



# Staunton District

## VIRGINIA CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

P. O. Box 1048  
26 Orr Drive  
Fishersville, VA 22939

Office: (540) 932-1055  
Fax: (540) 932-1054

**Kathleen Overby Webster**  
District Superintendent  
Email: StauntonDS@vaumc.org

**Martha Reynolds**  
District Program Director  
Email: StauntonDistrictPD@vaumc.org

**Donna Desper**  
Administrative Assistant  
Email: StauntonDistrict@vaumc.org

**David Mawyer**  
District Treasurer  
Email: SDTreasurer@vaumc.org

**Robin Powell**  
District Lay Leader

To: Clergy  
Lay Leaders  
Pastor-Staff-Parish Relations Chairpersons  
Finance Chairpersons

From: Kathleen Overby Webster, District Superintendent

Date: August 2005

*The local church provides the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs. It is the community of true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers and the redemption of the world.*

*The church of Jesus Christ exists in for the world. It is primarily at the level of the local church that the church encounters the world. The local church is a strategic base form which Christians move out to the structures of society. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God, Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture to all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches, to defend God's creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church, as minimal expectations of an authentic church. (The Book of Discipline 2004, ¶201-202)*

*We envision churches where all God's people are welcomed at table, nurtured and transformed to be Christ to others in the world. (Virginia Conference Vision Statement)*

Grace and peace to you in these hot summer days. Already my thoughts are turning to the autumn, the season of bazaars, and football games, and, of course, Charge Conferences!

In some ways, my mind and heart are spinning with images and words from this summer

- Working and traveling with 47 youth and adults from across the district in mission together in Guatemala

- Celebrating 12 Covenant Relationships with GBGM Missionaries where there were only 4 two years ago—but lamenting that we are still a long way from 87!
- Hearing convicting thoughts from a sermon preached by Bishop Lindsey Davis (North Georgia Conference) at Junaluska:
  - Church membership is the church of the past
  - Worship attendance of the church of the present
  - Professions of faith are the church of the future
- Reading Paul Nixon’s statement in a NetResults article: *I refuse to lead a dying church*
- Rereading Harold Percy’s article in NetResults about the clear distinctions between “Maintenance” and “Mission” congregations
- Reflecting on the clear signs of decline in many of the churches on the district as evidenced by the Transformation Surveys
- Noting that on that same sermon Bishop Davis told a story of an encounter with a pastor in his conference who asked why some churches (particularly those independent churches around) were growing so explosively and so many others were not. The pastor expected some sort of “systems answer” but got this assessment from his bishop. Bishop Davis said he believed those churches that were growing had a “passion for souls.”

In light of all this I am compelled to ask:

Do we (you and I and each church on the district) have a passion for souls?

How is that passion being lived out so that those outside the church are hearing, seeing, experiencing the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ?

The theme for this year is ***Christ for Others in the World***. The Scripture focus once again is **2Corinthians 5:16-20** and **Matthew 28:16-20**. Core questions for each leadership team are:

- How will you make disciples by welcoming new people to Christ through the church?
- How will you make disciples by nurturing persons in their faith?
- How will transformed disciples be Christ to others in the world?

We will celebrate the Eucharist during each Charge Conference. I will provide the juice, bread, chalice, paten, and worship order. Martha Reynolds, Program Director, and I will share with each pastor the leadership for this worship.

Conference forms may be found on the Conference Web Site

<http://www.vaumc.org/index.cfm/fa/content.view/menuID/863.htm> and the District forms may be found on the District Web Site: <http://www.stauntondistrict.org>