

## Update: COVID-19 Requirements

The Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church and all local churches must place the highest emphasis on public safety at this time of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. Failure to do so will result in the death and severe sickness of our congregants and many innocent people. **This is a public health emergency and the steps that you have been directed to take below are wholly consistent with the State of Emergency that Governor Northam has declared.**

Therefore, all clergy who have or believe they have COVID-19 must notify the Virginia Department of Health and Tom Joyce, the assistant to the bishop, at [TomJoyce@vaumc.org](mailto:TomJoyce@vaumc.org) immediately. For ready reference, the Department of Health reporting locator is here: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/health-department-locator/>.

Similarly, we – the conference and local churches– must advise individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19, particularly in any church location (e.g. sanctuary, conference rooms, offices, meeting areas, etc.), to report this to the Virginia Department of Health. We must also report to the Department of Health any and all individuals who we reasonably believe were exposed to COVID-19.

Whether or not someone completes the forms, we have a moral and legal obligation to report known cases and the names of those exposed to COVID-19 infected people to the Virginia Department of Health and other local, state, and federal governmental agencies.

By also providing the conference with this information there is a back-up to ensuring public safety because the conference will also ensure that the information has been reported to the applicable agencies. Should the Department of Health misplace or be unable to find information by clergy, or if for some reason it is not reported correctly, we will be able to provide the information to them quickly and follow up.

We know that our clergy are some of the most caring people in the Commonwealth of Virginia and we know that our clergy want to do what is necessary to protect the public from COVID-19. Thank you for your attention to these matters and being so attentive to our members, visitors, and the general public that we all serve.

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis

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