



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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District Alignment Update

Dear Virginia Annual Conference:

Peace to you as we continue in this season of pandemic and challenge. The world, in fact, seems quite changed in recent years, something we have felt for some time as a conference. Thankfully, we serve a God who is unchanging, unfailing and unending.

As Virginia United Methodists, we have met this moment in our history with renewed vision, setting our eyes on the One who is unfailing. Our vision remains strong: “To be disciples of Jesus Christ who are lifelong learners who influence others to serve.” We have begun to dream together of how we might bring this vision to life in our conference, in our churches, and in our communities. In 2020, with the formation of my District Alignment Team (DAT), we asked, “How can districts most effectively order themselves for the adaptive challenges of the 21st century?”

The question propels us to be innovative and collaborative, especially as we have not significantly changed our order for more than 40 years. Our District Alignment Team made six forward-looking recommendations that we are now considering for implementation.

Please take a moment to [watch my video](#) about the first steps of alignment. This contains important information about our district superintendents. I’ve also provided [FAQs](#) for more detail and [information](#) that pastors may use in sharing with members who do not have easy access to Internet communications.

Our first steps are part of a larger plan that will span more than a year. This is intentional, to give us time to pray, to dialogue and to collaborate. To start, please use this [questionnaire](#) to share feedback that will shape a number of virtual listening posts in coming months. All the resources listed above can also be accessed at www.vaumc.org/dat.

We were made for a time such as this. We will move forward in unity, guided by our vision: “**To be disciples of Jesus Christ who are lifelong learners who influence others to serve.**”

Peace and Blessings,

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis