

REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON REDISTRICTING

I. AUTHORIZATION

At the 2009 Annual Conference, the following motion was passed as amended:

CFA recommends the formation of a task force, appointed by the bishop, to review the current number of districts in the Virginia Conference and to present a recommendation to the 2010 Annual Conference regarding the reduction of districts from 18 districts to not fewer than 16 districts.

In response to this motion, Bishop Kammerer appointed a task force of 12 members: Darlene Amon, Benham Black, Warner Bonderman, Sallye Bowen, Clarence Brown, Robert Cofield, Thelma Crowder, Susan Garrett, Beth Givens, Maureen McKay, Kirk Nave, and M.J. Kim (who was unable to serve and was replaced by Raymond Wrenn). David Dommissie and Anna Workman were asked to staff the task force.

II. PROCESS

The task force spent the fall and early winter in a discovery process, collecting and processing information. Before the first meeting of the task force, questions were collected from all task force members on the subject: "What information would you need before you could make a decision on recommending a specific number of districts?" The following information was collected and discussed:

- Reports from 17 other annual conferences across the U.S. which had redistricted or were in the process;
- Virginia Conference financial and statistical data;
- Financial and statistical data from other SEJ annual conferences;
- Demographic data on the present 18 districts, including Lovett Weems' "Four Virginias" presentation, the location of churches with more than 350 in worship attendance and the location of new faith communities;
- The 2008 *Book of Discipline*'s paragraphs related to the Duties of District Superintendents [¶¶419-425] and District Structure [¶¶657-670];
- Individual reports from the 18 District Superintendents on the unique qualities of their districts and boundary issues;
- Survey related to district superintendent time structuring;
- Articles from church leaders — especially helpful were Dr. Donald W. Haynes for the *United Methodist Reporter* entitled "Wesleyan Wisdom: Creatively Rethinking the Smaller Membership Church" and "District Superintendency: A Reconsideration" by Dr. Russell E. Richey of the Candler School of Theology
- Information on recent past Virginia redistricting proposals — the 1969-1973 conversation, and the 1993-1995 conversation;
- A presentation by Peter Vaughn, former conference director of Church Extension, of an 18 district boundary proposal he completed in 2005 related to growth areas of the conference as an illustration of possible change;
- A presentation by Raymond Wrenn, also a former conference director of Church Extension, on possible 16- and 17- district proposals based on population changes and church relocations, with information about early redistricting plans from the early to middle 20th century.

Following this extensive discovery process, the Task Force spent a full day in January looking at its options. The following criteria had been adopted by the task force for this discernment process:

The Task Force, by direction of the 2009 Annual Conference, was to offer a vision for no fewer than 16 districts.

The proposed plan should include sufficient districts to permit every district superintendent to perform efficiently the Disciplinary requirements related to leadership, supervision, legal matters, appointment-making, and administrative duties.

The proposed plan should take into account the changes in the Virginia Conference since 1972 when the district lines were last changed substantially and attempt to equalize the differing duties and workloads related to each district — including responsibilities for revitalizing existing faith communities, new church starts, supervisory needs, and other variables.

(NOTE: The task force was very clear, from the start of its work, that district lines are, by *Discipline*, set by the Bishop after consultation with the Cabinet. ¶415.4 under "Presidential Duties of Bishops" reads: "To form the districts after consultation with the district superintendents and after the number of the same has been determined by vote of the annual conference.")

The plan proposed by the Task Force should be guided by the stated goals of the Virginia Annual Conference as expressed in its adoption of the Conference Vision Statement, the Conference Challenge, and the strategic "All Things New" plan.

The Task Force agreed to use a consensus model of decision making.

In all that the Task Force does, it would strive to be faithful to God's direction.

At the end of the process, the task force, by consensus, agreed to present a 16-district proposal to the annual conference.

III. RATIONALE FOR 16 DISTRICTS

The following reasons are offered for the 16 district recommendation:

- The 16-district structure change has the possibility of taking into account new demographic patterns and strategic groupings; there have been no major changes in district boundaries since 1972, almost 40 years ago, and yet Virginia has changed substantially since that time.
- Before 1972, the conference had 390,000 members served by a 16 district structure. If this task force's recommendation is passed by the annual conference, approximately 340,000 members would be served by a 16-district structure.
- A 16-district plan like the one presented in this report has the possibility of creating more balance in the number of charges on each district and the workload of district superintendents. The number of charges on a district in the Virginia Conference varies from 33 and 34 charges per district for the two smallest districts to 63 and 70 charges per district for the two largest districts.
- The 16-district plan is in line with the average number of charges and churches per district in the Southeastern Jurisdiction (SEJ). A 16 district Virginia Conference would have an average of 57 charges and 75 churches per district; the SEJ average is 58 charges and 77 churches per district. (Presently the Virginia Conference average is 51 charges and 67 churches per district, or 7 charges and 10 churches fewer than the SEJ average.)
- The 16-district plan is more in line with the number of districts per conference in Virginia's Southeastern Jurisdiction peers. Virginia has 18 districts, more than any other conference. Other than Western North Carolina at 15, no other annual conference has more than 12 districts, even though they may have close to the same number of total churches or number of members that the Virginia Conference does (*see table of Southeastern Jurisdiction Statistics below*).

Southeastern Jurisdiction 2008 Statistics

	<i>Districts</i>	<i>Churches per District</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Conference</i>	<i>Members</i>
			<i>Charges per District</i>	<i>Charges per District</i>		
Alabama-West Florida	8	644	81	461	58	190,656
Florida	9	701	78	676	75	421,983
Holston	12	909	76	591	49	197,595
Kentucky	12	813	68	642	54	179,250
Memphis	7	443	63	277	40	98,535
Mississippi	11	1,131	103	716	65	206,537
North Alabama	8	788	99	661	83	178,144
North Carolina	12	811	68	657	55	280,494
North Georgia	12	904	75	806	67	448,755
South Carolina	12	1,023	85	677	56	277,678
South Georgia	9	643	71	444	49	161,310
Tennessee	7	615	88	399	57	140,581
Virginia	18	1,199	67	911	51	429,967
Western North Carolina	15	1,123	75	879	59	383,391
Southeastern Jurisdiction	152	11,747	77	8,797	58	3,594,876

Reduced Districts as Proposed

Virginia	16	1,199	75	911	57	429,967
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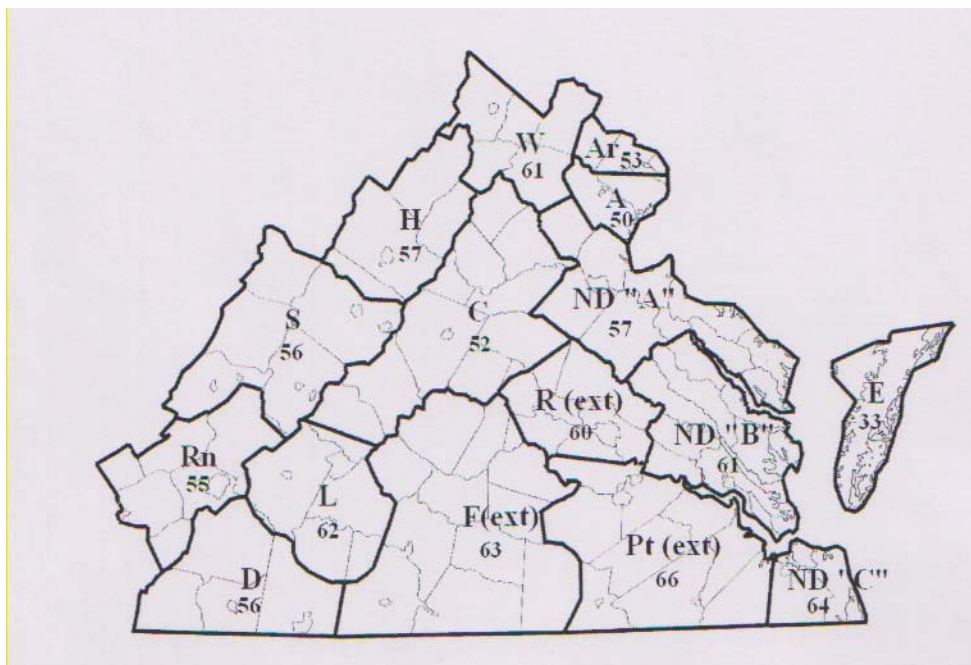
- The 16-district plan achieves short- and long-term cost savings. According to the conference Treasurer's Office, on the conference level the average cost in 2009 for two (2) district superintendents' salaries, pension, insurance, continuing education, travel and meeting expenses would be approximately \$235,000. On the district level, the average cost for maintaining two (2) district offices and a district parsonage or housing allowance in 2009 was approximately \$205,000.

- The 16-district plan allows more strategic use of lay and clergy in leadership positions by having fewer positions that need to be filled.
- The 16-district plan allows more strategic use of resources by moderately increasing the number of charges per district for a good number of our districts and thus giving districts more resources.

- Division of district property if new boundaries are set is not a major problem, as direction is given by ¶2517.3 of the 2008 Book of Discipline.

IV. FEASIBILITY OF 16 DISTRICTS

As stated earlier in this report, the Task Force is aware that district boundaries are set by the Bishop with the district superintendents. However, the Task Force felt it needed to develop a scenario for a 16-district plan to make sure that our criteria could be met by 16 districts. We therefore present the following plan.



(The number next to the district abbreviation on the map indicates the proposed number of charges.)

Alexandria: Cities: Alexandria, Manassas, Manassas Park

Counties: Fairfax (southern part, including Centreville), Prince William

Arlington: Cities: Fairfax, Falls Church

Counties: Arlington, Fairfax (northern part), Loudoun (part east of Catoctin Mountain, including Leesburg)

Charlottesville: City: Charlottesville

Counties: Albemarle, Amherst (northern part), Culpeper, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa (except Gum Spring), Madison, Nelson, Orange, Rappahannock

Danville: Cities: Danville, Martinsville

Counties: Franklin (except Boones Mill area), Henry, Patrick, Pittsylvania (southern and central part)

Eastern Shore: Counties: Accomack, Northampton

Farmville (extended): Counties: Amelia, Appomattox, Brunswick, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Halifax, Lunenburg,

Mecklenburg, Nottoway, Prince Edward

Harrisonburg: City: Harrisonburg

Counties: Augusta (northern part), Page, Rockingham, Shenandoah

Lynchburg: Cities: Bedford, Lynchburg

Counties: Amherst (Southern part), Bedford (except southwest corner), Campbell, Pittsylvania (northern part)

Petersburg (extended): Cities: Colonial Heights, Emporia, Franklin, Hopewell, Petersburg, Suffolk

Counties: Chesterfield (southern part), Dinwiddie, Greensville, Isle of Wight, Prince George, Southampton, Surry, Sussex

Richmond (extended): City: Richmond

Counties: Chesterfield (northern part), Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, Louisa (Gum Spring only), Powhatan

Roanoke: Cities: Roanoke, Salem

Counties: Bedford (southwest corner) Botetourt (except Mt. Olivet), Craig, Floyd, Franklin (Boones Mill area only), Giles, Montgomery, Roanoke

Staunton: Cities: Buena Vista, Covington, Lexington, Staunton, Waynesboro

Counties: Alleghany, Augusta (except northern part), Bath, Botetourt (Mount Olivet only), Highland, Rockbridge

Winchester: City: Winchester

Counties: Clarke, Fauquier (northern part), Frederick, Loudoun (part west of Catoctin Mountain), Warren.

New District "A": City: Fredericksburg

Counties: Caroline, Fauquier (southern part), King George, Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Westmoreland

New District "B": Cities: Hampton, Newport News, Poquoson, Williamsburg

Counties: Charles City: Essex, Gloucester, James City, King and Queen, King William, Mathews, Middlesex, New Kent, York

New District "C": Cities: Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, Knotts Island, N.C.

Under this plan, three new districts are formed by merger and are listed as Districts "A", "B", and "C". Three other districts would have their boundaries changed by the addition of a substantial number of charges; they are listed as "(extended)".

Under the task force's proposal, the major changes have taken place in the districts which have the fewest charges presently, that is, districts with between 34 and 51 charges. Those districts with between 52 and 70 charges have either had their numbers reduced or have stayed substantially the same. The one exception is the Eastern Shore; like other task forces before us, we bowed to the geographic issue.

It should be noted again that neither district names nor final district boundaries would be officially presented to the Annual Conference until the Bishop and Cabinet set the boundaries of the districts over the coming year. The Task Force respectfully asks that if the Annual Conference approves the reduction to 16 districts, that the Bishop, after consultation with the districts superintendents, set the district boundaries.

It should also be noted that this plan has been shared with the Bishop and Cabinet, and on March 9, the following motion was approved unanimously and recorded in the Cabinet minutes: "The Virginia Cabinet recommends both the 16 districts and the plan as presented to this date."

Susan S. Garrett, *Chair*

RECOMMENDATION

The Task Force recommends that the Virginia Annual Conference reduce the number of districts to 16, the reduction to take place following the 2011 Annual Conference.