**Eastern PA Conference Communications Resource Team Meeting Notes
November 12, 2020, 7-8:30 PM via Zoom Video-conference**

**Present:** John Bletsch (John B), John Coleman (John C), Sabrina Daluisio, Dawn Taylor-Storm. Jared Stoltzfus and Rob Stippich

1. John C share that he reported on Communications to the Bishop’s Cabinet that morning. He also introduced Dawn Taylor-Storm, Director of Connectional Ministries, new to our team.
2. Dawn said she wants to find ways for our communications to get closer to and be more readily consumed by our members in the pews because too many people don’t know what we’re doing and how they can help. She emailed personal invitations to some leaders to promote attendance at recent key events. She also suggested producing and posting brief online videos on social media as an occasional alternative to publishing stories for people who increasingly don’t want to read. Her brief series of CMGN (Connectional Ministries Good News) short videos on Facebook that introduced Connectional Ministries people and places are a good example. Her short video interview of Luky Cotto prompted a pastor, Wendy Bellis, to contact Luky about starting a ministry of outreach to Latino neighbors at her church, Morrisville UMC.
3. Church Communications & Marketing Training & Resourcing:

- 2020 Tools for Ministry: Communications/Marketing courses were taught in 3 districts by Kevin Kresge (West), Sue Kiefner (North) and John Bletsch (South) aided by Faith Turnbull, Social Media Marketing Intern at St. Matthew's of Valley Forge UMC. Kevin Kresge will teach a marketing course in our first online Tools for Ministry session March 13, 2021.

- Laity Academy 2020 was canceled due to the pandemic. Planners of the 2021 academy are considering also offering online classes throughout the year and seeking people to teach them. Sabrina suggested we ask Diane Wrisley about offering a Communications class online.

- John B said he recently learned to use Final Cut Pro video-editing software (via YouTube) to solve a need at this church. He said he might be able to do some light editing for us.
- Dawn suggested team members might offer short communications skills tutorials to churches using Zoom. For example, she prompted John B to consider teaching use of Final Cut Pro. (Maybe ask Faith Turnbull also, and Kevin Rutledge and Kevin Kresge to teach other short turorials?) She said Baltimore-Washington Conference does this. John C said UMCom has good online tutorials in various topics on its website that needs greater promotion to our members. John B suggested we make this idea one of our goals for 2021

1. John C. talked about recent and upcoming online teaching events for church leaders sponsored by the Congregational Development Team—e.g.: Digital Ministry for the Rest of Us; Dealing with Church Bullies; Mike Slaughter on Church Multiplication; several weekly book studies; etc. Other groups have sponsored online learning events also—e.g., Commission on Religion & Race. John wants to explore how we can extend the value of these events by making recordings available and repackaging & repeating content in other media presentations. Dawn said there will likely be more online Conference teaching events and meetings in the foreseeable future and maybe some hybrid events offering both onsite and online components.
2. The 2021 Annual Conference theme will be “**Come to the Water**” and will focus on the role and importance of baptism. We need creative ideas to promote this theme. A highlight of our 2020 Annual Conference was a Connectional Ministries video report using the Conference vision statement (“United in Christ, Committed to Transformation”) and mission statements.
3. John C. reported on:
* recent and upcoming news and feature stories in our media, and the need for more local church stories to balance all the Conference-level reporting;
* his focus on advance promotion of events but not much post-event coverage due to the effort required to write post-event stories;
* the process for determining what gets featured in NEWSpirit newspaper versus just on the website.
1. John C reviewed strategies and introduced pages, changes and key features (e.g., fully searchable clergy and church directories) in the newly designed website, set to launch in Feb. 2021. He also expressed a desire for articles from CRT members in the future—blog essays (brevity is fine); sermons, news & information, and observations about ministry, life, church, society, etc. Or even just thoughts that John can edit, flesh out and develop into articles. That would suffice.

Sabrina suggested we create & offer visitors a video tour on our website showing the site’s key features and functions. Jared suggested a video tour tool that’s used on his Jubilee Store’s new site. John C said we hope to produce and use more video content on the new site. Rob reminded us of his earlier suggestion that we solicit blog writings, video reflections and podcast recordings of pastors to feature on the site.

1. John C reported on:
2. [**Local Church Crisis Communications Plan**](https://www.epaumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/LocalChurchCrisisCommunicationsPlan.pdf) (On our webpage but needs promotion.)
3. Team members voted to approve a new[**Communications Policy for Reporting and Promoting News and Events**](https://www.epaumc.org/wp-content/uploads/Communications-Policy-for-Reporting-and-Promoting-News-and-Events.pdf)policy—i.e., non-conference-affiliated events get reported as news but not promoted.
4. An Editorial[**Style and Reference Guide, by UM Communications**](https://www.epaumc.org/wp-content/uploads/UMN_Stylebook_2020.pdf) **on our website**
5. Communications & Marketing Strategic Plan(Still need to develop one)
6. Team members agreed to meet again in late February or early March 2021. John B & C will send possible dates and times.