

Virginia United Methodist Annual Conference

Hampton, VA Convention Center

June 16-18, 2022

We recently returned from the 240<sup>th</sup> Session of the Virginia Annual Conference. John Wesley started this idea many years ago when he was starting what was to become the Methodist Denomination. The conference was in person this year. The last 2 years it was virtual and harder to follow. In 2019, it was in Roanoke, VA. It will return there in 2025. This year and the next 2 years it will be in Hampton, VA. They try to move it around the state where it can accommodate the number of attendees and their families, and it is affordable. It is a big operation and convention to bring together.

We had over 1200 laity and clergy delegates (or members) of the Conference representing the churches across the state of Virginia gathered on June 16-18. They are churches of all sizes, WUMC being one of the largest. So, we are allowed 2 laity delegates. The business of the conference is to hear from the members what is of concern to them in the life of our churches. The theme was "United as One in WORSHIP."

This year, the big decision that was brought to the body, was reducing the number of districts and District Superintendents (DS) from 16 to 8. This was controversial last year but passed this year with a lot of motions and conversation. I believe the goal of Bishop Lewis with the consolidation is finding ways to reduce cost that affect our apportionments paid to the Conference for operations and support of the individual churches. The second focus of this will be to create efficiencies and synergies within the geographical locations. Our Richmond District is combining with the Charlottesville District. So now, Dr. Hyo Lee, our DS(which replaced Dr. Pete Moon), will have something like 144 churches and 155 clergy to oversee. He has spent the last year or so working with a committee and existing committees to consolidate this area.

Many perfunctory items are addressed and updated such as budget reports to the monitoring of being inclusive and having diversity representation. There are several issues that are addressed from new clergy being ordained to recognizing retiring ministers. Voting to close churches is one of the hardest things to watch each year. It is a sign that church could not support its activities, our reach and maintain the membership. While at this phase of that church, it is about numbers in some respects, we are reminded of the impact of not being accountable and keeping God's resources viable.

It is interesting to watch and participate. You better know your Roberts Rules of Order to participate! Ha! The participation also gives you a chance to see what is happening to other churches in Virginia. The worship is so inspiring to be a part of and see the Holy Spirit moving among the delegates.

Thank you for electing me to represent WUMC. It is interesting to listen and participate in the direction of our denomination.

Thank you,

Don R Vaught