

Letter Supporting the Nomination of Rev. Richard Conner as the 2018 recipient of the Harry Denman Evangelism Award

I am writing to nominate Rev. Richard Conner as this year's recipient of the Harry Denman Evangelism Award.

Richard is a retired elder in the Eastern PA Annual Conference. During the years preceding his retirement, Rev. Conner actively led several congregations in innovative ways to reach people who were outside the church, but not outside of God's love; including a variety of outreach programs to minister to the needs of the communities where he served.

Richard also continued to grow and learn more about how to minister to the needs of people, including those who were not connected to any faith community. I know that he travelled to places like Charlotte NC in order to attend evangelism training events. He was instrumental in starting contemporary services in order to reach a younger group of people.

As he prepared for retirement, Rev. Conner travelled to Lake Junaluska for training as an intentional interim pastor. Since his retirement, Richard has served Calvary UMC in Wyomissing, and Wiest Memorial UMC in Schoeneck as an interim pastor; as well as assisting . Glossbrenner UMC in Mt. Joy while the pastor was recovering from heart surgery and on a disability leave. For the past two years Richard has served as he interim pastor at Bethesda UMC in Southern Lancaster County. During his time at Bethesda, Richard has again introduced a contemporary service on Saturday evenings, where no previous contemporary worship expression had existed. As a result of this service, new people have come to attend the church and several families have been introduced to the worship experiences at Bethesda impacting a number of lives for Christ. Richard has also gotten the church's website up

and running, encouraged the congregation to actively reach out into the community , through programs such as an intentional strategy to reach out to families in their zip code that have recently had new births with gifts from the church as well as initiating a community meal. Richard has worked hard to strategically impact lives for Christ in the community surrounding this congregation located in rural Southern Lancaster County. Richard as also instrumental in having the United Methodist Churches in this mission connexion come together for a shared series of Advent and Lente series of services. Richard has strategically positioned this church for the future and encouraged this congregation to focus on the community around them and beyond their four walls, even involving conference staff in this process. Richard has empowered many individuals and congregations to reach people for Christ throughout his ministry and this has continued to be the case at Bethesda.

While at Calvary, Richard introduced a contemporary service utilizing young musicians from the community. He also oversaw the establishment of a community block party, Easter Egg Hunt, and showing VeggieTale films in an effort to reach out to children and families in the community.

Although Richard was over 65 when he was asked to serve Wiest Memorial he was a strong advocate for this predominantly older congregation reaching out to the youth of the community, actively participating in the youth program; that was largely attended by youth who were not church members. Richard personally took several oof these youth on day long outings to the beach and was actively involved in the establishment of a youth center in nearby Denver. A number of these youth began to attend church at Wiest. Additionally, these youth took part in a live nativity scene which was held outdoors and open to the

community. Richard also helped establish a monthly community meal at Wiest, eventually helping the church to host a Girl Scout Troop. A number of these Girl Scouts helped with serving the community meal and clean up. Also while at Wiest, Richard became actively involved in the creation and oversight of the Power Pack program at the Lampeter YMCA, a program that provides free food to children and their families from the Lampeter Strasburg School District who receive either free or reduced school lunches.

For a number of years Richard has served as a volunteer counselor at Gretna Glenn's after hours camping program. For one week each summer these campers take part in a program where they sleep during the day and take part in programs throughout the night. An article highlighting this camp and Richard's involvement in this program; despite nearing 70, appeared in the Lancaster Newspaper.

While at Glossbbrenner UMC in Mt. Joy, he was an advocate for children and youth. As part of his ministry at Glossbrenner, he advocated for the hiring of a staff person to oversee this congregation's programs for children and youth, a position that was filled with Rev. Conner's active involvement.

At Glossbrener, Richard also led a Bible Study, oversaw the congregation's Lenten program, including a mid-week Bible Study and worship service. He also lead a weekend retreat for children from the congregation with over 25 children taking part.

Rev. Conner has formerly served as a member of the Conference Camping Board. Richard is also an active member of the Lancaster County Bicycle Club, recently completing a three year term as the club's vice president. Within the bicycle club, Richard has become the group's

unofficial chaplain, often engaging in conversations concerning faith with members of the club. He frequently leads in prayer at club functions, strongly witnessing to his faith, while remaining respectful of those of differing or no acknowledged faith. Richard also rode his bicycle over three hundred miles three years ago along the C&O canal and the Great Allegheny Passageway (From Georgetown MD to Pittsburgh ,PA) to raise funds for Imagine No Malaria.

I count Richard as a dear friend and mentor and enthusiastically endorse his nomination for he Denman Award because of his strong faith and evangelistic fervor for a number of years both in the church as well as the community.

Rev. Dr. Richard J. Rimert Jr.
April 30, 2018