

**An Open Letter to the Greater Hillsboro Community
November 16, 2020**

An Update on Honoring Those at Hillsboro UMC's Arnold Grove East Cemetery

We are pleased to announce that in the coming days construction will begin on a memorial to 73 people in unmarked graves at the Arnold Grove East Cemetery, which was established in 1847 and is now part of Hillsboro United Methodist Church (UMC). The remains of Freed African Americans and Slaves, Mulattos, Native Americans and Europeans, Brothers and Sisters in our Christian faith, are buried in this cemetery.

More than \$40,000 has been committed to this project. After careful review and discussion, the design has been completed and related contracts negotiated and signed. Hillsboro UMC and a mission partner, the Winchester UMC Board of Missions, are providing the funding.

In 1835, the Arnold Grove Methodist Church was constructed and established by abolitionists with the Reverend William D. Wicks presiding. The African American community was invited to worship in the church and to bury their dead in the East Cemetery. The graves were identified in April 2018 following the hiring of a geologic consultant who used special equipment to view underground. A commemorative sign has been placed at the area.

The memorial will have a 65-foot long and four-foot high stone wall, placed on a solid foundation. In the center of the wall, on mounted aluminum letters, will be the following scripture from John 1:12 "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of GOD."

In addition, each resting place will have a commemorative stone measuring six inches by six inches by nine inches, with a cross. There will be stone steps to enter a memorial garden as well as cornerstones and an engraved cross.

The project is expected to be completed by December 31, 2020. When the pandemic subsides, the church plans to have a ceremony to formally dedicate the memorial, where all in the community will be welcome.

Updates will continue to be provided. We are also grateful for the many people who have helped to make this possible, particularly the congregation at Hillsboro UMC and Laity Leader Al Gooden. Mayor Roger Vance of Hillsboro has also been quite supportive of the project as have the people of Hillsboro.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Steven Summers

Rev. Dr. Sarah Calvert

Rev. Ralph Carver

Note: Effective November 16, The Rev. Dr. Sarah Calvert is the District Superintendent for Hillsboro United Methodist Church in the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church. She replaces The Rev. Dr. Steve Summers who has been appointed to service as the Director of Connectional Ministries for the Conference. Rev. Carver is the pastor at Hillsboro UMC.