

We are GBUMC's Lay Members of Annual Conference and one of the responsibilities is:	<i>"...you are the connection from your church/district/agency to the Annual Conference and from the Annual Conference to your church/district/agency ... you shall ... 'connect' with your local church when you return.... along with the pastor, shall serve as an interpreter of the actions of the annual conference session ... (and) report to the local church council on actions of the annual conference as soon as possible, but not later than three months after the close of the conference."</i> <i>251.2 2016 Book of Discipline</i>
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The circumstances of the 2020 Virginia Annual Conference (VA-AC2020) was challenged by the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Good News is that VA-AC2020 was finally completed including all required and adjudicated items. Below are summaries of what occurred, actions taken, noted reports:

1. **The 238th Session of VA-AC2020** was originally scheduled this year for **June 18-21, 2020 in Roanoke, VA**. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the postponement of this conference and was rescheduled for September 19, 2020 as a one morning annual conference using an on-line remote method by ZOOM.us, and a voting method using software and assistance by Options Technology, Inc.
2. As information, the **2020 General Conference of the United Methodist Church (GC2020)** (a quadrennial, or 4-year event), that was originally scheduled for **May 5-15, 2020**, in Minneapolis, MN, was also postponed due to the pandemic, and rescheduled in Minneapolis, MN for **August 29 to September 7, 2021**.
3. **The 238th Session of VA-AC2020** started on **September 19, 2020**, via a Zoom remote conference call. The purpose of the VA-AC2020 was to fulfill the constitutional requirements of the United Methodist Church and served the needs and interests of Great Bridge United Methodist Church. After numerous on-line preparatory meetings in advance (see our GBUMC Lay Representatives Report dated September 28, 2020 for details) VA-AC2020 **did not finish and was postponed** to a later date (**Saturday, October 31, 2020**) due to wide-spread remote technology voting issues.
4. **The 238th Session of VA-AC2020** started on **October 31, 2020**, via an on-line service hosted by another technology service, Lumi Global that managed a "Zoom-like" conference view for participants using PC's that included access to all documents, and use of separate smart phones for secure voting. As information, your lay representatives voted about 20 times, most of them were procedural or related to finances. **VA-AC2020** finally occurred and completed all necessary business and reports. What follows is: 1) **A short summary of key points by your lay representatives**, and 2) **VA-AC2020 Highlights by Brenda Capen of the Virginia United Methodist Annual Conference News Service**.

1) **VA-2020 key points by your lay representatives:**

The 238th Session of VA-AC2020, after two previous scheduling's and postponements, was held and completed as on-line conference (due to COVID-19) on Saturday, October 31, 2020. The annual conference started at 9:00 am with a scheduled ending at 1:30 pm. Due to a number of reasons, the annual conference was continued in order to finish business and ended at about 2:10 pm.

- a. **PREPARATION:** Due to the technology issues confronted at the September meeting VAUMC obtained the service of a new technology firm who was able to host and handle secure voting for the approximate 1,700 VA-AC2020 representatives. Under this plan for on-line participation, representatives would need to use both a personal computer/laptop to observe the conference and use a smart phone for secure voting. Lay and Clergy representatives were given several open dates to become familiar with and test

their computers and smart phones ahead of VA-AC2020. Help lines and training videos were available and accessible in advance and throughout the conference.

- b. 9:00 am: The VA-AC2020 started. Your lay representatives observed and participated from home in Chesapeake, VA. Most of the VAUMC leadership and speakers were at sites in the Richmond, VA area. The initial 30 minutes involved a number of log-in problems, explanation of motion and speaking procedures, and other delays to accommodate the large number of participants. While worrisome at first, the remainder of the conference continued without problem.
- c. Bishop Sharma Lewis opened VA-AC2020, thanked the speakers and conference representatives, prayed and sang opening hymns. Details are in the News Service report that follows.

- d. Due to the modified conference (shortened length and agenda), most of the conference consisted of required reports and finances only.
- e. A number of revised conference rules were initially adopted and approved to accommodate the on-line method and to limit motions given this meeting format, emphasizing the hard stop time for the conference at 1:30 pm.
 - At least twice during the proceedings, motions were offered from the floor to consider other unspecified subjects outside the scope of this on-line conference. This was repeated later during needed rule changes to extend the conference beyond the 1:30 pm stop time in order to complete VAUMC business.
- f. Recommended items to review in the VAUMC's summary:
 - An approved change considered significant was offered by the Virginia Conference Site Selection Committee.
 - The District Alignment Team (DAT) Report being prepared by CFA. VAUMC districts will be under review and may be revised, see the note.
 - Chesapeake, Virginia was mentioned in connection with a new faith community called Impact UMC, has been established.
- g. **Treasurer's and Council on Finance Administration (CFA) Report:**
 - \$27,850,000 – Proposed 2021 Budget for VAUMC's CFA. This is a reduction of \$3.6M or -11.45% from last year.
 - o This is the source of local church apportionments and is at the lowest level in 15 years.
 - o General & Jurisdictional Apportionment obligations for 2021 were reduced overall by 17.2%, and specifically for VAUMC 23.48%.

Bishop Sharma Lewis, again, proved to a great Spiritual and Conference Leader for Virginia. More information on VA-AC2020 can be found on the Virginia UM Conference website: vaumc.org.

We appreciate the opportunity to represent GBUMC at the Virginia Annual Conference. If you, or any group would like more details or elaboration, we are available to discuss/present in any way.

Thank you, and blessings to you,

Denise Carbaugh, Ed Carbaugh
GBUMC Lay Representatives

ITEM 2: VA-AC2020 Highlights by Brenda Capen of the Virginia United Methodist Annual Conference News Service.

2020 Annual Conference Overview

by Brenda Capen | Oct 31, 2020 | News, Virginia News

Annual Conference was held virtually because of the pandemic.

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis presides over the 238th session.

The 238th session of the Virginia Annual Conference was held virtually, Oct. 31, 9 a.m. to 2:10 p.m. The session started with the Rev. Joshua King, chair of the Rules Committee, giving instructions on conference procedure.

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis called the conference to order and welcomed clergy and lay members to the virtual session. She gave thanks to the many people who helped make the session possible. She shared the theme this year is "See All the People." The pandemic and racial unrest has caused us all to see all the people, she said. "I know it is hard, I know we are tired of wearing masks and feel there are too many restrictions, but I want you all to be safe and informed," she said.

The memorial service and ordination service are available on the conference website at www.vaumc.org/Ac2020

Bishop Lewis shared she is calling the conference to three days of Praying and Fasting for the Healing of the Nation. The letter from Bishop Lewis is available at <https://vaumc.org/bishop-lewis-issues-prayer-and-fasting-for-the-healing-of-the-nation/>

The conference members joined in the singing of "Are We Yet Alive," being led by a virtual choir.

The Rev. Raymond Wrenn, who turned 102 in June, brought a prerecorded opening prayer. Danielle Cloud, a youth member from Fredericksburg UMC, Rappahannock River District, also brought a prerecorded prayer.

Host District Superintendent Dr. Hyo Lee welcomed Bishop Hasbrouck Hughes and his wife Mrs. Mera Hughes; Bishop Ray Chamberlain and his wife Mrs. Martha Chamberlain; Bishop Young Jin Cho and his wife Rev Kiok Cho; Unable to attend are Bishop C. P. Minnick, and Bishop Tim Whitaker and his wife Mrs. Melba Whitaker.

Dr. Lee led the setting of the virtual bar of the conference to allow for voting.

Elections

Conference secretary the Rev. Susan Reaves, led the election of: Assistant secretaries: the Rev. Delano Douglas and Mrs. Bev

Myers (Elected)
Chancellor: Mr. Steven D. Brown (Elected)
Election of the treasurer and statistician were delayed until a General Conference is held.
Editor of the *Journal*: Mrs. Madeline Pillow White (Elected)
General Evangelist: the Rev. Gregory West (Elected)
Annual Conference Committees as found in the *Book of Reports* (Elected)
Mr. John Meeuwissen, chair of the Board of Laity Nominations Committee, presented the 2020-2024 Conference Lay Leader nomination. The nomination of Mrs. Martha Stokes was put forth to replace Mr. Warren Harper, outgoing conference lay leader. (Elected)

Rules Committee

The Rev. Joshua King, chair, asked the rules be suspended for this conference session. The vote supported the request. The vote to allow conference to be held in a virtual format was taken and approved. King presented 15 proposals from the Rules Committee. The Rev. Bill Davidson proposed an amendment to delete a portion of numbers 13 and 21 of changes recommended.

Reports (*All reports can be found in the Book of Reports*)

Mr. Neal Wise gave the **Site Selection Committee Report**. The committee recommends to amend the Site Selection Committee report adopted at the 2019 Annual Conference to accept ONLY the next three years of location recommendations and further, the Site Selection Committee makes no recommendation for a location in 2025.

The Rev. Mary Dadisman gave the report of the **Commission on the Status and Role of Women**.

The Rev. Alan Layman gave the report of the **Minutes Committee**. He asked for the adoption of the Minutes following this conference session.

Richmond District Superintendent Dr. Hyo Lee shared the **Report of the Cabinet**.

The following congregations were voted on and are discontinued as of Oct. 31, 2020:
Charles Wesley United Methodist Church (Arlington Dist.)
Graham Road United Methodist Church (Arlington Dist.)
Pleasant Hill United Methodist Church (Danville Dist.)
Travis Chapel United Methodist Church (Eastern Shore Dist.)
Crawford United Methodist Church (James River Dist.)
Howard Chapel United Methodist Church (Winchester Dist.)

The Cabinet is working on a video project to focus on **Race and Race Relations**. It will be available for local church use and shared on the conference website. The first installment will be released Nov. 20.

The district superintendents shared their appreciation to clergy and laity who have met the challenges of 2020. Lee said, "The pandemic may have shut us down, but we have found strength in the Lord," he said. "We have offered love and faith to people who have suffered in a myriad of ways."

The Rev. Dr. Paul Baker gave the report on **New Faith Communities**. He thanked the Rev. Melissa Dunlap for her work with New Faith Communities. He also thanked the Rev. Mark Ogren, retired, who served for 46 years for the conference and served as the director of Congregational Excellence.

Two **new faith communities** have been launched this year:

- New Life International UMC @ St. Andrew's, John Obeng, Planter, Alexandria District
- Impact UMC, Tracy Bass, Planter, Elizabeth River District

Glory Sighting Video #1

A video on the Henry Fork Service Center, Danville District, was shared. [View video](#)

Conference Lay Leader (Martha Stokes, new conference lay leader)

After sharing remarks ([click here to view Harper's remarks](#)), outgoing Conference Lay Leader **Warren Harper** introduced incoming Lay Leader **Martha Stokes**. Stokes shared that she worked with the four previous conference lay leaders with her former position in lay leadership at the conference office. She emphasized the partnership between laity and clergy. Laity are 99.2 percent of the church, "and our voices matter." "This is holy time, this is holy ground," she said. She invited everyone to "take off your shoes" to stand on that holy ground. "Our words and actions matter now more than ever. Holy ground certainly doesn't need to be within the walls of our churches." [Click here to read Stokes' remarks to the conference](#) (pdf).

A gift was presented to Harper for his eight years of service to the conference.

The **Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc.** (VUMPI) video report was presented by Mr. Kenneth Peterson. The seven recommendations presented were approved by the conference.

The **Equitable Compensation Commission** report will be presented by Rev. Joseph Carson III. The minimum compensation schedule and floor schedule were recommended to stay the same for 2021 as it was in 2020. This was approved by conference.

The bishop asked Warren Harper to present the **Common Table Report**. The report was adopted by conference members. Harper also presented the nominations from the bishop, the

appointive Cabinet and the Conference Leadership Discovery Development Team in conjunction with District Nomination Facilitation committees. They were approved. The bishop consecrated the 2020-2021 boards and agencies.

Mr. David Dommissie presented the **Conference Statistician** report. The conference is 314,000 members strong. Some 2500 people professed their faith. The conference received \$192 million to support the ministries of the conference.

The Rev. Kathy Gochenour presented the **Harry Denman Evangelism Awards**.

The Rev. Brenda Laws received the clergy award. She is the Case Manager, Intellectual Disabilities Services, Eastern Shore Community Services Board, and pastor of the Greenbackville Charge.

Ms. Arleen Field received the laity award. She is a member of Grace UMC in Manassas.

Jackson Smith of Good Shepherd UMC, Richmond, received the youth award.

United Methodist Family Services (UMFS) was highlighted with a video presentation of the services they provide.

The Rev. Joshua King moved that the rules be suspended to extend the time to complete the business on the agenda. The motion was approved.

A video was shared by Bill Chaffin, conference **Scouting coordinator**. The video, and a story about the presentation of the Scouting Silver Torch award to Bishop Lewis are available on the conference website at <https://vaumc.org/scoutingministries/>

Glory Sighting Video #2

A video Glory Sighting #2 highlighted **Una Familia** on the Eastern Shore. [View video](#)

Offering

The bishop prayed for the conference offering and announced the amount would be shared in an upcoming e-Advocate. Some 50 percent of this year's **Annual Conference offering** is designated to Virginia area food banks and 50 percent to our Virginia Partnerships of Hope International Ministries – formerly called the Initiatives of Hope. The Partnerships of Hope ministries are Methodists in Brazil, Cambodia and Mozambique.

Treasurer and CFA

David Dommissie presented the **Treasurer's report**. There has been a shortfall in annual conference receipts which was partially offset by lower spending. Apportionment receipts are down. Conference leadership has reduced expenditures. He

praised the churches for working so well through the coronavirus pandemic.

Mrs. Betty Forbes, president of the **Council on Finance and Administration (CFA)**, gave a video report. The conference budget is more than 11 percent lower than last year's so more dollars remain in the local church. CFA's report was adopted by the conference.

The next report came by an action and request of the CFA. At the guidance of the CFA, a workgroup was formed to begin looking closely at the configuration of districts. The workgroup was named the **District Alignment Team**, referred to as the DAT workgroup. The co-chairs of the DAT workgroup are Mrs. Kathy Merry and Mr. David Dommissie. Merry gave the report. The work centered around the bishop's vision. How can we most effectively order our districts to facilitate the new vision? The DAT has conducted interviews around the conference to align structure to needs. It is a think tank, not an implementer. A recommendation is expected at next year's annual conference.

On Oct. 26, 2020, the conference sent out a number of documents related to the bankruptcy of Scouting. A letter was sent out to local churches if they want assistance from the Bradley law firm. Documents must be returned no later than Nov. 2, 2020. Questions may be directed to district superintendents. The business office will be available Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m., and Monday, 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., to answer questions.

Bishop Lewis **adjourned the 238th** conference with prayer, giving thanks to God for the clergy, laity, faith communities, ministries, churches, and fight against racism. She asked for prayers to guide us through the pandemic.

END OF REPORT