Leaders discuss ‘Love and Law in the UMC’

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

The annual Bishop’s Days on the Districts are intended to enable clergy and laity to dialogue with their episcopal leader. The clergy assembling across six districts throughout October are dialoguing with each other as well. Their topic is the 2014 book Finding Our Way: Love and Law in The United Methodist Church. In it eight bishops address the dispute between clergy adherence and defiance to their Book of Discipline’s prohibition against same-gender weddings.

Asked to read the book in preparation, clergy participants are seeking to reconcile conservative views about biblical and church law with the growing acceptance of marital equality for same-gender couples. Meanwhile, their lay counterparts are engaged in the same quest during their evening district meetings with the bishop.

Following worship Bishop Peggy Johnson begins each meeting by highlighting important conference news, including the recent “just resolution” of a complaint against 36 clergy who officiated a same-gender wedding last November. She then reads the Bible story of King Solomon mediating the conflict between two women who both claim to be a baby’s mother. When he threatens to sever the baby in half so the women can share it, the one who surrenders her claim to save the newborn’s life is deemed to be the real mother.

The story offers an apt metaphor for the two sides in the church’s often contentious debates over whether to sanction same-gender weddings and homosexual clergy. Many fear, and some long for, denominational schism if there is no lasting compromise that can resolve the prolonged disagreement.

To each gathering Bishop Johnson explains four options suggested in Finding Our Way for resolving these disputes:

• Enforce the Discipline to maintain order and honor clergy covenants;
• Amend the Discipline.

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Just Resolution ends complaint; dialogues continue

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

October may become a month of completion (like the corresponding number 10) for the Eastern PA Conference in regard to resolutions on the controversial issue of clergy performance of same-sex weddings.

Bishop Peggy Johnson announced on Oct. 3 that a Just Resolution was completed to satisfy a complaint filed May 30 against 36 clergy who had co-officiated such a wedding for two men at Philadelphia’s Arch Street UMC on Nov. 9, 2013.

She also is meeting with clergy and laity groups during October for dialogues on this very issue as it pertains to clergy adherence and opposition to church law. (See related story.) Those meetings were requested by the Annual Conference in May as part of its decision to refer to the bishop’s Cabinet six related resolutions on this same matter.

And finally, the Judicial Council, the United Methodist Church’s high court, will affirm or reject on Oct. 22 the Northern Jurisdiction Appeals Committee’s June ruling to restore clergy credentials to the Rev. Frank Schaefer. He lost those credentials last December for refusing to sanction same-gender weddings.

Meanwhile, their lay counterparts are engaged in the same quest during their evening district meetings with the bishop.

The complaint’s advocates for upholding order, unity and accountability among ordained clergy, while supporting the right to challenge church law through “all appropriate and legal means.” However, when clergy vows are violated even in good conscience, they say, “disciplinary action must be taken.”

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October

OCT. 18
Latin Ministries for Non-Latino Churches: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., National Christian Conference Center, 1485 Valley Forge Road, Phoenixville, PA. Intensive training for non-Latino churches to explore the presence and characteristics of Latino/neighbors and various minority models and perspectives. Cost: $20. RSVP to the Rev. Lydia Muñoz at ldamen5051@gmail.com or 215-687-1368.

OCT. 21, 22, AND 23
Change Stewardship in Your Church, led by author Dr. Clif Christopher:
Oct. 21: Wescosville: Bethany UMC
Oct. 22: Ashton: Mt. Hope UMC
Oct. 23: Dover, DE, Wyoming UMC

OCT. 25
Safe Sanctuaries Training in all districts. 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.: CE District: Cedarsville UMC. EA District: Langhorne UMC. NE District: Effort UMC. NW District: First UMC. SE District: Thorndale UMC. SW District: Lititz UMC.

OCT. 31-NOV. 2
Changing Racism anti-racism training:
National Christian Conference Center, 1485 Valley Forge Road, Phoenixville, PA Course title: “A Personal Approach to Multiculturalism, Inclusion and Equality.”

November

NOV. 1:
Leadership Institute for African-American Clergy & Congregations: 8:30 a.m.-4:40 p.m., at Lincoln University. Facilitator: Dr. Robert R. Jennings, President of Lincoln University, 1570 Baltimore Pike, Lincoln University, PA. Theme for this first in a series of seminars: “Reaching and Serving God’s People in this Present Age.” (Sponsored by the Central District.)

NOV. 15
Planting Seeds for Ministry Growth Event: 2 p.m. to 5:25 p.m., at Hopewell UMC, 852 Hopewell Road, Downingtown, PA. Keynoter is Dr. Clint Jenkins, PhD, Vice President of Barna (Research) Group. Theme: “Connecting Church with Culture.” Speakers and workshops will address how to make churches more “young adult-friendly” and also how to foster racial-ethnic inclusiveness, restorative justice, church-school partnerships and a ministry of wellness. This event will also provide advanced training for Christ Servant Ministers.

NOV. 16
Viewing of documentary film Urban Rez: plus Native American-themed worship and music, sponsored by the EPA Conference Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM). 4 p.m., at Camp Innabah, 712 Pughtown Road, Spring City, PA.

NOV. 22
YES: Youth Call to Ministry Retreat, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., at New Life UMC, 2600 Bond Ave., Drexel Hill, PA. This event for students in grades 9 through 12, offers worship, testimonies by church leaders about their call to ministry, games and activities to encourage the teens to discover where God may be calling them to serve in the church.

2015

JAN. 13-15
2015 Midwinter Retreat for Clergy and Spouses: Holiday Inn Oceanfront, 6600 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, Md. M. Garlinda Burton, popular speaker, former UMC journalist and former head of the UMC General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, will keynote the event.

JAN. 31
The Financial Leadership Academy, sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic United Methodist Foundation: The academy will offer seminars, peer groups and coaching over two years to help participants learn about managing the financial health and wellbeing of churches and pastors.

EPAC STAFF TRANSITIONS

David Piltz, of Bristol Pa., joined the conference Connectional Ministries team as Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries (part-time) in August. The longtime youth and adult ministry leader is a Certified Lay Minister and a specialist and trainer in instructional design and organizational development in both church and corporate arenas. While serving on numerous local church committees, he has also led, coached and trained leaders in Christian education, mission trips, Safe Sanctuary policies, organizational development, conflict management and strategic planning.

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Acknowledging that they violated “certain rules of our Discipline,” the respondents admit to having “opened ourselves to certain consequences, which we are willing to face.” However, they explain their “civil disobedience” as being “in solidarity with our LGFT friends, family members, neighbors and church members,” for whom “discriminatory policies and practices continue to cause emotional and psychological harm.”

Both sides agreed to the resolution “to avoid the cost and pain of an ecclesiastical trial, and to maintain the unity of the church amid our deep disagreement.” The respondents “acknowledge their obligation to obey the Discipline” and that a repeat violation will subject them to the complaint process and “prompt and appropriate disciplinary action.” In response, the complainants agree to not pursue any complaint for any such violation committed up to Sept. 30.

Both sides agreed to not disclose any of the “internal debates” in their negotiations and to refrain from making “defamatory” comments against each other. They acknowledged that each side sees itself as obeying good conscience and “the call of Christ.” They also agreed to engage in dialogue to seek “ways that enable both groups to live together within the same communion with integrity.”

The dialogue will comprise two meetings. The first will define a respectful process of listening and honest discourse without “drama.” Small groups will dialogue aided by an outside facilitator. The second session will probe beyond differences to determine “how we can live and work together, moving forward.” “This is where we can move (to) the next step in our conference,” the resolution asserts, “and model a sense of unity for the denomination.”

Bishop Johnson, in an attached statement, accepted the terms of the resolution, acknowledging each side’s “principled belief” about challenging and upholding church law. “Though I may sympathize with the pastoral concerns of the respondents,” she stated, “it is unacceptable to disregard and disobey the Book of Discipline; change must be sought through our established means of Holy Conferencing.”

She further pledged to “handle swiftly and with significant and appropriate consequences” any future complaints lodged against clergy who “officiate or host a same-gender ceremony.” Those consequences, she added, may include a trial or unpaid involuntary leave in accordance with the Discipline and in consultation with the conference’s Board of Ordained Ministry and Clergy Session.

“It is my hope that the dialogues will provide a way forward for us,” said Johnson, “and model for the church a way of engaging one another in love and respect, in accord with the Discipline, amid profound disagreement.”
Faithfully Yours

Compassion

I have been studying the Book of Exodus recently, and I find myself a bit overwhelmed with the many detailed laws for worship, food, family values, property management, etc. It is tempting to skim over it because some of this legal matter is hard to compare to modern life. I haven’t built an altar out of hewn stone lately. Charges of donkeys and livestock being stolen don’t come across my desk.

But it is the spirit of these laws and not the content that is relevant for our lives today. In Exodus 22:24-27 God talks about money lending: “If ever you take your neighbor’s cloak in pledge you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, for that is his only covering; and it is his cloak for his body. In what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear for I am compassionate.”

The word “compassion” literally means “feel with.” God “feels with” and has sympathy for those who suffer. The entire law proclaims that our Creator has mercy and pity for the marginal peoples of the earth.

The laws teach people to be fair in how they treat their neighbors but also to have compassion for the poor, the widow, the orphan, the sick, and persons with disabilities. Those who suffer are God’s special concern. As we obey God’s law we make them our concern as well.

This was brought home to me recently when one of our missionaries from the General Board of Global Ministries, Helen Roberts Evans, addressed the Cabinet. Before mid-August she was a director of educational services for the church in Monrovia, Liberia.

She and all of the missionaries in that country were evacuated due to the Ebola outbreak. This terrible virus has killed thousands of people and the death toll continues to rise.

The president of Liberia announced a high state of emergency. Schools were closed, and people were forbidden to gather in groups to avoid spreading the disease. People have flooded clinics and hospitals, which lack staff and money to care for the sick and dying. There are not enough isolation centers, protective equipment, beds or medications.

Dead bodies lie on the streets, and people are afraid to bury them because touching a body can transmit the disease. Many family members who tenderly buried their loved ones became infected, and some have died. Helen Roberts Evans explained that some people have become suspicious about the disease and actually believe it is the fault of medical workers that people have become sick. Ambulances carrying the sick are being ambushed by fearful people.

Yet, there are numerous orphans without families to care for them. There are shortages of food, water and supplies of every kind, and few airplanes to fly into the country to bring needed supplies.

I cannot imagine a more difficult situation. Liberia is not alone. The Ebola outbreak extends to Sierra Leone, Guinea, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Surely people in these countries are crying out to God for help, and we have a God-given responsibility to the world to respond. The UM Committee on Relief (UMCOR) has sent more than $600,000. But there is more we can do.

I urge you to have unending compassion for the people in Africa who suffer from a disease that has no proven cure and that continues to spread. If everyone could contribute something so more people could be saved, so much hunger people could be fed, then this virus could be controlled with proper treatment.

Helen Roberts Evans is available to speak at churches while she is on furlough. She is staying at a mission house in Elkon, Md. For more information e-mail her at micradon@hotmail.com.

Acts of compassion are not only needed in Liberia. Look around you locally and see where people are in need. As we respond to our brothers and sisters we are the hands and feet and yea, the heart of Christ. It is the same Christ who came not to abolish the law but to fulfill the spirit of God’s law, most especially, the law of compassion.

The Harvest is Plentiful

BY THE REV. DR. CHRISTOPHER JACOB KURIAN, DIRECTOR OF CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES

The fall season is busy with events happening in our lives and the lives of our churches. Many congregations have celebrated Homecoming Sunday, Back-to-Church Sunday or Rally Day to invite past and present members to come back to church for worship, fellowship and Christian education classes...and not to come alone.

Hopefully, many members are using this season as an opportunity to invite non-members—whether family, friends, colleagues or even strangers—home to their churches for worship. Bible study or special events. Fall is, after all, a season of harvest; and there is a plentiful harvest of souls we encounter daily who yearn for more meaningful, righteous and uplifting events. Fall is, after all, a season of harvest; and there is a plentiful harvest of souls we encounter daily who yearn for more meaningful, righteous and uplifting lives. All of them need is an invitation.

Our churches are activities driven, but many of our neighbors may not know of or be attracted to what our churches have to offer. The sense of obligation to attend Sunday worship no longer prevails. Once active members have become inactive. Some were disappointed or hurt by negative things they experienced or observed in church.

It is also true that when visitors come we often do a poor job of making them feel at home. Beyond our friendly smiles and handshakes, we may not communicate clearly that we care about who they are and why they came. And we may not demonstrate truly welcoming, radical hospitality.

Especially now, when church is not a first priority nor the only place of refuge for a troubled soul, it is important that we do all we can to reach out and draw in people by expressing—in words and deeds—our genuine love and care for their lives. We must offer them a life-changing communion with Christ and with true believers who will share in their faith-journeys.

We all know that people need God to deal with many challenges they face. If our churches can truly become communities of love and hope, people will want to come and then come back. And for those who don’t, we should try to find out why.

You might discover some of those reasons why at our next conference faith-sharing event on March 21, 2015, at New Hanover UMC (9 am to 2:30 pm, lunch included). Thom and Joani Schultz, co-authors of the book Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore: And How 4 Acts of Love Will Make Your Church Irresistible, among other creative resources, will help us explore what works, doesn’t work and can work to stimulate people’s interest, involvement and investment in our churches as their preferred place of spiritual and social development.

I hope and pray many of you will choose to come and benefit from this exciting event. Those who need CEUs can get them, as well as the evangelism training experience required for clergy. We want to see every congregation represented at this event, preferably in teams. Registration and more information will be available soon.

Thom and Joani are great presenters and innovative thinkers who love the church. You will enjoy them and learn much about the changes happening in our culture today and how your church can respond.

May God bless you, and may you all have a bountiful fall harvest!
Leaders discuss ‘Love and Law in the UMC’

Continued from page 1

At the Northeast District laity meeting Oct. 1 Bishop Peggy Johnson addresses widespread disagreement over the Discipline’s prohibition against same-gender weddings and homosexual clergy. She explains the four options bishops offer for resolving the crisis in the book Finding Our Way: Love and Law in The United Methodist Church. John Coleman photo.

"Don't just listen to each other's words, Listen to each other's hearts."

Planning is underway for a marvelous, historic occasion when we will explore and celebrate a timeless, United Methodist story of redemption:

- The birth 150 years ago (1864) of the all-black Delaware Annual Conference.
- The death 50 years ago (1964-1965) of that racially segregated conference by its own decision.
- The resurrection 50 years ago (1965) of an interracial annual conference through merger into what would become the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

We will signify these combined anniversaries through presentations, dialogue, testimonies, dramatic and musical performances, a new video, and inspiring worship featuring the preaching of Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, a Philadelphia native and child of the former Delaware Conference and today an episcopal leader of The United Methodist Church.

Join us as we esteem our past, examine our present and envision our future as the people called Methodist.

Journey toward Wholeness
A Celebration of Our Methodist Heritage
May 30, 2015
Tindley Temple UMC

SAVE THE DATE!
May 30, 2015, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Tindley Temple United Methodist Church, Philadelphia, Pa.

The annual period for selecting or changing health insurance options for the coming year, 2015, is here now. For active clergy and staff participants it will be November 10-30. Selections and changes will be effective Jan. 1.

This year our Open Enrollment will be considered “passive.” That means you only need to log into www.epaumcbenefits.bswift.com to review and update your record for accuracy, and make any desired changes to your benefits.

Please note that in order to maintain security your login has been changed. Your username is your first initial and your last name (with no space in between). Your password is your birth date (with no dashes or slashes).

This is the time to make any enrollment changes or waivers to take effect in 2015. Please watch for further instructions from us in your mail.

You can log into your account at any time to download or review documents and plan information. Just click on the link in the right hand block that reads "All Documentation." And be sure to abide by the Open Enrollment period deadline.

http://epaumc.org/healthinsurance

Central District clergy members Jacqueline Hines, Jim Whitehouse and Ricky Ayala discuss their views on sexuality concerns and restrictions in the Book of Discipline. John Coleman photo.
Innabah celebrates 85 years

More than 200 people flocked to Camp Innabah Oct. 4 to celebrate its 85th anniversary at a fall festival that offered something for everyone—from hayrides to boating, from painting pumpkins to roasting s’mores on a campfire. Laughter pierced the crisp autumn air, along with the squeals of children running through a fun maze of hay bales. So did eclectic music from a funky string band. The camp sold a bounty of Innabah t-shirts and memorabilia. And finally, the day ended with the Rev. Dan Lebo, camp director, recounting Innabah’s history and impact on countless lives, and Bishop Peggy Johnson praising Innabah and all camps as life-changing treasures.

Sabrina Daluisio photos.

Gretna Glen welcomes youth groups

By Jessi Carver, Program Manager, Gretna Glen Camp & Retreat Center

September 28th brought beautifully warm autumn weather and nearly 100 youth and adults from the surrounding area to Gretna Glen for the first Free Youth Group Night of the 2014-2015 school year. Ten churches from five of the six EPA Conference districts and our neighboring Susquehanna Conference joined together to enjoy our sacred camp space through outdoor games, gaga, 9-square, boating, hot dogs, s’mores, campfires and worship.

Please Live was invited to be part of the evening as a non-profit group that tackles the tough issues of depression, self-harm, suicide and mental health stigmas. The organization connects people with resources available to help them. Bryan Stevenson led worship against a backdrop of changing autumn leaves, a scenic reminder of the beauty God creates.

Dan Gray from Love Life Ministries, a new partner of Please Live, shared a powerful message about compassion and how the Bible shows us that compassion is something all people are called to. Dan was able to talk openly about the tough issues facing youth and youth workers in an authentic and passionate way that was perfect for empowering everyone to make a positive difference.

We are grateful that Gretna Glen has the opportunity to be a resource to the community. If you have a topic, a speaker or a band that would like to perform, please let us know.

Upcoming dates for Free Youth Group Nights are: Oct. 19, Nov. 16, Jan. 18, Feb. 15, March 15 and April 19. Please come with your youth group. You’ll enjoy it.

RSVP to program@gretnaglen.org.

Camp’s EcoEternity Forest

A special place

The EcoEternity Forest at Pocono Plateau, the first of its kind in Pennsylvania, is a burial option for cremated ashes and an alternative to the traditional cemetery. Since it opened in 2008, our designated EcoEternity Forest has garnered 150 reservations and 37 interments.

The cremated ashes of the deceased are buried at the roots of a tree, allowing remaining minerals to be absorbed by the tree. It creates in essence a living memorial in a natural, peaceful woodland setting.

The interment process causes no lasting disturbance to the forest floor. In a plot of mature growth forest, suitable trees are selected and registered in a log.

Interested parties visit the EcoEternity Forest by appointment and select a dedicated burial tree for an individual or a family. If the family wishes, graveside services can be conducted in the forest during the interment. A memorial plaque is attached to the tree.

Open to all churches and denominations, Pocono Plateau owns and manages the forest. The camp and retreat site began over 65 years ago with a vision to create a place surrounded by God’s beautiful creation for young people to hear the gospel message and grow in their faith. That mission is extended to promote Christian growth for all ages through a well-rounded spiritual, educational and recreational program.

There is no better place to reflect upon life’s choices than in the midst of creation. The EcoEternity Forest allows the camp to impact the most challenging aspect of life: preparation for death. The beauty of this place provides those who visit the peace and comfort they seek, as well as the living hope of Christ’s gospel.

For more details visit www.ecoeternity.com or contact Pocono Plateau at 570-676-3665.
Seeking unity in fellowship and sacrifice for the common good

BY ANN JACOB

The Global Young Peoples Convocation and Legislative Assembly (GYPC-LA) this past summer has been a formative part of my understanding of unity, radical hospitality and ways to faithfully live into the fruits of the Spirit.

My journey there was a unique one due to my experience with previous convocations. As a high school freshman I was a non-voting delegate at the Global Convocation in Johannesburg, South Africa. Later, as a college student, I was a voting delegate at the Convocation in Berlin, Germany. And now, I was privileged to attend the Convocation in Manila, Philippines, as a new seminary student and as the young adult co-chair of the General Board of Discipleship’s Division on Ministries with Young People (DMYP).

From spending time with HIV/AIDS infected orphans in Soweto, to understanding the atrocities of the Holocaust while visiting the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, to enduring Typhoon Rammasun, these convocations have challenged and enabled me to grow spiritually and intellectually.

As I reflect on the most recent gathering, I remember moments of unity, fellowship, and joy. I witnessed our joy as a Christian body when we worshipped together, assembled UMCOR relief bags for Filipino communities impacted by the typhoon, participated in the commissioning of missionaries, voted on a statement of unity, and talked with one another regardless of our differences in age, gender, race, socio-economic background, or ability. However, I also witnessed pain and division during the legislative process and unholy conferencing at times. This was especially challenging for me as I chaired three legislative sessions, attempting to facilitate holy conferencing with young people from 34 countries and volunteer translators. We worked our final session until 2 a.m., trying to maintain transparency, civility, and sanity.

One thing I observed was that young people were not shying away from tough conversations. Legislation that addressed human sexuality elicited passionate conversations. I observed young people grappling with how this issue and the church’s stance affect not only their peers back home, but also young people around the globe.

For me, the question that remains is “What does it mean to be a Christian and live a Christian life in the 21st century?” While this question may prompt many nuances, the true answers may be “to love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind,” to “love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22: 37,39) and “to act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

Our legislative process places people in categories of winners and losers. Yet, I believe the young people discovered common ground, which allows rivals to compromise for the greater good and enables opponents to go beyond the barriers of differences to seek understanding.

After our final legislative session, a few young people crafted a Statement of Unity. Five members from various parts of the globe, who held different views about human sexuality, agreed on the Statement of Unity and wanted to present it to the entire body. To me, that statement represented a bold assertion by the United Methodist young people to the entire Church that we are one despite our spectrum of beliefs on a few issues.

I believe there needs to be a better way of practicing holy conferencing in legislative sessions. In our assessment of the Global Young Peoples Convocation and Legislative Assembly, the DMYP made a commitment to work on ways to improve legislative sessions and the ways we conduct business.

I hope this will be a conversation that the Church at large undertakes as well. How may we be a blessing to those around us? And as The United Methodist Church prepares for General Conference in 2016, I hope we consider how may we leave legislative sessions without leaving the church we love.

Collaboration key to Young People’s Ministry

BY DAVID PILTZ, COORDINATOR OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES

The General Board of Discipleship outlines the mission of Young People’s Ministry at www.gbod.org/about/about-young-peoples-ministries. Youth and Young Adult Ministries of the EPA Conference embraces the board’s mission as our own. We will work towards:

• Empowering youth and young adults to transform themselves into the likeness of Jesus Christ.
• Empowering youth and young adults to be agents of change helping to transform others into the likeness of Jesus Christ.
• Developing leadership skills and relationship skills.
• Advocating for inclusion of all types of youth and young adults into ministry, and celebrate God’s call for them.
• Advocating for the needs of youth and young adults and creating programs to meet their needs.
• Empowering youth and young adults to act as agents of peace, justice, and mercy by helping to eradicate injustice, violence, inequity and other social ills.
• Creating a diverse network of helpful resources for youth and young adult ministries.

The success of The United Methodist Church can be traced to our Wesleyan roots and foundation: lay and clergy working and leading together, side-by-side, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Likewise, the goals of young people’s ministries can only be achieved through strategic collaboration among conference, district and local church leaders. Thus, we are working on ten strategies that focus on:

• Relationship building;
• Fortifying the conference councils on Youth Ministries and Young Adult Ministries;
• Expanding our communication and resourcing through creative use of media;
• Effective leadership training; and
• Increasing young people’s participation at conference-wide events, including annual conference, and at other events critical to their interests, such as the Peninsula-Delaware Conference’s annual Youth Rally in Ocean City, Md.

All of our strategies will include an underlying but intentional focus on building diversity (geographical, racial-ethnic, church size, socio-economic, etc.) among participants and leaders. You can learn more on our Web page at epaumc.org/ministry/youngpeoples.

YOU Are a Masterpiece!

DAVID PILTZ, COORDINATOR OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES

Masterpiece is the theme for the 2015 Peninsula-Delaware Conference’s Youth Rally scheduled for Jan. 9-11, 2015, in Ocean City, Md. We share in this always exciting annual gathering because we also share a bishop. Bishop Peggy Johnson is the episcopal leader of both our conferences.

For 2015 our ambitious goal is to see at least 1,000 youth represent the Eastern PA Conference at the rally. Yes, you read that right: 1000. Think that’s impossible? Well, Jesus’ disciples thought it was impossible to feed more than 5,000 hungry people with just two loaves of bread and five fish. When we recognize Jesus at work within us and our churches, especially among our youth, then nothing is impossible!

Now is the time to register online, begin raising funds and plan your trip to the 2015 Youth Rally. We will soon announce an interesting conference-wide contest to generate interest and increase attendance. Watch for it, and get ready to be challenged and excited when you learn all the ways in which YOU, as a child of God, are a Masterpiece!
Embrace change to spread the good news

BY THE REV. JOHN BLETSCH

F or as long as I can remember I have loved Lego. Almost every Christmas and birthday brought more of those wonderful little plastic bricks into our home. My brother and I loved playing with them because we could build almost anything we could imagine. The problem was that sometimes we would build something so cool we did not want to tear it apart to make something else. We just wanted to keep the spaceship or building we had made intact, and have our parents buy us some more Lego so we could keep making new things. But money was not unlimited in our family, and we often had to wait until Christmas or a birthday for another box.

Unfortunately, that often meant choosing to tear apart what we had made in order to make something new. This dilemma was captured well in The Lego Movie, a future classic for Lego lovers. Master builders represented by Lego superheroes—Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, and the wizards Gandalf and Dumbledore—struggle against the evil machinations of Lord Business in the Lego world. They embody change and creativity, while Lord Business wants everything to stay the same forever. In fact, he has located a Lego so we could keep making new things. But God has struggled with change over their long history. Many of us want things to stay the same, but many others know we have to make room for change.

One place we that see this struggle unfolding is in the church's reluctance to adopt new technology and communication tools to proclaim the gospel. Our Lord has entrusted us with the "words of life," as his loyal disciple Peter noted; but all too often we are content to communicate those words using outdated mediums that have limited effectiveness. Then we wonder why fewer people attend worship or the other great programs we plan.

The world is more connected than ever through the Internet and devices we use to access it. But instead of adopting them to proclaim the gospel we drag our feet. We hem and haw and ask, "Why can't we just do it the way we've always done it." We scratch our heads at learning something new and wish that the pace of change was less rapid. I think all of us know we can't glue everything down and expect success in our mission. The church can't run from the Internet, social media and technology and expect to reach and attract new people with Jesus' words of life. If we don't learn how to harness them for the gospel then the world will pass us by.

The church will become another chapter in the history books rather than a vital force for transformation of lives and of the world.

However, it does not have to end that way. Throughout the ages, innovators in the church have tried new methods to reach people and have seen God's Spirit work through those efforts. The invention of the printing press put the Bible in the hands of the common people. Methodism's founder John Wesley adopted the radical idea of going to the people instead of waiting for them to come to the church.

The church has the good news—the best news for the world. Instead of avoiding or rejecting new methods to share it, we should embrace them. Effective websites, curated Facebook pages, timely Tweets, beautiful Instagram photos, dramatic YouTube videos and insightful podcasts can all proclaim the good news of salvation to a world that needs to receive it. Anything less makes us guilty of hiding our light under a bushel basket.

The Rev. John Bletsch, the new pastor of Otterbein UMC in Audubon and a Lego enthusiast, is also a new member of the renamed EPA Conference Communications Ministry Team.

Surviving storms among ‘the smiling people’

BY LAUREN LOMAS

I have been truly blessed and changed by my trip to the Philippines for the Global Young People's Convocation and Legislative Assembly this past July. I felt so many emotions while I was there. I was scared while experiencing a typhoon; but looking back, I see how much faith and trust I put in God to keep us safe. So I was not terrified.

I was happy that God used the bodies of the young people of the UMC to fill food bags for the Filipinos affected by the typhoon. I was exhausted and disappointed during stormy, late night legislative debates. But I was ecstatic when the GYPC-LA ended with a statement of unity. It was created out of God bringing young United Methodists together and approved by those young people of the UMC.

Four days after our arrival, when we traveled outside the resort area in daylight for the first time, I was shocked with disbelief to see how close very poor living conditions were to us. Yet, I felt in awe of God's creation of the beautiful land of the Philippines. The volcano trek we went on was beautiful. These are just a few of the emotions I experienced during my stay. Throughout my time there, I kept thinking of how happy, hospitable, kind and friendly the Filipino hosts were. The night we arrived the typhoon caused a lot of awful destruction; but through it all they did their best to ensure that we were comfortable. Not once did I see them dismayed over the disaster of the typhoon. I couldn't imagine how they were able to be so hospitable while they knew their work places and homes were damaged.

After the GYPC-LA, the group from the Northeastern Jurisdiction stayed around for a few extra days. During one of our outings, the Filipino guide on our bus said, "The Filipino people are the smiling people," a perfect description of what I had witnessed. The guide explained further: "The Filipino people are the smiling people because they realize they may be poor in this life, but they know they will be rich in the afterlife." As I have continued to reflect on my time there, this statement has stuck with me the most and changed me the most.

While I was in the Philippines, I showered with cockroaches, changed sleeping rooms four times, slept in a room with 31 other girls, stayed up till 2 am. voting on legislation, experienced a typhoon, fell off a horse and got pinned under it. But none of that phased me one bit because I knew I was living out God's plan for me that week.

I fellowshipped with young United Methodists from all over the world, praised God with them, and made a difference in the UMC. I was blessed with the experience of representing the Northeastern Jurisdiction. And I visited a country that taught me more about how to live than I ever thought possible.
touching music and message, as he played guitar, sang and entertained a special performer, George Dennehy, Sept. 19.

Born without arms, George delighted patrons with his heart-welcomed a special performer, George Dennehy, Sept. 19.

entertainment, refreshments and community fellowship reflected on his life's blessings. New church members Dave and Pat in the cafe, adjacent to the church's sanctuary, while Pastor Ricky Ayala and fellow members and friends.

ing cafe in their daughter's special place for memory this year, aided by new church members Dave and Pat. Sue Kiefner, Wesley's mission resource coordinator, used her keen marketing skills to make the Backpack Program, this two-year-old blest-fest, a great success.

Along with underwear and socks dental, vision and hearing check-ups, child-ID fingerprinting, and share with others. Once-popular Christian music festivals like the Purple Door, which ended in 2012 after two decades in the Lebanon area, have been closing due to music industry changes and the struggling economy. The Revelation Festival offered a welcome revival with inspirational acts that included pop, rock, alternative, acoustic, dance and metal genres. Aaron Smith, youth minister at Good Shepherd UMC in Lebanon, was the sole speaker: “We look forward to 2015,” said event organizer Alexander Sterjef. “We plan to host Revelation Festival again next Aug. 8 and we hope to see young people there.”

More than planning and promotion Kochenderfer UMC in Lebanon hosted Revelation Festival Aug. 9 and sold more than 120 tickets, exceeding its goal for a first-time effort. Organizers sought to offer contemporary Christian music, at low cost, that young people would enjoy and share with others. Now people Christian music festivals like the Purple Door, which ended in 2012 after two decades in the Lebanon area, have been closing due to music industry changes and the struggling economy. The Revelation Festival offered a welcome revival with inspirational acts that included pop, rock, alternative, acoustic, dance and metal genres. Aaron Smith, youth minister at Good Shepherd UMC in Lebanon, was the sole speaker: “We look forward to 2015,” said event organizer Alexander Sterjef. “We plan to host Revelation Festival again next Aug. 8 and we hope to see young people there.”

Ken Patton photo.

Members of Emmanuel UMC in North Philadelphia and nearby Bethel Presbyterian Church marched and rallied together Sunday afternoon, Oct. 5, at a rally to push for the memory of young victims of handgun violence in their community. Emmanuel’s adult and children’s choirs sang, followed by prayer, testimonials by parents of a murdered youth and a call to action led by Heeding God’s Call, an organization working to end illegal gun purchases and gun violence in the city. As members held white balloons and finally released them into the sky, a colorful, empty bottles stood as silent testimonies to those murdered this year, bearing their names, ages and the date they were killed.

Wesley UMC Bethlehem’s Korean choirs.

welcomed many guests, including several children of Philadel phia, part of Lighthouse UMC in Glenside, celebrated its 50th anniversary Sept. 28 with melodious choral music, joyful fellowship and greetings from Bishop Peggy Johnson and new Southwest District Superintendent Rev. BumKoo Chung. Church leaders inaugurated six new Exhorting Stewards, the Rev. Byung Woo Cho, pastor of Philadelphian, in Levittown took a different ice bucket challenge Sept. 7 to help the congregation raise its portion of the connectional fund and enjoy some fun and fellowship in the process. They responded to one generous member’s pledge that he would pay $25 for everyone who poured a bucket of icy water over their head and add another $5 if they matched his gift. Of 51 who doused themselves, half matched the $25 pledge made by church band drummer member’s pledge that he would pay $25 for everyone who poured a bucket of icy water over their head and add another $5 if they matched his gift. Of 51 who doused themselves, half matched the $25 pledge made by church band drummer.

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Lighthouse Korean UMC in Philadelphia, part of Lighthouse UMC in Glenside, celebrated its 50th anniversary Sept. 28 with melodious choral music, joyful fellowship and greetings from Bishop Peggy Johnson and new Southwest District Superintendent Rev. BumKoo Chung. Church leaders inaugurated six new Exhorting Stewards, the Rev. Byung Woo Cho, pastor of Philadelphian, in Levittown took a different ice bucket challenge Sept. 7 to help the congregation raise its portion of the connectional fund and enjoy some fun and fellowship in the process. They responded to one generous member’s pledge that he would pay $25 for everyone who poured a bucket of icy water over their head and add another $5 if they matched his gift. Of 51 who doused themselves, half matched the $25 pledge made by church band drummer.

After much planning and promotion Kochenderfer UMC in Lebanon hosted Revelation Festival Aug. 9 and sold more than 120 tickets, exceeding its goal for a first-time effort. Organizers sought to offer contemporary Christian music, at low cost, that young people would enjoy and share with others. Now people Christian music festivals like the Purple Door, which ended in 2012 after two decades in the Lebanon area, have been closing due to music industry changes and the struggling economy. The Revelation Festival offered a welcome revival with inspirational acts that included pop, rock, alternative, acoustic, dance and metal genres. Aaron Smith, youth minister at Good Shepherd UMC in Lebanon, was the sole speaker: “We look forward to 2015,” said event organizer Alexander Sterjef. “We plan to host Revelation Festival again next Aug. 8 and we hope to see young people there.”

Ken Patton photo.
Learning for Leadership

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

With workshops happening almost every Saturday and often during the week, school is in session this fall in the EPA Conference. No doubt John Wesley would be proud to see how much effort our conference puts into learning for leadership and how faithfully clergy and laity show up for class after class after class, seeking knowledge that might make them better disciples and better disciples-makers.

That’s why NEWSpirit begins a series in this issue, titled Learning for Leadership, to reflect the importance we place on leadership training and the value we accrue from it. For starters:

- "Leading from the Heart," Reviving Worship for the 21st Century, Sept. 6, convened over 120 people at Paoli UMC to learn emerging ideas for increasing creativity, sensitivity and spirituality in worship. There was both singing and study, led by Mark Miller with his band, the Rev. Lydia Muñoz, the Rev. Dr. Tanya Linn Bennett of Drew University and also workshop leaders, the Rev. Michael Johnson and the Rev. Suzanne Duschesne.

- Conflict Mediation Skills Training, Sept. 13, taught by the Rev. Sharon Barley, helped about a dozen lay members understand and learn responses to conflicts and interpersonal dynamics that can inhibit or enhance communication and discipleship growth in the church. This important training is offered periodically to laity and clergy to improve their effectiveness in ministry.

- Conversations on Intercultural Communication, helped a roomful of clergy at Hope UMC Douglassville, Sept. 19, develop intercultural competency to enhance their community and church leadership skills in an increasingly multicultural society. Two diverse pastors and consultants from California, the Rev. Dale Weatherspoon and the Rev. Sun Hee Kim, provided lectures, lively discussion and group problem-solving exercises. The training helped attendees understand cultural distinctions and effective ways to interact cross-culturally.

These trainings and others will be offered periodically to laity and clergy in every district, according to the Rev. Anita Adams Powell, Cabinet Dean and Superintendent of the Central District, which sponsored these events but opened them to participants conference-wide.

Indeed, there is a lot more learnin’ going on, including:

- Two recent introductory orientations to Mission-InSite, one online and one face-to-face.
- A new Growing Church Covenant Group started by the Rev. Blake Deibler, pastor of Wesley UMC Quarryville, to engage fellow pastors in peer learning on how to grow their churches.
- Basic and advanced Christ Servant Ministry courses.
- Latino Ministries training for lay members and for non-Latino churches.
- Sexual Ethics training for clergy.
- Financial stewardship training by Dr. Clif Christopher, the best in the business.
- Safe Sanctuaries training events conference-wide on Oct. 25.
- The fully enrolled Changing Racism course, which returns Oct. 31 to Nov. 2.
- The Leadership Institute for African-American Clergy and Congregations, Nov. 1, at Lincoln University, to be led by university president Dr. Robert Jennings.

Clearly, this conference understands that learning for leadership is ministry in action. And the fruit of that learning can pay dividends in ministry relevance and congregational vitality for years to come.
Learning for Leadership: MissionInSite

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

“I’ll show it to you.” That seemed to be Peter Wernett’s favorite response to many questions raised at the MissionInSite orientation he led Sept. 20 at West Chester UMC. Some have testified to the ease and benefits of the Webinar orientation held online just a month earlier, but Wernett’s affable and knowledgeable presentation in the face-to-face session was a plus.

The Conference Congregational Development Office is trying to get more churches onboard with this invaluable resource to help them learn more about their communities and their members. While many have yet to tread onto this promising technology terrain, those that have are singing its praises.

“I believe more of our churches should use this resource to enhance their mission outreach,” said the Rev. Mary Jane Kirby, pastor of Union UMC in Havertown who, sadly, was one of only nine people at the Sept. 20 orientation. “I plan to bring this to our (Eastern Main Line) Mission ConneXion and encourage other churches to use it.”

She came because she chairs the Central District Board of Church Location and Development. “This can help us when we need an overview of demographics in an area that we’re exploring to build or expand a church.”

Wernett showed his fledgling class MissionInSite’s surprising capabilities for helping churches make sense and profitable use of what the corporate world calls “location intelligence.” Part one was “Introduction to Neighborhood Discovery.” Part two: “Comparing Your Congregation to Your Community.”

The latter capability requires a church to e-mail the Rev. Gordon Hendrickson (ghendrickson@epaumc.org), Coordinator of Congregational Development, to request password access so it can upload information about its members and learn comparative insights that can enhance its mission, discipleship and stewardship efforts.

Unfortunately, while about 70 EPA Conference churches have logged onto MissionInSite and created accounts, only a handful have uploaded membership details into the system. The investment of labor and members’ trust in that process may be two of the biggest hindrances; but the return on that investment could be significant for a church that wants to grow in membership and ministry.

Hendrickson said his goal is to see 100 new churches signed onto MissionInSite by next year. It costs them nothing since it is purchased through the conference’s Connectional Ministries Fund.

“It’s an uphill climb, but this tool is not hard to use, and they offer users a lot of help” he said. “Most of us in the church came along in a different era and environment. But this is where we are now, and if we want to grow and serve our members and our communities better, this resource can help us.”

Learn more about MissionInSite on our Web site at www.epaumc.org/ministry/missioninsite, where you’ll find links to an introduction and a short video.

Learning for Leadership: Laity Academy

BY AUDEY BATES, DEAN OF THE ACADEMY FOR LAITY

The 31st EPA Conference Academy for Laity, Aug. 8-10, provided intensive training for 170 persons on 11 topics of importance to our denomination—from United Methodist polity and structure, to preaching the Word and using technology in worship, to intercessory prayer and practical evangelism.

This academy is the largest annual event for laity in our conference. Attendees expressed pleasure with their fellowship and learning experiences, as they grew in their knowledge of God’s plan for us in His world. The next Academy will happen in August 2015, with world-class instructors and a plethora of interactions with others who are striving to reach a better understanding of our personal missions.

Learn more (and view photos!) about the 2014 Academy for Laity and other laity news and events at www.epaumc.org/ministry/leadership/lay.

(From left) Participants enjoy “A Spiritual Journey with God,” one of a dozen classes at the 2014 Laity Academy. And Dr. Mary White, who helped organize the event as outgoing conference lay leader, speaks to the full gathering. John Coleman photos.
**United Methodists respond to Africa’s Ebola epidemic**

As the Ebola epidemic spreads with ferocious speed, United Methodists in West Africa are intensifying the fight against the outbreak by joining efforts to reach remote villages. Yet, a disease that was once limited to rural areas is rampaging through urban centers as well.

National infection rates continue to rise. Since the epidemic began more than 4,000 people have died in West Africa—including Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Nigeria. Ben Bawoh, a community health officer in Sierra Leone, died Oct. 12 and is believed to be the region’s first United Methodist health-care worker to die of Ebola.

The United Methodist Church and its global partners are helping with treatment, prevention, communication and public education. The response is a joint effort by West African UM church leaders and regional health boards, denominational health facilities, missionaries, UMCOR and general agencies.

**To keep informed of the church’s efforts and to donate funds to save lives visit www.umc.org/news-and-media/the-church-responds-to-ebola.** We will occasionally publish updates with links on the conference Web site also.

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**Tanzania missionaries visit EPA Conference churches**

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

The Rev. Mutwale Ntambo Wa Mushidi and Kabaka Ndala Alphonsine, United Methodist missionaries in Tanzania, East Africa, have been itinerating in the EPA Conference for much of October. During his sixth visit and her third, they have visited churches and shared the strifes, hopes and critical needs of their growing mission enterprises, while meeting old and new friends and supporters.

Fast-growing, multicultural, multi-faith Dar es Salaam is Tanzania’s capital and largest city. There they are involved in evangelization and church growth, Christian education, women’s education and activities, community development, health education and refugee ministries. This active, dedicated missionary couple, who have four daughters and two sons, receives support for their work from donors in our conference, among other conferences they are visiting. They will return home in December.

The Rev. David J. Davis, EPA Conference Secretary for Global Ministries, has been their host for the month, encouraging churches, groups and individuals to invite them for fellowship and mission interpretation.

“The Conference Missions Team has been working hard to draw attention to the mission work United Methodists are engaged in globally through the missionaries we support,” said Davis. He coordinated the conference’s two Celebration of Mission events in March 2013 and 2014, held at Olivet UMC in Coatesville, where he serves as pastor.

“We try to bring missionaries into our midst, from time to time, to give our congregations opportunities to hear and support what God is doing through them,” he said. “The amazing work they do is really good news and a testament to the sacrificial giving we engage in for missions.”

Kabaka Ndala Alphonsine coordinates women’s activities and training for the church in Tanzania and directs a United Methodist preschool in Dar-es Salaam. Her work includes Christian education and teaching sewing and other entrepreneurial skills to help women obtain income security. Kabaka also teaches health education, especially healthy habits to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and now Ebola. Of special focus are the many refugees in their area, where she works with her husband to evangelize and care for the developing church and community.

The Rev. Mutwale Ntambo Wa Mushidi is a member of the North Katanga Annual Conference in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which is part of the North Katanga and Tanzania Episcopal Area. He represents the bishop as Superintendent of the Dar-es Salaam District, the headquarters of the Tanzania Provisional Conference, which hopes to become as a full annual conference if approved by the denomination’s 2016 General Conference.

As an evangelist, church planter and community developer, Rev. Mushidi pioneered United Methodist mission work in Tanzania in the early 1990s. Thanks to support and collaboration from mission partners, there are now 64 churches in 11 regions there, he reports. “Our primary function,” he says, “is to proclaim Christ to the world while working for God’s reign of grace, peace, and justice.”

There is a lot of “competition” among many faith groups, especially Catholics, Rev. Mushidi admits. But the United Methodist Church in Tanzania is growing and reaching out. “People are changing according to God’s word; refugees are being consöled,” he says.

Thanks to generous donations they recently purchased 15 acres of property in southwest Dar es Salaam to build a guest house and reception center for missionaries and visitors, and eventually a church, a school and a medical facility (Advance Project #1263SN).

The Mushidis end their visit to our conference at First UMC Lancaster on Sunday, Oct. 19, before departing to visit other conferences. Learn more about them and their mission work on our Web site at www.epaumc.org/ministry/global and on the General Board of Global Ministries Web site at www.umcmision.org/Missionaries-in-Ser vice/Missionary-Profiles.
Ardmore UMC celebrates union with Bala Cynwyd UMC

With heart-stirring music and messages, Ardmore UMC held a formal Service of Unity Oct. 12 culminating its merger with the former Bala Cynwyd UMC, which was closed and sold this year.

The celebration completed a yearlong journey that included their first worship service together Jan. 26 and a vote to merge Aug. 5. About 30 of the remaining 35 members of Bala Cynwyd reportedly came to nearby Ardmore as a group after deliberating over several options of where to go once their historic, gothic-style church buildings were sold.

Ardmore’s pastor, the Rev. Timothy Thomson-Hohl, led worship. The Rev. Anita Adams Powell, Central District Superintendent, officiated the uniting ceremony, which included greetings and aspirations voiced by members and visiting pastors. Bishop Peggy Johnson commended the united congregation in a sermon about hope and responsibility, challenging members to undertake new, creative forms of outreach ministry and stewardship.

“The Bala members did it the right way, coming here together as a faith community,” recalled Thomson-Hohl, “and we warmly welcomed them in several ways and involved them in our worship and ministry life, as we became one congregation.”

“We had long-standing relationships as a close-knit congregation,” said Bala’s lay leader Paula Engard-Ellis, a 28-year member whose recent wedding was the last of many to be conducted there. “Over a year ago we realized we could not continue on our own, so we looked for a place where we could move together. This congregation was like a mirror image of our own, and we felt most comfortable here.”

It was “very meaningful, like a holy merging,” akin to holy conferencing, said Ardmore lay leader Clare Sautter, a business consultant. She described it as “a tremendous learning experience” for her, with much prayer, honesty and spiritual discernment, unlike many business mergers.

“We took nothing for granted, but maintained openness in our many conversations,” she said. “It’s been tough to balance my mixed feelings of empathy for them because they lost the church they dearly loved, but also of joy and anticipation that they have joined Ardmore and are now part of us.”

Participating in Ardmore UMC’s Service of Unity and Blessing, Oct. 12, to signify its merger with Bala Cynwyd UMC, were (from left): Ardmore’s Lay Leader Clare Sautter; Bala Cynwyd’s former lay leader Paula Engard-Ellis; the Rev. Mary Duff, former Christian education director at Bala Cynwyd; the Rev. Anita Adams Powell, Central District Superintendent; Bishop Peggy Johnson; the Rev. Timothy Thomson-Hohl, Ardmore’s pastor; the Rev. James McIntire, a former pastor of both churches; and the Rev. Lydia Muñoz, a friend of the congregation. John Coleman photo.
Help us celebrate Missions in the Winter 2015 issue of NEWSpirit.

Please send us your news, stories, photos and video of mission work teams, youth or young adult mission trips, support for UMC missionaries, and the work and witness of your church’s Mission Connexion.

Please e-mail everything to: communications@epaumc.org.

Thanks!

Members of the EPA Conference Connectional Table met Oct. 11 at St. Matthew’s UMC Valley Forge to share ministry reports, concerns and upcoming events, build teamwork, and plan ministry strategies for 2015. The Rev. Robert Wilt (seated, third from right) and Krystl Johnson (seated, far left) are Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, respectively. The next meeting, in Camp Innabah’s retreat setting, will be Jan. 31 (or Feb 7 or Feb. 21 as snow dates). John Coleman photo.

The 2014 Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Journal is almost here!

You can access it online after by mid-November at www.epaumc.org/resources/2014-Journal

You can also order a hard copy for only $25. There are two methods:

1. Purchase a printed copy on-line now at epaumc.smartevents.com/public/events/2014-journal, or
2. mail a check in the amount of $25 (made payable to EPAUMC) to: Gloria Knoeller, EPA Conference, PO Box 820, Valley Forge, PA 19482.

Your Journal will be mailed to you when they are printed and delivered to the Conference Office (mid-November). We have limited copies; so it’s first-come first-served until they run out.

Out with the old, in with the new.

There are lots of changes this year. So discard your old 2013 Journal, and check out the new 2014 Journal!

EPA Conference Committee on Native American Ministries presents

Award Winning Documentary

Urban Rez

November 16, 2014 - 4:00PM

Plus worship, singing, and a light meal.

CAMP INNABAH

712 Pughtown Road

Spring City, PA 19475

RSVP PLEASE:

fanderson@epaumc.org

Hopewell UMC’s Annual Planting Seeds for Ministry Growth

Keynoter is Dr. Clint Jenkins, PhD, Vice President of Barna (Research) Group.

CONNECTING

CHURCH + CULTURE

Making our local churches relevant to new people, younger people and more diverse people

2 p.m. to 5:25 p.m. at Hopewell UMC, 852 Hopewell Road, Downingtown, PA.
In Memoriam

Full obituaries are available on our website at www.epaumc.org/news/obituaries.

The Rev. George E. Darby

The Rev. George E. Darby, 64, of Akron, an Elder in the EPA Conference, passed away Saturday, August 30, 2014, at Lancaster General Hospital.

Rev. Darby was an ordained minister since 1987, serving the following United Methodist churches: Collingdale: Mariners Beth (Closed), Sharon Hill (Closed), Rothsville: Salem, Fresh Faith Gospel Ministries, Inc., (in Extension Ministry), Limeville and Milton Grove. He was on medical leave since 2010.

In addition to his wife, Susan L. (Aukland) Darby, he is survived by two daughters—Jennifer, wife of Jer- emy Yountd, and Amy Darby, wife of Geoff Thomas; a brother, Kenneth Darby; and a sister, Sharron Bryant.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Lan- caster General Hospital, Trauma-Neuro Unit, 555 N. Duke St., Lancaster, PA 17602. Online condolences can be given at straullingfuneralhome.com.

The Rev. Samuel H. Stoner

The Rev. Samuel H. Stoner, 102, formerly of Lykens and Manheim, Pa., passed peacefully on August 21, 2014 at Hospice and Community Care in Mount Joy. He was a retired elder of the EPA Conference and the oldest pastor on record in the conference.

He was a member of St. Mark’s UMC, Mount Joy. He served the following churches as a devoted pastor: Fal- mouth UMC; Lykens: Grace UMC; and Manheim: Salem UMC. He retired in 1978.

Sam was married to the late Alice Keller Stoner, who died in February 2013. His first wife, the late Mary E. Bose Stoner, died in May 1982.

Surviving him are three sons: John D., husband of Patricia Stoner of Ansonia, Conn.; Stephen H., husband of Sara Stoner of Millford; and Timothy D., husband of Claire Stoner of New Freedom. He also leaves behind six grandchildren, sixteen great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by a grandson and six brothers.

In lieu of flowers contributions may be sent in rev. Stoner’s memory to the Brethren Village Good Samaritan Fund, 3001 Lititz Pike, P. O. Box 5093, Lancaster, PA 17602. Online condolences can be visited at www.BuchFuneral.com.

Mrs. Eleanor B. Landis

Mrs. Eleanor B. Landis, of Horsham Township, died August 3, 2014, at 84 years of age. She was married for 62 years to the Rev. James A. Landis, who retired in 1993. Together they served the following churches: Phoenixville: Bethesda; Emmaus: Zion; Bethlehem: St. Luke’s; Palmerton: Salem; Quakertown: Bethel; Belle- grove; Water Works; and Narvon: Mt. Zion.

Mrs. Landis was a member of First United Methodist Church, Perkasie, Pa. She is survived by her husband and by two daughters, Nancy S. Wright and Judy C. Weigner, and their husbands.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to the Rev. James A. Landis, at 523 Mullen Road, Ambler, PA 19002. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to South America Mission, 1021 Maxwell Mill Road, Suite B, Fort Mill, SC 29708 designated for Weigner Bolivia Account #76134.

The Rev. Sandra Forrester Dufresne

We were informed of the death of the Rev. Sandra Forrester Dufresne, a retired elder in the EPA Confer- ence. She passed away on August 8, 2014.

Memorial contributions may be sent to the Rowan Breast Cancer Center at the University of PA Hos- pital, and expressions of sympathy may be sent to her daughter, Rachel Jones, 3304 Bowman Street, Philadelphia, PA 19129.

Rev. Dufresne served the following charges: Thomaston UMC (New York Conference); Clearview UMC, Philadelphia; University City and Calvary UMCS, Philadelphia; Glenolden UMC; Grace UMC, Ca- tasauqua; Willow Grove UMC; Green Land UMC; and Jarrettown UMC. She retired in 2008.

The Rev. Bernard Horsey

The Rev. Bernard Horsey, a retired elder, passed away on August 8, 2014.

He is survived by his niece, Sandra Horsey. Ex- pressions of sympathy may be sent to her at 3228 West Oxford St, Philadelphia, PA 19121.

Rev. Bernard Horsey served the following charges: Carmichael; St. Daniel’s UMC; Chester; Union Memo- rial, Darby; Harry Hosier Memorial, Philadelphia; and Advocate-St. Stephen’s, Philadelphia.

The Rev. Dr. David G. High

We have received word that The Rev. Dr. David G. High, a retired Elder of the EPA Conference, passed away on Monday, July 28, 2014. He had been a resi- dent of Cornwall Manor since June 2002.

From 1952 to his retirement in 1993, he served at the following EPA churches: Girardville UMC, Phila.: Wissahickon UMC, Frackville: First UMC, Newtown UMC, Stroudsburg UMC, Haevertown: Union UMC, Wayne UMC, and Swarethmore UMC.

He is survived by his wife, Marion, and their chil- dren: Gregory Keith High, Christopher Mark High, Jonathan Rife High, and Laurel Elizabeth High.

The Rev. Mark E Kroeher

The Rev. Mark E. Kroeher, formerly of Lancaster, died Wednesday, July 16, 2014, in Pureray, TN. He had celebrated his 100th birthday in April.

An Elder in the EPA Conference, he served at: Clif- ton Heights UMC; St Paul’s UMC, Lancaster; Church Of the Redeemer UMC, Philadelphia; and First UMC, Lancaster. He previously served churches in the Wyoming Conference with appointments in Maple Grove, Moshennon, Peckville, and Scranton Myrtle Street. He retired in 1979.

Mark was preceded in death by his wife, Anne. He is survived by his sons, David, Kent, and Stephen.

Gifts in lieu of flowers may be sent to the Memo- rial Fund, First UMC of Lancaster. Condolences may be sent to the Rev. Kent Kroeher, 2005 Robindale Avenue, Lancaster, PA 17601, or to kent.koe@gmail.com.

The Rev. Mark James Hostetter

The Rev. Mark James Hostetter, the EPA Confer- ence’s second oldest pastor, died July 15 at age 99. He would have turned a century old on July 25.

Rev. Hostetter was an Elder who served in the fol- lowing appointments: Home Missioner Board; Alpha Methodist Protestant Church in Ohio; Statton Memo- rial United Brethren Church in Missouri; Communi- ty UMC, Lincoln Park: Zion UMC, Reading; Annville UMC, Sinking Spring; St. Paul’s UMC, Elizabethtown; Morristown UMC. He retired in 1979.

His second wife, Ruth C. A. Keenes Hostetter, pre- ceded him in death. He is survived by his son, Sid- ney Hostetter, and wife Evelyn; his brother Penrose and wife Carolyn, and grandchildren.

Contributions may be made to the Hostetter Schol- arship Fund, Philadelphia Foundation, 1234 Market Street, Suite 1800, Philadelphia, PA 19107.

Districts install new superintendents

You have been appointed to be among us for the ministry of Word and Sacrament, and called to a special ministry of supervision and leadership. You are called to guard the faith, seek the unity and exercise the discipline of the Church, and to supervise and support the Church’s life, work and mission. Do you affirm your commitment to these ministries in our midst?

Three times in September Bishop Peggy Johnson pronounced those words as her hands rested upon the heads of three new superintendents in her intercultural “rainbow” Cabinet: the Rev. Tracy Bass (shown above) of the East District, the Rev. Bumkoo Chung of the Southwest District and the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm of the Southeast District.

When each responded in affirmation it may have been the quietest and most important moment in three worship services that were both solemn and joyful at times, always celebrative and richly diverse.

The choir were African American, Korean and Caucasian. Children of the Casa del Pueblo Latino Ministry danced at Bass’s installation service, hosted by Lehman UMC in Hatboro. Taylor-Storm preached a children’s sermon aided by puppets at her service, hosted by St. Daniel’s UMC in Chester. And Chung, installed at First UMC Lancaster, honored the legacy of Henry Appenzeller, a pioneer missionary who in 1885 brought his Christian faith from that church to share with the people of Korea.

Participants welcomed and presented symbolic gifts to each new presiding elder to signify their multifaceted responsibilities: a Bible and Hymnal, a pitcher of water, a loaf and cup, a towel and basin, a stole, a globe of the world, and finally a Book of Discipline. Two services included Holy Communion with inspiring liturgies written by the Rev. Michael Johnson. His wife, the Bishop, sang the full Communion liturgy at Taylor-Storm’s service.

Finally, the three new superintendents thanked the host churches for their excellent hospitality and then proached to their flocks with humble but impassioned hearts. Each spoke in different ways about treading difficult paths forward together with “high hopes” and embracing a deep sense of God’s call and blessing on their journeys ahead.
3 New District Superintendents installed
Appointed and anointed to supervise and support ministry

At three great celebrations that featured stirring worship, rich diversity, sharing of gifts and sermonic eloquence, Bishop Peggy Johnson installed the EPA Conference’s three new district superintendents in September: the Rev. Tracy Bass (bottom left) of the East District, the Rev. Bumkoo Chung (bottom center) of the Southwest District and the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm (right) of the Southeast District. Here are images from the three services. See more on our Web site at www.epauc.org.

Read the full story on page 15. John Coleman photos.