

Conference, churches rally to recover from recent floods

Donations, volunteers needed for disaster response

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

"The Eastern PA Conference is operating in full disaster response phase," said Disaster Response Coordinator Robert Simcox. "We are supporting the Schuylkill County area in flood relief."

County residents are struggling to recover physically and emotionally from a July double-drenching of relentless rain storms. But experienced, volunteer work teams and individuals are direly needed to help clear damaged, molded items out of flooded homes and perform related tasks.

"Volunteers are needed immediately

now and in the coming year," said Simcox. "They will be working with the community in the recovery and rebuilding phase." That work includes listening to and consoling residents to help them overcome the emotional toll of the storms' destruction.

St. John's UMC in hard-hit Tremont is designated as that area's Disaster Information Center, thanks to the hard work and coordination of Suzanne Schach and other church members who are serving many needs among neighbors. Schach, a nursing supervisor at a local rehabilitative health center, is Tremont's onsite disaster recovery coordinator and

Continued on page 4--RALLY TO RECOVER.



First UMC Port Carbon pastor Lorraine Heckman visits with a member who received food from a local distribution outlet.



Laity Academy inspires joyful learning, music, fellowship

The joyful energy and communal spirit of the 35th annual Laity Academy, held August 3-5, seemed to fill the classrooms, corridors, dining/fellowship hall and even the sanctuary of Quakertown UMC, where Caribbean-style steel drums and a lengthening conga dance line climaxed Saturday night's entertainment.

Among the diverse student body of about 170 laity from all districts of the Eastern PA Conference, love and laughter seemed to abound; and so did learning. Nearly a quarter of attendees were first-timers. Along with their more seasoned peers, they filled tables around the cozy classrooms to hear faculty presentations, view materials, engage in enlightening discussions and offer insightful testimonies of their experiences.

Some evaluation form comments

affirmed the value of the 10 hours of instruction required for a coveted lay ministry training certificate:

- "For the first time, I wrote and delivered a sermon. Maybe I can pursue this."
- I learned the importance of working and abiding in community.
- Our church needs to market itself to the community. These tools can help us achieve that goal.
- I learned that there is much to learn about our church and becoming more engaged.
- I can start a prison ministry in my church.
- Everything I learned I plan to take back to my church.
- Knowing and controlling your own emotions first is most important.
- Best course ever (Making Every

Continued on page 16--LAITY ACADEMY.

INSIDE this issue:

- District to welcome new DRA ... 2
- Love Offering for Puerto Rico ... 3
- Disaster Response News 4-5
- 4 Stations of Holy Spirit 6
- Annual Conference coverage 7-10
- Summer camps leave lasting impact 13
- Advance Specials roster 14



At the Reading Mission Connexion's "Prayer of Unity: Dialogue of Hope" event at West Lawn UMC, August 8, nearly a hundred participants pray for General Conference delegates the Rev. Jeff Raffauf and Judy Ehninger (center) led by the Rev. Jean Howe. The closing prayer followed a presentation and table discussions on the UMC Way Forward proposals for the 2019 Special Called General Conference. Story on page 6. John Coleman photo

SEPTEMBER

SEPT. 8-9

Installation of Rev. Steve Morton as North District Superintendent:

Sept. 8: Pre-installation prayer service at Shamokin: St. John's UMC. 6 PM

Sept. 9: Two installation services: 2:30 PM at Neola UMC; and 6:30 PM at Shoemakersville: Salem UMC.

SEPT. 10-OCT. 1

(4 Mondays) Methodists United Laity Academy: North District, Western Region. 6-8:30 PM. Elysburg UMC.

SEPT. 15

Laity Retreat: 9 AM-2 PM, Montgomery Square UMC. Theme: Living in Fullness.

The Vital Church training event: (Formerly Vital Church Mergers and More). 8:30 AM - 12 PM. Christ UMC Lansdale.

UnLearning Racism: Continuing the Conversations. 9 AM-3:30 PM. Conference Office. For all alumnae of any Changing Racism or Healing the Wounds of Racism workshop.

SEPT. 15, 29, OCT. 13

Local Pastor Licensing School: Preaching,

Worship & Sacraments. Mt. Hope UMC Aston.

SEPT. 16-30

(3 Sundays) Helping Puerto Rico Rise Again Love Offering

SEPT. 18

Advanced Sexual Ethics Training: Child-On-Child Abuse Workshop: Recognizing, Reporting, Preventing. 10 AM-3:30 PM. Faith UMC Lititz.

SEPT. 22

Eastern PA Conf. Youth Rally: 1-5 PM. Bethlehem: Wesley UMC.

SEPT. 26-28

Health Insurance Open Enrollment Meetings: 9 locations. (See page 15.)

SEPT. 29

Church and Society Conference: "Building Connections for Social Justice." 8:30 AM-3:30 PM. West Lawn UMC

Claiming Sabbath for Clergy Spouses Retreat: 9 AM-5 PM. Black Rock Retreat Center, Quarryville.

Nocha de Gala Hispana: Hispanic/Latino Heritage Month Celebration. 5-8 PM.

Allentown: Asbury UMC. Sponsor: Allentown: La Trinidad UMC.

OCTOBER

OCT. 6

Exploration: Board of Ordained Ministry recruitment event. Emilee UMC, Levittown.

OCT. 13

Tips & Testimony (A Panel Discussion for New Clergy Spouses): 10-11:30 AM. St. Matthew's UMC Valley Forge.

Children's Ministry Event: 8 AM-5PM. West Lawn UMC.

OCT. 20

UMW Annual Celebration: 8 AM - # PM at Lansdale First UMC.

Volunteers in Mission (VIM) Team Leader and Early Response Team (ERT) training: 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM. Otterbein UMC Lancaster.

OCT. 26-28

Changing Racism Workshop: 5:30 PM Friday to 3 PM Sunday. Desmond Hotel, Malvern.

NOVEMBER

NOV. 10

Faith-Sharing Event with Rev. Jasmine Smothers: 9:30 AM - 2 PM. Hopewell UMC.

NOV. 17

Domestic Violence: The Faith Community Responds. 9 AM - 2 PM. West Lawn UMC

4 Stations of the Holy Spirit training: Bethany UMC Wescosville

Certified Lay Minister (CLM) Class: Module 3

DECEMBER

DEC. 1

Emotional Intelligence & Diversity Workshop

2019 DATES

- Jan. 19: Equipping Church Leaders
- March 2: Tools for Ministry
- March 23: HOPE! Talks Seminar on Vital Small-Church Ministries
- April 5-7: Changing Racism Workshop
- June 1: Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Ministry Workshop
- June 13-15: 2019 Annual Conference

North District to welcome new DRA Sept. 3



The North District's staff transitions should be complete by Sept. 3, when **Sheri Kentner** becomes the new District Resource Assistant (DRA), succeeding former DRA Sheila Milz. The longtime member of Hopewell UMC in Downingtown is a Certified Lay Minister. She will work primarily from the Conference Office in Valley Forge.

On August 31, **Kristin Reifsnyder** (West District DRA) ends her temporary service after assisting the North District part-time over the summer. **Christine Collazo** will continue as a part-time District Resource Assistant,

based at Mt. Pocono UMC, where she is the church secretary. She can be contacted at ccollazo@epaumc.org.

The **Rev. Steve Morton**, who became District Superintendent July 1, maintains a small office at Mt. Pocono UMC but visits pastors and churches all around the far-flung district and will periodically work closer to the Conference Office. He will be officially installed at two services **Sept. 8 and 9**.

St. John's UMC in Shamokin will host a pre-installation prayer service on Saturday, Sept. 8, at 6 PM. The full installation service will take place on Sunday, Sept. 9, at either at Neola UMC at 2:30 PM, or at Salem UMC in Shoemakersville at 6:30 PM.



Morton attended West Chester UMC and Innabah's summer camp as a child. He was ordained at Tindley Temple in Philadelphia and Albright College in Reading. He served three fulltime appointments in three districts over 35 years, including the past 21 years as lead pastor at Hopewell UMC in Downingtown.

Morton and his wife Joan built a home in the Pocono Mountains, just above Tobyhanna, 25 years ago.

It's September, and school's in session!

Be sure to register now for some of the great fall learning events on our conference calendar.

See event details on this page or on our website.

- Sept. 15:**
- Laity Retreat
 - Vital Church Training Event
 - UnLearning Racism: Continuing the Conversations
- Sept. 18:**
- Advanced Sexual Ethics Training: Child-On-Child Abuse Workshop
- Sept. 22:**
- Eastern PA Conf. Youth Rally
- Sept. 29:**
- Church and Society Conference: "Building Connections for Social Justice"
- Sept. 29:**
- Claiming Sabbath for Clergy Spouses Retreat

And check out our exciting October and November learning events also!



(USPS 19-604)

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. Anita A. Powell - Director of Connectional Ministries

Published 4 times per year. Annual Subscription \$12.
Please submit articles for publication to:
EPAUMC, P.O. Box 820, Valley Forge, PA 19482
or via email to communications@epaumc.org



Periodicals postage paid at Norristown, PA 19403.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: NEWSpirit at EPA Conference, P.O. Box 820, Valley Forge, PA 19482.

Read this entire newspaper in color and online at www.epaumc.org/news-events/newspirit-publication



Helping Puerto Rico Rise Again

EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE
The United Methodist Church
IGLESIA METODISTA DE PUERTO RICO

Loving others in our family of faith

Galatians 6:10 says, “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

These words of the Apostle Paul give us clear direction to be about doing good works in the world every time we have an opportunity. But Paul makes a distinction as well. We need to do good especially to those who are of the “household of faith.”

Our fellow Christians should be treated as special. It is a sign of our covenant to take care of one another so that the world can see that we are different.

Evangelist Chuck Swindol, in one of his famous sermons, tells about a man named Aristides, who was sent by Emperor Hadrian to spy on the early Christians. He came back to the emperor and exclaimed “Behold! How they love one another.”

Still today we should be treating the family of faith with more special care. We have a great opportunity to do this!

Last year there was a devastating hurricane named “Maria” that laid heavy damage on the island of Puerto Rico. Our brothers and sisters on this United

States territory, including those who are part of our Methodist family, still need our help to repair their many churches and to support community recovery and the restoration of their ministries.

Puerto Rico was our partner conference for many years, part of our Philadelphia Episcopal Area family. Indeed, they are still “family” and will always be close to our hearts. There is still a great need for more aid, even after all we have given through our offerings and donations over the past conference year. No doubt that need will continue for years to come because of the extent of the devastation and the obstacles to recovery there.

At our June session of Annual Conference we approved a special love offering for our ongoing “Helping Puerto Rico Rise Again” recovery support campaign. I encourage every church to take a special offering for the autonomous, affiliated Methodist Church of Puerto Rico, our sister church, on some Sunday between September 16 and September 30.

Every year, from September 15 to October 15, our nation celebrates National Hispanic/Latino Heritage Month, a span



2018 Appointive Cabinet

From left: The Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm (South District Superintendent), The Rev. Bumkoo Chung (West District Superintendent), Bishop Peggy Johnson, The Rev. Tracy Bass (East District Superintendent), The Rev. Steve Morton (North District Superintendent).

EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE
**CELEBRATE NATIONAL HISPANIC/
LATINO HERITAGE MONTH.
GIVE GENEROUSLY TO HELP
OUR FRIENDS IN PUERTO RICO.**

Helping Puerto Rico Rise Again

EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE
The United Methodist Church
IGLESIA METODISTA DE PUERTO RICO

**SHARE A LOVE OFFERING ON ANY SUNDAY,
SEPTEMBER 16-30, 2018**

Dear Eastern PA Conference Churches:
We urge you to receive a special love offering and help us support efforts by the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico to recover from Hurricane Maria's destruction.

Resolution 2018-26, adopted at our 2018 Annual Conference, calls on all churches to celebrate Hispanic/Latino Heritage Month in September by receiving and sharing this love offering to aid our sisters and brothers in Puerto Rico. We recommend any Sunday, September 16-30, for your observance and offering



Offering for Puerto Rico at Annual Conference in June.

of time chosen by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 because it is when at least seven Latin American countries celebrate anniversaries of their national liberation and independence.

This is an ideal time for us to receive this special offering in all our churches, as we celebrate the cultural heritages of Latino sisters and brothers but also the family relationship we share with our friends, fellow citizens and fellow Methodists in Puerto Rico.

As you give to help us respond to their urgent need for recovery from an awful disaster, please also consider forming or joining Volunteers in Mission teams to

go to Puerto Rico and help with repairs and renovations. All of our hands and hearts are needed in this critical mission endeavor.

Let us “love one another with mutual affection (and) outdo one another in showing honor.” (Romans 12:10). Let us show—and let the world see—how much we love another, especially those in our household of faith.

DISTRICT TOWN HALL MEETINGS WITH BISHOP PEGGY JOHNSON

- Sept. 24: East District—Doylestown UMC
- Sept. 25: South District—St. Matthew's UMC Valley Forge
- Sept. 27: West District—Ruhl's UMC Manheim
- Oct 1: North District (Eastern Region)—Effort UMC
- Oct. 3: North District (Western Region)—First UMC Pottsville

All town hall meetings are 6:30 to 8:30 PM.

*Faithfully Yours,
Peggy A. Johnson*



RALLY TO RECOVER--continued from page 1

is working with the mayor and other borough leaders to facilitate recovery efforts.

Simcox and West District Disaster Response Coordinator Dwain Hotstetter are offering recovery support, along with the Rev. Steve Morton, North District Superintendent. And a \$10,000 grant from UMCOR (UM Committee on Relief) is helping address “unmet needs” That includes temporary shelter assistance for residents flooded out of their homes.

Still, with residents trying to overcome the destruction and depression caused by back-to-back storms, more funds are needed, along with more hands-on help from kind-hearted, Christ-minded volunteers.

Donations to the conference's **Disaster Recovery Advance Special Fund (Project #0345)** can be addressed and sent to the Conference Treasurer's Office, Eastern PA Conference UMC, P.O. Box 820, Valley Forge, PA 19482. Gifts may be designated for “North District Flood Relief.”

In addition, Simcox urges “any teams or individuals with disaster recovery cleanup experience, please contact me.” Contact him at drc@epaumc.org or 610) 427-0470.

Simcox says the conference may be lacking in volunteers trained and

recently credentialed to do Early Response Team (ERT) disaster recovery work. That's why he is eager to teach a second all-day ERT class on Saturday, October 20, at Otterbein UMC in Lancaster. He just taught one for eight students on Saturday, July 14, at West Lawn UMC in Reading, and hope more will sign up for the next one.

Volunteers in Mission (VIM) teams will be needed later for the rebuilding phase. Just like in July, the Rev. Russell Atkinson, conference VIM Coordinator, will facilitate a simultaneous VIM Team Leader class alongside the ERT training.

Hotstetter and the Rev. Rick Rimert, conference Disaster Response Spiritual Care Coordinator, spent time with residents one recent evening, talking especially with children, some of whom seemed traumatized by the repeated storms and repeated losses of appliances, furniture, clothing and other belongings.

“We did a lot of listening, which is about all we could do at that point” said Rimert, who noticed a worried woman constantly watching the overcast sky.

“The emotional and spiritual counseling was draining, not with the adults but with the children,” recalled Hotstetter, who lives in the Lebanon area. “The children are hurting and don't know how to express their feelings. They have seen these floods destroy their happiness in their family and their community. Some just want to give up.”

“I told the families we would try to be a regular presence as much as possible,” said Rimert, a longtime emergency chaplain and pastor of two churches in Conestoga, Pa. But more chaplains and pastoral counselors are needed.

Bishop Peggy Johnson visited St. John's UMC in Tremont on Sunday, August 26, for worship, before also visiting members of First UMC in Port Carbon, another church trying to serve its hard-hit community. Both small churches are rallying members and neighbors in big ways with solace, support and opportunities to serve.

St. John's 10 members, led by their part-time pastor, the Rev. Ken Edwards, have recently questioned the church's purpose and value to its community. But members hosted about 150 guests Saturday, August 18, “for an impromptu lunch for the community and volunteers,” said Suzanne Schach. “We ended up serving about 200 meals, including home deliveries.

“Food was brought in by several members of the church and community and local businesses,” she reported to Simcox. “Our church hasn't been that full of people since I got married there an

eternity ago. It was awesome to see. I can't thank you guys enough for your support.”

The church, now a center of volunteer activity with a renewed sense of purpose, hosted an encore luncheon on Saturday, August 25.

North District Superintendent Steve Morton and District Assisting Elder the Rev. Jennifer Freymoyer spent August 15 visiting St. John's and UM churches in other “storm-ravaged communities”: Pine Grove, St. Clair and Port Carbon. Morton called it “a beautiful but heart-breaking afternoon.”

Bishop Johnson also visited St. John's Tremont for worship and then First UMC Port Carbon, both on Sunday, August 26.



Leaders of the Tremont disaster recovery team met August 3 at St. John's UMC: (from left) Robert Simcox, Suzanne Schach, the Rev. Ken Edwards, Dwain Hotstetter and the Rev. Rick Rimert.

Churches, communities of hope 'make room for a new future'

BY THE REV. JENNIFER FREYMOYER
ASSISTING ELDER, NORTH DISTRICT
PASTOR, SHOEMAKERSVILLE: SALEM UMC



On August 15, the Rev. Steve Morton and I traveled to some of the churches and towns most affected by the flooding in our North District. I've been in disaster areas before; but I was still surprised by the scope and depth of the complete devastation we encountered.

Once again, I was reminded that for each image and story on the news, there are hundreds more that remain underneath the surface. Each paved street that, after flooding, now looks like a dirt road leads to person after person who spent the morning of Aug 13 wondering when the chaos would stop and wondering what would be left.

Each washer, dryer, refrigerator, mattress or box of clothing (literally lined up outside home after home) represents a story of hard work—of friends, neighbors, strangers and maybe outside volunteers coming together to accept loss and make room for a new future. And for many that we met, this newly forming community of hope was grounded in the church.

We first visited Pastor Lorraine

Heckman at First UMC in Port Carbon. The church was—and remains—on the front lines of this small community's battle for recovery. As the flood waters rose, people sought refuge in the church, which stood just inches in elevation above the houses down the street.

Pastor Heckman and her team of volunteers fed them sandwiches on the first floor—even as the church basement was flooded and church volunteers were uncertain of the fate of their own homes. Rev. Morton and I saw first responders, other volunteers and those affected by the storm come to the church for pizza and cold water throughout the day.

Many anticipated returning for a warm meal in the church fellowship hall later that evening. Pastor Heckman now reports that they are a staging area for Schuylkill County relief efforts.

We traveled from there to St. Clair-Wade, where North District Lay Leader Deb Forney welcomed us, and then to Pine Grove to meet with Pastor Ira Lydic. Like so many others that we didn't get to, these churches sustained some damage (water in one, a large tree that looks like it might fall on the other). But the damage was not as severe or complete.

From Pine Grove we went to Tremont, which was once again devastated by water. Suzanne Schach, one of St. John's UMC's key church leaders, gave us a tour of the town, showing us house after house that had just been cleaned out from flooding weeks earlier before being hit again by a more severe flood.

As we walked around town, we chatted with a few residents, heard stories of cars being washed away in a matter of minutes, and saw sheer and utter exhaustion on the faces of survivors. One resident told us she, her daughter and granddaughter had lost all their clothing. As she shared her story, I kept hearing the poignant refrain from our scriptural tradition of the Psalms: “How long, O Lord...”

And as I watched Suzanne, a local leader empowered by her church and our district to provide tangible, immediate assistance to those in need, I was reminded that all of our Lament Psalms, save one, include affirmations of trust and offer praise to God.

Over the course of my adult life, in faithful response to God's call, I have invested everything into our United Methodist Church: my time, my energy,



First UMC Port Carbon members prepare to feed their neighbors during the town's flooding.

my money. I have entrusted our Connection with my children's wellbeing. At my core, I am a United Methodist.

Seeing these churches opening their doors, living into Jesus's call to be the light of the world, a city on a hill, makes me proud to be a United Methodist. My prayers since have been that our churches and pastors feel the strength and power of the Holy Spirit, and that God continues to inspire them to share the hope that comes from experiencing that strength and power with their local communities in Schuylkill County and across the entire region.

Peace,
Jenny

Conference, churches helping Puerto Rico 'rise again'

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

Both the Eastern PA Conference and several local churches are responding to the ongoing critical needs caused by Hurricane Maria's devastation of Puerto Rico a year ago in September.

The has conference raised over \$96,000 from districts, churches and individuals for its Helping Puerto Rico Rise Again campaign. The goal was \$100,000. Now churches are being asked to receive a special love offering on any Sunday, Sept. 16-30, to aid the island's recovery. The dates align with the start of National Hispanic/Latino Heritage Month, which runs Sept. 15 to October 15.

The offering was approved by the Annual Conference in June. All funds will be shared with the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico (MCPR) to support its recovery and restoration efforts among struggling churches and communities.

Meanwhile, the Rev. Nick Camacho, project manager for our conference's response to Puerto Rico's crisis, will lead a Volunteers in Mission (VIM) team of nine lay and clergy members from various churches to his native island to do recovery work there Nov. 3-10. This first Eastern PA Conference work team may



focus on restoring homes and churches in the Northeast region, supervised by UMCOR (UM Committee on Relief) and MCPR leaders and assisted by church members.

"This will be a great opportunity for us to make a crucial difference in people's lives—people who are still hurting but also are still hopeful," said Camacho, who is also recruiting more teams to work on the island next year.

Helping local, resettled Puerto Rican evacuees

And thanks to a \$10,000 emergency grant from UMCOR, Robert Simcox, conference Coordinator of Disaster Response, has purchased and provided 12 beds to Puerto Rican evacuees now living in Reading and Philadelphia. He said the families had moved from temporary shelters into apartments but were sleeping on floors and air mattresses.

Simcox works closely with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Administration (PEMA) and the PA Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD). Nearly 1,500 Puerto Rican evacuee households, with more than 3,400 members, had applied for FEMA disaster assistance in Pennsylvania by June, second only to New York in the Northeast. Other needs are being explored, and churches—especially Latino churches—are being urged to welcome and assist recent evacuees in their communities.



The Rev. Russell Atkinson (left), Conference UMVIM coordinator, listens to Tiffany Clayton of Grace UMC Reading, who attended the VIM Team Leaders training July 14, along with her pastor, the Rev. Jean Howe (right). John Coleman photo

Volunteering with the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico How to Get Your Church Involved

Eastern PA Conference Disaster Response Coordinator Robert Simcox and the Rev. Russell Atkinson, conference UM Volunteers in Mission Coordinator, organized dual, daylong training events July 14 for people who want to become VIM team leaders and Early Response Team members. Some of them hope to use those skills in Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

The conference's new Disaster Response & UMVIM leadership team—Simcox, Atkinson, Camacho and adviser Ben Botti—all helped lead the joint training events held at West Lawn UMC, along with the Rev. Tom Lank, UMVIM Coordinator for the Northeastern Jurisdiction.

Another joint VIM and ERT training event is scheduled for Oct. 20 at Otterbein UMC in Lancaster. Persons interested in growing and helping others through a potentially life-changing mission encounter are urged to register now via the conference website.

Rev. Russell Atkinson wrote the following article to explain the UMVIM process and concerns.

In nearly a year since Hurricane Maria wreaked havoc across much of Puerto Rico, we have watched news reports of the extensive devastation and the long, difficult road to recovery. We have prayed. We have given funds through our districts, the Annual Conference and UMCOR. We have assembled UMCOR cleaning buckets.

Some of us who have lived through storms know the importance of having companions in the journey toward recovery. We want to go help our sisters and brothers in Christ in Puerto Rico.

But how? The answer to that question has much to do with John Wesley's *Three Simple Rules*. "Do Good," but first "Do No Harm."

Let's Go! ... But Wait ...

We must ensure that our partners there, the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico (MCPR), remain in charge of their own recovery. UMCOR has consulted with MCPR from the beginning; but it is up to resident Bishop Hector Ortiz and his leaders to develop their own strategy for organizing the recovery effort.

Of vital importance is that we do not become "the disaster after the disaster." Disaster-affected communities only have so much capacity to receive, house, feed, transport, and supervise volunteers. Furthermore, if our efforts are not conscious of insurance policy stipulations and federal relief protocols, we might ruin our host's chances of receiving aid to which they are entitled. The last thing we want to do is unwittingly place more of a burden on the community.

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) teams work within a tried and true design that provides a reliable supply chain for the resources needed in the reconstruction effort. That was difficult for several months due to procurement and distribution concerns immediately following the hurricane. Thankfully, those problems have diminished or been resolved.

Now Let's Go!

In January 2018, the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico released its guidelines for receiving volunteers. They can be downloaded at umvimnej.org. Some highlights were:

- climate, terrain, conditions and limited access to electricity, team members should be in good physical condition and not reliant on refrigerated medicines or electrical devices like CPAP machines.

Continued on page 15--VOLUNTEERING.



Trinity of partners benefits Puerto Rican church

Responding to dire repair needs after 2017's Hurricane Maria, a 14-member mission team from New Hanover UMC in Gilbertsville and Lampeter UMC in Lancaster, went to Puerto Rico for a week in April, to assist a partner church there, Villa Fontana Methodist Church in Carolina. They replaced its roof and repaired its bell tower.

The mission began with New Hanover's Christmas offering last December, which eventually raised over \$90,000 for Puerto Rico, where the church's new pastor, the Rev Jose "Ricky" Ayala, is from. Over 30 churches were severely damaged by the historic storm.

Four volunteers from Lampeter UMC were also inspired to go by one of their church members, Armando Iraheta, who attended Villa Fontana as a youth in Puerto Rico. He shared his memories and emotions with fellow Lampeter members.

The church plans to send another team there in November. New Hanover also sent a youth mission group to work at the church in June.

Conference offers bilingual Four Stations of the Holy Spirit training

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

The Rev. Gordon Hendrickson has found a new, willing and able partner in his crusade to get more lay people to: 1) pray one-on-one with others; 2) anoint others with oil; 3) serve Communion wherever and whenever people need it; and 4) help those in search of “newness of life” in Christ to affirm their baptism.

It’s called the Four Stations of the Holy Spirit., a new Eastern PA Conference Congregational Development Team (CDT) emphasis. The Rev. Elena Ortiz, pastor of New Birth (Nuevo Nacimiento) UMC in Lebanon, joined Hendrickson, the conference’s Coordinator of Congregational Development, in conducting a second training event August 11 at Bethany UMC Wescosville

Ortiz caught the vision at the first training in January, held in Lancaster, and soon she had her entire, already deeply spiritual and celebrative congregation praying for and anointing one another with oil during worship each month on Communion Sunday. They started doing it with family and friends, then with others.

“I love it when I see the Holy Spirit moving around the church, kids anointing their parents and parents anointing



their children,” she said. Some are already taking it to the streets, offering prayer with anointing and pre-consecrated Communion elements during hospital visits and in other neighborhood places.

At the August training, Ortiz taught the Four Stations concept, background and protocols in Spanish to about 20 lay members, and a few clergy, from Latino churches. Like her, many of them wore New Birth UMC’s new red t-shirts imprinted with prayerful expressions in Spanish. While they gathered in Bethany’s upstairs sanctuary, Hendrickson, the church’s interim lead pastor, taught about 20 more attendees in English in the fellowship hall downstairs.

The teachings were rooted mostly in the Bible and Wesleyan theology. How and why we pray, how God answers prayers, how sacraments can affect those who receive them—much of the lively discussion was about prayer, scriptural interpretation, sacraments and the freedom and responsibility of laity to faithfully minister to one another.

Amid patient listening, there was open, candid sharing of questions, concerns, opinions, suggestions and testimonies. Participants in both venues also engaged in one-on-one practice

sessions, anointing and sharing Communion with each other.

“Come with an open heart, not a hardened heart,” Hendrickson admonished his class members from Bethany and several other churches. Indeed, there were testimonies and sometimes tears among the various “glory sightings” that witnessed to God’s grace at the close of the half-day training.

“I felt a special presence when I was anointed with oil,” shared one woman. “I started to cry because I felt the Lord’s presence very deeply. I’m very happy today.”

Another asked for prayer as she was leaving for Lehigh Valley Hospital to visit a man dying from Leukemia who did not expect to live long.

“This is a sign of hope that so many people are learning about this ministry, especially with all that the church is going through now,” said the Rev. Irving Cotto, pastor of St. Paul UMC Warrington.

“We can’t do what God is calling us to do in our communities without engaging fully in the Holy Spirit,” said the Rev. Helen Adams, pastor of Stehman

Memorial UMC in Millersville. “We’ve gotten away from holding spiritual revivals; and many of us have gravitated to the idea all this is just the pastor’s job. But Methodism began and grew as a lay-driven church.”

As one Bethany layman said solemnly, “I’ve been waiting for this for a long time.”

Hendrickson and Ortiz, along with the Rev. Mike Netznik, CDT chairman, will co-teach a third, Four Stations of the Holy Spirit session Nov. 17 at Bethany from 2:30 to 8 PM. Ortiz will also preach at the church’s regular 5 PM Saturday service.



New Birth UMC prayer and anointing time during worship. Photo courtesy of the Rev. Elena Ortiz.

Conference engages in UMC Way Forward dialogues, prayer

About a hundred people came out to West Lawn UMC August 8 to learn, talk and pray about the seismic changes and considerations that will be proposed to a special session of the UMC’s General Conference next February—changes that could alter the foundational *Discipline* and structure of the denomination. The event, open to anyone in the conference, was hosted by the Reading Mission ConneXion.

“Prayer of Unity, Dialogue of Hope” was the apt name for the gathering to examine and lift in prayer the “Way Forward for the UMC.” It mirrored dialogues with PowerPoint presentations that occurred at Annual Conference in June and at Asbury UMC in Allentown in April. Other dialogues have happened in other places, including one led by Bishop Peggy Johnson in the spring that drew a mostly black audience to Tindley Temple UMC in Philadelphia. And more will follow.

South District clergy will convene for “A Time for Prayer and Dialogue” Sept. 12, 10 AM to 1 PM, at Berwyn UMC. Co-facilitated by the Rev. Anita Powell, Connectional Ministries Director, and the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, District Superintendent, the gathering will seek “God’s vision for our future,” said Taylor-Storm. “We will reflect on our contexts, as we share our hopes, questions and our faith with one another. We

will review the information released by the Council of Bishops, offer resources for local church dialogue and spend time in prayer.”

Bishop Johnson will update conference members on the Way Forward and respond to their questions at four town hall meetings, one in each district, in September and October. (See schedule and locations on page 3.)

The Rev. Jeff Raffauf, West Lawn’s pastor, and Judy Ehninger—both General Conference delegates from Eastern PA—co-led the August 8 event, along with the Rev. Jean Howe of West Lawn’s pastoral staff. They guided an attentive audience through the PowerPoint report on decisions facing the Special General Conference session and actions being taken before that worldwide body convenes in St. Louis, Mo., Feb. 23-26.

While they extended the UM Council of Bishops’ request for daily prayer and its oft-repeated advice for all to maintain “a non-anxious presence,” Raffauf reminded the crowd that such wisdom is easier said than done.

“We have people here at West Lawn who don’t know if they want to join our church,” he admitted. “They’re waiting to see which way the (UM) church will go before they decide. I get it, but frankly, it breaks my heart.”

The trio offered three questions and respectful communication guidelines,

as they ushered the assembled body into an hour of table talks. “I pray your comments will be music to our Lord’s ears,” Ehninger the audience.

Comments were briefly summarized in a report-out session afterward. Among them: “Don’t give up,” “Pray for discernment,” “Love is the key,” and “We must examine our values and convictions before we change the *Book of Discipline*.” Also, “The church must focus on the power and purpose of its unity.”

NOTE: A full list of comments from the discussions will be posted on the conference website’s Way Forward for The

UMC page, found under the Resources tab. Also, Bishop Johnson’s new PowerPoint presentation, prepared for the upcoming district town hall meetings, will be posted in early September. Other resources located there include:

- *The Way Forward Report – Final, English – August 14, 2018*
- *Commission on The Way Forward videos–July 3 2018*
- *The Way Forward Information Background & Updates*
- *Scriptures to Study (Contemporary English Bible)*
- *Reading Materials*
- *Accountability Covenant*



Way Forward dialogue at West Lawn UMC. John Coleman photo

Annual Conference 2018: 'A time for every purpose'



BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. (Ecclesiastes 3:1, NKJV)

Invoking heaven's oversight from start to finish, the 232nd Eastern PA Annual Conference, June 14-16, sought to reconcile its converging seasons—an uneven past, a changing present and an uncertain future—while fulfilling every purpose on its busy agenda.

From pre-conference clergy and laity sessions and opening worship to the final legislative debates and ministry reports, the two-day annual conference, held at the familiar Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks, Pa., offered the usual sights and sounds. But along the way, there were some new twists and ample evidence of the conference's overarching theme: "We Will All Be Changed," taken from the Apostle Paul's end-times prophecy in 1 Corinthians 15:51.

The historic opening worship service featured an on-stage assembly, liturgy and preaching that all emphasized, visually and verbally, the contributions of people with disabilities, proving once again that disability does not mean inability. The Rev. Justin Hancock, a deacon from the North Texas Conference who has cerebral palsy, inspired many with his uncompromising but affable candor in advocating for the church to welcome the leadership and witness of all members of the Body of Christ.

Members hear 'Way Forward' arguments

Also historic was the first evening's



dramatic but peaceful discourse about The United Methodist Church's 'Way Forward.' Prepared speeches appealed for support of opposing plans of the Special Commission on a Way Forward. Bishop Peggy Johnson summarized the commission's work and advocated for the One Church Plan favored by the Council of Bishops. She also explained the process leading up to the Special Session of General Conference in February 2019 and encouraged members to pray continually for a positive, peaceful outcome.

The Rev. Joan Trout spoke for the conservative Eastern PA Evangelical Connection, which favors the Traditionalist Plan to retain and enforce current sexuality prohibitions in the church's *Book of Discipline*. In a polished, eloquent argument, Trout criticized the One Church Plan, asserting daunting risks to the denomination's membership, integrity, administration and public image. But she enthusiastically cited numerous positives in the more exclusionary Traditionalist Plan.

Trout chairs the Evangelical Connection, which also sponsored a breakfast presentation and Q&A session with the Rev. Tom Lambrecht, Vice President and General Manager of Good News, a 50-year-old conservative renewal movement within the UMC. A founding leader of the recently formed Wesleyan Covenant Association, Lambrecht served on the Commission on a Way Forward. He spoke on "A Faithful Way Forward," advocating for the Traditionalist Plan, and fielded numerous questions from the full-house, early morning audience at nearby Arnold's Family Fun Center.

Trout's Annual Conference speech was one lone voice speaking for many. But seven diverse voices spoke for the Eastern PA Reconciling Ministries Network, which supports "inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in policies and

practices of the denomination"—including ministry and marriage. Jerry Noone, a gay layman who co-chairs the network, voiced personal pain and reflection in advocating for the One Church Plan. So did other lay and clergy members in remarks shown on recorded video. The Rev. Sukja Bang also read a statement as part of the assembled presentation.

Way Forward table talks follow speeches

A brief period of collective, small-group conversations then ensued, including one impromptu grouping of Noone, Bang, Trout and Noone's pastor, the Rev. Laurie Ann Rookard.

Conference members pulled their chairs forward, leaned in across tables and listened closely, some with intense facial expressions, as a hubbub of voices arose from over a hundred tables crowded across the vast meeting hall. On-screen were rules to remind members of respectful communication, emphasizing personal responsibility, empathy, self-examination, confidentiality and acceptance of ambiguities, without concern for who's right or wrong.

Participants were encouraged to write down their thoughts and questions on pieces of paper that were later collected and will be used to inform Bishop Johnson's town hall meetings in the four districts in the fall.

"I hope these church leaders will also bring the discussion back home to their local churches for more conversations and sharing of thoughts and hearts," said Bishop Johnson. "As we talk together in gracious holy conferencing, barriers can come down and bridges of understanding can be built."

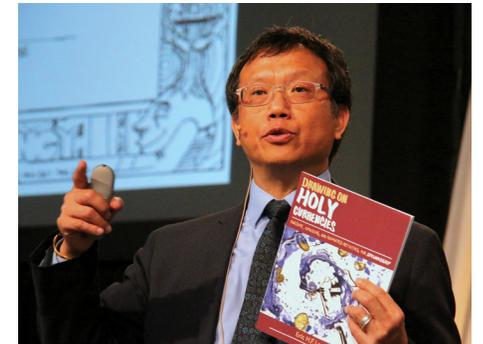
More dialogues have since been scheduled, as our General Conference delegates also make themselves available to listen and share insights. The Reading Mission ConneXion hosted an hourlong session on the "Way Forward," titled Prayer of Unity, Dialogue of Hope, at West Lawn UMC August 8, at 6:30 PM. The Rev. Jeff Raffauf and Judy Ehninger, both delegates, led the gathering in prayer and discussion.

Conference manifests Holy Currencies

In his Friday morning teaching session, the Rev. Eric Law (*right*) explained to conference members how Money, Time and Place, Gracious Leadership, Relationship, Truth and Wellness are six *Holy Currencies* to be used for creating sustainability in mission and stewardship.

But those same values were very much a part of the conference session as well. The staff and members invested considerable time and funds to rent, furnish and fill the Expo Center with about 900 members and guests, all to conduct the

important business of the conference. Part of that business was the nearly unanimous approval of the conference budget, pension and health benefit plans and other fiscal proposals for the coming year.



Law's holy currencies of Gracious Leadership, Relationship and Truth could be witnessed in worship and Communion, in "holy conferencing" during legislative debates on resolutions, including several justice-oriented resolutions, and in ceremonies to honor newly retiring clergy and recently deceased clergy and clergy spouses.

Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi preached during the Service of Ordination and Commissioning and then joined Bishops Johnson and Violet Fisher in ordaining and commissioning full and provisional elders and deacons.

Another highlight of the ordination service was the commissioning of two new, young Global Ministries missionaries, Rebecca Parsons (*below, right*), a member of the Eastern PA Conference, and Brenda Nguwa (*left*) of Zimbabwe.



Another special guest from Africa, the Rev. James Boye-Caulker of the Sierra Leone Annual Conference, also greeted the conference and gifted Bishop Johnson and Dawn Taylor-Storm with colorful dresses from his country. Educated at the United Methodist University in Monrovia, Liberia, and the University of Sierra Leone, he serves as a District Superintendent and Secretary to the Board of Ordained Ministry.

The Rev. Jonathan Baker and Donna Baker, RN, who recently retired as missionaries with the Congo Partnership, gave a farewell report and gifts to the conference and bishop. Eastern PA partners with three other conferences in

Continued on page 10--AC2018.

Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koiko, Pittsburgh Episcopal Area, said in her Ordination and Commissioning Service sermon, "I see a little crazy in the church. There are times in the church when our thoughts or actions lack reason. There are times in the church when we say one thing and then do another. . . . We sing, 'What a wonderful change has come over me.' But try to change something in the church, and see how wonderful it is. . . . God created this universe to be in a constant state of change. God created individuals to grow, change, and evolve. God created organizations to grow, change, and evolve. God created The United Methodist Church to grow, change, and evolve. . . . Change is a blessing from God."



Bishop Peggy Johnson, in her Memorial Service sermon, preached about inevitable change and raising expectations. She recalled the Apostle Paul's message to the people of Corinth, noting, "This church was full of diversity and division, not unlike the church of today." She encouraged listeners to: "trust the mystery"; not fear death, which was destroyed by the power of Jesus; and be "steadfast, immovable, excelling in the work of the Lord."



The Rev. Eric Law (Teaching Session) explained to conference members how Money, Time and Place, Gracious Leadership, Relationship, Truth and Wellness are Holy Currencies or essential, transactional values to be used for creating "sustainability in mission and stewardship." The six holy currencies must circulate or flow among people to form a "cycle of blessings," said Law, an Episcopal priest, author and the founder and CEO of the Los Angeles-based Kaleidoscope Institute.



The Rev. Justin Hancock, (Opening Worship) a deacon from the North Texas Conference who has cerebral palsy, inspired many with his uncompromising but affable candor in advocating for the church to welcome the leadership and witness of all members of the Body of Christ: "We must be a church that accepts as many people as we can hold. We can't afford to be picky, folks. My friends with disabilities aren't waiting on us. They're going to other places . . . to anyone who will accept them. They should be able to find a place in our church. If we are the body of Christ, we're going to need all sorts of body parts."



AC2018--Continued from page 7

the thriving mission enterprise in the Central Congo Episcopal Area. Eastern PA's Congo Partnership representative, Anette Onema-Orbach, joined them on-stage.

Conference attendees hear ministry reports

In other highlights, David Koch was reelected Conference Lay Leader for 2018-2022 by the Laity Session and affirmed by the full conference session. He reported to the conference on lay ministry efforts, achievements and concerns, followed by reports from the presidents of UM Men and UM Women.

Three other dynamic reports captured members' attention with their theatrical creativity:

- Members of the Committee on Native American Ministry (CONAM) performed a lively skit to update the conference on its Act of Repentance progress and to emphasize the committee's activities and concerns and its desire for more congregations to appoint local church Native American Ministry representatives.

- The Connectional Ministries Office reported on diverse ministries happening across the conference and recent and upcoming events using an innovative four-part TV news reporting format. The WEPA News Desk (below) featured studio signage, intro



Dancers from New Life UMC Drexel Hill

music and images, newscast hosts with microphones, studio interview guests and video segments—all interpreting connectional ministries that exemplify the conference's vision and mission statements.

- The District Superintendents ignited probably the most laughter and applause of the entire conference session with their poetic and musical talents on display to deliver their Cabinet report. The Rev. Irving Cotto, outgoing Cabinet Dean, played guitar. The Rev. Tracy Bass recited another of his hilarious poetic compositions. And all four superintendents, including the Revs. Bumkoo Chung and Dawn Taylor-Storm, sang a rollicking rendition of Johnny Cash's classic "I've Been Everywhere, Man," changing the song's lyrics to offer a winding, rhyming travelogue of their many journeys among towns and cities across their far-flung districts.

In addition, the Rev. Fred Day, General Secretary of the UMC's Commission on Archives and History, and the Rev. Robert Wilt, retiring pastor of Lima UMC, offered compelling testimonies to celebrate the Evangelical United Brethren heritage—including Wilt's own family

history—that is key to The United Methodist Church's legacy.

Music, offerings, creative arts inspire worship

As always, inspirational music filled the conference hall during worship and during gathering moments. The Rev. Eric Carr, pastor of Midtown Parish UMC in Philadelphia, led a young adult band and praise singers onstage, and the Rev. Lydia Munoz, pastor of UMC Church of the Open Door in Kennett Square, joined them during the opening worship service.

Carr also conducted the Philadelphia United Methodist Mass Choir, which energized the ordination service congregation. The popular concert choir, formed in 2015, comprises 45 singers from 10 Philadelphia churches.

Equally uplifting was the energetic music performed during gathering times, as conference members reconvened, by Lima UMC's praise band and young liturgical dancers from New Life

UMC in Drexel Hill. The Revs. Monica Guepet and Candy LaBar coordinated worship again this year, offering artistic, colorful, often profoundly relevant worship elements to inspire conference-goers.

During worship and at other times, the conference raised

\$19,447.40 in offerings, including:

- \$6,323.34 for Eastern PA Conference Scholarships
- \$4,845.49 for Board of Ordained Ministry Scholarships
- 7,511.57 for the Helping Puerto Rico Rise Again! disaster recovery aid campaign, and
- \$767 for support of the Conference Council on Youth Ministries

For the first time members could donate offerings directly to the conference via text message. The text codes are still accessible and can still be used to make contributions even now. Text 610-463-0244 with the amount you want and the offering code (ex.: 100 SCH):

- For scholarships to support ministerial education, use code ORD.
- For scholarships to support undergraduate students, use code SCH.
- For Helping Puerto Rico Rise Again hurricane recovery aid, use code PR.
- For supporting Youth & Young Adult Ministries, use code YYA.

Awards honor evangelism, urban ministry efforts

Also historic were the unprecedented number of awards presented to ministry leaders at this Annual Conference.



Rev. Eric Carr

Members recognized peers for their noteworthy evangelism, discipleship and urban ministry efforts. The awards spotlight not only recipients and the work they do but also the importance of missional values in the work of discipleship that all are called to do, and do well, in service to Christ.

The conference Congregational Development Team awarded the clergy Denman Award to the Rev. Richard Connor, a retired but still serving pastor, and the laity Denman Award to Apryl Miller, Director of



Denman Evangelism Awardees: (from left) Apryl Miller and Rev. Richard Connor

Gretna Glen Camp & Retreat Center.

The One Matters Award, recommended by conference leaders and presented by the UMC Discipleship Ministries agency, recognizes churches that have grown from zero to one or more new, profession-of-faith members in one year. This year Cokesbury UMC in Marcus Hook was awarded for its growth



One Matters Award: Cokesbury UMC Marcus Hook leaders (from left) Rebecca Stevens, Marion Grayson, and Neena Deibler.

from 0 to 7 new members since 2016.

Finally, the conference expanded its yearly Kim Jefferson Award for extraordinary work in urban ministry from one to eight recipient churches, two recommended by superintendents in each of the four districts. While several of the awardees were commended as Impact Initiatives for their achievements, others were recognized as Emerging

Kim Jefferson Urban Ministry Award: (from left) Jane Gaughran and the Rev. Barbara Lee for Fritz UMC Bethlehem



Initiatives for creatively investing vision, talents and resources into their fledgling pursuits.

The 2018 Kim Jefferson Awards for Urban Ministry were presented to:

- North District: Salem UMC Allentown and Fritz UMC Bethlehem for creative, collaborative outreach ministries serving ethnically diverse communities.
- West District: First UMC Lancaster for its Anchorage Breakfast Ministry and LUMINA, a district-wide human services agency based in Lancaster.
- East District: Haven-Peniel UMC Philadelphia, and Casa del Pueblo at Lehman UMC Hatboro, both for their creative youth-oriented ministries.
- South District: the Upper Darby Urban Alliance for The Annex, a new, collaborative café ministry being erected near Union Memorial UMC Darby; and Elim, a new Latino outreach emerging ministry based at Olivet UMC Coatesville.

Continued on page 11.



Kim Jefferson Urban Ministry Award: Elim Latino Ministry leaders (from left) the Rev. Elena Ortiz and Madeline Amil.



Kim Jefferson Urban Ministry Award: (from left) Correen Russo for LUMINA, Rev. Joe DiPaolo for Anchorage Breakfast Ministry and Rev. Luky Cotto for Casa del Pueblo



Kim Jefferson Urban Ministry Award: (from left) Revs. Kevin Babcock and Victor Gimenez for The Annex



Kim Jefferson Urban Ministry Award: The Rev. Navin Satyavrata for Salem UMC Allentown

AC2018--continued from page 10 Conference hears mixed 2017 statistical report

Evangelism and community outreach ministries are key to much-needed church growth, said Gordon Yocum, in his conference 2017 statistical report overview. He cited a few bright lights: reported increases of nearly 5,000 church members involved in mission and 40 members attending Christian

Eastern PA Conference Statistician's Report

- Number of people ordained, commissioned or received into associate membership: 15
- Number of people retired: 11 clergy retirements and 6 "re-retirements."
- Membership stands at 96,120, down 4,028 from the previous year.
- Worship attendance stands at 34,325 down 1,264 from the previous year.
- Church school attendance stands at 9,920, up 40 from the previous year.
- Professions or reaffirmations of faith: 1,506, down 93 from 2016.
- Adults and young adults in small groups: 3,725, down 1,086 from 2016.
- Worshippers engaged in mission: 80,463, up 4,892 from 2016.

education classes.

But most of his stats were dim versions of past years' reports, including decreases in: church membership (4,028); worship attendance (1,264); professions or reaffirmations of faith (93); and members involved in small groups (1086).

Tools used to engage members mentally, physically

Two final bright lights for this Annual Conference involved the use of a new online tool to encourage members' mental engagement and an old, offline tool to encourage healthy, physical exercise.

A first-time use of a mobile event application, or app, helped the conference communicate with and involve attendees in activities—like games—through their mobile digital devices. With information at their fingertips, the mobile app kept members informed about resolutions, exhibitors, speakers, schedules, offerings and other details.

They also found themselves more connected with fellow attendees, as they shared photos, contact information and tweets. And they were enticed to answer quizzes and scour the conference center in search of QR codes in a contest to rack up points and win prizes.

Some of those points could be gained by uploading photos of the Hulapalooza contest, where attendees could get their

hips and hearts moving inside spinning hula hoops. The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits supplied the colorful hula hoops and urged members to put them to good, healthy use, while uploading smartphone photos of their hula-hoop duels to the mobile app to score points.

The artful combination of work and play, mixing serious information and inspiration with light-hearted performances and the quest for points and prizes, may have helped this Annual Conference to fulfill Eric Law's final holy currency of Wellness.

Indeed, thanks to the inclusion of all the currencies across a full, action-packed agenda, there seemed to be "a time for every purpose under heaven" and much that was accomplished for the good of the entire conference.

Editor's Note: Video recordings of this



Annual Conference session are posted on our Annual Conference 2018 webpage and on our conference YouTube page. Also, be sure to view the dramatic, colorful photos depicting Annual Conference highlights in several albums on our Flickr page.

Conference approves justice-inspired resolutions

Members of the 2018 Eastern PA Annual Conference took historic steps in the cause for justice by passing several key resolutions.

The conference voted to cancel all churches' unpaid "prior-years' balances" of apportionments and certain other billings, as of the end of 2017. But members voted to cancel even more prior-years' balances—including unpaid property tax and liability insurance—of 28 predominantly black churches "as an act of justice."

Many churches have large outstanding balances that would be daunting, if not impossible, to pay off. But some of those balances in black churches are attributed to costs that came from being convinced to occupy large, deteriorating inner-city church buildings left by declining white congregations decades

ago. The measure was "one attempt at acknowledgement and atonement" for a long racist history that included segregation of black Methodist churches into the all-black Delaware Annual Conference. Their segregation ended with merger into the mostly white Philadelphia Annual Conference in 1965 to produce the present-day Eastern PA Conference.

Other justice-inspired actions

Among other justice-inspired actions, the conference called on the Trump administration to stop separating Latin American parents and children apprehended after crossing into the U.S. after fleeing extreme violence in their home countries. Members unanimously approved the emergency resolution, presented in English and Spanish, just before the session ended.

Two other approved resolutions call on the conference to advocate against the offensive use of Native American team names and mascots in sports and for protection of sacred Indian sites and reversal of recent White House decisions to reduce the size of national monuments on public lands.

Two further approved resolutions address rampant violence in U.S. society. One affirms the action of the 2016 General Conference calling for a reduction of guns, including assault weapons, and gun violence in America. Another creates a new conference Committee on Domestic Violence to help churches address that concern with more substantive programming and resources.

A third approved resolution urges greater awareness of and support for conference efforts to confront sexual harassment, sexual abuse, misconduct and misogyny in church and society, as "we stand in solidarity with the #metoo movement."

Members also approved unanimously a special offering to aid the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico in its long, painstaking recovery from 2017's devastating Hurricane Maria. Churches are asked to receive and remit special love offerings, on any Sunday from Sept. 16 to Sept. 30, coinciding with the annual National Hispanic/Latino Heritage Month (Sept. 15 to Oct. 15). Offerings will be sent to the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico to support its churches' recovery efforts that will likely last for many years.

Two Way Forward resolutions fail

Two failed resolutions related to The United Methodist Church's imminent "Way Forward" decision whether or

not to change church laws prohibiting LGBTQ members' participation in pastoral ministry and marriage within the church. A Special Session of General Conference will make that decision next February.

One resolution would have the Annual Conference "strongly urge the 2019 General Conference to include in any plan it passes provisions for a fair and gracious exit path for congregations who cannot in good conscience abide by the stance of the church regarding LGBTQ+ ministry.... Such an exit path should allow congregations to leave the denomination with their buildings and assets, assuming their own liabilities, but without demanding burdensome payments to the conference."

That "Gracious Exit" resolution generated lengthy, emotional debate; but it eventually failed by a close vote.

The other resolution asked the Annual Conference to advocate to the Council of Bishops that "any restructuring of the Church in response to the Commission on the Way Forward must actively seek to redress the legacy of racism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, sexism, and all other systems of oppression." It was "postponed indefinitely" after some debate, in view of the imminent decisions to be made by General Conference in 2019.



(From left) The Revs. David W. Brown and Bill Lentz

Churches in two cities partner in (Kingdom) building ministries

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

If you want to do Kingdom-based ministry, you have to learn to love your zip code.” The Rev. Kevin Babcock, pastor of Clifton Heights and Swarthmore UMCs, credits theologian Len Sweet with that axiom. No doubt it means learning to love your zip code’s people, along with their wants and needs, hopes and dreams.

Together, Babcock and the Rev. Victor Gimenez, pastor of Union Memorial UMC in Darby, are showing some love to 19023, at the corner of Darby’s Summit and Mulberry streets. That’s where the tiny, historic church is rehabbing and dedicating to the community its next-door church annex—a once-dilapidated, underutilized, two-story corner building. It will now become a café, a “space for grace,” where they envision serving up coffee and tea, as well as educational programs, community arts and dialogue events, tutoring and activities for schoolchildren, and...well, the hopes and dreams are still percolating.

What to name it? That was easy: The Annex, which they hope to open in the

late fall. And as they continue to love and learn about this zip code through community input and feedback, the plans and activities there will grow, along with the church’s relationships with its neighbors.

“Our church is hungry to do some innovative things,” said Gimenez, a quarter-time, seminary-trained local pastor whose “day job” is helping youth at Catholic-run Covenant House in Philadelphia. “We’re just trying to learn how to do ministry that’s effective and impactful in this community, where we have a lot young people and single women with children.”

With an OK from church leaders, Gimenez brought the trendy café vision—with no funds or knowledge of how to do it—to “Friar” Babcock, who responded with, “Let’s do it!” Both men credit prayer and their close friendship, along with Babcock’s expertise as a former building contractor, for the promising success of their efforts—especially as inevitable challenges and costs arose. They also credit the collaboration of their churches, a \$6,000 Urban Alliance seed grant from the Eastern PA Conference



Carol Caturia, a member of Grandview UMC, is one of dozens of volunteers working to rehab a formerly abandoned house through MANIFEST, the new Lancaster Urban Alliance project.

Urban Commission, their “super supportive” district superintendent, the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, and other friends who are praying for and aiding in the fulfillment of this worthy dream.

A new Kingdom-building ministry in Lancaster

About 80 miles west from Darby, seven Lancaster churches are also engaged in Kingdom-building ministry to show love to their zip code. They too are rehabbing a dilapidated property to benefit a community—in this case, a condemned, abandoned inner-city house that was not selling but was attracting thieves, vandals, illegal drug



(From left) Matt Beakes, who heads IMPACT! Missions in Lancaster, recently greeted the Revs. William Brawner, Eastern PA Conference Urban Ministries Coordinator, and David Eckert, Co-chairman of the Urban Commission, along with Corren Russo, who heads LUMINA. The four toured 112 New Dorwart Street, the abandoned house that MANIFEST volunteers from seven Lancaster churches are helping to rehab for sale to a low-income family, aided by an Urban Alliance grant and other funding. *John Coleman photos*

activity and homeless squatters.

The seven UM churches—Christ, Covenant, First, Grandview, New Creation, Otterbein and Ross Street—joined with LUMINA, a multi-faceted community services agency which the West District supports, to form the Lancaster Urban Alliance. Adopting the name MANIFEST (Methodists Aligned for Neighborhood Invigoration Faithfully Embodying the Spirit Together) they decided to focus on addressing the dire need for livable, low-income housing in Lancaster.

The city of 59,000 residents has a 30 percent poverty rate—over 50 percent in some areas. Absentee slumlords and a lack of affordable home ownership contribute to declining stability, values and morale in communities.

Together, the churches are partnering with IMPACT! Missions, a nonprofit, Christian housing ministry in Lancaster. Since 2013, the faith-based agency, led by Executive Director Matt Beakes, has been buying vacant, abandoned houses in blighted communities, in partnership with a city agency. With help from donors and volunteers, they rehab and sell the homes affordably and offer training to low-income families who are first-time homebuyers.

The MANIFEST partners are working with IMPACT! Missions to buy and help rehab 112 New Dorwart St. for sale to a family, hopefully by the end of 2018. They kicked off the effort with a celebrative block party allowed them to meet neighbors and get their support.

A \$6,100 Urban Alliance seed grant from the Eastern PA Conference Urban Commission helped plant the partnership. The churches and LUMINA have since raised more funds, while recruiting and deploying volunteers to work at the supervised building site each week. IMPACT! Missions provides instruction and guidance for their labors.

“With this project,” reads the MANIFEST statement of purpose, “together we will not only rebuild a house but also rebuild trust and relationships, and begin the resurrection of community.”



The Annex, located in Darby, is another work in progress benefiting from a conference Urban Alliance grant. The project required extensive rehabilitation, including a new floor, and fundraising, all overseen by the Revs. Kevin Babcock (left in 3rd photo) and Victor Gimenez. Gimenez is the pastor of Union Memorial UMC, which owns the next-door property and is dedicating it to be a community café and gathering space for learning and entertainment activities.



BMCR, BUMP award annual scholarships to 3 new collegians

Leaders of BMCR and BUMP (Black Methodists for Church Renewal and Black UM Preachers) held their annual scholarship awards luncheon at the Conference Office in June. They awarded scholarships to three new college students from BMCR member churches: Lea Janay Lockman, Dawnsian Dawson and Jozel Reed. Bishop Peggy Johnson spoke and gave gifts to

the new collegians. She attends the event annually, along with grateful parents and pastors of scholarship awardees. *John Coleman photo*



Summer camps leave life-changing impact

Summer Camp 2018 offered up to nine weeks of exciting, life-changing adventures for several thousand young minds, bodies and souls at all four of the Eastern PA Conference's Camp & Retreat Centers.

Gretna Glen drew 1,267 campers, while Innabah increased its attendance to 523, 40 more than 2017. Pocono Plateau and Carson-Simpson Christian Farm will likely report similar numbers.

In addition, there were many dozens of staff, counselors and volunteers whose lives were also impacted by their work together and their care for so many impressionable children and youth experiencing God's love through nature and nurture.

Gretna Glen shared feedback from some parents in a recent newsletter:

"My girls love camp. They feel God's grace, love, and acceptance through their wonderful counselors every year."

"My children have met so many great Christian role models who have helped them to see that Christians come in all ages, sizes, shapes, and colors. I think that they are happier and more confident because of their camp experiences."

"My children are impacted at camp by continuing to find grace with others - being grouped with strangers and learning how to manage individual idiosyncrasies."

While young campers provided similar answers about the life-lessons they learned and the fun and educational activities they enjoyed, probably most telling was one child's discovery that, "God loves me even more than I thought."

In daily Bible studies, devotions and conversations, three of the camps explored the theme "Beyond Belief: The Universe of God." They helped young campers appreciate the presence of God in nature, in themselves

and in their relationships with others.

"This theme gave campers and staff opportunities to ask challenging questions within our faith," said Gretna Glen program manager Mike Barker. "We might not understand everything in our faith journey. But understanding that we always have more than enough with God can go a long way in the minds of campers."

Each year young campers at Carson-Simpson Farm raise funds in its annual give-back program to help others who have less. This summer they raised funds for disaster relief in Puerto Rico, particularly for Methodist Church-owned Camp Corson, which was heavily damaged by Hurricane Maria in 2017.

Meanwhile, from the wilderness to the water and every setting in-between, fun and fellowship filled each day's agenda. Enjoy some of these scenes of

summer camp, remembering that each picture is worth a thousand smiles.



Conference Advance Specials 2018-2019

Conference Advance Specials is a mission stewardship program of second-mile giving by generous churches, groups and individuals to support primarily local ministries. Churches that want to give to support Conference Advance Specials should first fulfill their primary connectional stewardship commitments to the conference and general church by remitting apportioned funds and direct bill payments.

The 2018 Annual Conference approved this list of programs and ministries as Advance Specials for the year July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019. Churches and members are encouraged to support their good works. The fundraising amounts indicated are only advisory.

Church treasurers are advised to remit contributions through the monthly remittance. Funds will then be forwarded to the approved Conference Advance Special.

ANCHORAGE BREAKFAST PROGRAM (\$10,000)

Applicant: Rev. Joseph F. DiPaolo
Director: Patty Eastep
717-682-9976,
director@anchoragebreakfast.org



This 501c3 organization provides free breakfast meals at First UMC, Lancaster from Monday through Friday, 52 weeks per year. An average of 4000 hot meals are served per month to over 120 people of Lancaster who are low income, unsheltered, and socially-excluded. Social Service agencies are invited to be present as a resource. Volunteer chaplains are available for those seeking spiritual counsel.

COKEBURY SUMMER READING AND LUNCH PROGRAM (\$3,000)

Applicant: Rev. Sandra M. Cislo
307 Market Street, Marcus Hook, PA 19061
610-416-5112. 610-485-6162, smcislo@yahoo.com

This is a ministry of Cokesbury UMC, in its 6th year of providing a 4 week, free

summer reading program and healthy lunch for children entering grades K-5, who live in high poverty areas of Marcus Hook, Trainer, and Lower



Chichester. Funding is for stipends for certified teachers and trained instructional assistants.

EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE SCHOLARSHIP FUND (\$15,000)

Applicant: Lenora Thompson
215-472-8219, 215-666-1000, lenorathompson@hotmail.com

Provides scholarships twice a year in various amounts to lay and clergy persons in EPA who are full-time students attending approved colleges, universities, or seminaries. They must be active members of a UMC for at least 2 years, and they must maintain a 2.5 grade point average.

4th GENERATION CHILDREN'S MINISTRY (\$5,000)

Applicant: Rev. W. Matthew Whayland
164 Black Oak Road, Lebanon, PA 17043
St. John's UMC, 1709 Center Street, Lebanon, PA 17043
Director: Madaline Amill
717-980-7189,
madylove64@gmail.com

This ministry is an outreach to children of the Pleasant Hill section of Lebanon, by members of St. John's UMC and New Birth UMC, who staff the Monday evening program of scripture stories, art, drama, media, and a hot meal.

HELPING HANDS MINISTRY (\$100,000)

Applicant: Rev. William J. Ritzenthaler
7860 Center Street, Emerald, PA 18080,
610-767-6233. ritz007@verozon.net

This ministry of St. Peter's UMC, Emerald, provides food to food banks, soup kitchens, individuals facing emergencies, and food back packs to middle school students. Clothing and furniture are provided to families in need. A community center is run in Parryville with Wednesday Bible study for elected officials and business owners and with a Saturday night Lifetree Café. A teen center is planned for June 2018.

HOPE CHRISTIAN COUNSELING (\$3,000)

Applicant: Rev. Susan L. Worrell
Mail: P.O. Box 91, Unionville, PA 19375.
Location: UMC of West Chester, 129 High St. West Chester, PA. 610-436-9298.

484-732-8269, 484-883-7628. Hope-ChristianCounseling@gmail.com

This non-profit ministry offers professional counseling, spiritual direction, retreat and workshop facilitation and training for individuals and groups by qualified, certified, or licensed professionals and/or ordained clergy who have expertise in areas including but not limited to addictive/compulsive behaviors, mental health concerns, grief, loss, life transitions, relationship issues, visitation ministry, and small group ministry. Service is available to all regardless of ability to pay a full fee.

LIGHT OF MARNIE (\$10,000)

Applicants: Jennifer and John Lafferty
John: 610-470-1369,
JohnL@lightofmarnie.org.
Jennifer: 610-766-0944,
JenL@lightofmarnie.org
Office: 610-384-4228

SHALOCA Christian Academy is an elementary school, grades K-6, in Liberia, West Africa, providing basic education and Christian education for 75-100 children annually for over 10 years. The ministry will be working with the government of Liberia to bring clean piped water to the school property, and raising funds to install bathrooms. The Board of Directors does fundraising through presentations to churches and community groups to urge support for the school. Rev. James Coleman, founder and President of SHALOCA Ministries is a member of First Media UMC. Light of Marnie is supported by Thorndale UMC.

LUMINA (\$10,000)

Applicant: Correen M. Russo
20 E. Clay Street, Lancaster, PA

17602, 717-394-8412, 717-808-8633, correen.lumina@gmail.com

This ministry serves nearly 1,000 economically disadvantaged individuals in Lancaster annually using volunteers from 75 churches in West District. The program has 3 focus areas:

Children: weekly Kids' Nights, summer day camp, field trips, scholarships for residence camps.

Clothing: professional for work and school uniforms.

Nutrition education.

SHORES OF GRACE (\$5,000)

Applicant: Luke Billman
2223 E. York Road, Philadelphia, PA 19125, 215-259-3554, 267-549-1746, luke@shoresofgrace.com

This ministry is primarily with victims of sex-trafficking, prostitution and abuse, providing a safe house and education, worship and counsel with the goal of bringing the love of God to those who are trapped in this vicious cycle in the city of Philadelphia.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL MINISTRIES (\$10,000)

Applicant: Rev. Sara Davis-Shappell
P.O. Box 724 Southeastern PA 10399,
610-873-3988, 610-873-8328, 610-613-6253 SpiritualRM@aol.com

This ministry celebrates 25 years as a growing and integral part of EPC, providing retreats, spiritual direction, seminars, prayer circles, and preaching. Financial donations are used for scholarships to companion churches, groups, and individuals desiring to deepen their relationship with God in Jesus Christ and overcome racism, poverty, and injustice which are destructive to relationships with God, others, and self.

Domestic Violence: The Faith Community Responds with The Rev. Lydia Mulkey

FaithTrust 
INSTITUTE

Saturday, November 17th, 2018

9 AM – 2 PM at West Lawn UMC, Reading, PA

\$15 to register by November 1.

\$20 to register after November 1.

Register online at eiseverywhere.com/dvfaith

Offering .20 CEUs for this event. Both laity and clergy are urged to attend. The conference Board of Ordained Ministry endorses this training event and highly recommends it to clergy.

VOLUNTEERING--Continued from page 5

- at churches or Methodist camp & retreat facilities around the island.
- be provided by the Methodist Church there.

Initially, trained Early Response Teams were invited with the expectation that regular rebuilding teams would be scheduled later. But the church soon began scheduling VIM teams regardless of ERT training. They have the capacity to host 5-6 teams at a time and are now

scheduling teams for this fall into next year.

Remember that recovering from a storm of this magnitude will require volunteers for up to 10 years. As United Methodists, we need to be committed for the long haul. UMCOR and UMVIM are known for remaining to help disaster-affected communities long after other relief organizations have fulfilled their

mandates and left.

The Process

Should you or your church be interested in serving in Puerto Rico's recovery effort, the first step is to contact me. As your conference UMVIM coordinator. Email me at ratkinson@epaumc.org. I can answer your initial questions and get you started.

If you are an individual or do not have enough people to make up a full team, I can connect you with other like-minded people in the conference to combine your efforts. Another helpful contact is the Rev. Nick Camacho, our Conference Puerto Rico Recovery Support Coordinator

Once you fill out an online "Intent to Serve" form our partners in Puerto Rico can assess when and where to deploy you. UMCOR's U.S.-based scheduler will confirm that you meet the criteria set by the MCPR and help firm up the dates and venue for your service. From that point on, your team will be handled by the amazing team that Bishop Ortiz has assembled in Puerto Rico.

Church-to-Church partnerships

Some of our EPA Conference churches, pastors, and laypeople already have relationships with churches in Puerto Rico. If you

plan to arrange your own visit directly with a local church, please make sure you still connect through our system and notify us of your plans and actions. Sidestepping the system that the MCPR has put in place can strain already scarce resources and create unnecessary competition for teams and resources within their church.

Answers to some Frequently Asked Questions:

Do I need a passport?

No. Puerto Rico is a U.S. Territory and its citizens are U.S. citizens. You do not need a passport to visit, and Puerto Ricans do not need a passport to come to the mainland.

How much will it cost?

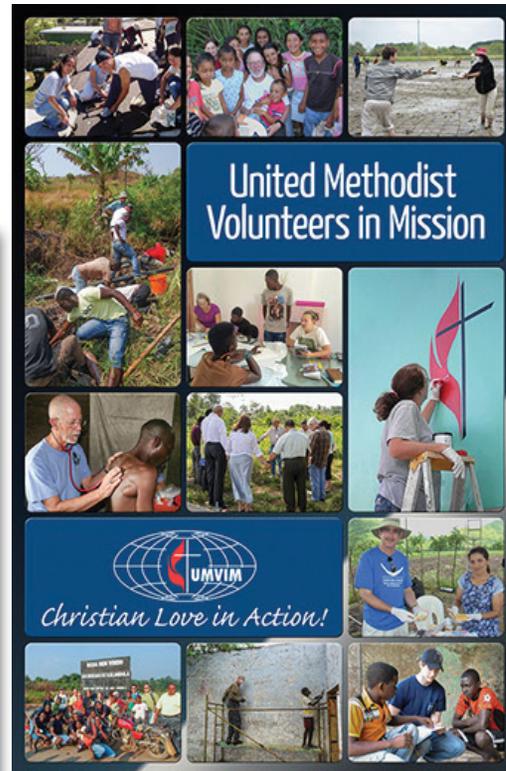
It depends on the size of your team, but a ballpark figure would be \$1000-\$1250 per person, assuming a \$500 plane ticket.

Can I bring my youth mission team?

Not yet. The current guidelines only allow for team members 18 years and older. As the recovery progresses, this guideline may change.

Do I need specific skills?

All team members are welcome as long as they meet the criteria of the MCPR. However, certain skills are highly valued such as masonry, roofing, electrical, and particularly the ability to work with metal roof trusses.



In Memoriam

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

The Rev. Cecil P.E. Pottieger

The Rev. Dr. Cecil P. E. Pottieger, 94, passed away on July 5, 2018. He was a Retired Elder of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference. Prior to his retirement in 1990, Rev. Pottieger served the following E. PA Conference Churches & Extension Ministries: New Berlinville: St. Andrew; Middle Creek; Ackermanville; Saylorsburg: St. Peter's; Telford: Grace; Extension Ministry (Dir. of High Rise Apt., Rockville, MD); Extension Ministry (Exec. Staff EUB, BNM, Dayton Ohio); Extension Ministry (Exec. Staff, NYC, BOGM, Nat'l Div. Urban); Phila.: Roxborough, First; Media: First.

He is survived by his wife, Doris, their two children-son, Donald Pottieger, and daughter, Cheryl Enders-as well as 6 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

The Rev. Barbara Housley

The Rev. Barbara Housley, Doylestown, Pa., a retired Elder in the Eastern PA Conference passed away June 22, 2018. She served Grove and Mountainhome UMCs, prior to her retirement in 2014.

The Rev. Albert Schell, Jr.

The Rev. Albert Schell, Jr., retired local pastor, passed away on August 20, 2018. Prior to his retirement in 2016, he served the following Eastern PA Conference Churches: Shamokin: Emmanuel, Shamokin: Zion, and Trevorton.

Rev. Schell is survived by his wife of 47 years, Mrs. Marlene Schell. Her address is: 25 21st Street, Coal Township, PA 17866. Other survivors include his daughter, Jennifer L. Schell, his son-in-law, Raymond Garancosky Jr., two grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

Conference prepares for move to HealthFlex

BY NANCYJO FIELDING
CONFERENCE HEALTH & PENSION BENEFITS OFFICER

The Eastern PA Conference elected at their June Annual Conference to move to the HealthFlex plan offered through Wespeth in January 2019. ControlHealthFlex Exchange is a private exchange model that maximizes participants' flexibility to choose HealthFlex plans that best fit their needs, while helping UMC conferences/employers manage volatility in the cost of providing health benefits.

In late August, eligible members will begin to receive information from Wespeth in preparation for our open enrollment meetings in September and October. It is very important to take time to register for one of the offered meetings to hear about the choices and cost sharings that are available to you in 2019 and the open enrollment process itself.

ALL eligible members need to participate and complete an open enrollment form online. Those who have waived in the past need to waive again with a new HealthFlex waiver form. Any eligible member who does not sign up for a plan, or waive coverage, will be AUTOMATICALLY enrolled in the default plan (Bronze) with no eligibility for HSA contributions.

Open Enrollment is October 31 - November 15, 2018. At the meetings held throughout the conference, you will be introduced to the ALEX system that assists you in making the right benefit choice for you and your family. You will be able to work with ALEX up to and including the open enrollment window.

This year, for the first time, we are offering interpretive services, if requested, for both Spanish- and Korean-speaking members. We also have some literature in Spanish and 800 numbers for interpretive services to assist with open enrollment choices. You must register and request this service if needed.

More information will be coming as we move closer to the open enrollment window. Here is a schedule of open enrollment meetings:

26 Sep. - 10:00 AM - Downingtown UMC: eiseverywhere.com/2019-downingtwn

26 Sep. - 2:00 PM - EPA Conference Office: eiseverywhere.com/2019-epa

27 Sep. - 10:00 AM - Simpson House: eiseverywhere.com/2019-simpson



28 Sep. - 10:00 AM - Lititz: Faith UMC: eiseverywhere.com/2019-faith

28 Sep. - 2:00 PM - Gretna Glen Camp & Retreat Center: eiseverywhere.com/2019-gretna

9 Oct. - 2:00 PM - Schuylkill Haven Area (Location TBD): eiseverywhere.com/2019-schuylkill

10 Oct. - 10:00 AM - Pocono Plateau Camp & Retreat Center: eiseverywhere.com/2019-pocono

10 Oct. - 2:00 PM - Allentown: Emmanuel UMC: eiseverywhere.com/2019-allentown

11 Oct. - 11:00 AM - Warminster: St. Andrews UMC: eiseverywhere.com/359021



LAITY ACADEMY--Continued from page 1

Prayer Count). I would take it again. "This academy did its job of 'Passing it on,'" said first-time academy dean Rick Wrisley, drawing from the 2018 academy theme, "Pass It On: Spreading God's Word through Action," inspired by 2 Timothy 2:2. "The word was shared and passed onto many that weekend," he said. "There was a level of energy present that neither I nor longtime instructors had seen in recent memory."

"God, Christ and the Holy Spirit were at work throughout the event," recalled West District Lay Leader Sue Grimm

Mattox. "There were tears of joy and sorrow, hugs and smiles. Yes, the energy was overflowing! I will continue to encourage laity from the West District to participate in Laity Academy."

The planning team, including some new members, chose a new location and offered several new courses and instructors.

The 12 courses fit within the Christ Servant Ministry (CSM) categories, including the Basic Course and Leading, Caring and Speaking advanced courses.

The Basic Course ("The Journey Begins"), taught by Judy Ehninger, is a first step in the Christ Servant Ministry program for those who are ready to explore God's call in their lives and may



even be interested in becoming a Certified Lay Minister.

About 1,400 people have taken the Basic Course in Eastern PA over the years, according to Ehninger, and about 550 are Christ Servant Ministers currently. There are 71 trained Certified Lay Ministers in the conference, 52 of them active, and 14 are serving as pastors.

Other courses included:

- Speaking 1 and 2, which teaches preaching skills.
- The Speaking 1 course was also offered in Spanish (Hablando 1) for the first time ever.
- Emotional Intelligence: A Blueprint for Your Spiritual Path.
- Timeless Spiritual Gifts in a 21st Century Context
- Let Your Light So Shine: Maximize your Message and Ministry through Media and Marketing
- Making Every Prayer Count: Moving from ME to WE,
- Disability Ministry and the Body of Christ
- Pastoral Care: What to Say to People Who Are Hurting
- Addiction Recovery through the Power of Prayer
- Restorative Justice: Creating Stations of Hope

Two nights of diverse sounds of praise music entertained and inspired

attendees. Threefold Blessing, a local vocal ensemble, opened the event on Friday night. The family and friends were close-knit members of the Praise and Worship Team at historic Alice Focht Memorial UMC in Birdsboro, which closed in April 2017. Despite their disappointment, they have continued to share their ministry in song and testimony.

The popular, local Caribbean Steel Rhythms enthused the gathering with their upbeat, celebrative musical sound on Saturday night. They played a variety of hymns and other uplifting songs, inspiring listeners to join in dance and even form a conga line that snaked around the sanctuary. They rehearse and play monthly at Christ UMC in Easton, where they were formed in 2007.

The Academy announced that their Walter King Award, given annually to a dedicated Christ Servant Minister, would go to Jean Kershaw of New Vision UMC in Philadelphia.

And students from the Speaking 2 class joined their instructor, the Rev. Lloyd Speer, and Quakertown UMC's praise band in leading worship, participating in a dramatic sermon and serving Communion on Sunday morning before the gathering adjourned.

*Be sure to view more photos in our conference Flickr page's **Academy for Laity** photo album.*

2018 Mission u offers learning and doing

A faithful response to the question "What About Our Money?" was what some adults and a handful of youth learned at the UM Women's Mission u, held July 20-21 at The Inn at Reading. Also explored were the topics "Embracing Wholeness: An Earth Perspective for Covenantal Living" and "Missionary Conferences of the UMC."

But along with the learning, there was doing for 17 members who experienced the annual academy's first Ubuntu mission outing. They journeyed to Reading's Hope Rescue Mission, where they hung decorations to help the mission celebrate Christmas in July. They also dusted shelves and served food to clients; and they collected \$110 among themselves to help repair a broken refrigerator.

Newly commissioned Deaconess Barbara Drake led the expedition; and Jean Twardzik succeeded her as Mission u Dean this year. The UMW also promoted their Living Wage for All Campaign and other causes.

Their next big event is their 45th Annual Celebration, October 20, 8 AM-3 PM, at First UMC Lansdale, where they will welcome keynoter Deaconess Clara Ester, a longtime civil rights activist and justice advocate from Alabama.

