



Churches pray for UMC's future

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

"Fill your servants with your Holy Spirit. May they seek you for wisdom, knowledge, love, compassion and clarity as they follow your leading."

About 40 congregants repeated that hopeful appeal to God eight times during a special Wednesday night "Concert of Prayer," Jan. 11, at Lima UMC. Their "Litany of Prayer for Bishops, Clergy and Laity" sought wisdom and compassion that will be

Continued on page 2--CHURCHES PRAY

District dialogues offer 'real talk' about race

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

Real talk about race is happening around much of the Eastern PA Conference this winter, as dialogues and teaching moments bring people together to explore a difficult but timely topic. And we've only just begun.

The Central, Southeast and East districts each have sponsored recent teach and talk events addressing race and racism. The **Central District** held a Real Talk about Racism event Dec. 3 at First UMC Phoenixville for about 40 people. Participants committed to taking action-oriented "next steps" both personally and with their congregations.

Former Eastwick UMC pastor Helen Stafford Fleming, now a leadership development trainer and consultant, facilitated the dialogue. She helped the group understand the sin of racism as a spiritual disease and our need to become more self-aware, transparent and focused on fostering forgiveness and healing of ourselves and others.

The **Southeast District** welcomed nearly 40 members to Church of the Open Door in Kennett Square Jan. 16 for an evening of racial learning and dialogue, titled "Becoming the Beloved Community." The event was aptly scheduled for



At the Southeast District's racial learning event right-handed members try tossing a ball left-handed to imagine the discomfort felt by people who are not part of a 'normal' or 'dominant' culture. This "interactive empathy exercise" was followed by candid conversations about experiences with racism. *John Coleman photo*

the national holiday honoring the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Indeed, the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, in her opening devotions, quoted King's challenge in his pivotal "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" for churches to become "thermostats" that can "transform the mores of society," not merely "thermometers" that only measure it. The district superintendent likewise challenged members, as well as herself, to be aware of and respond to the prevalence of white privilege and racial inequities in seeking a more just church and society.

ities in seeking a more just church and society.

'Becoming Beloved Community'

The two-hour session, with diverse participation, was packed with a lecture on the roots of racism, candid testimonies of white members' awakenings to racial realities, creative activities to stimulate thinking and engagement, and small-group "vital conversations."

Members will dig deeper into race concerns at the district's Tools for Ministry lay leadership training event, April 29, at West Grove UMC. The Rev. Rodney Smothers, a trainer, coach and pastor, who serves in a cross-racial appointment in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, will help participants explore their theme, "What is Beloved Community?"

The **East District** welcomed the largest
Continued on page 5--DISTRICT DIALOGUES



Sharing lessons on love

Eastern PA Conference Council on Youth Ministry (CCYM) members share insights on love, especially God's love, with a breakout session audience of about 400 youth and adults during the 2017 Pen-Del Conference Youth Rally in Ocean City, Md. Enjoy our coverage and colorful photos of the rally, and read CCYM members' profound reflections on pages 6-8. *Sabrina Deluisio photo*

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FEBRUARY

FEB. 25
Conference UM Men's Brunch Meeting: Evansburg UMC, 10 AM-12 PM. Inviting all UM church men's ministry groups.

FEBRUARY 28
Clergy Lenten Day Apart: Locations & programs TBA on each district.

MARCH

MARCH 4
Conference Connectional Table Meeting, First UMC Phoenixville, 8:30 AM-12:30 PM

MARCH 4-5
UMW Girls on the Go: Teens United for Mission in the 21st Century (for ages 13-18). Gretna Glen Camp &

Retreat Center. Cost: \$60

MARCH 17
UM Night at the 76ers: Wells Fargo Center, 7 PM. 76ers NBA game and gospel music concert.

MARCH 18
Faith-Sharing Seminar from 8:30 AM to 2 PM, at New Hanover UMC. Our guest presenter is the Rev. Terry Teykel, a leading "prayer evangelist"

MARCH 21
Retired Clergy & Spouses Luncheon: Cornwall Manor

MARCH 25
Vital Church Mergers Workshop

MARCH 26
UMCOR Sunday

MARCH 28
Basic Sexual Ethics

MARCH 31-APRIL 2
Changing Racism Workshop: led by Visions, Inc.

APRIL

APRIL 1
Changing Church for a Changing World: A Fresh Expression Vision Day, Mount Carmel UMC Elverson

APRIL 22
Eastern PA Conference Annual Youth Rally: Saturday, 9 AM to 4 PM, Hopewell UMC

APRIL 22
Order of Deacons Meeting

APRIL 23-25
Local Pastors and Associate Members Retreat: Black Rock Retreat Center, Quarryville, PA

APRIL 29
Tools for Ministry: Times

and locations determined by districts.

APRIL 30
Native American Ministries Sunday

MAY

MAY 7
Certified Lay Ministers Graduation Service

MAY 13
"Social Holiness and Vital Ministry": 9AM - 2 PM at Holy Cross UMC, Reading.

MAY 21
District Conferences: 3-6 PM

JUNE

JUNE 15-17
2017 Annual Conference, Oaks Expo Center

Staff Transitions

The Rev. Dr. Christopher J. Kurien, Director of Connectional Ministries, will leave that position after six years in June. He is appointed to First UMC Lansdale, effective August 15, 2017. Kurien, who was formerly a District Superintendent and Dean of the Cabinet, hired and managed staff, recruited and supported leaders, and resourced conference program ministries during his tenure.



The Rev. Dr. Anita A. Powell will succeed Kurien as Director of Connectional Ministries July 1. She has been Superintendent of the Central District for six years and Dean of the Cabinet for the past two. The Central District will end operations in July when the number of districts is reduced from six to four. Powell planted Church of the Open Door in Kennett Square as pastor of a multicultural new church start. She has empowered district churches through resourcing, networking and training, while helping leaders develop competence in strategic planning and cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry.



CHURCHES PRAY, from page 1

much needed by an exploratory body of global leaders whose forthcoming deliberations may help determine the future state of The United Methodist Church.

The 32-member Commission on a Way Forward, assembled by members of the UMC's Council of Bishops, will examine church laws and teachings on homosexuality to determine whether to recommend changes to a special session of General Conference in 2019. The body held its first meeting in late January.

Praying Our Way Forward

In its Praying Our Way Forward Initiative, the Council asked each conference to take turns spending a full week in collective prayer over this endeavor, and Eastern PA was the second conference to do so. Each conference was asked to pray "for the church's effectiveness in fulfilling our mission of making dis-

ciples and for the outcome of the work of the Commission on a Way Forward."

While churches around the conference reported lifting the denomination in prayer during Sunday and midweek services, Bishop Peggy Johnson invited members to join her at Lima UMC for a special prayer service. The Rev. Maryanne Ditter, Minister of Spiritual Formation at Tabor UMC in Woxall, wrote two litanies and led the service, along with Music Director Rich Fetzer. Ditter had also prepared a Prayer Guide for the full week to help conference members honor the daily commitment to pray.

Along with inspirational songs and prayers, including a Prayer for Unity, the quiet, 90-minute service featured ample time for worshipers to visit three stations placed around Lima's fellowship hall for reading, reflection and prayer. Each station table held brief but profound writings by Rich and Sue Fetzer on three topics fitting for the occasion: Humility, Testimony and Honoring God. Each station also offered symbols of its assigned topic to enhance reflection.

The Northwest District sponsored a simultaneous Concert of Prayer that drew about 40 more people to First

UMC Schuylkill Haven. After silent meditative prayer, the service followed the ACTS prayer model, according to the Rev. Joe Tyson, District Superintendent.

First Church's praise team led the gathering in Adoration, followed by corporate and personal Confession, a time of Thanksgiving, including Holy Communion, and then a season of Supplication that lasted until 9 PM, as people prayed for "The Way Forward," as well as personal and intercessory needs.

Here, too, there were prayer stations where worshipers could focus on Family, Healing, the Nation, the Community, their Local Churches, and the Unity of the Body of Christ.

'Clear Presence of Holy Spirit'



"There was a clear presence of the Holy Spirit here that night," said the Rev. Christopher Fisher, senior pastor. "The Holy Communion and the time of confession were very meaningful and powerful. And some of us saw immediate results to our intercessory prayers within a short time.

"Many simply waited before the Lord in silence," he recalled, "pouring out their hearts in groans and wrestling during the time of supplication." The

"Transformation through Prayer"

5th Annual Faith-Sharing Seminar featuring Terry Teykl

March 18, 2017
8:30 AM to 2:30 PM

New Hanover UMC
2211 Swamp Pike,
Gilbertsville, PA
610-323-2353

Please register on our Conference Website!
Eastern Pennsylvania Conference
The United Methodist Church
www.epaumc.org

church remained open for prayer until 6 AM, the next morning, offering "a time of abiding" and an open invitation to "come when you can and leave when you must."



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Celebrate Women in Ministry Sunday

At the national gathering of the UMC's General Commission on Archives and History I learned about the amazing story of the Rev. Helenor Alter Davisson, one of many pioneering women in ministry.

The 2016 General Conference voted that each church should assign one Sunday a year to commemorate "Women in Ministry Sunday." There are many ways to observe this worthy occasion in our congregations—for example, by sharing accounts of heroic, faithful women in ministry throughout our Methodist history or even in your local church's history.

I share Helenor's story as an example, thanks to a helpful journal article, titled "A Small Work: The Story of Helenor Alter Davisson, Methodism's First Ordained Woman," authored by the Rev. Christopher M. Shoemaker. (Methodist History, 41:2, January 2003).

On July 25, 1863, at the Quarterly Conference of the Wabash Conference's Bradford Circuit in Medarysville, Indiana, Helenor was approved to be recommended to the Annual Conference as "a suitable person to preach the gospel or at least a small work." She was later ordained into

ministry in the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church* in 1866.

Born on January 24, 1823, near Pittsburgh, Pa., she was the daughter of the Rev. John Alter, the first of 18 children divided among three wives. As a child she was known as the "little pest" because of her inquisitive nature.

Helenor was young when her mother died, and at the age of 14 she became responsible for raising a number of her siblings. She nursed this family through many sicknesses. At one point, she also ran her father's sawmill when no one else was able.

She married John Draper in Henry County, Indiana, in 1842. Later she married Thomas Davisson, but there are no records of children from either marriage.



Helenor Alter Davisson, First woman preacher of the Methodist Protestant Church

She became a circuit rider on the Monon and Grand Prairie Circuits. Church records report that the charge had 100 full members, five probationary members and 170 Sabbath students. Helenor continued in ministry until her health failed, and she died in 1876 at the age of 53. Her tombstone read: "The first ordained female in the United States."

I thank God for the minis-

try of this brave woman, who dared to be the first in the Methodist Protestant Church to answer the call to ministry. She was a trailblazer who made it easier for the next person to come along and chip away at barriers of societal norms.

We still need brave, bold trailblazers today to pave paths for future generations. I would not be in ministry today if I had not seen proof that it was possible for a woman to preach, thanks to the example of those women who were in ministry when I first answered the call.

Women pastors, never underestimate the God-given power of your witness as you dare to be in vital ministry still today. There are barriers of adversity yet to be conquered and bridges of acceptance still to be crossed.

Younger people are watching you, and they need your strength and example to follow. I hope that every church will celebrate Women in Ministry Sunday and lift up the names and lives of women pastors who have led the way and brought new and fresh giftedness to the Body of Christ in the UMC.

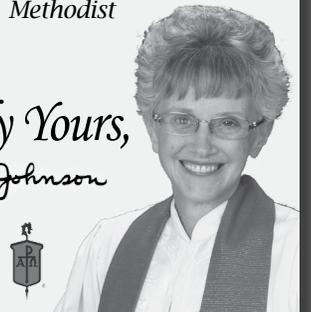
**Note: The Methodist Protestant Church emerged from division in The Methodist Episcopal Church in 1830 due to disputes on several issues raised by a sizable group of members. Those issues*



Bishop Peggy Johnson welcomes Women in Professional Ministry to the episcopal residence annually for an Advent celebration. At the Dec. 6, 2016, gathering the clergywomen shared devotions, music, prayer, humor and personal testimonies together. Seated here (from left) are group co-leaders Monica Guepet and Jenny Sauerbrun, along with Jacqueline Hines and Nikki Kleinberg. "When clergywomen gather the spirit of fellowship and empowerment is full of energy and joy," said Bishop Johnson. "The church is blessed to have so many talented women pastors."

included the leadership role of bishops, the desire to elect presiding elders (district superintendents), and the desire to allow lay members voting privileges in the Annual Conference. In 1939 The Methodist Protestant Church united with The Methodist Episcopal Church and The Methodist Episcopal Church South, to form The Methodist Church.

*Faithfully Yours,
Peggy A. Johnson*



Cabinet to visit 6 mission sites in 2017

The Eastern PA Conference Cabinet visited the Elizabethtown Winter Shelter at St. Paul's UMC in the Southwest District Jan. 24. Seated (from left) are Janice Davis (Coordinator) and Deb Jones (Director), Bishop Peggy Johnson and Northeast District Superintendent Irving Cotto. Standing (from left) are the Rev. David Woolverton, St. Paul's Pastor, and superintendents Bumkoo Chung (Southwest), Anita Powell (Central), Tracy Bass (East) and Joe Tyson (Northwest), plus conference Treasurer Jim Cruickshank.



The Cabinet will visit six diverse mission sites across the conference during appointment-making season this year. Its purpose is to become more familiar with the missional priorities of each district and to experience first-hand local missions as a backdrop for the appointment-making process. "So many of our churches are outwardly focused in community ministry," said Bishop Johnson, "and it is a joy to behold."

District mission sites visitation schedule:

- SW—Jan. 24: St. Paul's UMC—Elizabethtown Winter Shelter
- NE—Feb. 21: Green Pond UMC—Downtown Easton's "Safe Harbor" feeding program
- SE—March 30: Parkesburg UMC—"The Point," a collaborative program for Coatesville-area, at-risk youth.
- EA—April 27: Holmesburg UMC—"King's Kitchen" feeding program
- CE—May 11: Simpson House—UM-related retirement community
- NW—June 1: Women's Correctional Facility in Lebanon—Prison Ministry site

Capital Campaign ends in unfinished success

The Eastern PA Conference's "Fulfilling Our Covenant" Capital Campaign officially ended in December 2016 and has raised \$3.2 million in gifts and pledges so far, surpassing its ambitious \$3 million goal. However, the campaign committee is asking churches that have not finished paying on their pledges to do so during this "wind down" period until March 31.

The Conference approved the three-year campaign in 2012 and launched it in 2014 to help retire an \$11 million liability in unfunded pensions for clergy who served in ministry prior to 1982.

That unfunded portion of the liability has been reduced to about \$3.4 million, due in part to net proceeds from the capital campaign, conference budget reductions and revenue from the sale of church properties.

While the campaign surpassed its goal, the pledge fulfillment rate so far is actually

above a respectable 82 percent. Campaign leaders want to see that rate increase with additional fulfillment of pledges by churches and individuals by the end of March.

Meanwhile, about \$450,000 has been distributed to churches that participated in the joint fundraising campaign options to raise funds for their own capital needs as well. Some churches have built, expanded, renovated or made other improvements in their facilities with their portion of funds raised from the campaign.

"The contributions, the sacrifices of faithful churches and individuals have helped our Conference to conduct its first successful capital campaign in our 50-plus year history!" said Bishop Peggy Johnson, who will send a letter of appreciation to donors in March.

"Our hope and faith in this effort, especially during tough times for many churches, was grounded in our faith in God and in each other. Our ongoing success can ensure a secure future for our faithful retired clergy and signify our integrity in keeping a promise to those who made sacrifices to serve us for so many years."

A more detailed report on the campaign and participating churches will be published in a NEWSpirit special supplement inside the Spring issue in May.



Capital Campaign leaders Bishop Peggy Johnson, Kip Craven and the Rev. Denny Emrick

Transformation through prayer

BY THE REV. CHRISTOPHER J. KURIEN
DIRECTOR OF CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES,
EASTERN PA CONFERENCE



Scripture instructs us to pray without ceasing, to see every moment as an opportunity to pray, whether it is a time of crisis or just an everyday, routine moment.

Prayer acknowledges the presence of God and reminds us that God's redeeming power and purposes are always at work. We have ample evidence that prayer can heal hurts and resolve crises. But it can also transform our lives—even everyday, routine moments—into tremendous blessings and testimonies of faith.

On Saturday, March 18, we will learn much about transformation through prayer at our conference's fifth annual Faith-Sharing Seminar. From 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM we will gather and enjoy again the hospitality of New Hanover UMC, as our featured speaker, Dr. Terry Teykl,

teaches us about Prayer and Evangelism.

A leading "prayer evangelist," author and popular speaker, Dr. Teykl previously led a workshop on prayer in our conference, and it was well-attended by an enthusiastic audience. Because much of our Annual Conference session and other events this year will focus on prayer, we decided to invite someone who is a recognized speaker and facilitator on this essential, life-changing aspect of our Christian life.

Core of our Christian discipleship

Indeed, I believe prayer is at the core of our life of Christian discipleship. Prayer connects us with God and reveals God's plans and provisions for us. Prayer also connects people, bringing them together to discern God's will and direction for the Church. In that connectedness, that togetherness, we gain an awakening to our oneness in Christ, our greatest source of power.

With General Conference approval, our denomination's Council of Bishops established a special Commission on

a Way Forward to examine church law and new understandings of human sexuality. The bishops also created a related, supportive church-wide prayer initiative titled Praying Our Way Forward.

It is an effort to get United Methodists praying for one another, for their local churches and for The United Methodist Church. This initiative demonstrates that we recognize the power of prayer in bringing people together, in discerning God's plan, and in bringing about transformation.

I invite us to pray without ceasing for any areas of our lives, our churches, our nation and our world that beg for transformation. No matter what, the context of ministry can be challenging. We can meet and overcome challenges with prayer by intentionally praying together in our congregations, church councils, committees, boards, classes and small groups.



Rev. Jim Goudie photo

Imagine also if we had groups praying for the pastoral leadership, staffs and volunteers of our local churches on a daily basis—especially when they are in the pulpit or leading a workshop or Bible Study.

One of the characteristics of the first century church is that members came together to pray. Prayer bound them to one another and renewed their passion for spreading the gospel. That is how they changed the world for the sake of Jesus Christ.

May we follow their leading, as others follow ours. There is a world waiting, yearning to be transformed, and unceasing prayer is the key.

Camp & Retreat Ministries Winter and Spring Events

Gretna Glen

- Free Youth Group
Nights: Feb. 19, March 19, April 23—Sundays 4 to 6:30 PM
- Multicultural Youth Retreat (Actively Discovering Human Diversity—Grades 8-12): March 3-5
UMC Confirmation Camp: March 31 to April 2 and April 7-9—Friday 7 PM to Sunday 1:30 PM
- Spring Work Day: April 22—Saturday 9 AM to 5 PM
Gretna Gritty Mud Run: May 13



Camp Innabah

- Challenge Camp Winter Retreat: Feb. 3-5—Friday 7 PM to Sunday 1 PM
- Women's Retreat: March 17-19—Friday 7 PM to March 19 1 PM
Spring 5k Trail Run/Walk: April 8, 9 AM
- Community Easter Egg Hunt: April 8, 11 AM
- Spring Work Day: May 6, 9 AM to 4 PM
- Spring Open House: May 20, 10 AM to 3 PM



Pocono Plateau

- United Methodist Confirmation Retreat: Feb. 24 to March 11—Friday 7 PM to Wednesday 1 PM. Theme: "Discover: Light for the Journey"
- Dangerous Retreat for Boys (and Dads) April 28-30
- Young Adult Retreat: June 2-4—Friday 7 PM to Sunday 1 PM



Our camps—changing seasons and young lives

BY BISHOP PEGGY JOHNSON

It is the darkest, coldest season of the year, but that should not stop us from thinking about the months to come when spring will bring new life, warm sunlight and... CAMP!

We are so richly blessed with four fantastic outdoor havens of Christian ministry right here in the Eastern PA Conference: Camp Innabah, Carson Simpson Farm, Pocono Plateau and Gretna Glen. These diverse, wonderfully scenic Camp and Retreat Centers provide Christian learning, fun fellowship and life-changing adventures for children, youth and even adults, not only during summer but year-round.

While these jewels may shine brightest in the radiant sunshine of summer, they are no less beautiful and almost as busy in the fall, winter and spring, as they host exciting, indoor-outdoor retreats for all ages. Just take a look here at the schedule of outstanding events at our three year-round sites, and then go to their websites to register now while there's still time.

Making Young Disciples for Christ

Our camps are especially a valuable and essential vehicle for guiding young people to live Christian lives. Here is where we make young disciples for Jesus Christ, opening their minds, their senses and their hearts to learn about God and explore their faith. Many have even discerned a call to ministry right there, amidst the majesty and miracles of God's creation.

Camp is also a place where we teach

care for creation and model Christian community. Very few conferences offer the breadth of camping experiences that we have in Eastern PA. Many that



Carson Simpson Farm photo

once did have since closed camps because of costs and dwindling support.

Indeed, our camps simply cannot exist without the support of our churches. We need ongoing monetary support and ongoing prayers. But we also need volunteers to work as camp counselors and aides, maintenance helpers, promoters to speak to churches, and recruiters to invite more young people to come see their lives change right before their eyes.

Our hard-working, dedicated and gifted camp directors are asking that every congregation identify someone who could serve as a "Camp Ambassador." These ambassadors would receive information about upcoming events and schedules. They can then share information with their local church and encourage members to take advantage of camp and retreat activities.

Many times information does not get

to people in the pews, and as a result, there are lost opportunities for service and enjoyment of our Camp and Retreat Centers. When you designate a Camp Ambassador for your church, please send their name and contact information to us at the Connectional Ministries Office, in care of Felicia Anderson at fanderson@epaumc.org.

I offer you a final challenge: Offer camp to a young person—maybe two or three—whose families have limited means. Find someone in your church or in its community. Find a way to get them to camp. It can be a life-changing experience and thus, a worthwhile investment.

Sometimes it may require helping parents fill out the application, or providing the funds, or actually driving the young person to and from the camp in order for them to get there and back home. Many children and youth don't go to church any more; but we can bring "church" to them through our camping programs.

Introduce a child to camp

If every one of our churches would introduce one such child to camp, we could reach 415 more young people for Christ this summer. Isn't that exciting? And there is no telling what the fruit of our efforts may be—possibly a future pastor, youth minister, teacher or camp counselor. Maybe even a future bishop. It has happened many times before.

So right now, in the midst of winter, start thinking about the joys of summer camp and the young lives you can help change. The possibilities are endless.

DISTRICT DIALOGUES, from page 1

crowd—over 100 attendees—to its weekend Conversation on Race Relations at Washington Crossing UMC, Jan. 20-21. Titled “Walk With: The African American Experience,” the event—possibly the first in a series—was mandatory for clergy, but many laity attended also.

Facilitated by the Rev. Tracy Bass, District Superintendent, the gathering viewed the controversial new documentary “13th” on Friday night. On Saturday, they discussed its harsh lessons of racial injustice and related challenges in table groups—many of them racially mixed—spread across the room.

The compelling film portrays the mass incarceration of black Americans as a product of the Constitution’s 13th Amendment, which although outlawing unpaid forced labor—or slavery—in the U.S. in 1865, exempted prisoners from that prohibition. That exemption and other criminal justice laws and policies have led to a system of labor exploitation of prisoners that benefits many American corporations and helps keep jails and prisons running over, especially with black and Latino inmates.

Participants also wrestled with revelations about racial conflict and widespread mistreatment of African Americans by law enforcement officers. Emotional plenary discussions revealed tough, new



East District



East District

revelations for many and prompted some to express intentions to seek more knowledge and ways to address racism and other injustices. What seemed key at this event, and perhaps others, were bonds formed from honest, communal sharing of experiences and insights.

3 more districts address race

Looking ahead, the Southwest District will host the fourth of its bi-monthly learning sessions Feb. 20 at Faith UMC Manheim. This time members, led by an interracial team of pastors, will focus on creative actions churches can take, informed by knowledge from their previous guided discussions.

While turnout for their dialogues is good, the leaders look forward to reaching more hearts and minds when they

also address racism and social justice at the district’s Tools for Ministry event April 29.

The Northwest District plans to also foster more understanding and involvement in matters of race and reconciliation, according to the Rev. Joe Tyson, Superintendent. That will be a focus of workshops at its Tools for Ministry



Central District

training event, April 29.

And the Northeast District plans to host three discussions on culture, race and justice Feb 7, March 21 and April 4. Groups of 25 to 35 members will use the General Commission on Religion & Race’s new Vital Conversations resource, and the Rev. Giovanni Arroyo from GCORR will facilitate the second gathering. The aim, said the Rev. Irving Cotto, District Superintendent, is to build a team that can plan a district-wide event to address issues of race, culture and justice.

Meanwhile, clergy and lay ministers continue to take the required Changing Racism workshop, led by Visions, Inc., and offered again from March 31 to April 2. But some participants in the October 2016 workshop also got to experience an optional follow-up session, titled Changing Racism: Continuing the Conversations. It was held Jan. 28 at the Conference Office.

Co-sponsored by two collaborating conference groups—the Commission on Religion & Race and Healing the Wounds of Racism—the experimental six-hour session offered more teaching of U.S. racial history and culture, and engaged participants in deeper discourse on these topics. More Continuing the Conversations events may follow future Changing Racism workshops to bolster the learning that happens there.

Charter for Racial Justice

The conference’s United Methodist Women are seeking ways to enact the global organization’s recently updated

Charter for Racial Justice, which was endorsed by the 2016 General Conference. “We are addressing racial justice from a biblical, leadership, and community perspective,” said Gladys Hubbard, who leads the group. “We believe that racial justice should be an integral part of our spiritual practices.” (See page 12.)

Other discussions and actions are planned or already happening in churches across the conference. They signify its commitment to building cross-racial bridges, and indeed a beloved community, that can encourage racial understanding and the pursuit of justice and reconciliation through social change.

For Bishop Peggy Johnson’s detailed report of the conference’s response so far to the Call to Action, a Northeastern Jurisdiction mandate to overcome racism and address the concerns of black churches, visit her page on our conference website at www.epaumc.org/about/bishop-peggy-a-johnson. Also, visit our



Central District

website for an article that shares highlights of recent racial dialogues and candid reflections from some participants. You can also find photos from some of these dialogues on our Flickr page.



Southeast District



Southeast District

Reflections on Race Talks*

Southeast District

I was struck by the sobering reality that it is hard, long work for white people to see and address their white privilege, and it is the sort of work we generally try to avoid. -- The Rev. Mark Terry, Oxford UMC

Sitting together, sharing stories and experiences brought me insights into the issues of racism that I would not have had the opportunity to hear elsewhere. --The Rev. Mercedes Case, Avondale and New London UMCs

East District

This kind of experience is needed and has great value, especially considering our current political (world and church) climate. I believe there need to be more consistent conversations around race relations with action steps to achieve real unity. --The Rev. Andrew L. Foster, III.

The atmosphere in the room was one of collaboration rather than blame. I felt we had enough trust in each other to actually have true conversation, the kind of dialogue that leads to conversion... I left the weekend with a lot more hope than I had when I arrived. --The Rev. Dorry Newcomer, Newtown UMC



Southwest District

Southwest District

Becoming aware of and beginning to dismantle racism within ourselves and our culture is a slow process, but it is a journey that we are committed to walking together. --The Rev. Jason Perkowski, Faith UMC and Oregon Community UMC

Central District

The time was a blessing to me because it was cathartic. Dr. Powell’s call for our action plans was a powerful reminder that each of us needs to make a commitment. -- The Rev. Jacqueline Hines, Bethel UMC, Spring City

**Note: These are only excerpts of revealing comments offered by some dialogue participants. To learn more, read the Racial Dialogue Reflections article on our website.*

Youth Rally teaches thousands lessons on love

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

Christ's love was defined beautifully through inspiring words spoken and sung at the 2017 Peninsula-Delaware Conference Youth Rally, held in Ocean City, Md., Jan. 6-8. But it was defined best in deeds, as thousands of youth—including many from the Eastern PA Conference—formed bonds of loving support with each other and their adult leaders.

While temperatures plummeted and snow and ice blanketed the region, more than 400 youth and adults from 28 Eastern PA churches joined thousands more from Delaware and Eastern Maryland at the annual winter rally. They enjoyed powerful, energetic praise and worship, along with generous helpings of wisdom and wit, all around the theme, "This Is Love," taken from 1 John 4:10.

Four plenary sessions, from Friday night to Sunday morning, featured heart-stirring Christian rock, gospel and jazz-influenced music, followed by challenging soul-talks by dynamic speakers, plus some comedic detours to offer the levity of laughter. It all ended with a spirited sermon by West Virginia Bishop Sandra Steiner-Ball, armed with her super-soaker water blaster, and then a closing celebration of Holy Communion.

Plenary sessions in the vast, teeming arena featured loud music and lofty messages shared from the heart. But there was much to learn in smaller gatherings too, like the Eastern PA breakout session titled "Ever Wonder Why?" and nightly youth-

group devotions to discuss and discern "What is love?" "How to love" and other questions and learnings of the day.

Author and motivational speaker **Steve Fitzhugh**, a former NFL player with the Denver Broncos, inspired the youth and adults with his compelling testimony about life-lessons learned the hard way and life-blessings that made it all worth it. A national spokesperson for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, he witnesses often to young audiences, as well as athletes, corporations and penal institutions, about rejecting drugs and alcohol, and making right choices.

Music came from **Zealand Worship**, a worship band from Tennessee, and **Rend Collective**, a cadre of multi-instrumentalists from Ireland who share their faith through music and stories. **Urban Street Level**, an interracial, Christian hip-hop and jazz-style band, performed on Sunday.

"Tasha" Cobbs, a young, Grammy Award-winning gospel vocalist, performed a Friday night concert. And zany comedians **Dave and Brian**, from Philadelphia, were a hit with their cutting-edge musical com-

edy. Many youth got to meet and take photos with them, with Steve Fitzhugh and other artists among displays in the bustling exhibits hall.

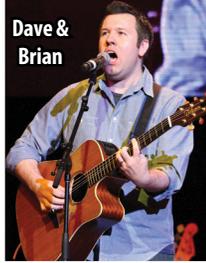
Meanwhile, about 400 filled a room at the Eastern PA Conference Council on Youth Ministry's (CCYM) lively, Saturday morning breakout session, titled "Ever Wonder Why?" Led by Conference Youth and Young Adult Ministries Coordinator **Dave Piltz** and CCYM President **Mei-Ling Blackstone**, the session engaged youth and adults in exploring unusual and typical human behaviors, and the sources of our motivations and misfortunes. They wrestled with various questions about love—and the lack of it—and how having faith in God's love can be the answer many people are seeking.

There were 11 breakout sessions, including "Uncompromised" and "Faith from High

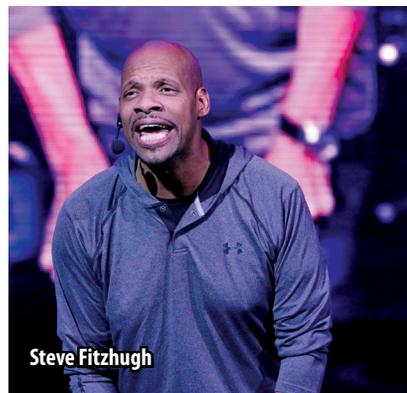
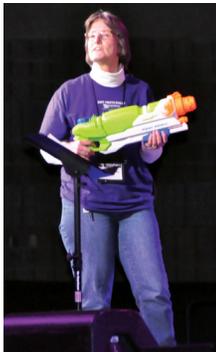
School to College," both about learning to live purposefully for Christ, and two training and problem-solving sessions for adult youth workers. Saturday night ended, as always, with a powerful altar call that drew hundreds of youth to the stage to join one another in prayer. And Sunday began with this year's Spittin' 'Da' Word preaching champion, which, for the second consecutive year, was an Eastern PA Conference youth.

Zachery Uporsky, a 9th-grader from East Stroudsburg UMC, wowed the audience with his short sermon about love and how churches need to show more love to the world beyond their doors. Zach talked about some of the outreach ministries happening at his very active church and how it's teaching him

to have a heart for mission. Mission was, as always, the focus of the special offering taken that morning,



Zealand Worship



Steve Fitzhugh



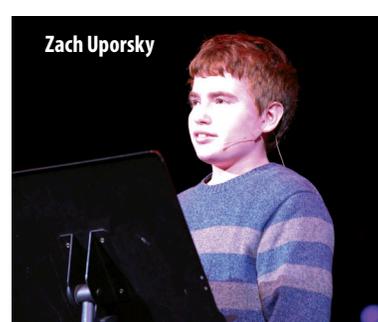
Tasha Cobbs



Rend Collective



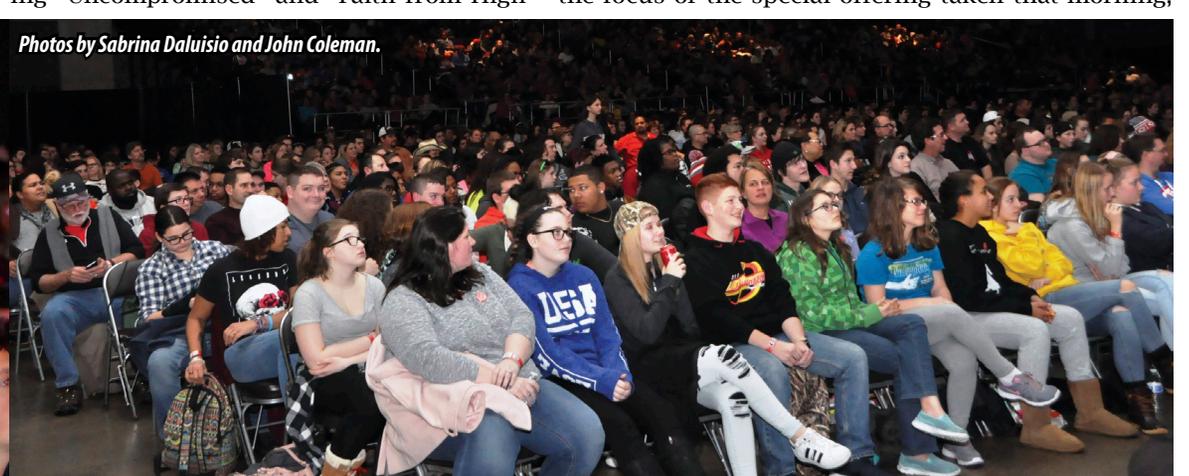
Urban Street Level



Zach Uporsky



Photos by Sabrina Daluisio and John Coleman.



which was dedicated to support the multi-conference Congo Partnership and disaster recovery efforts to aid flood-victims in West Virginia.

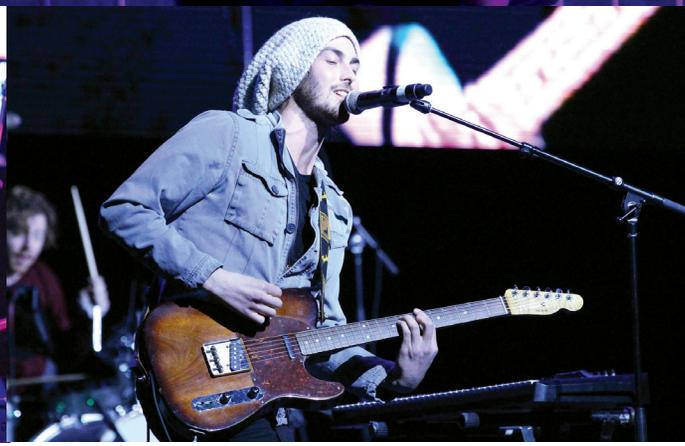
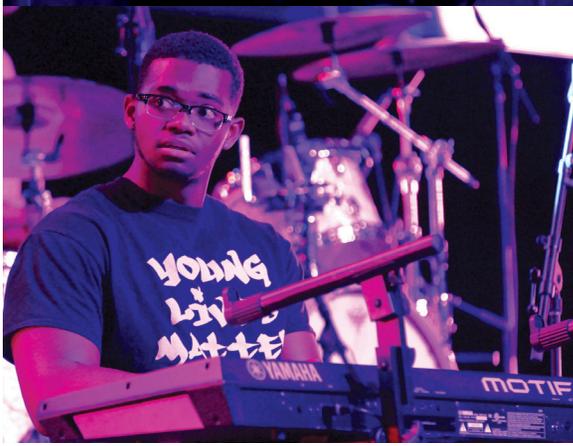
Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball, who leads United Methodists in West Virginia, thanked the crowd for its support and preached, with sermon prop in hand, about being super-soaked with the Holy Spirit through God's love. The former Pen-Del Conference Director of Connectional Ministries started the Youth Rally 30 years ago when she was conference youth director there. After preaching, she joined host **Bishop Peggy Johnson** in celebrating Communion to end the rally.

Be sure to read the touching, eloquent reflections written by Eastern PA's CCYM leaders on what moved



them most about the Youth Rally—ranging from Fitzhugh's personal testimonies, to the worship music, to the inspiration they felt during the prayer altar call.

For some, their biggest impression may have been the friendships they were able to make or renew, the support they received from each other, and the caring guidance of their adult leaders. They, like the throng of young peers who joined them in O.C. that weekend, can likely point to many aspects of the overall experience and say with certainty, "This is love."



Save the Date!

3rd Annual Eastern PA Youth Rally!

Saturday, April 22nd, 2017; 9 am--4 pm; Hopewell UMC

Wake UP ... God's People!

God's People ... Wake UP!

Questions: Send to David Piltz ; dpiltz@epaumc.org; 814-883-0118

Wake up, God's People!...

All-day Eastern PA Youth Rally
April 22, 2017

Plan to attend the 3rd Annual Eastern PA Conference Youth Rally on Saturday, April 22, at Hopewell UMC in Downingtown. For the first time, this youth rally will last all day, from 9 AM to 4 PM.

We're planning fantastic features, with dynamic speakers, soul-stirring music, fun games, powerful prayers, laugh-out-loud humor, great food and hospitality, and enough friendship and fellowship moments to give you a lifetime of memories. Don't dare miss it!

Reflections on 'This Is Love'

2017 Pen-Del Conference Youth Rally

BY EASTERN PA CCYM MEMBERS
(CONFERENCE COUNCIL ON YOUTH MINISTRY)



Jess Eden

I was blessed to take part in this great event. Personally, my favorite part was coming together as one and sharing in worship, love, learning and laughter for the weekend. When the church unites, it reminds me of our important mission as Christ's body, to work together for success of the church, using everyone and leaving out no one.

The bands clearly had Christ in them and were very gifted. They were able to transform a roomful of unrelated believers into a family of believers. As they played, people rushed to the stage to sing and praise God together.

The rally showcased the outpouring of love, support and respect people have for others, including me. I participated in the Spittin Da Word contest, and CCYM members came offering kind words of encouragement. The judges were very supportive and gave me helpful feedback. In the end, I did not win the contest. However, I did walk away with good advice for future sermons as well as a few opportunities to talk with people about my plans for the future.

Overall, the rally showed me the value of friends and what can be accomplished in the future of our Eastern PA CCYM. As we embark on expanding our own youth rally to a full day this year, I'm looking forward to seeing how large our rally can one day become and the love of Christ it will offer to our youth.



Matthew Lynch

I enjoyed having quality time to worship God and to spend with my youth group. Because this wasn't my first time, I had to look deeper into what I felt that God was leading me to. The impact I felt was to help me to push my limits and trust my FUTURE in him.

Matthew Calderone (CCYM Vice President)

My favorite aspect of the entire rally was when people came back after the altar call. You could really feel how much of an impact it had on those who participated at the stage. It felt like the Holy Spirit was flowing through them, and they brought that right back to those sitting at their seats.

Steve Fitzhugh spoke to many hearts through his no-games, raw view of life and its many issues that people young and old face daily. He showed that no matter what you're dealing with, God is always there to show you which choices may save your life and the lives of others.



Chris Ortolf

The rally answered many questions I came with about the place for my religion socially and mentally. It comes at a good point in the school year because there is usually overwhelming stress and few helpful breaks.

I came forward with some answers during the breakout session that I would not have given much consideration to otherwise. It affected me just as much as the audience, I believe, and it really shed some light on love as a concept.

Mei-Ling Blackstone (CCYM President)

The rally was something that was overdue for me. It impacted me in ways I wasn't expecting and in ways that I'm still trying to figure out. The entire weekend rejuvenated me spiritually, and it prepared me to tackle my last semester in high school.

Zealand was an amazing band that played songs that we were all familiar with and could enjoy. The best part was when Zealand stopped singing, and you only heard the thousands of people singing in unison. It was as if the Holy Spirit was flowing out of every person singing, and you could just feel the spirit lifting you up. You didn't just hear everyone singing; you felt it from your heart to your soul.

Steve Fitzhugh was real. He didn't try to sugarcoat life, or tell us that his life was awesome and that playing in the NFL was a blessing. It wasn't about that. He focused on real life. He shared hardships in his life that most would never want to talk about again; but he did it to connect with youth who may be in a rut right now in life. He is living proof that any of us can get through anything that life throws at us because we have God on our side.

Being able to be a part of CCYM has changed my life and my relationship with God. Having the opportunity to lead a session with the guidance of David Piltz was an honor and an experience that I'll never forget. We got



to interact and share some stories about our lives that hopefully connected with the youth there. Also, the fact that 400-plus youth decided to come to an early morning session while there was a snowstorm outside was really meaningful.

Jose M Tirado

My favorite part of the rally was definitely the speaker (Steve Fitzhugh). He said a lot of stuff that really stuck out to me. Like, when he said that he was so excited to be a father, and then they found out that it was a miscarriage. That really stuck out to me because it is living proof that God can get you through anything.

My favorite band was Zealand because they were so energetic about God and his love for us. It really moved me.

Over all, the rally was an amazing experience for me because I now have a better understanding of what God wants for me and my life. The most meaningful part for me in the sessions was when we shared about our experiences in the prayer room. It really gave me an experience of reflection on my life.

Kayla Bartkewich (former CCYM member)

My favorite part about these youth rallies is when they do the altar call. I've seen them various times, but every one has a different effect on me. Steve (Fitzhugh) really spoke to me about love. I remember him talking about how if you do not have God in your life you make different decisions, and how even the smallest decisions are affected by your love for God. Leaving this youth rally, I felt loved by God even more. Everyone that was a part of my experience helped me realize that I am truly blessed. Being a former CCYM member puts things in perspective as I watch the younger members experience the great work they do and how it changes them as persons. It amazes me as they grow with every event, seeking new ideas and making new friends. This event is amazing overall, and I hope to never stop coming to these rallies, I recommend them for all!



Mission work in Africa grows with Eastern PA support—Part 2

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

In our Fall 2016 issue of NEWSpirit we looked at mission development projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Tanzania that benefit from support by Eastern PA Conference churches. In the Winter 2017 issue we report on some other life-saving efforts happening elsewhere in Africa, also supported by our global-minded, mission-driven congregations.

Sierra Leone, Zambia, Liberia, South Africa—Eastern PA churches are active in these and other places, supporting local efforts to share the message and ministry of Christ among neighbors in need.

“Please circle this land with your prayers,” wrote the Rev. Dorcas Kamanda in a Jan. 31 e-mail message to supporters of her new mission. She plans to one day house and care for unparented children in her Sierra Leone village. These children lost their families to the viral Ebola disease that ravaged that West African country and others in 2014-2015. It killed more than 3,580 people in 18 months.

After a visit home to her rural village in 2016, Kamanda returned and said goodbye to Newtown UMC in rural,

Western Columbia, Pa., the church she had lovingly served for over two years. She felt God calling her home to repair the breach and save an all but lost generation of children, too many of them rendered virtually homeless.

Her last Sunday in the pulpit, fittingly, was on the day Newtown celebrated the birth of God’s child, Christmas Day 2016. But she returned there Jan. 15 to be “commissioned for Christian service” by the congregation and its new pastor, the Rev. Sally Ott. A week later she departed on her long mission journey, leaving behind her own family.



‘Where do I begin?’

“I am humbled by all the revelations and challenges God is already taking me through,” wrote Dorcas in her first epistle to friends. She cited the lack of reliable tele-communications, transportation, news media, mail delivery and other conveniences so prevalent in the U.S. But she also lamented the “huge suffering and lack of basic human needs such as safe drinking water and adequate food,” forcing her to ask “Where do I begin?”

She began with 6-year-old Kumba, orphaned, undernourished, in need of medical and dental care, and thus, “our



My church, my country: Richard Hachoose (center) and Yardley UMC celebrated in November 2016 the 100th well it helped drill in his native country, Zambia. Photos courtesy of Joyce Lee



first child for the Children’s Village we hope to build,” she writes, preferring that term to “orphanage.” The former nurse, midwife, nutritionist and educator, now in her 70s, has master’s degrees in nursing and administration. But as she gradually takes in more children, she plans to recruit, train and compensate other adult caretakers for the promised village

Her son, Ali Kamanda, whose family resides in the Lancaster area, is also there periodically to manage Salone Rising, a microenterprise lending and empowerment program. So, with ample abilities, despite few resources, she is negotiating with local leaders to acquire land and other needs.

Empowering, Enabling Development

Fortunately, there is already the Nar-Sarah Clinic, which Dorcas and her husband Daniel helped establish there about a decade ago as part of SEED (Salone Empowering and Enabling Development, Inc.). Along with partners, they formed the nonprofit, non-governmental organization to develop services in healthcare, education and microenterprise assistance.

Newtown, a small church with few resources, has pledged to support its beloved former pastor’s God-sized mission, as have others in the Southwest District, led by the Rev. Bumkoo Chung, Superintendent, and District Lay Leader Sue Grimm Mattox, have already filled 20 barrels with donated Bibles, toys, clothing, backpacks and other items that will be sent to Kamanda to give to the children she will care for children like Kumba.

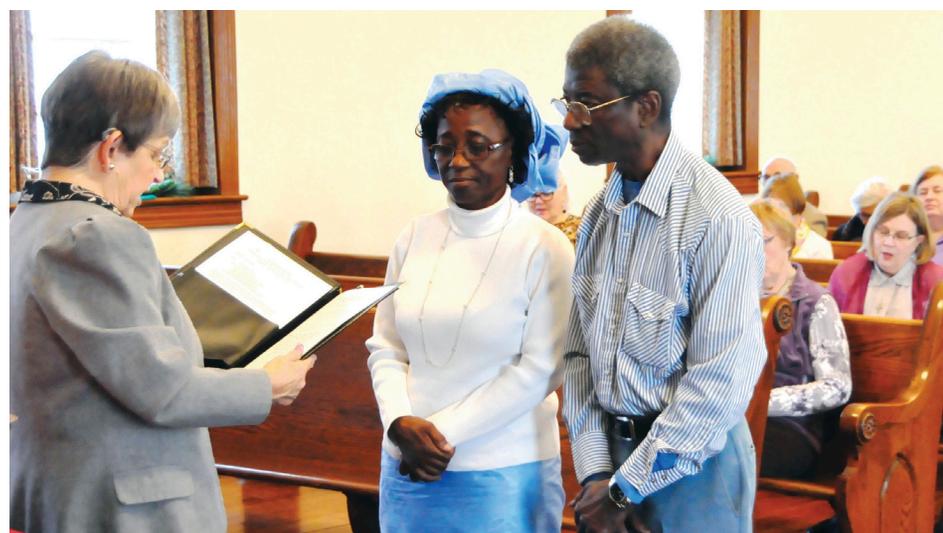
Celebrating 100 Wells in Zambia

In the East District of the Conference is Yardley UMC, which celebrated in November 2016 the drilling of the 100th well it has helped fund in rural Zambia. The congregation held an African-style Harvest Sunday worship service, with drums, dashikis, dancing and the bringing forth of food gifts to its altar on that day.

“It was exhilarating,” said member Joyce Lee. The celebration also featured a replica of a water pump and remarks by Richard Hachoose of Zambia, who inspired the congregation to undertake the project back in 2001. He described his country’s dire need for water during a Joys and Concerns moment of worship one Sunday, and two concerned, enterprising members, Dale and Debbie Van Aken, developed an organization they named the “Life-Giving Water Fund.”

They networked with other congregations and individuals to financially support the drilling of deep wells in rural areas of Zambia. Each well serves the needs of up to 2,000 people and their livestock, while freeing children and women from the arduous task of collecting water at rivers each day for their families’ needs. Instead they can attend school and create income-producing crafts. Learn more at www.LifeGiving-Water.org.

Coming Next: In our Spring issue of NEWSpirit we will publish an extraordinary mission saga, with colorful photos, of Christ’s love shared among faithful “servant-disciples” at Asbury UMC in Allentown and their remarkable partners in a rural area of Liberia, West Africa.



Columbia: Newtown UMC’s new pastor, the Rev. Sally Ott (left), anoints its former pastor, Dorcas Kamanda and her husband Daniel, surrounded by their family, as they prepare to return home to Sierra Leone, where Dorcas will create a village for children orphaned by Ebola. John Coleman photos

Network! Network! Network!

BY THE REV. GORDON HENDRICKSON
COORDINATOR OF CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
EASTERN PA CONFERENCE



Remember the old axiom about the three most important considerations for buying real estate? It's "Location! Location! Location!"

As Coordinator of Congregational Development, I am sometimes asked what the single most important need is for starting or growing a church. Is it having a vision, along with passion and spiritual energy? Or having the right persons to lead the effort?

Some say it's knowing one's community and how to address its many needs. Others say it's having a spiritual covenant to grow new leaders and entrust each other with new ministries.

Actually, I am a strong believer in all of the above, and we always encourage churches to develop those essential values for ministry growth.

Yet, I keep coming back to something called "networking." I remember starting a new church back in the 1980's—such a long time ago. That's when you would receive a vision from the Holy Spirit calling you to touch the spiritual needs of your community. You would wander through the wilderness, sharing that vision and wondering if anyone would respond and join you in pursuing it.

Sometimes you would feel all alone and question God for calling you to this mission enterprise. But you would try to remain faithful and obedient to the vision.

Suddenly, a few people would catch the vision and begin telling others



what God was doing at that church for that community. People would invite others to attend worship or Bible study, to get involved in outreach or recreational ministries or mission trips, to sing in choirs or gather for fellowship in members' homes. People would share their church and its evolving ministries with others, all in the name of Jesus.

That spiritual energy drives the networking that occurs when the Body of Christ begins to expand in growth. People get excited and cannot wait to share with others what the Lord is doing. This is EVANGELISM!

We need vision and vitality

But this is what is lacking in too many of our churches today. As we consider reaching out to our communities, we need vision and vitality to touch people where they feel need, to inspire excitement and to nurture the hope that comes from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We can have all of the ministry growth tools we want, but without passion, nothing will matter.

For more than a year, I have been introducing the innovative Lifetree Café outreach ministry model to churches that show an interest. Leaders of about 30 churches have attended our orientations and trainings, but only several so far have launched this powerful, collaborative ministry in their communities. A few others are planning to join this fledgling movement soon.

Yes, some are still praying and discerning whether this ministry is right for their church or cluster or mission connexion. But for me, this is a no-brainer.

Each church has two ways to reach those who are not walking with Christ. One way is to invite people into your church to find Christ there. The other is to meet neighbors out in the community, where more of them actually congregate, and to create safe, comfortable environments for guided, non-judgmental conversation about topics that interest them. That is where we



can find unpressured moments to share our walk with Christ, what it has meant for our lives and what it can mean for theirs.

We must have passion and a spirit of invitation, reaching out to our families and neighbors, friends and acquaintances, colleagues and classmates. We can invite them to our churches or to restaurants, cafés, pubs and other public places where we can share a meal or beverage, while sharing our friendship with Christ.

Is there a passion for Christ in your life? Then why not nourish it by sharing it with others? Yes, some folks do not want to be in church or have anything to do with church; but many still have a thirst for good, meaningful conversation.

A place to meet and minister to others

So envision planting and growing a Lifetree Café in your community. It's a place where you can meet and minister to others, a place where the Body of Christ can stretch out its arms, open wide its heart and really network. And yes, growing a Lifetree Café in your community, outside of your church, means evangelism can also be about "Location, Location, Location."

Gordon Hendrickson holds periodic Lifetree Café orientations and training with resources for interested church leaders at the Conference Office. The next ones are scheduled for:

*Feb. 27: Part 1--Orientation
March 14: Part 2--Training*

UM legislative advocate reports on 2017 state issues

More state budget cuts that will hurt the poor, climate change and hydraulic fracking that undeniably hurt the environment, expansion of gambling, sanctuary versus detention for undocumented immigrants, nonpartisan fairness versus gerrymandering in state redistricting...the list of crucial issues for the new, 2017-2018 Pennsylvania legislative assembly is long. And the need for keen legislative monitoring and advocacy on behalf of United Methodists perhaps has never been greater.

The Rev. Dai Morgan, of the Pittsburgh area, has been reappointed and funded to continue leading that work in 2017 as Coordinator of UM Advocacy in Pennsylvania. He represents the three UM conferences, Eastern and Western PA and Susquehanna, and reports monthly to their three bishops.

"Perhaps the greatest amount of my time is occupied monitoring actions and activity of the state government," said Morgan, who addressed all three annual conferences last year. "When appropriate, I meet or otherwise communicate with legislators and other officials. It is frequently useful for me to make connections with special interest organizations."

A longtime advocate on hunger and other concerns, Morgan meets monthly in Harrisburg with an informal coalition of faith-based political advocates to network and share information, while also representing the

UMC on the Pennsylvania Council of Churches.

"The issues on which I was most active in 2016," he reports, "were fracking and the environment, anti-payday loan efforts, 'Dream Care' health insurance for undocumented children, and 'Safe Harbor' prosecution protection for human trafficked minors." But he plans to address other issues as well in 2017.

State's most challenging priority

Creating a balanced state budget is the state assembly's most challenging priority in this new session, Morgan reports. But a worsening deficit that may exceed \$2 billion will make that task most daunting. "Residents—especially the poor—will likely feel the worst effects," says Morgan, "but all may suffer eventually."

Strategies being pursued or considered include:

- Closing several of the state's 26 prisons, starting with the 135-year-old one in Pittsburgh.
- Consolidating four state agencies dealing with human services, health, drug and alcohol addiction and aging into one Department of Health & Human Services.
- Closing or merging some of the 14 state-owned universities that face falling enrollments.
- Expanding gambling, and resulting taxes and fees, especially with online and fantasy sports gaming.

• Reducing the assembly's its own, comparatively large 253-member size.

Moreover, the number of so-called "sanctuary cities" may increase to protect undocumented immigrants by limiting cooperation with federal government deportation efforts. But about 40 mostly-Central American, asylum-seeking families held for over a year in a Berks County detention center may soon find relief in a pending court decision. Morgan has been monitoring that cause, and Bishop Peggy Johnson may lead the weekly prayer vigil held by religious advocates outside the facility on Sunday, March 12.

We will begin posting links to Morgan's informative (and worth-reading) monthly reports on the Advocacy page of the conference website. Anyone who wants to know more about his work in faith-based legislative advocacy may contact him at daimorgan@comcast.net or 412-595-6011. He is available to speak to churches and at conference and district events. Also, visit and comment on the UM Advocacy PA Facebook page.



Clergy spouse retreats offer Sabbath and support

“Come, all you who are weary and heavy burdened,” Jesus Christ tenderly invites us, “and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28) Ten Eastern PA Conference clergy spouses heeded a similar invitation in November 2016, when they gathered to enjoy a full-day Sabbath retreat designed just for them. Those who missed it will get another chance at the next retreat on Saturday, May 13, at Daylesford Abbey in Paoli.

The 10 participants in “Claiming Sabbath for Clergy Spouses,” offered by Artos Retreats, were diverse in age and tenure as clergy spouses, but all extolled the value of the experience, reported Julie Anderman, Ex-

ecutive Director.

In evaluations, nine said they would view and “claim” Sabbath differently as a result; and seven said they would no longer feel alone in their journeys as clergy spouses. Six said they had never been to a retreat for clergy spouses before, but they were grateful for this opportunity and wanted more.

Create Connection and Support

“We all wanted to be able to express ourselves authentically and safely, but with the positive intent to create connection and support,” said clergy spouse Bernie Jacobella, whose remarks captured the sentiments of several participants. “Thanks to the retreat’s design and leadership, we never stayed in a place of venting and lamenting. The Sabbath Game is an ingenious tool to draw forth balanced and useful discussion. I was surprised!”

Artos Retreats is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the wellbeing of clergy spouses. “We design our retreats to allow clergy spouses to express common issues without revealing church-specific situations,” Anderman explained. Retreat learning occurs through original visual and musical activities, case scenarios and problem-solving aided by the engaging, hands-on Sabbath board game.

Anderman, retreat team leader and a clergy spouse herself for 18 years (“with reluctance and reward!”), is thankful to Bishop Peggy Johnson, her Cabinet and the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits for giving “prayerful support” in approving, promoting and subsidizing the retreat. She presented the model to them

last year and gave them a preview of the “Sabbath Game,” a key feature of the retreat experience.

Once again, partial scholarships will be available to eligible participants for the May retreat, thanks to a grant from the Pastoral Excellence Network. The retreat team, which comprises Anderman, musician and worship leader Lynnette Carter, and graphic designer Lisa Mears, may plan a third retreat for the fall.

Seeking male clergy spouse insights

“Artos Retreats feels blessed to play a role in bringing a diverse group of clergy spouses together in such a spiritually meaningful way,” said Anderman. While retreats are designed for clergy spouses of both genders, she added, “we need to learn more about the male clergy spouse experience in order to provide them with the most meaningful workshop or retreat experience. We are asking male clergy spouses to share their insights with us during a confidential evening focus group session over dinner on (Thursday) March 16 at The Desmond Hotel in Malvern.”



In Memoriam

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

Mrs. Gladys Gale

Mrs. Gladys Gale, 83, previous spouse of the Rev. Andrew Schultz, passed away on December 25, 2016.

Rev. Schultz was a full member of the Eastern PA Conference who died in 1989, at age 56. He served as a pastor and district superintendent in the following appointments: Richmond UMC; Philadelphia: Elmwood UMC; Drexel Hill UMC; Chester Parkside UMC; Philadelphia: Frankford Memorial UMC; Bala Cynwyd UMC; Mary McLeod Bethune District Superintendent.

Mrs. Gale, 83, was married to Schultz from 1958 to 1989, She taught high school for thirty years, earned an Ed. D. from the University of Pennsylvania, and was awarded the Philadelphia Teacher of the Year Award.

She is survived by her husband, Harold V. Gale; a daughter from her previous marriage, Carla Falb and her husband Don Falb; and other relatives.

The Rev. Russell W. Streeper

The Rev. Russell W. Streeper, a retired Elder of the Eastern PA Conference passed away December 15, 2016. He served the following churches: Philadelphia: Johnson Memorial; Philadelphia: Grace; Lebanon: Kochenderfer; Bethlehem: Epworth

He is survived by his spouse, Mrs. Diana Irene Streeper.

The Rev. Sharon Kaye Paul

The Rev. Sharon Kaye Paul passed away on Dec. 8, 2016. She was a Local Pastor who retired in 2015.

Rev. Paul served: Landenberg UMC; Christ UMC in Middletown; and Nantmeal UMC.

Richard A. Griffith

We were informed that former, longtime Eastern PA Conference staff member Richard A. Griffith, of Upper Darby, passed away on Nov. 8, 2016, at age 60. He worked for Eastern PA Conference from 1985 to 1995 and was currently employed by Novitex.

Griffith, an Eagle Scout, was a member of Inabah Camp and Retreat Center’s Site Committee. He was also very involved in the Emmaus and Chrysalis communities.

He leaves behind: his wife Maryann Griffith (nee Ostimchuk); son Eric Ostimchuk (and his wife Laurie); two grandchildren and other relatives.

UM group delivers annual Christmas gifts to Methodist Services

Members and supporters of the Lan-Chester UM Men (from churches in Lancaster and Chester counties) made their annual delivery in December of Christmas

toys and gift baskets to Methodist Services, located next-door to Simpson House in Philadelphia. The historic, multi-services agency provides “life-enriching



programs to children, adults and families as they face the challenges of limited resources, increased poverty, homelessness, disabilities and deficits in education.”

Agency staff, including President and CEO Anne Rice Burgess (*front step, left*) gave the group a tour of the facility, including its Head Start and kindergarten classes and its transitional residence for women. Kevin Bidwell (*third step, center*) and the Rev. Mark Biderman (*far right*) led the group, which collects and delivers donated and much-appreciated gifts every December. *John Coleman photo*

NEJ Bishops urge loving welcome for immigrants, refugees

Bishops of the UMC's Northeastern Jurisdiction called on the church to "welcome the foreigner" and reject a controversial new U.S. Presidential Executive Order temporarily barring immigrants from seven mostly Muslim countries and all refugees, especially from Syria. The bishops wrote to their episcopal areas Feb. 1 while meeting in Lancaster, urging the church to "do what it does best: love our neighbors as we ourselves have been loved."

NEJ Bishops (active and retired)--Seated (from left): Bishops Peggy Johnson, Latrelle Easterling, Violet Fisher, John Schol and Jane Middleton. **Standing (from left):** Bishops Jeremiah Park, Ernest Lyght, Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, Mark Webb, Sudarshana Devadhar, Thomas Bickerton, Marcus Matthews, Sandra Steiner-Ball and Peter Weaver.

Bishop Peggy Johnson earlier had sent her area's members and churches "An Appeal to Conscience" opposing the executive order. She visited the Lancaster office of Church World Service, which works to resettle refugees, along with her Pennsylvania episcopal colleagues. *John Coleman photo*



UMW Charter for Racial Justice

Eastern PA Conference UM Women and friends met Jan. 31 to explore ways to enact the global organization's recently updated Charter for Racial Justice, which was endorsed by the 2016 General Conference. "We are addressing racial justice from a biblical, leadership, and community perspective," said the group's leader Gladys Hubbard. From left are: Carmen Sol Cotto, Hubbard, Donna Blanchine, Susan Kepner, Ruth Carr, Janet Mills, Sandi Cianciulli, Ethel Malone and Bernice McCray. *John Coleman photo*



Camp ministries veteran pitches in

(From left) The Rev. Sally Ott, who left her position as Camp & Retreat Ministries Development Coordinator to return to the pastorate in November, meets with camping ministries veteran Carlen Blackstone, who will help with development tasks in the interim, and the Rev. Christopher J. Kurien, Director of Connectional Ministries. *John Coleman photo*



Lift every hand and sing

Bishop Peggy Johnson (center) preached at St. James UMC in Philadelphia Jan. 22, highlighting Disabilities Awareness Sunday. Joining her there were members of the Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing Ministry of Grace UMC Philadelphia, who led the congregation in singing and signing several songs, conducted enthusiastically by ministry leader Rosalind "Roz" McKelvey (above photo, right). *John Coleman photos*

