Guide to Annual Conference 2018

There will be some variations to the Annual Conference process and format in 2018.

Great Day of Service

Following the Mission Service on Saturday, June 16, Bishop Lewis is asking all clergy and lay members to participate in a Great Day of Service, 2-5 p.m. This event will be broken into three sections: ministry within the City of Hampton, United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) kit building, and presentations on social justice issues. Each clergy and lay member will be asked to sign up for one of these activities prior to Annual Conference. Registration is forthcoming. Each participant will receive a T-shirt to be worn during the Great Day of Service. How will you help create an impact on the Hampton Roads area with your service? Below are the three service options:

◆ Ministry in Hampton Roads area (off-site): There will be two primary areas of work to accomplish outside the convention center: clean up and Block Walks.
  - **Clean up:** This area involves the physical labor of pruning, digging and the removal of debris from historical cemeteries and children’s parks. Also included is the removal of debris from several alleyways, around some of the schools and a youth community center. In the event of bad weather or extreme heat, there will be indoor activities, such as painting, in the area schools and youth center.
  - **Block Walks:** Working with several departments within the City of Hampton, volunteers will be handed a distribution packet to be delivered to the residents in targeted neighborhoods within the city. The purpose is two-fold.
    1. To make a personal contact having a face-to-face interaction with people in the neighborhood in order to offer support through a caring presence that may address needs they may have with contact information, a listening ear and, if invited, to offer prayer.
    2. To make a brief general assessment of the person’s well-being that if needed can be reported back to the city public health contact person. (There will be a brief orientation to all volunteers by the city to assist in this assessment.)

◆ UMCOR Kit building (Convention Center): There will be three stations set up in the convention center to build hygiene kits for UMCOR. Each station will hold eight to 12 people per shift and all of the material will be provided. The kits will then be packed, taped and loaded on a truck. Each shift of people can take breaks after 15-30 minutes. The goal is to build 3,000 kits.

◆ Social justice presentations (Convention Center): There will be three separate social justice issues addressed at the convention center. Each presentation will last 45 minutes and will feature a Q&A portion. Each person who signs up for this option can attend all three talks.

Annual Conference Schedule

To accommodate the Great Day of Service and complete the business of the Annual Conference, the schedule will be new in 2018. Annual Conference will begin Friday, June 15 at 10:30 a.m. with the clergy and laity sessions. The opening session will begin after lunch at 2 p.m. The Friday afternoon session will also be extended an extra 30 minutes to 5:30 p.m. before the recess for dinner.

*Reprinted with permission from the Virginia Advocate, March 2018. For more information see [www.vaumc.org/AC2018](http://www.vaumc.org/AC2018) or call 521-1134.*

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UM Center Closings

The District Office and the VAUMC Conference Center will close Thursday, March 29 at 1 p.m. and be closed on Friday, March 30 in observance of the Easter holiday.

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Richmond District

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March 2018

Friends,

Last Saturday, I enjoyed joining nearly 450 of you and other District representatives at the Bishop’s called “Chat and Chew 2.0.” During the time, we gathered in small groups, had robust discussion around the issues of denominational future and human sexuality, had a great time of worship, and enjoyed lunch together around tables.

We are still processing through the notes as we send them on to the Bishop. But there is one impression I hold that has floated to the top. Clearly, there are many congregations in our midst who simply have not dealt with this issue, haven’t processed this issue, and are not sure if they want to.

And I can’t say I blame them. We are all a bit weary of it and to be honest, more than a bit fearful of taking this subject on in our congregations. Nobody likes controversy, and we all have a healthy dose of fear within these conversations.

But as Tom Hanks said in the movie “Apollo 13,” “The earth is getting big in the window…” In other words, this very big thing is getting bigger and closer to all of us. As hard as the conversations are and as uncomfortable as it is dealing with it, the time has simply come.

But as you do, a couple of reminders. First, we are not alone in this nor are we the first to deal with church crises. The church has been around for two thousand years and it will still be here long after we are gone. Jesus Christ is still Lord, he is still head of his church, and he still will be even after General Conference 2020.

Secondly, we have resources. A quick review of General Conference, Way Forward Commission, and Virginia Conference web sites offer a bounty of possibilities. There are numerous books out there, all designed to help us face this earth in the window. Let me remind you, that we as Disciples of Jesus Christ are “self-feeders.” We don’t wait for someone to send us the link, or for someone to spoon feed us material to help us through the crisis. We go and find it and get it and put it to work.

In that vein, I would like to let you know about another upcoming opportunity. Because of this challenge in our congregations around this issue, we are going to have another training session for pastors and congregational leaders in the Richmond District. On April 28th, we will gather for two hours to receive an update on the information from the Way Forward Commission and the Council on Bishops, a discussion on how to work with conflict, and a robust conversation about the possible ways forward after General Conference 2020. We believe that this will be very helpful and encourage you to put it on your calendar. Specifics about the training will be coming soon.

Again, Jesus Christ is still Lord. The church will still be here after we are gone. Even so, we are in a kairos time both for us and our denomination. We need to engage and stay in the conversation. See you on April 28th!

In Christ,

Pete

Bishop’s Convocation on Race and Reconciliation

Bishop Lewis has called a convocation on Race and Reconciliation for Saturday, April 14, at Annandale UMC. It will begin with registration and a continental breakfast at 8:30 a.m. and end with Communion at 3:45 p.m. Lunch will be served. The convocation will empower participants to become life-long learning disciples who will be able to conduct the difficult conversations we all need to have related to issues of racial division, justice, and God’s call to ministries of reconciliation and peace.

The keynote speaker for the event is Romal Tune whose ministry has impacted the lives of thousands through examining their own lives and stories in transparent and honest ways; in short, to “help hurting people find healing.”

Register at <www.vaumc.org/events>. Call 521-1139 for more information.

Midsize Church Training

The Midsize Church Leadership Team invites pastors of midsize churches to a day of learning led by Phil Maynard. This training will focus on Phil’s book, “Shift: Helping Congregations back into the Game of Effective Ministry.” Discover the key shifts that all churches must make if they are going to have a fruitful ministry in the next century. With three dates and locations to choose from it couldn’t be easier to attend:

- March 12, Mountain View UMC, Forest
- March 13, Heritage UMC, Virginia Beach
- March 15, Floris UMC, Herndon

Registration is available at <www.vaumc.org/events>. Questions, call 521-1155.

Prayers for...

- The family of Rev. Allen Minter, retired, who died February 16.
- Rev. Jim Lavender, retired, who is receiving treatment for leukemia.
Talent Academy

Saturday, March 10
9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Beyond Sunday School: Empowering Regular folks to lead a God Movement featuring Rachel Billups

◆ You are One: Reclaiming the servant leader in You--Jesus called ordinary people to extraordinary God work. Our neighborhoods are full of brilliant and broken, spiritual and seeking people who are looking for hope. You are hope dealers.

◆ No Fear: Embrace The Mess of Ministry--What happens when boundaries become barriers that keeps us from the real work of disciplining regular folk, prioritizing people over programming.

◆ Coffee Talks, Family Walks, and Fellowship Dinners: The life style of discipleship--Living the Jesus way means embracing community as you go, where you live, when you work, and while you play.

◆ 12 Locations including Good Shepherd UMC, 9155 Hungary Road, Richmond. Register at <vaumc.org/5talent>. For more information call 521-1155.

Community Easter Celebration

Come out to Reveille UMC, Saturday, March 24 | 10:30 am, for a morning of Easter festivities including an egg hunt, petting zoo, live music, crafts, stories, and more. This event is free and open to the public. Reveille UMC is located at 4200 Cary Street Road, Richmond. Contact <www.reveilleumc.org> or 359-6041 for more information.

Holy Week Services

Reveille UMC, 4200 Cary Street Road, Richmond, will offer the following services during Holy Week:

◆ Holy Thursday, March 29 (fellowship meal at 5:30 p.m., worship service at 7:00 p.m.)

◆ Good Friday, March 30 (worship service at 7:00 p.m.)

◆ Easter Sunday, April 1 (worship services at 6:30, 8:15, 9:30, and 11 a.m.)

Contact <www.reveilleumc.org> or 359-6041 for more information.

When Words Fail

Westminster Canterbury Richmond, 1600 Westbrook Avenue, invites clergy, lay congregational leaders, service professionals, and caregivers to a seminar, When Words Fail: Practical Ministry to People with Dementia, Thursday, March 22, 1-5 p.m. in the Rice Assembly Room. The seminar will highlight the physical, emotional, and spiritual effects of dementia. Participants will learn: How to provide pastoral care through the various stages of dementia, practical ways to engage the congregation in supporting those affected by dementia, and effective communication tools. The $30 cost covers lunch and materials. Copies of presenter Kathy Berry’s newly published book, When Words Fail, and its companion, instructional DVD with study guide will be available for purchase. The DVD is a 137 minute demonstration seminar for individual or group use. Conference space is limited, so please contact Vanessa Perry, <vperry@wchristmond.org> or 200-1502, by March 16, for further information and registration.

Convergence

Convergence: Where Faith and Science Meet is a 9-day program, June 23-July 1, that allows rising 10-12th grade students to come to Randolph-Macon’s campus in Ashland and learn about the intersection of science and Christian faith. They will dive deeper into their religious beliefs, deeper into the study of science, and will meet other high school students and Randolph-Macon College student leaders with those same interests. There will be time in the classroom and outdoor experiences throughout the region. The cost to participate is only $100 for this 9-day program. Upon high school graduation, if a Convergence participant chooses to attend Randolph-Macon, they will receive a $1,000 annual scholarship for each year they participated in Convergence. Please visit <http://convergence.rmc.edu/> to learn more. Please contact the Rev. Kendra Grimes or Laura Ruxton at <convergence@rmc.edu> with any questions about the program.

Get Away from it All!

The VA PAUMCS (Professional Administrators of the United Methodist Connectional Structure) spring retreat will be held Wednesday, May 16 at W.E. Skelton 4-H Center in Wirtz, Virginia. Our speaker for the day, Martha Stokes is the director of Church and Community Relations for Pinnacle Living, formerly Virginia United Methodist Homes, Inc. She has been honored to represent the laity of the Virginia Conference at the 2008, 2012, and 2016 General and Jurisdictional Conferences. Martha served as the chair of the Virginia Conference delegation. She and Rev. Tom Berlin will lead the delegation back to the called 2019 General Conference session. The General Conference is an international body of nearly 1,000 delegates that meets every four years to wrestle with today’s issues in light of scriptural teachings and the church’s understanding of that teaching. It is the only body that can set official policy and speak for The United Methodist Church. The Jurisdictional Conference meets every four years in the months following the General Conference with the primary responsibility of electing bishops to serve within each jurisdiction. Martha will be sharing her reflections on the experience of the 2016 General and Jurisdictional Conferences and expectations for the called General Conference in 2019. This special meeting of the denomination’s top lawmaking assembly will be held February 23-26, 2019, in St. Louis, Missouri. The work before the 2019 Conference will be limited to acting on a report by Council of Bishops based on the proposals from the Commission on the Way Forward. The 32-member commission, appointed by the bishops, has the charge of finding ways for the denomination to stay together despite deep differences in our understandings of scripture, ordination and marriage relating to ever-changing expressions of gender identity and human sexuality.

Registration details can be found at <vaumc.org/uaumcs>.

Registration details can be found at <vaumc.org/paumcs>.
Ministers’ Convocation

This spring, April 23-25, The Center for Clergy Excellence invites all clergy, diaconal ministers, and professional/paraprofessional certified ministers in the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church for a time of Sabbath retreat, learning and fellowship together as ministry leaders at Ministers’ Convocation. Come be engaged in theological and academic conversation while experiencing rejuvenation for ministry. Theme is “The Paradox of Perfection: Our Wesleyan Heritage” with an emphasis on Christian Perfection. Dr. Rex Matthews, professor in the Practice of Historical Theology and Wesleyan Studies at Candler School of Theology will be teacher for the event. Bishop Sharma D. Lewis and the Rev. William Lamar, pastor of Metropolitan AME Church in Washington, D.C., will lead in worship. Worship, keynote and workshop sessions, lodging and meals will be held at Virginia Crossings Conference Center in Glen Allen. You are encouraged to register before Holy Week to ensure lodging availability. The deadline for in-residence registration is Monday, April 2. For event details and to register visit <www.vaumc.org/MinistersConvocation> or call 521-1126.

Lay Servant Training

◆ Danville District, April 20-21, at Concord UMC, Chatham, Basic and Advanced classes.
◆ Arlington District, April 27-28, at Herndon UMC.
◆ Rappahannock River District, May 4-5, at Warsaw UMC, Basic and Advanced classes.
See <https://www.vaumc.org/LayServantTraining> for details and registration information.

District Opportunities

◆ March 10–5 Talent Academy, Good Shepherd UMC, 521-1155.
◆ March 12–Midsize Church Training, Mountain View UMC, Forest, 521-1155.
◆ March 13–Midsize Church Training, Heritage UMC, Virginia Beach, 521-1155.
◆ March 15–Midsize Church Training, Floris UMC, Herndon, 521-1155.
◆ March 24–Community Easter Celebration, Reveille UMC, 359-6041.
◆ April 7–District UMW Prayer Breakfast, Mt. Pisgah UMC, 744-3034.
◆ April 7–District UMW On the Road in Mission day trip to Rising Hope UMC Mission Church, Alexandria, 744-3034.
◆ April 14–Bishop’s Convocation on Race and Reconciliation, Annandale UMC, 521-1139.
◆ April 20–21–Lay Servant Training, Concord UMC, Chatham, 521-1153.
◆ April 20–22–Conference UMW Spiritual Life Retreat, Eagle Eyrie, Lynchburg, 744-3034.
◆ April 23-25–Ministers’ Convocation, Virginia Crossings Conference Center, Glen Allen, 521-1126.
◆ April 27-28–Lay Servant Training, Herndon UMC, 521-1153.
◆ April 28–Commission on a Way Forward–Version RD, 521-1124.
◆ May 4-5–Lay Servant Training, Warsaw UMC, 521-1153.
◆ May 16–VAPAUMCS Spring Retreat, WE Skelton 4-H Center, Wirtz, 321-1124.
◆ June 1–2–Conference UMW Day at Ferrum College, 744-3034.
◆ June 5–Annual Conference Orientation, Good Shepherd, 521-1124.
◆ June 16–18–Annual Conference, Hampton Roads Convention Center, Hampton, 521-1134.
◆ June 16–Great Day of Service, Annual Conference, Hampton, 521-1134.
◆ June 23–July 1–Convergence, Randolph-Macon, Ashland, 752-7374.