

Historic 2020 Annual Conference makes big decisions in little time

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

To ensure members' safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, the 234th Eastern PA Annual Conference conducted its delayed business session solely online Oct. 13, with an agreed-upon, reduced agenda that it processed in under four hours via a Zoom video-conferencing webinar.

And the next Annual Conference is scheduled to be conducted online again, May 21-22, 2021, since the pandemic will likely still be a hindrance to holding the large yearly gathering onsite.

Bishop Peggy Johnson presided over 2020's historic, perhaps shortest session on record, which featured worship and presentations of only essential resolutions and reports—all pre-recorded. The live portion included legislative questions and answers but no amendments or debate. Non-voting persons could view the livestreamed session on the Conference's Facebook page.

Votes were cast by the 714 attending members using the secure, online eBallot system and a Zoom vote by telephone option. The reduced, online format was approved in a pre-conference online

session August 26 that voted for temporary rules changes. However, the 2021 session will likely be expanded to allow for legislative amendments and debate before voting.

Camp Innabah land sale authorized

Nine key, time-sensitive 2020 Resolutions were presented and passed. (Other 2020 resolutions not presented to this session may be presented to the 2021 Annual Conference.) Two controversial resolutions each drew about a half-dozen questions.

A resolution (#2020-09) to authorize Conference Trustees to sell up to 50 +/- acres of Innabah Camp & Retreat Center property for residential use to pay off Camp & Retreat Ministries (CRM) budget deficits passed by 522 to 74 votes, with 11 abstentions. The 2020 and anticipated 2021 deficits are partially the result of the pandemic that forced cancellation of summer camps and retreats this year and will probably also limit retreats in early 2021. A five-year accumulated payroll debt at Innabah—totaling nearly \$400,000, with budget shortfalls in 2015, 2018 and 2019—also necessitated the land sale proposal.

CRM board president the Rev. Don Keller presented the proposal and answered questions. He reported that all four camps are stable despite the unavoidable deficits. The land being considered contains no structures and its sale would not hinder camp

programs. His report included a video of Bishop Peggy Johnson's appeal for special giving to support the camps in their time of need.

Grandview UMC disaffiliation request approved

The other controversial resolution (#2020-05) was to approve the disaffiliation of Grandview UMC in Lancaster, in accordance with temporary church disaffiliation rules adopted by the 2019 Special General Conference. Those rules—which are in effect until December 2023—allow for churches to disaffiliate and retain their church properties—which are held in trust and typically would revert back to the annual conference—if their decision is prompted by United Methodist Church disciplinary laws regarding the rights of “self-avowed, practicing” lesbian and gay members.

Those laws, upheld by the 2019 general church session, continue to deny such members the rights to be ordained clergy and to be married in UM churches or by UM clergy.

The Grandview congregation legally voted to seek disaffiliation for reasons of conscience in February 2020, as it awaited any hoped-for changes that might be made by the 2020 General Conference. However, General Conference was postponed and will happen in late August 2021. Meanwhile, the denomination's Judicial Council is expected to

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Newly ordained clergy: (Front row, from left)—Elders: Revs. Tamie Scalise, Laurie Jean Pfahler and Julia Lynne Singleton. And Deacon: Rev. Debra Ann Neild. (Back row, from left)—Elders: Revs. Greg Impink, Rodney Brailsford, Shayla Lavina Johnson and Steven Michael Pittman, Sr.

Navigating evangelism across a shifting cultural landscape

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

The Eastern PA Conference's annual **Faith-Sharing Seminar**, Nov. 14, was presented like a well-designed, well-packed suitcase, ready for travel to unknown but potentially exciting locales. Perhaps rarely has so much knowledge-sharing insight from an acknowledged thought-leader been so neatly packed into a three-hour workshop.

And for the nearly 160 attendees who may choose to benefit from what they learned, it's time to start unpacking and put their luggage contents to good use.

The Rev. Lisa Greenwood led the Saturday morning Zoom webinar comfortably with lecture, breakout groups, visuals, chat message responses, and creative touches like a a Mentimeter

word-cloud poll (“What words define evangelism for you?”) and colorful Google Jamboards where participants posted pithy comments.

Greenwood, Vice-President for



Rev. Lisa Greenwood

Leadership Ministries at TMF (formerly the Texas Methodist Foundation), dug deep and yet, no doubt only skimmed the surface of her knowledge about the webinar's topic, **Evangelism in a Changing Landscape**. The healthy attendance likely reflected the urgency—indeed, anxiety for some—about the challenges facing mainline churches today, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the future. Many of those churches have been forced to move their worship and other activities online to serve congregations dislocated from their church buildings. And yet, most were already declining in their memberships and ministries before the pandemic.

Yet, Greenwood's teaching was not about loss but about love—the “love of neighbor” that defines evangelism for her. Or more specifically, “sharing the

love of God holistically,” in the words of Elaine Heath, one of several sources she quoted.

“The dominant culture once pushed people toward the church,” Greenwood said. “Now it pushes them away from

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Navigating evangelism across a shifting cultural landscape

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the church.” She charted the “landscape shifts” from “old power models to emerging new power models,” from affiliation to individuality, from convergence to divergence, from valuing the status quo or conformity to valuing change and disruption, from long-term relationships to transient relationships, from being leader-driven to being peer-driven.

For some it may mean a shift from seeing church as a spiritual place that’s open on Sundays to seeing it as a daily spiritual journey. That may mean providing not just weekly sermons but daily meditations on messaging and social media platforms. It may mean not just a weekly Sunday school or youth group meeting, but more frequent, adventurous, outreaching and engaging discipleship gatherings. And surely, it may mean more work for already-hardworking, weary pastors and church leaders.

Navigating the ‘liminal place’

“Our world has changed, and we have an incredible opportunity to step into it,” said Greenwood, a message she offers to many leaders around the UM connection—from episcopal to congregational leaders. “That was true long before COVID happened. How can we pivot from the small changes we’ve had to make to the big changes we need to make? The more we bravely navigate those changes, the better we can love our neighbors.”

That navigation becomes most crucial in the “liminal place” where many churches find themselves, said Greenwood—a shifting place of ambiguity, disorientation, between the known and the unknown, between what is ending and what is only beginning. It is where one encounters what she describes as a cycle of disturbance, then disruption, then innovation, then coherence and finally, adoption of new norms. “We are living in a time of disruption now,” she said.

Breakout groups wrestled with

challenging questions about shifts they see in their churches and communities, resistance to change, identifying what is ending, what is being disrupted and what is being born. And finally, “What conversations should we be having that we’re not having?”

Jamboard comments and chat messages indicated the struggles of many to embrace the shifts in their congregations and communities, to question the relevance of their church buildings and traditions to growing generations in an increasingly virtual, dispersed, post-modern world.

“We created a church that made sense in a convergent culture, and now that culture has shifted” said Greenwood. “And nothing indicates that we’re going back to the way things were 20 years ago, or even five years ago.” For churches adapting to online ministry, she added, “nothing is going to look the same... Online ministry is here to stay.”

6 churches to try virtual campuses

In fact, the Conference’s Connectional Ministries Office, sponsor of the seminar, is working with the Congregational Development Team to help six pilot churches explore creating virtual church campuses that can operate almost totally online—meaning much more than just online worship.

“This change is good news; we don’t want to go back,” Greenwood insisted. “We’ve been reaching less of the population every year; we want to reach more people with the love of God. So this is a hopeful time of creativity and innovation and possibility. And we know that God does God’s best work out of chaos and in the wilderness.”

Quoting Susan Beaumont, author of

the popular book *How To Lead When You Don’t Know Where You’re Going*, she spoke of this “liminal season” as having “one foot rooted in a thing that is not yet ended and the other planted in a thing that’s not yet begun.”



“Our call is not to eliminate ambiguity and chaos but to embrace the emergence of the new thing—new behavior patterns and new organizing structures that arise.

“We want the church to be its strongest witness,” said Greenwood. “The world needs love and grace and mercy and justice and hope and joy. And the church stands tall to offer God’s love to a hurting world, but not if we stay stuck and close ourselves off from the new thing God is doing in us.”

To watch or hear a recording of the 2020 Faith-Sharing Seminar with the Rev. Lisa Greenwood, and to receive the Jamboard comments, contact NEWSpirit Communications at communications@epaumc.org or the Conference’s Connectional Ministries Office at dtaylor-storm@epaumc.org.

Also, Lisa Greenwood shares a link to her monograph *The Mixed Ecology* and a helpful list of recommended books:

- *How to Lead When You Don’t Know Where You’re Going: Leading in a Liminal Season*, by Susan Beaumont
- *Quietly Courageous: Leading the Church in a Changing World*, Gil Rendle
- *Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of Quick Fix*, by Edwin Friedman
- *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*, by Tod Bolsinger (and his new one, *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders are Formed in the Crucible of Change*)
- *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard to Talk to White People about Racism*, by Robin DiAngelo
- *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*, by Peter Steinke (Also *Uproar: Calm Leadership in Anxious Times*)
- *Social Media to Social Ministry: A Guide to Digital Discipleship*, by Nona Jones

DECEMBER

DECEMBER 5

Digital Ministry for the Rest of Us. 10 AM – 11:30 AM. Zoom online meeting. [Register.](#)

DECEMBER 6

UM Men’s annual conference-wide meeting. 2 PM. Zoom online meeting.

DECEMBER 8

Women in Professional Ministry. 10 AM – 12 PM, Zoom online meeting. [Register.](#)

DECEMBER 13

“Celebrating our Cultures at Christmas.” 3 PM. Zoom online meeting. [Register.](#)

JANUARY 2021

JANUARY 8-9

Virtual Youth Rally

JANUARY 13

Start of Book Study “Quietly Courageous” with Gil Rendle (Weekly, for 4 weeks)

JANUARY 30

Basic Sexual Ethics. 9:30 AM – 3 PM. Zoom online meeting. [Register.](#)

FEBRUARY 2021

FEBRUARY 10

Transfiguration Day Apart. 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM. Zoom Webinar. [Download the flyer.](#)

MARCH 6

Advanced Sexual Ethic: Ministry with Sex Offenders. 9:30 AM – 3 PM. Aldersgate UMC in Wilmington, DE. [Register.](#)

MARCH 13

Tools for Ministry.

Celebrating Our Cultures at Christmas

Sunday, December 13, 2020, at 3 PM
A Conference-Wide Christmas Celebration.
A Virtual Experience on Zoom.

Come join us! Bring a candle and place your computer or mobile device in front of your tree or nativity scene! Send us a photo of your nativity or live nativity scene to be included in the celebration: communications@epaumc.org

Register here: <https://na.eventscloud.com/cultures-2020>

Celebrations from around the world to be shared:

- Three Kings Day
- Korean Celebrations
- Kwanzaa and New Year’s Celebrations
- Democratic Republic of Congo @ Christmas
- Native American Traditions @ Christmas
- Indian Celebrations
- Evangelical Brethren/German Traditions
- British Traditions
- Sierra Leone @ Christmas

We will also hear church traditions, family traditions and close our program by lifting the light of Christ together.

Sponsored by the Eastern PA Conference Commission on Religion & Race
Eastern Pennsylvania Conference
The United Methodist Church

Observations about shifts in the culture

<p>Connectivity</p> <p>We are now connected to each other in ways that were not possible before. This is a double-edged sword. While it allows us to stay connected, it also allows us to be constantly interrupted. We are always “on” and always “available.”</p>	<p>Information</p> <p>We are now inundated with information. We have access to more information than ever before. This is a double-edged sword. While it allows us to learn more, it also allows us to be overwhelmed. We are always “informed” and always “aware.”</p>	<p>Technology</p> <p>We are now using technology in ways that were not possible before. We have access to more technology than ever before. This is a double-edged sword. While it allows us to do more, it also allows us to be distracted. We are always “connected” and always “online.”</p>	<p>Community</p> <p>We are now living in a more global community. We have access to more people than ever before. This is a double-edged sword. While it allows us to connect with more people, it also allows us to feel isolated. We are always “connected” and always “alone.”</p>	<p>Values</p> <p>We are now living in a more pluralistic society. We have access to more values than ever before. This is a double-edged sword. While it allows us to learn from more people, it also allows us to feel confused. We are always “informed” and always “lost.”</p>
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"Rejoice!"

BY BISHOP PEGGY A. JOHNSON

Deacon Jerome Kiel was the only Deaf Deacon in the Roman Catholic Church's Archdiocese of Baltimore years ago when I was serving as the pastor of an all-Deaf United Methodist congregation.

It was significant that he achieved the office of Deacon because holy orders were rare for culturally Deaf people who used sign language exclusively. This was true not only in the Roman Catholic Church, but also among United Methodist and other mainline denominations.

Deacon Jerome was a faithful pastoral presence at the "Little Flower" Deaf congregation for many years. He was at the end of his ministry when I was beginning mine, and I appreciated so much his ministerial wisdom and gentle patience with my rookie mistakes.

Back then, the Roman Catholic, United Methodist and Lutheran Deaf congregations in Baltimore offered many shared, ecumenical events, especially during the seasons of Advent and Lent. Our Wednesday night dinners and worship services gave us a chance to learn about each other's beliefs and traditions. We had so much in common.

Pink candle's real story

During Advent one year, I learned from Deacon Jerome the meaning of the pink candle on the Advent Wreath. I was mistakenly taught that it was the last candle to be lit during the four Sundays of Advent and it signified God's love at Christmas. That was not the true story at all!

Advent began in the 4th century when the church was getting more converts than it could handle because Emperor Constantine had declared that Christianity would be the religion of

the Roman Empire. Prior to that time people preparing for baptism would do so exclusively during the season of Lent. Then they would be baptized and brought into church membership on Easter Sunday.

With so many new candidates for baptism, the church needed to offer a second option. That became the season of Advent (prior to Christmas); and baptism would happen on Epiphany Day, January 6..

Because of that, the Advent season was marked as a time of preparatory penance for sin, personal examination and prayer. The liturgical color for sorrow and repentance is purple, as it is during the season of Lent.

Pink (or rose), the color of "joy," became a part of the Catholic Mass every year on the third Sunday of Advent. The opening missal (a book containing the texts used in the Catholic Mass throughout the year) included the Latin word "Gaudete," which literally is a command to "rejoice." (There was also a designated "pink" Sunday on the fourth Sunday of Lent, known as "Laetare," which calls for Jerusalem to "rejoice".)

The church taught that in the midst of this season of penance and sorrow, there needed to be a reminder about the joy of the Lord. It was a call to rejoice in the truth that Jesus has come, is with us, and will come again. Nothing can separate us from that relentless love of God.

I thought this was a wonderful thing since pink has always been my favorite color. During the years of my pastoral ministry, I took full advantage of "Gaudete Sunday" with pink bulletins, pink flowers, pink offering envelopes, pink altar cloths, etc. The worship service on the third Sunday of Advent was always a



with concerns and fears of becoming viral "super spreader" events.

"Gaudete" calls us, commands us, begs us to "Rejoice" nonetheless, because when we rejoice even in the midst sorrow, difficulty and uncertainty, it is an affirmation of faith that God is still God. "Emmanuel" means God is with us.

God will work all things together for good, even when we can't see our way forward. When we rejoice something deep within us feels the joy of the Lord that is not dependent on circumstances but rather on that "peace that passes understanding."


Gaudete Sunday needed now more than ever

We need Gaudete Sunday more this year than ever. Light a pink candle in your heart and on your altar. Celebrate the joy of the Lord. Also, remember to do something to bring joy to someone else whose journey is especially lonely and difficult this year. Spread the "pink!" Rejoice!


References:

- www.umc.org, "History of Advents for United Methodists"
- The Catholic Herald, December 8, 2016
- www.catholic.org, December 8, 2004

ADVENT FEATURE



GAUDETE SUNDAY



The Third Sunday of Advent is called *Gaudete Sunday*, the day when we light the pink candle on the Advent wreath (hence the 'pink candle' Sunday). Rose vestments are worn to emphasize our joy that Christmas is near.


Gaudete means "rejoice". This day reminds us of the joy that is to come, and serves, amid this season of penance, as a kind of 'break' when we recall the hope we have because of the coming of Our Lord Jesus.

time of rejoicing, second only to Christmas Eve.

Deacon Jerome died one morning after a long illness during the season of Advent. A box arrived at my church a few months later. In it was an amazing and deeply meaningful gift: Deacon Jerome's pink Deacon stole. I have kept it as a cherished reminder of this saint who knew the meaning of the joy that comes from serving God with generosity, compassion and love.

This year's Advent season comes at a time when our church struggles to keep preparations for the coming of Christ at the forefront of our minds. As usual, we seek spiritual introspection while the world is screaming for holiday festivities and non-stop commercialism.

But this Advent season is most unusual, burdened by the threat of more COVID infections, political unrest in our country and theological division in our church. It might be hard to "rejoice" on that third Sunday of Advent when you cannot hold regular Christmas services in the same way due to social distancing concerns. Our cherished gatherings of family and friends are also clouded


Faithfully Yours,
Peggy A. Johnson



Historic 2020 Annual Conference makes big decisions in little time

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rule in November on the validity of the 2019 General Conference's temporary disaffiliation rules vote because of problems with the vote.

Grandview has agreed to March 31, 2021, a Conference Trustees deadline, as its "date of disaffiliation," once it has fulfilled all financial and organizational obligations. The church may choose to rescind its request before then or follow through with its departure. The Grandview disaffiliation resolution was passed by a 466 to 115 vote, with 25 abstentions.

When asked if she intends to leave the denomination with her congregation, the Rev. Andrea Brown, who is a Conference delegate to the 2021 General Conference, said she is currently "discerning my course."

3 churches discontinued

The Annual Conference also approved discontinuances of three closed churches: Avondale, Gradyville and Open Door in Kennett Square. Members also voted to shorten the name of the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits to simply the Board of Benefits. And they approved for 2021 an updated agreement for the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP), Rental/Housing Allowances for Retired or Disabled Clergypersons, and recommended Equitable Compensation.

Also approved was the Council on Finance and Administration's 2021 Budget and the Committee on Leadership's 2020 Leadership Report for the new



Providing leadership on-camera for the 2020 Annual Conference conducted on Zoom were: (left) the Rev. Jacqueline Hines, Conference Secretary; Bishop Peggy Johnson; and Conference Lay Leader David Koch.

quadrennium.

Bishop Johnson called for "great rejoicing" in response to the announcement that the Conference has paid 100 percent so far of its pre-1982 clergy retiree pension liability, thanks to the former capital campaign and ongoing support. "Folks, that is a cause for great rejoicing," she said, "and a thank you for God's faithfulness and the faithfulness of our people. It shows this conference can do anything it puts its mind to."

Reports, Rewards, Retirees all celebrated

The Revs. Olivet Brown and Hun Ju Lee presented the Commission on Religion and Race's 2019 Call to Action anti-racism initiative report. Conference Lay Leader David Koch presented his 2020 Ministry of the Laity report. And the Connectional Ministries' report was presented in a colorful, thematic video, using the song "Bind Us Together," that depicted

staff tossing to one another a multicolored ball of yarn and conference ministry leaders bearing signs containing words from the Conference's vision and mission statements.

Connectional Ministries also presented its various annual awards for excellence in ministry, all pre-recorded on video.

Four persons received Harry Denman Awards for Evangelism from the Congregational Development Team. And four churches received **Herbert E. Palmer Urban Ministry Awards**, one in each district, from the Urban Commission. (See their photos on page 7.)

Finally, the Conference also honored new clergy retirees with recorded, inspirational testimonies from each of them offered on Zoom. The annual Memorial Service for deceased clergy and clergy spouses and the Ordination and Commissioning Service for advancing

clergy both happened on Oct. 14 at Olivet UMC in Coatesville.

"For the first time we ever had to do this, we did a phenomenal job," said the Rev. James Anderman, chairman of the Conference Commission on Sessions, when sharing evaluations with commission members. "We'll do it even better next year if we have to do it again."

Annual Conference offerings—given online and in checks mailed after the session—totaled \$6,915. Individual amounts were:

Conference Scholarships: \$820.

Board of Ordained Ministry Scholarships: \$2,550

Conference Council on Youth Ministry: \$575

***Bishop's Camp & Retreat Ministries Appeal:** \$2,970

(*Total giving to the Bishop's Appeal for Camp & Retreat Ministries was \$13,716 as of Nov. 5, including gifts before and after the Conference session.)



The Revs. Olivet Brown and Hun Ju Lee, present the Commission on Religion and Race's Call to Action 2020 Update Report.



The Connectional Ministries video report depicted the Conference's vision statement—United in Christ, Committed to Transformation—and mission statements.

Annual Conference worship honors unity, leadership, sacrifice

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

The 2020 Eastern PA Annual Conference, Oct. 13-14, rescheduled and conducted mostly online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, began with a tradition that's never been more timely: the Clergy Session's singing of Charles Wesley's venerable hymn, "And Are We Yet Alive?"

Later, for the plenary body's opening worship, Bishop Peggy Johnson picked an ideal scripture, Colossians 2:1-5, for her message, invoking the Apostle Paul's appeal for the church to be "Knit Together in Love." She preceded the shortened, half-day business session by emphasizing the primacy of redemptive love.

The next day Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi of the Western PA Conference preached the annual Service of Ordination and Commissioning by uplifting the urgent necessity of exemplary leadership. She preached before a limited audience of ordinands and commissionees, with their families safely seated downstairs, at Olivet UMC in Coatesville. But the service was livestreamed for public viewing on the Conference's website.

Bishop Johnson, who advocates often for her denomination's unity even as it moves steadily toward division in 2021, likened that endeavor to Paul's efforts to calm dissent among the early Christian churches. "Paul spent much time... calling the church to be united in love," she said. "Love was the secret sauce and always will be."

Noting the encouraging, loving outreach of our connectional system of ministry, she nonetheless described plans for denominational division as "a failure of love and the relationship-building that love calls us to do."

2 deacons, 10 elders commissioned, ordained

Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi preached a call to bold, unifying leadership that is wholly dependent on God in her message at the Service of Ordination and Commissioning.

"You picked a heck of a time to be ordained or commissioned," she began, citing the challenge of trying to lead ministries in the midst of "two pandemics—a global virus and 400 years of racism," and also the denomination's

threat of schism.

"I know you didn't pick this time for you to be ordained or commissioned," she later admitted. "But God did. The God... who prescribed that for everything there is a season, a time for every matter under heaven, determined that this season of COVID-19, racial unrest and denominational turmoil would be the season for you to be blessed by the church to lead the church. So how do you lead in such a time as this?"

"If you feel inadequate and ill-prepared and not up to the task," she told the group of new elders and deacons,



Newly commissioned clergy with bishops: From Left—Rev. Brenda J. Coffin (Deacon), Rev. Jennifer Lynn Miller (Elder), Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, Bishop Peggy Johnson, and Rev. David Robert Alderson (Elder). Not shown: Rev. Zimran Yaqub Khan (Elder).

"let me assure you that under the power of your skills and degrees, you are not prepared. But... God's infinite mercy and grace has equipped you to do the job to which God has called you..."

Bishop Johnson commissioned a deacon and three elders and then ordained a deacon and seven elders, all witnessed by their families who joined them in the sanctuary.

Memorial Service honors 33 who served

An earlier memorial service remembered 18 clergy members, 13 clergy spouses and two former Conference staff, all of who "entered the church triumphant" in the past Conference year.

Bishop Johnson preached at that solemn service, extoling the commitment of deceased leaders who had served churches, communities, institutions and the Conference, some for decades. She spoke of seeing Jesus in the lives and legacies of clergy who have followed and served Christ faithfully, "willing to die to self" that they might live "a life consecrated to the service of God through sacrifice."

Pursuing racial justice in a 'Fight for Floyd and Beyond'

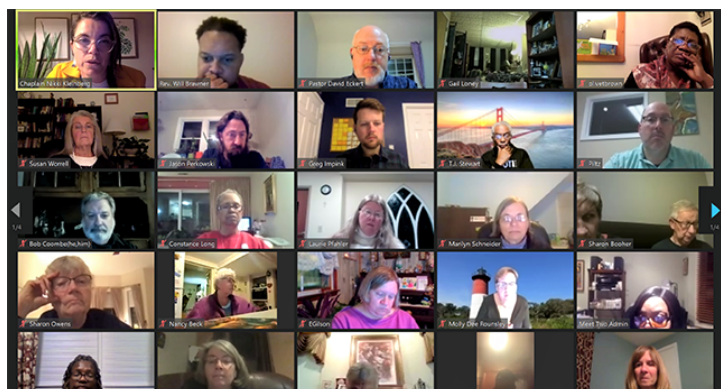
2nd meeting reveals progress but much work to be done

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

In Round 2 of the Eastern PA Conference's Fight for Floyd campaign, at a Oct. 29 follow-up to the initial June 1 meeting, three action committees reported on their efforts to seek justice and reconciliation for racial-ethnic communities suffering from police violence.

The Urban Commission quickly organized that first meeting on Zoom and drew nearly 300 concerned participants, one week after George Floyd was brutally slain by police in Minneapolis, Minn. Over a hundred people attended the Oct. 29, two-hour follow-up meeting, also on Zoom, to find out what the now-renamed "Fight for Floyd and Beyond" campaign is doing and planning for the future.

The three action committees—labeled Policy, Community Development and Education—are hoping to gain some much-needed new members, inspired by their work. That hope may also be fueled by the tragic continuation of fatal police shootings of Black and Hispanic victims both locally and around the nation.



Two recent police killings that happened in Philadelphia and Lancaster prompted dramatic reports from several meeting participants who were involved in protests and police encounters that resulted.

Walter Wallace Jr. was fatally shot by Philadelphia police Oct. 26 when he refused to put down a knife as he approached them. And Ricardo Muñoz, was fatally shot by Lancaster police Sept. 13 when he too approached them brandishing an apparent knife. Both men were 27 and experiencing mental illness crises. And both shootings sparked protests and public outcries for more intervention in crisis situations by mental health professionals and more de-escalation training for police.

Against that backdrop, the three Fight for Floyd and Beyond committees updated attendees on their work.

"These committees are on the front lines of this fight, dealing with issues in Philadelphia and beyond," said the Rev. William Brawner, Conference Urban

Ministries Coordinator, who organized and facilitated the meeting. "We need to get more people engaged and involved in their work."

Policy Committee

The Rev. Nikki Kleinberg, a deacon and chaplain, presented the Policy Committee's carefully crafted police reform advocacy letter* that endorsers can adapt and send to public policy officials and police unions. The committee, which researched relevant issues before drafting the letter, hopes to spur policy conversations with such leaders.

"Racial inequity in police culture, leadership and practice is measurable, damaging, and destroying many aspects of public and private life," the letter begins, "while the daily environment of police work leaves officers at greater risk of long- and short-term adverse health risks." The one-page



Rev. William Brawner



Rev. Nikki Kleinberg

letter reflects concern for the wellbeing of both police and the communities they serve; and it calls for progressive changes in policies and practices that law enforcement in other states and cities have adopted.

"With the diversity of United Methodists in mind, we tried to draft something that people of different political affiliations can sign and share with policymakers," said Kleinberg. "We tried to keep the letter moderate and also to include a focus on police unions because they have a lot of power and don't seem to be hearing the message of police reform."

Kleinberg addressed Philadelphia's City Council Nov. 18 in a public hearing about its new contract with the Fraternal Order of Police and desired changes in policing. "This is the first time ever that Philadelphians have the opportunity to give their thoughts about the contract ahead of it being renewed," said an organizer with RECLAIM, a local justice advocacy group.

"We may not all agree on tactics and that's fine," said Brawner, who thanked the committee for its work. "But we want to share different ideas and just be able to hear one another."

Kleinberg also highlighted three

critical, police-related ballot measures that Philadelphians would vote on come Election Day. On the ballots were: an Office for Victims' Advocacy; a new, more accountable Citizens Police Oversight Committee; and a mandatory end to unconstitutional stop-and-frisk practices. All three measures were approved by voters Nov. 3. (See "Philadelphia voters approve police reform ballot questions")

Community Development Committee

The Community Development Committee "was charged with creating community interventions that support healthy relationships with police and community members." The Rev. David Eckert, committee co-chair acknowledged "the tensions of conflict between caring for the police and caring for the community." But he affirmed the goal to "reduce negative, painful and fatal interactions."

The committee plans to hold an online forum and workshop in early 2021, where persons on both sides can share their testimonies and begin to foster trust and better relations.

"We recognize that there is a lack of trust, fear and hesitation, and intimidation regarding getting involved, but we know that police and community members—especially now—are looking for opportunities to build community," said Eckert, who also co-chairs the sponsoring Urban Commission. "The church is partnering to be a support and catalyst for all who wish to be involved in changing our current state with the police and community."

The Education Committee

The Education Committee is focused on developing a database of multimedia resources, housed on the Conference website, to build public anti-racism awareness and response. Committee members have shared their own perspectives and experiences with one another in monthly meetings, which may lead to video-recorded testimonies and discussions, or maybe even a podcast, said the Rev. David Piltz, co-chair.

North Central Philadelphia resident and community activist Gail Loney, who also co-chairs the committee, shared her wisdom and experiences in seeking justice and respect from law enforcement. "In my neighborhood, we have police who work for the City of Philadelphia, SEPTA, the Philadelphia Housing Authority and Temple University," she reported, citing evidence of "over-policing" in her community.

Loney, who helped defeat Temple University's proposal to build a new stadium in North Philadelphia, sees "over-policing" as a tool of urban neighborhood gentrification. With 1.5 million people and 6,300 police, Philadelphia has the fourth largest force in the U.S. But despite a policing research study, a hefty \$727 million budget and recommended improvements, there has been "almost no progress on implementing needed changes," said Loney. "Police need training badly. We need police who can de-escalate situations, and we need mental health and social workers to help them in those situations."

She also interpreted protest groups' demands to "defund the police" as calls for reinvesting significant funds from that budget to address long-neglected community needs.

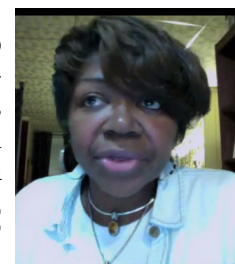
The impassioned activist also called on the church to do its part. "We need everyone involved to solve these problems," she pleaded. "It's everybody's issue. If we don't do something now the explosive volatility we see in Philly, Lancaster and other cities around the country will keep happening."

The church has to go outside into the community," she continued. "You have to be present in these neighborhoods where you have churches. They need you."

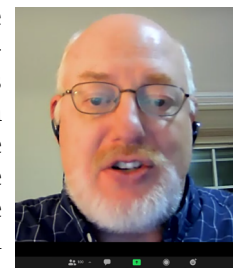
Clergy participate in Lancaster anti-racism advocacy

At least two UM pastors have been present in Lancaster, marching along with other clergy and community leaders to protest police killings of George Floyd, Ricardo Muñoz and other victims of color. The Revs. Greg Impink and Jason Perkowski, members of the community organizing group POWER Interfaith, both reported on their efforts to address racism in policing and also in state education funding in a city that is about 60 percent nonwhite.

"We've been meeting with the press and young people, holding protests downtown and going before the mayor and city council, the police department and sheriff's office to push for as much change as possible," reported Perkowski. "There are major groups doing racial justice work in Lancaster; but we need to be more coordinated in our message to the public. Also, we have an advantage as faith leaders, and we get attention with our protests. But until we get new, proposed policies written and into the hands of elected officials and powerbrokers, we're not going to get the changes we want to see."



Gail Loney



Rev. David Eckert

Continued on page 6.

Pursuing racial justice in a 'Fight for Floyd and Beyond'

Continued from page 5.

Perkowski recalled meetings with top business leaders, who acknowledged systemic racial bias and a willingness to "work with us on it." He identified several key needs, including a review board to monitor use-of-force policies and practices, and a crisis team of clergy, social workers and psychologists to respond with police to appropriate crisis situations.

"As clergy, we need to be able to stand in the gap and be a peaceful boundary between police, community members

and militia groups" said Perkowski. He was attacked with mace last spring when he tried to defuse a policeman's encounter with a young protester.

Browner introduced to the gathering Gabriel Palmer, 18, who works for the Community Healing Project for All, a diverse youth assistance and development program in Philadelphia. He said a



Gabriel Palmer

lot of young people now are grieving "multiple deaths from the coronavirus and violence."

Palmer, who speaks at prayer rallies and other community events along with religious leaders, said his family, church and other influences saved him from the violent streets. "Otherwise, I would be dead right now."

His late grandfather was

a Philadelphia icon who saved many young people from gang violence. Melvin Floyd was revered as a police officer and urban minister on the streets from the 1960s through the 1980s. He died in April 2020.

Palmer and Browner recalled a prayer rally and march led by the Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity Oct. 27, the day after Walter Wallace Jr.'s death. Browner, an activist-pastor newly appointed to Mother African Zoar UMC, recalled how the clergy and their supporters were met at a police precinct by officers in full riot gear.

But he also lamented the community violence that has led to over 400 murders in Philadelphia this year, along with students kept out of school, the ongoing drug crisis and the presence of National Guard patrolling the city's streets in response to violence and destructive looting.

"Philly has been suffering for a long time," Browner said in his poignant closing reflections, following comments and questions from meeting participants. "Everyone, please get involved with us.

We need to see you on the front lines."

In her benediction, the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, Director of Connectional Ministries, asked God to "remind us of what's needed in this Fight for Floyd, for Breona (Taylor), for Walter (Wallace Jr.) for Ricardo (Muñoz) and for others we don't know.... What's needed are our hands, our voices, our bodies, our pocketbooks. Wake us up, God, and move us."

Email Contact List For Fight for Floyd & Beyond Action Committees:

Education Committee Co-Chairs: Gail Loney, gdmonie6@gmail.com; and Rev. David Piltz: dpiltz@epaumc.org

Community Development Committee Co-Chairs: Rev. David Eckert, pastor. messiahchurch@verizon.net; and Charie Staton: nmazumc@gmail.com

Policy Committee Co-Chairs: Rev. Susan Worrell, rev.s.worrell@gmail.com; and Rev. Nikki Kleinberg: nikkikelleykleinberg@gmail.com



Rev. Jason Perkowski

Conference offers full calendar of learning events, and finally, a celebration

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

After the COVID-19 pandemic led to a mostly quiet summer with few events, the Eastern PA Conference calendar recovered and has bustled since September, creating an online university of sorts on Zoom. With a full curriculum of leadership courses, the Connectional Ministries Office and its various ministry groups have been offering workshops and dialogues extending from half-day to one- and two-day sessions.

Addressing racism and diversity, emotional intelligence, domestic violence, baptism, church bullies, and even how to celebrate Christmas in the midst of COVID, the online educational events have been diverse and well-attended, the topics and speakers compelling, and CEUs (Continuing Education Units) available for all those who need them.



A half-day **Dismantling Racism Level II** workshop kicked off the recent spate of courses with a focus on "The Experience and Impact of Racism on People of Asian Ancestry" Sept. 19. The Conference's Healing the Wounds of Racism Core Team welcomed The Rev. Doris Kung Chi Pui Dalton, a Deacon and former conference staff member now

working in the New York Conference, to present a fascinating personal and cultural history and lead an enlightening discussion.

Connectional Ministries' annual **Leadership Launch** training event for church and conference leaders followed Oct. 3, with the theme "Bearing Fruitful Ministry." The Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, Connectional Ministries Director, led the half-day session, urging leaders to focus on mission over meetings, on real accomplishments over mere activities, on starting small but thinking big, and on seeing adaptive, transformational opportunities as being both/and rather than either/or.

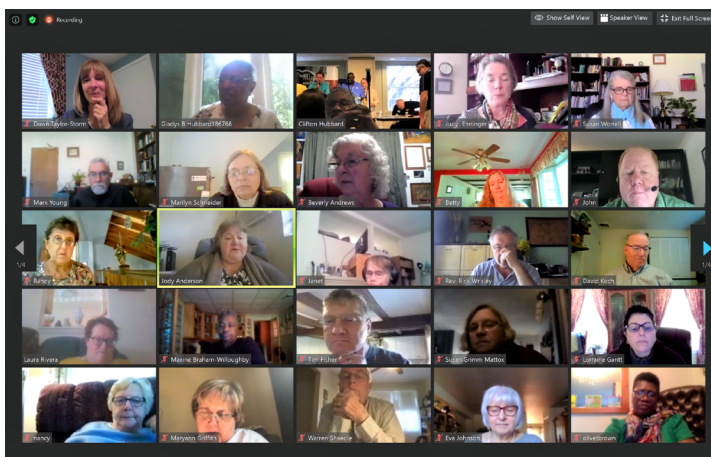
A lively Oct. 5 conversation on celebrating "Christmas amid COVID" spurred encouraging ideas, questions



and answers about working through safety protocols to still celebrate Advent and Christmas in "COVID-tide." Those ideas ranged from drive-through live nativity scenes complete with angels, shepherds and livestock, to outdoor Christmas Eve services using FM radio transmitters; from porch visits and caroling with instruments in lieu of voices, to Advent wreath-making parties for children offered on Zoom.

The **Domestic Violence Committee's annual seminar**, Oct. 9-10, during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, focused this year on how children and families are impacted "When Home Hurts." Pastors, counselors, advocates

and survivors all shared wisdom from experience about this destructive social crisis that hurts individuals, families and communities, and how churches can best respond to protect human life and promote healthy families. Partnership between churches



community DV services providers was emphasized, especially the importance of counseling referrals by pastors who are often the first to learn of abuse.

A frank discussion on "**Racism, Trauma and Transformation**," Oct. 17, attended by people of color and led by minister and trauma therapist Dr. Dandridge Collins, delved into historical, psychological and sociological aspects of the often indelible pain, fear, anger and other emotions felt by those who have borne the brunt of racial prejudice and mistreatment. But participants—including some clergy serving in cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments—also shared beliefs, experiences and strategies that have helped them find transformation out of their post-traumatic stress from racist encounters.

Like the Racial Trauma dialogue, the annual **Emotional Intelligence and Diversity** workshop, held Oct. 31 and Nov. 7, was also sponsored by the Conference Commission on Religion and Race (CORR). Through lecture, readings, dialogue and exercises, participants gained a poignant awareness of hidden feelings, ignorance and beliefs about race, culture, privilege and internalized oppression, and how to develop a

Continued on page 8.



Above: Four Harry Denman Awards for Evangelism, presented by the Congregational Development Team, went to (from left): **Yvonne Morgan** (*Laity*), of Sayers UMC in Philadelphia; **Lydia Burkit** (*Youth*), of Covenant UMC in Moore Township; the **Rev. Jason Perkowski** (*Clergy*), pastor of Manheim: Faith UMC, & Oregon UMC; and **Donna Wert** (*Laity*), of Lampeter UMC.

Below: Four Herbert E. Palmer Awards for Urban Ministry, one in each district, were presented by the Urban Commission to (from left): **West Lawn UMC Reading** (the Rev. Jeff Raffauf, South District); **Fritz Memorial UMC, Bethlehem** (the Rev. Joong Hyuck Kim, North District); **Anchorage Breakfast Ministry at First UMC Lancaster** (the Rev. Joseph DiPaolo, West District); and **Haws Avenue UMC, Norristown** (from left: Pastor Lisa de Paz and Mary Alice Law, East District).



The 2020 UM Discipleship Ministries **One Matters Award** went to (from left) the Revs. **Manfredo Martinez Luna** and **Navin Satyavrata**, pastors at the formerly merged Salem and La Familia UMCs in Allentown.

In Memoriam

Full death notices are available at www.epaumc.org/death-notice

Mrs. Joyce A. Watson

Mrs. Joyce A. Watson died on November 5. She was the spouse of The Rev. Donald L. Watson, retired full elder.

Rev. Watson served the following Eastern PA Conference churches, prior to his retirement in 1999: Christiana Gap, Linwood Heights, Reeders, Shamokin: St. John's.

The Rev. Ted Mefferd

The Rev. Ted Mefferd, retired elder, died on October 30. He served the following Eastern PA Conference churches: Lancaster: Covenant, New Berlinville: St. Andrew, Cornwall, Mount Joy: Chiques (after retirement).

He is survived by his spouse, Mrs. Esther M. Mefferd. The family plans to hold a public Memorial Service sometime in the Spring of 2021.

The Rev. William T. Cherry

The Rev. William T. Cherry, Retired Full Elder, died on October 8, 2020.

Rev. Cherry served the following Eastern PA Conference churches: Malvern, Valley Forge, Paoli, Lancaster: Grandview, Philadelphia: Arch Street, Ardmore. He also served as Superintendent of the former Northeast District.

The Rev. Larry L. Light

The Rev. Larry L. Light, Retired Elder, died on October 17, 2020. He served the following Eastern PA Conference churches--Millersville Community, Phila.: Grace, Grove, Hulmeville: Neshamony.

A private burial will be held at the convenience of the family. In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to Central PA Food Bank at centralpafoodbank.org.

Mrs. Anne Patterson

Mrs. Anne Patterson, surviving spouse of the Rev. John Patterson, died on October 6, 2020.

In addition to Extension Ministry, Rev. Patterson served the following Eastern PA Conference churches: Giraldville, William Penn, Hummelston.

The Rev. Menno E. Good

The Rev. Menno E. Good, Retired Full Elder, died on October 6, 2020. Rev. Good served the following Eastern PA Conference churches--Williamsport: Pine Street, Phila.: Mid-Town Parish, Mount Joy: Salunga, Mount Joy: Chiques,

Valley Forge: St. Matthew's, Hatboro: Lehman Memorial, Elizabethtown: St. Paul's, West Lawn, Montgomery Square. He also served as Superintendent of the former Northeast District.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to Montgomery Square United Methodist Church, North Wales, 19454.

The Rev. Larry Frank

The Rev. Larry Frank, Retired Full Elder, died on September 26, 2020.

Rev. Frank served the following Eastern PA Conference churches--Conestoga, Palmyra: Bethany, Hamburg: Bethany, Harmony.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Jennifer L. Frank, and children: Jonathan and Benjamin.

Mrs. Joan Nicholson

Mrs. Joan Nicholson died on August 31, 2020. She was the surviving spouse of The Rev. Robert E. Nicholson, Retired Full Elder.

Rev. Nicholson served the following Eastern PA churches--Tobyhanna, Havertown: Trinity, Lima, Upper Darby: Stonehurst, Phila.: Berry-Long Memorial, Phila.: Simpson, Phila.: Miller Memorial, Gradyville.

The Rev. William H. Garrett

The Rev. William H. Garrett died on September 23, 2020 (on the date of his birthday).

He was a retired Full Elder, who served the following Eastern PA Conference churches--Springfield: Covenant, Warminster: St. Andrews, Mohnton Calvary, Francis Asbury District Superintendent, Palmyra: First, Chaplain, Cornwall Manor.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Marianne Garrett, and three children--Susan R. Kalbaugh, Scott A. Garrett and Michelle R. Tomczak--and seven grandchildren. A graveside service will be held for family members, and a Memorial service at church will be announced at a future date.

The Rev. James F. McIntire

The Rev. James F. McIntire died on September 23, 2020. He is survived by his wife, The Rev. Lydia E. Munoz, and children: Lindsay, Elizabeth, Timothy and William Caraballo-Munoz.

Rev. McIntire served the following churches in the Eastern PA Conference--Abington, Narberth, Philadelphia: Germantown: First, Extension Ministry as Director of Center for Spirituality and Disability, Springfield CC Hancock Memorial, Bala Cynwyd, Philadelphia: Manayunk New Church Start, West Grove, Prospect Park: Prospect, Haver-town: Hope, Royersford.

Conference offers full calendar of learning events, and finally, a celebration

Continued from page 6.

mature understanding of themselves and others in these contexts.

"I didn't know what I didn't know or even how to ask," said one attendee. "But I thank the Conference for offering programs like this because there are things I'm learning that I need to know."

The Conference Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM) presented a video-conference on "**Race-Based Mascots**" Nov. 8 about the abuse of Native American culture and identities through offensive stereotypes used for sports team names and symbols.

And the Congregational Development Team (CDT) has increased its educational offerings this fall and into next year with weekly book study groups and several learning events. That included a helpful discussion on "**How to Recognize and Deal with Church Bullies**" Nov. 11, led by the Rev. David Woolverton, who addresses that high-interest topic in a new book to be published in July 2021.

CDT will also sponsor "**Digital Ministry for the Rest of Us**," Dec. 5. The session will cover: understanding the Foundations of Church Technology; the pros and cons of using livestreamed

or recorded programs; and "DIY (Do It Yourself) Livestreaming & Recording."

The Urban Commission sponsored "**Fight for Floyd and Beyond**," Oct. 29, its second meeting of conference members concerned about racial injustice in policing. (See related story.)

And the Prison Ministries and Restorative Justice Team led a three-session **Healing Communities Training**, Oct. 21, 24 and 28, for the West Chester Mission Link, designed to help churches become "stations of hope" for "those who have been impacted by the criminal justice system."

Beyond Connectional Ministries, the Board of Ordained Ministry sponsored a two-session Zoom workshop titled "**By Water and the Spirit: Theology & Practice of Baptism**" Nov. 7 and 21. BOOM also sponsored a **Basic Sexual Ethics** training Oct. 17 and 24, addressing relational, ethical boundaries for persons in ministry. Another session is scheduled for Jan. 30, 2021.

The Order of Deacons explored "**The Role of Anger in the Work of Justice and Love**," Nov. 7. And the Order of Elders learned about using digital media strategically for ministry, Nov. 18,

from Phil Cooke, a Hollywood producer and expert in creating and marketing Christian media.

Looking ahead, the Conference's Women in Professional Ministry (WIP) and the Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) will jointly sponsor a talk on Zoom with author Susan Beaumont about "**Leading in a Liminal Season**," Dec. 8. The discussion may explore Beaumont's new book *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going: Leading in a Liminal Season*. The event will be part of WIP's annual Advent gathering with Bishop Peggy Johnson.

Finally, CORR will help folks enjoy the Christmas break from "EPA Conference University" with some fun and festivities—on Zoom, of course—when it sponsors its **Celebrating our Cultures at Christmas** event, Dec. 13, a virtual follow-up to its 2019 outdoor picnic. The multicultural program will feature music, poetry, storytelling, a slideshow of nativities from around the world, and

more.

The Conference's 2021 calendar is already starting to fill with more learning events, once "school" is back in session. That includes:

The Rev. Leah Schade, a Lutheran clergywoman (ELCA) and author of *Preaching in the Purple Zone: Ministry in the Red-Blue Divide*, will lead us in a timely, interactive discussion on "**Discovering our 'Theologies of Conflict': Finding Our Way in the Post-Election Season and Beyond**" Jan. 12, on Zoom. "As we prepare for the U.S. Presidential Inauguration Day on Jan. 20, we need to seek ways to bridge divides in our churches and communities," said the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm.

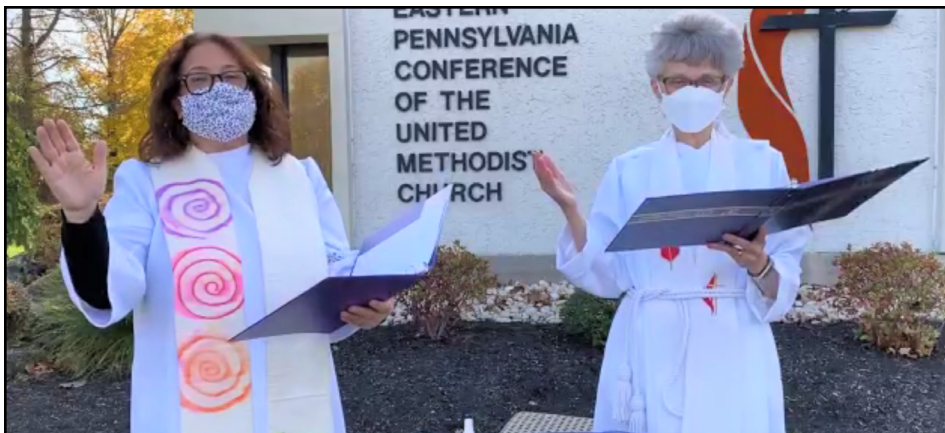
And Bishop Peggy Johnson will host a **2021 Transfiguration Day Apart** Zoom webinar Feb. 10 for all clergy and Certified Lay Ministers serving congregations. The Rev. Deborah Appler, who teaches at Moravian Theological Seminary will speak on "The Transfiguration from an Old Testament Perspective."

And the annual **Tools for Ministry** will happen March 13 offering courses online and conference-wide, rather than onsite in individual districts.



Please support our camps

Innabah Camp & Retreat Center staff welcome back Challenge Campers, a favorite program for many. All four camps were forced to reduce their activities and cancel summer camps this year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But they have been open to special groups, to volunteers offering them labors of love, and to children, youth and families wanting a brief getaway to enjoy nature's finest. All the centers are planning for Summer Camp 2021, strategizing for a sustainable future, and welcoming much-needed fundraising support. Learn more in a December update story on our Conference website.



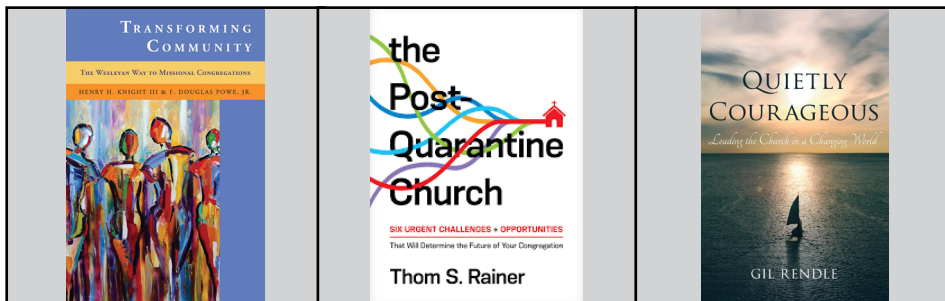
Eastern PA leaders participate in MARCHA annual meeting

The Rev. Lydia Muñoz (left) and Bishop Peggy Johnson lead a Reaffirmation of Baptist ceremony during the annual meeting of the UMC's Hispanic/Latino caucus, MARCHA (Metodistas Representando la Causa de los Hispano Americanos) March 13. With the theme "Lament in Community: A Way to Hope" (from Lamentations 3:19-22), the bilingual event on Zoom included a memorial service; a panel discussion about the state of the church and society; and a keynote message from Miguel De La Torre, Professor of Social Ethics and Latinx Studies at Iliff School of Theology in Denver. Other Eastern PA Latino Commission members also participated.



CCYM leads NEJ youth session on racism, diversity

The Eastern PA Conference Council on Youth Ministry (CCYM) created and led a remarkable 3-hour interactive workshop on racism and diversity for the Northeastern Jurisdiction Council on Youth Ministry Nov. 14. Their presentation used scripted vignettes authored by CCYM member and teen film producer Sara Mott (inset photo) of Covenant UMC in Moore Township. Her scripts spurred frank, in-depth conversations among youth and adults about trigger words and biases that can harm others and hinder understanding, acceptance and sharing the love of Christ.



CDT Book Club connects leaders who want to learn

The Conference Congregational Development Team has designated Wednesday as "CDT Book Club Day" September; and so far dozens of eager bibliophiles have read and discussed two books together. Much of their discussions focus on what they are doing—or want to do—in their churches, and how it relates to what they are learning. The morning and evening sessions have been led by the Rev. Kevin Babcock, Coordinator of Church Support Services, and the Rev. Lloyd Speer, CDT's new chairman.

"These gatherings offer clergy and laity ideas about strategies to help revitalize their congregations and further develop their ministries," said Babcock, who designed and administers the program. The Rev. Gil Rendle will lead the next, four-week study of his new book *Quietly Courageous*, which begins Jan. 13, 2021.