

## **The Reverend Sharma Denise Lewis**

The Reverend Sharma D. Lewis serves as the District Superintendent of the Atlanta-Decatur-Oxford District in the North Georgia Conference. This very diverse district includes sixty (60) local churches ranging in size from as few as 25 to as many as 3,500 members.

Reverend Lewis, a second-career pastor, has a distinguished record of service in the North Georgia Conference beginning with her first appointment in 1999 as the Associate (and subsequently Senior Associate) Pastor of the 8,000 member Ben Hill UMC in Atlanta. In 2004, she was appointed as the first African-American and first female Senior Pastor of the Powers Ferry UMC, a cross-racial assignment in Marietta, GA.

In 2007, Reverend Lewis became Senior Pastor of Wesley Chapel in McDonough, GA. During her three-year tenure, over 600 new and restored members were added to Wesley Chapel, and worship attendance doubled. Her visibility as a strong spiritual and pastoral leader propelled her into numerous leadership roles in the local community, including Hands on Henry County and Many Hearts, Many Hands McDonough. Reverend Lewis' remarkable pastoral leadership at Wesley Chapel enabled her to receive the Harry Denman Award for Evangelism in 2010, as well as the G. Ross Freeman Leadership Award.

An Elder in Full Connection in the North Georgia Conference, Reverend Lewis has offered her gifts to The United Methodist Church in a variety of ways. Presently, she serves as a Board member of the Wesley Woods Foundation, United Methodist Children's Home, Breakthru House, Branam Tower Advisory Board, Southeastern Jurisdictional (SEJ) Intentional Growth Center, Committee on Coordination and Accountability, SEJ Committee on the Episcopacy, North Georgia COE, and as the Cabinet Representative for United Methodist Women, the Executive Committee on Church Development and the Committee for Equitable Compensation.

Reverend Lewis has served as a Chairperson of the Ethnic Local Church Concerns Committee, Chairperson of the District Superintendency Committee (Griffin District), Vice-Chairperson of the Wesley Woods Foundation Board, Vice-Chairperson of the North Georgia Church Development Committee, the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, Bishop's Task Force, Reserve Delegate to SEJ Jurisdictional Conference (2008), Delegate to the World Methodist Conference (2011), and member of Black Clergywomen of The United Methodist Church. In June 2011, the North Georgia Conference honored Reverend Lewis by electing her as the first African-American female to lead the Delegation to the 2012 General and Jurisdictional Conferences. In 2015 she was once again voted to lead the Delegation to the 2016 General and Jurisdictional Conferences. The members of the North Georgia Conference Delegation have unanimously endorsed her as their episcopal nominee.

Reverend Lewis was born and raised in Statesboro, Georgia in a loving Methodist family where individuals have answered God's call to serve the church and to minister to God's people. A graduate of Mercer University (B.S., Biology, 1985), the University of West Georgia (M.S., Biology, 1988), and Gammon Theological Seminary at the Interdenominational Theological Center (M.Div., 1999), Reverend Lewis worked as a research biologist and chemist prior to surrendering to God's call upon her life.

Active in the community, she was a vital part of the Metro State Women's Prison Women of Faith Bible Study and Worship Services, Peachtree Pine Homeless Shelter, and has led mission experiences to Jamaica, Kenya and the Philippines. Reverend Lewis is a member of the Atlanta Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. She has received the Delta Sigma Theta Pinnacle Award and the Torch Award. She is the recipient of the 2014 Gammon Theological Seminary Distinguished Alumna Award.