Pen-Del Youth Rally renders a vivid ‘Masterpiece’

Like so many artistic masterpieces, there was a lot happening across the sweeping, kinetic canvas of the Peninsula-Delaware Conference’s 2015 Youth Rally that occurred Jan. 9-11, in Ocean City, Md.’s convention center. The stage, bathed in iridescent lights, pulsed with the loud, lyrical music of several, impassioned Christian rock bands.

Throng of enraptured teens were jammed in front, many with their hands raised high, some jumping to the music’s infectious beats. Some were texting messages and perhaps photos from their cell phones. After all, this was their Holy Ghost party, an annual youth extravaganza not to be missed. And it was a sonic vision to behold, especially for the adults who watched quietly but supportively from their seats beyond the stage area. “It’s better they’re here,” they must have thought, “than anywhere else.”

Gifted speakers also captivated the young crowd with heartfelt wit and wisdom. Keynoter, the Rev. Brenda Salter McNeil, a professor, author, speaker and consultant in the field of racial, ethnic, and gender reconciliation, challenged them be the missing Master-pieces in the puzzle of churches and communities that yeart for survival but need transformation. Wry comedian Michael Jr. spun his offbeat, teasing humor and demonstrated what makes comedy funny. And young artists illustrated the Masterpiece theme in large, vivid paintings that evolved while events were happening on-stage.

Illusionist Brock Gill performed surprising stunts and unbelievable feats, adding further variety to spice up the agenda. Gill also delivered a patient, compelling, evangelical altar call Saturday night that drew hundreds of brave, commitment-ready youth toward the stage and to waiting pastors and youth leaders ready to pray with them.

Annual Conference speakers to teach ‘Faithful Stewardship’

Emphasizing faithful stewardship, the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference’s 2015 annual session, May 14-16, will engage church leaders in exploring wide-ranging concerns that promote what presiding Bishop Peggy Johnson aptly calls “responsible living and giving.”

“Faithful Stewardship of Our Time, Treasure and Environment” is this year’s theme for the annual conference of representative lay and clergy leadership. Attendees will hear major addresses on these three aspects of holistic stewardship. They will also participate in worship, resolutions and reports, legislative debates (known as Holy Conferencing), and voting for delegates to the 2016 United Methodist General Conference in Portland, Oregon.

Financial stewardship expert Clif Christopher, a popular speaker, author and consultant on church finance, will offer a keynote address on wise stewardship of our treasure, a vital emphasis for many churches at this time. And the Rev. Susan Henry Crowe, General Secretary of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, will focus on vigilant care for our earth’s environment when she preaches during the opening worship celebration.

Bishop Peggy Johnson will focus on stewardship of time when she preaches at the Memorial Service to honor clergy members and spouses who died during the past year, many after giving years of devotion to ministry. And her colleague, Bishop James E. Swanson Sr. of the Mississippi Episcopal Area, will preach for the always anticipated Service Annual Conference speakers to teach ‘Faithful Stewardship’
February

FEB. 21
Forum on Comprehensive Immigration Reform: Presentation on President Obama's Executive Order on Immigration Reform. Sponsored by EPA Conference Rapid Response Team. 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM, West Lawn UMC, 15 Woodside Avenue, West Lawn, PA.

MARCH 10
Conference Advance Specials applications deadline: Approved church and community ministries may seek official funding through conference-wide appeals. Application can be found on Conference Website under Finance.

MARCH 10
Clergywomen's Retreat: Focus on prayer, witness and fellowship for clergywomen of every status. Gretna Glen Camp & Retreat Center. Cost: $25. (Or stay overnight Monday for $40 more.) Send by March 1 to Rev. Dorry Newcomer, 35 Liberty Street, Newtown, PA. (Check payable to Newtown UMC Pastor’s Fund.) Contact Dorry at 267-795-8153 (dorry.newcomer@yahoo.com) or Cyndi at 215-316-1431 (cyndi.ski@pakk.gmail.com)

Deadline to nominate delegates for General Conference 2016: The form is online. Conference Secretary must receive it by this date.

MARCH 15
One Great Hour of Sharing: This churchwide Special Sunday offering undergirds the worldwide ministries of the UM Committee on Relief, aiding in disaster relief, recovery and rehabilitation. UMORC celebrates 75 years of saving and supporting lives and communities.

MARCH 21
Faith Sharing Forum: Thom and Joani Schultz, co-authors of the provocative book Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore: And How 4 Acts of Love Will Make Your Church Irresistible, will present new wisdom and winning strategies for making your church more inviting and welcoming to visitors. 9 AM - 3:30 PM. New Hanover UMC, 2211 Swamp Pike, Gilbertsville, PA. Register online. Bring a church team.

MARCH 21
Order of Deacons Day: Willow Grove UMC.

MARCH 24
“When There’s Conflict in the Church”: Workshop will teach how to handle church conflict and promote disciple-making. 9 AM - 3 PM. West Lawn UMC, 15 Woodside Avenue, West Lawn, PA. Led by the Rev. David Woolverton. Cost: $35. Register online. Contact David Woolverton at shepherd2842@comcast.net.

MARCH 28
Tri-Conference Disability Ministry Conference: Disability Ministry Committees in the Eastern PA, Peninsula-Delaware and Greater New Jersey conferences will co-sponsor this event with the theme “Yes WE Can,” from 9 AM - 3 PM. Cornerstone UMC, 3135 Summit Bridge Rd, Bear, DE. Register online.

MARCH 31
Sexual Ethics Workshop, Advanced Level: “Leading Between The Lines” 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM. West Lawn UMC, 15 Woodside Ave., Reading, PA. A course about applying family systems principles to your personal life in order to impact your leadership, ministry and church.

April

APRIL 12
District Conferences: Church leaders in all six districts will meet in the afternoon to address district business and program matters and prepare for Annual Conference.

APRIL 24
Sexual Ethics Workshop, Advanced Level: "A Preacher and a Shrink Talk about Sexual Ethics" 9:00 AM–3:30 PM. Ruhl's UMC, 4810 Elisabethtown Road, Manheim, PA. Ruhl’s UMC Pastor Rob Timlin and licensed psychologist Curt Nicholson, PhD, lecture on and discuss how to integrate theological and psychological foundations of Christian sexual ethics into one’s thinking and behavior. Cost: $30. Register online.

APRIL 26-28

May

MAY 3
Eastern PA Conference Youth Rally: 4-7 pm. West Lawn UMC

MAY 14-16
Eastern PA Annual Conference: Philadelphia Expo Center, Oaks PA.

MAY 29 - 30
Young Adult Retreat: Awake "A time of renewal to eagerly build awareness." Fellowship and learning about career versus vocation, healthy relationships and spiritual centering, led by Coordinator for Young People’s Ministries, David Piltz. Getrein Glen Camp and Retreat Center

MAY 30
Celebration of Former Delaware Conference and 1965 Merger: 9:30 Am to 1:30 PM, with lunch. Tindley Temple UMC, 750 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA. Featuring Bishops Gregory Palmer and Ernest Lyght, music, ministry and memories.

Is your church: A. Half-full? or B. Half-empty? If you answered “B,” do you want to know what to do about it?

Then be sure to attend our 2015 FaithSharingForum with Thom and Joani Schultz, co-authors of the provocative book Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore: And How 4 Acts of Love Will Make Your Church Irresistible.

INFORMATION

They’ll present new wisdom and winning strategies for making your church more inviting for members and visitors. Bring a team of leaders from your church who are ready to learn new ways of doing church. It’s time for a new perspective. It’s time for a change.

Saturday, March 21, 9 AM to 3:30 PM. 0.5 CEUs. Cost: $10/person with materials & meals. New Hanover United Methodist Church 2211 Swamp Pike, Gilbertsville, PA. Register online today!
First

The first African American Methodist churches in the early 1800s were controlled by white senior pastors and trustees. Chafing under oppression, the churches sought but were denied the dignity of self-determination by four consecutive General Conferences. But in 1864, as the end of America's Civil War and slavery was imminent, their petition was approved, and the Delaware Annual Conference became the first African American annual conference to be formed in Methodism.

A century later the 1964 General Conference mandated that all racially segregated conferences in the United States be disbanded. Four years later, the segregated Central Jurisdiction, to which they all belonged, was abolished as well.

The sprawling Delaware Conference was the first to take on the challenging task of merging with predominantly white conferences in the six geographical areas where their respective churches resided. Those conferences included: the Philadelphia (now Eastern Pennsylvania) Conference, the Peninsula (now Peninsula-Delaware) Conference, the Virginia Conference, the New York Conference and the North and South New Jersey conferences.

The last formal conference session of the Old Delaware Conference was held on April 27-28, 1965, with Bishop John Wesley Lord presiding. The bishop said, according to the Rev. Edwin L. Ellis, a District Superintendent who wrote about this event later, “We are restoring that which is broken. This is a return to the way the Methodist Church began. It was our sin which brought division... Surely now, we have much to share with all of Christ’s Church and this great dream will be now pouring into the life of the new conferences that are being organized.” (Commemorative Booklet: Delaware Annual Conference, page 101)

The Delaware Conference has the distinction of being “first.” It was the first to form and first to merge. In this, the 150th and 50th anniversaries of its sunrise and sunset, and especially during Black History month, I ponder the word “first.” To be “first” has many connotations. We often think of it as being the earliest, the best, and the most important. That is true on many levels.

But as we study the scriptures we see it a little differently. In the Old Testament we read about the importance of the “first-born” child in the family being set apart and dedicated to God (Exodus 13:1-2). The Jews were required to give the first fruits of their harvest in sacrifice to God (Exodus 23:16). In the New Testament we read about Christ being the first-born of all creation (Colossians 1:15), who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for our sins (Matthew 20:28). Jesus turns the tables on the world’s pride in being first by reminding all that the “first shall be last” and “anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.” (Mark 9:35).

Indeed the Old Delaware Conference was first in its sacrificial, life-changing service to the Lord Jesus Christ through its 100 years of ministry among us. The servant leadership of its many pastors is evidenced by the fruit of their preaching and the way “scriptural holiness” was spread across the land in their day. In the history of the Delaware Conference, written by the late Dr. William Jason (and soon to be published and available to all), we read story after story of the miracles and life-changing ministries of both lay and clergy who gave of their means to erect houses of worship and hold conferences and camp meetings. They did it so that more might know the saving love of Christ. People mortgaged their houses to build their churches in many cases. They were “first” in their self-giving love for their Lord and the church.

In this day and age the call of being “first” is still coming from our Lord Jesus to all of us. As Paul says, we should “outdo one another in showing honor” (Romans 12:10), and not only to others but especially show love to the very people who despise and reject us and treat us with disrespect (Romans 12:20). I invite you all to take part in our celebrations of the Old Delaware Conference which disbanded in order to model a new way of ministry for the church of Jesus Christ for all to see. The Peninsula Delaware Conference celebration will be on Saturday, April 25, at 4 PM at the Whatcoat UMC in Dover. Bishop Woodie W. White, a racial justice pioneer himself, will be the guest preacher of the day. The Eastern PA Conference will hold its celebration at Tindley Temple UMC in Philadelphia on Saturday, May 30, with Bishop Ernest Lyght, Bishop Gregory Palmer and Dr. David Briddell featured among the speakers.

I pray with profound gratitude that we are far beyond the widespread rejection and disrespect. But our solemn call is still to “outdo one another in showing honor,” eager to be first to greet, embrace and exalt one another as beloved sisters and brothers in the household of God. Being first in this way transforms us, our enemies and the very world that is busily striving to “win” and have it all. There is simply no telling what God will yet do with us and among us, as we seek to be in ministry in the counter-cultural Spirit of Christ. So let us join together in these vital celebrations of our shared Methodist history, and see what new firsts shall come to pass.

Peggy A. Johnson
Annual Conference 2015 to feature electronic voting

Preparations for the 2015 Annual Conference, May 14-16, at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks, Pa., are underway, and deadlines are fast approaching. All necessary information and forms are available on the conference’s Website at http://epaumc.org/events/annual-conference.

Online and mail-in registration for all members begins Feb. 23 and ends April 27. Meanwhile, Conference Secretary Lloyd Speer (at conferencesecretary@epaumc.org) must receive by March 10 all legislative resolutions and all nominations for delegates to the 2016 United Methodist General Conference and Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference. Forms and instructions are the Website. Exhibitors’ tables, available on a first-come, first-served basis, can be reserved on the Website or by contacting Lori Henning by phone at 610-544-1400, or by email at exhibitCoordinator@epaumc.org, or by postal mail at 212 W. Springfield Road, Springfield, PA 19064.

Conference voting for delegates to next year’s General and Jurisdictional conferences is going digital this year. Members will use assigned electronic voting devices and return them at the end of the two-day conference. Training will be provided during pre-conference meetings, at clergy and laity sessions, and at the plenary session.

Among the resolutions debated and voted on will likely be some aimed for General Conference, which will meet May 10-20, 2016, in Portland, Ore.

“The Commission on Conference Sessions is working hard to create an atmosphere of Holy Conferencing where all members of the Annual Conference can openly discuss where they believe God is leading the church in the future,” said the Rev. James Anderman, who chairs the commission.

Clergy and Laity sessions will precede the conference on Thursday, May 14, 10 AM to 12 noon. And the Order of St. Luke invites all attendees to join them for brief devotions and Holy Communion on Friday and Saturday mornings at 7:30 AM. A preliminary agenda will be distributed prior to Annual Conference.

“I anticipate the Holy Spirit to be working in and among us at this year’s Annual Conference,” said Bishop Peggy Johnson. “Our first-time use of an electronic voting system should streamline that election process. But above all, I pray this will be a time of inspiring worship and wisdom-sharing that will help us focus on our mission for Christ in the world.”

Annual Conference speakers to teach ‘Faithful Stewardship’

continued from page 1

of Ordination, no doubt celebrating the talents of faithful stewards facing new challenges of leadership in ministry.

“I am anticipating the Holy Spirit to be working in and among us at this year’s annual conference,” said Bishop Johnson. “Our theme of stewardship will help lay and clergy leaders to better equip and engage our churches in responsible living and giving.”

Many churches are shouldering heavy fiscal burdens due to declining memberships, rising costs, stagnant incomes and other causes. Yet, faithful giving to the conference’s Connectional Ministries Fund and Lifestyle Stewardship Campaign continues, in addition to support for other denominational funding needs.

Twenty-five clergy members are enrolled in the Mid-Atlantic Foundation’s new Financial Leadership Academy. And dozens of church teams have learned stewardship wisdom from giving guru Clif Christopher, a former pastor himself. He will return to the conference once more in October, according to Foundation executive director Jack Brooks, to teach another full-day workshop.

When the Rev. Susan Henry Crowe preaches during opening worship, she will likely address major environmental concerns that her agency is addressing and that threaten and already impact our nation and our world. Henry-Crowe has led the church’s social concerns education and advocacy board, based in Washington DC, since last February. She was the second woman to be ordained in the South Carolina Conference and the first woman president of the United Methodist Judicial Council. Bishop Johnson serves on the Board of Church and Society.

Bishop Swanson, a much in-demand preacher, previously led the Knoxville (Tenn.) Episcopal Area. He chairs the General Commission on United Methodist Men, and also serves on the denomination’s Connectional Table, the advisory board of PATH 1, which resources new church development, and the International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges and Universities.

“We are working hard to create an atmosphere of Holy Conferencing where all members of the Annual Conference can openly discuss where they believe God is leading the church in the future,” said the Rev. James Anderman, who chairs the Commission on Conference Sessions. “At the same time we are endeavoring to provide the members and the churches they represent with resources to assist them in being better stewards of all that God has provided.”

Be Steadfast, Abounding in Hope

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

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

—1 Corinthians 15:58

Daily we are reminded of our need and desire to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. All creation is groaning to be transformed, to be renewed to God’s original plan. We have a message of hope to bring to the broken and grieving persons, communities and nations of the world. The need of humanity is great, but the message of hope is greater.

Looking back on 2014, it is my prayer that the ministries of our local churches, districts and conference have increased hope among us. I pray that hope has spilled over into our communities.

It is my prayer that we have spoken out against injustice, paid attention to the marginalized, given bread to the hungry and shelter to the homeless. It is my prayer that we have proclaimed good news to the broken-hearted in our pews and in our streets.

It is my prayer that we have reached out to all who seek and need the love of God with our arms, hearts and doors wide open. It is my prayer that each of these efforts has increased our passion for ministry and inspired us to think about doing ministry in new ways.

Looking ahead in 2015 it is my prayer that we will be steadfast, immovable, and abounding in the work of the Lord, because the radiant Light of Christ needs to shine in the darkness. As United Methodists we have a unique heritage that calls us to holiness of heart and life, to works of piety and works of mercy. The benefits of regular worship, fellowship, sacrifice and Bible Study especially during the holy season of Lent must find their way into our everyday lives.

Many congregations begin a new year with Wesley’s Service of Covenant Renewal. The service invites us to re-visit our membership vows and to re-commit to the promises to live the life of Christian discipleship and to support the ministry of the local church with our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. Let us do the same for the work of the Annual Conference renewing our commitment to bringing hope and transforming the world in the name of Jesus Christ.

In the coming months there are rich learning opportunities available to equip us in this calling. They include:

• Our annual Tools for Ministry sessions on each district, offering numerous courses that help prepare and advance leaders in many areas in ministry (March 7);
• Our third Faith Sharing Training Event, this one titled ‘Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore’ and featuring the provocative ideas of Thom and Joani Schultz (March 21);
• A Youth Rally (May 3) and a Young Adults Retreat (May 29-30), promising exciting, creative learning and fellowship opportunities for both groups;
• Conversations on Intercultural Communications, seven gatherings in our conference to stimulate dialogue and learning about relating to others in diverse cultural settings.

Each of these important events, intended for lay and clergy, will give us necessary resources to be faithful and innovative in our varied ministry contexts. They will nudge us to leave our comfort zones to witness freely, as we engage new persons and new communities in ministry in the name of Christ.

Please look for more information in our conference communications media and be sure to register soon. And let us pray for one another as we abound in the work of the Lord.

May our vibrant message of God’s love be grounded in steadfast hope, as we spread the love of Christ far and wide throughout this year.

Clergy learn money basics at Financial Leadership Academy

M

oney has a deep and profound effect on how pastors do the work Christ calls them to do, the Rev. Phil Jamieson told 62 pastors embarking on a two-year learning experience through the Financial Leadership Academy. The way the church thinks about and addresses money will transform its future – for better or for worse.

“You’re at the launching pad of something transformational,” said Jack Brooks, who leads the Mid-Atlantic United Methodist Foundation, which sponsors the Academy. “This is a unique approach to get to change within the church.”

Two dozen of the pastors were from the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, the others mostly from the Baltimore-Washington and Peninsula Delaware conferences.

They each paid $1,125 to participate in six learning sessions taught by financial ministry experts and also regularly scheduled small-group meetings with coach-facilitators. The Foundation underwrote most of the expense for the participants, explained the Rev. Andy Lunt, who serves as Dean of the Academy.

At the first session at Simpson UMC, Wilmington, Del., Jamieson and his wife, Janet, spoke about stewardship and personal finances. Janet, a certified public accountant, helped clergy with complex tax, salary and benefit issues. She also helped them to develop a deeper understanding of stewardship.

Thirty percent of self-identified United Methodists report giving nothing to the church, she said. Sixty percent of contributions given to the church are given by five percent of its members.

“If those who attended United Methodist churches regularly tithed,” she said, “and less committed Christians gave half a tithe, we would be able to generate $133 billion more. You could solve the problems of the world.

“It’s not that we don’t have,” she said, citing more than $2 trillion earned by American churchgoing Christians since 2005. “It’s that we don’t give.”

The Academy’s first session dealt with personal finances and giving issues for pastors because people tend not to follow those who don’t lead by example, Lunt said. “It’s about getting our own houses in order, first,” said Brooks.

When he served at Glen Mar UMC in Ellicott City, Md., before retiring in 2010, Lunt announced each year what his salary was and the precise dollar amount he intended to give to the church. People like being informed and tended to be inspired, he said.

Many worked to match his generosity.

Jamieson warned against becoming legalistic about tithing percentages. Rather, people need to realize God has provided them with all they have and need.

Giving is a spiritual discipline, and tithing or any giving, he said, is not an end in itself, but a means to a transformed life.

Jamieson urged participants to ponder that if they belong to Christ, how does their giving become a witness to that? “Our giving should reflect God’s giving,” he said.

When working with congregations, asking for 10 percent or some other proportional figure has the percent or some other proportional figure has the following three-day seminar participants were tasked with creating an action plan for their churches and for their personal finances. The academy continues in April when financial stewardship expert Cliff Christopher speaks, and in October when strategist Gil Rendle will address the group. Next year, General Secretary of the denomination’s Council on Finance and Administration, Moses Kumar, and Ken Sloan of the General Board of Discipleship are scheduled to teach at the Academy.

Conference leaders stress cooperation to support church ministries

members of the Eastern PA Conference’s Con
nectional Table focused on enhancing their collaboration among ministries when they met Jan. 31 in a retreat setting at Camp Innabah.

The Rev. Robert Wilt, chairperson, led about three dozen of the conference and district ministry leaders through creative group exercises, goal-setting and planning discussions, and ministry reports. Their activities and overarching theme were drawn from Ephesians 4:16, 13: “Knit together to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ.”

The assembly explored how they can better live out the Connectional Table’s purpose, which is to oversee and connect diverse ministries of the conference in ways that provide coordination and support and help accomplish the conference’s overall mission: to develop new places and new leaders for ministry, to improve global health and to share in transformative ministry with the poor.

“We’re a ministry of the called who are called to support ministry in local churches,” Wilt asserted, in remarks that helped cast a vision for the body, which meets only several times a year.

Members also received a preview report from Mary White on a proposal coming to General Conference in 2016. It would restructure the denomination and its legislative body more globally by convening U.S. and non-U.S. Central Conference delegates separately in their respective regions and making the quadrennial General Conference sessions less U.S.-focused. White serves on the General Council on Finance and Administration.

Amid the serious dialogue, there was laughter and levity in the agenda, including the collaborative exercises, fellowship over lunch and a musical interlude of camp songs led by the Rev. Steward Warner, who chairs the Board of Camp & Retreat Centers. Members also prayed with and for one another individually before gathering in a prayer circle to close their meeting.

John Coleman photo
Pen-Del Youth Rally renders a vivid Masterpiece

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There were more happenings, onstage and off, during two, full days of worship and workshops, performances and presentations, devotions and debates. Plus, there were plenty of informal times for young participants to make new friends and form closer relationships while enjoying fellowship, music and laughter together.

Nearly 300 youth and adults about a tenth of the total attendance—made the trek from the Eastern PA Conference. Their participation is welcomed annually by our sister conference. But this time they also had their own workshop, titled “From Muck to Masterpiece,” planned and hosted by Conference Youth Ministries Coordinator David Piltz.

The highlight of the session was a revealing talk by Joseph Bill Jacobs and Jaimee McMillan, two former clients of Covenant House in Philadelphia, a Catholic run transitional living and outreach services program for homeless and runaway youth. They shared questions about their struggles and their deliverance from poverty and homelessness. Those who spoke touched the hearts of many, and I pray it would be possible to hear them again at another event. Being a part of the planning process, I admire the research and work put into our EPA Conference youth presentation paid off admirably, and we are planning to do something like this again. I cannot wait for next year’s Youth Rally, which will be called “Word.”

—Vicki, Conference Council on Youth Ministries member
Couple manages Carson-Simpson Farm for 20 years and counting

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

A
fter two decades of welcoming young campers to Carson-Simpson Farm Christian Center, in Hatboro, Pa., Ray and Meg Neitz still enjoy surprises, especially life-changing ones.

“We had an unbelievable moment last summer when a kid accepted Christ for the first time here,” recalled Meg. “He was hanging onto his camp counselor for dear life, sobbing that he’d never felt so loved before.”

It’s probably a scene they’ve witnessed many times before, but such miracle moments, like sunrises over the Farm’s 60 acres of verdant and wooded grounds on Pennypack Creek, are new and inspiring each time they happen.

“We both were looking for something more meaningful from life when we came here, some way to serve the Lord together,” recalled Ray, who formerly worked in construction. “It might have been a match made in heaven, because they and the Farm each found what they were searching for.”

“There was a steep learning curve; we had to figure out how to build new relationships with churches,” said Ray, who was hired to do maintenance part-time but soon became site director. “Carson-Simpson was in transition. Some relationships were broken, and the conference camping board had taken over management from Metro Ministries.” Ray also works with Metro Ministries to support and strengthen its urban ministry work through Carson-Simpson Farm.

The non-profit Farm serves Philadelphia, Montgomery and Bucks counties. They especially focus on churches in low-income communities, inviting them to send children there for summer daytime and overnight camps, and to send families for picnics, retreats and special events. That requires Ray and Meg, who manage the office and does marketing and program design, to visit churches in the off-season to stimulate trust, creative planning and supportive relationships.

The creativity abounds in popular summer camp activities, including games like Gold Rush, Capture the Flag and GaGa, and special events like Dress-Up Camp in transition. Some relationships were broken, and the conference camping board had taken over management from Metro Ministries.” Ray also works with Metro Ministries to support and strengthen its urban ministry work through Carson-Simpson Farm.

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Innabah gets new Summer Camp Director, Retreat Host

BY SALLY W. OTT

CAMP AND RETREAT MINISTRIES DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

A
t a recent national gathering of United Methodists, I was fortunate to participate in workshops that helped me frame my new task of development in the context of spirituality. I invite you to help me complete the phrase, “Development is about ….” Several answers come to my mind:

- **Relationships**: Cultivating relationships is key, especially with individuals, congregations, foundations and others who have resources to share. When we ask for support, we offer them opportunities to grow closer to God.
- **Gratitude**: Giving is an appropriate response to God’s gracious initiatives in our lives. I was reminded that prayer and gratitude are the foundation for development.
- **Belief**: We must believe in what we’re developing. Having experienced my call to a full-time Christian vocation during a week of junior-high church camp, I totally believe in the lifelong benefits of camping and retreat ministries.
- **Impact**: Camping and retreat ministries make a positive, personal impact on all involved.
- **Faith in the Future**: Development is about believing in the future. Our faith calls us not just to survive, but to thrive. For me this means longing for others to have life-changing experiences comparable to those that have benefited me.

I encourage you to visit the informative websites of our four camp and retreat centers. Along with our exciting summer camps, you will be inspired by the retreats and special events we offer year-round for children, youth, individuals and families. While we welcome our churches—and we certainly want more to come visit—we also share our centers with schools and other groups.

Approximately 15,000 people use our sites in a given year, including about 4,000 children and youth attending our summer camps. We invite you to join us in eagerly anticipating our 2015 summer camp season.

Meanwhile, our “Pathways to Our Future” funding initiative has raised over $400,000 over the last 2½ years from generous donors. A dynamic future still beckons; so please join us on that pathway of gratitude and generosity. And please keep us always in your prayers.
Couple manages Carson-Simpson Farm for 20 years and counting

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Day and the colorful Carnival finale. There’s also daily Bible study, swimming, hiking, sports and recreation, along with arts and crafts, drama and music. But it’s the special interactions with people—counselors, staff and fellow campers—that can make summer camp the adventure of a child’s lifetime.

“This is a place where a kid can let down his guard, the hard attitude he has to have to survive at school or even at home every day. Here he can be himself, be a kid again,” said Meg. “We see it happen; we see the shift take over at some point, and then God can speak to them.”

“We stress that this is where they can leave everything else behind and start over,” added Ray, who collects all cell phones once the kids arrive. When some nervous parents complain or want to communicate with their children, Meg counsels them to let go and essentially, to let God care for their kids with the aid of camp staff.

What is special to the Neitzes are the opportunities for young campers to “give back,” even before they arrive at camp, by collecting school supplies for foster kids at the United Methodist Children’s Home, or raising funds last year to provide nutritious food to Haitian children. This year they will bring contributions for Jenkintown UMC’s Loaves and Fishes ministry, Meg reported. And each year campers visit two neighboring retirement homes to spend time with residents there.

For Meg, who has a degree in criminology and delinquency counseling, the PEACE Ministries program (Partners Equipping All Children for Eternity) is a favorite. It provides a group camp experience for low-income children through a partnership with Philadelphia area churches.

The couple’s own children, including two who are now teachers, labored at the camp with them over the years, giving and receiving valuable life-lessons.

‘Never expected to last this long’

“We never would have expected to last this long,” said Ray, whose office décor shows he’s a faithful Phillies fan. “But managing this camp has become a way of life.” In fact, it is their life during summer camp season, which often feels like a 24-7, full-day, full-week job.

“By the final, ninth week, we’re looking for a place to rest,” said Meg. Ray admits his energy lags a bit at times now; but he manages to keep going, including serving as interim site manager for Camp Innabah. He goes there twice a week to oversee and help improve the camp’s operations for Camp Innabah. He goes there twice a week to oversee and help improve the camp’s operations.

The partnership, which began in 2000 and includes the Peninsula-Delaware and Western North Carolina Conferences. Yet, one well, costing about $50,000 to install, will not suffice for thousands of residents who have no access to clean water. They suffer from poor health and diseases contracted from using the local river as their only water source.

“We can only imagine the excitement, celebration and praise to our Lord that will happen when the first bucket of water is extracted from the well,” writes Donna Baker, who traveled there with her husband, Partnership Chairman Jonathan Baker.

The team will also help dedicate Miriam’s Table, the newest feeding program, created in late 2014. Hundreds of children receive their only nutritious meal daily at Miriam’s Table, located on the outskirts of Kinshasa, the capital city and home to thousands of refugees from nearby countries.

In addition, the medical clinic at Mpasa, funded largely by the Partnership, will begin to expand its resources, services and facilities. A U.S. professor of architecture joined the team to help plan for a new building there, which may house expanded pediatric services. Our conference’s Southeast District is raising funds for the Mpasa clinic as its district mission project.

The Partnership team is assessing other current and potential programs as well, including medical clinics, Christian education for children, rapidly developing farms and sewing projects that teach adults and teens skills to become financially self-sustaining.

“Despite the harsh realities of life in the DRC, the Congolese maintain an amazingly strong hope in God for a better future,” writes Baker. She promises to provide periodic updates in the hope that partner conferences, districts and churches will spread the good news and help increase fundraising, enabling them to improve and increase life-saving ministries there.

Congo Partnership helps expand DRC mission projects

Lives are being saved and changed every day in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) thanks to the ministry of the Peter D. Weaver Congo Partnership, which includes the Eastern PA Conference. But more support is needed to expand vital mission efforts there. That is the praise report of a mission team that traveled there Feb. 10 and has been posting updates on the Partnership’s Website, www.congo-mission.org, and its Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pages/Congo-Partnership/190059111024921.

During the visit they will witness the digging of a new fresh-water well in a remote area, funded in part by gifts from the Partnership, which began in 2000 and includes the Peninsula-Delaware and Western North Carolina Conferences. Yet, one well, costing about $50,000 to install, will not suffice for thousands of residents who have no access to clean water. They suffer from poor health and diseases contracted from using the local river as their only water source.

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Delivering Christmas joy for 25 years

Bob Hinderliter, a member of the EPA Conference Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM), might resemble Santa Claus to some Native friends in North Carolina he visits each year bearing gifts. He has the white beard, the generosity and the travel history to prove it.

The longtime member of Prospect UMC in Prospect, once a 1990s volunteer for the Partnership, would travel with teams but never thought he would have his own place to go. That is until 1996 when he met a member of the Lumbee Tribe in Lumber Bridge, NC, who repeatedly asked him to come to the Lumbee Indian Reservation to help distribute presents.

“I’ve been to her wedding and stayed with her parents,” said Hinderliter proudly. “Whenever I arrive there, they say ‘Welcome home.’ They’re so loving, they always do something to surprise me.”

Hinderliter has also been on a mission trip to the Dakota-Sioux Rosebud reservation in South Dakota, where he helped repair a home, working alongside a 80-year old grandmother he persuaded to come. If you want to support or know more about Hinderliter’s annual trek to “Lumbee Country” in North Carolina e-mail him at brutherbaab-hindy@aol.com or call 610-459-2740.

Delivered to the Rev. Tryon Lowery, their pastor, now deceased, and sent what the children needed most: school supplies. Then he returned with Christmas gifts and a tradition began. He became close—like family—to 6-year Sophia Locklear, who is now 31 and expecting her first baby.

“I’ve been to her wedding and stayed with her parents,” said Hinderliter proudly. “Whenever I arrive there, they say ‘Welcome home.’ They’re so loving, they always do something to surprise me.”

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How to grow vital, disciple-making churches

BY THE REV. GORDON HENDRICKSON
EPA CONFERENCE COORDINATOR OF CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Primary Focus:

The mission of The United Methodist Church is to “make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” This is based on the Great Commission of Jesus, found in Matthew 28:18-20. Allowing the transforming grace of Jesus Christ to be experienced by our local churches, districts, and conference means forcing us to reach out to share Christ in ways that meet the needs in our communities.

Action Plan:

Let the Holy Spirit flow in the local church, the district and throughout the conference. How?

- Invest time in every meeting or gathering reading and reflecting on the Word of God, and share God moments in fellowship and prayer.
- Stimulate a permission-giving movement of new ministries to flow and grow, as long as they agree with the aforementioned mission of the local church, district and conference.
- Provide churches with information to help them define their communities, see their gifts and stir their passion for reaching out to meet human needs in their communities and beyond.

At each charge conference churches must be able to define their communities and describe how they are reaching or will reach out to meet the needs of their communities. Use an information database, they should examine “Call to Action” criteria to determine if they are a vital church with vital leadership:

1. Disciples in worship: worship attendance
2. Disciples making new disciples: numbers of professions of faith.
3. Disciples growing in their faith: number of small groups that nurture and encourage spiritual growth and hold people accountable for growth. (These can be short-term or long-term groups, such as Sunday Schools, Bible studies, etc.)
4. Disciples engaging in ministry: number of disciples doing outreach in the community and the world.
5. Disciples sharing their resources for mission: amount of money given to mission (including apportionments paid and support for all UM and non-UM organizations active in advocacy, education, health, justice, mercy, outreach and welfare anywhere in the world).

Other tactics

Each district should create “213 teams” to help churches assess their ministries to see if they are vital congregations, or what they need to do to become vital congregations, or where there are potential new places to be in ministry.

Superintendents should select and provide training to prepare individuals as coaches who can work with pastors and churches to create vital congregations. They should also continue to develop more Growing Church Covenant Groups and Mission Connexions to help clergy and laity achieve the primary disciple-making focus together.

Creation of an ongoing preaching symposium can enable pastors to become better pastors. All pastors should also be receiving continuing education in evangelism. Each pastor should take the DISC assessment test and share the results with the district superintendent and local church.

We must look for new, creative ways to reach new people and create new places (or modify old spaces) to attract and serve them.

“The term “213 teams” comes from Paragraph 213 of the 2012 United Methodist Book of Discipline. It lays out a process for assessing ministry viability and potential. Some questions for a group of churches in that process might include:

- What kinds of things are our congregations doing well?
- How is each congregation impacting its community for Christ?
- Are there some things we could do better through mutual cooperation?
- Can our appointed clergy be deployed more effectively?
- Are all of our church buildings needed for the worshipers we currently serve?
In Memoriam

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

Mrs. Judy Gapyol Choe

Rev. Asbury Jonsu Choe has notified us of the death of his wife, Mrs. Judy Gapyol Choe. She passed away on December 7, 2014 in South Korea. There are no surviving children.

The Rev. George W. Eppehimer

The Rev. George W. Eppehimer, a retired elder, passed on January 20, 2015. He served the following church appointments before retiring in 1983: Bensalem; Cherry Valley; North Wales: Sanctuary; Easton: Green Pond; and Mount Hope. He is survived by his wife, Mabel Connard Eppehimer.

Mrs. Beatrice Virginia Cloud

Beatrice Virginia Cloud of West Lampeter Township, Pa., passed away at age 94 on Dec. 31, 2014. She was the widow of the late Rev. Adolphe Glen Cloud, whom she married in 1942 and who retired in 1975.

The Clouds had four children: Donald Cloud of Lancaster, who died in 1974; Gerald Cloud of Calais, Maine; Nancy Cloud of East Greenwich, R.I.; and Ruth Finn of Hagerstown, Md. She is also survived by four grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and one sister Laura McSparran. Her brother, Haines Brown, also predeceased her.

Mrs. Dorothy Lorraine Herr Sangrey

We received word of the death of Mrs. Dorothy Lorraine Herr Sangrey, 92, of Brethren Village, Lancaster. The surviving spouse of the late Rev. Abram W. Sangrey (Elder), she passed on Dec. 11. Mrs. Sangrey was predeceased by her husband in 2004. Surviving are five children: Dwight Abram, married to Karla Ann Sangrey, of Portland, OR; Dawn Eda, married to Paul Fargis, of Bedford Hills, NY; Dean H., married to Dee Sangrey, of Garden Valley, ID; Donald G., fiancée of Sondra Younker, of Sonora, CA, and Elletta, married to John D. Callahan, of Skaneateles, NY; nine grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren.

Mrs. Esther Neely

We have received word of the death of Mrs. Esther Neely, who passed away on December 2, 2014 at age 94. She was the surviving spouse of The Rev. Robert M. Neely, who retired in 1981.

She is survived by her children Eileen Howard, Patricia Helbers, Virginia Woodburn and Daniel Neely in addition to 2 Sisters, 14 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren.

The Rev. Howard J. Pinter

We have been informed that retired local pastor Rev. Howard J. Pinter passed away on Saturday, December 6, 2014. He is survived by his three daughters: Carol Pinter Helveston, Lois Pinter Helveston, and Nancy Pinter Cerino.

Rev. Pinter served his entire 25 year ministry at the former Abington Church, from 1963 until retiring in 1988.

The Rev. Frank A. Nickle Jr.

We received word today of the Rev. Frank A. Nickle Jr.’s passing. A retired Elder of the EPA Conference, he died Saturday, Nov. 22, 2014. He is survived by his daughter, Sharon Myers, and a son, Timothy A. Nickle.

A retired Elder of the EPA Conference, Rev. Nickle is survived by his daughter, Sharon Lee (Nickle) Myers, and a son, Chaplain Timothy A. Nickle. He was a grandfather to Cody Nickle and great grandfather to Gage. He was married to Janet Nickle, deceased.

Rev. Nickle served the following UM churches until his retirement in 1992: Moore Twp.: Covenant; Elizabethville; Calvary in Harrisburg, PA; Littitz; Paradise: St. John’s; and Elizabethtown: St. Paul’s.

The Rev. John Nelson Roberts


During his 43 year of ministry Roberts was appointed to eight diverse congregations in Eastern Pennsylvania, as follows: Hamorton UMC; First UMC, Columbia; Mountainhome: Trinity UMC; Camphor Memorial UMC; Covenant UMC; First UMC in Bangor; and finally Otterbein UMC, from which he retired in 1998. He served briefly as “Retiree Supply Pastor” of the Oregon Community UMC near Lancaster.

For several years he was a member of the Conference Board of Trustees, as well as the District Committee on the Ordained Ministry. His autobiography entitled, “This is My Story” was published in 2000.

He is survived by his widow Mrs. Eleanor R. Roberts, and three children: Mary E., Kelly, John N. Roberts and Andrew Roberts.

Mrs. Joan C. Bare

We have learned that Joan C. Bare passed on Tuesday, November 4, 2014. A resident of Cornwall Manor, she was a member of Lehman Memorial United Methodist Church, Hatboro, PA.

Her husband, the Rev. Thomas W. Bare, of Cornwall, is a retired elder who served the following churches from 1950 until he retired in 1995: Heckton; Belfast: Wesley; Bethel; Philadelphia: Grace; Havertown: Trinity; Philadelphia: Crescentville; Glenside; and Palmyra: First.

The Rev. Lorenza Williams Jr.

We received word of the death of the Rev. Lorenza Williams Jr., retired elder, who passed away on October 30, 2014. He was the spouse of former EPA conference employee, Cynthia Washington Williams. Rev. Williams served the following congregations: Metropolitan UMC, Rome, Ga.; Asbury UMC, Savannah, Ga.; Berry-Long Memorial, Philadelphia; Siloam, Chester; Grace, Philadelphia; Union Memorial, Darby; Haven Memorial, Philadelphia; Sayers Memorial, Philadelphia; and Mt. Zion, Darby.

Denise J. Shank

Denise J. Shank, 48, of Chestnut Hill Township, died Tuesday, Oct. 28, 2014. She was the wife of the Rev. Robert “Bob” R. Shank. Denise was a member of Stroudsburg UMC, where her husband is the pastor.

In addition to her husband of 26 years, parents, and twin children, Lydia M. and James E., Denise is survived by a sister, Sabrina (Brian) Kser of Elizabethtown; a twin brother, Dennis E. (Linda) of Manheim; and many other family members and friends.

The Rev. Bob Shank has served the following UM churches: Bellertown: St. Paul; Springtown: Salem; Allentown: Asbury; Paloli; and Stroudsburg.

John Miller

John Miller, Lay Pastor at Highville UMC, Conestoga, passed away Sunday morning, October 19, 2014, at Lancaster General Hospital. He was 70.

Miller served as pastor of Highville UMC for the past 17 years and was a longtime member of Grandview UMC, Lancaster. A native of Lancaster, he was married to Jo Ann Bryson Miller, with whom he celebrated 50 years of marriage in September. He leaves behind his wife, Jo; daughters, Charity, wife of Felix Cruz, and Christina, wife of David Grebinger; and three grandchildren. He is survived also by a brother, Ralph, husband of Margaret Miller, Jr.

Memorial remembrances may be made in John’s memory to Highville UMC, c/o Beatrice B. Troup, 1790 Water St., Washington Boro, PA 17582.
You are a Masterpiece

BY DAVID PILTZ, EPA CONFERENCE YOUTH MINISTRIES COORDINATOR

The Peninsula-Delaware Conference Youth Rally 2015 focus was on how we each are God’s masterpiece. Eastern PA was present with more than 500 youth and adult participants from many churches, including members of the Conference Council on Youth Ministries. We distributed hundreds of EPA Conference Youth Ministries t-shirts and other souvenirs; and we hosted a workshop to help our young people discover how we are all unfinished masterpieces of our Master and Creator, God. Let’s remember and reflect on the rally!

Memories were made. Youth from various groups interacted, as they talked, joked and shared. Youth grew closer to others in their groups by listening, supporting and encouraging one another in their various struggles. They created memories that will last a lifetime, as they continue to develop their relationships with God and with each other.

A sense of amazement occurred. Speakers were engaging and challenging. Music was uplifting and youth leaders created opportunities for youth to process the experience and discover their own ah-ha moments.

Spiritual enrichment was the purpose. Both youth and adults were able to attend worship and workshops, and listen to music and messages they can apply to their lives. Being an unfinished masterpiece of God means we need to constantly enrich our relationship with God.

Trust happened. Youth and adult youth-leaders had opportunities to talk and get to know each other better. Trust is a basis of all relationships, and spending time increasing our trust is what God calls us to do with each other.

Excitement happened throughout the two days. From entering the huge convention hall and taking in the electrifying ambience, or hearing and singing in the electrifying ambience, or hearing and singing the music with their hands raised, or listening to speakers, or being surprised by the illusionist, the excitement was pervasive and contagious.

Response was almost inevitable. For some the rally was a remembrance of their commitment and relationship with God. For others it was the first time they were making a conscious commitment to serve God. Either way, everyone had the chance, and many responded to God’s call in their life!

Preparation. Youth learned that they are unfinished pieces of God’s work being prepared for a meaningful life. We need to realize that no matter who we are, where we are from, or what we have done, we are still God’s handiwork being finished. In the Eastern PA youth ministry workshop, we heard from two young people about how their lives had been in shambles, but they worked and believed and relied on God to overcome their struggles with homelessness, poverty and wrong choices. They are living examples of how we are God’s unfinished masterpieces.

Introspection. Event’s like this always provide time for young people to take time to reflect on their lives and their relationships with God and with others.

Enlightenment. It was great to see youth and adults get it! The rally was a time for many to learn profound truths and to say, “I get it God. I get it!”

Conversations, conversations, conversations. At the heart of relationships is conversations. Sometimes we forget to converse with God, just like we do with our best friend. The rally was a time for us to start conversations with others but to also continue and deepen our conversations with God.

Experiencing God. We were able to feel, hear, “taste and see” God’s goodness and presence in our lives. It can’t be said enough: We are unfinished masterpieces of God. CCYM is looking forward to taking what we learned at the rally and applying it not only in our own lives but also sharing it with other youth in Eastern PA. Be sure your youth group attends our own Conference Youth Rally on Sunday, May 3, from 4 to 7 PM, at West Lawn UMC.

NOTE: In addition to leading Eastern PA Conference Ministries with Youth and Young Adults, David Piltz is also the new part-time, interim Campus Ministry Director for the Open Door Christian Community at Drexel University in Philadelphia, a Wesley Foundation ministry. He replaces the Rev. Sarah Colwill, former director and now a full-time church pastor.

YES: Youth explore call to ministry

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

“Yeld to the Call; Explore the Call; Stay with the Call.” The biannual YES retreat for high school-age youth undeniably masters the “Explore” part of that call-to-ministry formula. Hopefully, the rest happens when they return home.

As each retreat ends Bishop Peggy Johnson shares her call story and then anoints and prays for each participant (as shown here). But in the eight hours prior to that solemn climax the young attendees explore the inner and outer nature of the “call” experience, aided by some dedicated, knowledgeable tour guides.

There is always uplifting praise and worship, lunch and snacks, getting-acquainted games, fellowship and recreation. But the youth also perform costumed skits to portray biblical call stories. They dialogue and record in personal journals their intimate answers to questions like, “Have you ever felt God speaking to you?” And they examine their spiritual gifts, but only after hearing from people deeply engaged in ministry—from a military chaplain to ordained elders and deacons, to a church pastor/musician, to photographers who capture ministries in motion, and yes, to a bishop who started out as a schoolteacher.

The last YES retreat, Nov. 22, 2014, drew several dozen youth, with adult guides, from host church New Life UMC in Drexel Hill, Hopewell in Downingtown, Sayres in Philadelphia, St. Daniel’s in Chester, and Epworth in Bethlehem.

The next retreat will be April 10-11, a first-time overnighter, at Pocono Plateau Camp & Retreat Center. The Rev. Matt Heckman, of Kochenderfer UMC in Lebanon, has been leading the retreats for four years with help from members of the Cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry, both co-sponsors. They move the retreats to different districts to offer the experience to more youth in diverse areas, he said, hoping to bear fruit all over the conference’s ministry garden.

Sabrina Daluisio photo. See more photos of the Nov. 22, 2014, YES retreat in our online photo gallery via our Website at www.epaumc.org.

Boys’ Book Club sees Selma in Phila. for free

Members of The Boys’ Book Club, started by Lenora Thompson in 2010, were among thousands of Philadelphia teens who received free tickets to see the popular historical film Selma in January. As part of a national movement, some Philadelphia business leaders underwrote the cost of 10,000 tickets for middle-school students to see the film by Jan. 19, the date of the national observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday.

Thompson was already planning to treat book club members to the movie; but the generous donation made it much easier. The young bibliophiles read chosen books and then gather to present book reports each month. Their meeting venues range from McDonald’s and other restaurants to recreational facilities and museums. They have even toured college campuses and visited the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington DC. One member addressed the 2013 Eastern PA Annual Conference session.

The Boys’ Book Club is a 501 © (3) non-profit ministry of Wharton-Wesley UMC, Philadelphia, and welcomes tax-deductible contributions.

Selma photo by Sabrina Daluisio. See more photos of the Nov. 22, 2014, YES retreat in our online photo gallery via our Website at www.epaumc.org.