



Richmond District

Virginia Conference United Methodist Church

PO Box 5606, Glen Allen, Virginia 23058

804.521.1124, FAX 804.521.1175, richmonddistrict@vaumc.org

February 2022

Dear Charlottesville & Richmond District Churches:

How have the people of the Charlottesville and Richmond Districts met the challenge of envisioning a new, united district for ministry in a new era? In November, I called together a task force composed of equal numbers of laity and clergy from both districts to meet, pray, study, and also listen to diverse members of both districts. From there we created a contextual, collaborative way of doing ministry that would be relevant to the local church (not top down) in changing and challenging times.

First, the group discerned that we could simplify the district level of administration-related committees (Superintendency, Finance, Trustee, Missions, and Board of Building and Location) so that we can spend more energy and resources on actually doing the ministry at local churches and communities rather than sitting at various meetings. There would be no changes to the current district ministry groups such as District Youth, Local Missions, Disaster Relief, UMW, UMM, and Lay Servant Ministry and others.

Secondly, we would have pilot clusters or circles according to geographical locations where laity and clergy will get together to learn from one another, to encourage one another, and to share ministry and mission plans and resources as a connectional body.

These initial clusters would be voluntary. We recognize that not all churches or pastors are ready for this change. Pilot projects will give us a chance to learn and implement this way of doing ministry better. Some pastors and churches have already shared their interest and desire to do this. We will begin with those who want to participate and learn. So, if you, as a pastor, or as a local church, desire to be on a pilot cluster group, please let us know.

Finally, in order to support these two foci--simplified District administrative committees and cluster pilot projects--two part-time staff persons will provide necessary resources and trainings as requested: Maria Maxwell for church revitalization, and the Rev. Jim Chandler for new expressions of faith and new church starts. All of this is to further the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

You may ask, why are we doing this? Why one district, why a new district name and all the rest? The simple answer is, though it is very painful to admit, the way we have been doing ministry is not necessarily working except in a few cases. We are aging, and we have fewer and fewer disciples. Therefore, it is time for us to bring new wineskins so that we can continue to provide the wine—Jesus Christ and his good news of love, forgiveness and new life—for many. Didn't Jesus say, he came to give his life, the precious wine, as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45)?

Grace & Peace,

Hyo Joong Lee
Hyo J. Lee

MaryKaye Cochran
Executive Administrator

Rev. Hyo J. Lee, Ph.D.
District Superintendent

Maria Maxwell
Coordinator, Church
Revitalization & Leadership