



## THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

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### **Church Actions Pertaining to COVID-19/Coronavirus**

Dear Virginia Conference:

As cases of COVID-19 (coronavirus) continue to spread in Virginia and are expected to increase, the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church is carefully monitoring this situation and what it means for our clergy and congregants.

Safety and preventing the spread of the virus is paramount. With church services and other activities in public settings, we must be especially rigorous and cautious. We ask that you do the following:

***Stay home if at all ill or concerned and worship online.*** Anyone who is feeling ill, particularly from fever, cough or shortness of breath, should stay home. Please consider viewing a livestream of your church's service. If your church does not livestream [here](#) is a list of churches and links for United Methodist worship services throughout Virginia as well as [tips](#) to start livestreaming your worship services.

***Understand and be flexible if clergy are not present.*** I have also asked that pastors not perform services if they are not feeling well. This may cause some disruptions and even cancellation of worship as many of our churches are small and have just one pastor. Please be understanding about this and, time permitting, consider worshipping online or at a different church.

***Maintain excellent hygiene.*** This message from our public health authorities cannot be emphasized enough. Please wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face. Hand sanitizer should also be in highly visible places at all churches. Please use as necessary.

***Be a loving, non-anxious presence.*** Encourage those in your church and community to be non-anxious during this time and to use best cleanliness practices. We are people of faith and, as such, should lead from love and not fear. We trust in God and will extend compassion to those suffering.

**Pray.** Placing our trust in God, let us continue to pray for those suffering from COVID-19 and their families as well as for leaders and professionals in the United States and worldwide working to contain COVID-19 and find a vaccine.

Below are additional resources that I encourage you to review and check for updates.

Peace and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sharma D. Lewis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sharma" being the most prominent.

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis

Resources:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is updating information daily at <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- CDC information for community facilities: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>
- National Institutes of Health: <https://www.nih.gov/health-information/coronavirus>
- “Guidance for Congregations: In Response to severe infectious disease outbreak” – Resource prepared and shared with permission by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) [https://pda.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/pda/pdfs/preparedness\\_for\\_pandemics.pdf](https://pda.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/pda/pdfs/preparedness_for_pandemics.pdf)