

Annual Conference to convene online May 20-21

JOHN W. COLEMAN

The 2022 Eastern PA Annual Conference will meet May 20-21 via Zoom for voting members, while sessions are video livestreamed for other viewers on the conference Facebook page. The session begins on Friday, May 20, at 8:30 AM with the Episcopal Address by Bishop John Schol, presiding over his first EPA Conference session.

The Holy Conferencing, reports and presentations, Service of Commissioning and Ordination, and Memorial Service to remember deceased clergy and clergy spouses will all take place and be livestreamed from the UMC Church of West

Chester over two days.

Clergy members and Lay Members to Conference elected by their local churches may register online. The registration cost is \$80; but registration is free for retired clergy not serving churches under appointment.

Others who are not clergy or elected lay members to conference can view the Annual Conference via livestream video on the conference's Facebook page.

A majority of respondents to a survey by the Sessions Commission indicated a preference for an online rather than onsite conference. This will be the third consecutive time that the Annual Conference is held online, due to the still-prevalent



COVID pandemic.

The conference's theme is "Now," drawn from Romans 13:11b: "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now, our salvation is nearer than when we first believed."

Resolution seeks economic equity for clergy, churches of color

Eight legislative resolutions will be presented to the Annual Conference for

consideration and votes. One possibly historic measure seeks to foster economic justice for clergy and congregations of color. The Resolution Relating to Economic-Equity urges the conference to deepen its commitment and broaden its cooperation to "dismantle racism in EPA and create a more racially just, inclusive and equitable church."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Project Restoration underway; seeks volunteers for disaster recovery efforts

JOHN W. COLEMAN

Project Restoration is fully staffed and doing needs assessments, building strategic partnerships, finding resources and recruiting volunteers to help residents recover from the severe damages—physical, financial and emotional—wreaked by floods caused by recent hurricanes.

The three staff members—Denise Shelton, director; the Rev. Allen Keller, case manager; and Daniel Jeffers, construction project manager—are gearing up to fulfill an ambitious list of goals this year. That includes working with 55 families in need of restoration by providing case management. "In cases that require home repair we will directly oversee and organize volunteers to complete the rebuild projects," said Shelton.

Their work is funded mostly by a \$417,000 grant received from UMCOR in December, along with generous donations

by individuals and churches. But while additional funds are needed, the more urgent need now is volunteers, with various skills or even unskilled, who can devote time during the week and on weekends, starting this spring and throughout the year.

Volunteers who are willing and able to help can register, indicating their availability and skills, by using either of two Google Docs sign-up forms—one for individuals and another for groups. Their labors of love may include drywall installation, painting and repair or installation of floors, doors and windows.

- [Sign-up form for individuals.](#)
- [Sign-up form for groups.](#)

Shelton, who became the project's director Feb. 15, is learning systems and forging helpful connections in the multilevel disaster response services community. Meanwhile, she is assessing dire needs in flood-damaged communities, including Eastwick, Downingtown, Mont Clare and Coatesville. She will dispatch a few small groups to Coatesville in April, with other communities soon to follow.

Meanwhile, Keller began in March contacting survivors whose homes are in disrepair and who have unmet needs and may be still displaced from their homes. He is guiding them to resources to address their needs and helping them plan and implement steps toward their recovery.

And Jeffers will assess home repair



The Project Restoration team (from left): Daniel Jeffers, Denise Shelton and Rev. Allen Keller.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



Otterbein UMC in Mont Clare hosted a community prayer vigil for the crisis in Ukraine Feb. 26. The Rev. Ihor Royik, of the Saint Peter and Paul Ukrainian Catholic Church in Phoenixville, spoke to the group, along with the Rev. Catherine Bowers, Otterbein's pastor. Tom Brooks photo

Prayers and provisions EPA churches offer local support to war-torn Ukraine

JOHN W. COLEMAN

Janetta Horbach described to worshippers at Mount Carmel UMC in Saint Peters conditions in her tortured, war-torn but beloved home country, Ukraine, where she keeps in touch with friends and family. She told the Rev. Denny Emrick, who interviewed her in a dialogue sermon on Sunday, March 27, about her people who are enduring constant, brutal, unprovoked,

destructive attacks on their country by Russia's invading military.

With thousands dead, many more in hiding, and millions now uprooted and dislocated from their homes, Horbach solemnly described their pain and anguish, but also their faith and courage. The Coatesville resident, who came here 23 years ago, had met and shared with Mount Carmel's missions leader Kathe Spohn at a Catholic relief shelter in Phoenixville, where

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

APRIL**APRIL 1-3**

CCYM Black & Brown Youth Retreat

APRIL 3

CONAM Spring Meeting: Restored Language + Restored Culture = Healing

APRIL 22-23

Dismantling Racism – Level I – Spring 2022

APRIL 26

Creating and Sustaining Lay Care Teams in the Local Church

APRIL 30

North District Conference

MAY**MAY 1**

District Conferences

MAY 42022 Clergy Session
AC Listening Session with Bishop Scho**MAY 7**

Dismantling Racism Level II – Spring 2022

MAY 10

Bivocational & Small Church Network

MAY 11,18,25

May 2022 Book Club: The Sun Does Shine

MAY 14Transition Workshop for New Appointments Spring 2022
Spiritual Life Retreat – EPA UMW
Relating with Clergy Spouses, Spring 2022**MAY 20-21**

2022 Annual Conference

JUNE**JUNE 4**

2022 Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Workshop

JUNE 11

2022 Celebration of Cultures

JUNE 25

Basic Sexual Ethics, Summer 2022

JULY**JULY 7-28**

2022 Mission U – EPA UMW

AUGUST**AUGUST 5-6**

2022 Laity Academy

Black and Brown Youth Retreat to build cross-cultural bridges

The EPAUMC Black and Brown Youth Retreat, April 1-3, an unprecedented spring gathering of 55 Black and Latino/Latinx young people at Gretna Glen Camp & Retreat Center in Lebanon, is designed to plant fertile seeds of relationship and revival.

The retreat—from Friday evening to Sunday morning—will draw racially and culturally diverse youth of color together from various churches. “We’ve been talking about doing something like this for years,” said the Rev. William Brawner, conference Youth & Young Adult Ministries Coordinator, “because we share some of the same challenges with oppression in our communities.” His other purpose is to invite more youth of color to join the Conference Council on Youth Ministry and thus, increase that group’s racial-ethnic diversity and inclusion.



Rev. Will Brawner

Registration exceeded initial plans, as Brawner worked with the Rev. Luky Cotto, EPA’s Latino Ministries Coordinator, to promote the event. While focused on youth in grades six through 12, young adults will also attend as participants and counselors—especially Latino/Latinx young adults whose earlier retreat scheduled for January had to be canceled due to the resurgent COVID pandemic.



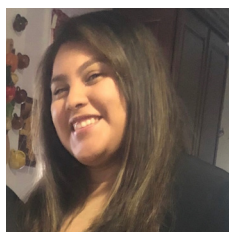
Rev. Luky Cotto

But that canceled retreat provided the spiritually uplifting theme for this one:



“Generation of Revival.”

“During COVID and quarantine a lot of youth and young adults lost that flame they had for God,” said teenager Brianna Granados. “When we asked some what happened, they told us they had become disconnected from their churches, and they didn’t have that guidance they used to have. So we thought to ourselves, ‘This is our generation; this is the generation of future leaders, pastors and missionaries. We have to help our generation revive again and turn that flame back on for God. This is the generation of revival; this is the generation of tomorrow.’”



Brianna Granados

During the retreat attendees will join in inspirational worship and witnessing, dialogues and devotions, teambuilding and trust exercises, and music and meals together. They’ll also enjoy outdoor fun, while forging new friendships during gaga, basketball and other games, plus a campfire with s’mores,

“Scriptures say, ‘And a child shall lead them’” (Isaiah 11:6), said Brawner, who already is planning an encore to this promising experience. “So we want young people to show adults the way to build bridges, not barriers for the future.”



Learn to create, sustain a Lay Care Team in your church

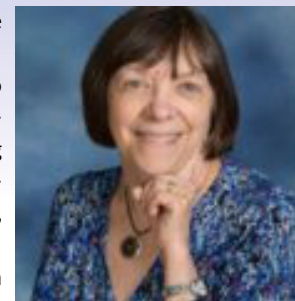
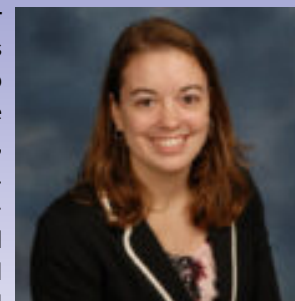
Want to start a Lay Care Team in your church to help persons with various needs? Learn how in the workshop “Creating and Sustaining Lay Care Teams in the Local Church” on Zoom April 26, on Tuesday, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM. All are welcome at no cost.

The Rev. Tawny Bernhardt is Pastor of Children’s Ministry at Christ UMC Lansdale, and Marge Kramer is Director of Congregational Care and a Certified Lay Minister there. They will teach what they know as co-facilitators of the workshop.

Lay Care Ministers (LCM’s) are persons who have received special training in the most appropriate methods and techniques of providing pastoral care to individuals. Learn why an organized ministry can be important for your church, and how to get started.

“We’ll discuss the basic components of a comprehensive care ministry, and we’ll provide resources to strengthen your programs,” said Bernhardt. After attending a Congregational Care Ministry Seminar at the UM Church of the Resurrection in Kansas in 2014, she used their model to launch a Care Ministry program at Christ UMC that same year, starting with four care ministers.

Register now at na.eventscloud.com/laycare/.



Bishop John Schol - Eastern Pennsylvania & Greater New Jersey
John W. Coleman - Director of Communications, Editor
Lindsey Cotman - Graphic Design and Layout
Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm - Director of Connectional Ministries

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

Direction: A Key Ingredient for Successful Leadership



PART 2:

Mission

BY BISHOP JOHN SCHOL

Successful leaders lead toward something. Churches, ministries and organizations without direction flounder and eventually fail. There are three things that are essential to successful leadership: vision, mission and goals. In March* I shared with you about vision. Today I will talk with you about mission.

While vision provides direction and inspiration, mission provides purpose, focus and alignment.

What is Mission?

Mission is used in different ways. We use the word mission to describe an activity when helping others, or a cause or purpose we give money to, or the purpose of a church or organization. In this article I am using the word mission to describe the purpose of a church, organization or ministry.

A mission is a brief phrase that describes the key activity or purpose of a congregation or ministry. It provides what leadership should focus on achieving; and it aligns people, resources and activities to accomplish the purpose of the church or ministry. The following are examples of mission statements.

Recruit and develop transformational leaders to make disciples of Jesus Christ and grow vital congregations for the transformation of the world. This is our purpose as United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania (EPA). The mission statement is the first five words, *recruit and equip transformational leaders*; and the remainder of the phrase is what transformational leaders do.

"Recruit and develop transformational leaders" focuses and aligns people, resources and activities of EPA. EPA is shaping its budget, staffing and activities with the singular question, "Will this recruit and develop transformational leaders?" EPA

as an organization does not directly make disciples or grow vital congregations. This work is done by congregations. Instead, EPA develops lay and clergy leaders to be transformative leaders so that disciples are made, congregations grow in vitality and world transformation is experienced in and through congregations.

Maximize disciple making. This is the mission statement of the cabinet, our district superintendents and bishop, when making appointments. When the cabinet considers different churches and pastors for appointments, it asks the question, "Which churches have the greatest probability of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, and which

pastors will maximize this possibility?"

Sometimes the cabinet is faced with the difficult decision of whether a particular pastor will better serve the overall mission of the church, making disciples and world transformation in one church over another church. But the question becomes, "Which pastor will better maximize making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world?"

A congregation's mission

To know and serve God. This is a congregation's mission. It focuses the time, treasure and talents of people to deepen their relationship with God and to equip and support them to serve God. This is a

mission statement that can adapt with the congregation and people as they grow and mature in their faith, within an ever-changing community as their mission field.

Some churches would like to expand a mission statement by providing further descriptors of what people are to know or the types of service. But this leads to narrowing God's possibility for the congregation, or its ministry groups, or its individuals. The concise mission statement actually expands possibilities, based on an individual's level of faith development and talent, passion and ability for service. It also provides a powerful question for focusing resources and ministry: "Will this better help us to know and serve God?"

Gather for fellowship and learning, and support members in daily living. This is a mission of a small group; and while a little long, 11 words, it clarifies why the group meets. It also provides a paradigm for what they do when they meet: begin with fellowship; engage in learning; identify life commitments in the coming weeks; and covenant for how the group members will support one another in their living during the week.

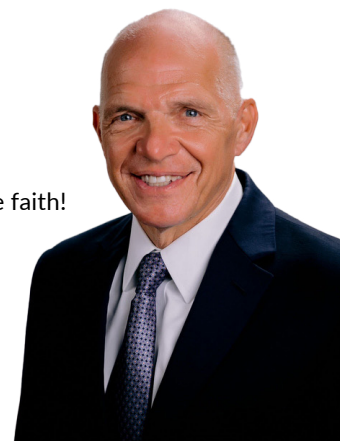
While vision provides direction and inspiration, the mission statement provides what you will do to move toward God's preferred future. The mission statement focuses and aligns how you will use the resources of time, talent and treasure to accomplish the purpose of the congregation.

Does your congregation have a clear mission statement, vision and goals? Are they shaping and focusing your congregation's time, talent and treasure? EPA has people ready to assist your congregation and ministry to shape a mission statement. Contact the Director of Connectional Ministries, Dawn Taylor-Storm at dtaylor-storm@epaumc.org for more information about how your congregation can develop, identify and carry out its vision, mission and goals.

Be purposeful and fruitful. Lead toward your vision, mission and goals.



Keep the faith!
John



* Read Part 1 of Bishop Schol's three-part essay "Direction, A Key Ingredient for Successful Leadership" on the EPA website's Bishop's Page. There he shares Jesus' vision, mission and goals. He tells us what a vision should accomplish—providing inspiration and direction—and how a vision should be articulated and promoted to be most effective.

"Today, the church is in a season of discerning what God has next for us," Bishop Schol writes. "This is a time to discern and reframe God's vision, missional clarity and ministries for a healthy body of Christ. This is a time for learning, experimentation and refinement to identify what is essential for the life of the church, as we move forward with God."

Part three of his essay, with a focus on Goals, will follow in May 2022.

Annual Conference

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

It cites long-term systemic racism, including segregation, endured by Black/Indigenous/People of Color (BIPOC) in The United Methodist Church from its genesis. And it notes the conference's commitment, stated in 1996, "to end the sin of racism" and become "an interculturally competent church" that works for racial justice.

An interracial Economic Justice Council, formed in 2021 by the conference's Commission on Religion & Race, engaged in months of intensive research, discussion and planning to forge a candid report that led to the potentially groundbreaking resolution. That report, titled A Path Towards Wholeness, calls for quantitative goals, strategies and yearly progress reports from conference leadership.



All the resolutions, as approved by the Conference Secretary, were made available on our Annual Conference website for suggestions, questions or comments—all due by March 24. Now authors may submit changes to their initial resolutions, in response to feedback, by April 4. Perfected resolutions will be published on the conference website by April 12, to be voted on by the Annual Conference. See the full list of submitted Annual Conference Resolutions.

Among key actions of the session will be election of a new Conference Lay Leader, nominated by the annual Laity Session, convening online via Zoom on Saturday, April 2, at 10 AM to 12 PM. The annual Clergy Session will meet on Wednesday, May 4, at 9 AM to 12 PM, onsite and online at St. Matthew's UMC of Valley Forge.

The East, West and South district conferences will all meet online on Sunday, May 1, at 3 PM. The North District Conference will meet onsite on two days and in two locations: Saturday, April 30, at 10 AM at Frackville UMC; and on Sunday, May 1, at 3 PM, at Covenant UMC in Moore Township. The district conference will be offered online also.

Eastern PA Conference Laity Session

Saturday, April 2, at 10 AM

- Convener: David Koch, EPA Conference Lay Leader
- Opening Remarks & Prayer: Bishop John Schol
- Guest Keynote: David Teel, Director of Laity and Spiritual Leadership at UM Discipleship Ministries "Near, Now, Here: Adaptive Leadership and Life with Jesus."



Program Agenda:

- Presentation of the 2022 class of Certified Lay Ministers.
- Report on the 2021 Laity Academy.
- Reports on EPA United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men.
- Nomination of a new Conference Lay Leader to Annual Conference for 2022-2026.

Candidates:

- William Thompson Sr. of Wharton-Wesley UMC Philadelphia
- Vipulkumar "VK" Macwana of Morrisville UMC

Register if you are a Lay Member to Annual Conference, including Equalizing Lay Members. Others can view the session livestreamed on the conference Facebook page.



Prayers and Provisions

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Horbach worked for 16 years. Spohn, a volunteer there, invited her to come speak to the congregation.

Horbach, an English teacher in Ukraine, recalled the terror and oppression many suffered there when it was part of the Soviet Union and even under Russia's influence afterward. But in contrast, she appreciated the freedoms

she and her children experience here. She related the valiant efforts of Ukrainians of all ages to survive and to defend their democracy from the Russian military. She lamented the millions who were forced to leave their homes and the suffering and abduction of thousands of children.

Watch a recording of her riveting, 26-minute account on [Mount Carmel UMC's YouTube page](#) (from 5:38 to 32:18, ending with Emrick's prayer).

"Her passion is to help the women and children trying to leave Ukraine for a safer haven," said Emrick. "Our church will support her in that effort." Indeed, the church is collecting donated items to transport to

Ukraine through MEEST-America, an organization that delivers parcels there, even during the war. The church is already providing a long list of needed items Horbach has requested; and it will receive more donations on Saturday, April 2, from 10 AM to 12 noon, and on Sunday, April 3 during morning worship. To help, contact Emrick at pastor@mountcarmelumc.org.

More EPAUMC churches reach out to connect

Horbach's visit is only one example of how EPAUMC church leaders are reaching out to connect personally with Ukrainians living in our region.

The Philadelphia area has the second largest Ukrainian population in the U.S., about 60,000. With the U.S. preparing to accept up to 100,000 Ukrainian war refugees, thousands more will likely be resettled in the Philadelphia area.

Yet, many Ukrainians live and worship in communities further north, especially in the North District's former coal-mining region. The Rev. Rose Marquardt, pastor of Zion UMC in Aristes and Girardville UMC, will make a donation on the district's behalf to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church in Centuria, Pa., during a prayer service there on Sunday, April 3, at 6 PM.

The district has been raising funds to support the relief efforts of neighboring Ukrainian churches. That includes a \$5,000 donation presented in March to the Rev. Mikola Ivanov, pastor of the Transfiguration Ukrainian Catholic Church in Shamokin,

which is sending protective helmets and vests to vulnerable families in Ukraine.

"Father Ivanov tearfully welcomed the support of United Methodist friends for this unthinkable yet necessary mission," reported the Rev. Steve Morton, North District Superintendent, who has spearheaded the ongoing fundraising effort.

"The towns in our district's northwestern corner are home to many Ukrainian peoples, with many Ukrainian Catholic churches," Morton explained. As of March 30, the district has raised over \$21,000 to support relief efforts in Ukraine through donations to such churches. "Because our pastors have personal relationships with these Ukrainian pastors, we have a unique opportunity to...support Ukrainian families and refugees through the ministries of their faith communities."

Morton urges district members and churches to also give to UMCOR for its relief efforts. ([Advance Project #982450: International Disaster Response and Recovery Fund](#).) No doubt many churches and individuals across the conference are doing just that to help the agency work with partners in Ukraine and neighboring countries as they receive throngs of fearful, exhausted but grateful refugees.

Other EPA churches, like Huntingdon Valley UMC, which rents building space to a Ukrainian congregation, are helping to solicit and collect supplies to send to Ukraine. And several churches—like Otterbein UMC in Mont Clare, Christ UMC in Lansdale and St. Andrew's UMC in Warmminster, have sponsored community prayer services to keep the beleaguered but brave nation on the hearts of their members and neighbors.

Please let us know how your church is helping to support Ukraine, whether through prayer services, collection of



Mary Hollingshead (*left*), Christ Servant Minister at First UMC Shamokin, and the Rev. Karyn Fisher (*right*), pastor of St John's UMC Shamokin, deliver the North District \$5,000 donation to the Rev. Mikola Ivanov, pastor of Transfiguration Ukrainian Catholic Church in Shamokin.

donated supplies or other supportive activities. Write to us at communications@epaumc.org or use our Submit News web page.

Here are ways to give to support the people of Ukraine:

- [Online through the Advance.](#)
- By toll-free telephone: 888-252-6174
- By sending checks addressed to Global Ministries/UMCOR with "Advance #982450-Ukraine" written on the memo line. Mail donations directly to Global Ministries/UMCOR, GPO, P.O. Box 9068, New York, NY, 10087-9068.
- By using the [EPA Conference Remittance Payment System](#) for churches.
- Read "[How to assist the Ukrainian people.](#)"



Janetta Horbach talks to Mount Carmel's congregation, as the Rev. Denny Emrick (*left*) listens.

Church food-sharing ministries to collaborate with EPA's help

JOHN W. COLEMAN

Church-sponsored food-sharing ministries spread across our region are feeding their neighbors; and now they have become a "collective," thanks to the EPA Conference's efforts. The Office of Connectional Ministries welcomed dozens of food ministry leaders to a first-time video-meeting on Zoom Feb. 22. No doubt others will join them when they meet again on Thursday, April 7, at 7 PM.*

EPA now has a growing roster of these leaders and their diverse, hunger-fighting ministries. The new EPA Food Pantry & Food Serve Collective will meet monthly initially as it coalesces and then perhaps bimonthly or quarterly afterward. See the directory, which expands the initial directory of food distribution centers the conference created in 2020 as part of its Coronavirus Assistance Program. Read "Church help feed their communities during coronavirus shutdown."

Some ministries have creative, inspirational names that describe their mission: Feed My Sheep, Helping Hands, Lord's Pantry, Garden of Grace, Shepherd's House, Caring for Friends, and Blessings of Hope. There's even the Pop Up Food Pantry at Berwyn UMC. Others are named by the churches or communities where they



Anchorage Breakfast Ministry, First UMC Lancaster

serve.

"It was a powerful evening of testimony, as we heard stories of anti-hunger work from Philadelphia to Phoenixville to Lancaster." That's how the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, EPA Director of Connectional Ministries, described the first meeting. She cohosted it with Deaconess Darlene Didomineck, Executive Director at The Center in Philadelphia, at Arch Street UMC. "We plan to continue this conversation to learn more about food sourcing opportunities; grant writing possibilities and ways to partner in the future."

Didomineck, whose program includes Arch Street UMC's Grace Café, thought an EPA collective would be a good idea. Her program recently received a delivery of donated vegetables that was more than

it and nearby food-sharing partners could handle that day. The food was in danger of spoiling.

"In a connectional system like ours there is no reason for that to happen if we had an email or text messaging listserv so we could be in ministry together," she said. "There were probably other church pantries within a few minutes of us where I could have dropped off those vegetables." Indeed, she said cooperation with other church pantries and food service ministries could extend also to sharing in-kind donations and training together to learn best practices and fundraising strategies.

One by one, the meeting's participants shared basic information about their vari-



Mt. Zion UMC Darby

ous food ministries and their personal commitment to fighting the ever-growing crisis of hunger that afflicts so many communities. Some have been in that fight for a long time; others more recently.

Annette Glover has been serving food weekly to Eastwick UMC's neighbors in Southwest Philadelphia for two decades as director of its Mission House.

Ivan Hanes reported on Lampeter UMC's

small pantry that supplies people with food twice a week, along with the church's monthly community meal. Plus, it shares donated food with other area churches and with food banks at Millersville University and other schools.

"I can't express my gratitude enough for being invited to this meeting," James Lowell, a volunteer at Bridesburg UMC's Community Food Pantry, wrote in the Zoom chat section. His church welcomes 100-plus families weekly into its pantry to "shop" for their food, which is gathered from several sources.

"We are constantly fundraising," he added. "It may be a yearly neighborhood flea market or our annual concert where numerous musicians donate their time and talents."

"Yeah! Let's get together again," Lowell wrote. "I believe that the more we interact, the more we may realize that we can help each other in ways that we are not aware of at this time."

"I'm excited about what God might do," said Taylor-Storm, "as we come together to share our collective wisdom and even dream about what might be possible, as we think about doing ministry in collaborative ways." She offered to set up an online collaboration tool, using Basecamp, for the new collective's partners to easily alert one another about food-sharing needs, resources, strategies and opportunities.

She urged participants to invite others to the Thursday, April 7, meeting and also to join the collective's Lead Team by emailing her at dtaylorstorm@epaumc.org.



Undies for Easter campaign nears its Holy Week goal

The Eastern PA Conference is trying to reach its final goal of adding 2,000 men's t-shirts, purchased and donated online, to its Undies for Easter campaign by the April 11 deadline. The underwear will be given to new inmates arriving at Philadelphia's prison. And with only a handful of shirts to go, we're practically there. But we would welcome additional donated purchases of men's briefs to go over the top.

The EPA's Prison Ministries & Restorative Justice team and conference staff will load a bevy of boxes of donated underwear onto a borrowed truck on Tuesday morning, April 12, during Holy Week, to take to Philadelphia's Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility.

Head chaplain Carmelo Urena, who serves about 6,000, mostly male prisoners, will greet us and direct our truck to a storage facility on the grounds. He

requested donated underwear—about 2,000 men's briefs, 600 women's briefs and 2,000 men's underwear shirts—to be given to incoming prison inmates, along with the inadequate single pair of briefs they each receive now. Yes, that's right: each person receives only one pair of briefs when they arrive.

This is an Easter gift sure to be appreciated by our sister and brothers incarcerated in Philly's prison system. If you want to help, please make purchases via the [Undies for Easter Gift Registry on Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) website. Make sure they are delivered before Holy Week, directly to the Conference Office, in care of Dawn Taylor-Storm. (You should see the boxes already filling up her office!) Contact the Rev. Marilyn Schneider at prisonministries@epaumc.org with any questions. [Learn more about this campaign.](#)

Project Restoration underway

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

needs and provide plans and oversight to help volunteers effectively restore homes to livable condition. Those volunteers may soon be wearing Project Restoration's new logo on t-shirts, as a symbol of EPA's goals and collaborative work with churches, work teams and communities.

"Right now we are coordinating with several agencies to find survivors who still have unmet needs," said Shelton. "Each community we are working in has its own unique set of circumstances, as does each survivor; and we are assessing how best to help—whether that means assisting other groups already in place or taking a lead role in case management."

"When we started this project we expected every case to require home



repair," she explained "But while there are many survivors that we will assist with rebuilding projects, there are many others that our case manager will help in other ways, connecting them with aid that already exists but they may be unaware of or not know how to navigate."

"The biggest takeaway I keep hearing is how much pain these survivors are still experiencing from these disasters," Shelton continued. "Currently, our focus is on how

to best help them heal and move forward in their recovery. We do have several volunteer groups and individuals wanting to join our efforts, but we need more volunteers to assist with hands-on rebuilding work sites and various other organizational tasks."



EPA leaders learning '3R's' of dismantling racism

JOHN W. COLEMAN

Dismantling Racism may start with learning a new form of "the 3Rs": Relationships, Recognition and Revelation. Relating openly and lovingly to others who are different—especially cross-racially or cross-culturally—can lead to honest recognition of what one doesn't know and then to revelation of subtle but significant truths. All of that can be liberating. Or to echo Jesus' words, "The truth will set you free." (John 8:32)

The Eastern PA Conference is fully invested, from various vantage points, in the goal to dismantle racism and liberate us from that sin. How? By doing candid assessments, training and equipping leaders, and making substantive, systemic changes that can help achieve our denomination's mission: "Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Recent examples of honest assessments include the Commission on Religion and Race's Economic Equity Council that intensively researched inequities in the

advancement and compensation of clergy of color, and in the burdens and demands experienced by churches of color, especially in regard to paying financial apportionments.

Resolution Relating to Economic Equity

While CORR actively examines and addresses many racial justice concerns in our church and society, the historic resolution being presented to the 2022 Annual Conference in May, seeking to reconcile inequities in affirmative ways, may be its most dynamic yet. Read the [2022-05-Resolution-Relating-to-Economic-Equity](#) in the Resolutions section of our 2022 Annual Conference web page.

No doubt, that study relied heavily on the relationships forged among CORR members during their monthly meetings and while collaborating on various projects between meetings. Those relationships are leading to mutual recognition of realities in our conference and among its churches, and also a desire to reveal to others what is

being learned and how to make just improvements.

The primary role of forging relationships to foster recognition, revelation and real change can also be learned by lay and clergy church teams who attend various EPA training events—such as the recent *Crossing Cultures: Understanding & Applying*

Intercultural Competencies in Cross-Racial / Cross-Cultural Ministry, held March 11-12

online via Zoom. The long title reflects the long journey required to achieve its main goal: Intercultural Competency, which evolves in stages and may be understood as "the ability to function effectively across cultures, to think and act appropriately, and to communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds." ([What is intercultural competence? - Monash University](#))

The upcoming annual *Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Workshop for new and returning CR/CC Clergy and Staff/Parish Relations Committee Teams*, June 4 (9:30 AM to 12:30 PM, via Zoom), is also a training most advantageous to church teams and not just individuals. And the same goes for the upcoming "*Congregational Racial Audit: Are You Ready?*" training May 7, 9 AM to 12 PM, sponsored and planned by EPA's Healing the Wounds of Racism Core Team. That team, which collaborates with CORR, offers Dismantling Racism Levels I and II workshops yearly—Level I for basic racial awareness and competency training, and Level II for more topical, experiential learning.

'Congregational Racial Audit: Are You Ready?'

The congregational racial audit training will help congregations engage in self-examination, as they "conduct courageous conversations on race." Such conversations must involve relationship-building to help leaders recognize and reveal to their congregations where they are on

the journey toward racial awareness, justice and reconciliation, as they pursue the ideal of becoming "the Beloved Community."

This workshop will help attendees discern if their congregation is ready to undertake a racial audit. It will explore ways of doing an audit and the challenges of following it up with action, based on one congregation's experience of planning, conducting, and "making meaning of a congregational racial reflective audit."

[Learn more about this event on EPA's website.](#)

All of these efforts and more will be reflected in CORR's annual Call to Action Report, to be presented to the Annual Conference session in May and to the Northeastern Jurisdiction Vision Table, which receives reports from each conference in the NEJ. All bishops and conferences were mandated to undertake and report on Call to Action racial justice initiatives at the last NEJ Conference in 2016.

CORR's report to Annual Conference will also highlight a creative witness expression of the Dismantling Racism quest in the form of a song composed by CORR members and friends. It is titled "Now Is the Time," echoing the conference theme "Now," taken from Romans 13:11. Conference members will hear the song and possibly an accompanying spoken word composition. Both will be shared also on the conference website.

Search the EPA website for past articles about our Call to Action reports and Dismantling Racism initiatives. And look for more coverage of recent and upcoming training events and other activities.



The Healing the Wounds of Racism Core Team hosted a Dismantling Racism II workshop titled "Courageous Conversations" Nov. 13, 2021. Their next workshop, "Congregational Racial Audit: Are You Ready?" will be on Zoom May 7.

May book study to illuminate journey toward justice in *The Sun Does Shine*

"And the truth shall set you free." (John 8:32)

Don't miss three weeks of compelling discussion in May about the resilient power of hope and *agape* love in search of justice and freedom, when the Learning for Leaders Book Club explores *The Sun Does Shine*, by Anthony Ray Hinton. The humble but celebrated author himself will lead the weekly book study's first session, sharing his own courageous story, on Wednesday, May 11, from 11 AM to 12 noon, via Zoom.

Two other Wednesday sessions will follow. On May 18 a representative of the Equal Justice Initiative will describe the difficulties they encounter with the criminal justice system as they pursue equal justice for all. The small but mighty nonprofit group, co-founded by Bryan Stevenson in Montgomery, Alabama, provides legal representation to prisoners who may have been wrongly convicted of crimes, poor prisoners without effective representation, and others who may have been denied a

fair trial.

EJI helped secure Hinton's exoneration and release from Alabama's death row in 2015 after he endured 30 years of unjust imprisonment on death row—just steps from the execution chamber—for two murders he did not commit.

On Wednesday, May 25, a panel of faith-based legal advocates will discuss difficulties often encountered with the criminal justice system in Pennsylvania and how you can help make needed changes.

They include:

The Rev. Greg Holston, a former EPA pastor and Senior Advisor on Policy and Advocacy for the Philadelphia District Attorney's office.

Nia Holston, a staff attorney at the Abolitionist Law Center based in Pittsburgh. She was formerly worked for the Defender Association of Philadelphia and before law school, she was a paralegal at the Equal Justice Initiative.

The Rev. Dr. Larry Pickens, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Council of

Churches and a former attorney, pastor, UMC general agency head, and leader in ecumenical and interfaith programs in the Lehigh Valley.

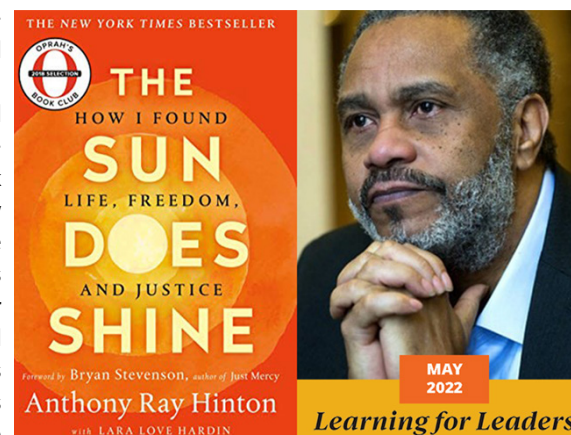
[Download and share the flyer. Learn more and register.](#)

This event is free of charge and all are welcome. It is co-sponsored by EPAUMC's Prison Ministry and Restorative Justice Team, Commission on Religion and Race, Urban Commission, and Congregational Development Team, with additional funding from a Church and Society Peace With Justice Grant.

Get *The Sun Does Shine*, and read Anthony Ray Hinton compelling testimony before the book study begins in May. This New York Times Bestseller won the 2019 Christopher Award and was an Oprah's Book Club Summer 2018 Selection. "An amazing and heartwarming story, it restores our faith in the inherent goodness of humanity," wrote Archbishop

Desmond Tutu.

From Amazon.com: *With a foreword by Stevenson, The Sun Does Shine is an extraordinary testament to the power of hope sustained through the darkest times. Destined to be a classic memoir of wrongful imprisonment and freedom won, Hinton's memoir tells his dramatic thirty-year journey and shows how you can take away a man's freedom, but you can't take away his imagination, humor, or joy.*



Merged churches inspire hope through mission center

JOHN W. COLEMAN

“**H**ope Starts Here,” penned in colorful letters, adorns a small sign on the door of a big room where food is prepared at [Mission First](#), a ministry located at the former First United Methodist Church in downtown Pottstown. And that sign speaks truth in the lives of the mission center, its willing workers and the community they serve.

While feeding hungry and unhoused neighbors almost daily in various loving and creative ways, Mission First also provides clothing, an outdoor phone-charging station, access to onsite medical services, “Lockers of Love” for needed storage, its “Laundry Love” service at a laundromat across the street, and a “Library of Love” collection of books for the taking.



There’s also rent assistance for those living temporarily in hotel rooms, household items for others transitioning to new homes, and so much more. Mission First staff find out the needs of their neighbors—who soon become friends—and then they find ways to fill those needs.

The new hope that starts here was started about four years ago, when the 180-year-old First Church had shrunk to about 30 members and admitted that it needed to close.

“The Lord doesn’t want us to stay in this building for another decade and just be here until the money runs out,” members said, according to Clare Schiller, missions chairperson and a member for about 12 years. They had plenty of meetings to get everyone on board and finally decided to look for a partner church to welcome their members and agree to adopt their large, old, brownstone, multi-room facility as a mission center.

“It took us a couple of years and various proposals to find a partner; but we found Cedarville UMC, about a mile away,” Schiller recalled. The two churches merged May 1, 2020. Asked to lead the new Mission First center, she said, almost in tears, “I had to do it. I love mission; it’s my baby.

COVID pandemic increases needs and mission response

Before Mission First could open the COVID-19 pandemic struck in March 2020, shutting down many places where people could find help. Schiller kept coming to the center and seeing unhoused neighbors on the street suddenly without access to food, water, bathrooms and other needs—even places to charge their phones.

That’s one of the first services she arranged: an outdoor phone charging station, followed by a portable toilet and an exterior water faucet installed by a local plumber. Hotels and hospitals would not welcome the unhoused, leaving them nowhere to stay during the pandemic. Her



voice breaks as she recalls their plight.

Schiller and her team quietly got one neighbor set up in a tent and tried to supply other needs. Before long, others joined him in what became, and still is, an informal tent village, much to the displeasure of local police and officials.

“Our ministry just blossomed because of the great needs,” she recalls. “I think it all came from God, who blessed us with this mission. His work is done outside the church and on the street; that’s where we need to be.”

A cadre of volunteers from Cedarville UMC and other churches come weekly to help organize donations, and prepare and deliver meals, among other tasks. Schiller is devising ways to attract others to this hands-on work—like offering them



Sue Malloy, Mission First volunteer from Cedarville UMC

chair exercise classes, smartphone usage instructions and other activities.

She networks with many local groups—Salvation Army, Tri-county Homeless Services Network, Ministries at Main Street, and others; but she tries to dovetail with, not duplicate, their services. Next she wants to add showers for unhoused neighbors, which first would require major renovation of the basement.

Church and community partnerships are key

Temple, Mount Carmel, Evansburg and Coventryville UMCs are among the other churches she is thankful for in the area’s EPAUMC Mission Link. “All of them come here and bring us stuff and try to help. And



Clare Schilling explains Mission First’s kitchen food.

I try to get our name out there wherever we go.”

Schiller spends time on the streets to identify needs and resources and to get to know people. She appreciates Tower Health at Pottstown Hospital especially for helping to create the community garden and buying the outside community refrigerator powered from inside the center. It’s an innovation made popular in Philadelphia and other U.S. cities during pandemic-caused food shortages. Next to it is a colorful, tiny house filled with free food and a sign that reads: “Give what you can, take what you need.”

Former First UMC members are mostly happy with the choice to merge with Cedarville UMC and create Mission First, Schiller said. “They come here and see what’s going on; and they say, ‘Yes, this is what we had envisioned. We just needed a partner to help us.’

“Our people really sacrificed a lot to give up their church,” she admits. “That was a hard thing for some to accept, even myself. But it was to do God’s work here on the street.”

Now that the sacrifice is a growing success, she hopes “other churches that are small and looking to close would instead merge with somebody and use their building for mission centers like ours. It could be worthwhile.”



URBAN COMMISSION GRANTS-FALL 2021 and SPRING 2022

The Eastern PA Conference’s Urban Commission liked the Cedarville UMC/ Mission First model enough to reward it with an Urban Alliance grant in late fall 2021. Grants went to six Urban Alliances, which are recognized as collaborative endeavors:

- Mission First, Pottstown
- Hazelton Enlarged Alliance
- Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON of the Delaware Valley)
- Manifest (Home renovation ministry), Lancaster
- Philly Clifton
- Young Latinos

Grants were awarded also to seven Urban Initiatives, which comprise six individual urban churches and one urban campus ministry:

- Arch Street UMC, Philadelphia
- Epworth UMC, Bethlehem
- Mt. Zion UMC, Darby
- Ebenezer UMC, Lebanon
- Holmesburg UMC, Philadelphia
- Sayre UMC, Philadelphia, and
- Open Door Community Campus Ministry at Drexel University, Philadelphia

These exemplary, conference-supported urban ministries received their grants in January 2022. Look for more stories about them on our EPAUMC website throughout 2022.

The spring Urban Commission grants application period has begun. [Learn more and apply](#) on our Urban/Metro Ministries webpage. The application deadline is May 31. Awards will be announced by July 1.



EPA gives \$384,000 to missions via Advance in 2021

The United Methodist Church's Global Ministries agency reports that EPAUMC churches and individuals donated over \$384,000 in 2021 to aid global and national missions through The Advance for Christ and His Church, the UMC's longtime primary giving channel to support missions.



Deaconess Barbara Drake (left), our EPA Conference Secretary of Global Ministries, shared the good news of our generous giving with cabinet members recently. She

computed the \$384,050.51 total, including gifts from at least 120 churches, from a report that would exceed 100 pages if printed.

One hundred percent of gifts through

The Advance go to support the intended project or missionary, while administrative costs are covered by our World Service apportioned giving and by the UMCOR Sunday churchwide special offering. (The 2022 official date for celebrating UMCOR Sunday and its special offering is March 27; but it may be celebrated at any time.)

A large majority of the gifts went to UMCOR (the UM Committee on Relief), either to aid international or national disaster relief efforts or to go "wherever needed."

And 10 missionaries received donations, led by Dr. Mark Zimmerman, who received nearly \$25,000 for his work in Nepal. Others receiving support were:

- Deirdre Zimmerman, serving with her husband Mark in Kathmandu, Nepal.
- Mutwale Mushidi and Kabaka

Alphonsine, a married couple from the Dem. Republic of Congo, serving in Tanzania

- Becky Parsons, serving as Global Ministries Mission Advocate for the Northeastern Jurisdiction
- Jane Kies, of South Africa, serving at Africa University in Mutare, Zimbabwe
- Ngoy Kalangwa, from the Dem. Republic of Congo, serving in Tanzania

- David McCormick, serving as Global Ministries Mission Advocate for the South Central Jurisdiction
- William Lovelace, serving as a Ministry to Migrants Consultant in Norway
- Luky Cotto, who served Casa del Pueblo, at Lehman Memorial UMC, but is now retired.



Dr. Mark and Deirdre Zimmerman

In Memoriam

Mrs. Carol Puckhaber	JANUARY 14, 2022
FEBRUARY 26, 2022	Mrs. Eleanor F. Palmer
The Rev. David Briddell	FEBRUARY 15, 2022
FEBRUARY 22, 2022	The Rev. Janet Hess
Mrs. Wilma I. Musser	JANUARY 24, 2022
FEBRUARY 8, 2022	Mrs. Evelyn Ochs
Rev. Paul W. Dissington	JANUARY 14, 2022

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

As JFON's immigration cases grow, so does its need for help

JOHN W. COLEMAN

Justice for Our Neighbors of the Delaware Valley (JFON-DV) has been operating immigration legal clinics for 13 months in three states, handling a growing docket of cases, as it looks for volunteers, especially language interpreters.

The Eastern PA regional office moved April 1 from Historic St. George's UMC in Philadelphia to Haws Avenue UMC in Norristown, relocating to where a large immigrant community can more easily access its services. Haws Avenue Pastor Lisa DePaz is JFON's new EPA Regional Council Co-chairperson, along with the Rev. David Eckert. The program also operates and has councils in Greater New Jersey and in Delaware.

'Good legal advice to over 300 people'

"We have given good legal advice to over 300 people in the past year. Unfortunately some of them have no pathway under current immigration law," said the Rev. Tom Lank, assistant executive director, who manages the



Rev. Tom Lank

programs' daily operations. The Rev. Mark Salvacion, an attorney and pastor of Historic St. George's, led the program's launch and development over the past few years and continues to handle cases.

"We've closed nine cases, and we have 51 cases on our docket," Lank reported. That includes 36 cases of undocumented persons targeted for removal/deportation.

JFON needs more Spanish-speakers to help with translation

Many are refugees seeking asylum, mostly from Central and South America and Haiti, Lank said. JFON needs more Spanish-speakers to help with translation

both on Saturdays, when clinics are held, and during the week for follow-up work with clients.

"But now we're also reaching out to the Brazilian community to find pastors and churches to host clinics," said Lank, because they are in need of immigration legal assistance. "We're also partnering with the Council on American-Islamic Relations in the Philadelphia region to connect with Muslim immigrants in need of legal services.

Since JFON-DV does not charge fees to most of its clients, it relies on support from the sponsoring annual conferences, plus districts, churches and individual donors to cover its costs for running the legal office and paying staff. Abe Hobson is JFON's full-time attorney. He is supported by full-time paralegal John Mitchell and another volunteer attorney and paralegal.

JFON has operated immigration legal clinics at two EPA sites: Haws Avenue UMC, in Montgomery County, and Swarthmore UMC. But with the latter site now closing, JFON is looking for another host church in either Chester or Delaware county by the summer.

Call JFON to host a clinic, provide volunteers, refer immigrants

If any church wants to host a clinic, provide volunteers or refer immigrants for affordable legal services, the new JFON-DV phone number is 814-343-3260. Lank, an ordained deacon and former regional coordinator of UM Volunteers in Ministry, is available to talk or preach to churches about the importance of engaging in immigration ministry for justice and mercy through JFON.



Pastor Lisa DePaz (left), the new EPA Regional Council Co-chairperson of JFON of the Delaware Valley, confers with an asylum seeker, along with JFON attorney Abe Hobson, at Haws Avenue UMC in Norristown, where DePaz is the pastor. John Coleman photo