

Conference ratifies 4 districts, \$3.2 million budget for 2017

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

Unlike some church meetings, where leaders quickly dispense with a hymn, a prayer and a short homily to get down to business, Eastern PA Conference members gave more time and may have found more need for the prelude to their recent Adjourned Session of Annual Conference.

They began the three-hour session, Oct. 1, at Bethany UMC in Macungie by vigorously singing "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." They prayed and then heard the Rev. Robert Johnson of Tindley Temple UMC preach passionately on the theme "You Shall Live and Not Die" from Psalm 118:17.

Both the song and sermon offered a prophetic invocation to the tense proceedings that ensued, as members debated and then accepted a proposal by the Conference Cabinet and Treasurer to reduce the conference's districts from six to four, as of July 1, 2017.

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They then approved a 2017 Connectional Ministries budget, based on that mid-year redistricting, that calls for \$3.2 million in church giving and over \$3.1 million in conference expenses. The \$92,000 balance will be used to help meet growing financial obligations, including the Pre-1982 Clergy Pension Liability.

The Rev. Rodney Shearer no doubt spoke for many when he voiced lament

for the loss of two districts and district superintendents. But after months of painstaking deliberations, following April town hall meetings in each district, it was too late to change directions or further delay the inevitable. The decreases in churches and total church giving and the stubborn increases in conference liabilities had become all too clear.

The enlarged districts will be renamed

as the North, South, East and West districts, with more churches per district but also more staff support and compensation for the superintendents who must oversee them. Also, the leadership of *mission connexions* will become more crucial to connecting churches across larger districts and advancing their collaborative efforts in ministry.

The conference Cabinet presented the

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The Rev. Robert Johnson of Tindley Temple UMC (center) preached to open the Adjourned Session of Annual Conference, Oct. 1, followed by a challenging session of reports and debates that led to an approved 2017 budget, a reduction in the number of districts from six to four, a revised Safe Sanctuaries policy and other measures. *Sabrina Daluisio and Rev. James Mundell photos*

Seminar plants vision of 'Church as a Movement'

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

Kingdom Building," and definitely not "Church Building," was the theme of Hopewell UMC's 13th annual Planting Seeds for Ministry Growth seminar, Oct. 22. Church visionary Reggie McNeal taught a packed sanctuary that the Kingdom is "life as God intended it," and that the Church should offer not a building but "a relationship with Christ" to help people achieve that life. Like an airport, it should be not a destination but a hub, from where disciples are sent out to save the city and change the world.



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NOVEMBER 2016

NOV. 5

Claiming Sabbath for Clergy Spouses. 9 AM - 3 PM. At Black Rock Retreat Center, Quarryville, PA. A retreat created for clergy spouses by clergy spouses. Fee: \$50. Due Oct. 29.

NOV. 6

Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM) worship and fellowship gathering. 4 PM. At Innabah Camp & Retreat Center, Spring City, PA.

NOV. 16

Social Entrepreneurship & Economic Development Seminar for all clergy and ministry candidates. (Sponsored by SE District) 8:30 AM to 1 PM. Plus, retreat meetings of the Order of Elders, Order of Deacons and Local Pastors Fellowship, at 1-2 PM. At Innabah Camp & Retreat Center, Spring City, PA. Fee: \$25.

NOVEMBER 27

United Methodist Student Day. Offering provides scholarships and loans for students attending United Methodist-related and other accredited colleges and universities.

JANUARY 2017

JAN. 6-8

2017 Peninsula-Delaware Conference Youth Rally. At the Ocean City Convention Center. Fee: \$67 by Nov. 15; \$77 by Dec. 15.

JAN 8-14

Eastern PA Conference Week of Prayer for the UMC Way Forward. More info to come.

JAN. 15

Human Relations Day. Offering strengthens United Methodist outreach to communities in the U.S., encouraging social justice and work with at-risk youth.

JAN. 20

FOHS (Full of the Holy Spirit) Latino youth praise event (all youth welcome). At New Birth (Nuevo Nacimiento) UMC, Lebanon, PA.

JAN. 26-28

Restoration 2017 Retreat—“Prayer, Praise and Presence.” At the Sands Hotel, Rehobeth Beach, DE. For clergy and laity. Finding new life in the Spiritual Disciplines to bring strength to our Christian journey.

UPCOMING

- Feb. 28: Clergy Lenten Day Apart (on each district)
- March 18: Annual Faith-Sharing Event. The Rev. Terry Teykel, prayer evangelist. 8:30 AM to 2 PM.
- April 22: Eastern PA Conference Youth Rally. 9AM to 4 PM. Hopewell UMC, Downington, PA.
- April 23-25 - Local Pastors and Associate Members Retreat. At Black Rock Retreat Center, Quarryville, PA
- April 29: Tools for Ministry. Times and locations determined by districts.
- June 15-17: Eastern PA Annual Conference. Oaks Expo Center

CONFERENCE RATIFIES 4 DISTRICTS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

resolution with a comprehensive financial and missional rationale offered by the Rev. Anita Powell, Cabinet Dean; Irene Dickinson, the new Chairperson of the Council on Finance and Administration (CFA); and Jim Cruickshank, Conference Treasurer. The Board of Trustees was also a co-sponsor.

While there was ample debate, including questions, pro and con speeches, and attempts to offer amendments, the resolution passed as presented by a large majority.

Also, approved were:

- A proposed and amended policy for **“Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church,”** postponed from the

Annual Conference session in June to invite and consider more suggestions. Lengthy debate focused on what some felt were excessive and potentially disruptive restrictions on who can supervise children during church activities. While two proposed amendments did *not* pass—including one that would have deleted a requirement that a church secure work histories and references for volunteers—one other amendment did pass. It offers an exception to the rule requiring prospective volunteers who supervise children in a church to first have six months of active involvement in that church. They may instead have 24 months of good standing at their previous church.

- A new Computer Network and Internet Access Policy, co-presented by the conference’s Communications Ministry Team and Safe Sanctuaries Committee to help churches ensure safe, responsible management and usage of comput-



er and Internet resources.

- A Comprehensive Funding Plan for Benefit Obligations, presented by the Board of Pension and Health Benefits.
- An amended resolution to establish an Ad-hoc Study Committee to Evaluate Alternative Fair Voting Methods for Electing Members to Committees and Delegations.

Also, an offering was received to provide scholarships for the conference’s mandatory Changing Racism Workshops, offered twice-yearly. And the conference officially welcomed back Bishop Peggy Johnson and her husband, the Rev. Michael Johnson, for another four years. She becomes the first Philadelphia Area bishop to be assigned to a third term since Bishop Fred Corson in the early 1960s.



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The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of
The United Methodist Church
980 Madison Avenue, Norristown, PA 19403

Bishop Peggy Johnson - Philadelphia Area Bishop
John W. Coleman - Director of Communications, Editor
Lindsey Cotman - Graphic Design and Layout
Dr. Christopher J. Kurien - Director of Connectional Ministries

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Faithfully Yours An inconvenient Christmas

In less than a month we will be singing Advent hymns in our churches and wondering where this passing year has gone.

December 25th falls on a Sunday this year, and I am already hearing questions about having worship services on Christmas Day. I've fielded such comments as:

"It is so inconvenient when Christmas is on a Sunday."

"No one comes, and people are tired from the Christmas Eve services the night before."

I have been asked if it would be alright to cancel church services on Christmas Day and perhaps even on New Year's Day a week later, since the same kind of holiday issues exist. Few churches observe a Watch Night service, however; so the New Year's Day concern is more about late-night celebrations than holy exhaustion.

It is true that attendance is typically low on a Christmas Sunday. Some churches have opted to have one short service with coffee and cinnamon rolls. And I've heard of at least one church inviting people to attend services in their pajamas.

All of this says that Christmas, when it falls on a Sunday, is inconvenient to many, and we are trying to find ways

to make it work for us. Family gatherings and a million other holiday festivities compete with worship on that day.

But I call on all of our churches to persevere and continue to hold services in some fashion on Sunday, December 25. It is, after all, the celebration of Christ's birth.

The truth is, Christmas, the real Christmas, has never been convenient. The birth of Christ came amid a time of political unrest. The Jews were an oppressed people under the cruel domination of Rome. The religious leaders were for the most part self-seeking, wealthy intellectuals who were more interested in maintaining the status quo than taking any prophetic stands on justice.

Jesus' birth was inconvenient

The circumstances of Jesus' birth were certainly less than convenient. This Galilean couple made a hundred-mile trek across rough, unpaved roads, as the new mother-to-be rode perched on a donkey in her third trimester of pregnancy.

The birth event itself ends up happening in a rustic stable for animals, not exactly the cleanest or most comfortable environment. A murderous, unbalanced king seeks the child's life and kills a swath of innocent babies in his foiled attempt at eliminating the competition.

There was nothing about the realities of this Jesus' birth that was glamourous or even convenient. A fancy Hall-

mark card depicting the nativity with golden insert envelopes simply doesn't tell the real story.

Christmas is still inconvenient, and it always will be. The coming of Christ ushered in a whole new paradigm whose purpose was to turn the world upside down, and not just a little.

Mother Mary, in the "Magnificat" describes the plan: "He (God) has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty." (Luke 1:51-53)

Simeon, the aged prophet in the temple, said similar things about Jesus at the time of his dedication: "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also) so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:34-35).

Show up for Christ on Christmas

The best way to celebrate this newborn king is not just to show up for church services on Christmas Sunday. We should feel compelled—indeed, honored—to do the inconvenient and difficult work of justice ministries: sharing our wealth with those who are hungry for bread and for equality; speaking out when we see inequities and sharing power with people who

usually don't have a place around the table.

This is year-round ministry-in-action that celebrates the birth and life of Christ every day!

I challenge you to call your churches to a time of prayer and study during Advent. At my Days on the Districts meetings with clergy this fall I gave to everyone copies of a 40-Day Prayer Challenge book, titled *Draw the Circle*, by the Rev. Mark Batterson. You and your congregation could read this book, or one like it, as you prepare together for the celebration of Christ's birth.

Through prayer and searching the scriptures the Lord will surely lay on your hearts what you need to be doing to "let justice roll down like water and righteousness as a mighty stream." (Amos 5:24) And what the Lord asks you to do won't likely be convenient or easy; but the real work of Christmas means walking the difficult, dusty roads that Jesus walked, while bearing a cross on your shoulder.

So, before you sing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" on that first Sunday of Advent, consider how you will observe an "inconvenient Christmas." May your goal be to turn the world—your world—upside down with the love of Jesus all year long.



Peggy A. Johnson



Bishop urges districts to go forth in faith, reach out in love

"Therefore, go!" the theme of General Conference 2016, was also the message Bishop Peggy Johnson offered during her visits to the six Eastern PA Conference districts in October, as she reported on the state of the church.

Recalling the apostle Peter's account, in Acts 11:1-18, of being sent by God to go eat with gentiles at the home of a Roman soldier, she encouraged her audiences to also seek opportunities for fellowship with people unlike themselves. While General Conference was a vivid tapestry of cultural diversity, that is hardly the case for many U.S. members and their relationships.

Using visual slides, Bishop Johnson admitted the lack of

diversity in her own friendships initially and then showed the results of her intentional efforts to change that. (*Her Powerpoint slides can be found on the Bishop's Page of the conference website.*)

She also urged clergy and lay district members to "remain prayerful and faithful to your ministries," while continuing to "spread the gospel and feed the hungry," unhindered by the suspenseful controversy of whether the denomination will remain united or divide in the coming quadrennium.

She updated members on the Council of Bishops Special Commission to address conflicts between progressive and traditional views on human sexuality, Scripture and church

law, as well as the Judicial Council's plans to consider alleged violations of that law.

But the bishop also cited positive General Conference highlights, including global growth in new missionaries and annual conferences, \$68.5 million raised so far to fight malaria, and new special Sundays to celebrate women in ministry and Volunteers in Mission.

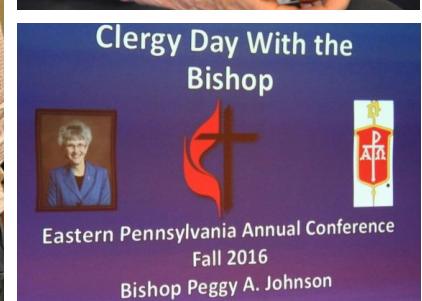
And she reported on historic outcomes from the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference in July, including: the election of two African-American female bishops; and the Call to Action to "enhance ministry with African-American churches" and to work on dismantling systems of racial bias, white privilege and

institutional racism.

Bishop Johnson named two main annual conference themes for the coming year: Prayer and the Call to Action. Or put another way, "Loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength" and "Loving your neighbor as yourself."

She outlined several related foci: fostering cross-racial dialogue, reconciliation and relationships, and nurturing practices of prayer and other spiritual disciplines. For the latter, she gave each attendee the Rev. Mark Batterson's book *Draw the Circle: The 40 Day Prayer Challenge* (2012).

John Coleman photos.



Planting a timely Tree of Peace



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

November is Native American Heritage Month, and the Eastern PA Conference Committee on Native American Ministries will have a special worship service on Sunday, Nov. 6, at 4 PM, at Innabah Camp & Retreat Center.

Prior to the service, we will plant a Peace Tree, traditionally an Eastern White Pine, which among the early Iroquois people and the Five Nations Confederacy was a symbol for peaceful unity. They used it in diplomacy with Westerners and buried weapons at the foot of the tree to seal peace agreements.

In such troubling, divisive times as these, this symbolic tree can be a prayerful plea for peace in our many contemporary struggles. It is a plea for peace in North Dakota where Native Americans and other advocates are protesting a crude oil pipeline set to invade their lands and violate their sacred burial places. And if it ruptures, which is a real danger, it will pollute their local drinking water.

Tree is a plea for peace in our nation

This tree is a plea for peace in our nation, burdened with many conflicts, including racial and gender discrimination and religious intolerance, to name just a few. At the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference in July the College of Bishops joined delegates in answering a Call to Action that challenges us all to strengthen our predominantly black churches and communities. We agreed to demonstrate our denomination's commitment to the value and protection of all lives, but black lives especially, in the onslaught of shootings and killings happening in cities and towns across our nation.

Many in our nation are greatly disappointed with our presidential election campaigns and debates. One mother lamented to me the difficulty of sitting with her children to watch the debates but fearing the uncivil behavior they might witness. We expect better from our leaders. We are eager for words and actions that will bring us hope and a forward movement toward peace in our nation.

We will plant a tree of hope for peace in our world, where children are no longer dying and entire communities are no longer displaced by war, famine, natural disasters and diseases.

Our tree is also a plea for peace in our church, so deeply divided over the issue of human sexuality. The Council of Bishops has created a study commission to recommend to General Conference "a way forward" for the sake of our vital mission to serve Christ and minister together to the world's needs. We must pray for our bishops and all others involved.

Prayer is the first answer to our concerns

I believe the first answer to many of these concerns is prayer, followed by appropriate, concerted actions.

Prayer is always the right place to begin because it brings us together in community before the God we love and serve. In prayer we can discern what God wants us to do about the issues that face us. In prayer we will be led to act in ways we did not anticipate, because prayer changes everything.

Let us pray whenever we gather, wherever we gather. Commit to praying in worship, in small groups and in our Sunday school classes. Commit to praying in private or in family devotions.

Perhaps peace will come upon us, our church, our nation and the world. As we prepare for another Advent season, I pray that our Tree of Peace grows strong in the fertile soil of our faith and commitment, and that the Prince of Peace will bring us healing, wholeness and a future with hope.



... who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. —2 Chronicles 7:14 NRSV

Seasons of Prayer & Praise: Winter 2017

As challenging as 2016 has been, 2017 may prove to be even more so, as we embark on new, unpredictable four-year journeys for both our church and our nation. The United Methodist Council of Bishops' Commission on the Way Forward has asked each annual conference to take turns praying vigilantly for one week. The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference will pray together during the week of January 8-14, 2017.

We are a people in conflict, encountering doubt, discord, disruption and division. But we are also a people of faith, who lean heavily on the steadfast promises of God. So it is in our constant prayers and our confident praise that together we can seek and find unity, loving harmony and the blessed assurance of all things hoped for in God.

Throughout 2017 our conference will present opportunities for God's people to gather in inspirational prayer and praise. We will teach and learn and celebrate these and other grace disciplines that are the mighty works of our faith.

Five events so far, for youth and adults, are planned for the Winter season, with more to come in the Spring. So come, gather in prayer and praise, in the presence of the Holy, to humbly seek God's face, to repent for wrongs and to seek paths of righteousness and transformation, wherever God leads us.

FOR ADULTS

Restoration 2017: "Prayer, Praise and Presence"

January 26-28 (Thursday to Saturday). A retreat for clergy and lay members of the Eastern Pennsylvania and Peninsula-Delaware conferences at the Sands Hotel in Rehoboth Beach, DE. Our guest speaker will be the Rev. Junius Dotson, the new General Secretary of UM Discipleship Ministries.

Bishop Peggy Johnson invites all to come find new life in the spiritual disciplines to bring strength to our Christian journey. We will bring to light aspects of ministry, life and community that need to be restored on our journey to making disciples. Join us in prayer, praise and worship to God in the presence of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Attendance at this event offers two CEUs.

Clergy Lenten Day Apart

February 28 (One on each district. More information to come.)

Faith-Sharing Training Event: "Transformation through Prayer"

March 18, 8:30 AM to 2 PM, at New Hanover UMC.

Our guest presenter, the Rev. Terry Teykel, a "prayer evangelist" and popular speaker, travels the world encouraging churches to develop and strengthen prayer ministries as a means of transformation. He is the founder of Renewal Ministries and Prayer Point Press.

FOR YOUTH

Pen-Del Youth Rally 2017: "This Is Love"

January 6-8 (Friday to Sunday). An annual youth rally and retreat offering praise and worship, learning and laughter, fellowship and fun at the Ocean City (Md.) Convention Center. Register online by Nov. 15 for \$67 or by Dec. 15 for \$77 at umyoungpeople.org

Theme: "This Is Love" from 1 John 4:10. Featuring motivational speaker Steve Fitzhugh, a "champion for youth," along with Rend Collective, Zealand Worship Band, Dave & Brian, and a full concert by gospel singer Tasha Cobbs.

FOHS (Full Of the Holy Spirit)

Friday, January 20, at 7 PM, at New Birth (Nuevo Nacimiento) UMC, Lebanon. Calling all talented youth! Don't miss the next FOHS gathering. Come for a fun-filled, praise-packed night of talent through inspiring music and spoken Word. Dinner served afterward.

This is a Christian youth event, but you do not need to belong to a church to attend. All youth (and adults) are welcome. Come share your talents with the Lord, or just come and enjoy this spirit-filled celebration of young life and faith. Let us know if you want to share a talent or have any questions. Spread the word. Pass it on!

Mission work in Africa grows with Eastern PA support



Churches in the Eastern PA Conference are supporting missionaries and vital mission efforts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Tanzania, spanning a vast distance

that makes occasional visits and newsletters all the more essential. Those visits and communications help strengthen relationships and inspire support.

The Rev. Jonathan and Donna Baker, our **Congo Partnership** missionaries working in the Central Congo Area, visited the Southeast District here twice in the past four months. In October they presented a celebratory report to clergy during the Bishop's Day on the District. And in June they addressed the full District Conference.



The district raised funds in 2014-2015 to build a pediatric clinic in the region of Mpasa, near Kinshasha. In 2015-2016 it raised more, along with partners, to help furnish it with equipment. Now in Phase III, known as Light4Life, district members are raising funds to help provide solar power and a solar-powered blood bank for the medical center.

The Northeast District is also raising funds to support the work in Mpasa, part of a partnership that also includes the Peninsula-Delaware and Western North

Carolina conferences. To support its efforts visit the Partnership's website at www.congo-mission.org.

The new Pediatric Medical Building's ground-breaking occurred Sept. 19. "This was a celebration of a dream for Mpasa for many years and is a culmination of so much prayer, preparation, and sacrificial giving by many people both in Congo and among our U.S. Partner Conferences," wrote the Bakers on the Partnership's Facebook page.

The United Methodist Church built a medical clinic and nutrition center in Mpasa in the late 1990s to serve a large migration of refugees escaping civil war, drought, and other conflicts. When the new pediatric clinic is finished, medical staff will be able to improve maternal care and treat children separately from adults, said Donna Baker, a retired nurse.



Meanwhile, generous donations have provided much-needed equipment, including a generator, an infant incubator for newborns, a surgical bed and operating lights. An ultrasound machine is next among the many critical needs that still exist.

"You are making a live-saving difference for Christ in Central Congo," Jonathan Baker told the district in October. "You are there with us through your prayers and support."

You can also support the Bakers individually as missionaries through the Advance: Donna L. Baker, Advance #3022054; Jonathan E. Baker, Advance #3022050.



Tanzania UMC growing in mission

Further east, the **Rev. Mutwale Ntumbo wa Mushidi and his wife Kabaka Ndala Alphonsine** are building up the fledgling but growing UM Church of Tanzania in Dar es Salaam. They wrote a grateful, informative letter, with photos, to supportive Eastern PA Conference churches in September.

The missionaries, who last visited here in fall 2014, reported on the Chagombe Preschool, which the community named for the Good Samaritan because it serves "orphans and destitute and vulnerable children free of charge."

Women, who learn to sew and sell clothing as a microenterprise, also promote development and advocate to leaders about community needs and human rights concerns. Local UMW members grow beans, maize and peanuts, and this year began raising chickens, hoping to provide additional food for children, poor neighbors and pastors.

The UMC in Tanzania is also building a guest house. "We want to begin a welcoming ministry to promote good hospitality and comfortable lodging for volunteers, missionaries, church staffs and other visitors,"



wrote Mutwale. "This project is well appreciated by many people and Tanzanian UM church members." You can support the building of the UMC Guest House and Reception by giving through the Advance at www.umcmision.org/Give-to-Mission/Search-for-Projects/Projects/12635N.

Chagombe First UMC hosted the Tanzania Annual Conference in July, which was retiring Bishop Ntumbo Nkulu Ntanda's last conference. Meanwhile, more churches are being built to welcome more members and care for refugees, despite limited funds and materials and the need for more help.



Churches investing in local education needs

There may be no church ministry that offers a greater return on investment for the future of its community than one which supports the education and cultural enrichment of local children and youth.

Churches across the Eastern PA Conference are investing time, talents and treasure in dynamic ways to enhance the learning and life-experiences of young people in their communities, especially those from disadvantaged schools and families. Some shining examples are depicted here. We will feature some of them and others in articles on our conference website and in future issues of NEWspirit.

Lighthouse Korean UMC in Glenside offers children affordable Saturday classes in Korean language and culture, plus arts and crafts, piano lessons, exercise and occasional field trips—all for one-tenth of what other private schools charge. Teaching is done by church members and attendance is growing. (*John Coleman photo*)

Like numerous churches, **Lititz UMC** holds an an-

nual backpack giveaway in August, drawing families from near and far to receive backpacks stuffed with school supplies for the new school year. Over 400 people came this year, some lining up the night before to receive backpacks and items from the church's popular clothing bank. (*Photo and information provided by Sarah Hummer*.)

For six years the Boys' Book Club, a ministry of **Wharton-Wesley UMC** in Philadelphia, has been turning boys into bibliophiles. They present written and oral reports monthly on books they've read. But they also enjoy activities, field trips, friendship and the caring guidance of church mentors to encourage their academic success. Two of the boys are now high school graduates and one is attending college. (*John Coleman photo*)

Casa del Pueblo, the Latino Ministry of Lehman UMC in Hatboro, fills the church on Friday nights with the sounds of La Escuelita de Musica (Music School), known by the Hebrew word *Anawim*. Young students from the community are learning to play piano, guitar, violin, drums and other percussion instruments. With more local schools ending music instruction, parents look to affordable programs like this one to nurture

the talents and interests of their young ones. (*John Coleman photos*)

Seeking to do more in its community to serve Christ, **Asbury UMC** in Allentown adopted the overcrowded, under-resourced Luis A. Ramos Elementary School in 2012. Members unleashed a cornucopia of kindness on the 900 students there, nearly all from low-income families. Church members volunteered in classrooms, purchased books for the school library, started a yearly hat and mitten drive for kids lacking winter-wear, donated classroom supplies for teachers and "goodie bags" for students, and helped furnish the music program with instruments from concert fundraisers. Recently, they led a school and community effort to give the downtrodden school playground a total facelift, and now they're helping raise funds to create a much-needed second playground, which the school hopes to begin building in March 2017. (*Information and photos provided by Dick McCreight*)

If your church is investing creatively in young people's education, whether in your community or beyond, please let us know (at communications@epaumc.org) so we can let others know. Thanks!



Children's Ministry Training Event

“**C**onnecting Children with Christ” was the theme of the conference's first Children's

Ministry Training Event, sponsored by the new Children's Ministry Team. Open to anyone who works with children in any role, it was held Sept. 10 at West Lawn UMC, Reading. Keynoter Melanie Gordon, Director of Ministry with Children at the UMC Discipleship Ministries agency, led an impressive line-up of gifted speakers and workshop leaders who shared vital

information and helpful insights.

Gordon told about 70 attendees “What Every Child Should Know” and when. Workshops covered “Making Sunday School Irresistible,” teaching children with special needs and with trauma histories, mandated reporter training for Safe Sanctuaries, teaching in the digital generation and other topics. (*John Coleman photos*)



For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven... (Ecclesiastes 3:1-22)

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

Seasons are a wondrous gift to us all from our Creator. Throughout our lives we witness changing seasons of nature and nurture in everything, for as the world changes and matures, so do we, guided by God's grace. And yet, so much about the rhythms of life remains unchanged: the transformative power of love and compassion, the sweetness of laughter and fellowship, the exhilaration of learning.

All these essential and enduring blessings can be found in abundance at our four Camp & Retreat Centers in the Eastern PA Conference. For everyone there

is a season, from the youngest campers, who run and play in the spring and summer of their lives, to the oldest who bask in the slower pace and vivid colors of autumn. Meanwhile, the rich variety of activities provided to delight minds, bodies and souls of every age make every day or week spent at camp truly special.

Here are some recent scenes of our changing seasons—from summer camp for children, to confirmation camp for teens, to young adults participating in fall races, to seniors enjoying a fall retreat.

Want to know what's behind these smiles? Visit our website to read testimonies from some satisfied customers and learn how they feel about their camp



and retreat experiences. Then also read development coordinator Sally Ott's love letter, as she appeals for your "Sustaining Gifts of Steadfast Love" to support our Camp & Retreat Centers through all their seasons. Please help them continue to be "God's Place Apart," enriching and transforming lives year-round.



Camp Innabah



Carson Simpson Farm



Carson Simpson Farm



Pocono Plateau



Carson Simpson Farm



Gretna Glen



Pocono Plateau



Gretna Glen

From near-death to life through ‘Vital Merger’



BY THE REV. GORDON HENDRICKSON
COORDINATOR OF CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

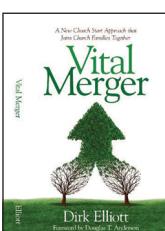
(Jesus) cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.” John 11:38-44 (NRSV)

Why does a local church exist?

Its primary purpose is to fulfill Jesus’ Great Commission: to make new disciples of Jesus Christ by spreading the gospel and helping believers to grow stronger, deeper and more active in their faith. In its mission to call forth disciples, the church helps many who suffer to emerge spiritually from death to life, imitating what Christ did for Lazarus.

Ironically, when this stops occurring in a local church, it has reversed that process, taking on death, a natural, if unnecessary end-stage of life. But rather than wait to let a local church die, we in the conference Cabinet and Congregational Development Team (CDT) want to be proactive about helping it to revive. We want to try looking at creative ways to resurrect and unbind a church for a new life in ministry, based on the true reason it exists.

Over the next four years, the CDT will be sharing in



meetings, written articles, video interviews, and training events where we may be headed. We have spent time with the Bishop and Cabinet working to address what has to be done to grow the Kingdom of God throughout our Conference.

One of the most difficult issues we face is how to revive ailing and dying local churches. Vital Church Mergers is one way to be proactive. Each district will identify a group of struggling churches in geographic proximity and invite them to participate in a workshop to learn about creating one new church for their area using their collective gifts and graces.

Vital Merger: A New Church Start Approach that Joins Church Families Together (2013) is an excellent book by the Rev. Dirk Elliott, a former pastor and now Director of New Church Development for the Michigan Conference. Reading it before the workshop will help churches understand this process of coming together, like the dry bones in Ezekiel’s dream, to experience a new, connected life in fruitful ministry.

I was at a 50th anniversary celebration for Bethany UMC Wescosville recently. Five decades ago several small churches were asked to merge to create a new vital church in their community. Three decided to begin this journey together. Their hope was to create a church with as many as 250 in worship.

God blessed them with a church reaching the com-

munity and growing in worship over four times greater than they could have dreamed or imagined. Yes, a couple of churches decided not to join the merger. But they died and no longer exist, leaving only buildings now used for other purposes.

More recently, another miracle of faith, also in the Northeast District, created Faith Alive UMC in Bowmanstown. A handful of churches were invited to join together, to form a family; but not everyone chose to be a part of these mergers. As we look back at those congregations who said no, it is sad to note that some closed and others are near closing.

Yes, this is a difficult decision for a local church to make. For many, the building is all that’s left from great moments in their lives and once-notable ministries in their community. But they are no longer able to fulfill Christ’s very demanding commission.

Friends, our missional focus has to shift from past to present and toward a new future with hope, where a new vision is cast to reach our changing, less-church-oriented communities for Jesus Christ. With a combined new vision and new gifts, a new passion and purpose can emerge that will enable us to once again pursue and fulfill Christ’s Great Commission.

Don’t be afraid to let go of your individual past stories to write a new story and create a new, collective future as a vital, growing church family. May God be with us in this new journey.

Using church makeovers to enhance ministry

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

Wow!” The Rev. Scott Friedgen-Veitch’s first word from the pulpit of Green Pond UMC in Easton on Sunday, Oct. 16, voiced what many pleased members felt, as they gazed upon their newly renovated sanctuary for the first time. After three months of squeezing into the lobby for worship during construction, this was their “soft opening” to settle into the modest, new and improved worship space before the grand opening and dedication two weeks later.

Members of Bethany UMC in Lebanon will likely experience the same excitement of a soft-opening Oct. 30, after months of renovation to add new luster and ministry capacity to their sanctuary. “We’re a declining church serving an ever-increasing population,” said the Rev. Nelson Alleman, pastor. “So we’re taking a ‘swing for the fences’ mentality.”

The church was designed like most others: primarily for worship by able-bodied members. “We changed the facility to be better equipped as a multi-use facility with handicapped accessibility,” explained Alleman. “Our goal is to use this fresh new facility to better reach our community.”

Get to know community needs

That includes a planned café behind the sanctuary for social gatherings and a multi-purpose room in the former balcony. A “Warm-up Wednesdays” program would invite neighborhood parents and grandparents in for morning coffee after they take their kids to school.

“We will use this opportunity to get to know what our community needs,” said the pastor, who used Mission InSite to study the community’s demographics. “We want to become the center of our community (and)... address its social, economic and spiritual needs.

At 200-year-old St. James UMC (formerly Solid Rock UMC) in Philadelphia’s Olney community, which will celebrate its bicentennial Nov. 6, the hard work has been in not reconstruction but restoration. Targeted for support by fellow East District churches, St. James has welcomed dozens of volunteers from other churches who’ve come to help clean, paint, repair and renew the allure and utility of this grand old edifice poised for



new ministries.

“I witnessed an exceptional group of believers in the body of Christ, women and men from different backgrounds, sacrificing to serve in our district’s One Church at a Time mission project,” said the Rev. John Brice, St. James’ optimistic new pastor. “We have built relationships and are encouraging those in this community who have thrown in the towel. But there is still much work to be done and many more resources needed.”

Ambitious makeovers at these and other churches are intended to enhance not just the view but the vitality of their congregations, to provide more welcoming interiors for hospitality and more useful spaces for ministry.

Green Pond’s sanctuary renovation helps to “unify



our members who came from three merged churches,” said Friedgen-Veitch. It also liberates them from what members say was a colorless, all-white cinderblock room that looked more like a gym—which is what it was built to be initially.

“People didn’t want to use it for weddings or other special events,” said music director Janna Dowdell. Among their various mission activities, some members lead Sunday worship services at Easton’s Safe Harbor homeless shelter. But shelter residents who prefer to worship at the church are also enjoying the sanctuary’s new look and feel.

This work of building, improving and restoring ministry spaces is happening around the conference. Faith UMC in Manheim is building a new Fellowship Hall and Education Wing to provide needed gathering and classroom spaces for not only the church but the community as well.

In 2015 St. Luke UMC in Bryn Mawr upgraded its sanctuary space to install a fully accessible exterior bathroom and new lighting. It also removed the carpet and rearranged seats to make use of its radiant heated floor, reported the Rev. David Tatgenhorst, pastor.

Both Faith and St. Luke used the local church portion of funds they raised for the conference’s “Fulfilling Our Covenant” joint capital campaign to finance unfunded pre-1982 clergy pensions and to support church ministries.

Another 'phenomenal experience' at 33rd Laity Academy



Veteran Laity Academy teacher Judy Ehninger receives the Walter King Award.
David Koch photo

BY AUBREY BATES

The summer has ended, cool weather has arrived, and already Christmas decorations are beginning to appear. Thoughts of the coming Advent and Christmas seasons remind me of the hot days of August, when we "Followed that Star" at our annual Academy for Laity.

We were not looking to the birth of Jesus, but to His ultimate presence with us as the "Morning Star rising in our hearts." This year's academy was an amazing experience as 163 attendees and 11 instructors met in Reading to further understand our role in following that Star.

There were nine different classes available to support each of us in finding or expanding our role in God's Kingdom. Forty-one of the attendees were first-timers, and about half of the attendees were Christ Servant Ministers, with 25 persons attending the Basic Course for entering the Christ Servant Ministry.

And while our experience was bell-ringing (the hotel was plagued by gremlins in the fire alarm system), we received gracious comments like, "...phenomenal experience," "...amazing course," "great sense of community," "well planned and implemented," and "This was awesome!"

Major conference-wide laity training event

The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference's Academy for Laity is entering its 34th year, having started at Albright College as a means to provide lay persons with advanced knowledge of God and His Grace. The Academy is presented each year as our major conference-wide laity training event.

It invites all to a remarkable array of lessons that stretches our thinking out of the secular, day-to-day events that occupy our daily lives and into the greater spiritual world. Some of United Methodism's most experienced teachers present courses in pastoral care, theology and doctrine, prayer, emotional intelligence and preaching. This year we rounded out that selection with courses on improving church health and living out the Act of Repentance with Native Americans.

All people are encouraged to attend the Academy next year. Many keep coming back year after year when they realize what one person described as "the joy of fellowship with lay persons serving the church."

The sense of wholeness that comes from attending such an event can't be adequately described; it must be experienced. As two attendees said, "I loved the whole experience and look forward to attending next year" and "God bless you all, and keep up the good work."

Aubrey Bates is Dean of the Eastern PA Conference Academy for Laity.

SEMINAR PLANTS VISION OF 'CHURCH AS A MOVEMENT' CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"God is calling us to a new chapter" in our story, said McNeal in a presentation full of humor and honesty. About 225 attendees registered for the Downingtown church's annual leadership training event. Assuring them of his Georgia Baptist upbringing and generations of pastors in his family, McNeal explained, "I come to you from deep in the belly of the beast. I'm not saying Church as an institution has no relevance or value, but I want to emphasize Church as a movement."



Reggie McNeal

The popular author and keynote speaker cited the growing numbers of people, now 1 in 5, who profess no interest in any religion, while many others aren't willing to be merely "congregationalized" as members. Young millennials especially are looking for places that are authentically nurturing and outreach. "To have any hope of connecting with them," McNeal warned, "we're going to need a completely different posture than 'come and get it.'"

Efforts to fix church doomed to fail

Rejecting notions of trying to "just do church better," he said, "All our efforts to fix the church are doomed to fail. We need to do things differently to connect with a generation that sees 'Church as Institution' as irrelevant but sees 'Church as Movement' as compelling."

In his later workshop, McNeal offered examples of that movement—faith communities that are externally "seeking the welfare of the city" to ensure their own relevance and growth in ministry. Among others, he cited the Dream Center in Phoenix, Ariz., where members are rescuing human trafficking victims and offering housing to indigent neighbors.

"All the energy we put into the usual church business and activities is too small an agenda for the people of God," he asserted, pointing to people who are mobilizing "church" in homes, workplaces and other community venues. "We're supposed to be the people who go out to bless the city and the world."

As usual, Planting Seeds offered two other high-interest workshops for attendees, including those training as local church Christ Servant Ministers.

The Rev. David Woolverton, a counselor and pastor of St. Paul's UMC Elizabethtown, taught on "Forgive and Remember: Discovering Forgiveness within a Perfect-Tense Experience." Exploring the intimate connection between forgiveness and grief within a Christian context, students learned about expectations of forgiveness, as it affects healing, intimacy, power dynamics, painful memories, and restoration.

Peter Loedel, a PhD faculty member of West Chester University, taught on "Divided Nation," guiding his class through dialogue about our increasingly divisive politics and implications for our practice of faith in the public square. Loedel is Director of the Center for International Programs at WCU and an expert in international relations and comparative politics.

Hopewell's young praise band, and the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm closed the program with soul-centering praise music and a message calling for faithful commitment among Christ's disciples.

'Choose service over security'

The Southeast District superintendent preached on Peter getting out of the boat and walking toward Jesus across the stormy sea (Matthew 14). She urged listeners to "choose service over security," to leave their familiar church buildings and surroundings and respond fearlessly to God's call to new places for sharing the gospel.

"You're the ones God is waiting for, the ones we are waiting for to be in ministry," she proclaimed. Taylor-Storm challenged the congregation to fill out commitment cards accepting Jesus' invitation to "step up and out in faith" and provide leadership for Kingdom building. Ninety-two people placed signed cards in the collection basket.

The Rev. Steve Morton, Hopewell's senior pastor and host for the event, announced that the 2017 Planting Seeds keynoter will be the Rev. Scott Chrostek, pastor of Church of the Resurrection's downtown campus in Kansas City, Mo. Also scheduled to speak will be the Rev. Wilson Goode, Philadelphia's first African-American mayor and now a minister, advocate for faith-based community initiatives and director of Amachi, a mentoring program for children of incarcerated parents.



The Rev. David Woolverton taught on how to forgive in the midst of conflict and remembering. John Coleman photos

Northeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops, The United Methodist Church

A statement presented to the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference July 13, 2016, Lancaster PA



As we gather for this Jurisdictional Conference many persons have been confronted and consumed with overwhelming reports of shootings and violence. Life taken! Trust broken! Anger and fear growing. Frustration and despair looming.

We believe that God's heart breaks, as our hearts break, with these acts of violence-fed and complicated by fear, prejudice, racism and privilege. We pray for each family and each community affected by profound loss and grief. We pray for the ripple effects of these acts of violence that strip away certainty of safety, sanctuary, value and trust.

The death of young black males in encounters with white law enforcement officers calls for response. The loss of life within our Hispanic/Latino community and among our brothers and sisters identifying with the LGBTQ community in Orlando calls for response. The death of police officers protecting the rights of persons to peaceably protest points to a destructive cycle of violence and retribution. And it calls for a response.

We, the College of Bishops of the United Methodist Church's Northeastern Jurisdiction, stand together to respond, and our response is not just for the moment. Our response is a commitment to acknowledge our participation in the sin of institutional racism and to have ongoing conversations within the College about

racism, privilege and oppression. Our response is to give leadership and develop plans to continue these conversations within and among the jurisdiction and with the leadership of the annual conferences to which we are assigned.

'Hold one another accountable'

The purpose of these dialogues will be to talk about our own racism and prejudices; to heal the wounds that have been caused by racism, privilege, and oppression; to train our leadership and churches in intercultural competency; and to lead them to celebrate diversity. We will lead and offer training for leaders in the craft of building bridges across cultures and ethnicity so that all those whom we profess to acknowledge as created in the image of God, and as persons of sacred worth, will truly feel welcome and find the safety, sanctuary, value and trust these recent and ongoing acts of violence have robbed from them.

We in the College will hold one another accountable for this action, reporting to our conferences at their annual sessions and providing a report to the 2020 Jurisdictional Conference. At the jurisdictional level we will partner with both the Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry and the Vision Table in our ongoing response.

Together, we claim the need to listen more deeply and to seek greater understanding for those who cry out for justice. We commit ourselves to seeking justice,

supporting faithful law enforcement officers, and empowering the movement of people toward healthier community engagement within the areas we serve.

Because we believe that all persons are created in God's image, from our United Methodist faith perspective, all people matter, all are valuable. In these particularly violent, life-taking incidents and times, however, we need to intentionally lift up that black lives really do matter and the lives of all persons of color really do matter. The lives of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters really do matter.

'Justice, repentance, and reconciliation'

The NEJ College of Bishops believes that in the midst of the chaos, fear and violence, there is a rich opportunity for the church to be the church. We seek to be the leaders of this church. We seek justice, repentance and reconciliation. We seek not just to love peace, but to be peacemakers. God's people need us to be bearers of peace.

At the beginning of this Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference, we ask you to join us. Join us as we make this response not just for the moment, but effecting the future. Our hope is that, together—as bishops, clergy and laity—we might be quilted together more strongly in our work of allowing God to transform us, so that we might go out with God's great transforming love—to bring healing, hope and peace to the world.

As a beginning, we would ask that you think and reflect with us on these questions. How will you be a peacemaker in the midst of storms of violence and destruction? How can you be a peacemaker and at the same time work for justice?

What can you do to help develop a sense of wellbeing and harmony in your life, in the lives of neighbors, strangers, friends and communities?

What social problems move you to want to make a difference by building bridges, making connections, valuing people? Blessed are the peacemakers! Blessed are the peacemakers! Blessed are the peacemakers!

In the midst of all the storms encountered and perpetuated in this life, please think on these things. This work begins with each one of us—first individually and then collectively. We, your bishops, will be not only thinking on these things, but moving in response. We seek your prayers and support as we take this action.

'Speak the truth in love'

"But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the Head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love." (Ephesians 4:15 -16)



Southwest District Racial Dialogue, August 29, at Grandview UMC. John Coleman photo

white privilege and institutional racism. Bishop Johnson named the Call to Action as one of her main priorities for next year and the coming quadrennium. During her presentation to each district she called for: interracial dialogues, friendships and educational encounters; efforts to increase and support African American ordained ministry candidates; and a goal of to start a new, predominantly black, youth-focused congregation by 2020. In addition, her Cabinet received training from Eric Law's Kaleidoscope Institute in September "so that Cabinet members might have more tools for this work."

Meanwhile, Bishop Peggy Johnson is promoting the Call to Action proposed by African American delegates and endorsed by the entire Jurisdictional Conference. That call urges all NEJ conferences to engage intentionally in ministries to develop African-American leaders and churches, and to work on removing systems and habits of racial bias,

but the bishop knows that publishing episcopal manifestos and setting ambitious goals from on high will not end racism nor ensure racial progress, without redemptive change happening closer to the ground.

"Reconciliation cannot be addressed at a structural level until it has been embraced at a personal level, within your

own heart," she said, quoting *Transitioning Your Church to Living Color* by Mark DeYmaz & Bob Whitesel. "Only then will you be motivated and excited to pursue the biblical calling with others of a different ethnic or economic background."

Several districts and churches are bringing people together to talk and learn about race relations and racial inequities. After an initial clergy dialogue in 2015, the Southwest District has been convening clergy and laity for regular, guided discussions since August 29, when nearly 40 attendees came from 15 churches.

Their stated goals are to engage participants in "Opening Conversations, Developing Relationships, and Working Towards Justice." An interracial team of four pastors—the Revs. Jason Perkowski, Andrea Brown, Derrick Gutierrez and now Quentin Wallace—co-lead the effort, helping participants to share experiences, questions and often profound insights. Two have hosted dialogues with dinner at their churches. Anyone may attend. The next session will be Nov. 7, 6 to 8 PM, at Chiques UMC in Mount Joy.

"Several people in the group are eager to do, not just talk," said Perkowski after the Oct. 13 session. "But do what?" So he prepared a list of suggestions titled "Concrete Things Congregations Can Do to Promote Racial Justice." Contact him for the list at jbperkowski@gmail.com.

Continued on page 11

Improving race relations on a personal level

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

The Eastern PA Conference has published three times the Northeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops' recent statement promising to work on dismantling racism, healing the pain of violence and oppression, and becoming effective peacemakers.

We have published their historic statement, delivered July 13 at the NEJ Conference in Lancaster, on our website, in our newspaper and, as requested of all annual conferences, in a local newspaper ad, which we purchased in the Philadelphia Tribune's Sept. 22 edition.

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"Reconciliation cannot be addressed at a structural level until it has been embraced at a personal level, within your

22 Eastern PA clergy complete Financial Leadership Academy

The Mid-Atlantic UM Foundation graduated 22 Eastern PA Conference clergy from its two-year-old Financial Leadership Academy Oct. 18, along with 37 clergy from the Peninsula-Delaware and Baltimore-Washington conferences. The new class of students that began that same day numbers 20 from our conference and 47 in total.

"We are going to extend registration until the end of January for more pastors to enroll," said Jack Brooks, the foundation's executive director. He promised that new enrollees would receive a make-up of the important first session on the stewardship of personal finances.

The newly minted grads, no doubt more stewardship-savvy than when they began, attended classes and managed home assignments covering a range of financial development and management topics, taught by top-level experts. They also worked together in

peer groups to help them stay on task and learn from each other.

"The fellowship, support and accountability of learning within a peer group was very meaningful," said the Rev. Joe Tyson, Southwest District Superintendent, who served as one of several group coaches. "The process of action, reflection, action allowed the pastors to try different approaches to financial leadership within their respective churches."

After two years, some pastors were surprised "at how helpful that process had been for their personal financial awareness and the leadership they were able to provide in their congregations," said Tyson. One pastor even reported that his church's staff evaluation noted the increased value to the church of his newly acquired skills in financial leadership.

Shared testimonies by several graduating pastors reflected changes in their approaches to church finances, along with greater appreciation of, and confidence in, their roles as not just spiritual shepherds but financial leaders as well. For some that includes asking church finance committees to let them start reviewing giving records so they can offer more informed pastoral care and guidance. Others have convinced their leaders to start using a "narrative budget"

to understand and communicate church finances from a clearer, more missional perspective.

Several reported greater excitement and stewardship outcomes in their churches, as well as new plans for financial education and ministry. Look for follow-up articles on our conference website and future issues of NEWSpirit to learn more about the Financial Leadership Academy and its impact on participating clergy.

John Coleman photo.



BMCR members discuss NEJ Call to Action

Several members of Black Methodists for Church Renewal's Philadelphia caucus attended Northeast Jurisdictional BMCR's Annual Meeting Oct. 8 at Wesley UMC in Worcester, Mass. The group joined in plenary and small-group discussions about the Call to Action endorsed by the NEJ Conference and College of Bishops. Bishop Latrelle Easterling (standing), Unity Banquet speaker and newly elected leader of the Washington DC Episcopal Area, listens as the Rev. Shayla Johnson (left), who will lead the Phila. caucus in 2017, addresses the group. With her is (from left): the Rev. Eric Carr; an unidentified BMCR member from New York; the Rev. Arthur Pressley of Drew University, who heads the NEJ Multi-Ethnic Center; Lorraine Foster; and the Rev. Andrew Foster III. *John Coleman photo*



IMPROVING RACE RELATIONS ON A PERSONAL LEVEL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

The Southwest District Racial Justice Dialogue ministry also has a Facebook page.

Meanwhile, the East District, which also sponsored a clergy dialogue in 2015, is now planning a more in-depth Conversations on Race Relations retreat, Jan. 20-21, for clergy and laity. Titled "Walk with the African American Experience," the overnight retreat, hosted by Washington Crossing UMC, is mandatory for clergy members.



Former prosecutor Adam Foss from his TED Talk on race and the judicial system

days, using "TED Talks on Race" videos as discussion-starters. On Nov. 10, participants will watch and discuss "A Prosecutor's Vision for a

Better Justice System," a talk by Adam Foss, a young, black former prosecutor who now heads a nonprofit working to improve legal outcomes for juveniles.

It's about taking personal responsibility, says Bishop Johnson, to embrace change on personal and then public levels. She suggests "sharing a meal to hear people's hearts in



their stories," or sharing church facilities or a mission project with others who are different, or sharing pulpits and choirs for a Sunday. The key is in sharing experiences with others in order to "open wide one's heart."

If your church is, or plans to be, involved in improving racial understanding and race relations, please let us know, so we can report on it to encourage others. Contact us at communications@epaumc.org.

In Memoriam

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

Mrs. Lucille Hultsch

We received word of the death of Mrs. Lucille Hultsch, surviving spouse of the Rev. David Smith Hultsch. She passed away on Sept. 21, 2016. She is survived by their two children: Sarah Hultsch-Smith and David F. Hultsch.

The Rev. David Smith Hultsch served the below Eastern PA Conference churches: Raubsville, Richmond, Pequea: Mt. Zion, Pequea: Pleasant Grove, Brodheadsville: St. Luke's, Cherry Valley, Kellersville, Neola, Poplar Valley, Chaplain US Navy, Reading: Covenant, Lucknow: St. Mark's, Norwood, Phila.: Oak Lane, Oxford, Phila.: Roxborough, First, Phila.: Cooper Memorial, Upper Darby: Stonehurst, Quakertown First.

Rev. Jack T. Buttmer

We have been informed of the death of the Rev. Jack T. Buttmer on Sunday, October 16, 2016, at the Good Samaritan Hospital, Lebanon. A retired United Methodist pastor, he was a resident of Cornwall Manor since October 30, 2013.

Rev. Buttmer served the below Eastern PA Conference churches: East Bangor, Bethlehem: Wesley, Drexel Hill: Covenant, Newtown, Lincoln Park: Community.

He retired in 2003 and is survived by his wife, Mrs. Nancy M. Buttmer.



Korean church honors founder in gift to First UMC Lancaster

The Chung Dong Methodist Church of Seoul, South Korea, came to First UMC Lancaster bearing generous gifts in song, sermon and sculpture on Sunday, Oct. 23. Yet, their generosity seemed surpassed only by their gratitude for the gift they received over 130 years ago. That's when Methodist missionary the Rev. Henry G. Appenzeller (1858–1902) left his beloved First Church to bring Christianity to Korea.

After studying at Lancaster's Franklin & Marshall College and then Drew University Theological School, Appenzeller was inspired to journey to Korea in 1885 with his new wife, Ella, and four other missionaries to convert the resistant pagan culture to Protestant Christianity and help establish democracy, modernization and independence there. He translated the Bible into Korean and established a school, medical missions and several Methodist churches, including Chung Dong (also spelled Chong Dong), where he served as pastor. Today, there are over 5,200 churches and 1.4 million members in the Korean Methodist Church.



Pastors of the thriving Chung Dong Church's Korean and English-speaking congregations both came to preach at First UMC. They brought the church's 60-member Sitos Choir, which days before had performed in concert at Drew, offering a special composition, "Sitos: Prayer of Appenzeller." They also brought and presented a luminous sculpture of Appenzeller cast in bronze and Korean granite, which now hangs in First UMC's Appenzeller Chapel, along with a bronze cross gifted to the chapel in 2010.

"Henry Appenzeller became a Methodist in your church," said the Rev. Ki Sung Song, Chung Dong's senior pastor, in his interpreted sermon, "and you sent us the greatest treasure to bring us Christianity and build our church." Extolling Appenzeller's "pioneering missionary spirit," he recalled how the founder, although ill, returned to his work in Korea after a brief hiatus in Philadelphia and soon died during a ship accident while trying to save a Korean girl's life. "We remember his holy life and sacrificial spirit."

In these photos, members of the Sitos Choir (named after the New Testament Greek word for a grain of wheat which produces much fruit) sing an anthem during worship, and the Appenzeller sculpture is presented to First UMC. Joining in the presentation are (from left): Chung Dong's associate pastor the Rev. Se Hyoung Lee; senior pastor the Rev. Ki Sung Song; Methodist historian the Rev. Charles Yrigoyen; Southwest District Superintendent the Rev. Bumkoo Chung; First UMC senior pastor the Rev. Joseph DiPaolo; and sculptor Kim Chang Gon. *John Coleman photos.*

Youth praise God in song, sermon, and dance at lively FOHS event

"We are Children of God" ("Hijos de Dios") was the bold theme that over 70 youth and family supporters proclaimed in song, sermon, dance and enthusiastic fellowship at the FOHS (Full Of the Holy Spirit) gathering on Friday night, Sept. 30, at New Creation (Nueva Creacion) UMC in Lancaster.

It was an explosion of Spirit-infused praise by talented young people, as the church reverberated with their infectious energy and love for God. Youth groups from a half-dozen Latino Eastern PA Conference churches took turns expressing that love upfront in over an hour of melodious praise songs, prayers and spirited dance, accompanied by tireless musicians, congregational singing and on-screen lyrics in Spanish and English.

Then 14-year-old Jose Tirado preached an earnest, insightful message on the theme and the Lord's reassuring command to a shy, self-doubting youth who became a prophet: "Do not say, 'I am only a child; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you.'" (Jeremiah 1:7)

Young leaders from the participating churches were inspired to reignite the recently dormant tradition of periodic FOHS gatherings while at Gretna Glen's Latino Camp this past July. The next FOHS event is planned for Friday evening, Jan. 20, at New Birth (Nuevo Nacimiento) UMC in Lebanon. Everyone of any age and belonging to any church—or no church—is invited to come join in the celebration. *John Coleman photos.*



Standing Rock Sioux protest

Aztec dancers at the Cannon Ball, N.D., site of the Standing Rock Sioux protest to protect their sacred lands and water safety from planned construction of a crude oil pipeline. Many United Methodists have visited the site and joined in the protest. *Dave Stucke photo, Dakotas Conference, UMC.*



Celebrate Native American heritage in worship and fellowship, Nov. 6

Come celebrate Native American Heritage Month in November by joining the Committee on Native American Ministries in a special worship service on Sunday, Nov. 6, at 4 PM.

The celebration, at Innabah Camp & Retreat Center in Spring City, will include music, a message and a meal. Plus, CONAM member Bob Hinderliter will offer a visual presentation on his recent visit with Native communities and churches in Montana.

Barry and Barbara Christy Lee, who frequently delight audiences with their cultural teaching and musical gifts, will teach and conduct Native American-style social dances. And prior to the service, participants will plant a Tree of Peace, a symbol for peaceful unity among early Iroquois people and the Five Nations Confederacy.

Posing here with Bishop Peggy Johnson and the Rev. Michael Johnson (seated) at the recent Northeastern Jurisdictional CONAM meeting in West Virginia are CONAM members (from left) Sandi Cianciulli, Verna Collier, Suzanne Duchesne, Barbara Christy Lee and the Rev. Christopher Kurien.