



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

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June 29, 2020

Thanks for Your Perseverance!

Dear Virginia Annual Conference:

These are certainly challenging times – and there is also a great deal of positive news for our church. Through faith, flexibility, and hard work we are returning to in-person worship in a safe and responsible manner.

Virginia is on track to enter Phase Three of Governor Northam's reopening plan this Wednesday, July 1, 2020, as the number of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths continue to decline in the Commonwealth. The Conference has been carefully monitoring events at the state level and the transition to Phase Three by Governor Northam was expected. It does not impact our return to worship plans.

Our churches continue the return to in-person under the [Stage 2 criteria](#) that went into effect for the Conference on June 21, 2020. The Conference will remain in our Stage 2 for the foreseeable future as we are being rigorous about the safety of our members and guests. Face coverings and social distancing are essential at all in-person gatherings.

I encourage all churches to return to in-person worship, even if it is with a modest number of church members, while continuing to provide online or telephonic worship services. We will continue to monitor and evaluate events. As trends are expected to continue to improve in Virginia, we will likely loosen some of the requirements for in-person worship.

Thank you to the hundreds of churches that have returned to in-person worship and other church activities, and thanks to those that are making plans to do so soon. Even though the services are smaller than before the pandemic, you are providing important, essential ministry to help the well-being of the Body of Christ. Every church that is comfortable can have in-person worship by following the [Technical Assistance Manual](#) on the Conference website.

Peace and Blessings,

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis