



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

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Recap of Virginia Conference COVID-19 (coronavirus) precautions

Dear Virginia Conference,

As we remain nimble in the face of COVID-19 with precautions implemented starting last week against its spread, I want to thank our clergy and local church staff across the Commonwealth who found creative and loving ways to lead us in online worship this morning. Here are some things to be thinking about for the week of March 16, 2020:

- **In-person church services** will be again cancelled for Sunday, March 22, 2020.
- **All preschools are directed to be closed until March 30, 2020.** Churches with preschools should be consulting their leadership on a number of issues for the employees that will not be working. If the preschool has paid time off or other benefits for employees that are out of work, think about using those. Some employees may also qualify for unemployment compensation. If the local church wants to seek donations to pay these employees while they are out, that would be a good thing to discuss as well.
- **During the week of March 16, 2020 and the week of March 23, 2020, defined as Monday – Saturday, our churches will remain open and attend to business in small groups and with proper social distancing.** Clergy should not allow large gatherings during this time. Governor Northam has banned all gatherings of 100 or more throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and all gatherings of 50 or more in the Peninsula. Furthermore, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) just announced that it recommends that organizers cancel or postpone events of 50 more people for the next eight (8) weeks. These requirements may lead to many event cancellations, especially dinners and weddings. Please use your discretion, remember the gathering size restrictions and make sure to use proper social distancing. Other church events can go on at the discretion of the clergy such as AA meetings, small group Bible studies, normal church meetings, etc.

Please be in contact with your district superintendent with any questions. You can keep up with the latest conference news about further precautions and COVID-19 information at: <https://vaumc.org/Coronavirus2020>.

I will be reviewing tonight's CDC guidance along with other aspects of the COVID-19 situation at a Cabinet meeting tomorrow and will continue to provide updates and direction this week and throughout this crisis.

Thank you for your attention to these matters and your love and service to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Peace and Blessings,

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis

Link to tonight's CDC information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/mass-gatherings-ready-for-covid-19.html>