



## District News 4-15-2021

### Why My Children are Over Six Years Apart in Age



A message from Roanoke District Superintendent  
Rev. J. Douglas Forrester

My daughter Ellen was born in the spring of 2002, and my daughter Claire was born in the fall of 2008. Their age difference has (generally) been a source of great blessings. For example, when they were younger, Ellen could babysit Claire. When Claire was a virtual student, Ellen could supervise her. This is all in addition to the fact that I won't have two kids in college at the same time and will only have two teenagers in the house for about six months.

Practical considerations aside, there is a completely true, singular reason that my children are as far apart in age as they are, and it is all my fault.

Here it is: when Ellen was born, I was convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that I loved her so much that there existed in me no reservoir of affection to share with another child. I just could not imagine loving anyone else the way I loved her.

As time went by, I began to see the kind of person Ellen was becoming, and it dawned upon me that I was depriving her of an opportunity to experience the blessings I have with my brother and that Tracy has with her sister. Furthermore, I was depriving some lucky child of knowing Ellen in all of her unique wonder.

This process of discovery took me nearly six years. This is why my children have the age gap that they have.

One of the many things I learned from having a second child was that my heart, as full as it was, that it could expand, Grinch-style, two sizes bigger as Claire stretched my ways of thinking and my understanding of what love is.

Here is thing: writing this, I realize that I do not love my two daughters the same. I love them differently, because each of them is different, unique, special. I love them with all of my heart, just differently in ways that I pray celebrates the unique ways in which they were lovingly, fearfully, and wonderfully made by God in God's own image.

Over the course of the last nine months, I have come to a realization about the Roanoke District: I love the clergy and churches of this District enough that if given the opportunity to choose you, I would. In a short time, I have grown very fond of you

as we have shared together this odd and wondrous calling to walk together down the often narrow and rocky pathways of Christian discipleship.

As you know, starting July 1, I will begin service as the Staunton District Superintendent while remaining the Roanoke District Superintendent, and it is my conviction that through this process, the clergy, laity, and communities of this new District will allow my heart to grow another size larger than it was when I arrived last summer and began to build relationships with all of you.

I am the kind of person who does not like to ask for things for myself, but I need your continued prayers through this process. I am grateful for your gifts, and I give praise to God for your hard work and dedication as together we face all that is to come. God is with us, come what may, allowing us to love one another in ways at once alike and different as together we walk towards a future were God already is. Grace and peace, Doug

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## Registration Opens for Summer Camps at Alta Mons



We are so excited to welcome camp families to Alta Mons for summer camp:

Week 1: June 20-25

Week 2: June 27 - July 2

Week 3: July 4-9

Week 4: July 11-16

Check out our [WEBSITE](#) for the schedule, pricing, COVID practices & policies, and more!

Alta Mons is hiring for a variety of staff positions-- summer camp counselor, kitchen staff, groundskeeper, guest services coordinator, and more! Check [SUMMER STAFF](#) or [OTHER POSITIONS](#) on our website for details.

We are also looking to hire a camp nurse for the summer! If you know anyone who would be interested in spending several weeks here (lodging and meals provided!) please reach out to Meredith - contact info below.

Meredith Simmons, Program Director [program@altamons.org](mailto:program@altamons.org), 540-268-2409

Visit Alta Mons  
website

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## Annual Conference 2021

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis, together with the Annual Conference Planning Team, announced the 2021 Virginia Annual Conference will be a virtual event held **June 18-19**. The business of the Annual Conference will be limited to Friday, June 18. Worship services and other opportunities will be conducted on

Saturday, June 19. The theme for 2021 is “United as One” with the guiding Scripture of John 17:20-23 (NRSV).



Annual Conference 2021



## Annual Conference 2021 Community Cans and Kits Collection

This year we will be doing things a little differently. The collections will be stay in our district. We need your support and we want to make sure you read the instructions carefully.

Two collection sites and each site will be collecting specific items.  
**Huntington Court UMC** - 3333 Williamson Road, Roanoke  
**edges campus of Blacksburg UMC** - 706 Harding Ave., Blacksburg

The collection times at these sites will be from **2:00 - 4:00 PM on June 19.**

All the instructions and how you can be a part of this new way to do Annual Conference Kits and Food ministry are linked below. Contact Rev. Jeff Wilson at [JeffWilson@vaumc.org](mailto:JeffWilson@vaumc.org) for more information. COVID guidelines will be followed at the collection sites.

Community Kits and Cans Collection 2021 Information  
Here

## COVID-19 Updates

**What is ministry going to look like as we move out of the pandemic?**

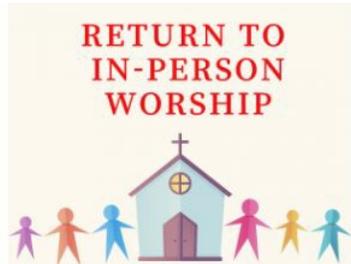
Hosted by the Back to In-person Worship Work Group (led by Rev. Alex Joyner) and Mission and Ministries Work Group (led by Rev. Doug Forrester) the conference will present a webinar on **Monday, April 26 at 7 PM** where Bishop Lewis and members of the work groups will offer a progress report and announce some new developments.

Clergy, Healthy Church Team (HCT) members and lay members of the Virginia

Conference are invited to join this event that will be streamed live on the [Virginia Conference Facebook page](#).

Annual Conference members are invited to participate in a short survey before the webinar starts. [Survey link](#).

The In-person Worship Work Group and Mission & Ministries Work Group thank you for your commitment to continuing to be a church together!



The Return To In-Person Worship Work Team released revisions to the Technical Assistance Manual (TAM) on March 24. Revisions are included in green in the manual for local churches planning in-person worship.

Visit the website



Guidance from the Mission and Ministry Work Team was released on February 26 - including Mission Trips and Vacation Bible schools. Remember to submit HCT plans for each event to the DS prior to advertising them.

Visit the website

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## Prayers for . . .

For **Rev. Scott and Ruth Robertson-Gouge** on the death of her father, Bob Robertson, recently in Jacksonville, Florida. Scott is the pastor of the Catawba Charge in the Roanoke District.

For **Rev. Don Baldwin and his wife Jackie**, as he waits for a kidney donor. Don is a licensed local pastor on our district, currently on medical leave.

**Jean Rorrer**, wife of **Rev. Sebert Rorrer** (Calvary, Christiansburg) as she prepares to undergo knee replacement surgery.

**Rev. Darren Landon** and his wife, **Chris**, as he continues his cancer treatment regimen. Darren pastors the Floyd Parish (Cooper Hill, Haven's Chapel, Huffville, and Stonewall)

The **Prayer Wall**, a Facebook group, is a virtual place where clergy and laity of the Virginia Conference can visit and pray for racial justice and reconciliation, established by Bishop Lewis and the Racial Justice task force. Prayer and action must go hand in hand to stop systemic racism.

**Daily Bible Reading** - Bishop Sharma Lewis encourages the Virginia Conference to read the Bible daily. Her challenge for 2021 is to read the Bible straight through from

## Upcoming Dates

April 18 - [Native American Sunday](#)

April 22 - [Earth Day](#)

April 26 - [Live WEBINAR](#) - Ministry as we move out of the Pandemic - 7 pm

May 1, 8, 15 - [Lay Servant Training](#). Via Zoom

May 23 - Pentecost Sunday

May 24 - Clergy Day Apart for Renewal -[Aldersgate Day](#)

May 30 - [Peace With Justice Sunday](#)

May 31 - District Office closed for Memorial Day (summer office hours begin)

June 1 - [Annual Clergy Evaluations](#) and Annual Parsonage Reviews due

June 18-19 - [Annual Conference](#) - Virtual meeting

June 19 - [Community kits for conference](#) collection- 2-4 pm.

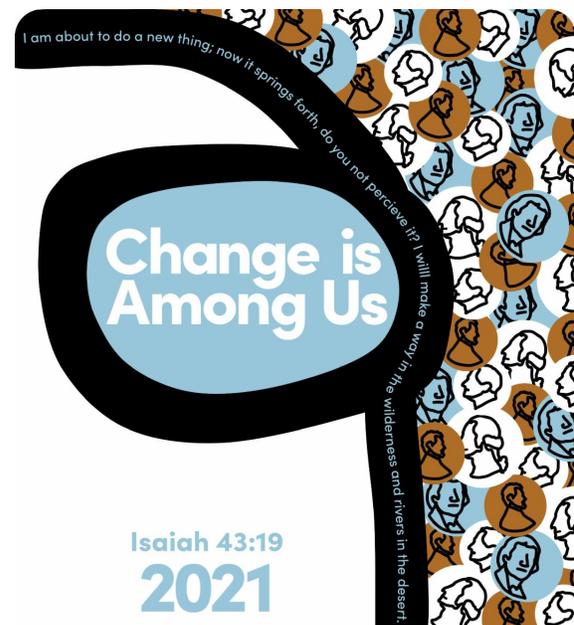
July 1 - [Mission Encounter](#) begins virtual classes

Check out [Latest News - Lifelong Learning Events](#) on the District website for current information on upcoming events.

## Wesley at VA Tech Hosted District Youth Retreat

Wesley at Virginia Tech hosted a virtual youth retreat for the Roanoke, Farmville, Lynchburg, and Danville Districts on March 20th ! With over 60 youth in attendance and 13 churches represented, (including 5 from the Roanoke District) we were able to share about the grace and love of Christ in a new way.

Our theme “**Change is Among Us**” combined the understanding that we are in the midst of change and the game many youths are playing called Among Us. We talked how God is doing something new in our midst even though we are going through this challenging time. Wesley students shared testimony about how this change has been hard on them, opportunities they had for growth, and the need to



help create change in our world. We closed with a time of worship around being “agents of change” and how God is calling us to do something in our world to help others.

The youth participated in small groups, played online games, and also collected change to begin a mission project in their area. Wesley surprised all the youth groups by announcing that whatever amount of change they were able to raise Wesley would match it for the mission of their choice!

We missed being with everyone in person, but we were glad to provide a youth retreat in a different format!

Questions should be directed to Bret Gresham: [wesfound@vt.edu](mailto:wesfound@vt.edu)

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**COMMUNITIES OF STRENGTH: MAY 2021**

We honor older adults, through Older Americans Month each May. To spread the news and to provide pastors with a Sunday "off," the VAUMC Older Adult Council will be making available a recorded worship service for churches to use on May 2 (or another Sunday of your choice)

which is Older Adult Recognition Sunday. Churches are invited to support older adult ministries by sending prayers and taking an offering to support ministries with older adults. This year's offering will go to support Pinnacle Living's (The Hermitage) Samaritan Offering ensuring the personal security for their most vulnerable residents!

Older Adult  
Council

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## Mission Encounter 2021- Virtual

All clergy and laity are invited to attend. Our theme, *There's Far More Here* is based on *2 Corinthians 4:16-18*.

Studies begin **July 1** and will include:

- *Finding Peace in an Anxious World* by Erin James-Brown
- *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* by Monique Morris
- *Bearing Witness in the Kin-dom: Living Into the Church's Moral Witness Through Radical Discipleship* by Darryl Stephens
- Youth: *Becoming Peacemakers in a Culture of Violence* by Jay Godfrey
- Children: *Responding to Violence* by Sue Raymond



*Learning Together for  
the Transformation  
of the World*

[CLICK HERE](#) for more details on the classes and specific dates. Books may be ordered from [unitedmethodistwomen.org/store](http://unitedmethodistwomen.org/store). Virtual event registration begins soon

Phyllis Geoghegan, Assistant Dean Mission Encounter 2021, [phyllisg9@verizon.net](mailto:phyllisg9@verizon.net)

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## Updates from District Alignment Team

The District Alignment Team (DAT) was formed in 2020 with Bishop Lewis to discern, “How can districts most effectively order themselves for the adaptive challenges of the 21st century?”

In the first communication on February 8, the DAT shared six forward-looking recommendations that are now being considered for implementation. Two near-term changes include the appointment of eight district superintendents to oversee the 16 districts effective July 1, 2021, as well as the creation of the District Developer position for the districts. It was announced that our District Superintendent, Rev. Doug Forrester, would serve the Roanoke and Staunton Districts.

On April 5, DAT shared updated Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), a video sharing more information about the District Developer position, and an updated feedback form. Click on the button for the latest updates.

District Alignment  
Information

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## Lay Servant Training - Virtual

Three Lay Servant classes (Basic, Polity, and Leading Worship) will be offered via Zoom! Classes are May 1, 8, and 15 from 8:30 am-noon, and you must attend all 3 sessions to receive credit for the class. Register by April 26. Sponsored by the Rappahannock River District.



Lay Servant Training  
Registration

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## Current Job Openings

Several District Churches and Alta Mons are advertising for staff positions. Check out **JOB OPENINGS** on the District website for all the latest.

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We wanted to wish everyone a Happy Easter! We are so thankful for all the churches and individuals who have been such faithful supporters of Kids Soar, especially throughout the pandemic. In a year that has been so hard for everyone, Kids Soar has been continually blessed by your faithful support. Without you, the children in our program would not be soaring to a better future through reading.



Blessings from all of us at **Kids Soar!**

Candace Hess, Executive Director, [chess@kidsoar.org](mailto:chess@kidsoar.org) 540-342-3103

Blessing of New Site - Villages at Lincoln

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## General Conference Postponed to 2022

On February 20, 2021, the Commission on the General Conference made a decision to further postpone the 2020 General Conference until August 29 - September 6, 2022, in Minneapolis as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect the safety of mass gatherings and travel. The Commission concluded that "full participation of all General Conference delegates" was not achievable by means of either an in-person meeting in 2021 or a virtual meeting. Use the button link for current information about General Conference.

General Conference updates

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## Apportionments

The power of our apportionments — our collective First-Mile giving — is that it enables United Methodists to do together what no church, district or annual conference could do alone.

**Conference and District 100% of total 2021 Paid** *(as of 2-28-21)*

Calvary, Christiansburg  
Three Oaks Fellowship

**District 100% of total 2021 Paid** *(as of 2-28-21)*

White Memorial

Dollars & Sense Newsletter - Conference Treasurer

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**Roanoke District  
of the United Methodist Church**

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(540) 989-3335

[RoanokeDistrict@vaumc.org](mailto:RoanokeDistrict@vaumc.org)

REACH OUT



Resident Bishop - [Sharma D. Lewis](#)

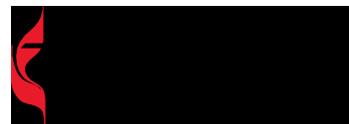
District Superintendent -

[Rev. J. Douglas Forrester](#)

District Lay Leader - [Gary Morris](#)

Office Manager/Bookkeeper - [Cynthia Martin](#)

Office Assistant - [Jan McCall Failes](#)



**The Virginia Conference Vision:** To make disciplines for Jesus Christ who are lifelong learners who influence others to serve.

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[OUR CHURCHES](#)

[CALENDAR](#)

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