

COMMITTEE ON RULES

The Rules Committee met numerous times over the past year to discuss several proposed amendments, as well as to study and draft the necessary rules to once again provide under the Virginia Conference Standing Rules of Order and Procedure a process for the submission and consideration of resolutions during annual conference. This year's proposed amendments and the rationale for each amendment follow:

A. RECOMMENDATIONS

Proposed amendments to the Standing Rules of Order and Procedure as recommended by the Rules Committee:

- **Technical Changes –**

Rule IV – First paragraph, change “68th” to “68th”

Rule IV – Second paragraph, change “con-ference” to “conference”

Rule V.A – Correct the citation to the Book of Discipline from “Paragraph 208” to “Paragraph 608”

Rationale: The Standing Rules referenced above require these minor technical changes due to past inadvertent oversight in not revising cross-references to the BOD or due to other typographical errors.

- **Rule V.C.8 – alter the subheading to “Ethnic Local Church Concerns, Committee on” from “Ethnic Minority Concerns and Advocacy, Commission on.”** Thereafter, revise the committee name accordingly in the remainder of Rule V.C.8. In the sentence citing the *Book of Discipline*, insert (§ 632) for the appropriate citation to the BOD. Remove the five members elected at-large, so that membership on the committee consists of only 10 clergy and 10 laypersons. Strike the sentence beginning, “The district coordinators for Religion and Race shall be ...”

As a result, the proposed new text for Rule V.C.8 is:

Ethnic Local Church Concerns, Committee on. There shall be a Virginia Conference Committee on Ethnic Local Church Concerns amenable to the Common Table for Church Vitality. The committee will provide for the functions as outlined in the current *Book of Discipline* for the Committee on Ethnic Local Church Concerns (§ 632).

The membership of the committee shall consist of 10 clergy and 10 laypersons elected upon nomination of the Conference Nominations Team. A minimum of two members shall be youth and young adults between the ages of 12 - 35. The committee will be constituted so that two-thirds of the membership be representative of people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. The presidents or chairs of conference caucuses, fellowships, or associations for racial and ethnic constituencies shall be ex-officio members of the committee with voice but not vote. The bishop may appoint to the committee a district superintendent to serve as Cabinet representative with voice but not vote.

Rule V.C.23 – add the following new rule for the Commission on Religion and Race:

- **Religion and Race, Commission on.** There shall be a Virginia Conference Commission on Religion and Race as outlined in the *Book of Discipline* (§ 643). The membership of the Commission shall comprise 5 laity and 5 clergy nominated by the Nominations Team. The commission will be constituted so that two-thirds of the membership be representative of people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. The bishop may appoint to the commission a district superintendent to serve as Cabinet representative with voice but not vote.

Rationale: CEMCA formed as the combination of the Conference Commission on Religion and Race and the Conference Committee on Ethnic Local Church Concerns. In an effort to provide more focused support for ethnic local churches, and to allow more concentrated efforts on systemic issues within the conference, these proposed changes to the Standing Rules for Rule V.C.8 and Rule V.C.23 will allow the annual conference to reinstate the two separate teams, as they are distinctly outlined in *The Book of Discipline*.

- **Rule V.C.19 – modify the final sentence to strike “three years” and insert “one year” for the Site Selection Committee. Thus, the sentence would read: This committee shall make arrangements for the meeting of the annual conference and shall recommend a location for the meeting of the annual conference a minimum of one year in advance.**

Rationale: The Site Selection Committee has indicated that it is constrained in terms of negotiating contracts for facilities, and the desire to find more cost-effective locations that might provide better support. This proposed amendment would provide more flexibility.

Proposed amendments to the Standing Rules of Order and Procedure as recommended by the Rules Committee for the reimplementation of resolutions:

- **Rule I.B.3.v – add the chairperson of the Resolutions Committee to this list of Lay Membership.**
- **Rule I.B.5.b – add the chairperson of the Resolutions Committee to this list for payment of expenses at annual conference.**
- **Rule II – amend the title to read, “REPORTS, RESOLUTIONS, PRESENTATIONS, PETITIONS, PROPOSALS AND CONSENT AGENDA.”**
- **Rule II.A.2 – add to the first sentence “... or resolutions, ...” so that this sentence reads, “For reports printed in the *Book of Reports*, verbal introductions shall not exceed five minutes, and there shall be no further reading of reports or resolutions, unless requested for clarification or requested by a majority vote of the annual conference.”**
- **Rule II.B – insert the below text to reinsert into the Standing Rules procedures for the submission and consideration of resolutions.**

B. RESOLUTIONS

1. **Resolutions.** Resolutions proposed for presentation to the annual conference shall be submitted to the Resolutions Committee no later than January 31 each year for consideration at that year’s annual conference. The Resolutions Committee shall meet as necessary throughout the year in order to review and process submitted resolutions in a timely manner. All properly submitted resolutions shall be organized by the Resolutions Committee for submission to the Conference Secretary, or the Conference Secretary’s designee, along with a Resolution Committee report, for publication in the *Book of Reports*.
 - a. The Resolutions Committee will determine if the below requirements under Rule II.B.2 and 3 have been met for any and all submitted resolutions. If a resolution is deemed to have been properly submitted, it will be further reviewed and prepared for presentation and consideration by the annual conference. If a resolution is deemed to not have been properly submitted under the below requirements, the Resolutions Committee shall timely return it to the person(s) who submitted it for revision; however, all revisions must be resubmitted by the January 31 deadline to be properly considered for presentation to the annual conference. Upon the January 31 final deadline for submission, the Resolutions Committee shall meet within two weeks in order to review, process and, if necessary, refer a resolution to an appropriate board, agency or committee for consideration and input.
 - b. A resolution may be submitted for consideration after January 31 only if the resolution concerns an issue that has clearly arisen after the January 31 deadline. Such resolutions must be submitted to the Resolutions Committee as soon as possible after the triggering event regarding the issue and no later than 14 days prior to the opening session of the annual conference.
 - c. The Resolutions Committee shall be the final arbiter to determine if the subject of the proposed resolution arose after the formal submission deadline. Such resolutions, if considered by the Committee, will be distributed via all conference e-mail groups, and the submitter of any such resolutions shall provide sufficient copies for all members attending annual conference, with the costs of such copies borne by the submitter, and submit such copies to the Conference Secretary for inclusion in the member packets prior to the opening session of the annual conference.

2. **Who May Submit a Resolution.** The following persons and entities may submit a resolution before the annual conference:
 - a. Any conference board, agency or committee;
 - b. Any group of at least ten (10) conference clergy members (full connection, provisional, or local pastor, including retired pastors) and/or conference lay members; or,
 - c. Any layperson who is a member of a local church within the conference and whose church council, or equivalent governing body, has endorsed the resolution.
3. **Submission of Resolutions.** To submit a resolution for consideration by the annual conference, the document must be properly formatted and submitted to the Resolutions Committee at an email address provided by the conference. The following process must be followed:
 - a. All resolutions shall be limited to one issue. If the *Book of Discipline* is affected, each resolution must address only one paragraph of the *Discipline*; except that, if two or more paragraphs in the *Discipline* are so closely related that a change in one affects the others, the resolution may call for the amendment of those paragraphs to make them consistent with one another (§507.2. *The Book of Discipline*);
 - b. All resolutions must be accompanied by a statement of: (i) any estimated financial impact; (ii) an estimate of any conference staff resources and time required; and (iii) the source(s) of funding required to implement its provisions, if any;
 - c. All resolutions are to be written in the following format: “Whereas, ... Whereas, ... Whereas, ... Therefore, be it resolved, ... Be it further resolved ...” structure;
 - d. All resolutions must be submitted electronically in Microsoft Word format, in 12 point, Times New Roman font, single spaced, with the following margins: top 1.25”; bottom 1”; left 1”; right 1.25”. Handwritten or submissions in .pdf format will not be accepted;
 - e. All resolutions shall be limited to no more than 1,000 words; and
 - f. Each resolution must be signed by the person(s) submitting it, and accompanied by appropriate identifying information, including the name(s), title(s), phone number(s), and email address(s) and conference district of the person(s) must be included with the resolution. Electronic signatures will be accepted in accordance with common business practices.
4. **Committee Actions.** The Resolutions Committee shall meet as necessary throughout the year to timely take the following actions upon properly receiving and considering resolutions:
 - a. Accept the resolutions as presented with no changes and recommend it for consideration at annual conference;
 - b. Accept the resolutions after working with the submitter regarding formatting and to comply with the Standing Rules and the *Book of Discipline*, and recommend it for consideration at annual conference;
 - c. Refer a resolution to another annual conference board, agency or committee for consideration and possible inclusion in that body’s report if the subject of the resolution involves the work of that conference body. Should the board, agency or committee to which a resolution is referred choose not to include the resolution in its report, then the Resolutions Committee shall be timely informed of this decision so that resolution may be included in the Resolution Committee’s report.
 - d. Refer a resolution to the Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) for review and to obtain an opinion or comment when such a resolution has a potential financial impact on the conference; or,
 - e. Refer a resolution to the conference Chancellor for review and to obtain an opinion or comment when such a resolution has a potential legal impact on the conference.

5. Scheduling and Debate of Resolutions.

- a. The Resolutions Committee shall determine the order for debate of all properly submitted resolutions included in the Resolutions Committee report for consideration by the annual conference.
- b. For resolutions that have come from or been referred to a conference board, agency or committee, the chairperson of that body will be entitled to speak once before the annual conference (prior to floor debate) to share any comments of the board, agency or committee concerning the resolution. This speech will not count against any time limitations.
- c. For resolutions that have been referred to the CFA or the conference Chancellor, the chairperson of the CFA or the Chancellor will be entitled to speak once before the annual conference (prior to floor debate) to share comments germane to the financial or legal impact concerning the resolution. This speech will not count against any time limitations.
- d. Debate on each resolution will begin with the submitter, or a representative of the submitter if submitted by a group of individuals speaking for a maximum of two (2) minutes. The resolution shall then be subject to floor debate and the speaking limits set forth under Standing Rule VII.H. Two speeches for concurrence and two speeches for non-concurrence shall be permitted.
- e. After debate has concluded, and prior to voting, the submitter of the resolution may offer to modify the resolution as referenced in Rule 6.b, below, or may withdraw the resolution from consideration.

6. Voting on Resolutions.

- a. Voting on resolutions shall be on each individual resolution, not on a recommendation of any conference board, agency, committee, the CFA or the Chancellor to which a resolution may have been referred to for review. Submitters proposing resolutions may submit supporting documentation or rationale with the resolution, and appropriate conference boards, agencies, and committees, as well as the CFA and Chancellor may provide opinions or comments regarding the resolution.
- b. The annual conference shall vote on the resolution, including the “whereas” language. The “whereas” language is not amendable during debate, although the submitter of the resolution may modify or strike the language of any “whereas” statements at any time prior to a vote on the resolution or during the debate. Any such modifications will not be subject to further debate.
- c. As deemed necessary by the presiding chairperson during consideration of resolutions, if the outcome of any voice or standing vote on a resolution is deemed inconclusive, a recorded vote may be taken with the assistance of the Chief Teller. Every resolution upon which a recorded vote has been taken shall have the vote count attached to it in all distributions of that resolution.

7. **Time Limit of Resolutions.** Every resolution passed by the annual conference shall be valid for the lesser of one year, or until the resolution is specifically rescinded, amended, or superseded by action of subsequent session of the annual conference. If the intent of a resolution is to be binding upon the annual conference for more than one year, the resolution must provide the appropriate language to amend the Standing Rules to allow for the indefinite implementation of the resolution. Such indefinite implementation must pass by a separate 2/3 vote majority of the annual conference; failing such a vote the resolution shall be valid under the one year time limit.

8. **Conference Secretary Recordkeeping.** The Conference Secretary shall maintain a list of resolutions passed by the annual conference and the list shall be published in each year’s *Journal* and such other places as may be helpful.

NOTE: All other rules under Rule II would be adjusted with the insertion of the above text on resolutions. Thus, Rule II.C – Presentations, Rule II.D – Petitions, Rule II.E – Proposals, and Rule II.F – Consent Agenda.

- **Rule III.B.5.b – add the text “... or resolutions ...” in two instances so that these sentences read,**
“fully participating in activities of the Conference including the debate over budgets, proposals or resolutions pending before the Conference. This shall include the right to bring petitions, amendments, or resolutions to the Conference and encourage votes for or against the same.”
- **Rule V.C.22 – add the following new rule for the Committee on Resolutions:**
 - o **Resolutions, Committee on.** There shall be a Resolutions Committee consisting of up to eleven (11) members, with no less than six (6) at-large members elected by the annual conference on nomination of the Conference Nominations Team or from the floor, with three being lay members and three being clergy. Other appointed members shall be (i) the Director of Connectional Ministries; (ii) a member of the Rules Committee; (iii) a member of the Board of Church and Society; (iv) the Conference Secretary or the Conference Secretary’s designee; and, (v) upon appointment by the Bishop, a representative of the Cabinet. The Resolutions Committee shall review and process each proposed resolution to determine if it can properly come before the annual conference; make revisions as needed in consultation with the submitter of the resolution; ensure consistency and adherence with *The Book of Discipline* and the Annual Conference’s Standing Rules of Order and Procedure; and present approved resolutions to the annual conference. Proposed resolutions for consideration by the annual conference shall be referred to the Resolutions Committee and handled pursuant to the procedures set forth under Standing Rule II.B.

Rationale: At the 2024 annual conference, a motion was adopted to restore resolutions as part of annual conference proceedings. As a result, the Rules Committee met numerous times in the past year to consider the best manner in which to amend the Standing Rules in order to do so. Members of the Committee reviewed our Virginia Conference’s past rules on resolutions and had discussions with both clergy and laity who were previously involved on past Resolution Committees. The Rules Committee also reviewed and considered text from other United Methodist Church conferences’ Standing Rules concerning the membership of a Resolutions Committee, various processes and procedures for submitting proposed resolutions, and for their consideration before the annual conference. The result of this in-depth analysis and discussion by the Rules Committee is the above proposed amendment.

In offering this amendment, the Rules Committee realizes that drafting such rules is one of two important steps, with the other step being successful implementation. Should the annual conference adopt these proposed amendments to restore resolutions to our Standing Rules and as part of annual conference proceedings, it is the Rules Committee’s recommendation that, following the 2025 annual conference proceedings where resolutions would again be considered, the leadership of the Rules and Resolutions Committees meet to confer on the process and determine if further adjustments to these rules are needed.

–Scott Diamond, Chair

CABINET REPORT

This conference year has been a fruitful one for the 8 districts of the Virginia Annual Conference. We completed our transitions into new leadership structures to maximize our support of local church mission and ministry, while also exploring innovative avenues of reaching into communities with the love of Christ.

Coastal Virginia District – Rev. Dr. C.R. Brooks, District Superintendent

The Coastal VA District made disciples! Under Dr. C. R. Brooks', (PhD) leadership, CVD has one of the largest groups of young adult clergy breathing new life into our District, including Jessie, a 16-year-old evangelist. In 2023, over 170 youth and young adults were baptized by profession of faith in our churches and camps and over 500 new adult members joined Coastal VA churches. Praise God! The DCOM became a diverse group practicing our theological tasks. Congratulations to Dr. Jason Stanley, our new Doctor of Ministry (DMIN), who revised NLI for small churches and spread the gospel of Simplified Accountable Structure (SAS) across the District. We welcome our new Administrative Manager, Jeri Burtchell.

Living Waters District – Rev. Jay Carey, District Superintendent

The Living Waters District Churches are now operating in 7 “regions” geographically to be nimbler in ministry together. Five of our monthly district “REFRESH” revival meetings were held, with strong attendance and support from local churches. Safer Sanctuaries classes have been offered by our four trained leaders. District Developer Tim Beck meets regularly with local churches to help develop community ministry and outreach strategies. District Youth ministry continues to grow with 100+ attending retreats and 10-15 youth delegates attending Annual Conference. The repurpose Ettrick church work team continues to develop plans for a ministry hub in that community.

Mission Rivers District – Rev. Dr. Charles Ledlum-Bates, District Superintendent

Our primary focus is to offer a vision of hope, healing, and reconciliation for our churches. Our strategy includes a commitment to improving communications that allow our laity and clergy to provide feedback and participate in all the district initiatives. Through SAS training, we have guided our churches in discerning whether this model fits their ministry contexts. We continue to support our churches in their efforts to improve their online presence and help them engage in collaborative missions and ministry. We have a system that supports, equips, and guides our churches through the work of our District Directors of Connectional Ministry. We invite each laity to utilize their expertise by joining their clergy in a shared ministry endeavor to fulfill our goal.

Mountain View District – Rev. Denise Bates, District Superintendent

The Mountain View District continues to develop contextual community ministries that connect people and share the love of Christ in real, authentic and tangible ways. Realizing that even within the district, there are many different contexts, we have organized into 3 regions, and within in those regions into 11 community groups of laity and clergy. Community groups of churches are sharing ministry, such as Worship in the Park, PubTheology, Food Pantries, Community Meals, Home Repair and Mission Trips. The clergy of Peaks View Region (Lynchburg area) are sharing the book “The Art of Neighboring” in their clergy peer groups, who then will share it in their churches. We continue to support Kaleidoscope -A Gathering Place, Henry Fork Service Center and Park View Community Mission as a district. We are excited to deploy the learning of 27 laity and clergy who have participated in Fresh Expressions training, as we discover God’s new thing among us! We are excited for the future!

Northern Virginia District – Rev. Dr. Sarah Calvert, District Superintendent

The Northern Virginia District is living into the new SAS model along with our four regions and regional connectors. We are living out our vision to inspire fruitful disciple-making in local communities by returning to in-person training and intentionally focusing on lay evangelism. We returned in-person for Training Day and included a hybrid training day. We continue to see partnerships and cohorts developing between churches in youth ministry, worship, community outreach and communications as the transition to regions continues. We were excited to welcome Bishop Sue and share some of the exciting ministry in NoVa!

Shenandoah River District – Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, District Superintendent

The Discipleship Board of the Shenandoah River District had a retreat this year at Camp Overlook, and it is working diligently to engage the district in mission and ministries for the sake of the kingdom of God. We are committed to engage our churches to making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the Shenandoah River District, and consequently for the transformation of the world. We recognize that it is time to get back to our Wesleyan roots and share God's love to all God's children.

Three Notch'd District - Rev. Dr. Hyo Lee, District Superintendent

Despite the many challenges we have faced, the laity and clergy of the Three Notch'D District have been bold and faithful to the mission of Christ. To do so, we applied three strategies. First, we sought to support local churches by providing Vitality resources such as SAS, Shift, NLI, Faithful Discernment, and others. Secondly, we enabled local churches to be innovative in reaching out to new people by providing resources for new ministries like Fresh Expressions, Dinner Church, Messy Church, and by starting new congregations. Thirdly, we offered support through Cluster ministries where mutual learning, encouragement, and collaboration like youth ministry and serving ministry happen. With these strategies, we aim faithfully make disciples in the coming years.

Valley Ridge District – Rev. Doug Forrester, District Superintendent

It has been another exciting year on the Valley Ridge District! The year 2023 saw great signs of hope, including a bold church merger and a nascent public-private partnership as we have prepared to launch our second Embrace Center for Community to serve Allegheny and Bath Counties as well as the city of Covington. In 2024, we launched nine geographic “guilds” to assist clergy and laity in community mission, programming, and fellowship. We continue to strive to equip the laity of our district as we pursue our goal of having a lay servant in each of our congregations.

On behalf of your District Superintendents, we give God thanks for the faithfulness of the laity and clergy in each of our districts, and their commitment to being the hands and feet of Christ, sharing God's love in transforming ways. This is our witness to the abundant love graciously given to each of us and all of us together. We are blessed to be a blessing to all!

On a personal note, it has been a deep blessing in my life to serve as a District Superintendent for these last 5 years. As I embrace this next chapter in my ministry, I am deeply thankful for the friendship of my Cabinet colleagues, and am blessed by all of the laity and clergy of the Mountain View District, as well as the former Farmville District. The work of ministry continues with God's help, and your faithfulness!

—Denise P. Bates, Dean

SITE SELECTION COMMITTEE

The Site Selection Committee is responsible for making the arrangements for the meeting of the Virginia Annual Conference. By Annual Conference rules, the Committee recommends the location for the Annual Conference three (3) years in advance. The Annual Conference Session date is set by Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson.

By previous Annual Conference action, the following locations have been approved for the site of the Annual Conference:

Roanoke	June 12-14, 2025
Hampton	June 18-20, 2026

The Site Selection Committee recommends the 2027 Virginia Annual Conference be held in:

Harrisonburg	June 17-19, 2027
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The Committee, along with the Director of Connectional Ministries and the Annual Conference Event Planner, continues to consider locations for holding Annual Conference across the Commonwealth. After careful evaluation of venues around Virginia, we are pleased to recommend holding the 2027 Annual Conference at the Atlantic Union Bank Center at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

For your reference, the following criteria is used in evaluating potential Annual Conference sites:

- ❖ Venue to accommodate 3,000 people
- ❖ 1,300 to 1,500 hotel rooms in the area
- ❖ Headquarters hotel in close proximity to Conference site
- ❖ Parking for 2,000 cars
- ❖ Meeting space for the Clergy Session of 1,500 people
- ❖ Meeting space for the Laity Session of 1,500 people
- ❖ Additional meeting spaces adjacent to the Conference floor
- ❖ Two (2) banquet areas to accommodate 500 people each
- ❖ Additional banquet locations accessible to Conference
- ❖ Restaurants to accommodate 2,500 patrons within 1½ - 2 hour timeframe
- ❖ 10,000 sq. ft. of special events space

–Neal E. Wise, Chair

EQUITABLE COMPENSATION COMMISSION

The Equitable Compensation Commission continues to provide financial aid to those churches requiring supplementation to strengthen their ministries in the communities in which they are located and to provide minimum salary or salary supplementation for the pastors. Equitable Compensation support in the amount of \$168,545 was provided to 27 charges in 2023.

There were 4 charges receiving salary support in 2022 that did not require salary support in 2023. These are Bethel Belle Haven (Coastal Virginia), New Mission (Coastal Virginia), Toms Brook (Shenandoah River), and Pembroke (Valley Ridge). These charges and their superintendents are commended for their success in providing a ministry in the communities they serve that has enabled them to grow spiritually in their stewardship.

District Superintendents and charges setting salaries for 2025 that may require supplementation are advised that the “floor” must come from sources other than the Commission on Equitable Compensation.

The Conference Average Compensation (CAC) for 2025 is \$69,518, which is an increase of 2.5% percent from 2024. The Commission recommends the Minimum Compensation and the Floor Schedule for 2025 be approved as outlined below:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

	2025 Proposed	2024 Approved
1. The Minimum Compensation Schedule:		
a. Full Connection Pastors	\$47,000	\$46,000
b. Provisional and Associate Members	\$42,700	\$41,500
c. Local Pastors	\$40,200	\$39,000
2. The Floor Schedule:		
a. Full Connection Pastors	\$30,000	\$30,000
b. Provisional and Associate Members	\$27,000	\$27,000
c. Local Pastors	\$25,000	\$25,000

The Equitable Compensation Financial Report for 2022-2023 is provided below:

Equitable Compensation Financial Report

	Year Ending 2022	Year Ending 2023
Apportioned	200,000	210,000
Uncollected Apportionment	(33,250)	(45,586)
Apportionment Income	166,750	164,414
<i>Percent Collected</i>	<i>83.38%</i>	<i>78.29%</i>
Grants	160,437	168,545
Total Expenses	160,437	168,545
Receipts Over (Under) Expenses	6,313	(4,131)

–Rev. Tom Durrance, Chair

REPORT FROM THE JUST COMPENSATION TASK FORCE 2024

Why this Task Force was Created?

At the 2023 Virginia Annual Conference session, a lay member named Ms. Terrie Chaplin (MV) expressed genuine concern about the financial well-being of our clergy, which led the Conference to adopt the amended motion to:

“Amend the report from the Equitable Compensation Committee to increase the minimum salary by \$1,000 for full-time clergy in each category for 2024.”

Out of that same concern, a motion by Rev. Dr. Janine Howard (NV) followed and was passed by the 2023 Conference to create our Task Force when she moved that: “A work group be created by the Annual Conference to study housing allowances for clergy and make recommendations to create consistent and equitable practices for setting the allowances, further suggest that conference commissions related to advocacy, Clergy Excellence/Board of Ordained Ministry, Equitable Compensation, CFA (and other as deemed necessary) be included in the study.”

The Challenge

Clergy housing allowances range greatly due to the following factors:

- Geographic location/cost of living
- Years of service
- Salary range
- Finances available within each local church
- Lack of standardization across the Conference and across districts

Our Goal

To review our current housing allowance practices and recommend a new way forward which is equitable to both local churches and clergy.

Our Work

We met seven times this past year to study all the factors that go into creating a housing allowance. Our research included housing allowances as well as the totality of clergy compensation in the Virginia Conference, focusing on years of service, age, gender, and race/ethnicity. For the purpose of statistical clarity, we primarily reviewed Full Time Elders, knowing that we also need to make sure we are not ignoring other clergy statuses in our discussions and recommendations. We also studied the policies and procedures around clergy compensation in other UMC conferences.

We also are keenly aware that our Conference has called upon us to study these concerns during a season of significant shortfall in income due to disaffiliations. Local churches are struggling financially, and creative solutions need to be well researched. On March 2, 2024, we presented our initial findings to the Board of Laity, whose input has been added to this report.

At the Board of Laity meeting, Rev. Bill Davidson (TN) (a task force member) shared the handout “Pastor Leontine” (see attachment pages 8-11) which describes the finances of a clergy person who is at the minimum salary. The Board of Laity responded that they had no idea that many pastors at minimum salaries (due to their other fiscal responsibilities as laid out within the handout) are barely getting by financially. This was an eye-opening exercise on both sides of the conversation, which speaks to why more education on clergy housing and salaries is needed for both clergy and laity.

Our Research (Outside of our Conference Comparisons):

The task force reached out to other Annual Conferences to see how they created their housing allowance policies and included the following Conferences: Baltimore-Washington Conference UMC (BWCUMC), California-Pacific Conference UMC (CALPACUMC), Western North Carolina Conference UMC (WNCCUMC), North Carolina Conference UMC (NCCUMC), and the Florida Annual Conference UMC (FLUMC).

Our Findings:

Each Annual Conference does this process differently. The Baltimore-Washington Conference and California-Pacific Conference have a set minimum number for housing. The Florida Annual Conference minimum housing allowance varies by geographic location (i.e. urban, oceanfront, and rural). In the North Carolina Conference, the following equa-

tion is followed: “Churches/charges providing a housing allowance in lieu of a parsonage should follow the Conference requirement, paying no less than 20% and not more than 40% of the Conference Average Compensation (CAC)” (“2023 Compensation and Personnel Policies for Pastors of The NC Conference of the United Methodist Church”). The Western North Carolina Conference does not set a minimum amount for housing allowances and states that “the local church shall determine how best to provide adequate housing for their pastors...in consultation with the District Superintendent” (Clergy Housing: Parsonages & Housing Allowances Guidelines & Policies Western North Carolina Conference The United Methodist Church revised 2020).

Some of these Annual Conferences include utilities (on top of housing allowances) within their equitable compensation report that local churches are required to pay, including: - Heat, water/sewer, trash pick-up, local telephone, cable and internet access (NCCUMC, CALPACUMC)

- Climate control, both heating and cooling (FLUMC)
- Travel allowance & auto expense (CALPACUMC)

Our Current Practice

In the Virginia Conference, our practice is much like the Western North Carolina Conference. As stated in The Virginia Annual Conference Clergy Housing Policy: “housing allowances shall be based on the fair rental value for a 3-bedroom, 1.5 bath home in the community (zip code) in which the church is located.”

Our Research (Inside the Virginia Conference UMC):

The task force looked at the data from the Virginia Conference UMC Unity database for the 2024 conference year (July 1, 2023-present) which includes the housing allowance information for clergy utilizing a housing allowance. For the purpose of these statistics we used ordained elders. Those in extension ministry, deacons, and lay supply were taken out.

Below you will find the housing allowance district statistics based off of ordained elders.

District	Elders	Reside in Parsonage	Collect Housing Allowance	Min Housing Allowance	Max Housing Allowance	Average Housing Allowance
Coastal Virginia	40	22	16	\$15,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$22,696.91
Living Waters	18	12	5	\$12,000.00	\$18,000.00	\$14,800.00
Mission Rivers	40	25	14	\$10,800.00	\$33,620.00	\$20,202.14
Mountain View	14	8	5	\$11,400.00	\$22,200.00	\$17,720.00
Northern Virginia	74	39	33	\$15,000.00	\$42,600.00	\$30,182.30
Shenandoah River	32	11	16	\$15,000.00	\$36,270.00	\$21,579.38
Three Notch'd	53	15	36	\$12,000.00	\$36,000.00	\$19,799.53
Valley Ridge	28	9	15	\$14,000.00	\$23,000.00	\$17,888.00
Total	299	141	140	\$13,150.00	\$30,211.25	\$20,608.53

The statistics above show that there is a great range both within each district and between districts.

The task force spent a lot of time talking about whether a minimum housing allowance and maximum housing allowance would be helpful and possible to use on every district. After looking at the cost of living within and between districts, the task force did not think it was possible to find an equitable number that would work across all the districts.

A Study on Clergy Salaries

While the Just Compensation Task Force was tasked to look at clergy housing, we noticed a wide gap in housing allowances and wanted to study the effects of housing on total compensation. The housing allowance could be lowered or raised as a means of lowering or raising the overall compensation package. Our study of the salaries also showed a gap in pay between male and female clergy. The pay gap became wider between genders as we looked at racial factors. This is an area of concern that we would like to explore further.

The task force also examined housing allowances by district and found that the allowances varied widely across dis-

tracts with the varied cost of living across our large districts. Because of this, the task force decided not to recommend setting housing allowances by districts and instead moved to a contextual housing allowance model adopted by the cabinet in their “Virginia Annual Conference Clergy Housing Policy” updated 2/2024, see pages 14-15).

Findings on Virginia Conference 2024 Salaries

Just as the housing allowances varied within and between districts, the task force found that salaries varied as well, due to race, ethnicity, gender, and years of service. For a full report view the “Data Analysis of Virginia Conference Clergy Compensation Trends” on pages 12-13.

Summary of Results of 2024 VAUMC Salary Study

The data reveal that the highest salaries for full elders are going to male elders, who are compensated at an average of \$64,757 compared to \$60,251 for female elders when we look in aggregate at all elders across ethnic groups and years of experience. As stated above, it is important to note that these data also include, in some places, very small subgroups which can create outliers.

It is clear that our Conference has significant work to do in terms of recruiting and sustaining full elders who are in the subgroups of Hispanic/Latino Male, Hispanic/Latino Female, as well as Multi-Racial Male and Female elders and African-American/Black Female elders. In the report, the cells marked #N/A are subgroups where, at various levels of experience, we are lacking full elders (see the following link: <https://vaumc.org/jctfreport2024/>).

Within the provisional status, the data are particularly telling, as they reveal subgroups where diversity is lacking amongst those in the ordination process in the Virginia Conference. These data also show disparities between men and women at various points in the provisional process in each ethnic group.

When comparing the data for full-time local pastors across years of experience, the average salary for men outpaces women \$43,855 to \$42,970. It is also noteworthy that the data indicate that even with 25+ years of experience, the average salary for a licensed local pastor across all ethnic groups (\$45,291) falls just below the average salary for all clergy in the Conference at 5-9 years of experience (\$47,792). There is a dearth of African-American/Black Female local pastors with experience above 9 years. The same is the case for Asian Female local pastors, as Asian Females who are licensed local pastors only fall into the range of 5-9 years of service. It is also important to note that the data reveal that our Conference lacks full-time local pastors who are Hispanic/Latino Females, as well as lacks Hispanic/Latino Male local pastors with service in the Conference other than those who have served in the 5-9-year range.

It is crucial to note that while these figures tell a very important story about where we are as a Conference in regard to clergy compensation, they cannot tell the complete story, as they do not reflect elements of the work of our clergy, such as effectiveness in ministry, variations in costs of living across the geographic regions of the Conference, and clergy who are limited in their ability to itinerate at various stages of their life and ministry.

In order to better understand this condensed summary, it must be accompanied by the full report which is available in the spreadsheet linked below. It is our hope that these two resources can spark holy conversations around clergy compensation in the Virginia Conference at all levels of our life together: Conference, District, and local church, and that these holy conversations will serve as touchpoints that will lead the people called United Methodists in the Virginia Conference to compensation for all of our clergy shepherds that is fair, equitable, and just.

See the full statistical table here: <https://vaumc.org/jctfreport2024/>

Collaboration between the Cabinet and the Task Force

The Cabinet will annually review “The Virginia Annual Conference Clergy Housing Policy” and has worked in collaboration with the Just Compensation Task Force to make the following updates and additions (see pages 14-15 highlighted items). The main changes and additions include the following:

- Clergy couples: when it comes to housing allowances, clergy couples are now treated individually. For instance, our current policy now states that even if a parsonage is provided by one church, “the other church will provide a full allowance” to the other member of the clergy couple (“The Virginia Annual Conference Clergy Housing Policy”). It also states: “If both appointments provide a housing allowance, each church provides a full housing allowance to both appointed pastors.”

- Accessibility needs: in order to support pastors and their family who may have accessibility needs, the following

statement was added to the policy: “If a parsonage is not accessible for persons with disabilities and the pastor or pastoral family requires accessible housing, either the parsonage shall be made appropriately accessible or a housing allowance shall be paid” (“The Virginia Annual Conference Clergy Housing Policy”).

- “The Virginia Conference Annual Housing Review Worksheet” was created by the Task Force and passed by the Cabinet for churches to use as they calculate housing allowances (see pages 16-17) and what is highlighted in “The Virginia Annual Conference Clergy Housing Policy” bullet number three). This fillable worksheet helps churches calculate just and equitable housing for their pastors and includes calculating the fair rental value of five homes in the same zip code where the church is located. It then eliminates the highest and lowest outliers. Finally, it adds the annual cost of heat and air conditioning.

Collaboration with the Equitable Compensation Commission

In conjunction with our work, the Equitable Compensation Commission also established long term goals for the setting of the minimum salary (see their report within The Book of Reports), which includes projecting minimum salaries for the next five years. This projection will be helpful to both pastors and local churches as they plan for the future.

Our Recommendations:

1. Most notably our task force created a new “Virginia Conference Annual Housing Review Worksheet” (see pages 16-17) to be used by Staff Parish Relations Committees in consultation with their District Superintendent to calculate clergy housing allowance. This worksheet is now being phased in to be used as part of “The Virginia Annual Conference Clergy Housing Policy.”

As the Cabinet Clergy Housing Policy states: housing “shall be based on the fair rental value of 3- bedroom, 1.5 bath home in the community in which the church is located.” In setting the housing allowance, there should be a comparison of five homes that meet the above defined criteria identified by a realtor (or other appropriate professional) within the same zip code in which the church is located. This worksheet also adds in the utility cost of heat and air conditioning.

2. Our task force is dedicated to increasing education around clergy compensation issues. To that end, we are working with the Office of Clergy Excellence, the Board of Ordained Ministry, the Office of Pensions and Benefits, and other willing partners to prepare and offer resources for clergy and laity on the following topics:
 - a) Unique clergy tax regulations and maximizing clergy tax benefits
 - b) Clergy debt reduction and financial wellness
3. Given the scope of the perceived needs and injustices around clergy compensation in the Virginia Conference, it is essential that this work continue to determine what additional variables might contribute to just, equitable, and adequate clergy compensation for all.

We recommend that:

The Just Compensation Task Force continue its work for another year to study clergy compensation in the Virginia Conference in its totality and present its findings and recommendations pertaining to this topic to the 2025 Virginia Annual Conference.

Topics that the task force would study include, but will not be limited to, the following: - Salary statistics including documented inequities with regard to clergy status, district, gender, race, ethnicity, years of service.

- Minimum parsonage standards.

In conclusion, our data confirm that the Conference’s concern regarding these issues is well-founded. The 2023 Annual Conference decision to increase the minimum salary recommendation and the recent actions of the Cabinet and the Equitable Compensation Committee are significant first steps in addressing these issues of justice, adequacy, and equity. We are confident that further research will reveal additional strategies.



We seek your assistance in identifying meaningful and creative solutions. If you or someone you know has a story to tell, suggestions to offer, comments to make, or resources to share that address these concerns of the Conference, please email the chair, Rev. Jessie Colwell at jessiecolwell@vaumc.org or use this QR code.

Just Compensation Task Force

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop
Steve Summers, Assistant to the Bishop
Tom Durrance, Equitable Compensation Chair
Doug Forrester, Cabinet Representative
David Dommissie, Treasurer, VAUMC
Jessie Colwell, Director of Clergy Excellence, VAUMC
Tammy Estep, Board of Ordained Ministry, Chair
George Warner, Cross Cultural/Cross Racial Committee Chair
Eduardo Carrillo, Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns Chair
Mark Ogren, CFA Committee Representative, Retired Elder
Jenny Day, Commission on the Status and Role of Women, Co-Chair
John Fuller, Pensions and Benefits, Director
Bill Davidson, Clergy Taxes, EA, Retired Elder
Chris Malak, Director of Data Management, VAUMC
Timothy Barth, Commission on Disabilities, Chair
Christy Haga, Turner VAUMC pastor
Marcela Jarman, VAUMC pastor, Provisional Elder
Laura Stratton, VAUMC pastor, young woman clergy
Donna Kellam, Lay Member

Resources

“2023 Compensation and Personnel Policies for Pastors of the NC Conference of the United Methodist Church: Effective January 1, 2023.” <https://nccumc.org>. January 1, 2023. Accessed August 1, 2023. <https://nccumc.org/treasurer/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/Compensation-and-Personnel-Policies-for-Pastors-2023.pdf>.

“Baltimore-Washington Conference Commission on Equitable Compensation 2024 Recommendations.” <https://www.bwcumc.org/>. Accessed August 1, 2023. https://s3.amazonaws.com/accountmedia/19721/uploaded/e/0e15952525_1685479394_equitable-comp-slides.pdf.

“California-Pacific Conference Charge Conference Appendix C 2023 Minimum Compensation Standards.” <https://www.calpacumc.org/>. Accessed January 1, 2024.

<https://www.calpacumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/AppCMinimumCompensationStandards-2024.pdf>

“Clergy Housing: Parsonages & Housing Allowance Guidelines & Policies Western NC Conference The United Methodist Church Revised 2020.” <https://www.wnccumc.org/>. Accessed August 1, 2023.

https://www.wnccumc.org/files/tables/content/11730247/fields/files/b514c8d181ac47fa9f48367e_f846716e/2020+clergy+housing.pdf.

“Florida Annual Conference North East District Housing Allowance.” <https://www.flumc.org>. Accessed August 1, 2023. <https://www.flumc.org/files/ne+directory/district+clergy+housing.pdf>.

VIRGINIA UNITED METHODIST PENSIONS, INC.

Section I: Reports

■ Report 1: Role & Responsibilities of Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church directs each annual conference to establish a conference board of pension, auxiliary to Wespath Benefits and Investments (Wespath), to have charge of the interests and work of providing for and contributing to the support, relief, assistance, and pensioning of clergy and their families, other church workers, and lay employees of the United Methodist Church, its institutions, organizations, and agencies within each annual conference except as otherwise provided for by Wespath.

On June 22, 1965, the Virginia Annual Conference (VAUMC) established and incorporated the Virginia Methodist Pensions, Incorporation, (subsequently renamed on February 2, 1971 to Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc., or “VUMPI,”) as its conference board of pension.

VUMPI, in conjunction with Wespath, develops and administers the numerous employee pension and benefit plans sponsored by the Virginia Conference. Some plans are employer-paid, while others are voluntary and 100 percent participant-paid:

VUMPI Plans

Health
Prescription
Dental
Vision
Supplemental Life
Voluntary Life
Long Term Care
Healthcare Flexible Spending Account
Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account

Wespath Plans

Ministers Reserve Pension Fund (Pre-82)
Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP)
Clergy Retirement Security Program – Defined Benefit (CRSP-DB)
Clergy Retirement Security Program – Defined Contribution (CRSP-DC)
United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP)
Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP)

■ Report 2: Virginia Conference-Sponsored Health Plans

VUMPI administers health plans for full time clergy of the Virginia Conference, as well as retired clergy who meet eligibility requirements based on years of ministry in the Virginia Conference. Details of the Conference-sponsored health plans follow:

Active Clergy Health Plans

Health plans recommended to be made available in 2025 are unchanged from the plans offered in 2024. Health plans available to clergy serving in full time appointments in the Virginia Conference include the following:

- **PPO Core:** \$1,000 individual deductible, \$2,500 family deductible, 20% coinsurance
- **PPO Buy-Up:** \$750 individual deductible, \$1,875 family deductible, and 20% coinsurance
- **HSA plan:** a plan with a higher deductible (\$2,250 individual, \$4,500 family) as required by Internal Revenue Service rules for HSAs, a Conference contribution to the Health Savings Account (\$750 for individual tier enrollees, \$1,500 for all other tier enrollees), 20% coinsurance

A fourth PPO health plan with a \$500 deductible, which is made available only to clergy on medical leave with CPP disability benefits and surviving spouses and children of clergy, will continue to be offered in 2025 with no plan design changes.

The vision plan will continue to be offered in 2025, with no changes in the plan design.

The two dental plan options currently administered by VUMPI will also continue to be offered in 2025 with no plan design changes.

The majority of the cost of the health plans made available to Virginia Conference clergy is funded through a Conference

apportionment, as described in Recommendation 1. The remainder of the cost of the plans is funded by participant contributions, as described in Recommendation 2.

Retired Clergy Health Plans

VUMPI administers health plans for eligible retired clergy of the Virginia Conference. The eligibility requirements include a minimum of ten years of full time ministry in either Virginia Conference church appointments or Extension Ministry appointments with enrollment in the Conference-sponsored health plans.

Plans made available to eligible retirees are coordinated with Medicare eligibility. Specific plans for retirees who are not yet eligible for Medicare and the program for Medicare-eligible clergy are described below:

Conference-sponsored health plan for pre-Medicare-eligible retirees: retirees who are eligible to enroll in the Conference-sponsored retired clergy health plan but who are not yet eligible to enroll in Medicare may enroll in the self funded PPO Core or PPO Buy-Up plans administered by VUMPI. Pre-Medicare-eligible retirees may also enroll in the self funded dental insurance program and the fully insured vision program made available to active clergy. The majority of the cost of the health plans made available to Virginia Conference clergy is funded through a Conference apportionment, as described in Recommendation 1. The remainder of the cost of the plans is funded by participant contributions, as described in Recommendation 2.

Conference-sponsored health plan for Medicare-eligible retirees: retirees who are eligible to enroll in the Conference-sponsored retired clergy health plan and who are also enrolled in Medicare have two options for retiree medical coverage.

The first option is the Group Plan, which is a group Medicare Advantage plan created specifically for Virginia Conference retirees. The Group Plan integrates the retiree's Medicare benefit and includes prescription drug coverage. The majority of the cost of the Group Plan is funded through a Conference apportionment, as described in Recommendation 1. The remainder of the cost of the plans is funded by participant contributions, as described in Recommendation 2.

The second option made available to eligible retirees who are enrolled in Medicare is the Connector option. Under the Connector option, Medicare-eligible retirees are able to select any Medicare Supplement plan or Medicare Advantage plan, and any Part D prescription drug plan, offered by United Healthcare. The Conference will provide funding through a Retiree Reimbursement Account ("RRA"), and those funds can be used to partially or fully offset the cost of the coverage elected through the Connector option. The RRA funding made available to retirees who elect coverage through the Connector option is funded through a Conference apportionment, as described in Recommendation 1. The remainder of the cost of the elected health plan coverage, if any, is paid by the retiree directly to United Healthcare.

■ Report 3: Pension Plan Structure

There are four components to the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP):

- A. Ministers Reserve Pension Fund (Pre-82) for service and benefits accrued on and/or prior to December 31, 1981.
- B. Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) for service and benefits accrued on and/or after January 1, 1982 through December 31, 2006.
- C. Clergy Retirement Security Program - Defined Benefit Plan (CRSP-DB) for service and benefits accrued on and/or after January 1, 2007.
- D. Clergy Retirement Security Program - Defined Contribution Plan (CRSP-DC) for service and benefits accrued on and/or after January 1, 2007.

Wespath refers to plans A – C above as defined benefit ("DB") pension plans. That is, each year an eligible clergy member of the Virginia Conference served/serves and received/receives pension credit, the applicable plan will pay a certain benefit, or "defined" monthly income during retirement. Hence, the term "defined benefit." Defined benefit plans do not maintain participant account balances since the employer, or in our case, Wespath, has the responsibility to manage the funds in a manner sufficient to pay the monthly defined benefit.

Simultaneous to Wespath calculating each participant's defined benefit, it calculates each annual conference's cost to provide these defined benefits. Wespath bills each annual conference the amount due. Each annual conference, or in our case, VUMPI, then bills our local churches for the cost of these plans.

In addition to these defined benefit plans, annual conferences provide their clergy pension benefits from the CRSP-DC, a defined contribution ("DC") plan. Each year an eligible clergy member of the Virginia Conference serves and receives pension credit, the Virginia Conference determines how much pension contribution each clergy participant will receive in his/her pension account. VUMPI bills local churches for the required amount of pension contribution, then makes monthly contributions into the clergy CRSP-DC accounts.

■ Report 4: Welfare Plans Structure

The welfare plans made available to Virginia Conference clergy include the Comprehensive Protection Plan ("CPP") sponsored by Wespath, as well as supplemental benefits sponsored independently by VUMPI.

The CPP disability benefits are as follows:

- For Clergy disabled on or after Jan. 1, 2002, the CPP disability benefit equals 70 percent of Plan Compensation, with compensation capped at 200 percent of the DAC.
- For Clergy disabled prior to Jan. 1, 2002, they will continue to receive the same CPP disability benefit per the plan document in-force at the time their disability claim originated.

The following generally describes the death benefit amounts payable under the CPP to eligible participants and their beneficiaries:

Active Participant Death Benefits: payable upon the death of an eligible active CPP participant, as follows:

- Participant: \$50,000, payable in 12 monthly installments or one lump sum
- Spouse of active participant: 20% of the Denominational Average Compensation ("DAC") in the year of death
- Surviving spouse of active participant: 15% of DAC in the year of death
- Child of active participant: 10% of DAC in the year of death
- Annual surviving spouse annuity benefit of 20% of DAC, less the annuity benefit payable from CRSP and other Church-related sources
- Annual surviving child benefit of 10% of DAC, payable in 12 monthly installments (for those age 17 and younger; benefits are paid through the month in which the child attains age 18)
- Annual surviving child educational benefit up to 20% of DAC, payable in equal installments (for those age 18 through 24 and attending school full-time)

Retired Participant Death Benefits: to be eligible for death benefits in retirement, a clergyperson must have been covered in CPP for a specified number of years. The 2012 General Conference approved a change to the CPP program which increases the length of service requirement for retirees. Retirees with 25 or more years of enrollment in CPP are eligible for the death benefits in retirement, and the eligibility criteria for those with fewer than 25 years in CPP was phased in with one-year increments, as detailed in the table below:

Retirement Year	CPP Enrollment Requirement for Death Benefit Eligibility
2013	6 of last 10 years
2014	7 of last 10 years
2015	8 of last 11 years
2016	9 of last 12 years
2017	10 of last 13 years
2018	11 of last 14 years
2019+	12 of last 15 years

The death benefit amounts associated with retired participants are detailed in the table below:

Plan Provision	Clergy Who Retired Before Jan. 1, 2013	Clergy Who Retire Jan. 1, 2013 or Later
Death of retired participant	30% of DAC in the year of death	\$21,400
Death of retiree's spouse	20% of DAC in the year of death	\$16,100
Death of retiree's surviving spouse	15% of DAC in the year of death	\$10,800
Death of retiree's child	10% of DAC in the year of death	\$8,600
Annual surviving child benefit, payable in 12 monthly installments	10% of DAC	10% of DAC
Annual surviving child educational benefit, payable in installments	20% of DAC	20% of DAC

The Conference Supplemental Death Benefit for active eligible clergy under episcopal appointment, and who are enrolled in CPP, is \$25,000. The Conference Supplemental Death Benefit is payable in addition to the CPP death benefit. During retirement, a \$5,000 Conference Supplemental Death Benefit will be payable to CPP participants, in addition to the CPP death benefit. The beneficiary will receive the Conference Supplemental Death Benefit payable in one lump sum.

In combination, the CPP and Conference Supplemental Death Benefit provide total death benefits as follows:

- \$75,000 to beneficiaries of active clergy participants
- \$26,400 (or 30% of the DAC for clergy who retired prior to January 1, 2013 + \$5,000) to beneficiaries of retired clergy participants

Gift Benefit

VUMPI currently elects to provide a one time \$1,500 gift at the time of retirement or disability (once awarded disability benefits under the Comprehensive Protection Plan) to each clergyperson who has served at least ten years of service in a full-time Virginia Annual Conference episcopal appointment in the Virginia Conference with pension credit. Further, a gift to the family of each clergyperson meeting the eligibility criteria above who dies in active service is paid in the same amount as the gift to retired or disabled clergypersons.

■ Report 5: Denominational Average Compensation

Several of the pension and welfare plans incorporate the Denominational Average Compensation (“DAC”) into the formula for determining the plan benefit. The formula VUMPI uses for funding those plans relies on the DAC, as well.

As reported by Wespeth, the DAC is projected to increase from 2024 to 2025 as follows:

Denominational Average Compensation	
2024	2025
\$78,292	\$80,297



Section II: Recommendations for Annual Conference Approval

■ Recommendation 1: 2025 Clergy Benefits Apportionment Recommendations

For 2025, VUMPI recommends total Clergy Benefits Apportionments of \$14,400,000. This represents a ten percent reduction from the 2024 clergy benefits apportionments. This reduction was enabled by the combination of lower than projected health plan cost trends and a decline in health plan enrollment. The total benefits apportionment amount includes funding for the Active Clergy Health Plan (which includes health care coverage for eligible clergy on medical leave and widowed spouses of active clergy) and the Retired Clergy Health Plan. The apportionment total is allocated between these components as follows:

Clergy Benefits Apportionment Recommendations - 2025	
Active Clergy Health	\$ 9,000,000
Retired Clergy Health	5,400,000
TOTAL CLERGY BENEFIT APPORTIONMENTS	\$ 14,400,000

VUMPI recommends the above Active Clergy Health and Retired Clergy Health apportionments as part of its broad strategy focused on maintaining adequate health plans for Virginia Conference active and retired clergy, while moderating the financial impact on local churches and individual participants to the extent possible.

VUMPI makes the Conference-sponsored health plans available to clergy serving in Conference-related extension ministries that do not pay apportionments. For clergy appointed to such extension ministries who are enrolled in the health plans in 2025, VUMPI will bill the Conference Health Plan Fee. The amount billed will be \$988 per month for each enrolled clergyperson, plus their applicable Participant Contributions for active clergy as noted in Recommendation 2: 2025 Participant Contribution Recommendations.

■ Recommendation 2: 2025 Health Plan Participant Contribution Recommendations

In administering the Conference-sponsored self-insured health plans, an element of VUMPI's strategy is to maintain plans that are similar to national average employer-sponsored health plans. In addition, VUMPI recommends participant contributions that are similar, as a percentage of the total health plan cost, to national employer-sponsored plan averages. For 2025, VUMPI is recommending no changes from 2024 in health plan contributions across all medical, dental and vision plan options.

Following are the 2025 participant contribution recommendations for the Conference-sponsored health plans:

Active Clergy:

	Medical Plans			Dental Plans	
	PPO Core	PPO Buy-Up	HSA	Core	Major
Clergyperson Only	\$109	\$144	\$84	\$13	\$34
Clergyperson + Spouse	\$330	\$387	\$276	\$49	\$98
Clergyperson + Child(ren)	\$334	\$394	\$282	\$51	\$100
Family	\$349	\$428	\$294	\$60	\$109

Note: active clergy have the opportunity to earn a \$15 reduction in the monthly participant contribution through participation in the Virginia Conference wellness program. Clergy spouses who are enrolled in the Conference health plans can also receive a \$15 reduction in the monthly participant contribution, for a total potential monthly reduction of \$30 in a non-individual coverage tier

Clergy on Voluntary Leave, Sabbatical, or Retired Under ¶358.2.a (With Twenty Years of Service) or ¶358.3 (Prior to Age 62 With Fewer Than Thirty Years of Service):

	Medical Plans		Dental Plans	
	PPO Core	PPO Buy-Up	Core	Major
Clergyperson Only	\$668	\$774	\$31	\$60
Clergyperson + Spouse	\$1,487	\$1,659	\$51	\$124
Clergyperson + Child(ren)	\$1,611	\$1,797	\$53	\$126
Family	\$2,075	\$2,315	\$64	\$137

Clergy on Medical Leave with CPP Benefits & Under Age 65 Surviving Spouses of Clergy

	Medical Plans	Dental Plans	
	PPO (\$500 deductible)	Core	Major
Clergyperson Only	\$118	\$13	\$34
Clergyperson + Spouse	\$180	\$49	\$98
Clergyperson + Child(ren)	\$183	\$51	\$100
Family	\$194	\$60	\$109

Retired Clergy Under Age 65 – Retired Under ¶358.1, ¶358.2b, ¶358.2c, or ¶358.3

Years of Qualifying Virginia Conference Service	PPO Core		PPO Buy-up	
	Retiree Only	Family	Retiree Only	Family
10-14	\$688	\$1,714	\$797	\$2,096
15-19	\$608	\$1,387	\$744	\$1,697
20-24	\$465	\$1,062	\$569	\$1,298
25-29	\$322	\$735	\$394	\$898
30+	\$179	\$408	\$219	\$500

Years of Qualifying Virginia Conference Service	Dental Core		Dental Major	
	Retiree Only	Family	Retiree Only	Family
10-14	\$31	\$58	\$60	\$131
15-19	\$31	\$58	\$60	\$131
20-24	\$31	\$58	\$60	\$131
25-29	\$31	\$58	\$60	\$131
30+	\$31	\$58	\$60	\$131

Optional Voluntary Vision Benefit Plan for Clergy and Lay Employees Enrolled in a Conference-sponsored Anthem Medical Plan

	Vision
Employee Only	\$8.34
Employee + Spouse	\$15.05
Employee + Child(ren)	\$15.05
Family	\$24.19

Retired Clergy Age 65 or Over – Retired Under ¶358.1, ¶358.2b, ¶358.2c, or ¶358.3

Under the Conference-sponsored medical plan for Medicare-eligible retirees of the Virginia Conference, there will continue to be two coverage options, as described below.

Group Plan Option: The group plan is a group Medicare Advantage plan. The group plan has a required participant contribution based on full time years of service in the Virginia Conference. The recommended 2025 participant contributions for the group plan coverage option are as follows:

Medicare-eligible Retirees - Monthly Personal Contributions		
Years of Service	Individual	Family
10-14	\$394	\$788
15-19	\$326	\$651
20-24	\$257	\$515
25-29	\$189	\$378
30+	\$121	\$242

Connector Option: The Connector option allows qualifying clergy to select any available Medicare Supplement or Medicare Advantage plan, and any Part D prescription drug plan, offered by United Healthcare. Retirees electing coverage through this option receive Retiree Reimbursement Account (“RRA”) funding, which can be used to offset the cost of the selected coverage. VUMPI recommends 2025 monthly RRA funding based on qualifying years of Virginia Conference service as follows:

Connector Option - Monthly RRA Funding		
Years of Service	Retiree Only	Retiree and Spouse
20-24	\$150	\$300
25-29	\$200	\$400
30+	\$250	\$500

The monthly RRA funding amounts will be prorated for qualifying retirees and/or spouses of qualifying retirees who gain Medicare eligibility or otherwise gain eligibility for retiree coverage within a calendar year. Any RRA funds remaining at the end of a calendar year will roll over into the subsequent year for use by the enrolled retiree and/or spouse for qualifying medical expenses.

General Virginia Conference Health Plan Information

For participants enrolled in the Anthem health plans, either as active clergy or as a retiree not yet eligible for Medicare, 2025 health plan selections will be made during the open enrollment period in the fall of 2024. If an eligible clergyperson does not elect coverage options during the annual open enrollment period, the default enrollment option is the prior year’s plan

selections (except for Flexible Spending Account or Dependent Care Spending Account contributions), and enrollees will be subject to the associated individual personal contribution rates.

If not selected during the open enrollment period, no Flexible Spending Account contributions can be made during 2025, in accordance with federal laws.

All who are eligible to enroll in a Virginia Conference health plan are strongly encouraged to participate in online open enrollment in the fall of 2024.

Virginia Conference clergy members earn a year of service towards his or her Total Years of VAUMC Service as indicated in the coverage options above for each year that Virginia Annual Conference health plan eligibility is met.

Eligibility for the Conference-sponsored retiree medical plans requires a minimum of ten years of full time ministry in the Virginia Conference. Virginia Conference clergy on approved leave or serving in an Extension Ministry appointment earn credit towards retiree medical plan eligibility only if enrolled in the Conference-sponsored health plan while on leave or while serving an Extension Ministry appointment.

■ Recommendation 3: 2025 Pre-82 Pension Past Service Rate

The Pre-82 pension provides a benefit to all eligible clergy who have served in the Virginia Conference prior to 1982. This program pays the greater of the following:

- An annual benefit equal to the Past Service Rate (PSR) times years of pre-1982 service, or
- An annuity amount based upon the participant's cash balance in his or her Defined Benefit Service Money Account

The Virginia Annual Conference establishes the PSR each year. For 2025, VUMPI recommends that the PSR be increased from \$611 to \$626.

■ Recommendation 4: 2025 CRSP/CPP/Supplemental Plan Funding Recommendations

Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP)

The 2025 CRSP Contribution from the local churches and/or salary-paying-units for each appointed eligible clergy member under episcopal appointment at that location shall be:

- For the Defined Contribution component of CRSP: Plan Compensation (base salary plus housing allowance or parsonage rate in accordance with the Internal Revenue Service), times 3%.
- For the Defined Benefit component of CRSP: Plan Compensation (base salary plus housing allowance or parsonage rate in accordance with the Internal Revenue Service, up to 135% of the Denominational Average Compensation ("DAC")) times 9%.

Local churches and salary-paying units are to make their monthly CRSP payments to VUMPI.

Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP)

The 2025 CPP contribution from the local churches and/or salary-paying-units for each appointed eligible clergy member under episcopal appointment at that location shall be:

Plan Compensation (base salary plus housing allowance or parsonage factor, up to 200% of the Denominational Average Compensation) times 4.4%.

Local churches and salary-paying units are to make their monthly CPP payments to VUMPI.

If, for any reason, CPP contributions are more than 30 days in arrears, participation in the CPP is suspended. If contributions are more than six consecutive months in arrears, participation in the CPP is terminated. For terminated participants, readmission into the CPP requires payment of seven months of contributions and submission of medical statement of good health.

Erroneously enrolled clergy who are ineligible to participate in the CPP have no right to benefits under the CPP. Eligible clergy who have not been properly enrolled in the CPP have no rights under the CPP until after proper enrollment.

■ **Recommendation 5: 2025 Housing Allowance/Exclusion**

**Resolutions Relating to Rental/Housing Allowances for Retired, Disabled,
or Former Clergypersons of the Virginia Conference**

The Virginia Conference (the “Conference”) adopts the following resolutions relating to rental/housing allowances for active, retired, terminated, or disabled clergypersons of the Conference:

WHEREAS, the religious denomination known as The United Methodist Church (the “Church”), of which this Conference is a part, has in the past functioned and continues to function through ministers of the gospel (within the meaning of Internal Revenue Code section 107) who were or are duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministers of the Church (“Clergypersons”);

WHEREAS, the practice of the Church and of this Conference was and is to provide active Clergypersons with a parsonage or a rental/housing allowance as part of their gross compensation;

WHEREAS, pensions or other amounts paid to active, retired, terminated, and disabled Clergypersons are considered to be deferred compensation and are paid to active, retired, terminated, and disabled Clergypersons in consideration of previous active service; and

WHEREAS, the Internal Revenue Service has recognized the Conference (or its predecessors) as an appropriate organization to designate a rental/housing allowance for Clergypersons who are or were members of this Conference and are eligible to receive such deferred compensation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT an amount equal to 100% of the pension, severance, or disability payments received from plans authorized under *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (the “*Discipline*”), which includes all such payments from Wespeth Benefits and Investments, during the period January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025 by each active, retired, terminated, or disabled Clergyperson who is or was a member of the Conference, or its predecessors, be and hereby is designated as a rental/housing allowance for each such Clergyperson; and

THAT the pension, severance, or disability payments to which this rental/housing allowance designation applies will be any pension, severance, or disability payments from plans, annuities, or funds authorized under the Discipline, including such payments from Wespeth and from a commercial annuity company that provides an annuity arising from benefits accrued under a Wespeth plan, annuity, or fund authorized under the Discipline, that result from any service a Clergyperson rendered to this Conference or that an active, a retired, a terminated, or a disabled Clergyperson of this Conference rendered to any local church, annual conference of the Church, general agency of the Church, other institution of the Church, former denomination that is now a part of the Church, or any other employer that employed the Clergyperson to perform services related to the ministry of the Church, or its predecessors, and that elected to make contributions to, or accrue a benefit under, such a plan, annuity, or fund for such an active, retired, terminated, or disabled Clergyperson’s pension, severance, or disability plan benefit as part of his or her gross compensation.

NOTE: The rental/housing allowance that may be excluded from a Clergyperson’s gross income in any year for federal (and, in most cases, state) income tax purposes is limited under Internal Revenue Code section 107(2), and regulations thereunder, to the least of: (a) the amount of the rental/housing allowance designated by the Clergyperson’s employer or other appropriate body of the Church (such as this Conference in the foregoing resolutions) for such year; (b) the amount actually expended by the Clergyperson to rent or provide a home in such year; or (c) the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and appurtenances (such as a garage), plus the cost of utilities in such year. Each clergyperson or former clergyperson is urged to consult with his or her own tax advisor to determine what deferred compensation is eligible to be claimed as a housing allowance exclusion.

– Stacey Anthony, Chair

COMMON TABLE FOR CHURCH VITALITY

As the Common Table for Church Vitality continues to live out its mission “to resource mission and ministry to fulfill the conference mission and vision” and to partner with the Directors of Connectional Ministries in implementing the vision of the annual conference, the team continues to adapt to the changing landscape of church leadership.

Beginning in January 2024, Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson invited members of the Common Table, the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry, and additional conference staff to meet with the Extended Cabinet monthly for the spring. These leaders have held focused conversations about the values of the annual conference, and new ways to enhance collaboration and coordination across departments and agencies within the conference.

For 2024, the Common Table has awarded \$72,500 in special and sustaining grants to support local churches in ministry in their communities, and \$131,000 in benevolence grants to support ministry partners beyond the local church level. The Grants Committee will anticipate coordinating their efforts with a larger initiative in the Annual Conference to simplify grant applications and ensure funding is available most readily for efforts that make large scale impact in communities around the Virginia Annual Conference.

As the annual conference has shifted to professional human resource management, the Common Table has recognized the need to rethink the role of its Personnel Committee. The Personnel Committee will continue to provide support and encouragement for staff, and will take part in the hiring of new staff, without additional responsibility related to human resource management.

The Connectional Ministries staff continues to provide support for local churches and their ministries as we live into a culture of innovation. The offices of Missional Engagement and Discipleship and Congregational Vitality continue to connect with local churches as they seek new ways of serving the Kingdom by strengthening local church ministry. Additionally, we are looking forward to working alongside the Conference Commission on Religion and Race to imagine a new office in the Annual Conference around Intersectional Justice. The Common Table is grateful for the dedication, faithfulness, creativity, and nimbleness of the Connectional Ministries staff.

Moving into the 2024-25 appointment year, the Common Table for Church Vitality will be in a space of continued discernment around the role this team is called to play in concert with other leadership entities in the Annual Conference. This is underway in an effort to ensure that local churches are served most effectively and that the Annual Conference is as collaborative in its resourcing work as possible.

The following reports, from page 58 to page 76, fall under the umbrella of the Common Table for Church Vitality.

BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY

The VA Conference Board has been organized following the issue areas developed by the UM Council of Bishops in their Letter to the Church (2009.) At that time in a document called “**Hope and Action**”, the Bishops identified 3 intertwined crises facing the world: 1. Proliferation of Violence and Weapons of Violence; 2. Pollution threatening Creation itself, and 3. Persistent Poverty and Discrimination facing people around the world. The Virginia Conference Board of Church and Society studied the Bishops’ letter, and is using this structure to organize and implement here in Virginia.

We partner with the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) as it celebrates the 100th anniversary of the United Methodist Building on Capitol Hill in Washington DC. Two of our board members serve on the General Board. Our Co-chairs and Peace with Justice Coordinator meet regularly with staff of the GBCS, also.

Another partner of the Conference Board is United Women in Faith (Formerly United Methodist Women.) We join them in leading the annual United Methodist Day at the General Assembly to educate both our members and the elected members of the General Assembly.

We anticipate many changes in Social Principles after the upcoming General Conference in Charlotte NC. We are organizing our luncheon at the Annual Conference this year to be a report on the changes in Church and Society policies determined at the General Conference. We are inviting Virginia delegates serving on the relevant General Conference committees to be our luncheon speakers.

Please read carefully the following brief reports from our committees. We appreciate their work and that of the Staff who assist us- the Rev. JoAnne Batteiger and Rev. Amanda Garber.

*– Jaydee Hanson, Lay Co-Chair, Ellen Comstock, Clergy Co-chair,
Amanda Lynn Holmes, Vice Chair, and Suzanne Shrader, Secretary*

Peace & Non-Violence (P&NV) Committee | Kenn Speicher, Chair

Our faith calls us to model our lives on the Prince of Peace. The P&NV team supports initiatives and equips congregations to work for peace and end violence in our communities, country, and world. Following the Book of Discipline, we have selected the following priorities for our activities: Gun Violence Prevention, Refugee & Immigrant Response, and Peace in Israel and Palestine. Among our activities this year, we engaged United Methodists across the Conference to help end gun violence and worked with the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy to support the common sense gun safety legislation introduced in the General Assembly. P&NV also took on the mission of the Refugee Response Team, supporting a Veterans Day fundraising campaign for FAMIL, which provides prosthetics for financially struggling Afghan allies in Virginia, and advocated for legislation to provide a licensing pathway for qualified refugee doctors to practice medicine in Virginia.

Goals for the year ahead: P&NV will continue to advocate for gun violence prevention (GVP) legislation, connect congregations with faith-based and other GVP resources and information, and organize a conference-wide GVP training event in conjunction with the UMC General Board of Church & Society.

Virginia United Methodists are encouraged to join our GVP Work Group. Following the Bible’s call to welcome the stranger, P&NV will share information and resources with congregations about forced migrants: how to welcome and assist them in finding better lives and becoming contributing members of their new communities. There are many opportunities for sponsoring refugee families and volunteering to assist with resettlement.

P&NV will also support peace and humanitarian efforts in Palestine-Israel and Ukraine. While we agree that those guilty of war crimes and atrocities be brought to justice, we encourage our congregations to learn about and support efforts to bring food and other humanitarian aid to civilians trapped in the conflict.

Finally, we will update the P&NV section of the Conference website to reflect our priorities and share resources and information with congregations. For information, please contact P&NV Chair, Kenn Speicher.

Peace With Justice Special Sunday and Grant Program

Our Social Principles call us to love our enemies, seek justice, and serve as reconcilers of conflict. This is why United Methodists celebrate Peace with Justice Sunday with a special offering on the First Sunday after Pentecost. 50 % of the received offering supports programs and ministries to educate, equip and mobilize networks to work for peace, resolve conflicts, and end violence in our Conference and 50% supports ministries through the General Board of Church and Society.

Grants. Congregations, conferences, and other UMC groups can apply for both Virginia Annual Conference and General Board of Church and Society Peace With Justice grants. Typical grant awards have supported: 1) a community experience event in the West Ohio Conference to improve services and support for people reentering society from incarceration, 2) expenses for a Susquehanna Conference group receiving gun violence prevention advocacy training with GBCS in Washington, DC, 3) meeting urgent needs of newly arriving refugee families in the Virginia Conference, and 4) Community Legal Clinics for low-income immigrants through Justice for Our Neighbors in the North and Central Texas Conferences. For information, please contact VAUMC Peace With Justice Coordinator, Kenn Speicher.

Creation Justice Committee | Brian Christoffersen, Chair

The Conference Creation Justice team is excited about the many opportunities God has provided for us to celebrate, educate, and advocate the beauty and integrity of all of God's creation over this past year.

In 2023, at Annual Conference, we awarded the Green Church Awards and Sustaining Green Church Awards to five congregations. We hosted the Church and Society Luncheon at Annual Conference (Roanoke) focusing on climate and racial justice. Additionally a prayer walk was held near the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) We founded the Northern Virginia District Green Team and reached out to other Districts to help establish district teams. We have continued the work assigned to us by the Annual Conference to develop green churches across the Conference and we are working to develop Green Teams for each District. We have also continued our assigned work on fracking and are partnering with Mt Olivet-Newport in Giles County to oppose the Mountain Valley Pipeline which is cutting through the mountains of West Virginia and Virginia to deliver fracked gas to overseas markets, ignoring the destruction being wrought here in Virginia.

The Creation Justice Committee held the first-ever webinar, From Energy Efficiency to Energy Justice to educate the Conference to demonstrate how faith communities can be part of the clean energy transition and work for climate justice from their congregations to their capitols. At this event, Faith Harris, Executive Director Virginia Interfaith Power and Light, Joshua Long, Congregational Organizer, DC. MD. NoVA Interfaith Power and Light, and Scott Peterson, Board Chair & Acting Executive Director of Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions spoke. Plans are to hold additional webinar opportunities in 2024 on topics such as: 1. Becoming an Advocate for Creation Justice 2. Greening the Conference and Your Congregation and 3. From Environmental Racism to Environmental Justice.

The Creation Justice Committee participated in listening sessions with Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson and continued conversations with Conference staff regarding hosting a Conference wide event on the intersectionality of Climate Justice and Racial Justice with Boards and Agencies who are stakeholders. The Rev. Dr. Kip Bernard Banks, Sr. framed our discussion at the November meeting. (Rev. Banks is the Senior Pastor of the East Washington Heights Baptist Church of Washington, DC; working to build up an intergenerational family of disciples who love God, love neighbors, and work to transform the community with the Gospel of Christ. He is the past General Secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Churches (the denomination founded by Martin Luther King, Jr. Rev. Banks also serves on the board of Wesley Seminary and teaches a course on environmental racism.)

We are partnering with the United Methodist Creation Justice Network to have a presence at the General Conference in Charlotte, NC. with VA delegates and volunteers.

Poverty and Human Rights Committee | Rev. Daniel Wray, Chair

The work of the Poverty and Human Rights Committee can be seen as a large umbrella with many different needs that fall under its purview. These needs include work on poverty throughout our commonwealth as well as issues of discrimination of all sorts. Guided by our United Methodist Social Principles we seek to address these needs through equipping laity and clergy with education, resources, and advocacy.

The 2024 focus of our committee is the housing crisis in Virginia. This includes both affordable housing and homelessness. (The statistics in Virginia are staggering. On any given night 6000 people go homeless in our commonwealth. It takes 2.1 people working at minimum wage to afford the average priced one-bedroom apartment in Virginia.) While our work is in its infancy, our committee is gathering resources, educational material, and opportunities for advocacy to better equip the Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and its local churches to respond to the growing crisis. We participated in the 2024 United Methodist Day at the General Assembly and met with our Commonwealth Delegates and Senators to advocate for solutions to housing problems in Virginia.

THE CHURCH DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The Church Development Team (CDT) continues in its mission to fulfill the All Things New vision of the Virginia Annual Conference. Using Conference resources, CDT provides grants, guidance, and accountability to new faith communities and supports leadership opportunities that disciple more people, more young people, and more diverse people for Jesus Christ in Virginia United Methodism.

During the Annual Conference of 2008 members voted to begin 250 new faith communities in 30 years. While we are not on track to establish 250 new faith communities by 2036, to date we have begun 59. Of these, 76 percent are still open. This is above the overall denominational average. Additionally, 25 of these are ethnic new faith communities that have a robust record of vitality and growth in the Virginia Conference, and our three newest faith communities aim to be multicultural.

CDT is supporting Crossroads (NV), and Good Shepherd (TN) with Leadership Grants. CDT is supporting St. Andrews Korean Congregation (TN) with a new faith community grant. Crossroads will be establishing a staff position to help their congregation engage in service opportunities in their community, and create a curriculum to engage those in service in discipleship. We look forward to learning from their experience. Good Shepherd is partnering with Anthem and Open Table in providing community and a living environment for young adults aging out of foster care.

This year CDT is continuing to embrace Ministry Incubators as a way to foster innovation in our conference. We will be partnering with Ministry Incubators to journey year-long with churches through innovative projects.

Rev. Michelle Matthews undertook a huge project of interviewing and compiling a Lessons Learned from church plants that have been a part of All Things New. A huge thank you to Michelle and others on CDT who helped interview pastors, as well as thanks to church planters and 2nd pastors for their honesty. We have already begun to implement the lessons learned and have plans to update our matrix in the coming year for both new faith communities and leadership grants.

I want to thank the talented and gifted clergy and laity who serve on CDT. Their experiences and passion for church development will continue to bear fruit in the Virginia Conference. Additionally, I want to thank our Conference staff person, Rev. Dr. Jonathan Page, Director of Connectional Ministries for Innovation and Creativity. Jonathan's abilities, passion and creative thinking serve CDT well. We are also excited that Rev. Amanda Garber, Director of Missional Engagement, brings her church planting experience to the Annual Conference staff and to the work of CDT. Finally, I want to thank all the local churches in the Conference. Apportionments paid through the sacrifices of local United Methodists provides the funding that makes great things happen with Church Development in Virginia.

—Stephanie Kimec Parker, Chair

THE BOARD OF COMMUNICATIONS

In 2023, the Board of Communications strived to find new ways to resource the churches in the Annual Conference as both the conference Communications Office and the Board work together to communicate news, information, and most importantly The Gospel. Together we continue to envision new ways church leaders can connect and communicate with their communities. Last year we partnered with T-Mobile, to offer affordable 5G Business Internet and equipment to churches around the conference. This helped many churches have internet and wireless access they may not otherwise have had access to.

We continue to work with T-Mobile and Verizon to offer expanded wireless internet access for rural churches and communicate information on how VAUMC churches can access these services. The churches across the Conference are communication hubs that convey news and information to members in the local community. Internet access helps pastors and leaders in churches receive information and pass it along, and it also gives reciprocal communication.

As a follow up to our 2023 Communications Webinar for small, rural church communications, the Board offered two webinar opportunities that focused on Digital Communications and Church Websites in February 2024. Both webinars are archived on the Virginia Conference YouTube Channel. We enjoy continuing to offer these webinar opportunities to develop a communications knowledge base around the Annual Conference. If you have ideas about future educational topics, please reach out to our Conference Communications staff.

Another area of growth we look at is a greater connection with the communication needs of our churches. The conference Communications Office sent out a survey in February 2024, to address communication needs across the Conference. The staff will use this data to identify areas for improvement and make necessary changes to the conference website and other communication channels.

The Board also continues to build out the Communications Resource page to have offers and help for local churches. You can find that page by going to <https://vaumc.org/communications/>. On that page you will see a help form where you can request information about specific communication needs for your church and information about our Conference Communications Staff and Board. You can also go to, <https://vaumc.org/communications-resources/>, for several resources to help you as well.

Know that this Board is always trying to discern ways to aid and resource the Annual Conference and churches for communication. Come by and visit the Communications display table during lunch to meet with some board members and communicators in the Conference or reach out if you have questions.

—Andrew Ware, President

BOARD OF DISCIPLESHIP

This year the Board of Discipleship has continued its work of ‘transplanting’ itself into more fertile settings so that it can best provide resources and training to local churches as they join Jesus in the making of disciples for the transformation of the world. As a part of our being transplanted, our teams continue to till the soil; the Operations Team under the skillful leadership of Susan Schall has led a workshop for the entire board on the Six Types of Working Geniuses, the Education Team is preparing coursework for this summer’s Lay Servant Academy, our Awards Team continues to seek nominees for the Denman and One Matters Awards, the Evangelist Team is working on standards for the position of what is called by the Discipline a General Evangelist, the Communications Team continues to effectively create and maintain avenues for the dissemination of information with both the BOD’s teams and our local churches through our board’s website. We have also renamed our Regional Planters Team to Regional Cultivators.

— Dr. Timothy D. Hazlett, Chair

CONFERENCE MISSIONAL MINISTRIES BOARD

General:

The Missional Ministries Board (MMB) invites local churches to be part of God's mission through our connectional system. In order to cover all dimensions of our Acts 1:8 mission, whether in the local community, beyond the community, or the global community, the MMB operates using the following three teams – Missional Discipleship and Engagement, Missional Connection, and Partnerships of Hope. The MMB endeavors to connect people called to serve with those in need.

When I'm asked if the MMB has been involved in fruitful ministry during the 2023-24 conference year, my answer is a resounding "YES"! Our local churches and districts are missionally engaged within their communities, our districts, our Virginia Conference, the Southeast Jurisdiction, and the world - all to the glory of God! Needless to say, we are in a time of some uncertainty; however, it's also a time of great opportunity - Bishop Sue has a missional heart, our Connectional Ministries staff has been reorganized, and our Missional Engagement Office is open to what lies ahead!

For the 2024-25 conference year, the MMB's near-term focus will center on the following:

- ❖ Continue to support our missional partnerships
- ❖ Continue to plan for greater district and denominational mission impact
- ❖ Continue to assess the missional needs within our communities, districts, conference, and world
- ❖ Go forth in missional ministry to the glory of God

Missional Discipleship and Engagement Team:

This team includes the following committees – Health & Welfare, Immigration Outreach, Mission Encounter, UMCOR/Disaster Response, UMVIM, and United Women in Faith (UWIF).

2023-24 conference year highlights include United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) leader training; Refugee responses; In-person and hybrid Mission Encounter offerings (spring for youth, summer for adults to include a Korean offering and children, and fall for Spanish speakers; Humanitarian relief and recovery; Early Response Team (ERT) certification training; and "Praying for & Celebrating" Ukrainian and Russian churches.

Missional Connection Team: (Advance Special List for 2024 at end of this report)

This team includes the following committees – Advance Specials & Initiatives, Conference Secretary of Global Ministries, District & Local Church Influence, and Missionary Personnel.

During the 2023-2024 conference year, the Missional Engagement Office gave thanks for the ministry of Rev. Seungsoo "RJ" Jun as he completed his time in office and moved back into the local church. The office welcomed both Rev. Jo Ann Batteiger and Rev. Amanda Miller-Garber as the Assistant Director and Director of Missional Engagement, respectively. This year has been full of listening, learning, and discerning where God is calling local churches and extension ministries within the Virginia Conference to best serve and be in relationship with their communities, as relationships are central to the work of mission. The Missional Engagement Office looks forward to being co-laborers in the vineyard with the conference to further bring God's kingdom into present reality.

Partnerships of Hope Team:

This team includes the following committees – In Mission Together, Missionary Itineration, POH Brazil, POH Cambodia, POH Haiti, POH Mozambique, POH Native American, and POH Vietnam.

During the 2023-24 conference year, Partnerships of Hope (POH), the Overseas Mission Committee of the Virginia Conference, went through a leadership transition. Rev. Seungsoo 'RJ' Jun followed the leadership of Rev. Dr. Clarence Brown to facilitate the overseas mission effort of the conference. Currently, POH continues to partner with overseas mission projects through their six team leaders and members of the MMB board.

First, the team would like to thank the support from the Virginia Conference for designating POH as one of the recipients of the Annual Conference Offering. We also want to thank the support from the churches around the conference, which established covenantal relationships with GBGM missionaries and projects. The insurmountable need requires collaborative work for all our churches to be part of the mission to reach people to the ‘end of the world’ (Acts 1:8).

For the conference to continue our effort to engage and support overseas missions, we ask you to keep the six partner countries in your prayers. We also invite you to be part of the Special Sunday for Partnerships of Hope in September as we continue to invite churches to be part of the overarching mission. If you have a mission country that requires collaborative support, please do not hesitate to contact the team members at poh@vaumc.org. We are blessed to be in partnership with the Virginia Conference. For more information, please visit www.vaumc.org/poh

Ministries and stories from the past year:

Brazil: The POH Brazil Team is in search of a leader to become a liaison between mission partners in Brazil and the Virginia Conference. Please contact Rev. Seungsoo ‘RJ’ Jun, seungsoojun@vaumc.org if you would like to nominate or serve in this position.

Cambodia: The Cambodia Team of Partnerships of Hope has continued to promote our long-standing relationship with the Methodist Church of Cambodia. Our team had a great loss this past year with the passing of Juanita Csontos. Juanita was the driving force for the Virginia Conference relationship with Cambodia as the Cambodia Team coordinator and primary liaison with the Methodist Church in Cambodia as it works to become an autonomous Methodist Conference in 2025. The next opportunity to participate in a Virginia UMVIM team to Cambodia will be in January of 2025 as part of a medical mission team. For information contact the office of Missional Engagement.

Haiti: The Virginia Conference has been in ministry with the Methodist Church of Haiti (Eglise Methodiste d’Haiti or EMH) since the mid-1970’s, partnering in many United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) church, school and clinic construction projects, supporting educational and medical programs, and providing relief in times of disaster and political turmoil.

Since Haiti was added to Partnerships of Hope in 2023, the Virginia Conference has focused on providing substantial food relief through the EMH and Food for the Poor, totaling over \$30,000, which was raised through the Annual Conference offering, local church and individual gifts. As the EMH struggles to remain in faithful ministry during a time of devastating social and political turmoil, including widespread gang violence, hunger and disease, the Virginia Conference is committed to providing spiritual and material support to our Haitian brothers and sisters, praying that peace will be restored and abundant living can become a reality.

Mozambique: The Mozambique Team with Partnerships of Hope is reforming after some dormancy. If you or your congregation would like to join in ministry with Mozambique Partnerships of Hope, please contact Joel Robinette at joelrobinette@vaumc.org.

In 2023, missionary John NDay had two priorities for the Cambine Agriculture Ministry. The first priority was for expanded irrigation for the farm. The second priority was for an egg incubator. Virginia Partnerships of Hope partnered with local congregations, the New York Annual Conference, and Oklahoma Annual Conference to give \$21,584 which made the first priority possible. John NDay has shared his appreciation and shared that the added water has made children and pastors happy at the Cambine schools as well as “happy crops and happy livestock on the farm!”

The Mozambique Team will consider the following ongoing projects: (1) agricultural ministry, (2) sewing ministries to train young and at-risk teenage women, (3) solar panels for parsonages so pastors may have electricity, (4) scholarships for students at Ricatla Seminary, Cambine Seminary, and Gondola Training Center, and (5) what ways congregations in the Virginia Annual Conference may fruitfully connect with Mozambique ministries.

Native American Ministries:

Boarding School Memorials – This initiative grew out of international gatherings hosted in person and online by Virginia Native American Ministries. Tribal elders and artisans are taking the lead in design and scope of this multi-media project. Rev. Larry Jent, VNAM Chair, met with Tuscarora, Mohawk, and Cayuga artists in December, 2023 to discuss next steps.

Generational Trauma – The Boarding School Experience is part of Native American generational trauma, resulting in

the highest rates of suicide, addiction, and violence of any ethnic group in America. We are currently planning a July event in Virginia to address these generational wounds with hope and healing. Leadership will be diverse and international.

Vietnam: The Virginia Conference celebrates the ministries of United Methodist missionaries Rev. J. Park and T. Park based in Ho Chi Minh City. They were able to be in Virginia for our Annual Conference in 2023 and to make connections with their five supporting churches and others. Their work includes support of the Vietnamese Methodist pastors in their ministries, expanding Christian Education resources and supporting the development of new faith communities.

A visioning team plans to visit Vietnam later this year, with plans to connect the conference with the Vietnam Mission Initiative and God's mission in Vietnam. If you or your congregation feels led to partner with God's mission in Vietnam, you may contact Ann Klotz at jasnc5@gmail.com or Hieu Phan at hieuphan@vaumc.org.

Advance Special List for 2024

Virginia

CHILDREN OUTREACH

Coastal Virginia District	Agape Christian Children's Community Center - #5020
Mountain View District	Henry Fork Service Center - #5008
Valley Ridge District	Kids Soar - #5004

IMMIGRATION

Northern Virginia District	English as Second Language & Immigrant Ministries - #5036
	Just Neighbors Ministry Inc. - #803002
	Caretakers of God's Creation - #5016

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Coastal Virginia District	Wesley Community Service Center - #5025
Living Waters District	Hope Beyond Bars - #5040
	Journey Community Center - #5009
	Pathways - #5045
Northern Virginia District	Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church - #5043
Shenandoah River Dist.	Equipment for Caring - #5012
Three Notch'd District	Belmont Community Resource Service - #5039
	Central Virginia Mission Hub - #5047
	Heart Havens - #6442
	Highland Support Project - #5007
	Open Table - #5042
	Sherbourne UMC Food Pantry Ministry - #5011
Valley Ridge District	Embrace Community Center - #5034
Missional Engagement Office	All God's Children Camp - #5301
	Camp Rainbow Connection - #6443
	Virginia Conference Disaster Response - #5037
	Virginia Conference UMVIM - #5038
	Retired Clergy Housing Corporation - #5030

—John Meeuwissen, Chair

PARTNERSHIP REPORTS

Heart Havens

As we reflect on the remarkable 25-year journey of Heart Havens, we are filled with profound gratitude and pride. We celebrate a quarter century; this milestone is not just a measure of time but a testament to the countless lives transformed through our commitment to empowering adults with developmental disabilities to live and thrive within their communities.

Founded on the vision of creating a world where parents have peace of mind knowing their children will be well cared for and every person with a developmental disability feels valued, included, and empowered, Heart Havens has grown from a single home in Virginia Beach into a robust network of supportive communities across Virginia. Our path has been shaped by tireless efforts, steadfast support, and a shared belief in the inherent dignity and potential of those we serve.

February 2024 heralded a new chapter in our leadership. Jennifer Boyden, our esteemed CEO of 15 years, stepped down to pursue new opportunities. Rebecca Huff, with nearly 8 years of dedicated service in program and leadership roles, assumed the role of CEO, with Mary Harvey, bringing 5 years of service, stepping in as the Chief Operations Officer. This transition is built on a foundation of mutual respect, deep understanding of our mission, and a shared history of navigating challenges, including the pandemic, with resilience and dedication.

The past year showcased significant achievements, notably the opening of the Meadowbrook location in Glen Allen and the securing of over \$150,000 in grants and donations for its startup costs. Heart Havens mission grew to 8 four-bed group homes and reached a census of 29 residents. These milestones have enabled us to expand our reach, providing a nurturing environment for additional residents. Our progress reflects the generosity of our donors, volunteers, and community partners, to whom we owe our heartfelt gratitude.

Looking ahead to 2024, we are thrilled to announce the introduction of Sponsored Residential Services. This expansion of our mission offers a more personalized, family-like living experience, further supporting individuals with diverse medical and social-emotional needs. We encourage our community to explore this exciting development and consider joining us in this endeavor. For more information, please visit: <https://hearthavens.org/services/sponsored-residential-services/>

With the theme “Flourishing” guiding us into the new year, we are inspired to pursue greater growth, innovation, and community engagement. We are embarking on a strategic planning process with our Board and stakeholders as we plan for continued strategic growth. Your continued support is essential to our mission. Whether through financial contributions, volunteering, or advocacy, your involvement is pivotal in empowering individuals to lead lives of joy, dignity, and belonging.

In closing, I extend my deepest appreciation for your role in our shared journey. Together, we are setting the stage for an even more impactful future. As members of a compassionate and faith-driven community, we invite you to continue your advocacy and support for Heart Havens and the individuals we serve.

—Rebecca Huff, CEO

Pinnacle Living

Records show that leadership of the Virginia Annual Conference of The Methodist Church became interested in a “home for the aging” in the 1930s. Districts that had been part of the former Baltimore Conference had maintained a relationship with a Methodist home in Maryland and pointed out the need in Virginia. A special committee was appointed, including the Executive Committee of the Conference Board of Hospitals and Homes, to study the matter. The committee submitted its report to the 1944 Annual Conference meeting in Lynchburg, asking that Bishop William Walter Peele appoint a committee with authority to incorporate a board for the “Home for the Aged” and to seek out gifts, bequests, and offerings to support this mission.

Eighty years have passed since that Annual Conference vote. No one could have imagined at that time what senior living would be like today. Pinnacle Living continues this long-standing Wesleyan based tradition of *Enriching Life's Journey* for seniors by the provision of housing, healthcare, and financial security at four communities in Virginia: Hermitage Richmond, Hermitage Roanoke, Cedarfield and WindsorMeade. A keystone of our service is the Pathways to Wellness Program that focuses on ten domains of healthy living including a healthy body, creative expression, intellectual growth, and spirituality. Along with four senior living communities, Pinnacle Living manages the separate faith-based not-for-

profit provider — Retired Clergy Housing Corporation — which provides independent housing for clergy with residential needs and partners with a faith-based provider for home-health and home-care services through Affirmation Home Health.

Pinnacle Living remains committed to honoring our heritage and building upon our strong foundation as we create new opportunities for adults to age faithfully and well. A few of our significant accomplishments during the past year include:

- ❖ More than 360 volunteers gave over 11, 500 hours of service to engage with residents, community outreach, and organizational support. The number of volunteers and their gifts of time continue to rebound following the pandemic. If you and/or your church would be interested in connecting with one of our communities, you can find contact information for Volunteer Coordinators on the Pinnacle Living website at <https://www.pinnacleliving.org/volunteer-coordinators>.
- ❖ Residents, community volunteers, and team members in partnership with 130 local organizations continued to do amazing work which impacted the broader community. From connections with local programs serving those who are homeless to reading programs for elementary school students, from being clinical training sites for certified nurse aide educational programs to packing backpacks for summer food programs, our residents and team members positively touched citizens of all ages and backgrounds in their localities.
- ❖ Pinnacle Living communities offered supervised internships, onsite training, and career exploration opportunities to 214 students last year, making a tremendous impact on the future workforce needed for aging services.
- ❖ Our Richmond communities – Cedarfield and Hermitage Richmond – along with the Pinnacle Living office were recognized for the seventh year in a row as one of the Top Workplaces in the large size company category in the Metro Richmond Region. The Richmond area program is sponsored by the *Richmond Times Dispatch*.
- ❖ WindsorMeade was named a top workplace in the midsize company category for the second year through the *Hampton Roads Inside Business* Top Workplaces initiative.
- ❖ Efforts continue to enhance support for those living with Alzheimer's and other dementias saw 233 new Dementia Friends made in Virginia and nine new Dementia Friends Champions trained.

A primary commitment to Pinnacle Living residents is the Samaritan Program. This program offers support to those Pinnacle Living residents who have been blessed with longevity and have outlived their financial resources. We extend our deepest appreciation to all local churches that included the Samaritan Program in your second mile giving. Each year we recognize the Virginia Conference top ten giving churches as *Samaritan Award Churches*. For Fiscal Year 2023, we are pleased to acknowledge the following congregations.

- ❖ Trinity UMC, Richmond, Three Notch'd District
- ❖ Reveille UMC, Three Notch'd District
- ❖ Rocky Mount UMC, Mountain View District
- ❖ New Hope UMC, Mission Rivers District
- ❖ Fairfax, Northern Virginia District
- ❖ Saint Mark's UMC, Daleville, Valley Ridge District
- ❖ Christ UMC, Newport News, Mission Rivers District
- ❖ Walker Chapel UMC, Northern Virginia District
- ❖ Gum Spring, Three Notch'd District
- ❖ Trinity, Lexington, Valley Ridge

Pinnacle Living is proud to be carrying on the tradition of advocacy and support for older adults that the Methodists of Virginia began discussing at Annual Conferences in the 1930s. We ask for your continued advocacy for the needs of older adults in your local community and across the Commonwealth. Together, as relationship partners in the mission outreach of the Virginia Conference, we can enhance health, wellness, and faithful aging for all people as we strive for a culture in

which age does not define the person. Thank you for your continued trust, hard work, prayer, and generosity in support of the work of Pinnacle Living.

– Christopher P. Henderson, President and CEO
– Martha E. Stokes, Director of Church and Community Relations
– Charles W. Wickham, Director of Donor Development

2024 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PINNACLE LIVING

We recognize these recommendations are the responsibility of the Missional Ministries Board and are traditionally included as part of the Common Table report and Council on Finance and Administration report. However, we do not want them to be forgotten.

1. The Relationship Agreement between the Virginia Annual Conference and Pinnacle Living be continued.
2. The period between Mother's Day and Father's Day be designated in support of the Pinnacle Living Samaritan Program, and each church promote an offering during this time dedicated to this purpose.

UMFS - United Methodist Family Services of Virginia

In 2023, UMFS continued to live out our mission as unwavering champions for high-risk children and families, collaborating with communities to help them reach their full potential. We serve children in foster care and children struggling with mental health and behavioral challenges through foster and adoption programs, specialized education schools, and residential mental health treatment programs. In 2023 we served 2,616 children and teens. We strive to support the entire family, helping us touch the lives of 9,160 high-risk children and family members in 113 communities across Virginia.

Since our founding in 1900, the churches of the Virginia Conference have partnered with us as advocates for high-risk children and families. Churches help recruit and support foster and adoptive families, serve as volunteers in UMFS programs, provide much-needed financial support, and donate countless gifts-in-kind. Church partners and the UMFS Auxiliary are critical resources for the children and families at UMFS.

In 2023, we celebrated the completion of the second phase of the UMFS Be a Champion capital campaign with the official opening of the new addition to the UMFS Charterhouse School building. The addition includes 10 new classrooms, a recreational therapy room, a cafeteria and a kitchen for our new dining program. We are grateful for the generous support of everyone who helped make this possible.

The past year we have continued to form deeper partnerships with grassroots organizations who share our mission of empowering high-risk children and families to achieve a brighter future. Our Generosity Partners include these organizations: Shalom Farms, Happily Natural Day, UMA, VAISEF, Voices for Virginia's Children, Virginia Kids Belong, Fit4Kids, Caring Closet and Worthdays. These organizations can operate rent-free, while reaching more individuals and extending their mission. There is power and strength in partnership.

We are grateful for the support of the Virginia Conference and for your partnership with us as unwavering champions for high-risk children and families. We ask for your continued advocacy for high-risk children, youth, and families. Together, we can create a world where caring, opportunity and generosity are passed on from generation to generation, empowering all children to contribute to society as engaged citizens.

– Nancy Toscano, President and CEO

Wesley Housing

Wesley Housing's (WH) vision is that everyone in the greater Washington, DC region has a safe, quality, affordable home, serving as a foundation to thrive, and has a place of value in the community. This guides our mission of building up the lives of our most vulnerable community members by creating and operating healthy, inclusive, stable, affordable housing communities and providing supportive resident services. For 50 years, we have served over 25,000 residents in the Washington, D.C. met-

ropolitan area. We currently manage 29 properties serving 3,800+ residents in Alexandria, Arlington, Manassas, Falls Church, Fairfax County, Winchester, and the District. We also manage 13 Community Resource/Support Service Centers that offer a full range of crucially needed programs and services to support children, adults, older adults, those with chronic disease, and those with disabilities to regain their dignity and renew their lives.

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT

Wesley Housing continued to move the needle in 202 by pushing forward critical affordable housing throughout the region. We are on track to bring over 700 new units of affordable housing to the DC metro region over the next four years, including new construction, acquisitions, and renovations. Recent pipeline updates include:

- ❖ WH, in partnership with **First Christian Church of Falls Church** plans to construct 95 affordable units of independent senior living on the land immediately adjacent to the Church (6165 Leesburg Pike). The community, recently named Kindred Crossing, received a \$9.7M loan from the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) in February 2024, providing essential leverage for a competitive 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) application in March.
- ❖ In November 2023, **Melwood**, a leading employer, advocate, and preferred provider of services for people with disabilities, announced that Wesley Housing will be its development partner for a new multi-functional building at 750 23rd Street South in Arlington. The project will convert one of Melwood's commercial buildings into affordable and inclusive housing, responding to a critical need in Arlington County. In addition to creating up to 104 units of affordable housing, Melwood will retain a portion of the space to continue offering on-site programs and services, including job skills training, for people with disabilities.
- ❖ **1 Hawaii** (70 units, Washington, DC [Ward 5]) is expected to close on financing in Summer 2024 with redevelopment of the site to commence shortly thereafter.
- ❖ **Beacon Landing**, a 54-unit permanent supportive housing (PSH) community in partnership with The Lamb Center, was awarded \$1.26M in low-income housing tax credits (LIHTC) from Virginia Housing in July 2023. The community for previously homeless individuals expects to break ground in late 2024.
- ❖ Following the acquisition of **Holmead Apartments** (100 units in Washington, DC [Ward 1]) in January 2023, we conducted "life and safety" upgrades to the property and continue advancing plans for a substantial rehabilitation within the next few years.
- ❖ Pre-development activities continue on **ParcView II** (200+ new units, Alexandria, VA).
- ❖ Acquisition activities continue on **Virginia Village** (Falls Church, VA), a 20-building, approximately 3.7-acre community.

RESIDENT SERVICES

- ❖ **Housing Stability Initiative:** With some of the most cost-burdened renters in the country living in our area, our resident services team provides 3,800 of them with award-winning supportive services. In 2023, our resident services team received 246 eviction prevention referrals from residents needing assistance with rent payments. Through their work, 99% of high priority referrals maintained their housing, 152 residents participated in employment coaching, 225 residents participated in health and wellness offerings, 957 residents received material assistance (i.e. food/hygiene items), and 234 kids and teens participated in youth programs. In addition, through our annual *Supplies for Success* program, more than 350 K-12 students received new backpacks filled with supplies and 600 residents received holiday assistance through our *Holiday Help* program.

OPERATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE

- ❖ In November 2023, Wesley Housing's Coppermine Place II received National Affordable Housing Management Association's (NAHMA) Communities of Quality® recognition. The community met NAHMA's high standards in physical maintenance, financial management, programs and services, employee credentials, endorsements, and several other categories.
- ❖ Wesley Housing will celebrate its 50th anniversary July-December 2024.

RESOLUTIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS: None

—Kamilah McAfee, President/CEO

THE BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAMPUS MINISTRY (BHECM)

It has been another exciting and encouraging year for campus ministry and higher education in the Virginia Conference. We recognize the incredible work of our campus ministers, chaplains, student leaders, and local boards, and we continue to celebrate their resilience as we lean into a new and joyful season of United Methodism!

Last year, I shared how every local church is responsible for putting forward names of high school graduates to our campus ministries and schools. We cannot stress enough how important it is for these connections to take place. We hope that students will find formative experiences that embody our theological values, a culture of inclusivity, and a place of discernment and calling.

Through the diligent efforts of our campus ministers, our Board has been adapting and reshaping our evaluative processes to measure leadership and fruitfulness. Our new process simplifies many of the previous reporting systems while integrating more comprehensive storytelling and narrative reflection. We hope that this new model will pair well with the reflection of values identified by our campus ministers: Welcome and Hospitality (Inclusion); Service (Mission), including both works of compassion and justice; Student Leadership Development; Discipleship (Spiritual Growth including worship).

The campus ministers have participated in gatherings with Bishop Sue and other extension clergy for times of conversation and spiritual renewal. We appreciate Bishop Sue's advocacy for campus ministry and look forward to ways we can highlight ministries in future annual conference sessions. Additionally, our campus ministers have developed a strategic and collaborative plan to address the pastoral response necessary in incidents of tragedy, crisis, or violence on campus.

Additionally, we are grateful to the Annual Conference and the Council on Finance and Administration for budgeting funds for fundraising support. Our campus ministers and local board leadership teams have been meeting with a professional fundraiser to gain insights into best practices around capital campaigns, development, and strategies to support our Wesley Foundation buildings in their journey toward self-sustainability.

In the coming year, our Board plans to vision how we might improve upon our relationships with our United Methodist institutions beyond financial support. We want to ensure accountability with these relationship partners around staffing, pre-ministerial programs, so that these institutions best reflect the values and vision of the Virginia Annual Conference and the United Methodist Church.

We remain grateful for the prayers, leadership, and support of Dwayne Stinson and Becky Tate in the Connectional Ministries office as we celebrate the Virginia Conference's commitment and value of campus and collegiate ministry!

— Ryan LaRock, Board Chair

CAMPUS MINISTRY ASSOCIATION

This year, we are trying a new thing: sharing all of the information for campus ministries throughout the Virginia Conference in a single report. There is no way to completely share the fantastic work done by the student leaders, the board members, and the campus ministers in our Conference. The thirteen campus ministries are on the campuses of Longwood, Hampden-Sydney College, Virginia State, James Madison, Eastern Mennonite, Bridgewater, Community Colleges of Southwestern Virginia, Old Dominion, George Mason, NoVA Community Colleges, Christopher Newport, William and Mary, Norfolk State, Virginia Tech, University of Virginia, Mary Washington, and Virginia Commonwealth Universities. This report does not include reports from the chaplains of our United Methodist-related schools, but we are also connected and supportive of their incredible ministries.

Throughout the year, we have been active in spiritually supporting students, feeding the hungry, serving our campuses and the community, helping students with mental health crises, collaborating to call for social holiness, supporting student and faculty health, and influencing policies on our campuses to be more just. Our campus ministries support student leaders, give them opportunities to use their gifts, and help them remember God's love for them. Your generosity enables all these things to happen daily in our campus ministries.

Here is some data that only shows the immense impact you have had on the lives of our students.

- ❖ Nearly 500 unique students are involved in weekly spiritual growth opportunities. This includes worship, Bible studies, small groups, and more.
- ❖ Over 3300 unique students were recipients of our feeding ministries each semester.
- ❖ 129 student leaders, sharing their gifts and talents, leading groups, and serving others.
- ❖ 20 students exploring ordained ministry

These numbers only tell a part of the story, as big things are happening all over Virginia. Here are a few of those stories:

We are creatively meeting the needs of students. **Norfolk State** expanded its food ministry and is working to get ecumenical grants to expand the services. **Arise at George Mason** gives out approximately 100 meals weekly for food-insecure students. **Wesley at William and Mary** started a food ministry during spring break when students are in the dorms, but dining services are closed. This spring break, student leaders and staff have fed over 75 students multiple times a day. **Wesley ODU** is building community by providing weekly free lunches to assist our commuter students in having a healthy meal and are working with the university to partner in addressing food insecurity on campus. **Rise at JMU** has started and expanded its “Struggle Bus” ministry, which incorporates intentional play and mental health resources for students in need.

We prioritize student leadership. At **VCU**, the **Pace Center** returned its week-long Student Leadership Institute, highlighting some relation-based missions in the area. **Wesley at Virginia Tech** has seen people with no church background become leaders in the community and find the transformative power of Jesus Christ. **CCC at Mary Washington University**, **UCM at CNU**, and **Wesley at VSU** are also seeing new students and experiencing growth!

We build community partnerships. **Wesley at UVA** has taken the lead in creating and cultivating interfaith relationships that have included service projects and hosting an Iftar dinner for the Muslim students on campus. **Wesley at Farmville** is also building relationships and doing interdenominational work. Every 3rd Saturday of the month, **F.L.O.W., the campus ministry at Virginia State University**, partners with other student organizations to pack food boxes that provide meals for over 4,500 families in the Petersburg community. **Community College Ministries in SW Virginia** has formed a partnership with the Center for Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation at Duke University. The program offers a model for changing the narrative of race and offers new ways of thinking and relating in a diverse community.

It is also important to note that all of us are welcoming and valuing of all students. Many of our groups are the only LGBTQ+-affirming Christian ministries on our campuses. Some of us are the only campus ministries recognizing and celebrating women’s full ordination in the church at our universities.

There are a few ways you, the Virginia Annual Conference leaders, are supporting our denomination’s present and future leaders. Thank you, and if you would like to learn more about any of our ministries, stop by our table. We are so thankful for all you do and your massive impact on our college students. Your generosity brings health and wellness to students and shares the transformative love of Jesus Christ on our campuses.

BOARD OF LAITY

The Board of Laity entered into a time of onboarding in November 2020 after the election of a new Conference Lay Leader. To enter fully into our work together, the Board of Laity developed a covenant to guide our efforts. We begin each board meeting by reviewing our commitments to one another to:

- ❖ pray for one another and for the work of the annual conference,
- ❖ prepare for meetings,
- ❖ listen openly and deeply,
- ❖ speak the truth in love as we share information and ideas openly and frankly, and
- ❖ communicate faithfully with each other and the laity of the Virginia Annual Conference.

It is our prayer that the laity of the Virginia Conference have found us to be faithful to this covenant as we have collaborated in ministry together.

One of the goals set from the onboarding was greater communication with the Bishop. This led to the establishment

of the Lay Council, composed of the District Lay Leaders and Associates, which has met quarterly with the Bishop since January 2021. The meetings have taken new direction with Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson. Meeting monthly from last September through January, the Lay Council read and discussed Faith Working Through Love: A Resource for United Methodist Teaching. Written by the denominational Committee on Faith and Order, Faith Working Through Love invites us to revisit and reclaim essential Christian beliefs and practices as United Methodist. The teaching resource is a prototype study based upon a report from the denominational Committee on Faith and Order to the 2024 General Conference.

As we entered the last six months of our traditional quadrennial cycle, evaluative work including discernment of leadership was a priority. In February, the Board of Laity participated in an onboarding follow-up. While there is still much work to be done, the board noted a growing understanding of the call of lay ministry within our conference. Discernment will continue as to how the board can have the greatest impact with the local church as we focus on our roots as a lay movement of renewal and revival in the church. Much of our conversation over the next year will center on hearing from and collaborating with the Youth and Young Adult Councils as they are being reformed and revitalized. A task group continues to evaluate the role and work of the District Lay Leader as we seek to meet emerging needs. We continue to pursue greater collaboration with other conference boards and district committees so that we can best utilize the gifts and talents of our leaders serving beyond the local church. One of our Associate District Lay Leaders summarized the work ahead for the Board of Laity well at our spring meeting.

- ❖ We are called to ACCEPT and acknowledge the realities before us.
- ❖ We must RESET – returning to our United Methodist roots and focusing on what God is doing in our lives and in our churches today.
- ❖ We must see ourselves as equipped by the Holy Spirit to TRANSFORM individual lives, our local churches, our communities, and the world.

The evaluative work of the board this year also included discernment of a recommendation for the role of the Conference Lay Leader for the next four-year quadrennial term. The recommendation will be offered during the Annual Conference session. Great appreciation is due to Keith Jordan, Karen McElfish, Bill and Linda Stead, Susan White, and Rachel Zahradka for serving on the Nominating Committee.

To support laity as we discern our calls to ministry and continue growing in our knowledge and skills, The United Methodist Church has established three categories for laypersons in the area of lay servant ministries to develop, prepare, and engage principled Christian leaders: Certified Lay Servant, Certified Lay Speaker, and Certified Lay Minister. Certified lay servants who wish to develop their skills further may choose a track to become certified as lay speakers (those who are called specifically to pulpit supply) or as lay ministers (those who are called to long-term, intentional ministry as part of a ministry team). Our Conference Lay Servant Ministry (LSM) team under the direction of Richard Spiers, Conference Director of LSM, coordinates these ministry opportunities. Highlights of this conference year include:

- ❖ Two conference-wide Lay Servant Academy sessions held in August and February, offering ten full courses (10-hour courses) and four short courses (2- hours courses). A total of 310 participants took part in the learning sessions. Several districts have held online and in-person training with over 350 individuals participating.
- ❖ In August 2022, Rev. Joanna Dietz and Jenn Robinson-O'Brien started the first module of Certified Lay Minister (CLM) training specifically for the Virginia Conference. There are currently four cohorts of students in the process of completing the four required training modules. It is anticipated that there will be ten graduates from Cohort 4 recognized at this Annual Conference session. This movement takes us back to our Wesleyan roots. As with lay ministry in early Methodism, the certified lay minister expresses their gifts as evidence of God's grace.
- ❖ Richard Spiers, Joanna Dietz, and Jenn Robinson-O'Brien attended the national level conference of Certified Lay Ministers. Jenn and Richard attended the meeting of Annual Conference Directors of Lay Servant Ministries (AC-DLSM). These two conferences provided valuable learning and tools.

The Virginia Conference remains committed to being in an ongoing, fruitful relationship with Scouting Ministries. Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson and Assistant to the Bishop, Steve Summers, have had the blessing of meeting with several scouting executives in the last year to listen to one another and formulate plans to enhance our mutual support in the years to come.

On behalf of the Board of Laity, thank you for the many and varied ways you live out your baptismal vows, equipped by the Holy Spirit in the work of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world

—Martha E. Stokes, Conference Lay Leader

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

H-E-L-L-O Virginia Conference

from United Women in Faith. We are strong, bold, accomplished, savvy,

God-loving women who care about and for women, children, and youth near and far. We expose our hearts so that others can thrive. We accomplish much and yet not enough for the world is aching. We see our sisters and the plights they live every day, and we weep right along with Jesus. We pray, inspire, influence, and impact for we know that we are called to serve. We asked for purpose and were given opportunities beyond our imagining.

Facing the same changes as all United Methodists, our numbers are reduced, but our hearts are warm. We encourage the joining of all women to know God, experience freedom, develop fellowship, and expand mission through the Spiritual Life Retreat, a day at Ferrum College, which our predecessors helped start, and we continue to support, Mission Encounter, Young Women's Retreat, and the 51st Annual Meeting. The Southeastern Jurisdiction United Women in Faith Conference in April offers the opportunity to not only meet and greet but learn and share what and with our Jurisdictional sisters.

Ours is an exposure, a rethinking, and a forward-thinking gift. It is an experience like no other where we can lift hands and hearts through the love of God.

We practice faith, hope, and love. We are United Women in Faith! Thanks be to God!

—Nancy Walsh, President

UNITED METHODIST MEN

I would like to thank all of the Men of the VAC UMM for the service provided me during these past four (4) years. My term as Conference President will come to an end at the conclusion of this Annual Conference.

This year, I have had the opportunity of attending the SEJ BMCR Conference in Charlotte, NC; The SEJ UMM Conference for Conference Presidents in Durham, NC and finally, I attended the meeting for the National Association of Conference Presidents along with the Vice President for Spiritual Growth, David Collins in Nashville, TN. We learned in all three Conferences that Cooperative Involvement is required if we are to move forward as a United Methodist Church.

We thank Bishop Sue for allowing us to continue with our Healing Circles in the Virginia Conference. We thank DS. Rev. Dr. Cecelia Brookes for having the foresight for us to bring the First Racial Healing Circle to the Coastal VA District; and (Pastors) Tom Mercer of St. Paul's UMC in Chesapeake, VA and Scott Rimer of Community of UMC in VA Beach for allowing the VAC UMM to bring this program to their Churches and congregations. The Past President of SEJ UMM, Andrew Kissell and myself had only one goal and that was to begin discussions on RACISM.

The Program of a Racial Healing Circle is the first step in having meaningful discussions on a very difficult subject. Our Healing Circle met twice a month for six (6) months. The Healing Circle led to Discernment. I session open with Prayer and our Touchstones. This led us to Concernment. We were Black, White, Latino, and Native American all in one space. We were mixed ethnic married couples and folk from various walks of life all talking to each other and listening to the pain of fears of each other. This led to Understanding. Finally, Understanding led to relationship Building and discipleship. We have new Friends that would like to take this concept on the road. I do not know of any Greater measure of success that could be achieved.

We, the VAC UMM, have survived the Change from 16 to 8 Districts and we have begun to move forward with our Goal of Making Disciples for Jesus Christ. We have had various pastors from the different Districts to reach out to us (VAC UMM) in an attempt to reinvigorate their UMM. We need to get more of our District leadership involved. We would like to encourage the District Superintendents to get more of the Pastors to understand that the need for the Growth of the UMM fellowships in the local Church.

The VAC UMM is setting new Goals and Objectives for 2024 – 2026. It is our Desires and Plans to build our Districts and local Fellowships with the following Objectives:

- ❖ Expanding outreach) - Improved race relations and understanding in cooperative settings to achieve mutually beneficial objectives.
- ❖ Wesleyan Groups (AME; AMEZ; CME, etc.; and Campus Ministries (Younger Groups)
- ❖ Encourage Individual Spiritual Development (. i.e., Software geared to the younger Men and the Church)
- ❖ Welcoming Scouting
- ❖ Support for Clergy Women
- ❖ Advocacy for Environmental Issues and Creation Care

We are suggesting these Objectives, whereby we can set Goals that will be mission oriented and give each District and Fellowship a Blueprint into a new view into Making Disciples for Jesus Christ.

I reiterate our request to collect our annual \$10 per man in the Virginia Annual Conference. We will be able to fund most if not all of the Conference Activities and Ministries and support the District UMM functions throughout the Virginia Annual Conference.

Finally, we are holding Elections this May for all positions of the VAC UMM. Nominations are being accepted by Andrew Kissell (arkissell78@gmail.com) for the positions of: President, Vice President for Spirit Growth, Vice President for Membership; Secretary; Treasurer; and Chaplain.

—Albert S Weal Jr, President

OLDER ADULT COUNCIL

Paragraph 651 of the 2016 *Book of Discipline* tells us that “each annual conference may have a conference council on older adult ministries”. Its purpose “shall be to strengthen the older adult ministries in the local churches and districts of the annual conference.”

The VAUMC Older Adult Council has met regularly throughout the 2023-2024 conference year, one time in-person at the VAUMC Center. Some of our accomplishments have included:

1. Providing resources at the Annual Conference session in June 2023.
2. Offering a class at the 2023 Licensing School.
3. Updating our website presence on the VAUMC website to include added resources and a new logo. (Please check it out.)
4. Offering leadership to and encouraging participation in The Festival of Wisdom and Grace offered annually at Lake Junaluska, NC. (This year’s event is scheduled for August 21-24).
5. Participating in lunch and a discussion with Bishop Sue during our September in-person meeting. Members of the council shared our goals and challenges and Bishop Sue shared her sense of mission and goals for the OAC.
6. Rev. Lisa Jean Hefner, new staff member for Older Adult Ministries at Discipleship Ministries, met with our council over zoom in February, listening and hearing our needs and celebrations, as well as sharing resources and ideas with us. (Resources from Rev. Hefner have been added to our web page, as well).
7. Plans for the coming year include:
 - a. Continuing to build the council to include a more diverse membership.
 - b. Seeking ways to offer support to congregations and districts.
 - c. Continuing to update website resources.
 - d. Lifting up the needs and gifts of Older Adults in our congregations and communities.

We welcome and encourage more participation in our council.

—Denise M. Childers and Louise Miller, co-chairs

COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES

The Commission on Disabilities affirms that all people, regardless of ability or disability, are of sacred worth. Through advocacy, education, and empowerment, we strive to fully include differently abled persons in the life of the church. We are working on updating our website; we have worked closely with the Just Compensation Task Force, and we would love to partner with you, too! This past year, the commission has focused on the charge conference required accessibility audit. If you have not filled out an audit, we want to encourage all churches to take the time to do so. The audit is designed to show you how to improve access to your building. While it might seem like an impossible task, I encourage you to pick one or two items on the audit that your church can improve on. It could be as simple as a greeter who opens the door and helps someone to their pew or cutting a pew to create wheelchair-accessible spaces throughout the sanctuary.

The Commission on Disability is working to implement a badge system designed by the Disabilities Ministry Committee of the United Methodist Church. Churches can earn four different badges that show how accessible they are: Honorable Mentions – these churches completed their annual accessibility audit, set goals, and held a Disability Awareness Sunday for two years. Bronze – The church is welcoming, offers basic amenities, trains ushers in disability etiquette, and offers website information on access. Silver – Church has many accessible features and offers accommodations for persons with disabilities, including hearing loss and limited vision, but some areas are not yet fully accessible. Gold – goes beyond ADA and strives to provide full accessibility, inclusion, and accommodations such as accessible chancel and automatic door openers. We hope you'll join us by completing an accessibility audit as the first step in moving towards becoming more inclusive of persons with disabilities.

While it is true one of the most significant barriers to full inclusion for persons with disabilities is our buildings, accessibility barriers are also found in our etiquette and communication with differently-abled persons. For example, when speaking with a deaf or hard-of-hearing person, be sure you have the person's attention before speaking. If the person is facing you, gently tap them on the arm or elbow and make sure the person is looking at you before you speak. If the person is not facing you, use a gentle tap on the shoulder. Always look at the person who is deaf or hard of hearing, not an interpreter who may be working with them.

In the case of a person who is blind, deaf-blind, or has vision loss, it's best to identify yourself when approaching a person and say where you are standing in relation to that person. Then there are just "common sense things," like using a natural conversational volume and ordinary tone and never touching, distracting, or offering food to a service animal unless you have permission from the owner. If you would like to know more about the commission's advocacy, programming, accessibility grants, and resources, find us on the VAUMC website or reach out to the Missional Engagement Office. Our commission members would love to connect with you!

– Timothy Joseph Barth, Chair

THE COMMISSION ON ETHNIC MINORITY CONCERNS AND ADVOCACY (CEMCA)

The Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and Advocacy (CEMCA), according to our stated mission, is called to advocate for the full and equal participation of all ethnic and racial constituents in the life and mission of the Virginia Annual Conference, to be a voice to the church for their concerns, and to guide the Conference in its fight against all forms of evil including racism.

In our meetings and ongoing work, we listen to and represent the voices of African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latinx, and Native-American Ministries. We continue to address our charge to voice the needs and concerns of ethnic clergy, laity, and local congregations, communicating them to the Conference and its leadership. We provide a forum for listening to ethnic minority concerns in our churches and our world, praying for guidance from the Holy Spirit to confront the sin of racism in the church, the nation, and the world.

The United Methodist Church in Virginia is uniquely positioned to catalyze consciousness and reconciliation, given its institutional resources and membership that crosses racial and cultural lines and includes grassroots and elites in its congregations. The Commission has prioritized improving our organization by creating steering and communications committees. We have met with Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson and are providing a voice for racial and ethnic concerns at the Common Table, the Conference Nominating Committee, and the General Conference Delegation. One priority has been to

REPORTS

increase the participation of and support for ethnic members of our conference boards and agencies, where minorities are widely underrepresented.

We continue our Annual Conference monitoring efforts in collaboration with COSROW to assess the degree to which diverse voices are heard in our sessions. As you can see from the combined reports of monitors on Thursday and Friday afternoon, few ethnic minority voices are included in our common deliberations.

BUSINESS SESSION	ETHNICITY						STATUS		GENDER		AGE			
	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native American	Pacific Islander	White	LAY	CLERGY	Male	Female	Youth (under 18)	Young Adult (18-35)	Adult (36-65)	Older Adult (65+)
Bishop	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
Sign Language Interpreters	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	0	1	1	0
Sound of Music Guy	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Laity Address	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Report of the Cabinet, Minute Questions	1	1	1	0	0	3	1	4	3	2	0	0	4	0
Discussion from floor	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Recognition of New Faith Communities	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Totals	1	1	1	0	0	10	7	5	6	6	0	1	10	0

Table 1. 2023 Annual Conference Sessions - Thursday Afternoon

BUSINESS SESSION	ETHNICITY						STATUS		GENDER		AGE			
	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native American	Pacific Islander	White	LAY	CLERGY	Male	Female	Youth (under 18)	Young Adult (18-35)	Adult (36-65)	Older Adult (65+)
Totals	2	6	1	0	0	34	22	21	26	17	6	1	31	5
Totals	2	6	1	0	0	34	22	21	26	17	6	1	31	5

Table 2. 2023 Annual Conference - Friday Afternoon

Our conference has many spiritual gifts from diverse heritages, and we are trying to share them. In addition to preparing Pentecost devotions, we have distributed Lenten devotions from a Native American perspective, crafted by the Rev.

Larry Jent: *Forty Days with Jesus: A Vision Quest*

Our constituent ministries have made significant contributions this year:

African American Ministries:

Asian-American Ministries:

Latino Ministries: The Latino Caucus, formerly known as the Latino Clergy Caucus, convened for a memorable luncheon at the Virginia Conference 2023, which was both inspiring and co-hosted with CEMCA. Rev. Larry Jent imparted deep and meaningful insights, and the spirit of unity and purpose resonated throughout our time together. The Latino Caucus continues to plan and pray together over Zoom. As a significant milestone, in the last quarter of 2023, the Latino Clergy Caucus gathered to formally vote on and adopt its new name, the Latino Caucus, reflecting our formal inclusion of laity into our leadership and membership. We're excited how God is already working through our more inclusive vision for the future."

Native American Ministries:

Boarding School Memorials

Work continues on boarding school memorials. This initiative grew out of international gatherings hosted in person and online by Virginia Native American Ministries. Tribal elders and artisans are taking the lead in the design and scope of this multi-media project. Rev. Larry Jent, VNAM Chair, met with Tuscarora, Mohawk, and Cayuga artists in December 2023 to discuss the next steps.

Generational Trauma

The Boarding School Experience is part of Native American generational trauma, resulting in the highest rates of suicide, addiction, and violence of any ethnic group in America. We are currently planning a July event in Virginia to address

these generational wounds with hope and healing. Leadership will be diverse and international.

We look forward to serving our ethnic minority communities as a listening space for ethnic and minority concerns and collaborating with the new Conference Commission on Religion and Race. We hope to share our diverse spiritual traditions with the Conference and serve local ethnic-minority, cross-racial, and cross-cultural churches, pastors, and laity.

– *Eduardo Carrillo (Clergy) and Lester Kurtz (Laity), Co-Chairs*

THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN (COSROW)

The Commission on the Status and Role of Women is committed to the work of advocacy for all women in the church, clergy and lay, at every level. We encourage the clergy and lay leadership of each local church to consider the demographics of their churches. Are women represented in official leadership roles, including Church Council, Finance, Trustees, Lay Leadership Development, and SPRC? Are women invited and welcomed to serve as scripture readers, ushers, counters, and greeters? Do small groups and Bible Studies use resources written by women? For our male colleagues, have you considered inviting female clergy or lay servants to lead worship in your churches?

COSROW also urges churches, clergy, and laity to be mindful of language used, both at annual conference and in the local church. One of our members, Allison Hickey, has put together an incredible D.Min project around the use of inclusive language and best practices – come and visit our display area to check it out and be inspired!

In 2023, several members of the Virginia Annual Conference reached out to COSROW following the Ordination Service. While we celebrate the commissioning of six women as provisional elders and deacons, we mourn that no women were ordained in this conference in this service. We encourage people in all levels of the process to consider ways to continue to encourage and empower women in the life of the church, so that we do not have another ordination service without women.

COSROW supports the work of the Annual Conference in rectifying these mistakes, including the Just Compensation task force that was created following last year's annual conference. If individuals or local churches are interested in further information surrounding best practices for supporting women in all levels of the church, or would like resource ideas, please visit our website (vaumc.org/COSROW) or Facebook page (search for 'Commission on the Status and Role of Women – VA United Methodist Conference').



THE CONFERENCE NOMINATIONS TEAM

Co Chairs:

Martha Stokes, Conference Lay Leader
Dwayne Stinson, Director of Connectional Ministries for Discipleship and Congregational Vitality
Jonathan Page, Director of Connectional Ministries for Creativity and Innovation

Monitors:

Lester Kurtz, CEMCA
Karen Robison, Commission on Disabilities
Lauren Wright, COSROW

District Representatives:

Albert Weal, Costal Virginia District
Ken Thrasher, Living Waters District
Angie Hoen, Mission Rivers District
Bonnie – Karen Byrne, Mountain View District

VACANT, Northern Virginia District
VACANT, Shenandoah River District
Scotty Doyle, Three Notch'd District
Jonathan Greer, Valley Ridge District

The goal of the Conference Nominations Team is to carefully discern over individuals who can provide leadership and diverse skills to our boards. While discerning, the Conference Nominations Team must consider the needs of the boards to ensure that boards are properly filled, and representation is taken into consideration. This year, the Nominations Team has taken a new approach to this process. In doing so, the names lifted for approval of the Annual Conference have been included in the Welcome Packet instead of the *Book of Reports*. This allowed the Nominations Team to ensure the most up to date list of names is provided to the Annual Conference.

BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY

The Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) has three core values:

1. **Whole Person:** in working with candidates and clergy, the whole person is considered, including their theological knowledge, emotional intelligence, practical skills, and cultural competency.
2. **A Changing World:** Effective ministry leadership is needed in the pulpit and far beyond it; Christ is present – and our witness is needed – in and for a rapidly changing world.
3. **Spiritual Discernment:** The Holy Spirit is at work in the BOM's practice of discernment; being prepared, being prayerful, and being healthy all help the Spirit to move among us.

Every weekday morning at 6:00 am, members of the BOM and others of the conference gather by zoom to pray for our conference, for clergy and laity, and for the world. "Simple Presence" is open to anyone who would like to join us. Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86853130886?pwd=dUxqeTN5NnpwSmhHdjNUeGpFT3FPQT09>.

The Board wants to thank all those who serve on the eight District Committees of Ministry (dCOM), extensions of the BOM's work. dCOM's interview, listen and guide all those who seek to answer God's call upon their lives for full and part time ministry. As the voice of the church and of God becomes more crowded by the sounds of the world, the dCOM work becomes more vital to our UMC mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This summer the BOM will hold a gathering/training for all dCOM's and BOM members as we continue to serve the Annual Conference.

We are grateful for those who have served so faithfully on the Board and have spent many hours meeting, reading papers, interviewing, discerning, praying and serving on dCOM's and different committees of the BOM. Your faithfulness among us has enabled God to work in mighty ways among us. On behalf of the BOM and the Conference and all the candidates served over the years, we thank those who leave us to do other ministries: Bill Bearden, Lyndsie Blakely, JaeHaeng Choi, Beth Givens, Susan Hannah, David Hindman, Darcey Johnson, Alan Layman, Mike Mayton, Gary Miller, Brandon Robbins, Jason Stanley, Christian White, Tim Ward, and Tracy Wines. We lost Mr. Willie Weigand, to cancer on February 3, 2024. We are grateful for all those who have served among us and embodied the grace, love and reign of God in our midst. We thank all the local churches and families who support our Board members and cover for them so they can do this holy work. Finally, thank you to the staff of the Center for Clergy Excellence: Rev. Jessie Colwell, Rev. Crystal Sygeel, and Rev. Lyn Harding. You three rock!

Know that those you elect to serve on the BOM for the next quadrennium will hold our disciplinary task with humble and prayerful hearts, seeking to follow Wesley's general rules to do no harm, to do all the good we can and to follow the ordinances of God.

– Tammy L. Estep, Chair

Nominations for the Board of Ordained Ministry

3rd Quadrennium

David Bonney
Alan Combs
Blair Ellis (lay)
Tammy L. Estep
Stan Hargraves
Marilyn Heckstall
Shawn Kiger (lay)
Mikang Kim
Deborah Lewis
Sarah Dumas Locke
Lynda Moore
Leigh Anne Taylor
David Vaughan
Neal Wise

2nd Quadrennium

Esther Agbosu
Tracy Bass
Adam Blagg
Brian Brown
Debbie Cali (lay)
David Edinger (AM)
Amy Grant
Grace Sun-khil Han
Teer Hardy
Chad Herndon
Janine Howard
Keon Huh
Seungsoo “RJ” Jun
Michelle Kim
Lauren Leggett (lay)
Cynthia Lopynski (lay)
Annette Northan-Austin (lay)
Craig Newman
Camille Pentsil
Nancy Robinson
Meghan Roth Clayton
Patty Slattum (lay)
Bill Slingerland (lay)
Jae Song
Laura Stratton
George M. Warner, Sr.
Sarah Wastella
Heather Wray

1st Quadrennium

Lisa McGehee

Rev. Dr. Charles-Ledlum-Bates, District Superintendent Representative Rev. Jessica S. Colwell, Registrar

Nominations for the Order Chairs

To the clergy executive session, the following nominations are presented to you:

Rev. Lisa McGehee, Chair of the Order of Deacon

Rev. Jae Song, Chair of the Order of Elder

Rev. David Edinger, Chair of the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Member

COMMITTEE ON EPISCOPACY

The Committee on Episcopacy (COE) is responsible for the review and evaluation of the resident bishop as required by the *Book of Discipline*. A process for this review has been created and is used by all Conferences in the Southeastern Jurisdiction (SEJ). The Virginia Conference COE has met with Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson at least two or three times this year to engage in conversation around this process and discuss matters present in the Virginia Annual Conference and larger connection. The COE communicates parts of the results and insights of this review with the SEJ COE for use in their assignment process.

The Virginia COE is pleased with Bishop Sue's leadership and forward thinking style and we are looking forward to another great year of ministry here in Virginia with Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson.

– Warren R. Harper, Chair

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Earlier in this Conference year, the Board of Trustees closed the final disaffiliations of local churches from our Conference under paragraph 2553 of the *Book of Discipline*. This legislation expired on December 31, 2023, and accordingly there will be no more disaffiliations. The sunset of paragraph 2553 marks the end of a challenging time for The United Methodist Church, the Virginia Annual Conference and all of its members, and all members of the churches that disaffiliated. While we all look forward to turning the page on this chapter of our history, a short recap of the disaffiliation process is in order.

The Annual Conference approved the disaffiliation pursuant to paragraph 2553 of 10 churches at the Called Annual Conference held on October 10, 2022, of 33 churches at the Called Annual Conference held on February 6, 2023, of 64 churches at the Called Annual Conference held on May 6, 2023, and of 120 churches at the Called Annual Conference held on October 7, 2023. That brings the total number of paragraph 2553 disaffiliations approved by the Annual Conference to 227. The Board of Trustees and its counsel have completed the legal closing process, with monies being wired to the Conference and Deeds of Release being delivered to the church to release the Trust Clause, for all 227 churches.

The total consideration paid to the Conference from all 227 closings was approximately **\$16.68 million**, which is comprised of the following:

- ❖ Contributions toward the Conference's unfunded clergy benefits liability of **\$8.98 million**, with **\$3.95 million** allocated to the pension liability and \$5.03 million allocated to the retiree medical liability;
- ❖ Payments to the Conference for Conference and District apportionments of approximately **\$5.19 million**, pursuant to the requirement under paragraph 2553 that each disaffiliating church pay roughly two times the Annual Conference and District apportionments (note that when taking into consideration apportionments paid by the disaffiliating churches during the disaffiliation period but outside of the closing process, this figure exceeds \$6 million);
- ❖ Repayment of Conference and District grants made to these churches over the years, totaling approximately **\$1.18 million**; and
- ❖ The remaining amounts represent (i) the Conference's legal fees that were paid by the disaffiliating churches, and (ii) clergy support, including for compensation and housing, for the remainder of the Conference year for those disaffiliating churches whose pastor remained in the UMC.

During the course of handling 227 disaffiliation closings, the Trustees and its counsel developed significant efficiencies, allowing us to handle the later closings well under budget. In fact, due to these efficiencies and the manner in which closings were conducted, in addition to the payment in full by the disaffiliating churches of all Conference legal fees related to each closing,

- (i) 100% of the Conference Chancellor and Conference Trustees' legal expenses related to the demand letters received in August of 2022, which expenses totaled approximately \$43,000, were repaid by the 26 churches on whose behalf the NCLL sent the demand letters (all of these churches disaffiliated), and
- (ii) the Conference Trustees recouped approximately \$211,000 of their \$213,000 of legal expenses related to the disaf-

filiation process that were not allocated to the closing of a particular church.

Again, the goals of the Board of Trustees throughout the disaffiliation process were to manage these transactions in an efficient way, to cause the least possible disruption to our Conference, District, and local church leaders so as to allow them to focus on the more important aspects of the ministry, and to allow all parties to move forward with grace and dignity. We feel that we were able to accomplish these goals.

Looking forward, as the Board of Trustees, we will be working on the Conference initiative to centralize the management of District and Conference owned properties so as to reduce the burden on our District leadership. We are excited to announce our contractual relationship with Wesley Community Development which is affiliated with The North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church, to help us with this endeavor. Wesley Community Development is not only an excellent Property Management Firm, but it is also deeply committed to the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church. Their philosophy is to retain closed church property whenever possible and repurpose it to address the needs of the surrounding community. They also offer consulting services to local churches who wish to maximize the usage of their own local church property.

As we put disaffiliations behind us, we face the future with a renewed sense of hope and joy as we strive to be good stewards of the properties and assets within the Annual Conference.

– Kathy Lutman, President

UNITED METHODIST-RELATED SCHOOLS

Ferrum College

Ferrum College is a private, liberal arts college founded by the women of the United Methodist church 110 years ago in rural southwest Virginia in the foothills of the Blue Ridge mountains. The College serves a student body of more than 800, offering undergraduate and a growing number of advanced degrees, as well as certifications in several areas of Career and Technical Education (CTE.) The College lives out its traditional ideals of serving “Not Self, But Others” by providing outstanding educational opportunities to our diverse student body (52% of our students are Pell grant eligible, 97% receive tuition assistance; 40% are minority students; 37% of our students are the first in their families to pursue higher education.) The College is known for having the second oldest environmental science program in the U.S. and continues to be an academic trailblazer. In February 2024, the College announced it will partner with Franklin County Public Safety, Carilion Clinic, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), and the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) to initiate Franklin County’s Paramedic Apprentice program – the first of its kind in the state. In the same year, the College announced it would reduce the cost of tuition by \$10,000 for all students and unveiled the Panther Promise, which affords qualifying Virginia resident students free tuition to attend Ferrum College.

The College remains the only private, liberal arts college in Virginia to offer a four-year degree in Agricultural Sciences and teaching licensure in vocational agriculture. Ferrum College is an economic, cultural and academic pillar of the Franklin County community and, in keeping with its motto of “Not Self, But Others,” adds valuable, hands-on experience to our students’ educations through ongoing outreach such as the water quality project at Smith Mountain Lake. Over the past 37 years, students and faculty have monitored the levels of bacteria, algae, and pollutants during the lake’s peak use season to ensure public health and safety.

The College has been moving boldly to forge new partnerships and explore new directions in curriculum to best serve today’s learners. Over the past year, the College sought and was given approval to award CTE certifications in construction project management; construction site management; construction small business management; sustainable construction; emergency medical technician/paramedic; fire science and technology; and advanced fire science and technology by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. This move is intended to close educational gaps for students, and is also a boon for regional employers, helping to ensure a highly skilled workforce while helping young people gain living-wage jobs in their home community. The College also won a Virginia Department of Education Laboratory School Planning Grant to explore CTE programming with Franklin County Public Schools in partnership with local industry leaders in skilled trades education. The College’s next step will be seeking further grant funding to create the Ferrum College Academy for Opportunity and Innovation to take this concept to surrounding school systems.

REPORTS

In December of 2023, the College signed a historic memorandum of understanding with the Universidad de Guadalajara to offer dual enrollment credit to Universidad students, extending the College's reach further afield than our founders ever imagined.

Along with a new vision, the College welcomed new visionaries in 2023 to build and accelerate our momentum: including Dr. Joseph Han as Vice President of Finance and Chief Operations Officer, and also promoted faculty and staff to new roles including Dr. Delia Heck as Chief Academic Officer and Dr. Jason Powell as Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Chief Innovation and Research Officer, and John DeVault as Associate Vice President for Recruitment and Retention. Ferrum College is especially blessed to welcome its new Chaplain the Reverend Michael Little, who has already touched the lives of students with his energetic outreach and messages of hope and purpose.

Mirta M. Martin, Ph.D.
President
540-365-4202

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

2023 – 2024 Roster*

E ective July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024

INCUMBENTS

Chair: D. Scott Showalter '73

1st Vice Chair: W. Jeffrey Booker

2nd Vice Chair: Everett Foxx '92

Secretary: Amanda Cox '04

David Arrington

Denise Bates

John Cougill '69

F. Abe Dymond

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson

Judson P. (Jud) Mason '67

Annita Nelson

Baxter Phillips, Jr. '66

Ronald E. "Ron" Singleton '70

Nancy Walsh

NEW:

Carl Cline

Greg Craddock '92

Glynn Loope '86

Randolph-Macon Academy

Randolph-Macon Academy holds the unique status of being the only United Methodist affiliated secondary school in the Virginia Conference. Consistent with our 132 years of commitment to developing young people in mind, body, and spirit to lead and positively impact the world they inhabit, R-MA continues to evolve and adapt for modern world realities while standing on the unchanging foundation of God and holding fast to covenant with the United Methodist Church.

In a boarding school environment, we are uniquely equipped to share all aspects of life together, including academic and spiritual formation, intergenerational relationships, sports, clubs, meals, prayers, worship, community, and fellowship.

This year, 317 students plus 75 faculty and staff attended chapel service every single week where scripture, song, prayer, and sacraments are part of the regular formative practices. 30-40 students voluntarily lead and/or attend weekly Bible study. 45 students are enrolled in World Religions class. 25 students and adults participated in a life-changing mission trip with the Appalachia Service Project that has resulted in deepening relationships.

Academically, 100% of our students were accepted into college or university, to include 14 appointments to military academies. Our students are globally, racially, socioeconomically, ethnically, and religiously diverse, representing 18 countries and every major world religion. Academic and spiritual formation, along with character and leadership development are embedded into the fabric of R-MA. Similar to our United Methodist roots, we understand that formation must always be intentional, relational, and immersive. As such, we create structures and rhythms to ensure that happens. We believe the United Methodist Church should enhance its support for mission and ministry at R-MA, as R-MA commits fully to our covenant, discipleship, academic excellence, and fruitful ministry.

—David C. Wesley, President, Brigadier General, USAF, Retired

Randolph-Macon College

In its 194th year, Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Va. remains committed to a steadfast mission of “developing the minds and character of each student,” with rigorous academics, opportunities for learning beyond the classroom, and an exceptional faculty.

The College welcomed a class of 430 freshmen this year, each class more diverse than the one before it. The 2023-24 academic year opened with 1501 students from 26 states (including the District of Columbia) and 22 other countries. About 80% of the students continue to live on-campus. The school maintains a student-faculty ratio of just over 10 to 1 and an average class size of 16 students. This personal attention, paired with an intentional career pathways program, has earned RMC a reputation for excellent preparation for careers, including a top 20 ranking for career services by the Princeton Review for four years in a row.

Last summer, the College launched branding that emphasizes this focus on personal attention and pathways to career with the theme “Up Close, Future Ready.” “Up Close” communicates the deeply individualized academic and co-curricular experience that is a hallmark of a Randolph-Macon educational experience. “Future Ready” speaks to the enduring life and career-advancing skills with which students tackle their futures, thanks to RMC’s hands-on, interdisciplinary curriculum, exceptional mentorship and advising, and character and leadership development.

RMC is proud to continue our pre-ministerial grants and A. Purnell Bailey Scholarships for those discerning a call to Christian ministry. Educating Christian clergy has been a part of our history from the very beginning. We also value our summer programs that include Convergence: A Youth Theology Institute on Faith and Science and Pathways to Science. Convergence helps teens explore how Christian faith and the sciences can inform and inspire one another. Pathways to Science is an opportunity for rising sophomore Hispanic girls to meet scientists and explore STEM related activities. In 2023, we partnered with the Fox Foundation and Va UMC to host the faith and science symposium on our campus, and we hope to continue this in the years ahead. We are honored to be home to a significant part of the Va UMC Conference Archives in our library and invite interested parties to visit the Archives and discover many amazing historical pieces.

Duncan Memorial UMC serves as our college chapel and offers a number of worship, service, and leadership opportunities to our campus. The church hosts the weekly RMC Student Fellowship, visits the college cafeteria following worship

once a month, and invites students to join in opportunities such as the twice weekly Child Watch for adult English classes, alternative spring break service projects (Westview on the James was our 2023 focus), Rise Against Hunger, and more. Chaplain Kendra Grimes has formed connections between our students and the Hermitage and Cedarfield retirement communities, Ashland Christian Emergency Services, and other area ministries. Chaplain Grimes continues to serve with the Va UMC Missional Ministries Board, Va Methodists for a New Thing, and the Va Conference Historical Society.

As the oldest continuously operating Methodist college in America, Randolph-Macon College greatly appreciates our historic and ongoing relationship to the Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and the mutual resources and support that we offer one another.

— Robert Lindgren, President

Trustees of Randolph-Macon College, Ashland, VA

As of March 1, 2024

Erica Glasper Andrews, Laurel, MD
Desmond A. Baker, Wilmington, DE
Reginald M. Barley, Richmond, VA
Everett B. Birdsong, Suffolk, VA
J. Haywood Blakemore IV, Charlottesville, VA*
Gilbert T. Bland, Virginia Beach, VA
Yvonne W. Brandon Ed.D, Richmond, VA*
Macon F. Brock, III, Newport Beach, CA
L. Preston Bryant, Jr., Richmond, VA*
Grace Burke Carroll, Oakton, VA
J. Scott Colley, Charlottesville, VA
William A. Davis, Jr. Rev., Richmond, VA
Kelly K. Domson, M.D., Ashburn, VA
Malinda E. Dunn, Alexandria, VA
Jennifer F. Folsom, Alexandria, VA*
Alice Collins Fruth, Richmond, VA
F. Gillis Green, Esq., Towson, MD
Richard M. Hamrick III, M.D., Richmond, VA
Thomas M. Hubbard, M.D., Ashland, VA*
R. Earl Johnson, Henrico, VA
William B. Kilduff, Esq., Richmond, VA
Sabra L. Klein, Ph.D., Washington, DC
Robert B. Lambeth, Jr., Forrest, VA
Robert R. Lindgren, Esq., Ashland, VA
Stephen P. Long, M.D., Richmond, VA
David G. Meleski, Manakin Sabot, VA
Thornton C. Melton, III, Richmond, VA
Thomas L. Millner, Monticello, GA
R. Geoffrey Neville, Jr., Atlanta, GA
Allison M. O'Brien, Richmond, VA*
Timothy P. O'Brien, Potomac, MD
Annette C. Paul, Ashland, VA*
John B. Peters, Charlottesville, VA
Susan P. Quinn, Richmond, VA
Graham B. Rashkind, Richmond, VA

Mary Lynn Reed, Washington, DC
Louis E. Renjel, Jr., Washington, DC
Michael R. Roberson, Richmond, VA
Susan D. Schick, Marion Station, PA
Linwood A. Staub, Doylestown, PA
Cindy Szadokierski, Southport, NC
Sanjay Tandon, Cupertino, CA
Adam T. Vasquez, Great Falls, VA
R. Randolph Weis, Henrico, VA
R. Douglas White, Richmond, VA*
Katherine G. Whitehead, Richmond, VA*

**New board members-need to be confirmed at Annual Conference*

Shenandoah University

Your Shenandoah University is larger and stronger and doing more good than ever! With more than 4300 students, a strongly balanced budget, and a zeal for serving our students and communities, Shenandoah continues to offer values-based education. Our mission is to educate and inspire individuals to become critical, reflective thinkers, lifelong learners, and ethical, compassionate citizens who are committed to making responsible contributions within a community, a nation, and the world. I am proud to report significant strides in advancing this mission, a number of which I believe will be of interest to the people of the Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

As our Social Principles remind us, “mental health eludes many in our world resulting in considerable distress, stigma, and isolation...no person deserves to be stigmatized because of mental illness”. Shenandoah University remains at the forefront of addressing the burgeoning mental health crisis among young people in our nation, of which our Counseling Center bears the weight first hand. They provided 1,981 counseling hours to 364 students over 2,046 appointments from July 2023 to January 2024. In an effort to be a part of an upstream solution to this problem, we launched a Masters of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling program, and our first cohort of students will begin their studies in the Fall 2024 semester. This initiative not only enriches our academic offerings but also prepares a new generation of counselors to advocate for wellness and social justice in the Northern Shenandoah Valley and beyond.

Additionally, our commitment to global learning remains strong. Most recently, our Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning helped secure a generous grant from the Stevens Initiative to embed global virtual exchange into every one of our First Year Seminar courses this fall. Therefore, every incoming first year student will be collaboratively learning alongside peers at Yarmouk University in Jordan. This initiative sets SU apart as an institution that is living out its responsibility to foster opportunities for learners to think globally, no matter their vocation. Fortunately, our incoming students’ exposure to cultures and peoples different from their own will not stop at the end of their mandatory First Year Seminar course. Global learning is in our DNA. Over the past year, 250 students engaged in Global Experiential Learning trips through our Office for International Programming. On these trips, students worked with our esteemed faculty to earn academic credit during these travel experiences. We additionally sent 40 students on five different Global Citizenship Project (GCP) trips over our March spring break to American Samoa, Argentina, India, Slovenia, and Zambia. Thanks to our generous donors, these students get to experience cultures different from their own and broaden their horizons for free.

Our commitment to service learning is also deeply embedded in Shenandoah University’s culture. In 2023, our students dedicated over 2,300 hours to community service in Winchester, facilitated by our Center for Civic Engagement. These activities, supported by over 300 volunteers, resulted in a direct economic impact of over \$92,000. Moreover, our Office of Spiritual Life orchestrated two service trips, extending our outreach beyond Winchester to North Carolina, partnering with Islamic Relief-USA, and to various indigenous communities across Virginia. These efforts not only embody our commitment to service but also reinforce our connections with diverse communities, fostering a spirit of inclusiveness and compassion.

Our Office of Spiritual Life is a hub for spiritual formation for persons of all faiths, embracing a commitment to celebrating religious diversity, which is rooted in our United Methodist heritage. Over the past year, our Spiritual Life staff engaged over

100 students in direct relational ministry as professors in the classroom. The courses they taught covered the spectrum of academic disciplines: Christian leadership, mental health, interreligious activism, music therapy, and study skills. Through these efforts, they formed lasting relationships with students who might not otherwise darken the doors of their offices. To deepen partnerships across the Virginia Annual Conference, the Office of Spiritual Life can be reached at spirituallife@su.edu.

SU also continues to make higher education more accessible and affordable. We have, once again, expanded our January-Term and Summer Term course offerings, which allow students to progress in their degrees during academic breaks, offering courses at a significantly reduced rate of \$495 per class. This cost is lower than most community colleges at a discount of 80%! In the summer of 2023, we served over 900 students, and in the 2024 January-Term, we served over 580 students. Furthermore, we open these opportunities to rising high school seniors, enabling them to earn transferable college credits at a discounted rate while acclimating to the demands of college-level coursework.

Lastly, I am excited to share that one of our United Methodist students—Jolonnice Reed ('25)—has been selected to serve on the Student Leadership Team of the U.S. chapter of the World Student Christian Federation. I have no doubt that Jolonnice's service on this team will be a blessing to our University and the Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

I remain grateful for the support and prayers for Shenandoah University from the Virginia Annual Conference, along with its districts and congregations. We are the "Big Little University Rising," with a passion for education and service rooted in our shared Wesleyan heritage.

— Tracy Fitzsimmons, Ph.D., President

Virginia Wesleyan University

VWU continues to garner widespread recognition as a member of the highly selective New American Colleges and Universities (NACU) collaborative. As one of the most innovative National Liberal Arts Colleges in the country, total enrollment in all programs and all locations from Virginia Beach to Tokyo, Japan, reached 4,517 learners including 1,500 in our traditional campus in Virginia Beach in 2023.

Addressing national trends, affordability remains a top priority. Virginia Wesleyan offers a multi faceted plan of affordability that combines multiple consecutive years of freezing tuition costs, the endowed Batten Honors College, an expanded donor-funded Work & Learn Program for student employment, a concurrent enrollment program and fair transfer agreement with Virginia community colleges, affordable out-of-semester 12-month course options, and a fifth-year tuition guarantee. A recently awarded federal Title III grant helps the university offer robust academic support for students.

VWU continues to add sought-after undergraduate and graduate programs along with widely popular talent development programs offered in-person and online. The newest academic programs include a major in Cybersecurity and a Master of Arts in Arts Leadership and Nonprofit Management, both starting in Fall 2024. Talent development programs, held in partnership with Virginia Beach Economic Development, help learners of all ages add and advance skills in pursuit of high-demand careers.

The University has completed several campus projects over the last year. Thanks to a grant, Phase III of our modernization of Clarke Hall was completed, adding new technology for enhanced teaching and learning in cybersecurity. Construction of the D. Henry and Eleanor Watts Field House at Tom and Betty Broyles Field for softball and the Perry Field House at Kenneth R. Perry Field for baseball (both in TowneBank Park) have been completed. A two classroom addition for the Blocker Youth Center is nearly completed. Construction for the new Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art at Virginia Wesleyan University will begin this summer.

The Greer Environmental Sciences Center and highly selective Batten Honors College, both opened in 2017, continue to be national niche programs. The Greer Environmental Sciences Center has enhanced prominence in the natural sciences programs and has helped the University earn multiple accolades, including 2018 Conservationist of the Year from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and induction into the Elizabeth River Project's River Stars Hall of Fame in 2023. The University was also recognized as a Tree Campus Higher Education by the Arbor Day Foundation and awarded a Silver rating by the Association for the Advancement for Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) in the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS).

The Batten Honors College (BHC) continues to operate at full capacity with 160 students. The inaugural BHC Louis and Prudence Ryan Research Symposium and Excellence in Research Prize was held last spring, with the prize awarded to a stu-

dent project that addressed urban tree planting to combat runoff and excessive heat. Additionally, students in the Batten Honors College are taking advantage of the opportunity to use their academic scholarship to enroll in one of our graduate programs, should they complete their undergraduate coursework in less than four years.

A third national niche program of VWU is the Robert Nusbaum Center. The center aims to create a civil society through education, respectful dialogue, and mutual understanding, and it equips students and community members to address difficult and urgent problems. The university is dedicated to diversity and inclusion and joined the Reconciling Ministries Network, an organization dedicated to advancing LGBTQ+ justice in The United Methodist Church, in 2023.

Religious life on campus is vibrant as Campus Ministries serves students of all faiths, interests, and backgrounds. VWU students, faculty, and staff are active members on campus and at our partner congregation at Haygood United Methodist Church. The donor-funded Boyd Fellows program provides opportunities for student leaders to assist with the administrative, visionary, and programmatic aspects of religious life on campus. Agreements with the Boston University School of Theology, Candler School of Theology at Emory University, and the Duke University Divinity School provide early assurance opportunities for students interested in pursuing careers in the ministry.

—Scott D. Miller, Ph.D., President

Duke Divinity School

Duke Divinity School attests to the work of God's Spirit to usher us into a season of hope and continued faithfulness to the mission and calling to serve the church, academy, and the world. In 2023, Dean Edgardo Colón-Emeric was appointed for a five-year term.

The Office of Black Church Studies (OBCS) commemorated its 50th anniversary. The Rev. Dr. Cynthia Hale (D'79) received Duke University's Distinguished Alumni Award in recognition of her outstanding contributions in ministry and service. The Hispanic House of Studies (HHS) celebrated its quinceañera (15th anniversary). HHS was created by the Divinity School, with support from The Duke Endowment, to support the formation of ministers to Hispanic/Latinx congregations and communities in the North Carolina and Western North Carolina Annual Conferences and beyond. These efforts extend throughout our academic and ministerial programs.

This fall, we welcomed 215 entering students from 35 different states and 17 countries. The Master of Divinity program gained 104 new students, with 54 residential students and 50 in the hybrid program. The Master of Arts in Christian Practice enrolled 13 new students; the Doctor of Ministry, 22; Master of Theology, 11; Master of Theological Studies, 29; the Doctor of Theology welcomed five new students to campus, and five special students. The Certificate in Theology and Health Care welcomed 11 residential students and 15 in the hybrid program.

Divinity+ launched the Church Administration series focused on developing practical skills for church leaders. More than 1,000 learners have enrolled in the first two courses, "Theology and Time Management" and "Strategic Management." We inaugurated the Certificate in Chaplaincy, designed to prepare students to provide spiritual care in a variety of settings including hospitals, hospice, prisons, higher education, and the military.

The Office of Black Church Studies is now led by the Rev. Dr. Eric Lewis Williams (D'05), assistant professor of theology and Black Church Studies; and the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies named the Very Rev. Timothy Kimbrough (D'83), Jack and Barbara Bovender Professor of the Practice of Anglican Studies. Key staff members joining our team include Anita Lumpkin, executive director of enrollment management; and the Rev. Sarah Belles (M.Div'14) an ordained elder in full connection with the Western North Carolina Annual Conference, as the director of student life.

With gratitude for funding from the Lilly Endowment, the Divinity School launched the Transformative Preaching Lab which will expand preaching training for students in the hybrid M.Div. program with new courses and capacities to explore digital tools for community worship, preaching and formation in trauma-informed preaching and preaching in immigrant communities.

The Theology, Medicine, and Culture initiative launched the Mental Health Track for Christian mental health practitioners as part of its Certificate in Theology and Health Care. The work of all Duke Divinity initiatives, including Duke Initiatives in Theology and the Arts; Leadership Education at Duke Divinity; and Thriving Rural Communities, continue to provide opportunities to bear witness to God's creativity, compassion, and care for communities and congregations.

—Edgardo Colón-Emeric, Dean of Duke Divinity School

RETIRED CLERGY HOUSING CORPORATION

It is important to know one's purpose in life. As Christians, we exist to serve as God's representatives in this world sharing the love of God and pointing people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Retired Clergy Housing Corporation (RCHC) exists to provide attractive, affordable housing to the Virginia Annual Conference retired clergy and their family in need of housing within their financial means. Through the strength of our conference pension program, the need for financial support has declined through the years. Because of the great work of the conference, the RCHC Board has expanded the definition to include physical and emotional support. The majority of our 19 properties are accessible for people with disabilities. Therefore, this ministry has opened itself to retired clergy families dealing with accessibility-related housing needs.

There have been transitions in the lives of our residents. One home is now available in North Chesterfield due to a current resident moving into assisted living. In addition, our resident, Rev. Ed Gant, earned his heavenly reward. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with his wife of 65 years, Louise. Also, please pray for Winston and Olivia Crichlow and Betty Murphy who have all experienced the death of a child.

Many of our properties are now between 15-20 years old. As many know, that is a time when repairs and replacements often begin. The RCHC budget is a faith budget, the rental income does not cover our budget and we depend on donations from individuals, churches, and organizations. This is why we are asking you to participate in our Covenant of Gratitude.

The Covenant of Gratitude requests a commitment of a \$1 minimum per commissioned Provisional Elder and Deacon at this Annual Conference session. With the ever-increasing cost of providing support, you are asked to consider a gift of \$10 per commissioned Provisional Elder and Deacon at this Annual Conference. Your ongoing support is important to meeting the needs of those we serve.

I also invite you to make RCHC a part of your estate planning. If you are interested in learning more about how to support this mission, please contact Rev. Charles Wickham at 804 474 8724 and he will be happy to meet with you.

On behalf of the RCHC Board of Directors, I thank you in advance for any assistance you give. All the hard work is so worthwhile when you hear a resident say, "Thank you for this beautiful home in which we live. I appreciate you more than you will ever know!" Our clergy and their families have given themselves to the service of God and what an honor to now help support them with housing.

—Dr. Michael Houff, RCHC Board of Directors, Chair

PREACHERS' RELIEF SOCIETY

The Preachers' Relief Society has been a ministry to the clergy of the Virginia Annual Conference since 1870. The sole purpose is to assist clergy families who are facing emergency financial needs.

If in need, clergy, retired and active, their widows and widowers should apply for help through their District Superintendent. The Superintendent will forward the request to the Society with a recommendation as to how large a grant should be awarded. Each request is responded to immediately in what the Society believes is appropriate after it has carefully evaluated the crisis and also considered the financial resources of the Society. All grants given are confidential. The recipients, of course, are free to disclose whatever they wish.

The Society welcomes contributions. In recent years these have been small in number. Fortunately, the Society's ability to provide grants has been sustained by the returns on its investments. The Mercadante Riggan Wealth Management Group of Davenport and Company currently serves as the Society's investment advisors. Those wishing to contribute to this ministry may contact our treasurer, Katherine Kidwell at kbkidwell@msn.com.

The current directors of the Society are: Robert F. Cofield, Jr., president; Edward D. Lilly, vice-president; Clark D. Cundiff, secretary; Katherine Kidwell, treasurer; Esther Agbosu; Robert N. Baker, III; James R. Bergdoll, James S. Mathews; and Elizabeth W. Taylor.

—Robert F. Cofield Jr., President

THE UNITED METHODIST CREDIT UNION

Serving the North Carolina, Western North Carolina, Baltimore-Washington, West Virginia, and of course Virginia Conferences, The United Methodist Credit Union (TUMCU) serves thousands of churches, clergy, laity, and organizations with a multitude of financial services. We offer savings and checking accounts, loans of all descriptions, credit cards, online banking services, and personal financial management resources, as well as:

- ❖ SnapLoans that provide educational lines of credit for college students (with discounts attending a United Methodist affiliated college or seminary);
- ❖ An Emergency Loan Program in partnership with local churches to help their church members in financial distress avoid turning to payday lenders;
- ❖ Secured Church loans to help with major building projects and initiatives, as well as refinancing church loans for better rates or terms;
- ❖ Project loans (up to \$50,000 unsecured), for things like church and parsonage repairs, van or bus purchases, HVAC projects, and even new A/V or technology purchases; and
- ❖ Visa ChurchRewards credit cards offering cash back to member's' local churches.

During 2023, the Rev. Burt Brooks, the credit union's Director of Stewardship & Outreach, continued TUMCU's commitment to help churches grow in their mission and ministry. He hosted several online "Stewardship Academy" sessions, as well as several specialized seminars around giving, budgeting, and stewardship planning.

TUMCU also launched a new program called ClergyAssist, to help active and retired clergy facing economic hardships with low interest loans and other financial assistance so they can avoid predatory lenders.

Another new offering this past year for the credit union are No-Fee Home Equity Lines of Credit (HELOCs), which allow our members to access the equity in their homes in order to make home improvements, make major purchases, or consolidate debt at lower rates than regular consumer loans.

The credit union is also proud to have helped a number of churches that have had their credit revoked or not renewed by their bank or credit union since many financial institutions have chosen to exit the "church" market for being, in their estimation, too risky and unprofitable. In contrast, we are proud to be a faith-based financial resource for our churches and pastors and intend to remain that way for many years to come.

We extend a heart-felt thank you to board members Susan W. Lewis, Thomas A. Rachele, and Joel H. Pollard for their invaluable service to the credit union. Sue retired from the board this past year after more than two decades of membership on the board, including service as secretary and treasurer. Thomas leaves after serving four years on the Supervisory Committee and eleven years as board member and treasurer. Joel retired from the board after serving eight years as secretary. In addition, we welcome to our board Paul Eichelberger, treasurer of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Special appreciation is also extended to our CEO, James Eads, and his exemplary staff for bringing a special level of personal and skilled expertise to their work on behalf of the credit union and its members.

With the assistance of such dedicated volunteers and staff, and as a result of TUMCU's focus on its member churches and individuals, the credit union has continued to grow and improve its financial strength. This has been a very busy and fruitful year for The United Methodist Credit Union as we have helped our members gain all they can, and save all they can, so they can give all they can.

– *The Rev. Alvin J. Horton, Chair*

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The 2023 Spring and Fall meetings of the Trustees of the Virginia Conference Historical Society were held both in person and via Zoom. On February 25, the program was Ben Campbell and his book *Richmond's Unhealed History* regarding slavery. The October 7 program was Prof. Douglas Tzan and his book on Methodist missionary William Taylor.

The Reports below will show the very active work of our Society in its subgroups.

– Mike Browder, President

The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation

In 2023 the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation (TOBCF) accomplished the following:

1. Continued the implementation of the \$209,605 ESHPF grant (aka Hurricane grant) received in 2021 from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) in partnership with the National Park Services (NPS) by:
 - ❖ Working to obtain the services of a qualified general contractor to do the construction needed to stabilize the foundation and chimneys of Canaan (the Edward Dromgoole House).
 - ❖ Accepting and funding a proposal submitted by the architectural firm, Glave and Holmes, for them to help us prepare a request for proposal (RFP) to solicit suitable candidates, provide construction and contract administration services and develop basic foundation engineering and framing repair designs needed for the job.
 - ❖ Arranging and participating in site visits for contractors so they could examine the Dromgoole house, ask questions and subsequently submit their proposals. As part of TOBCF's contract with them, Glave and Holmes provided these contractors and TOBCF with general engineering foundation design specifications to guide the required construction.
 - ❖ Negotiating with the general contractor who was the strongest contender for the job to determine the scope of work that could be completed within the budgetary constraints of the project
 - ❖ Organizing a site visit to the Dromgoole property for the VDHR's staff archaeologist, Mr. Michael Clem so that he could confirm the areas of archaeological significance on this site that contractors should avoid during construction. Mr. Clem surveyed the premises including what is initially believed to be a graveyard for enslaved people as well as other historical features on the grounds discussing with TOBCF representatives possible paths forward for their preservation.
2. Set up an informational tent on the courthouse square for the Boydton Day celebration that took place October 28, 2023 in Boydton, Virginia near TOBCF's Randolph Macon College and Boydton Institute historical site. This was done to engage with the local community in order to re-discover, save, and celebrate the history of the Boydton Institute. On display in the tent was an exhibit with short biographies, photos and the currently known names of Boydton Institute's scholars and teachers as well as historical photos of scenes around the campus. Walter Beales gave an afternoon interpretive tour of TOBCF's historical site. TOBCF also sponsored a professional storyteller, Mrs. Becky Stone, who performed in the Boydton library by telling stories written by the author, Dr. Lorenz Graham who had family ties to Dr. Charles Morris, the first African-American principal at the Boydton Institute
3. Board member Lewis Turner and wife Sylvia traveled to and did historical research at the Morristown and Morris Township Library in Morristown, New Jersey. They uncovered a scrapbook of Adeline W. Owen, Boydton Institute teacher and daughter of Dr. Frederick and Louisa Graves Owen, major contributors to the establishment of the institute. The scrapbook contained about 20 labeled photos of students, teachers, staff (including Mrs. Helen B. Sharpe, headmistress of the school) and life around the Boydton Institute campus in 1898/99.
4. Undertook an informal marketing survey in the community around the Ebenezer Academy Memorial Park identifying the need for and subsequently creating a brochure focused singly on that historical site.
5. Identified contractors for and solidified a contract to complete the brick repairs on the chimneys of the Helensha cot-

tage, “Dry in” the house , grade the grounds around the house and spray herbicides on the large vines that are growing high up on the brick walls of the ruins of the main Randolph Macon and Boydton Institute brick building.

—Prepared by Ann Keeling

The William Watters Foundation

The William Watters Foundation is responsible for the preservation and interpretation of the William Watters Gravesite, United Methodist Historic Site No. 7, located in McLean, Virginia.

William Watters was the first American-born Methodist itinerant preacher to be officially appointed to a circuit at the first Methodist Conference held in America, in Philadelphia in 1773.

The William Watters Foundation held its annual meeting on September 9, 2023, at Trinity United Methodist Church in McLean, Virginia. The foundation’s vice president, David Meyers, led a very interesting discussion about the use of Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) to detect unknown graves. The board granted permission for David Meyers and Myra Lindsey to meet with Aimee D. Wells, a Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) archaeologist, to discuss costs and requirements for performing GPR at the historic site. They also contacted archaeologist Mark Ludlow of M3 Archaeology LLC, who will perform the scan, upon approval of the board.

The foundation approved its slate of directors at the annual meeting, including a new director, the Rev. Bruce Johnson of Pender UMC in Fairfax. The Virginia Conference Historical Society confirmed the directors at its fall 2023 meeting. The foundation elected its officers at the October 6, 2023 board meeting, held via Zoom.

Care for the William Watters Gravesite, United Methodist Historic Site No. 7, is ongoing. The Rev. Rudy Tucker provided excellent lawncare at the site last year.

—Myra P. Lindsey, President

The Old Stone Church Foundation

The Old Stone Church Foundation was established in 1974 by the Virginia Conference Historical Society to preserve, protect and interpret the Old Stone Church site in Leesburg. The site, a United Methodist Heritage Landmark, was the first Methodist-owned church property in America, deeded in 1766.

The Old Stone Church Foundation continues to maintain the site in a manner befitting its stature as a superb United Methodist Shrine.

- ❖ Pictures in the entrance display at the site were renewed.
- ❖ President Bill Harrison vacated the Presidency for health reasons.
- ❖ The Foundation ended 2023 fiscally in the red.
- ❖ To correct its funding deficiency the Foundation plans a 2024 effort to increase membership.
- ❖ The Foundation plans to have a display at the June 2021 VA Conference.
- ❖ Three and perhaps four of the Foundation positions are expected to be vacated ion 2024
- ❖ Jack King was elected President of the Foundation vice Bill Harrison.
- ❖ Jack King participated in the VCHS February meeting at Shenandoah University.
- ❖ Jack King was asked, and he agreed, to be nominated as a VCHS Trustee.
- ❖ It remains to be seen in 2024 whether or not the Foundation can reverse its declining funding and membership trends.

—Jack E. King, President

Archives Committee

The primary activities of the Archivist of the Virginia Conference, Stephanie Davis, have centered around preparing for the anticipated receipt of the records of the 227 disaffiliated churches in the Conference. Records in the current collection have been consolidated and rearranged and materials not deemed appropriate for inclusion in the collection have been removed to make space for anticipated arrival of records.

To ensure that the records transferred to the Archives are handled as specified in The Book of Discipline, records guidance was developed and provided to the District Offices, and included a list and descriptions of records series that are to be transferred. In addition, a Church Records Delivery Form was created to assist with the efficient transfer.

The Conference Archivist has spoken with various District Offices about the importance of these records as well as providing phone guidance to District Administrators. To date, one set of records has been received in the Archives.

Early Virginia Methodist Records are maintained in the McGraw-Paige Library of Randolph Macon College, Rutland, Virginia, and the library works closely with the Virginia Conference Archives to provide continued maintenance and access to the collection. The Virginia Conference Historical Society recently approved a \$15,000 disbursement of funds to the McGraw-Paige Library to support the digitization of 55 reels of microfilms of The Richmond Christian Advocate for the years 1867-1939. This will ensure their continued preservation and online availability to historians and scholars. Future processing and digitization of additional paper copies will be done over the next few years with continued support from the VCHS.

Work continues on the Conference Archives Website to make records and other resources readily available to scholars and others with an interest in Virginia Methodist history. Finding aids to the Archives' collections, links to other relevant collections on other sites, tools for researchers, and various researcher and donation forms are included.

—Nina Frederick, Chair

Virginia United Methodist HERITAGE

Virginia United Methodist *HERITAGE* is the bi-annual scholarly journal produced by the Virginia Conference Historical Society. Its purpose is to document and to inform our readers of the rich United Methodist history found in the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church.

The Fall 2023 issue of *HERITAGE* featured Father Kobler, by Omer Kelly Blosser, and was a discussion of the Rev. John Kobler's life in retirement and his contributions to the ministry of the church known today as Fredericksburg UMC.

Our Spring 2024 issue features Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church, Fauquier County, Virginia, a brief history from the church's founding in 1844 through Reconstruction, written by Lyle Minter. We also present How to Be a History Detective – One Easy Lesson, by Omer Kelly Blosser. The story tells of a mysterious box of artifacts found in the church archives, and the processes the Fredericksburg UMC History and Archives Committee used when researching the items to uncover hidden church history. We also begin a series called Many Churches' Mini Histories, brief accounts of interesting and unique historical events experienced by our Virginia Conference churches. We continue Saddlebags, short vignettes about the daily lives of Methodist circuit riders, composed by Mark Leep.

The VCHS Publications Committee voted to increase *HERITAGE* subscription rates, which took effect with the Spring 2024 issue. A "Spring Special" offered subscriptions at existing rates until the end of March 2024.

The Spring 2024 issue of *HERITAGE* will be delivered in mid-May. The publications committee has had a very positive response to advertising *HERITAGE* on ClergyNet and LaityNet and will continue to use these assets to improve our subscription numbers.

—Myra Lindsey, Editor

History Update Committee

The History Update Committee of the Virginia Conference Historical Society was formed in 2021. For several years now the committee of some fifteen people has been writing chapters treating various topics that are important for understanding the last 70 plus years of our conference history. The previous history of the Virginia Conference was published in 1955 by William Warren Sweet. It is expected that the current enterprise will entail several years to complete. Our methods for the project have involved researching conference archives and interviewing people with memories. We also want to give careful attention to emerging issues and current trends. The committee is making progress and is close to compiling a number of drafts of its work. We expect that our project will be digital in format so as to allow for flexibility in content, together with the preparation of an abbreviated print version.

The Historical Society and its Update Committee welcomes the interest and participation of others in this project as we continue our work. Especially now, we would welcome persons with editorial skills

–Jim Athearn, Chair