

Rev. Scott Davis: Hi, my name is Scott Davis. I currently serve as a Lynchburg District Superintendent, and I'm excited about a new role I will have in the coming appointment year, which is to be the DATC. You may ask what is the DATC. It is the district alignment transition coordinator. So that means I've been part of the IDAT team and part of the vision that's rolling out. One of the big questions that we are getting these days is about the position of the district developer. So in our presentation today, I want to talk more about that role.

Rev. Scott Davis: First of all, there are three areas the district developer will work in. First of all, it is to resource clergy. Not to be the resource, but to bring resources to our clergy. We know that our clergy are doing ministry in a vastly changing landscape. They have a call. They want to continue to make an impact. And so we want to bring alongside our clergy the resources that can help them be more effective in their ministry.

Rev. Scott Davis: Secondly, we want to have collaboration among clergy and among churches. So the district developer will help with that. We talk about being a connectional system. This is to find ways that we can live into that connection. And thirdly, during the pandemic, more and more churches have been aware that we really need to find ways to engage our community. Oftentimes, we haven't been able to use our church buildings. And so this person will also help with that conversation about how to move into the community, not just in physical ways, but online as well.

Rev. Scott Davis: So the district developer is under the leadership of the district superintendent. And by operating in these three areas will help free up the DS to do the work of supervision, oversight of the districts, more of the senior administrative work as well. And as the effectiveness and fruitfulness over the long haul of our clergy goes up, that will help the DS's work.

Rev. Kirk Nave: Because these are going to be great people. These are going to be people who will listen. They are going to help us facilitate as clergy and particularly as local churches. The district developer's going to be key in all of that. One of the things we heard last fall when the district alignment team served the annual conference, both clergy and laity, one of the big things we heard was from clergy, that they felt they needed more support from the district office.

Rev. Kirk Nave: So you think, "Oh, there's going to be less district superintendents? How's that going to happen?" And that's where the district developer will come in. This next year will be challenging, as we have eight district superintendents serving all of our districts. But it will be during this time that we discover what it is the district developer needs to bring to the table in terms of mentoring, resourcing, coaching, facilitating for clergy as well as local congregations.

Sandra Fulcher: I first joined the iDAT on January 14th. It was then I heard about the role of the district developer. My first thought was how wonderful that clergy would have someone to provide valuable resources to aid in finding the lost one mentioned in Luke 15.

Rev. Kirk Nave: This is a big culture shift for us. It's not about institutional thing. It's not about districts. It's about alignment with the mission of the United Methodist church and alignment with the vision of the Virginia Annual Conference.

Rev. Scott Davis: And want to spend a moment walking through what this person would look like and how they would function. First of all, they would have the vision of our annual conference to make disciples of Jesus Christ who are lifelong learners who influence others to serve at the center of their focus. So for them, this is not just a mission statement that's up on the wall. They want to live this out as a way of life. They want to embody the mission of our annual conference.

Rev. Scott Davis: So this means, first of all, they know that they have not yet arrived. They're curious about learning more about how to do ministry in this age. And they also want to have an influence. They hear Jesus speaking through the Lord's prayer. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. They know that we want to have an impact for the kingdom.

Rev. Scott Davis: And they also want to serve. Their life is not ego-driven. They know that as Paul said in Philippians, after the example of Jesus on the cross who emptied himself and took on the form of a servant, they also want to live as servant leaders. So this means that they will also have an asset orientation as they move through the world. They can see the problems, but they can especially see the gifts that God is making available for ministry. And one of the biggest things I've learned in my work as a DS is to not put any limits on what God can do. There have been so many situations where I was not sure how things would turn out and God was able to do things much greater than I could ever imagine.

Rev. Kirk Nave: Another key component in this alignment process, another thing we heard last fall, was local churches know they need to reach out to the local community more than we currently do. We need to get outside the walls of our church facilities and get into the community and make those reconnections. And the district developer will help local churches in local communities collaborate with one another and then reach in service, and of course, as you reach in service, you're spreading the love of Jesus Christ. You're making connections with the local community. That is going to be a culture shift for us.

Sandra Fulcher: From my perspective, working as the Danville District Administrative Assistant, I'm stirred up about the possibilities of action in the local community. I remembered Bishop Lewis' first sermon, when she spoke of stirring up the passions of the Virginia Conference. We are tasked with finding new ways to engage the current assets available and strengthening ties already in place within the communities. I believe the district developers create a distinct advantage for clergy and laity to accomplish this.

Rev. Kirk Nave: This isn't just about the number of district superintendents and money, but rather how do we engage our communities in service and mission, spreading the love of Jesus Christ? Nobody wants to be a part of a local church that only exists for itself, that is serving itself. You can kind of understand that in the middle of

the pandemic and all the uncertainties that are surrounding us these days. We're worried about our own survival. But nobody wants to be a part of a church that's only concerned about itself.

Rev. Kirk Nave: There's a guy named Jesus who says, "You want to be one of my followers? Take up your cross. Follow me." So this is all about finding ways that we can serve our community. People do want to be a part of a church that is giving itself away in mission. And that's what really excites me about this.

Rev. Scott Davis: We will start building a pool of district developers in the fall. They will be appointed by the Bishop and the cabinet. I can hardly wait to meet them. And I know they're out there. And if you're watching this video, maybe you're one of them. And I believe God has placed people in our conference who can bring the gifts and graces that are needed to help us stay focused on our mission, which is to make disciples of Jesus Christ who are lifelong learners who influence others to serve.