

2020 Eastern PA Annual Conference Report Worksheet

Name of conference: Eastern Pennsylvania Conference

Location of conference gathering: Business session on Zoom. Ordination & Commissioning and Memorial services at Olivet UMC in Coatesville, PA

Dates of conference gathering: October 13 (business session) and Oct. 14 (Ordination & Commissioning and Memorial services)

Did the coronavirus change the dates or how the conference met: Yes. We changed our dates to the fall, met on Zoom and used eBallot for secure electronic voting. We also voted in a preliminary online session to temporarily change our conference rules re: legislation—i.e., to meet and vote electronically and to hold all non-essential resolutions until 2021.

Officiating bishop: Bishop Peggy Johnson

Guest speakers and memorable points or quotes by speakers: Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi of the Pittsburgh Area preached at our Ordination & Commissioning Service. See [AC2020 worship story](#) (“[Words of worship witness to unity, leadership, sacrifice](#)”) for quotes.

Bishop Peggy Johnson preached an opening sermon (“[Knitted Together in Love](#)”). Regarding the denomination’s unity, even as it moves steadily toward division in 2021, she spoke of the Apostle Paul’s efforts to calm dissent among the early Christian churches. *“Paul spent much time... calling the church to be united in love,” she said. “Love was the secret sauce and always will be.” She described plans for denominational division as “a failure of love and the relationship-building that love calls us to do.*

“Our annual conference has been involved in much encouraging, loving outreach this year; and I thank God for the connectional system that enables even more good community outreach,” she said. “If this pandemic has shown me anything,” said the bishop, “it has shown that we are better together.”

Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi preached a call to bold, unifying leadership that is wholly dependent on God in her message at the Service of Ordination and Commissioning.

“I know you didn’t pick this time for you to be ordained or commissioned. ...But God did. The God... who prescribed that for everything there is a season, a time for every matter under heaven, determined that this season of COVID-19, racial unrest and denominational turmoil would be the season for you to be blessed by the church to lead the church. So how do you lead in such a time as this?”

“If you feel inadequate and ill-prepared and not up to the task,” she told the group of new elders and deacons, “let me assure you that under the power of your skills and degrees, you are not prepared. But... God’s infinite mercy and grace has equipped you to do the job to which God has called you...”

“You are our Jeremiahs,” she proclaimed, recalling the prophet who helped encourage his people to remember Zion and to survive their exile and captivity in Babylon. “You are our Ezekiels and our Second Isaiahs. You are the prophets of our day, our time, and you are to speak hope into the world. Remind the world there is hope in the church. And remind the church there is hope in the world. We

need you to keep us grounded in a hopeful imagination and dare to believe that someday we're going to get back home."

Main actions enacted by the conference: See AC2020 story: [2020 Conference uses little time to make big decisions](#) Nine time-sensitive 2020 Resolutions were presented and passed. (Other 2020 resolutions not presented to this session may be presented to the 2021 Annual Conference.) The Conference approved discontinuance of three closed churches. And two controversial resolutions each drew about a half-dozen questions:

- The assembly authorized Conference Trustees to sell up to 50 +/- acres of Innabah Camp & Retreat Center property to pay off Camp & Retreat Ministries (CRM) budget deficits. (Deficits at all 4 camps were caused or exacerbated by cancellation of retreats and summer camps due to the COVID-19 pandemic.)
- The Conference approved the disaffiliation of Grandview UMC in Lancaster, in accordance with temporary church disaffiliation rules adopted by the 2019 Special General Conference. Grandview has agreed to March 31, 2021, a Conference Trustees deadline, as its "date of disaffiliation," once it has fulfilled all financial and organizational obligations. The church may choose to rescind its request before then or follow through with its departure.

Resolutions or action related to the coronavirus: Approval of sale of 50 +/- acres of Innabah Camp & Retreat Center property to pay off coronavirus-related budget deficits. (See above.)

Resolutions or actions related to the delay of General Conference: None.

Resolutions related to General Conference 2019: The Conference approved the potential disaffiliation of Grandview UMC in Lancaster. (See above.)

Resolutions related to General Conference 2021, including conference alignment: None.

Number of churches leaving conference: One possible departure that is known so far: Grandview UMC.

Number of churches that closed due to financial issues related to the coronavirus: None.

Any special annual conference set: Not set, but we may have one October 2, 2021, to set the budget for 2022, based on General Conference actions.

Endorsement of episcopal candidate: None.

Other resolutions adopted by the conference: Typical mandatory resolutions re: retiree benefits, Equitable Compensation, 2021 Budget and election of 2021 Leaders.

Did your clergy session approve any openly gay candidates for ministry? If so, how many?
No.

Names of delegates for 2021 General Conference, as well as whether they are lay or clergy:
CLERGY: Dawn Taylor-Storm, Andrea Brown, Lydia Munoz and Johnson Dodla
LAY: Judy Ehninger, Krystl Johnson, Ann Jacob and Lenora Thompson

Did the conference have to elect replacement delegates due to the delay? If so, which delegates are replacements and why? No.

Was there a push at your conference to elect younger delegates? If so, how many delegates under 35 were elected and what are their names and ages? Yes. Six delegates to General Conference and the NE Jurisdictional Conf. were under 35 when elected in 2018: Krystl Johnson and Ann Jacob were elected to GC2021. Rev. Hannah Bonner, Rev. Daniel Lebo, and Samuel Longmire were elected to the NE Jurisdictional Conf. Matthew Calderone is an alternate. Ages unknown.

Number of people ordained, commissioned or received into associate membership, and average age: 2 deacons, 10 elders commissioned and ordained. Ages unknown.

Number of clergy retired: 24

Membership stands at 89,483, or down from 93,968 in 2018 (and 96,120 in 2017).

2019 Worship attendance stands at 31,119 down from 31,960 in 2018 (and 34,324 in 2017).

2019 Church school attendance stands at 8,971, down from 9,659 in 2018.

Professions or reaffirmations of faith for 2019: 1,097, down from 1362 in 2018.

Adults and young adults in small groups for 2019: 28,158, down from 30,434 in 2018.

Worshippers engaged in mission for 2019: 18,306, down from 19,148 in 2018.

Submitted by John W. Coleman, Director of Communications, November 4, 2020

Conference Statistician: Gordon Yocum