

## 10 Ways to Care for the Emotional Health of Your Congregation During a Pastoral Transition

by Dr. Barry Howard, Coach & Consultant, Center for Healthy Churches

*As the district is planning for a record number of pastoral transitions in July, this article is being reprinted by permission from Leading Ideas, a free e-newsletter from the Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary and available at [churchleadership.com](http://churchleadership.com).*

A pastoral transition is one of the most impactful seasons in the life of a church. Whether a pastor retires or is appointed to another congregation, the transition can stir a wide range of emotions—grief, uncertainty, anxiety, excitement, and even division. How church leadership manages this process plays a crucial role in the emotional and spiritual health of the congregation for years to come.

To lead well during this critical time, it's essential to proactively support the congregation's emotional needs. Below are 10 strategies for nurturing a healthy church environment during a pastoral transition.

### 1. Acknowledge the emotions in the room.

Change—even expected change—can feel unsettling. Some church members may feel abandoned, while others may look forward to a new chapter. Create safe spaces for open, honest conversations where members can express their feelings. Validating these emotions helps prevent division and fosters unity.

### 2. Communicate clearly and consistently.

During a pastoral change, transparent communication is vital. Keep the congregation informed about the pastoral transition. Regular updates help reduce anxiety and build trust among members.

### 3. Honor the departing pastor.

Take time to celebrate the current pastor's service. Host a farewell service, share personal stories of appreciation, and pray over their next journey. A thoughtful send-off brings closure and lays the groundwork for a smoother transition.

### 4. Provide strong pastoral care.

Pastoral transitions can leave some members feeling spiritually adrift. Church leaders—including the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee, ministry staff, and church council/leadership board—should be intentional about offering emotional and spiritual support through encouragement and prayer.

### 5. Reinforce the church's mission and vision.

A church's identity is rooted in Christ, not a single pastor. Remind the congregation the church's mission remains unchanged. Keeping ministries aligned with the church's vision helps maintain focus and stability during change.

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THREE NOTCH'D  
DISTRICT

BOLDLY FORGING DISCIPLESHIP PATHS



## Passing the Baton

District Superintendent Hyo Lee is finishing his tenure next month. We are grateful for his six years of service to our district. Should you wish to thank him, please consider writing a note or card and mailing it by June 1 to: Three Notch'd District, 10330 Staples Mill Road, Suite 250, Glen Allen, VA 23060 and write "Celebration" on the envelope. You may also email a message to [TNDistrict@vaumc.org](mailto:TNDistrict@vaumc.org). Donations in Dr. Lee's honor may be made using this [LINK](#). One hundred percent of the donations will be divided between the Central Virginia Mission Hub (Culpeper) and Belmont Community Resource Services (Richmond).

Should you wish to welcome our new District Superintendent Rev. Grace Han, please send a card or letter to the address above and write "Welcome" on the envelope. Rev. Han will assume responsibilities as the Three Notch'd District Superintendent on July 1.

Next month, we will share the best ways to communicate with Rev. Han. Thank you for your patience as we work through this transition.

## Kit Packing Event: June 6

The Central Virginia Mission Hub is hosting a Kit Packing event **Sat., June 6, 9:00am**, at the Culpeper UMC pavilion. This packing event will be in conjunction with receiving Kits for Conference.

## Kits for Conference Collection Date: June 6

On **Sat., June 6, 9:00am-12noon**, the District will have two collection sites for Kits for Conference. Cleaning kits, hygiene kits, and menstrual hygiene kits will be collected. For UMCOR kit assembly directions, click [HERE](#).

- 1) **Charlottesville area: Culpeper UMC**, 1233 Oaklawn Dr, Culpeper. Contact: Darryl Lam, [darryllam@comcast.net](mailto:darryllam@comcast.net), 540-219-2829
- 2) **Richmond area: Lakeside UMC**, 2333 Hilliard Rd, Richmond. Contact: Kip Robinson, [krobin7856@aol.com](mailto:krobin7856@aol.com), 804-539-2494

## Volunteers Needed for Annual Conference: June 17-20

Annual Conference will be held June 17-20 at the Atlantic Union Bank Center, James Madison University, Harrisonburg. There will be a webinar **Orientation session for all attendees on Thursday, May 28, 7:00pm**. Click [HERE](#) to register for the webinar.

**Volunteers are needed** in the following areas: set up/take down, directional support, greeters, ushers, parking, registration, and transportation support. Click [HERE](#) to sign up to volunteer.

## UWF & UMM Breakfast: June 19

The United Women in Faith and the United Methodist Men are sponsoring a breakfast about Caring for God's Creation at Annual Conference on Friday, June 19, 6:30am, at Dayton UMC, 215 Ashby Street, Dayton, VA 22821. The speaker is Jeremy Harold and the cost is \$18/person. All are welcome to attend. Registration is available [HERE](#) and on the VAUMC website.



## Next Generation Choir Director Needed



Culpeper UMC is seeking a Next Generation Choir Director to lead and develop a vibrant choral choir for children and youth ranging from preschool-high school. This is a part-time, seasonal position (about 18-20 weeks/year) with an average commitment of five-eight hours/week. Interested candidates should submit resumes/inquiries to Cheyenne, [nextgen@culpeperumc.org](mailto:nextgen@culpeperumc.org).

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## 6. Maintain a consistent schedule.

Avoid making major changes to worship services or programs during the transition. Familiar rhythms provide stability and comfort. Once a new pastor is in place, there will be time to evaluate and adapt structures and schedules as needed.

## 7. Promote healing and unity.

If the transition follows a difficult season—such as internal conflict or leadership challenges—intentional healing is essential. Offer opportunities for reconciliation, reflection and spiritual renewal. A church that takes time to heal will be more receptive to new leadership.

## 8. Cultivate a spirit of hope and expectation.

Encourage members to view this transition not as a crisis, but as a divine opportunity. A hopeful attitude among leadership will positively influence the congregation. As Romans 8:28 reminds us, “God works in all things to bring about good.”

## 9. Create opportunities for fellowship and relationship-building.

Plan social events, meals and team-building activities to strengthen relationships during the transition. Laughter, shared meals and meaningful connection help maintain community and morale.

## 10. Pray the prayer of that never fails.

During the pastoral transition, invite the congregation to pray as Jesus did in Matthew 26:39: “Not my will, but your will be done.” A church that earnestly seeks God’s will will be spiritually prepared to embrace its next chapter with confidence and joy.

A pastor’s departure marks the end of one chapter but also the beginning of another. How a church navigates this transition will shape its emotional and spiritual health for years to come. By prioritizing clear communication, pastoral care, unity and prayer, a congregation can move forward with faith, trusting God will guide them as they help write the next chapter in their church’s story.



## New District & Conference Calendars

We have updated district and conference calendars now available for churches to publicize their events and see what is going on in other parts of the Virginia Conference. To view the calendars, visit:

- <https://threenotchd.org/calendar/>
- <https://vaumc.org/events/>

To submit an event for the district calendar, please use this **FORM**. Should you have any questions, contact the District Office, [TNDistrict@vaumc.org](mailto:TNDistrict@vaumc.org), 804-521-1124.

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” - Philippians 4:6-7*



## Summer Mission Week Experiences

This summer, Cross Connection is launching their first summer in Richmond with both Awareness and Access mission week experiences for middle and high school students! We are excited to welcome ten churches from North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland consisting of about 134 volunteers this summer to learn, serve, and be in community together as Christ taught us.

As this dream begins to take flight, we are in need of support in the form of referrals for our Access Week projects happening this July. The kinds of safe access projects we take on are: ramps, porches, steps/handrails, car work, and exterior painting. There is no cost for the work being done, and there are no barriers or requirements to receive help, with the exception of needing to pass a sex offender background check.

If someone you know or people in your congregation or community are in need of some extra assistance in this way in the Richmond area, we would love to help as best we can! You can refer yourself or someone else in the following ways:

- through our online form: [www.crossconnection.org/referral](http://www.crossconnection.org/referral)
- via Phone Call: 704-237-0349
- via Email: [referral@crossconnection.org](mailto:referral@crossconnection.org)

For more information about Cross Connection, please visit [www.crossconnection.org](http://www.crossconnection.org).

For any questions, please email Rev. Jo Ann Batteiger, Regional Director for Virginia, [joann@crossconnection.org](mailto:joann@crossconnection.org).



## Samaritan Program: May 10-June 21

Each congregation is encouraged to participate in a love offering for the Pinnacle Living Samaritan Program, which takes place between Mother's

Day (May 10) and Father's Day (June 21). This tradition dates back to 1948 when Pinnacle Living first began serving as the Virginia Conference Home for the Aged. The Samaritan Program offering ensures that individuals who enjoy a longer life do not have to move when their financial resources are exhausted. You can find helpful resources on our website at <https://www.pinnacleliving.org/samaritan-program>. Sample bulletin announcements, PowerPoint slides, Worship item are available. For offering envelopes or to have someone give a brief presentation about the Samaritan Program or if you need additional information, please reach out to: Rev. RJ Jun, Church and Community Director, 804-474-8718, [rjun@pinnacleliving.org](mailto:rjun@pinnacleliving.org).

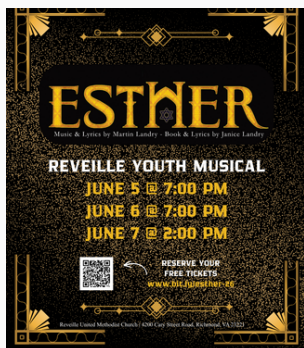


## Older Adult Ministry Leader Survey

The VAUMC Older Adult Council is collecting names of church leaders who are involved in Older Adult Ministries. Completing this survey will assist the Older Adult Council in:

- 1) creating a useful database as we seek to create opportunities for learning to best support your ministry
- 2) enable us to help you build connections with other congregations and communities, all in the interest of better serving Older Adults.

You can access the survey [HERE](#). Thank you for your participation.



## "Esther" Youth Musical: June 5-7 & Country Singer Amy Ladd: May 12 @Reveille UMC

You are invited to see Gospel & country singer Amy Ladd at Reveille's Fellowship Club on Tuesday, May 12, 11:00 am, in the fellowship hall. Amy has shared the stage with many classic country legends like John Conley, Jack Green, and Kitty Wells. She was also co-host of Sunday Morning Gospel on WXGI Radio in Richmond. Guests will enjoy fried chicken and beverages, and attendees are asked to bring a side dish or dessert to share. RSVP to attend at [www.reveilleumc.org/fellowship-club](http://www.reveilleumc.org/fellowship-club). Reveille United Methodist Church is located at 4200 Cary Street Road, Richmond, VA 23221.



## Be Still & Know Women's Conference: July 18

The Women in the Word, a weekly bible study, presents "Be Still and Know", a women's wellness conference on Sat., July 18, 9:00am-3:00pm, at Woodlake UMC in Chesterfield. This conference promises to provide a path to physical, emotional and spiritual wellness. Speakers include: Dr. Mary Brandon, DO; Cameron Kempson, MEd; and Rita Stewart, MEd, M.A.C.E. You are invited to step away from your busy routine into a space of balance and renewal with women who truly understand. You're invited because your wellness matters. Step away from the noise and reconnect with your purpose, passion and power. The cost is \$65 and includes lunch. Click [HERE](#) to register.

## Three Notch'd District Leadership

Three Notch'd District Office  
10330 Staples Mill Road, Suite 250  
Glen Allen, VA 23060  
PHONE: 804.521.1124  
EMAIL: [TNDistrict@vaumc.org](mailto:TNDistrict@vaumc.org)

- Area Bishop - Rev. Sue Hauptert-Johnson
- District Superintendent - Rev. Hyo J. Lee, Ph.D.
- Innovation Coordinator - Rev. Jim Chandler
- District Board of Church Location & Building Chair & Property Manager - Jim Mallon
- District Leadership Board Chair - Don Vaught
- Executive Administrator - MaryKaye Cochran
- Lay Leader - Elizabeth Farrell
- Associate Lay Leaders - Bert Asby, George Batten, Susan Custer, Lauren Leggett, Bob Pattison
- Treasurer - Ivy Solis
- Youth Coordinator (Richmond area) - Mary Elder
- Youth Coordinator (Charlottesville area) - TBA
- UWF Co-Presidents - Jean Swann, Sandra Thornton