Greetings from the United Methodist Church

on the occasion of

The Inauguration of President Bradley W. Bateman
Saturday, April 26, 2014

The Reverend John. B. Peters

Executive Director, Association of Educational Institutions, Virginia Conference, United Methodist Church

On behalf of 330,000 United Methodists in the Virginia Conference, I bring you heart-felt greetings on this glorious day as Randolph College inaugurates its 10th President, Dr. Bradley W. Bateman.

The United Methodist Church, formerly Methodist Church, has fostered a long standing and close knit relationship to Randolph College, formerly Randolph Macon Women’s College.

In 1820 the Baltimore Methodist Conference, of which Virginia was a part established a resolution affirming the importance of implementing a literary institution. This was completely consistent with the Methodist founder John Wesley who was quite a scholar in his own right and believed in combining learning and vital piety. When a charter for the Randolph Macon system of colleges and preparatory schools was approved, the Virginia legislature wanted to ensure that it was in the Jeffersonian model emphasizing separation of Church and state.

When the first trustees of the college were appointed, only 5 of the 30 were Methodists, perhaps to keep the school from appearing to strongly denominational. However, the United Methodist Church has been a consistent supporter and one of the largest donors to Randolph College since its inception. United Methodists have had a deep sense of pride toward this institution known for its academic excellence and for producing leaders for both the church and the society in general.

In 1890 when William Waugh Smith, who was also President of Randolph Macon in Ashland, took on the venture of establishing Randolph Macon Women’s College, he understood the enormous challenge he was facing. He needed to raise $100,000 in endowment, $100,000 for buildings and over $20,000 for property and development.

Remarkably, in 3 years’ time the task was completed with 87% of the funds coming from Lynchburg residents. As a result, in 1893, the doors of Randolph Macon Women’s College were opened for students. This school grew into one of the finest women’s colleges ever and was occasionally referred to as the Harvard of the South.

The vision of W. W. Smith, the first president, was enormous. His monumental efforts for the betterment and increased stature of this college were extraordinary.

Today we celebrate the inauguration of another exceptional leader. Dr. Bradley W. Bateman is demonstrating the vision and leadership to lead Randolph College to even greater heights focusing upon
the centrality of liberal arts, increasing the college’s academic reputation, and continuing to create leaders for the world and the church.

The United Methodist Church holds deep affection and a profound sense of pride in our part in the beginnings of this great institution. We will continue to offer unwavering support, financially, emotionally and spiritually.

Today we come in a spirit of thanksgiving to God recalling the history of this great institution, Randolph College and celebrating the gifted, energetic and principled leadership of our new President Dr. Bradley W. Bateman, one who certainly fits the mold of our founder W. W. Smith.