



The United Methodist Church

Virginia Conference

1001 WEST MAIN ST.

ROANOKE, VIRGINIA 24004

Roanoke, Virginia 24004-5606

Barbara B. Lundy
Executive Director

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Email: barb@virg.umc.org

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Dear Virginia Conference,

This worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has forced both secular and faith communities to change the way we go about our work as we focus on the safety and well-being of individuals inside and outside of our communities.

On March 23, 2020, Governor Northam instituted many changes for the Commonwealth of Virginia which includes the closure of K-12 schools for the rest of the academic year and the closure of "non-essential" businesses as of midnight on March 24, 2020 for 30 days.

In light of these recent developments,

- **In-person worship services are cancelled on all United Methodist Church properties for the next 30 days.** This includes Holy Week services. We will revisit the possibility of re-opening our churches for in-person worship on or before April 23 when the state has is scheduled to be lifted. Meetings in the church parking lot, "drive-in" worship services and drive-in communion are not allowed on church property during this period.
- As for our preschools, the Cabinet and I recognize that childcare facilities on United Methodist Church property may want to respond to the current COVID-19 emergency by re-opening on March 30, 2020, or even after, under the new restrictions introduced by the Commonwealth of Virginia with particular emphasis on serving the children of essential personnel. Full information about these new restrictions can be found in the [FAQ document](#) on the conference website. We offer these guidelines for such situations:
 - Encourage children, parents/guardians, and staff to protect their personal health and the health of others by staying home if they are sick and avoid anyone home who becomes sick;
 - Educate your children's community and staff of the signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Conduct regular health checks of staff and children to look for symptoms of sickness and fever. Separate symptomatic people until they are picked up from the facility;
 - Classroom childcare settings must limit capacity to 10 individuals per room to include staff. Under the Safe Sanctuary policies of the Virginia Conference of the UMC, the ratio must be at 4:2 ratio (4 children: 2 adults) per classroom;
 - Alter programming to increase distance between children;
 - Have staff and children wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth;
 - Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are frequently touched;
 - Ensure that students are eating meals in the classroom; and
 - Besides the entities listed for contact, if a child, parent/guardian, or staff member develops COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19, the childcare