



IMAGINE NO MALARIA

Our Faith In Action.

"This has been a marathon, without a doubt, and we are in the final lap... We've come so far, raising \$66 million and collecting 2.3 million (bed) nets to protect families in Africa. Only \$9 million more to go. We know the power of what one person can do, and now we know the power of many, the power of 'we.'"

Lynda Cammale (right) with her daughter Katherine, speaking at the Adjourned Session of Annual Conference, Nov. 14. Rev. James Mundell photo



2016 General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegates

- **General Conference** (front row)—Krystl Johnson, the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, the Rev. Lydia Munoz, Clarita Krall, Judy Ehninger and the Rev. Joseph DiPaolo
- **NE Jurisdictional Conference** (middle row)—Jane Bonner, the Rev. Tracy Bass, the Rev. Robert J. Wilt, the Rev. Christopher J. Kurien, David Koch, Lenora Thompson, Jordan Harris and Robin Hynicka
- **Alternates** (back row)—the Rev. Irving Cotto, the Rev. Lillian Smith, Ross Brightwell, Wilhelmina J. Young, Ann C. Jacob and the Rev. Melinda L. McKonly.
- **Not shown:** General Conference delegates Aaron J. Smith and the Rev. Jeffrey A. Raffauf.

John Coleman photo

Conference approves budget, elects delegates for 2016

\$40,000 raised for Imagine No Malaria: The Power of "We"

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

More than 500 Eastern PA Conference members took care of unfinished business at their

Annual Conference adjourned session Saturday, Nov. 14, at Bethany UMC in Macungie, Pa., approving a 2016 budget and electing delegates to the 2016 General and Northeastern Jurisdictional conferences. But beyond budgets and ballots, they also raised a surprising \$40,000 for The United Methodist Church's Imagine No Malaria campaign, inspired by two special guests who were largely responsible for the genesis of that campaign.

Members approved a proposed \$3.198 million budget for Connectional Ministries in 2016, a 4 percent increase

from 2015. The spending budget falls just below the conference Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) request for \$3.2 million in church giving to the Connectional Ministries Fund next year. That giving request, to fund the conference's mission and ministries, is unchanged from 2015, is 3 percent less than in 2014, and is well below the conference's allowed apportionment goal of nearly \$3.9 million.

Members also elected a full slate of delegates to represent the annual conference at the 2016 United Methodist General Conference in May, in

Portland, Oregon, and the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference next July in Lancaster, Pa. The original election at the Annual Conference this past May was invalidated because of errors discovered later, and new elections were scheduled for the adjourned session.

Twenty-two delegates were elected, most of them for the second time.

Elected to General Conference were:
Laity: Judy Ehninger, Aaron J. Smith, Krystl Johnson and Clarita Krall

Clergy: Dawn Taylor-Storm, Jeffrey A. Raffauf, Joseph F. DiPaolo and Lydia E.

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Rev. Myra Maxwell

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Faithfully Yours

Push Back, Lean Forward

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas," the song tells us. At least that's true on store shelves heavily stocked with Christmas gifts and decorations for sale. And beyond the look, there's the dubious sound of Christmas for some: "Cha-ching, cha-ching."

A continuous string of commercials over the next month will ring with the same message: "Buy, buy now, and buy more!" The onslaught of ads that started long before Thanksgiving, Black Friday and Cyber-Monday will continue long after, with hefty credit card bills arriving close behind.

But the church has a unique opportunity to show and share with people the true meaning of this season of Advent and Christmas and to model respectful, creative kinds of gift-giving and celebrating. Paul says in the letter to the Romans, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2)

How will you have a Christ-filled Christmas this year? You don't have to be conformed to the patterns of this world, but you can instead push back against its "care-less" commercialism. Why not emulate the star that guided wise men, and set a shining example of a more excellent way for the world to follow? Here are a few thoughts:

1. OBSERVE A HOLY ADVENT.

Advent is the beginning of the church calendar and it begins four weeks before Christmas. During this time the church ponders the coming of Christ: past, present and future. It is also a time to look within. The best way to prepare for Christmas is to lean forward by exercising the spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, fasting, study of the Scriptures, tithing, worship attendance, Holy Communion and devotional reading. Ask God to reveal the things that you need to change in your life. Get involved in a Bible Study at church or in your community. Don't miss a single Sunday of worship. Faithfully give of your means to help the poor.

2. SHOP WISELY, OR SHARE INSTEAD

The tradition of giving gifts at Christmas harkens back to the time

of the Wise Men who brought gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Christ child (Matthew 2:11). In our modern American culture it has become less about honoring Christ but more about our obsession with material things, even those who have more than enough things. Push back. Ponder

carefully the gift-giving that you will do this year. Then lean forward. Consider alternative gifts. Giving in someone's name or memory to the Congo Partnership, the Imagine No Malaria Campaign, or Heifer Project International could show

them true honor and resonate with their true values.

Or send your dollars, along with your prayers, to places where the precious lives of refugees hang in the balance, threatened each day by hunger, oppression, abandonment and despair. Check out Mike Slaughter's blog, "Face of a Refugee" or visit Global Ministries' Website, and learn more about the desperate ordeal racing



The Rev. Mike Slaughter at Hopewell UMC's Planting Seeds for Ministry Growth

these "foreigners in foreign lands."

As baby Jesus himself was a refugee in Egypt so are thousands of people who flee the ravages of war in the Middle East this Christmas. When he spoke recently at Hopewell UMC's Planting Seeds for Ministry Growth seminar, Mike told us about a new "Beyond Bethlehem" campaign to help refugees. We are challenged to devote half of our Christmas giving toward a miracle offering to save thousands of refugees and "not to idly stand by as more lives are lost and displaced." Please use the Advance project number #3022144 for your sacrificial Christmas gifts.

When purchasing store-bought items have you researched where these things are made? Many textiles are made in countries that pay their workers very little or abuse children who work long hours. Human trafficking and enslavement of

workers is on the rise. Push back. Go online to find retailers that sell "Fair Trade" items. "Fair Trade" means the producer, and not the corporate middle-man, gets a fair market price for their wares. Or lean forward. Giving something homemade or giving the gift of time by making personal visits or performing labors of love are alternative gifts that will likely be remembered and appreciated for years to come.

3. PARTY RESPONSIBLY

Think of how often we Americans bemoan weight gains that happen as a result of too much consumption of food around the holidays. Often the abuse of alcohol results in tragedy and deteriorating health. Jesus attended the festive wedding in Cana and was known to frequent the homes of people who would serve food. So eating is fine, but over-doing it is the problem. Push back from overconsumption. Honor God by the way you care for your body, with modest consumption and generous rest and exercise during this busy time.

4. INVITE THE CHRIST CHILD TO YOUR CHRISTMAS

Jesus said, "As you have done it unto one of the least of these, you have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). Lean forward. Seek a way to celebrate Christmas with those who have none of the world's goods or who are lonely. Christmas can be the saddest time of the year for the elderly, the student far from home, the recently widowed, people in institutions or people with limiting or disabling conditions, to name a few. Many of us know someone we could reach out to who may need our loving concern or just an invitation and a warm welcome.

We can honor Christ by honoring those who are Jesus' special concern. His priority was to bring "good news to the poor." (Luke 4: 18) When you do so "unto the least of these" you will find deep abiding joy that is at the heart of Christ and of Christmas.

Don't celebrate Christmas the world's way! Push back. Instead observe Advent and Christmas by leaning forward into the way of Christ. God will be glorified, and there will be peace and goodwill among all, starting with you.



Peggy A. Johnson

Supporting our mission partners in Tanzania

BY THE REV. CHRISTOPHER J. KURIEN
DIRECTOR OF CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES



In recent years our annual conference has hosted several times two dedicated United Methodist missionaries, the Rev. Mutwale Ntambo wa Mushidi and Kabaka Alphonsine, a married couple from the Congo serving in Tanzania with their children. With each of their visits came the invitation to come be their guests in Tanzania, to see their work and meet others who are likewise planting and growing congregations throughout the country.

Several of us accepted their invitation and took the long journey to Tanzania in mid-July. Mission opportunities, whether local or global, are always exciting to behold. On July 16 we landed in Dar Es Salaam, the capital city and mission field to four United Methodist congregations.

I grew up in a missionary family. Both my parents served as missionaries, and I have experienced firsthand the struggles and opportunities of those involved in grassroots mission work. So I was excited to learn of Rev. Mutwale and Kabaka's experiences.

Tanzania has a large population estimated at 50 million, with Christians making up 30 percent. Muslims represent 35 percent, and tribal religions 30 percent.

Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches have been in the country for quite some time. Our thriving Congo Episcopal Area commissioned United Methodist pastors to plant and grow churches 23 years ago. Five pastors were commissioned in this initial effort.

Today there are 64 congregations spread throughout six districts. Most districts have a large congregation that has given birth to several smaller, strategically planted ones.

Each large congregation occupies land that includes a pre-school and primary school, a clinic and a guest house for visitors and mission teams. Locally planted and sold fruits and vegetables help sustain the people and ministries of the church.

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Conference approves budget, elects delegates for 2016

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Munoz

Elected to join them at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference were:

Laity: Jane Bonner, Lenora Thompson, Jordan Harris and David Koch

Clergy: Robert J. Wilt, Tracy Bass, Christopher J. Kurien and Robin Hynicka

Elected as alternates were:

Laity: Ross Brightwell, Ann C. Jacob and Wilhelmina J. Young

Clergy: Irving Cotto, Lillian Smith and Melinda L. McKonly.

The delegates, led by the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm and Judy Ehninger, both elected first, will have a lot of catching up to do, as other conference delegations are already having meetings, being assigned to legislative committees and poring over materials for General Conference. The newly elected delegates will meet Dec. 2 at the Conference Office and again Jan. 30 at First UMC Lancaster.

Imagine No Malaria challenges

While the six-hour business session ended on a high note with elections completed, it began with a truly elevated *esprit de corps* from the soaring praise music of Bethany UMC's choir and musicians and from a surprise visit by special guests Lynda and Katherine Commale. The mother and daughter team came to help promote the conference's support for Imagine No Malaria, The United Methodist Church's campaign to raise awareness and \$75 million by 2016 to help end malaria, a lethal but preventable global

disease that continues to take thousands of lives.

With remarks and video clips, the Commales recalled how 10 years ago, then 5-year-old Katherine and her family, inspired by a television program, began promoting and raising money for specially treated bed nets to help protect African children from malaria. They thanked the Eastern PA Conference and their own church, Hopewell UMC in Downingtown, Pa., for giving ongoing support to an effort that helped spawn two global campaigns: the U.N. Foundation's Nothing but Nets and the UMC's Imagine No Malaria.

Katherine, now 15, said she is most proud of how the reported death toll for young victims of malaria has dropped from one every 30 seconds to one every 60 seconds. Lynda Commale recalled visiting a Ugandan village years ago where she painfully encountered a mother whose infant had just died for lack of a bed net. "It made me committed to go back and work harder to help remedy this deadly disease.

"This has been a marathon, without a doubt, and we are in the final lap," she said. "We've come so far, raising \$66 million and collecting 2.3 million nets to protect families in Africa. Only \$9 million more to go.

"We know the power of what one person can do," she said, pointing at her daughter. "And now we know the power of many, the power of 'we.'"

Inspired by her words the conference collected an offering onsite of \$10,000. The Rev. Steve Morton, Hopewell's



John Coleman photo

pastor, then pledged \$5,000 more as a matching donation if other church leaders could add another \$5,000 to the offering. Members began hurrying forward bringing pledges and checks until the amount collected reached \$30,000, adding to the initial offering for a remarkable total of \$40,000.

Appeal for 100% shared giving

In the end, the conference members' enthusiasm was coupled with awareness of multiple challenges facing their leaders. In addition to Imagine No Malaria's still formidable fundraising goal, they heard conference CFA chair Kip Craven and treasurer Jim Cruickshank encourage churches that pay less than 100 percent of their apportioned asking to "be faithful in their giving to support our mission and ministry." The two also emphasized the urgent need to pay off pledges made in the Fulfilling Our Covenant capital campaign to help meet the unfunded pension liability for pre-1982 clergy retirees.

"The best way to meet our financial needs and challenges is to increase the number of churches paying 100

percent of their apportionments and direct bills," said Cruickshank. "That means helping our clergy and lay members develop and implement viable plans to succeed in their ministries and stewardship."

In addition, the Rev. Jim Brashear,

host pastor of Bethany, the Northeastern Jurisdiction's largest church, lamented the disharmony, decline and disillusionment he sees across the denomination and challenged the conference body in his opening sermon to "tear down the walls of division."

He urged his fellow members to reclaim the unity and fellowship he fondly recalled from earlier annual conferences of decades past, to turn away from divisive issues and ideologies, and to focus their attention instead on living up to the denomination's mission to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."



Supporting our mission partners in Tanzania

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Land in Tanzania is very expensive, too expensive for many people to purchase. So constructing churches and ministry centers in key locations has been a challenge. But it has not daunted the passion of these disciples to make new disciples for Jesus Christ.

One newly established congregation worships on land loaned to them by a Muslim family and located in a Muslim community. This congregation built a pavilion-like structure of bamboo with a roof of thatched palm fronds. The structure and the passionate worship were humbling to witness, and yet, uniquely inspirational. I especially recall the joy of worshippers dancing as they came forward to present offerings. Many were poor, but they seemed rich in hearts filled with faith.

Visiting Tanzania made us keenly aware of the multitude of blessings which accompany a mission partnership. While there we learned how rare it is for congregations or even confer-

ences to send teams into the mission field being served by the missionaries and ministries they support. We were the first to come from Pennsylvania, and only a handful have visited there since United Methodists have been in Dar es Salaam.

The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference is a partner with the Tanzania Provisional Conference. As many of our congregations consider donating to causes during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, we may want to allocate some gifts to the Tanzania Mission and join them in their effort to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The churches of Tanzania are especially counting on us to pray for them. They are surely praying for us in our efforts to meet human needs and to expand the Kingdom. Our prayers and gifts will bring encouragement to them and make a difference in their lives.

If you wish to support the mission work in Tanzania please do so by giving through the Advance, either online or through your local church. While you can support the two missionaries,

Wa Mushidi, Mutwale Ntambo (Advance Fund #14184Z) and Alphonsine, Kabak Ndala (Advance Fund #15161Z), they currently need more support for the United Methodist Church Guest House and Reception in Dar es Salaam being developed (Advance Fund #12635N).

If paying by check, please write the Advance fund name and number on

your check memo line. Make your check out to your local church and drop it in the church offering or send it to the church treasurer. Otherwise, send checks payable to "Eastern PA Conference" to Eastern PA Conference, Attn: Accounting, PO Box 820 Valley Forge, PA 19482. Thank you!



Members of Amazing Grace UMC, a new church start in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, led by the Rev. Alfred Njau, a delegate to General Conference 2016. The congregation meets in a small hut with a thatched roof and no walls, unlike the building where First UMC worships.

New Ministry with Millennials

BY THE REV. GORDON HENDRICKSON
COORDINATOR, CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Recently I attended my first Lifetree Café national conference in Denver, hosted by the parent company, Group Publishing. Ever since we brought the innovative founders, Thom and Joanie Schultz, to our conference's Faith Sharing Event in March 2015, it seemed as though the Holy Spirit was moving our conference and me towards investing more time and energy in exploring and developing our own ministry of Lifetree Cafés.

I was initially skeptical because I typically don't like canned programs that don't allow for creative and contextual originality. So I needed to study it and assess its worthiness to be a new ministry vehicle in our conference.

I was pleasantly surprised and impressed by their keen strategy and execution and the overall quality of their products--from videos to print materials to presentations. I saw that it was better than anything I, or anyone else I've seen, could produce.

The ability to reach new people beyond the church walls and create new gathering places in communities

is exactly what The United Methodist Church says it wants and needs. It's one of our four mission foci. And the overall cost, in comparison to doing new church starts, is most appealing.

The relaxed, non-liturgical fellowship and dialogue experience of Lifetree Cafés will never replace churches and formal worship services. But they offer a necessary alternative in a world that seeks-- indeed, demands--creative diversity. Why not give people who are not coming to our churches new places to congregate where they can find the fellowship and faith experience many yearn for? In fact, by God's grace, new faith communities--maybe even churches--might one day emerge from these birthing places.

'Think like the unchurched'

As members of our conference's Congregational Development Team, as well as other church leaders, have attended Lifetree Cafés in our area, we've all had different reactions. Some of us resisted the idea that a café could be like a church. Some thought it did not really do discipling. Some wondered where the Bible study and prayer time was. Some wondered how this would get people into our churches.

Reflecting on these questions, I began to realize that we think like the "churched" people we are, but we need to think like the "unchurched." Reaching the millennial generation and others who are suspicious of organized religion requires a different way of thinking.

To reach millennials, "nones,"

"dones" and other unchurched folks requires a whole new approach. What we discussed at the Lifetree Café national conference is that these folks don't like the emphatic dogma of the church. They don't like the judgmental mentality many perceive, nor the bureaucracy that too often seems to hinder or destroy worthwhile ministries.

On the other hand, the presence of lay volunteers so essential to Lifetree Cafés --including new members not steeped in formal church culture--can attract people suspicious of clergy and organized religion.

Lifetree Café is a place where you can have conversation about many areas of life without feeling judged or alienated. Unfortunately, most of our churches don't provide such a venue.

What I like about Lifetree Café is its field-tested, approachable yet thought-provoking discussion materials that allow for open conversation and relationship-building opportunities. There is always at least one short Bible verse read and one prayer moment in every hour-long presentation.

There are opportunities to share your thoughts and questions, your life and faith experience in any of the conversations taking place over coffee or other beverages, around tables of four or five folks. It's relaxed but focused, thanks to the facilitator who shows video clips and guides discussion.

The overall program, or Café recipe, is packaged and made easy for anyone to be able to present. The videos are insightful, personable and often compelling. All that's really needed to do

the presentations are a laptop and DVD player, a projector or television monitor, a microphone and a prepared, friendly facilitator to follow the script, keep things moving and make participants feel comfortable.

Some participants, wanting more sustained and meaningful interaction, have chosen to join study groups or gather for hands-on ministry or activities. Others may visit a host church for worship, Bible study or a special event, and possibly even return.

'God may give the increase'

In my view, Lifetree Café--like the new one meeting in Lititz and organized by United Methodists there--offers many opportunities to plant raw seeds in fertile ground, nurture them and let God take it from there. We may never see some persons again, and we may never know what became of them. But if we have done our part, we can trust that at some point in their lives God may give the increase. And God may well do the same for us.

Learn more on our Website about the Eastern PA Conference's efforts to help churches develop Lifetree Cafés. Also please support the growth of this new ministry through your prayers, presence, gifts and service. Send checks, made out to the "Eastern PA Conference," to the Conference Office, to the attention of Rev. Gordon Henderson, and indicate on the memo line: "Ministry with Millennials," which is a new conference initiative in partnership with Gordon's nonprofit, Acts 6.

3 events teach how to plant and grow churches

Many Eastern PA Conference church leaders are showing they are serious about developing congregations by their attendance at recent church-growth events. The hope now is that the seeds of their learning will be planted to bear fruit, "fruit that will last." (John 15:15)

The conference Congregational Development Team (CDT) frequently promotes education about two fertile paths to success: **MissionInSite**, a proven community demographic and lifestyle information tool for church planning, and **PATH 1**, a UM Discipleship Ministries' training and resourcing initiative for planting and

developing new churches.

CDT brought MissionInSite maestro Peter Wernet here several times over the past year to explain the nuts and bolts of how this valuable research tool works. But author, consultant and ministry coach Tom Bandy (below photo) came to town Oct. 5-6 to show district and church leaders, in four presentations, what it can do for a church that wants to "See, Know and Serve" (his theme) its local mission field most effectively.

MissionInSite is constantly sharpening its focus on needs and preferences

of local communities that churches are called to serve. Indeed, Bandy stresses that the objective of knowing and serving is not to attract people to church but to bless them by meeting their precise needs and interests... which ultimately may attract them as well.

CDT and Discipleship Ministries also cosponsored **PATH 1 Launchpad**, the annual, three-day training event for Northeastern Jurisdiction church planters, both actual and aspiring. They gathered in August at Iglesia Metodista Unida Nuevo Nacimiento (New Birth UMC) in Lebanon. Attendees developed short-term ministry plans and prepared to explore the initial steps of a new church plant: Discerning, Visioning, Gathering, Discipling and Worshiping.

Paul Nixon and Samuel Rodríguez, two PATH 1 church-planting strategists and coaches, led the training. Rodríguez, who works



John Coleman photo

especially with Latino communities, taught Latino students (left photo) in Spanish.

And finally, St. Matthew's UMC of Valley Forge hosted another renowned expert in church growth and transformation, Bill Easum, who taught a full-day seminar (above photo) titled "Only 4 Things Grow Churches." The Central District cosponsored his visit with St. Matthew's pastor, the Rev. Lillian Smith.

CDT subscribes to MissionInSite and makes it available at no cost to help every church learn about its community's needs and spur congregational growth. You can access it through the conference Website at www.epaumc.org/resources/missioninsite.



Samuel Rodriguez photo

Hearts of gold

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

There's gold in them hearts," one might say, tweaking the old expression of a prospector's greed to evoke gratitude instead. That certainly applies to members of the Eastern PA Conference when it comes to supporting The United Methodist Church's \$75 million Imagine No Malaria global fundraising campaign.

As members were reminded recently, the conference was there to help 10 years ago when 5-year-old Katherine Cammale and her family, of Hopewell UMC in Downingtown, first began raising funds to buy beds nets that could help protect African children from a lethal disease. Back then malaria was snuffing out the life of a young child every 30 seconds. Now it's every 60 seconds.

And now, with \$69 million in collected gifts and pledges, we're just \$6 million away from our goal. The view gets much better and the journey easier this close to the finish line.

We raised an unexpected \$40,000 at the adjourned session of Annual Conference Nov. 14, just after a powerful praise service at Bethany UMC in Macungie. Everything was grand there that day--the music, the sprawling facility and stage, the hospitality, and yes, the generosity.

We responded to two challenges--one from Lynda Cammale and one from Hopewell's senior pastor, the Rev. Steve

Morton (*bottom right photo*). Church leaders hurried to the tables down front with checks and pledges in hand to respond to those challenges. Something must have gotten into them, into their hearts... something luminous and precious... like gold.

"A crazy thing happened," the Rev. Cyndi Skripak of Yardley UMC later wrote to Amy Botti, the Bishop's Executive Assistant. "I told my church the story of the matching challenge at the Adjourned Session and about our \$100 pledge. Then I made a \$100 challenge to them. So far, I've gotten \$300 worth of pledges to match my \$100! I'll see what comes in, and then send it all in!"

Yes, there's gold--not in them hills, but in them hearts.

'Gold in them hearts'

The Rev. Don Keller, pastor of Scottsville UMC, brought a check for Imagine No Malaria to the conference office this week to "fulfill the pledge given Saturday by our church's Christian Pre-School." But first he wanted to share the story behind the gift.

East District Superintendent Tracy Bass had brought Imagine No Malaria collection boxes to the district clergy meeting in October, and Don picked up a handful. "When I got home, these boxes reminded me of the 'Trick-or-treat for UNICEF' boxes from my childhood," he said. "So I picked up a few more, handed them out to the families in our pre-school with a little information about the campaign and a request to take the boxes trick-or-treating and

get some loose change from their neighbors to help fight this disease.

"Frankly, I was expecting them to bring back about \$15 to \$20," he said. "I would have been thrilled with \$30." Then came his smile. "Imagine my surprise when their effort totaled \$108.50."

Don's story wasn't over. Because once you dig and find pure gold, you tend to find a lot more. "At the Conference Session our lay member and I were confident we could bring home some of that enthusiasm and inspire the congregation to match the pre-school's effort," he continued. "So we submitted a pledge in the name of the Scottsville Christian Pre-School for \$200."

When Don told the congregation about what the pre-school's 3 and 4 year-olds had done and what his fellow conference members had raised, he also made a plea for contributions "hoping to bring the children's gift up to the \$200 we had pledged."

When he handed us a check for the total amount collected it read \$751.50. Pure gold.

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Our Faith In Action.
MALARIA



"We are seeing this loaves and fishes experience as not only an important mission outreach lesson," he told us, "but also as a way for us to say to the children of our pre-school, 'We love you. We support you. We are proud of you.'"

Indeed, that has been one lesson of this Imagine No Malaria effort from the very beginning, reminiscent of Isaiah 11:6. In a global campaign waged by adults primarily to save the lives of children, it's worth celebrating whenever children, with the purest of hearts, can lead the way.



John Coleman photo

Racing together to 'beat the bug'

The United Methodist Church of West Chester (UMCWC) is using food and fitness to raise funds for Imagine No Malaria. Members hosted a Saturday pancake breakfast Nov. 14, raising over \$800 to support the conference's campaign and help the denomination reach its \$75 million goal. But what they're best known for is their annual "Beat the Bug" 5K Run / 2K Walk, which raised over \$10,300 in 2015 and has generated over \$30,000 since 2011 to help defeat the mosquito-borne virus that spreads malaria.

This fun family event each April draws people from other churches and

the community, says Craig Thomas of the church's Imagine No Malaria Team, as well as donations from supportive local sponsors. The team also raises awareness of the disease and the campaign throughout the year.

"The UMC of West Chester has received many blessings by joining in the fight against malaria, Thomas says. "Being part of a global effort to eliminate this deadly disease has brought us closer as a church family by having a shared commitment, and it has allowed us to reach out to let people know that The United Methodist Church is working for a healthier world."



Fighting malaria through music

Ridge Avenue UMC in Philadelphia's Roxborough section fought malaria through music with a benefit concert Sept. 19 that drew over 80 people and raised more than \$1,100 in donations.

"You just donated from your heart at least \$10 to help a child you may never meet," Pastor Deborah Coulborne told the crowd. But to help members make at least a visual acquaintance, she showed a video about children and families affected by the disease on the Sunday before the concert.

Members took red Imagine No Malaria collection boxes home, and now the church is still receiving donations. One member took a box to her nursing home and brought it back full of love from residents who, like the pastor said, donated from their hearts.

"We want to do another fundraiser before Christmas," said Coulborne, offering malaria a rematch. "We wanted to find an outreach mission project to get involved in, and this is the one."

Logging miles against malaria



Gerald (Jerry) Reifsnyder, pastor of tiny Washington Boro UMC on the Susquehanna River, is raising donations for Imagine No Malaria through his own personal walk-a-thon.

The 65-year-old Lititz native started treadmill walking in 2013 for health reasons and invited church members to sponsor him with donations for every

mile walked to support Imagine No Malaria. This year they gave \$800, and the church's active missions council made it an even \$1,000. In his three years there the church has donated about \$2,500 to the cause.

"For a small congregation, I think they've done well in giving," said Reifsnyder, who educated the church about malaria and the campaign. "I'm proud of them." As their donations go up, their pastor's weight and blood pressure are going down, which no doubt makes them proud of him as well.

Bishop's report prepares districts for 2016

BY JOHN COLEMAN

While some churches celebrated Pastors Appreciation Month in October, Bishop Peggy Johnson was celebrating "Districts Appreciation Month" during her annual, day and night visits to all six districts of the Eastern PA Conference. Meeting with clergy and laity separately, she shared news and views of the conference and denomination, especially for 2016; and she brought along some other guests to help her do so.

"Keep up the good work!" urged the bishop, citing positive trends in church participation and outreach, support for global missions, ministerial recruitment, leadership resourcing and the growing vitality of Mission Connections, the various clusters of churches in each district that collaborate in mission.

Issues coming to General Conference

She highlighted issues coming to the 2016 General Conference, including proposed changes to make the Book of Discipline more global, general agencies more efficient and the global legislative session itself less Parliamentary and more spiritual and relational. She further explained why the Northeastern Jurisdiction, because of declining membership, may lose an episcopal area in 2016, and why it may not, as the final outcome remains uncertain.

What is certain, she reported, is our progress toward the denomination's goal of raising \$75 million for Imagine No Malaria and the progress made so far in efforts to eradicate the deadly disease. Each district received generous offerings to help the conference push this historic global-health fundraising

campaign to the finish line.

Bishop Johnson also dug into a tough topic that is on the minds of many across the conference and the nation: racism and racial reconciliation. She cited the recent essay "Enough is Enough" by Erin Hawkins, head of the General Commission on Religion and Race, and endorsed suggested tactics to foster racial courage, accountable relationships, inclusive respect for all people, and active solidarity with those who demand an end to racial violence, oppression and dehumanization.

Acts of Repentance

In each district session, a member of the conference Committee on Native American Ministry (CONAM) followed the bishop with an impassioned pictorial presentation on why the 2016 Annual Conference will celebrate ceremonial Acts of Repentance with Native Americans. The celebration on June 16 will seek to repent for the church's involvement and complicity in the nation's long, sordid history of racist oppression against indigenous peoples.

The 2012 General Conference asked each annual conference to sponsor a repentance ceremony during this quadrennium that ends in 2016. CONAM has been helping the conference prepare for that celebration for several years by offering classes and presentations at various events.

Also sharing in Bishop Johnson's report at each stop was new conference treasurer Jim Cruickshank, who spoke briefly about church remittances, the capital campaign to pay off the unfunded pension liability for pre-1982 clergy retirees and other financial

matters. Jo Fielding, Director of Pension and Health Benefits, also addressed clergy sessions about new health plan options for 2016 and pension concerns; and the Rev. Christopher Kurien, Director of Connectional Ministries, promoted key upcoming events.

As always, the fellowship, worship and hospitality at these district gatherings produced enthusiasm and some good turnouts. Buffeted by rain from Hurricane Patricia, the Southwest District nonetheless drew more than 130 people to St. Mark's UMC in Mount Joy and allowed clergy and laity to dine together by scheduling their separate sessions close together. The district also totaled nearly \$859 in its Imagine No Malaria offering.

\$4234 for Imagine No Malaria

The Central, East and Northwest districts received \$1,001, \$109 and \$779, respectively, from their Imagine No Malaria offerings. They met at First Phoenixville and Conshohocken UMCs (Central); Bensalem UMC (East); and First UMC in Palmyra and Kochenderfer's UMC in Lebanon. (Northwest).

The Northeast District, meeting at Asbury UMC in Allentown and Covenant UMC in Bath, raised \$308 to fight malaria from roughly 110 clergy and

lay attendees. The district's talented, all-clergy Free Spirit Praise Band, with Bishop Johnson playing flute, was as usual, a highlight of worship.

Nearly 140 attendees at both Southeast District sessions gave almost \$1,200 to Imagine No Malaria. The clergy celebrated Holy Communion during their meeting at Simpson Meadows in Downingtown, accompanied by the Rev. Jim Wilkin on guitar. But at Lima UMC the laity got a double portion of worship music from the Sayres Memorial UMC Choir and the Hopewell UMC youth band, #JesusTrending.

Beyond raising about \$4,234 total for Imagine No Malaria, the dozen district gatherings featured uplifting music, worship, hospitality and fellowship. And they all received valuable information from the Bishop's report to prepare them for General, Annual and Jurisdictional conferences in 2016. Her Power-Point presentation, which includes the CONAM Acts of Repentance slides, can be found on the conference Website under the Resources tab, titled Bishop's Report to District Meetings 2015 (PPT presentation).



Members of the Eastern PA Conference Extended Cabinet for 2015-2016: Seated (from left): The Rev. Anita Adams Powell (Central District Superintendent and Cabinet Dean) and Bishop Peggy A. Johnson. Standing (from left): The Revs. Irving Cotto (Northeast District Superintendent), Bumkoo Chung (Southwest District Superintendent), Christopher J. Kurien (Connectional Ministries Director), Gary Nicholson (Northwest District Superintendent), Dawn Taylor-Storm (Southeast District Superintendent), Tracy Bass (East District Superintendent), and James Cruickshank (Treasurer, Administrative Ministries Executive Director) John Coleman photo

Pastor's healing from abuse inspires ministry and a meeting with the Pope

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

--The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Civil Rights Leader

Though only 56, United Methodist pastor Myra Maxwell of West Philadelphia can sum up her life's journey thus far in five simple but stark words: "My misery became my ministry." Perhaps never have truer words been spoken.

Molested by a family friend from ages 3 to 7, she endured years of suppressed, agonizing shame before becoming a determined, empathetic voice for other victims of abuse and violence. Along the way, she gave her life to Jesus Christ, accepted her call to ministry and learned the power of forgiveness through faith.

Those three triumphs over years of turmoil recently led to an improbable encounter when she was selected with four other adult survivors of child sexual abuse to meet privately with Roman Catholic Pope Francis during his September visit to Philadelphia.

"God orchestrated this whole journey," Maxwell proclaims about her life, "and it has been amazing."

The sexual abuse ended when her abuser relocated. But shame and guilt prevented her from telling her parents about the ordeal until she was 20, when the "family friend" returned and brazenly asked to take Maxwell's young daughter shopping.

'This has been a long journey'

"What he had done was not the kind of thing people talked about freely back then; so he figured I hadn't told anybody," she recalls. "But I never forgot about it; I was still living with it. I remember rushing home to protect my daughter, and then I really went after him." Her vehement reaction stunned her parents and prompted her to finally tell them.

"They were devastated and felt guilty for years after that," Maxwell recalls. "I don't think they ever forgave themselves for what happened to me. But I don't blame them; they didn't know."

In fact, blaming herself and her abuser was what she had to stop. "When I saw him years later I realized the only way I could get better was to forgive him," she says. "That has been a long journey."

Children who suffer abuse and keep it secret suffer a lot of emotional conflict, Maxwell explained. "My self-esteem was probably at around zero; but nobody knew because I was good at masking the pain in a way that was not healthy for me. ... You do it for so

long, you never really find out who you are."

Admittedly, she got caught up in some delinquent behaviors that weren't healthy for her either, along with a "bad" first marriage that lasted two years. When asked how she finally decided to forgive, her initial answer is simple: "Prayer."

As a child, she would occasionally attend Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church with her parents. But when a neighbor took her to another church's Vacation Bible School and they sang the popular children's song "Yes, Jesus Loves Me," she was hooked. "That song stuck in my mind," she recalls, "and after hearing the words, I needed to know who this Jesus was. As I got older, I kept searching."

For years she attended and became active in various churches, denominational and non-denominational, always searching for herself...and for a savior.

Maxwell became a community outreach worker for a small neighborhood advisory agency about 20 years ago, helping mothers get federal WIC (Women with Infant Children) welfare funds. She instantly became a go-to listener and advocate, especially for victims of domestic violence and intimate partner abuse. "I wondered at times if I had a sign on my forehead that read 'Talk to Me.'"

When funding for that job was cut, her boss steered her to a victims services agency, where she was hired as a part-time court advocate. She soon became the agency's program director.

"I was curious why more churches and faith-based groups didn't have connections with victims services agencies," she recalls. "So I started trying to make those connections and got interested in ministry at the same time."

Eventually, she was surprised to discover a call to ministry on her life. So she enrolled in the non-denominational Jameson School of Ministry and after years of study became licensed and ordained.

'Faith can play a major role in healing'

"Making connections between faith-based groups and victims services agencies became more important to me because as a victim it was my journey to find Jesus that led to my own healing," she says. "Because of that I realized how important it was to keep faith involved in the work we do with victims. Some folks feel like 'I don't want to have anything to do with faith or religion.' But others say 'You know what? That's all I have to lean on.'"

"Faith can play a major role in healing because Jesus is a healer, even when he puts people in your path to bring you that healing."

Having worked for and led victims assistance programs for nearly two decades, her experience has run the gamut "from homicides to purse snatchings and everything in-between." But Maxwell, who formerly directed victim services at Philadelphia's Anti-Violence Partnership, eventually felt there must be "more for me to do" beyond just advocacy and intervention.

"I could help people with their basic needs, but there was more to it," she shared. "I had to reach down deep inside myself to find out what kept me going. It was that song that had stayed with me and never left me. I had to find out why Jesus loved me."

Remarried and raising five children, she joined an African Methodist Episcopal church, where she found "great preaching and fulfilling worship. But I still needed something more." Talks with the pastor



helped her explore her relationship with Jesus Christ and to hear and finally accept her calling to serve Christ through pastoral ministry.

"I cried a lot, a whole lot," she remembers. "Why me? I had so many issues and problems from my past. But then I realized that my misery and all that I went through over those years had become my ministry. Every time I met with women and families who were victims I genuinely cared for them and worked to help them through that experience, to get to a place where they could begin to heal."

For Maxwell, who now works on behalf of children and families at Wordsworth, a Philadelphia community services agency, it's all about restoration of one's mind and spirit through holistic ministry. So she started a faith-based nonprofit with that goal in mind, titled Faith and Victims Services Offering Restoration, or FAVOR.

After leading a small non-denominational church for five years, she joined the Eastern PA Conference and was assigned to start a new church, St. Luke's Restoration Worship Center, in 2010. Now a licensed local pastor, she was assigned in July to lead the merger of that church with historic St. Barnabas-Bethsaida UMC, whose longtime pastor--and her mentor--the Rev. Allen Jenkins Jr., was retiring. Members are still trying to devise a new name for the congregation; but she hopes "Restoration" is a part of it.

As a coalition leader and advocate for victims, Maxwell is accustomed to telling their stories to promote their cause. But, she says, she rarely gets to tell her own story publicly, except among people with whom she works.

'For me it's all about forgiveness'

"I've never been shy about sharing it," says the woman who kept her childhood abuse a secret for 17 years. "I feel it's important because the people I work with trust you when they realize you've been through something and you can be transparent about it."

When a longtime colleague who works for the Philadelphia's Roman Catholic Archdiocese called to invite her to attend an important meeting she first asked Maxwell to recount her story of struggle and survival again, right then over the telephone.

"I had to close my office door because I get a little emotional when I'm sharing," she remembers. "I told her that for me, it's about forgiveness. I had to let go of the weight. I hated this person who hurt me. I hated what he did at first; but then I began to hate him, too. I carried that heavy burden for a long time. I didn't want him to live anymore, partly out of fear that he may be doing it to someone else."

That telephone recollection stirred up a lot of painful memories, she said. "But afterward my friend told me the meeting she wanted me to attend would be with Pope Francis. She said, 'It's time for your story to be heard. This time is for you.'"

"My mouth dropped open," Maxwell remembers. "I



Rev. Myra Maxwell with Charlene Carr, a member of St. Barnabas-Bethsaida. John Coleman photos

cried. I must have sounded like I was crazy. It's a good thing I had shut the door."

Told she could only share the news with her husband, Maxwell asked and was permitted to share it also with her district superintendent, since the scheduled Sunday morning meeting would keep her out of the pulpit and require someone else to preach and lead worship for her that day.

"It was very hush-hush. The media couldn't know. All of us stayed at a hotel and were picked up that morning and taken to the (St. Charles Borromeo) seminary to meet the Pope."

The five persons--three women, two men--were survivors of sexual abuse by clergy, teachers and, in Maxwell's case, a family friend. But she says she was the only clergywoman, person of color and possibly non-Catholic in the group. Each came with a spouse or other companion. The Pontiff had read each of their personal stories in advance.

'He felt hurt by what happened to us'

"He expressed to us that he was sorry... that our pain was real.. and he felt hurt by what had happened to us at the hands of trusted persons," she recalls. "We were each able to go up and speak to him privately after his statement. I told him I was a United Methodist pastor."

Pope Francis held her hand gently as she spoke briefly about her journey to forgiveness and healing. "He heard my pain and cared enough to be there for us," Maxwell recounts with quiet awe. "I know he heard me because when he left us and went into the next room, which was full of bishops, he repeated in

his remarks some of what I had said.

"I felt his genuineness in his manner. It was an experience I'll never forget."

She knows it was not only her abuse or suffering that led to her invitation, but also her ability to forgive. "It's easy for other people to tell an abuse victim you've got to forgive and move on. But the decision to forgive has to be made by the individual for their own benefit. Some of the horrors these people experience..." She pauses. "Well, my role is to love people through it and let them know the Lord loves them.

She will never forget the pain of not knowing that love. "It affected my life in terrible ways--my relationships with loved ones and other people, and with God. I had flashbacks on bad days. Some days I was so angry with God, I would ask, 'Why did you let this happen to me?'"

But that awful burden came with a blessing. "It blessed me because God has allowed me to be a voice for other people who need help. I would go to trainings and absorb what they were teaching. Nobody there knew what I had suffered from; but it was a healing process for me. The Spirit just ministered to me. Back then I couldn't even tell people what was happening inside of me; but when I left, inside I was jumping

with excitement at what I was learning."

As a pastor, Maxwell feels seminaries should require the teaching of effective ministry with victims of crime and abuse, including how to build partnerships with helping agencies. The need is more prevalent than people realize, she says. Her vision includes bringing her message, along with FAVOR ministries, to churches and those they serve around the world.

"My role is telling people, 'You can be healed through all this if you just give it a chance. Don't run from Jesus. Run to him.'"

"My victims services work is part of my ministry," she explains. "It will always be that, because I'm touching lives that need to be touched and healed."



Maxwell (center, standing) prays with women of St. Barnabas-Bethsaida UMC over one of their own, Charlene Carr, who had just preached her first sermon, testifying that, like her pastor, she too is a survivor who has overcome child sexual abuse.

Prison Ministry promotes hope, healing, and Christmas joy

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

Nearly 20 churches across five districts report involvement in prison ministries and restorative justice efforts, ranging from visitations, Bible studies and Kairos (Emmaus) programs, to providing necessities and assisting parolees with job searches, computer skills training and other needs.

The Eastern PA Conference's Prison Ministry & Restorative Justice (PMRJ) Team applauds those efforts. But it wants to involve more people in ministries to foster hope, healing and possibly transformation in the lives of prison inmates, returning citizens and communities affected by crime and the criminal justice system.

Its newest endeavors, initiated this fall, were to introduce the Healing Communities initiative to interested churches through a training event Oct. 10, and to invite people everywhere to sign Christmas cards

for inmates, many of whom languish in loneliness and despair.

Healing Communities is a national program that offers "a framework" for congregations to adapt for creating restorative justice ministries with current and former inmates, their families and others affected by their crimes and incarceration. The training encourages clergy and laity to identify needs, mobilize existing resources and develop "Stations of Hope" for struggling persons.

The daylong training drew about 20 participants from 11 conference churches (see the list on our Website) and two non-United Methodist churches. Co-sponsored with the conference Church & Society and Health & Healing ministries, it was led by PMRJ team member Linda Van Til and Doug Walker, National Coordinator of Criminal Justice Reform for the General Board of Church & Society.

Walker leads trainings and resources conferences

across the U.S. on various criminal justice issues and initiatives. He and Van Til helped attendees understand how the system works and the roles of clergy and laity in creating Healing Communities through prayer, mentoring, advocacy and outreach efforts.

Through hard data but also real-life stories, they examined challenges facing inmates, their families and their victims. They also learned about working with prison officials and chaplains, and how to support acts of forgiveness, accountability, restitution and reconciliation. Related concerns included sentencing inequities, prison overcrowding, solitary confinement and lasting consequences ex-offenders face after having served their sentences.

The Christmas Card Project offered a less intense outreach for people who sympathize with the loneliness many inmates experience, especially those who lack communication with family or friends and barely witness any hint of Christmas celebration in their bleak confines.

Enlarging a 2014 effort, the PMRJ team worked hard to create appropriate, Christian nativity cards that would satisfy prison officials' rules. They circulated them widely--in person and via the conference Website--so that individuals, groups and churches everywhere could offer caring words of encouragement along with a first-name-only signature.

More than 5,000 signed cards were collected, including 265 at the Annual Conference Adjourned Session Nov. 14. After they are screened for compliance they will be given to grateful inmates in six Eastern PA counties. "The PMRJ team thanks everyone who participated," said chairwoman Marilyn Schneider. "We hope to repeat this worthwhile ministry again in 2016."



Healing Communities workshop



The Rev. Evelyn Kent Clark signs a Christmas card for a prison inmate. John Coleman photos

Race Matters: Seeking to bridge the divide

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

White privilege, inter-cultural, micro-aggressions, unconscious bias, cultural competency, racial equity...

While “prejudice,” “diversity” and “inclusiveness” may be familiar terms to many, these more in-depth concepts are becoming known by an increasing number of Eastern PA Conference members, as they engage in race and racism dialogues and training across the conference.

The weekend-long Changing Racism Level I classes are mandatory for all clergy and conference staff, some of whom prefer this model to the alternative Healing the Wounds of Racism workshops. Changing Racism is conducted by facilitators from Visions, Inc., which has done training and consulting in diversity and inclusion since 1984.

The conference also sponsored a first-time, half-day Changing Racism Level II class Oct. 17, partly in response to recent incidents of national concern involving killings of unarmed black victims, some by white police officers,

and resulting protests and dialogues about racial bias and injustice.

“We will reflect on ways we are engaged in a society whose patterns of racism are becoming more visible,” read a description of the Level II class. “We will also examine what we can do in our lives, in the church and in our communities to promote change.”

Such examination has been occurring across the conference this year in a growing number of dialogues about race and racism. At least four districts have held talks, a Cabinet initiative to engage members in candid discussions, learning, and considerations of next steps to take.

Several churches have also hosted dialogues, including First UMC of Germantown and Grandview UMC in Lancaster, which hosted a Nov. 10 conversation sponsored by the ecumenical Parish Resource Center. Also, the June killing of nine members and the beloved pastor of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., for which a young white gunman seeking to start a race war awaits trial, prompted several of our churches to participate in activities with AME

churches in their communities.

Last spring each district and the Board of Ordained Ministry participated in daylong Conversations on Intercultural Communication for laity

and clergy, led by staff from the General Commission on Religion and Race and organized by the Central District. Recently, the conference also convened clergy and laity involved in cross-racial and cross-cultural church appointments to learn and dialogue about that bridge-building ministry adventure.

And in September Connectional Ministries hosted a small dialogue on race and racism at the conference office. One outcome of that discussion will be periodic movie nights to view and discuss race-themed films. All are invited to the first gathering, Dec. 8 at 5:30 PM, to eat together and then view



Changing Racism I Class, Fall 2015 Rev. Mark Young photo

“White People” a 1-hour YouTube video about white privilege produced by Jose Antonio Vargas.

There will likely be more gatherings in 2016 to talk, teach, listen and learn about race matters, including Annual Conference in June, which will focus on this topic both in general and specifically in our church’s repentance for historic mistreatment of Native Americans. Thus, NEWSpirit will publish more articles on the subject, as concerned, courageous conference members struggle together to know the truths that may one day set us free.

Historic home of Conference archives gets a makeover

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

A small book of hymn lyrics handwritten by Methodism’s founder John Wesley in 1780 keeps company with other modest, historic treasures in a protective vault deep in the basement of Philadelphia’s St. George’s UMC. The national landmark is the oldest Methodist church building in continuous use in the United States, beginning in 1769.

Wesley’s hymnal was one of several antiquities that fascinated about a dozen history-lovers who gathered there Oct. 19 to reopen and dedicate the newly renovated home of the Eastern PA Conference Archives. Costing the conference Board of Trustees about \$158,000, the yearlong renovation was more like a transformation from a dingy, dreary, crowded, inconvenient space into a clean, well-organized, professional-looking research facility.

As the small group of celebrants gathered amid freshly painted walls, new fireproof storage cabinets and work stations, some might have sensed a larger cloud of virtual witnesses lingering there, especially in the reconfigured, lighted vault containing shelves of historical records and books.

The conference’s Historical Society, established by its predecessor Philadelphia Conference in 1867, is the steward of books and original documents con-

tained in the archives that date back to the late 1700s. While tour groups visit the museum upstairs, marveling over pioneer Bishop Francis Asbury’s Bible and numerous other artifacts, scholars, writers and institutions rely on staff to mine the archives downstairs for precious research gems.

“There’s a long, wonderful tradition of using these documents to push our faith forward,” Senior Interpreter Donna Miller, gleefully told the gathering, which included Mother African Zoar UMC’s archivist Betty Henderson. “I’m just glad to have been a part of it.”

Miller, the former full-time archivist and church secretary, recently retired and passed those duties on to Ruth Scott Blackson, a young artist from London, England, whose hobbies include binding and restoring books. Miller now assists part-time with archival and genealogical searches, leads tours and presentations, and cares for museum holdings and displays. She thanked the gathered supporters—including conference and church trustees, members of the museum board and historical society, volunteers and a representative from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission—for helping to make the renovation and celebration successful.

With Scriptures, hymns and prayers, Bishop Peggy Johnson led in consecrating the refurbished archival space.

Joining her was the Rev. Maridel Whitmore, who, as the church’s first female pastor is also its museum director, and the Rev. Fred Day, St. George’s former pastor and now General Secretary of the UMC’s General Commission on Archives and History.

“Crises are often opportunities for transformation,” said Day, recounting the day “pallets of materials from closed churches literally got dumped on St. George’s from people’s basements.” The conference paid for storage until the church could arrange to house and care for the materials.

Day, displaying his storytelling prowess, also recalled the popular story of

how St. George’s members and supporters successfully repelled city plans in the 1920s to demolish the church to make way for construction of the Ben Franklin Bridge. The planned bridge location had to be moved.

“We’re known to some as the church that moved a bridge,” Day proclaimed, “but St. George’s houses a history that is powerful enough to move the church. What we have here is so important. It’s not just a bunch of old records to be put on shelves. These are the inspirational stories and experiences, pratfalls and triumphs of a church we celebrate... and many discoveries we haven’t even found yet.”



Photo: In the newly renovated Conference Archives space, the Fred Day (center) recounts the arrival of church records at Historic St. George’s UMC, while flanked by (from left) Conference Trustees Chairman Al Kingcade, Donna Miller, Bishop Peggy Johnson, the Rev. Maridel Whitmore and the Rev. Joseph DiPaolo. John Coleman photo

In Memoriam

Full obituaries are available at www.epaumc.org/news-events/death-notices/

VANESSA ROSS

Mrs. Vanessa Ross, 59, of Wyomissing, passed away on September 23, 2015. She was the surviving spouse of the Rev. Thomas Ross, who passed away in 2014.

She is survived by her brothers and sisters: Candito Workman, husband of Jamilla Workman; James Speaks, husband of Maureen Speaks; Jonathan Workman, husband of Valerie Workman; Deborah Colbert, widow of Homer Colbert; Diane Liggs, widow of Daniel Liggs; Wanda Workman, Carmen Robertson, and neices and nephews. She was pre-deceased by John Workman, Michael Workman, and Mary Workman.

The Rev. Thomas Ross served the following churches: Tremont: First, Lancaster: First, Wyomissing: Calvary, Willow Street: Boehm's.

RUTH E. MYERS

Mrs. Ruth E. Myers, 85, of Lancaster, surviving spouse of the Rev. Stacy D. Myers Jr., passed away on Nov. 4, 2015.

With degrees in chemistry and medical technology, she had a successful career in medicine before marrying Rev. Myers. She worked alongside him in ministry during the following appointments: Berwyn; Jenkintown; Superintendency of the West Chester District; Conference Evangelist; Temple; and West Lawn.

Mrs. Myers is survived by her children: Stacy D. III, husband of Silvia Myers, Boca Raton, FL; Paul C., husband of Becca Myers, Dexter, ME; Cheryl M., wife of Scott Johnson, Richmond, VA; and Mary M., wife of Kenneth Mason; Lititz. Also surviving is a brother, Charles, husband of Marion Miller, Somerset; daughter-in-law, Elaine Hutchins, Boca Raton, FL; nine grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers contributions may be made to her alma mater, West Virginia Wesleyan, 59 College Ave, Buckhannon, WV 26201 or to the United Methodist Church's General Board of Global Ministries Office, 100 Maryland Ave N.E. #315, Washington, D.C. 20002.

REV. RUSSELL E. WALTERS

The Rev. Russell E. Walters passed away on Tuesday, September 22, 2015. He was a full clergy member of the Eastern PA Annual Conference who retired in 1996.

Rev. Walters pastoral service record includes: Orwigsburg: Salem; Coaldale; Tamaqua: Salem; Wiconisco; Philadelphia: Grace; Allentown: Salem; Pocono Union; Paradise: St. John's; Swiftwater; and Paradise Valley: Keokee Chapel.

He is survived by his spouse, Mrs.

Mary L. Walters, and four adult children; Donna Beech, Diane Peters, David Walters and Debra Fulmer. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Mrs. Walters, at 350 Lake Road, Canadensis, PA 18324.

REV. WILLIAM T. "TED" BACH

The Rev. William T. "Ted" Bach, a retired elder, passed away on Sept. 15. He is survived by his wife of 41 years, the Rev. Lorelei M. Bach, by their sons, Sebastian T. and Jorge F. Bach, and by three grandchildren.

Condolences may be sent to the Rev. Lorelei M. Bach at 3228 Rose Ave. Trevoise PA 19053.

Memorial donations in Ted's name may be made to Friends of the Township Library of Lower Southampton, Inc, 1983 Bridgetown Pk., Feasterville, PA 19053 or the Delaware Valley Stroke Council, 1528 Walnut St., Suite 903, Phila., PA 19102

Ted Bach served the following: The former Cookman UMC - Closed; Ross Street UMC; Ackermanville; Director of the former Kensington Area Ministries where he pastored St. Philip's, Mt. Pisgah, and Summerfield-Siloam UMC churches; Trevoise UMC; First UMC Fairless Hills; Bustleton UMC; Holmesburg UMC; Johnson Memorial UMC.

GLADYS FERNSLER

Mrs. Gladys Fernsler, 66, wife of Mr. Howard Fernsler, Lay Supply Pastor at Minersville UMC passed away on Saturday, September 5, 2015.

Actively involved at Minersville UMC, she also did volunteer work at the former Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center, Pottsville. In addition to her husband, she is survived by her daughter, Kathleen Holley; her son, Steven Fernsler and his wife, Marisa; a sister, Janet Boger; a brother, William Berry; five grandchildren; and nieces and nephews.

The family would prefer remembrances in the form of contributions made to Minersville UMC, 144 Carbon Street, Minersville, PA 17954-1451 (570-544-8951).

Please share your memories and condolences with Gladys's family by signing the guest book at www.jehumphreyfuneralhome.com. Messages of sympathy can also be sent to Mr. Fernsler at 298 N Eighth Street, Pottsville, PA 17901, or to howard.fernsler@gmail.com.

DANIEL E. SHIREY

Mr. Daniel E. Shirey, spouse of the Rev. Judy M. Kehler Shirey, passed away on September 10, 2015.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to: The Rev. Dr. Judy M. Kehler Shirey Cornwall Manor-Laurel Place 325 PO Box 125 Cornwall, PA 17016 Memorial Contributions may be re designated to Crossroad Walk to Emmaus, to sponsor scholarships and can be mailed to the:

Dave Cappuccio, Treasurer, 103 Leisure Ct. Wyomissing PA 19610.

Rev. Judy M. Kehler Shirey has served the following churches: Saylorburg: St. Peter's Phila.: Church of The Redeemer Douglassville: Hope Emerald: St. Peter's Slatedale: Salem.

REV. ANNETTE B. BOLDS

We received word of the death of the Rev. Annette B. Bolds, a clergy member of the Western PA Conference, on Sept. 3, 2015. A former member of the Eastern PA Conference, she was married to the Rev. Stanley Bolds, retired from Honorable Location in the Eastern PA Conference since 2007. Condolences may be sent to the Bolds' address at 44 S. Starr Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15202.

While a member at EPA Conference, the Rev. Annette B. Bolds served: Belmont Hills: Ashland Avenue; Wescosville: Bethany; Extension Ministry: Leave of Absence; Former Phila.: Bickley Memorial; Chester: Siloam; Former Chester: Providence Avenue; Chester: Siloam; Phila.: Falls; Phila.: Advocate-St. Stephen's; Phila.: Wissinoming; Springfield: C.C. Hancock; Extension Ministry: Phila University, Adjunct Professor in the School of Liberal Arts

Rev. Stanley Bolds served: Phila.: Mount Zion; Phila.: Emmanuel; Chester: Siloam; Former Chester: Providence Avenue; Phila.: Falls; Phila.: Advocate-St. Stephen's; Extension Ministry; Phila.: Mount Carmel

WESLIA HYNICKA

We have received word that Weslia Hynicka, wife of the Rev. Robin Hynicka, passed away on August 30, 2015. Hynicka is senior pastor of Arch Street UMC in Philadelphia. Condolences may be sent to him at 4231 Paul Street, Philadelphia PA 19124 or to robin@archstreetumc.org.

It was Weslia's wish, that if memorial gifts are offered, they be used to support the daily activity of ASUMC

- living the love of Jesus by welcoming the oppressed, befriending the lonely; feeding the hungry and healing the sick. For more information please contact the church office: secretary@archstreetumc.org or (215) 498 3718.

Weslia Hynicka, wife of the Rev. Robin Hynicka, passed away on August 30, 2015. Hynicka is senior pastor of Arch Street UMC in Philadelphia. Condolences may be sent to him at 4231 Paul Street, Philadelphia PA 19124 or to secretary@archstreetumc.org or robin@archstreetumc.org.

REV. RICHARD C. MARK

The Rev. Richard C. Mark, of Leola, a retired pastor on Honorable Location, passed away on August 24. He served the five churches: Marcus Hook: Cokesbury; Highville; Washington Boro; East Bangor; Bellegrove.

Most recently he worked for Stauffers of Kissel Hill. He was a member of the Worship Center, Lancaster, and was active in the Faith that Works Ministry.

Surviving him are his wife, Jane Keener Mark; a son, Randall (husband of Shawn Phelps Mark); a granddaughter; a sister and two brothers. He was preceded in death by another brother and sister.

BARBARA M. (OSBORN) NESS

Barbara M. (Osborn) Ness, 80, of Fawn Grove, Pa., died Saturday, Aug. 1, 2015. She was the wife of the Rev. John Ness Jr., a retired elder.

Barbara Ness was a bank teller for many years, retiring from Wells Fargo in Sea Girt, NJ. She is survived by her husband, three children and five grandchildren.

Rev. John Ness served the following churches: Orwigsburg: Salem; Land- ingville: Welcome; Cedarville; Lebanon: Covenant. He also served in Extension Ministry to the General Board of Global Ministries.



Connectional Table: Linking ministries to mission

Mei-Ling Blackstone, 16, leads devotions at the Connectional Table (CT) meeting, Oct. 17, where about 30 conference ministry leaders--including Connectional Ministries Director the Rev. Christopher Kurien (left) and Bishop Peggy Johnson--shared examples of transformational ministries engaged in making disciples of Jesus Christ. The CT, chaired by the Rev. Robert Wilt, enables conference ministry groups to network and ensure missional focus and effectiveness. *John Coleman photo*



Learning new ways to 'See Know Love'

About 40 Eastern PA Conference members joined about 700 other leaders from the eight other Northeastern Jurisdiction conferences at a "first of its kind" training event, Oct. 2-4, in Hershey, Pa. "See Know Love" focused on "transformational leadership," targeting younger participants in its creative--even "edgy"--style, speakers and agenda. About 200 bishops, cabinet members and conference executives also convened for a day of learning and conversation on key NEJ and denominational concerns.

John Coleman photo

150 attend Laity Academy, 40 for the first time

The Eastern PA Conference's 32nd Laity Academy, held Aug. 14-16, in Reading, Pa., drew nearly 150 registered and generally enthusiastic students, including 40 first-timers. Ten instructors, like Judy Ehninger (far right) who teaches the basic course for local church servants, included Certified Lay Ministers, Christ Servant Ministers and clergy. They taught courses on: intercessory prayer; the purposes of the Methodist Church; Emotional Intelligence; fostering repentance and relationships with Native peoples; preaching, pastoral care and using technology in the church. The Hopewell UMC Praise Team and the Native American band Spirit Wind (left photo) provided entertainment. The 2016 Laity Academy will happen Aug. 13-14 (2 days only) at a site to be determined.



John Coleman photos



#BlackChurchesMatter seeks support

The Eastern PA Conference's Urban Commission and Metro Ministries launched in November an online

fundraising appeal named #BlackChurchesMatter, through gofundme.com, to support black congregations serving critical needs in urban areas of our conference. Members of the two groups and black church pastors

met together with Bishop Peggy Johnson to endorse the social media giving campaign, which drew about \$1,500 toward its initial \$5,000 goal within a week.

Bethany Amey Sutton photo