



The Virginia Annual Conference has produced for its churches and leaders a fairly comprehensive resource to help congregations return to “in-person worship” as permitted under the reopening guidelines provided by its state government and conference leadership. [Embrace the Now, Prepare for the Next](#) is remarkable in its breadth and detail.

When this new resource came to the attention of our conference communications office (NEWSpirit Communications) and was relayed to Bishop Peggy Johnson, she contacted Virginia Conference Bishop Sharma D. Lewis to request permission for us to share it with our churches and leaders as well. In the spirit of the United Methodist Connection, that permission was kindly granted. And so, here it is.

Very little of the content has been removed, and none has been changed; but nearly all of it should be adaptable to our circumstances here in Eastern PA. [Please let us know](#) at communications@epaumc.org if it proves helpful to you and your church and if you have any additional suggestions to share. Like the Virginia Conference, we pray that all our congregations and leaders will continue to stay safe and healthy, as they strive to “Do good, Do no harm, and Stay in love with God.”

[**Embrace The Now, Prepare For The Next**](#)

INTRODUCTION

When Bishop Sharma D. Lewis announced the cessation of in-person worship in the Virginia Conference due to COVID-19 in March of 2020, she did so only after significant prayer and thoughtful consultation with experts in the religious, legal, and scientific communities. Her closure of our churches was done with the singular goal of saving lives and keeping individuals and their communities healthy, as we did our part as United Methodists to help stop the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Likewise, when Bishop Lewis formed a workgroup in late April to develop plans and procedures for resuming in-person worship in our churches, she did so with the same

goal of keeping individuals and their communities healthy and safe. Following Bishop Lewis' example, the workgroup also consulted professionals and resources from a variety of disciplines in order to develop the resources you will find on this web page.

It is the vision of the work group that what you find here will be dynamic documents that will be updated with information gleaned from churches around the Conference as we walk together and learn from one another in these difficult and uncertain times.

“I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous;
do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

—Joshua 1:9

[Graphical Presentation](#) (pdf)

[Graphical Presentation](#) (PowerPoint)

The Graphical Presentation is a helpful resource for all members of congregations. It provides information found in the Plan Summary in a handy, checklist format while also offering succinct summaries of the different stages of reopening.

[Plan Summary](#) (pdf)

The Plan Summary condenses the full Handbook for Local Churches. This document is a helpful resource for both congregational Healthy Church Teams as well as the broader leadership of the church, as it offers a snapshot of the tasks before us, including necessary things churches can begin doing immediately.

[A Handbook for Local Churches](#) (pdf)

The Handbook for Local Churches is the master document. It provides detailed lists of steps congregations must take in order to gradually return to in-person worship in the Virginia Conference. The Handbook includes, in granular detail, what requirements are necessary while providing specific actions to meet these requirements. **This document was originally posted May 14, 2020. Any revisions made to this document by the workgroup are noted in the PDF link above with the date they were made.**

[Health Acknowledgement Form](#) (pdf)

The Health Acknowledgement Form is the document referenced in the Handbook for Local Churches.