

EAST DISTRICT

E-ALERT FOR

December 7, 2016

Editorial Policy of the East District E-Alert:

Generally, articles will appear for only one week, and, if pertinent, will be posted on the East District website (<http://www.epaumc.org/districts/east>). Or, if you are on the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference website (<http://www.epaumc.org>), there is a link to the East District website at the bottom of any page. Previously published E-Alerts will be posted to the East District website.

This E-Alert is sent to Pastors and Church Offices on the East District and to lay people who have requested being added to the distribution list. Feel free to clip or copy any article for your church's bulletin or newsletter unless permission has specifically been granted to the East District for publication, in which case, request permission from the source. The District Office requests that pastors forward the E-Alert to church leaders and congregants who might find the E-Alert helpful and informative.

December 11-17, 2016: Bishop Peggy Johnson is praying for the East District. Joys and concerns can be sent to her at pjohnson@epaumc.org.

OPEN ENROLLMENT PACKETS FOR 2017 HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

Only 2 days left of open enrollment!! Open enrollment ends on **December 9** for 2017 health insurance coverage in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference group health insurance plan. Participants in the plan for 2017 **MUST** participate in Open Enrollment in order to have coverage in 2017. No current elections will continue next year unless participants choose them by enrolling online. Click [here](#) for the Open Enrollment brochure. Click [here](#) to enroll. (Username is first initial last name, as in John Doe = jdoe; password = date of birth, as in mmddyyyy or a custom password that was created at the initial login.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO PRACTICE RADICAL HOSPITALITY

From **Thursday to Sunday, December 15-18, for six hours a day**, UCom will be at popular places in and around Philly's Center City, handing out free cups of hot cocoa to anybody and everybody.

Volunteers are needed to join the effort in handing out flyers promoting **The United Methodist Church** as a place where people can find a warm welcome and a message of hope in uncertain times.

Why not join UCom for an hour or more in this radical hospitality adventure? Bring a group. While four men dispense hot cocoa from red dispensers worn on their backs, UCom needs some friendly United Methodists accompanying them to distribute flyers and a friendly Christmas greeting. Yes, you can offer invitations to your church; but we really want people to visit a church near them, and to find it by going to the **Rethink Church—Find-A-Church website**.

Volunteers will meet and greet commuters, holiday shoppers, and event goers in the city's most heavily traveled areas. And volunteers can simply offer them words of welcome and a flyer, as they sip on a cup of hot cocoa. After your stint with UCom, you can enjoy your own Christmas shopping at downtown stores or in the authentic outdoor German Christmas market located at City Hall (see <http://www.philachristmas.com/>) or take in the Macy's Christmas Light Show, hear the 5- manual

Wanamaker pipe organ playing Christmas carols, and visit the Dickens Village on the 3rd floor of Macy's Center City store.

"Church is not something that happens just within the walls of a building," says Bishop Peggy Johnson. "It's a way of life focused on reaching out into our communities to offer hope and love. By taking the church to the city, we hope to help people connect with a local church just in time for Christmas." Here is a schedule for the planned hospitality outreach appearances in Philadelphia, December 15-18:

- **Thursday, December 15:** City Hall Metro Station (**8 until 10 a.m.**), Made in Philadelphia Holiday Market and Philadelphia Christmas Village (**10 a.m. until 2 p.m.**)
- **Friday, December 16:** South 9th Street Italian Market (**8 a.m. until 2 p.m.**)
- **Saturday, December 17:** Liberty Bell and Independence Hall (**9 a.m. until 3 p.m.**)
- **Sunday, December 18:** Pat's King of Steaks & Geno's (**11 a.m. until 5 p.m.**)

A map of about 10 locations where UMCom will be is available, too. Come join us! Look for the men in the red jetpack cocoa dispensers, and help pass out flyers. Better yet, **please tell us you're coming**, so we can look for you. E-mail communications@epaumc.org or call [484-762-8227](tel:484-762-8227). **Tell us when, where and how long you can stay. And please tell us your name, church, e-mail address, phone number, days and times of availability, even if it's for only an hour.**

Teamwork makes the dream work. So bring a group to make the fellowship more fun. Bring members of your youth group, UM men's or women's group, Sunday school class, choir, or church outreach team.

Remember: Church can happen anywhere you are.

FAITHFUL PARTNERS IN MINISTRY – MESSAGE FROM BISHOP JOHNSON

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus the Christ!

I am writing to you during this season of giving with an important reminder about the paying of conference remittances and apportionments.

The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference currently has 415 churches. We are a collection of Christian communities which have partnered together to make a difference for Christ and the Kingdom in southeastern Pennsylvania and beyond. The Connectional Ministries apportionment and the direct bills for property & liability insurance, clergy pensions, and clergy health care benefits are a tangible expression of our unity in the face of human need. It is also an expression of our commitment to the much larger Body of Christ. Much good comes from our connectional ministry and the missions we support through this giving.

As we come to the end of this year, I am urging every local church to keep their commitment to this tangible expression of unity. Please find out if your church is behind on its payments. I am making this appeal because there are certain financial realities that are impacting the life and ministry of the Conference.

At the adjourned session of Annual Conference, delegates elected to reduce the number of districts from six to four in an effort to reduce the Conference budget and improve cash flow. This is just the first of several steps to be taken toward becoming a financially secure Conference.

Informing you about our financial realities is another step:

- As of October 3, 2016 out of 415 churches in the EPA Conference
 - 167 paid 100% of their Billed remittance in full.

- 233 churches paid a portion of their remittance bills.
- 15 church have paid zero toward these bills.
- In the past, we have managed the Conference cash flow by using monies from reserves or other one-time events such as building or property sales. With less and less of our churches paying in full or in advance, we do not have the funds required to meet our current billing responsibilities.
- Regarding the Pre-82 Pension obligation: \$1.2 million is due to the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits in December 2016 to pay for our annual Pre-1982 Pension invoice.
 - In 2015, the conference took an advance from the Board of Pension and Health Benefits to pay the 75% of the direct bill anticipating a reimbursement from the faithful remittance of local churches. As of this letter, the conference has been unable to recoup those funds.
 - If the Board of Pension and Health Care Benefits must do the same in 2016 and the responses of the churches are similar to 2015; and this trend continues, then it would leave us without reserve funds and creates the possibility of a pension shortfall in 2021 when the obligation should 100% funded.
 - This trend is also happening with other direct bills, including property and liability insurance and clergy health care. The Conference continues to pay this obligation, too, from resources that are nearly exhausted, and does so with the expectation that local congregations will do their part to make every effort to pay.

As stated earlier, all of these financial realities impact our life and ministry as a Conference of local churches called to be a witness for Jesus Christ in southeastern Pennsylvania.

I invite you to pray for clear steps forward. We also invite you to consider steps you can take as a congregation to faithfully partner with the other churches of the EPA Conference in securing, and growing, our life and ministry together. There are looming financial hurdles before us, but if each of us does our part, the challenges will be easily met. If we give cheerfully, as II Corinthians 9:8 says: *God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance.*

Let's be faithful partners in ministry for Christ and the transformation of the world.

Prayerfully,
Bishop Peggy Johnson

WALKING WITH: THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

What: East District Conversation on Race Relations
When: Friday, January 20th and Saturday, January 21st in 2017
Time: 6 pm (Friday evening with dinner; recess at 9 pm)
 8 am (Saturday morning; adjourn at 3 pm)
Where: Washington Crossing United Methodist Church
 1895 Wrightstown Road, Washington Crossing PA 18977
Who: East District clergy and laity
Theme: **WALKING WITH: The African American Experience**
Cost: \$35 per person (includes dinner, breakfast, and lunch)
Registration deadline: December 21, 2016 (earlier is best!)

District Superintendent Bass considers this to be one of three REQUIRED District events that appointed clergy must attend. The conversation will begin at **6 pm**. The cost to register is **\$35 per person and includes Friday dinner, Saturday breakfast, and Saturday lunch**. To register, send your name, mailing address, email address, and the name of your church, with a check payable to **“East District Superintendency Clergy Fund”** and mail to East District Office, c/o Clarita Krall, Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, The United Methodist Church, 3470 Huntingdon Pike, Huntingdon Valley PA 19006. The memo line should read **“Conversations on Race Relations.”** **Registration deadline is December 21, 2016.**

EASTERN PA TO HELP LAUNCH UMC PRAYER VIGIL IN 2017

By John W. Coleman

The Eastern PA Conference will help lead off a more than yearlong United Methodist prayer vigil in 2017 by being the second conference to gather daily, even hourly, in many places for a full week of prayer together. Our urgent cause for prayer could be the very future of the denomination.

January 8-14, 2017 is Eastern PA's week to participate in the Council of Bishops' **Praying Our Way Forward** Initiative. We are asked to pray for “the church's effectiveness in fulfilling our mission of making disciples and for the outcome of the work of the Commission on a Way Forward.” Click [here](#) to read more or [here](#) to sign up and commitment to a day and time to pray.

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