

## Annual Conference 2020 shortened to two busy days, October 13-14

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

The Eastern PA Annual Conference will happen October 13-14, with a tight schedule that shortens it from three days to two, to save on time and money. But the agenda will be much the same as usual, featuring worship, holy conferencing, conference reports and legislative resolutions, presentation of the 2021 conference budget, ordination and commissioning of clergy, a memorial service, and celebration of new clergy retirees.

The Tuesday and Wednesday midweek dates are the best conference planners could get at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks, where many other spring events, cancelled due to the pandemic restrictions against public gatherings, had to be rescheduled. The Commission on Sessions, meeting May 4, approved the new schedule, which was postponed from June 18-20. All District Conferences will happen on Sunday, October 4, from 3 to 5 PM, in four locations.

Meanwhile, conference leaders will monitor the pandemic safety concerns and recommendations for holding—or not holding—such large gatherings this fall. “Online options are being explored,” said Bishop Peggy Johnson, “and a decision about this will be made by late August.”

The Conference session will begin October 13 with the annual, separate Clergy and Laity sessions, from 9 to 11

AM, followed by service of boxed lunches. The conference’s Latino Commission will lead opening worship, as originally planned, but without a guest preacher this year. The commission will instead welcome the Rev. Dorlimar Lebrón Malavé as guest preacher in 2021 when they will lead opening worship again with a full celebration program.

**Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi**, leader of the Pittsburgh Episcopal Area (Western PA Conference), will preach at the Service of Ordination and Commissioning October 14 to end the session. Bishop Mark Webb, of the Upper New York Episcopal Area, was scheduled to preach at the service originally but has agreed to do so in 2021 instead.



The Rev. Junius Dotson, General Secretary of United Methodist Discipleship Ministries, was slated to teach at this year’s annual conference. He would have likely promoted “See All the People,” his agency’s evangelism and church revitalization resourcing campaign. He will teach next year instead.

The Tuesday schedule includes a boxed lunch and dinner on one’s own. Wednesday’s lunch will feature light reception fare, prior to the closing

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**Engaging  
Communities  
for Christ**



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## Churches respond to pandemic by going online, as some reopen and others wait

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

Members of First UMC Mt. Carmel (*right*) came home for Mother’s Day May 10. With bright carnations in hand, they returned to their beloved, historic sanctuary for worship after a two-month absence during the deadly COVID-19 pandemic that led to closed churches and stay-at-home orders from the state government.

“It felt good,” said the Rev. Kay Painter, pastor. “It did look strange with all our members wearing masks and sitting apart from each other. But it really didn’t feel strange because it was great to be there. And we’re still doing church!”

Other congregations in this northwesternmost region of the Eastern PA Conference have also returned or will return by June 7 to either their sanctuaries or church parking lots for onsite worship. They are in the less-populated Northumberland County, which is in Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf’s yellow-phase of pandemic mitigation efforts, meaning some relaxing of the extreme measures that shut down most businesses, services and public gatherings in late March.

Gatherings must still be limited to 25 participants, who wear protective face coverings and sit at least 6 feet from one another. Other restrictive protocols to avert COVID-19 infections include temperature checks for admittance, no use of hymnals or passing offering plates, and no singing by the congregation which can easily spread the virus.

Communion elements—wafers and juice—must come packaged together and be offered with no hands touching. And any fellowshiping must be done at a safe social distance. More detailed interaction and sanitation guidelines to protect public health are offered in a growing number of resources, including some that are accessible from the conference website’s [Coronavirus Ministry Response](#) page.

Meanwhile, most churches—even in the governor’s



yellow phase of mitigation measures—are wary of reopening their sanctuaries too soon. And many say they will wait until their areas reach the green phase of readiness. Bishop Peggy Johnson has repeatedly advised such caution and told churches to reopen when they feel it is safe for their members.

“Reopening guidelines issued by the state and CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) are still

**Continued on page 4—CHURCHES RESPOND**



## JUNE

**June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, etc.:** (Every Tuesday) Conference-wide Prayer Meeting Online Zoom event: 12 - 12:30 PM

**June 6:** Ministry in a Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Context: Workshop for New CR/CC Ministry Appointments Online Zoom event. 9 AM - 12:30 PM. Friday, 3 PM- Saturday, 7 PM

## AUGUST

**August 22:** Camping at the Crossroads Youth Rally & Retreat. Friday, 3 PM- Saturday, 7 PM. Covenant UMC of Moore Township, Bath, PA

## SEPTEMBER

**Sept. 19:** Dismantling Racism Level II Workshop. 9 AM - 3 PM. Location TBD.

**Sept. 25-27:** Encuentro 2 (Encounter 2) (National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministries) training event. Location: TBD

**Sept. 26:** Emotional Intelligence Workshop 8 AM - 5 PM. Location TBD.

**Sept. 26:** Basic Sexual Ethics Workshop 9:30 AM - 3 PM. Conshohocken UMC.

## OCTOBER

**Oct. 3:** Connectional Ministries Leadership Training Event. 9:30 AM - 3 PM, Cedarville UMC.

**Oct. 4:** District Conferences 3 to 5 PM. Four district locations TBD.

**Oct. 9-10:** Domestic Violence Workshop Online Zoom event. Friday, 7-9 PM. Saturday, 9 AM - 12 PM.

**Oct. 13-14:** 2020 Annual Conference. Tuesday 9 AM (Clergy & Laity Sessions. AC Session begins at 1 PM) - Wednesday, 4 PM. Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, Oaks, PA.

**Oct. 17:** UMW 47th Annual Celebration. 9 AM - 3 PM. St. Matthew UMC, Wayne, PA.

**Oct. 17:** ERT/VIM (Early Response Team/ Volunteers in Ministry) dual training events. 8 AM - 4 PM. Location TBD.

**Oct. 17:** Racism, Post-Traumatic Stress, & Transformation. 8:30 AM - 3 PM. Simpson House, Philadelphia.

**Oct. 23-25:** Dismantling Racism Workshop. Friday, 5:30 PM - Sunday, 3 PM. The Desmond Hotel, Malvern

## NOVEMBER

**Nov. 14:** 2020 Faith-Sharing Event: Evangelism in a Changing Landscape. 8:30 AM - 3 PM. Wesley UMC Bethlehem.

**Nov. 21:** Dismantling Racism Level II Workshop. 9 AM - 3 PM. Location TBD.

## Conference suspends summer camps for 2020

### 'Many tears have been shed'

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

The four Camp & Retreat Centers spread across the Eastern PA Conference have made the painful decision to suspend onsite summer camp this year, which was to begin in June. That action was taken Friday, May 29, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and severely restrictive guidelines to ensure social distancing and other cautionary measures to protect campers and their families.

The camps' site directors arrived at the decision in meetings with their site committees, the conference's Camp & Retreat Ministry Board and conference officials. The officials included Bishop Peggy Johnson and chairs of the conference trustees, finance and administration, and human resources—all stakeholders in the camps' operations.

"This is a tough decision because our summer camps are so beloved and offer such foundational experiences in the lives of children and youth," said the Rev. Don Keller, camping board chair. "It's a real loss to our families and churches, as well as our staff and volunteers who play such essential roles in this life-changing ministry. But we must make the health

of everyone our primary concern and not take any chances with this devastating virus."

Eastern PA is reportedly among the last conferences in the United Methodist connection to close its camps for the summer. The decision was delayed until the site directors received and carefully examined complex mitigation guidelines provided by Governor Tom Wolf and the state's Public Health Commissioner, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, and the American Camping Association, which is the camps' accrediting body.

Summer camps at three of the centers--Gretna Glen in Lebanon, Innabah in Spring City, and Pocono Plateau in Cresco--are suspended for the summer. But Carson-Simpson Farm in Hatboro is taking it a month at a time.

"We will be cancelling all activities on our site for the month of June," said new director Jonathan Curtis. "We will wait until Montgomery County transitions into the Green Phase before we can begin to consider opening our program."

Montgomery County and the entire Philadelphia region move from Red into

the governor's Yellow Phase in early June, with less severe mitigation limits on public gatherings. But even

those restrictions are deemed still too severe for summer camp.

"With all of the current guidelines...we believe that while in the "Yellow Phase," we cannot live up to the rigorous guidelines that have been passed down by the state and CDC without unnecessary risk to our campers, staff, and their families," Curtis explained in a letter posted on the center's website.

"This past week was one of the most difficult weeks in my ministry at Pocono Plateau," wrote the Rev. Ron Schane, Director. "As we struggled with the implementation of the guidelines, it became evident that we are unable to maintain best practices for the safety of all participants."

Innabah, which celebrated its 90th anniversary last year, will close for the first time in its history. But "while this summer won't be the same for any of us," wrote Michael Hyde, Director, "we remain committed to staying

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### ANNUAL CONFERENCE--continued from page 1.

Ordination Service at 2 PM. There will be no displays, nor sufficient time to visit them, this year.

Annual Conference registration fees already paid for June are being refunded. A new, lower fee for the fall session will be announced soon. New clergy retirees will have their annual fellowship and recognition luncheon September 17 at a location to be determined.

"Annual Conference will only be held in this onsite, in-person format if it is safe to do so, according to recommendations from the state and the CDC (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention)," said Bishop Johnson. "Online options are being explored, and a decision about this will be made by late August."

"The October dates would still be used, whether our session is held in-person or virtually. Many annual conferences around the connection are using online gathering options this summer. If we need to shift to an online option we will learn and benefit from their experiences and best practices."

The 2021 Annual Conference is scheduled for May 20-22, with a Special Session scheduled for October 9, 2021, to handle post-General Conference business, including approval of a quadrennial budget. Eastern PA Conference delegates elected last year to the 2020 General and Northeastern Jurisdictional conferences will attend those postponed events in 2021.

The Rev. James Anderman chairs the Commission on Annual Conference Sessions.



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# Reopening our churches: Lessons from Noah

BY BISHOP PEGGY JOHNSON

mountains appeared.

As we prepare for the slow, cautious process of reopening our churches after these many weeks of seclusion, we can find some helpful advice from the Word of God taken from Genesis 6-9, the account of Noah and the ark.

We haven't been on an ark for months after the entire earth was destroyed by a flood. But some days it has felt a little bit like that. Nothing will ever be the same again.

For many of us the "stay at home" order has limited much life-giving activity, employment and human contact. Financial concerns for many are devastating. Young people home from school have been an added challenge for parents who are working from home while simultaneously supervising internet-based studies and virtual play dates.

For others it has meant even more work outside the home, engaged in delivering essential services with the additional risk and stress of exposure and longer hours. For people in long-term care facilities it has been a seemingly endless time of isolation.

Sadly, for many there have been loved ones lost to this virus or sick in a hospital without visitors. Attendance at funerals and memorial services have been severely restricted, and the glad sounds of weddings, Easter worship and graduations have been silenced.

We have been immersed in a flood of sorts—a flood of anxiety, of challenges in readjusting to a new normal, of financial stressors, of deep grief and endless waiting, as reports of the spread and death toll of this virus continue daily.

It was something like that in the days of Noah: 40 days of rain and then another 150 days of water covering the earth (Genesis 7:24). Imagine being cooped up in a boat with numerous wild animals and no running water. Hidden securely from the outside, but likely no hiding place on the inside. What a place that would have been to have church!

However, there was good news. "God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided." (Genesis 8:1) The ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat and the waters continued to abate until the tops of the

## First 'reopening' recorded in Scripture

That's when Noah instituted the first "reopening" operation recorded in Scripture. He opened the window of the ark and sent forth a raven. This bird apparently flew around as the waters were drying up. Not much more do we learn from the raven. Next Noah sent out a dove to see if the waters had subsided. The dove found no place to rest; so she came back to the ark.

Noah waited another week and sent the dove out again, and she came back with an olive branch. This was a good sign but not quite good enough. Noah waited another seven days and sent out the dove a third time. The dove left for good and did not return. That meant the



water had dried up enough, and they would soon be able to leave the ark.

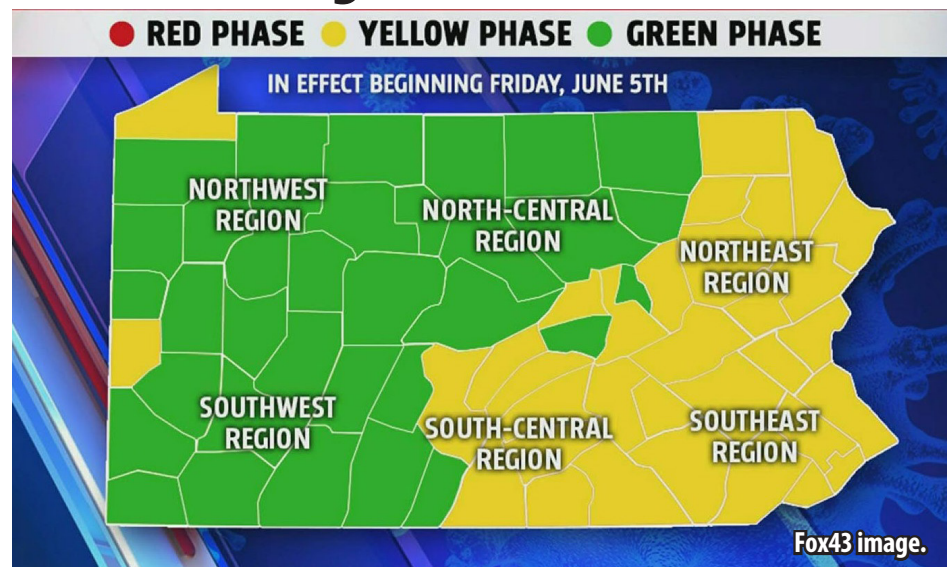
The principle here is holy caution. Noah continued to test and did not hurry to leave the ark. He wanted to insure safety for his family and the animals. As much as we wish to come back to our churches and the normal gatherings of our lives, **our return must be done with caution and patience.**

Even when we are able to gather again, by order of our state officials, there will be new, protective protocols in place at our churches while we are still in cautionary stages:

- face masks and hand sanitizer stations;
- social distancing and no congregational singing;
- no passing offering plates but instead, placing baskets at the door;
- no handling of open communion elements;
- no proximity or touching when passing the peace, but only waving the hand.

None of this will be easy; but it is worth the greater good of preserving health and life.

Nadia Bolz-Weber in a recent blog post commented, "Worry isn't helping me. But neither is setting my hopes on the



calendar." (*The Corners* by Nadia Bolz-Weber). We need to have patience with the calendar and take things one day at a time, one adjustment at a time, for the sake of safety and care for everyone."

## Sacrificing thanksgiving to God and help to one another

Noah also can teach us one other lesson. The first thing he did when he left the ark was to build an altar and offer sacrifices to God. No doubt the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving were a part of this time of worship. Burnt sacrifices of certain animals were offered that day as well.

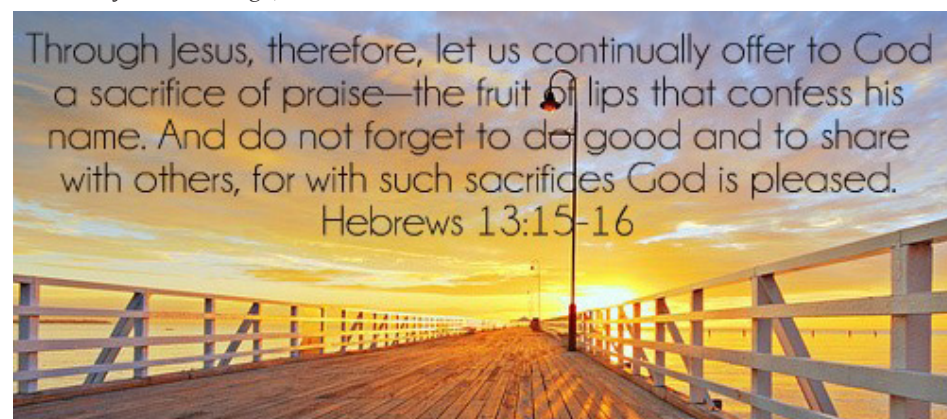
When we bring thanks to God we must always bring a gift that costs us something, be it money, service, or time. Even in the midst of this unprecedented time of suffering for many there has been much grace and favor. Take time to count your blessings, and offer to God

Obedience is precious in the eyes of God. God chose Noah to build the ark in the first place because God knew him to be a person of obedience. He built an ark in the middle of a desert simply because God asked him to do this. This must have been a difficult act of surrender given the scorn of neighbors and the enormous resources required.

God asks us to help our neighbors in need at this time. There is always something we can give or something we can to help.

I want to offer my thanks to all of you for your amazing cooperation, patience, creativity and life-giving ministry during this pandemic. I am sure that your faithfulness and obedience to God's call will continue in the months to come as we re-open.

Please continue to share your worship services, Bible studies and other programs online and on video, even after we are back in our buildings. Amazing opportunities for mission and evangelism have burst in upon us. And remember the lessons of Noah: take it

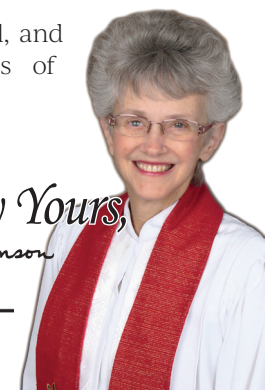


not only your words of thanksgiving but your sacrifices of help for your neighbors or family members in need.

Jesus told us that as we help a brother or sister in need it is the same as offering service to him (Matthew 25:40). Jesus' new commandment (John 13:34) was to love one another. This is a time of great need, and our generosity and caring are signs of our thanksgiving and our obedience to the mandates of Jesus.

slow, do it well, and offer sacrifices of thanksgiving.

*Faithfully Yours,*  
Peggy A. Johnson





**CHURCHES RESPOND--continued from page 1.**

our best practices,” she wrote in her latest episcopal letter to church leaders. “And they should be followed in the interest of health and safety for all, especially our older congregants and those with health issues that put them at higher risk.”

The bishop’s Cabinet advises every church’s board of trustees and pastors to draft reopening plans with safety guidelines in mind, including regular cleaning of their interiors and enabling hand sanitation wherever people gather. (See [Pandemic Reopening Best Practices for Churches](#) and [Video: Cabinet explains church reopening guidelines in webinar.](#))

**Churches urged to continue online ministry**

Meanwhile, churches that have moved their worship, Christian education, meetings and other activities online are urged to continue doing that even after they are able to return to onsite gatherings. Whether they are using videoconferencing on Zoom or other platforms, webinars or livestream or recorded video—even telephone conference calls—such connective innovations should continue even when churches reopen.

“This action can accommodate those who are unable to come to the church in person,” said Bishop Johnson, “and it can further the church’s online outreach into the community.”



**Rev. Jim Anderman, First UMC Palmyra, joins the Revs. Jared Stoltzfus and Jason Arnold in leading worship and preaching.**

Indeed, it has done just that for many churches who testify to seeing both new faces and long-absent faces, along with phone numbers, onscreen in their virtual worship, Bible studies and prayer meetings. Many pastors say they and their members were not interested in doing church online until it first became a necessity and then a boon to their outreach.

“Our first week of services was viewed by over 1,000 people,” reported the Rev. Jim Anderman, lead pastor of First UMC Palmyra, which began livestreaming its services via Facebook Live in March. “That means more people watched on Sunday than our average attendance.”

Some churches, especially in rural areas, have come together for joint livestreamed worship, a benefit for

those that lack high-speed internet access or the capability to livestream. Anderman teams up and take turns preaching with the Revs. Jared Stoltzfus and Jason Arnold, pastors of Bethany UMC Palmyra and Rocherty UMC Lebanon, respectively. And Grace-St. Paul’s UMC in Jim Thorpe livestreams worship on YouTube along with three nearby partner congregations.

“The church is always at its best when tested by the fires of adversity,” said Bishop Johnson. “These amazing pastors and their mighty lay people have taken a crisis and turned it into an opportunity to do much good and even greater works than before. I stand in awe of these creative, hardworking ministers of the Gospel.”

Indeed, virtual church is taking off big-time across our conference—not only in gatherings but also in giving.

More churches are trying to prevent or stem financial losses from not worshipping in their sanctuaries by turning to online giving, using a variety of apps. They are learning how to use—and convince tradition-bound members to use—Tithe-ly, Givelify, Venmo, Vanco, PayPal and other giving apps, as well as virtual banking solutions like Zelle.

Now the Eastern PA Conference is offering another offering-plate alternative to ease churches’ orientation into online giving. “In these changing times, we are pleased to offer an online giving option to aid local churches,” announced James Brown, conference Treasurer.

The conference activated a new service on its website’s [Giving page](#) in late May that allows members, visitors and donors to easily contribute online to congregations by selecting from a menu of participating churches.

The new giving portal, a benefit of the conference’s relationship with Vanco, is available to all churches; but it should be especially helpful to churches that do not currently offer online giving but want to. They must simply complete a bank electronic funds transfer form and return it to the conference’s accounting office, which will process and deposit gifts into the participating church’s designated bank account weekly.

No fees are charged to churches for the online giving set-up or transactions, thanks to the Mid-Atlantic United Methodist Foundation (MAUMF), which is paying the cost.

No doubt all of this new online connectivity will change and expand the ways many churches do church long after this pandemic crisis ends. It’s a virtual silver



**Members of Wesley UMC Bethlehem say thanks to health care and service personnel working on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, with the aid of an online photo collage created by the Rev. Candy LaBar, pastor.**

lining around the dark, ominous cloud that COVID-19 has cast over us.

And while these new virtual experiences may initially seem strange to

many, eventually the unfamiliarity will disappear. And many will gratefully realize what Rev. Painter observed: “We’re still doing church!”

**Churches help feed communities during coronavirus shutdown**

Many churches around the Eastern PA Conference committed to feeding their communities are meeting the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic with extra food donations, volunteers and creative solutions, including moving their operations outdoors. But the need is still great in the face of widespread unemployment and financial distress caused by the closing of businesses to ensure “social distancing.”

As part of its Coronavirus Assistance Project (CAP), the conference Connectional Ministries office has published a directory of UM church-run or church-affiliated food distribution ministry sites across our region. The directory is available on the conference website with a link under the Resources tab.

Included are individual churches and those with community and ecumenical partners, stretching across all four districts. Some names reflect their heartfelt mission: Caring for Friends; Loaves and Fishes; Blessings of Hope; Feed My Sheep; and Helping Hands Ministry.

They serve perishable and non-perishable foods on various days of the week, providing a variety of mobile options, including drive-through service for food pantries; food carts wheeled to patrons’ cars; take-out meals, and delivery of bagged groceries. Most have had to shift their operations from dining and picking up food indoors to outdoor solutions, as masked volunteers try to keep their distance from food recipients.

To address food insecurity among racial-ethnic residents in urban communities Connectional Ministries also provided gift cards to churches serving those populations. CAP funds from the conference—including a grant from the Northeastern Jurisdiction Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry—were used to send \$100 gift cards to pastors of urban racial-ethnic and multi-ethnic congregations to provide to church families struggling to buy food in under-resourced communities.

Learn more about these efforts by local churches and the conference by reading the full article on our website.



## CCYM walks by faith in planning August youth rally

The Eastern PA Conference's Council on Youth Ministry (CCYM) is working virtually, via Zoom videoconferencing, to plan its second annual "Camping at the Crossroads" Youth Rally in August. The March 28 annual spring Youth Rally had to be cancelled due to the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic and "stay at home" mandates.

The summer overnight rally will happen (hopefully) August 21- 22, from Friday at 3 PM through Saturday at 7 PM. Once again, Covenant UMC of Moore Township will host the rally at the



### Camping at the Crossroads

church, located at 2715 Mountain View Drive, Bath, PA. It will be part festival,

part tent rally and part retreat, all rolled into one event to reach youth and young adults for Christ.

The event theme is "2020 Vision: We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight" taken from 2 Corinthians 5:7. All Eastern PA Conference youth and young adults are invited to come enjoy fun activities, fellowship, worship, dialogue and music and spoken word from The Autumn, Egypt Speaks, Dave Berkey and more. More details will be announced soon.

"We are going full force for August, and the youth are excited," said the Rev. David Piltz, Conference Coordinator of Youth Ministry. He and his CCYM team will decide in late July whether to stick to their plans, or cancel the event or change its format, based on what pandemic mitigation phase and guidelines are in effect at that time or are anticipated for mid-August.

"We are also looking for new members; send us names please," said Piltz, noting that some members are graduating from high school and leaving CCYM.



The Revs. Gregory Holston (above right), Jason Perkowski (above left) and John Brice (below)

## Clergy, laity seek racial justice and peace at protest rallies

Eastern PA Conference clergy and laity have joined peaceful marchers in recent rallies for racial justice in Philadelphia and other cities, protesting the brutal killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis, Minn., police May 25. While violence and looting may have sullied the dignity and purpose of the protests in the eyes of many spectators, the large, popular gatherings have been primarily peaceful, engaging and effective.

The Revs. Gregory Holston, Jason

Perkowski and John Brice each provided pastoral presence and leadership at rallies. Holston spoke at a peaceful protest May 30 in front of the Octavius Caddo statue at Philadelphia's City Hall.

Perkowski helped marchers and police prevent violence at a rally in Lancaster May 31. However, he was attacked with pepper spray by a police officer during an arrest. Fellow marchers tended to his injury.

And Brice led a Black Lives Matter march June 2 after reports of retaliatory threats from a white nationalist group caused tension in Philadelphia's Fishtown neighborhood. The Rev. Dan Roth, pastor of a church in that community, credited Brice with bringing a "spirit of peace and unity" to a community ready to "explode like a powder keg."



### SUMMER CAMPS--continued from page 2.

connected as a camp family throughout the "The unknowns of this virus are just too great," wrote Apryl Miller, Director of Gretna Glen, in her letter to families. "During these many weeks of seeking a safe way forward, it became clear that offering camp would not be in the best interest of our campers whom we love dearly. Social distancing, PPE (personal protective equipment) and quarantine protocols, along with screening availability would need to be in place for summer programs to operate at the level we expect.

"Camp would be nothing like we know it to be under these guidelines," she continued. "As a result, we decided to suspend summer programs to protect our campers, volunteers, staff, and every parent, sibling, and grandparent connected to our wider community."

"Many tears have been shed," Miller

added. "We mourn the loss of serving our campers and families this summer."

However, camp directors have offered camp-like activities online for children and families to enjoy in the past two months and hope to offer more. And Miller said her staff is working on plans for "non-custodial program experiences" onsite at Gretna Glen for small numbers of families and children.

"While activity at our sites is curtailed," said Keller, "our call to ministry remains the same, and we continue to look for creative opportunities to serve our churches, our families and our communities."

"Camp will never really stop, even if sessions are suspended this summer," said Bishop Johnson. "The spirit of outdoor Christian community, the wonders of nature and the Spirit of God continue to shine forth from these sacred grounds. They await your return in the future."

## Racism in policing dialogue draws nearly 300 on Zoom

"Fight for Floyd: Where do we go from here?" a live video discussion sponsored June 1 by the Eastern PA Conference, drew nearly 300 participants to the event on Zoom to wrestle with the crisis of racial injustice in American law enforcement. That combustible crisis was reignited most recently by the brutal murder of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, killed by Minneapolis, Minn., police.

The two-hour dialogue, sponsored by the conference's Urban Commission, took place as peaceful protests were degrading nightly into violence, destruction and looting that raged in Philadelphia and other communities. Diverse participants, who joined the online session searching for understanding, heard from guest speakers and voiced concerns and possible remedies in breakout groups.

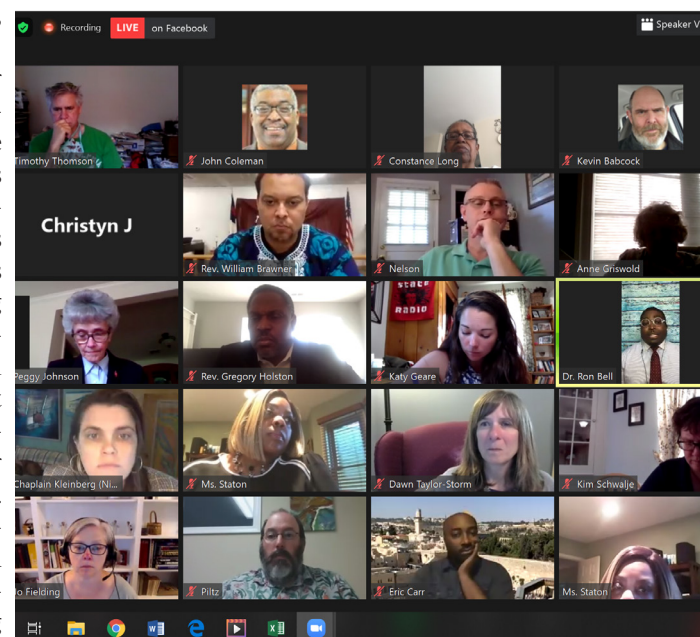
Speakers included criminal justice officials, community organizers and pastors. Among them were:

- Larry Krasner, District Attorney of Philadelphia;
- the Rev. Gregory Holston, who works with Krasner to promote criminal justice reform and is the pastor of Janes Memorial

UMC Philadelphia;

- De Lacy D. Davis, an organizer and educator in community policing, and head of Black Cops Against Police Brutality in Newark, NJ; and
- the Rev. Ronald Bell, pastor of Camphor Memorial UMC in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Bell offered valuable insight into the racial justice struggles happening in



Minnesota's Twin Cities. When asked, he told callers how they could support his church's response to the crisis there, but reminded them that they have their own work to do here.

The Rev. William Brawner, a pastor and conference Urban Ministries Coordinator, organized and facilitated the discussion. A recording of the session can be viewed on the conference's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/epaumc>).



# New DSs get a preview of the work they will begin July 1

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

The Society for Human Resource Management defines onboarding as any process designed to “help new hires adjust to the social and performance aspects of their jobs so they can quickly become productive, contributing members of the organization.”

Bishop Peggy Johnson and her Cabinet clearly believe in onboarding, since two new Eastern PA Conference district superintendents, set to begin their work July 1, have already been meeting with the Cabinet for months and learning from their soon-to-be peers. They have also engaged in Cabinet events and activities.

The Rev. Evelyn Kent Clark and the Rev. Andrew Foster III will step readily into their new roles, as their predecessors—the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm and the Rev. Tracy Bass, respectively, move on. Clark will succeed Taylor-Storm as Superintendent of the South District; and Foster will follow Bass as Superintendent of the East District.

Clark, a native Philadelphian and former educator, is pastor of New Life UMC

in Drexel Hill and Trinity Lansdowne UMC (known as The Garden Church) in Lansdowne. Both churches are in the South District. She has served on the UMC’s General Board of Discipleship and a number of conference boards and committees. She has chaired the Committee on Episcopacy, the Order of Elders and the South District Committee on Ordained Ministry.

Foster has been Superintendent of the Rhode Island, Southeastern Massachusetts (RISEM) District since 2017. He returns home to Eastern PA, where he was previously the pastor of Janes Memorial UMC in Philadelphia.

Also a native Philadelphian, he formerly served Grace Community UMC in Chester, where he founded the church’s Resource & Empowerment Center, Inc.



Clark



Foster

And he was the first African American pastor to serve at Clearview UMC, a cross-racial/cross-cultural appointment. Foster is a trained ministry coach and mentor, who has served on many committees and has taught Certified Lay Ministry classes.



Bass

After leading the East District since 2014, Bass moves to the Virginia Conference, where he will lead that conference in planting a new church in Chesapeake, Va. He and his wife—also named Tracy—are returning to their home state.

Taylor-Storm becomes our conference’s new Director of Connectional Ministries, after being Superintendent of the South District, and formerly the Southeast District, since 2014. She previously served as pastor of St. Matthew’s UMC of Valley Forge, and before that, White Haven UMC.

Taylor-Storm succeeds the Rev. Anita Powell, who will retire this month but plans to remain active. Powell previously

served as Superintendent of the former Central District. (See Powell’s farewell essay on page 7.)

The Rev. Bumkoo “BK” Chung, West District Superintendent, is the new Dean of the Cabinet for a year, succeeding Bass and Taylor-Storm in that role. He joined the Cabinet with them in 2014. The Rev. Steve Morton has been North District Superintendent since 2018.

“God continues to bless the Eastern PA Conference with gifted and Spirit-filled leaders for the work of superintendency, programmatic ministry and administration,” said Bishop Johnson. She describes superintendency as “the glue that holds the system together.”

“As we enter into this transition time, we thank God for those who have served so well and for the leaders who have offered themselves to God to fill these positions. The future is bright.”



Taylor-Storm

## Changes happening in conference office and staff

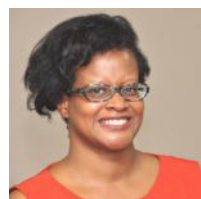
The Eastern PA Conference office and staff are undergoing new job changes, like employees in other places during these changing times. All district offices will move into the Conference office in July—a move that was planned before the COVID-19 pandemic—as major renovations are completed, including the addition and rearranging of offices.

A new District Resource Assistant (DRA) will be hired, as the South District’s Lin George retires June 30. Meanwhile, DRAs will work together in new ways to support the entire Cabinet, rather than individual districts. Their greater cooperation will streamline tasks and avoid duplication.

In Connectional Ministries, Administrative Assistant Felicia Anderson left the staff in March. **The Rev. Kevin Babcock** will join the staff part-time as **Coordinator of Church Support Services** in July. He will partner with the Director of Connectional Ministries and the Congregational Development Team to offer opportunities for local churches to consider new forms of development and revitalization.

Other jobs have been expanded in their titles and responsibilities.

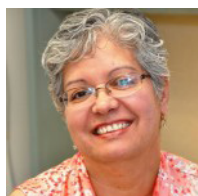
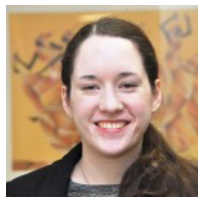
**Regina Raiford Babcock, Office Administrative Assistant** will welcome visitors to the conference office at the



front desk when the office reopens, possibly in July. That desk has been unstaffed for some years. She will also handle administrative duties for department directors, with an emphasis on Connectional Ministries. Babcock will work closely with the Connectional Table and process grants and scholarships, while continuing to work with vendors and troubleshoot office issues.

**Lindsey Cotman, Senior Media & Events Support Associate** supports online facilitation and registration of events, while designing and publishing media materials and managing technical operation of the conference website. Soon she will also support facilitation of district events, adding to her support of the conference’s Zoom video-conferencing, Google Mail and calendaring operations for meetings and events.

**Madeline Gonzalez-Lopez, Senior Benefits & Data Support Associate** has begun coordinating operations of the conference database, in addition to her ongoing work assisting with Pension & Health Benefits-related matters.



## New General, Jurisdictional conference dates in 2021

**U M NEWS**—Organizers have announced that the UMC’s postponed 2020 General Conference will be August 29 to September 7, 2021, in Minneapolis, despite pleas that the decision-making body not meet at the start of the academic year.

However, the organizers are still looking for ways to ensure that delegates unable to come in person can participate online in what many expect to be a historic legislative meeting.

The global lawmaking assembly — postponed from this May due to the COVID-19 pandemic — faces multiple proposals to resolve longtime debate around LGBTQ inclusion by splitting the denomination along theological lines. The quadrennial event will remain at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

“The hospitality industry has been devastated by COVID-19,” said the Commission on the General Conference’s business manager, Sara Hotchkiss. “So negotiating amid the pandemic was a much slower process. I am grateful for our partnerships in the industry we have built over the years that assisted us in getting our foot in the door early enough to find any dates in 2021.”

### Commission unable to accommodate young adults

However, the commission expressed regret about not being able to accommodate a request from young adult delegates to select different dates. The commission

met online May 16 with Ann Jacob (of the Eastern PA Conference), Jessica Vittorio and J.J. Warren — three young adult delegates who wrote and circulated a petition to change those proposed dates after they became public.

The young adults told the commission that the late summer schedule could conflict with school calendars and disenfranchise the record number of young delegates elected to what could be a landmark General Conference. A Council of Bishops recommendation encouraging the commission to consider the young adults’ petition drew more than 2,000 signatures from United Methodists in about 80 annual conferences around the world.

“Including young adults in the General Conference is always an important consideration. We affirm that their voices need to be heard,” Kim Simpson, the commission’s chair, said in a statement. “Unfortunately, this request did not come to the commission until late in the process.” Changing the dates, if it were possible, she explained, would risk loss of a deposit of “at least a half-million dollars.”

The commission is looking at the possibility of using technology to allow full participation of delegates who cannot make the trip to Minneapolis. The commission said it voted “to explore the implications of options for accommodating full participation” including virtual voting.

## In Memoriam

Full death notices are available at [www.epaumc.org/death-notice](http://www.epaumc.org/death-notice)

### Rev. Harry E. Aughinbaugh

The Rev. Harry E. Aughinbaugh, Retired Elder in Full Connection, died on May 20, 2020. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Joan H. Aughinbaugh, and his children, Carol L. Roosevelt and Gerald A. Aughinbaugh.

Rev. Aughinbaugh's service record is as follows: Mt. Carmel: Centennial, Aristes, Cleona: Immanuel, EPA Coordinator of Camps and Conference, EPA Conference Consultant, Lancaster: Grandview, Norristown: Haws Avenue.

Words of sympathy may be sent to his surviving spouse, Mrs. Joan H. Aughinbaugh, at 101 W. Winsdor Rd., Apt 3101, Urbana, IL 61802-6697.

### Mrs. Edythe Bryant

Mrs. Edythe Bryant, surviving spouse of The Rev. Wallace Bryant Jr., died on October 6, 2019.

Rev. Bryant was a Full Member of The Eastern PA Conference, who served the following churches: Chester: Siloam, Philadelphia: Berry-Long Memorial, Darby: Union Memorial, Chester: Trinity, Trevo: St. Matthew, Extension Ministries.

### Rev. Paul M. Carlson

The Rev. Paul M. Carlson, retired elder, died on February 17, 2020.

Rev. Carlson served the following Eastern PA Conference churches: Wescosville: Bethany, Ephrata: First, Pen Argyl: Grace.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to his surviving spouse, Mrs. Geraldine Carlson, at Devon House Senior Living, 1930 Bevin Dr., Apt. 153, Allentown, PA 18103.

### Rev. Paul E. Chreiman

The Rev. Paul E. Chreiman, Retired Full Elder, died on May 24, 2020. Rev. Chreiman served the following Eastern PA Conference Churches: Philadelphia: Bethesda, Philadelphia: Faith, Philadelphia: Olivet-Bethany, Philadelphia: Cumberland Street, Conshohocken UMC, Newtown, Ambler: Calvary.

He is survived by his children: Cynthia Hoover, Susan Smith, and Paul E. Chreiman, Jr. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Mrs. Cynthia Hoover, PO Box 1010, New London, PA 19360

### Rev. Carl H. Doerr, Jr.

The Rev. Carl H. Doerr, Jr., retired Local Pastor, died on February 13, 2020. He served the following Eastern PA Conference churches: Gradyville, Eddystone, Upland, Ridley Park, Philadelphia: Holmesburg.

Expressions of Sympathy may be sent to Mrs. Carol L. Doerr, at 2305 Lydia Hollow

Drive, Glen Mills, PA 19342.

### Mr. Rob Fisher

Rob Fisher, husband of Rev. Karyn Fisher, died March 23, 2020. Rev. Fisher is currently serving Shamokin: St. John's UMC.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to The Rev. Karyn Fisher at [karyn.fisher3@gmail.com](mailto:karyn.fisher3@gmail.com) or 1218 W. Arch Street, Coal Township, PA 17866.

### Rev. Donald Heacock

The Rev. Donald Heacock, retired Licensed Local Pastor, died on April 5, 2020. Rev. Heacock served the following Eastern PA Conference churches before retiring in 1997: Oak Grove

Shamokin: Emmanuel, Shamokin: Zion, Mount Nebo, Landingville: Welcome, Orwigsburg: Salem, Cumbola, Schuylkill Haven: Covenant, Wilburton

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to his surviving spouse, Mrs. M. Joanne Heacock, at 1430 Briar Manor, Berwick, PA 18603.

### Mrs. Margery Johnston

Mrs. Margery Johnston died on November 4, 2019. She was the surviving spouse of The Rev. Walter Johnston, retired full member.

Rev. Johnston retired in 1967 and died in 1976. His service record is as follows: Bristol: Harriman, Bensalem, Philadelphia: Frankford Group Ministry, Mt. Pocono, Philadelphia: Chestnut Hill, Narberth, Tremont Circuit, Cornwall, Phoenixville: Bethesda, Philadelphia: Tacony, Philadelphia: Oak Lane, Stroudsburg, Philadelphia: Calvary, Philadelphia: Grace, Bethel.

### Mrs. Nancy A. Lewis

Mrs. Nancy A. Lewis, spouse of The Rev. Roy Lewis (Retired Full Elder), died on May 11, 2020. Rev. Roy Lewis's service record is as follows: Belfast: Wesley, Wind Gap: First, Philadelphia: Roxborough Emmanuel Director of Methodist Chaplaincy Services, Executive Director of Pastoral, Psychotherapists, Penn Foundation of Pastoral Counseling, Director of Princeton NE Career Center, Lahaska, Director of Pastoral Care at Pine Run Retirement Community.

### Mrs. Cora J. Lowery

Mrs. Cora J. Lowery, surviving spouse of The Rev. Frederick Lowery, died on March 31, 2020. The Rev. Frederick Lowery was a Retired Elder who died in 2016. He served the following Eastern PA Conference churches: Jonestown, New Holland: Evangelical

### The Rev. Blake E. Nicholson Jr.

The Rev. Blake E. Nicholson Jr., Retired Full Elder, died on May 31, 2020.

He served the following Eastern PA Conference churches, prior to retiring in 1989: Marshallton, Quarryville: Memorial, Glenside, Friendship, Gladwyne, Strasburg: Wesley, Allentown: Emmanuel, Bensalem.

Rev. Nicholson was predeceased by his wife, Anne Elizabeth Dewees Nicholson, and his brother, Robert Early Nicholson. He is survived by his two children—Blake Edwin Nicholson the 3rd, and the Rev. Gary Lee Nicholson, who is a Full Elder of the Eastern PA Conference.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to The Rev. Gary Nicholson, at 1024 S Valley Forge Rd, Lansdale, PA 19446.

### Rev. Anna R. Steward

The Rev. Anna R. Steward, retired full elder, died on Monday, March 16. She served the following Eastern PA Conference churches before retiring in 2002: Philadelphia: Trinity Baynton Street, Philadelphia: Haven Memorial, Philadelphia: Haven Peniel.

### Mrs. Ruth Trauger

Mrs. Ruth Trauger died on April 13, 2020. She was the surviving spouse of The Rev. Earl E. Trauger, retired full member of the Eastern PA Conference, who preceded her in death in 2013.

Rev. Trauger served the following Eastern PA Conference churches prior to retiring in 1990: Telford: Grace, Schuylkill Haven: Trinity, Wyomissing: Calvary, Trevorton, Millers Crossroads, Snyderstown.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Mr. Robert E. Trauger, at 1645 Glenwood Circle, Cumming, GA 30040-7821.

### Mrs. Mary Walters

Mrs. Mary Walters, surviving spouse of The Rev. Russell E. Walters, died on February 19.

Rev. Walters retired as a full member in 1996, and died in 2015. He served the following Eastern PA Conference churches: Orwigsburg: Salem, Coaldale, Tamaqua: Salem, Philadelphia: Grace, Allentown: Salem, Pocono Union, Paradise: St. John's, Swiftwater, Paradise Valley: Keokee Chapel.

### Mrs. Judy L. Wooters

We have received word that Mrs. Judy L. Wooters died on December 7, 2019. She was the spouse of The Rev. H. Frederick Wooters, retired full member.

Rev. Wooters retired in 2002, and served the following Eastern PA Conference churches: Allentown: Asbury, Philadelphia: Tacony, Mt. Pocono, Philadelphia: FGM: Frankford Memorial, Phoenixville: First, Lancaster: Otterbein, Ambler: Calvary, Bensalem.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to: The Rev. H. Fred Wooters, 129 Madison Drive, Lewes, DE 19958.

## Reflections on My Journey

BY THE REV. DR. ANITA ADAMS POWELL



It was never my plan to be a pastor; yet, somehow, I found myself on that path. Eventually, I graduated from seminary and was ordained in the American Baptist Church, USA (ABCUSA).

It was never my plan to become a part of The United Methodist Church. My introduction to the denomination came through invitations to serve. I received them from two district superintendents who later became bishops—The Revs. Alfred Johnson and Violet Fisher—and also from the Rev. Anna Steward, who was then my field education teacher at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Eventually, I responded in faith, believing that God was calling me to be in ministry in a denomination about which I knew almost nothing.

It was never my plan to be on staff at a local church. Soon after my season of discernment, Bishop Peter Weaver appointed me to serve as Associate Pastor at West Chester UMC, where the lead pastor was the Rev. John Schol, (also now a bishop).

Eventually, by action of the Eastern PA Conference, my ordination in the ABCUSA was recognized by the UMC. Planting a new church was also never my plan. But three years later Bishop Weaver appointed me to serve as the founding pastor of Church of the Open Door UMC.

It was never my plan to be a district superintendent, nor Director of Connectional Ministries (DCM). Eventually, Bishop

Continued on page 8--REFLECTIONS.



**REFLECTIONS--continued from page 7.**

Peggy Johnson appointed me to serve as DS to the Central District, and then six years later, to serve as DCM.

Upon reflection, I can sincerely say, "Of course! None of this was my plan; it was never intended to be!" So these thoughts are not a resume about what I have done, but rather, what God has done. They are my testimony of how God orchestrated the details of my life, mirroring the power and efficacy of Jeremiah 29:11—"For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord ..."

God planned the course of my life



and ordered my steps into the Eastern PA Conference, UMC. I could never have planned any of these life-changing opportunities and experiences. Each new ministry responsibility proved to be an absolute blessing, bringing unspeakable joy.

Retrospectively, what is very clear is that God appointed me to the Eastern PA Conference. Those superintendents and bishops only served as messengers who conveyed my assignments, all of which were God's plans—plans for my well-being and not for my harm, plans to give me "a future with hope."

So, what did God provide to sustain me during these assignments?

First, God deepened my faith to believe that with God "all things are possible." My faith in God enabled me to envision new possibilities and embrace new realities.

These assignments were not easy! Nevertheless, because God was always with me, I was able to work through difficult challenges, and faithfully serve with (and in spite of) difficult people.

Secondly, God taught me that I could "trust an unknown future to all-knowing God." There was no need for me

to know everything about anything. I could trust God to teach me what I did not know, help me with what I could not do, and direct me to whatever source of support I needed for any task.

Thirdly, God showed me the virtue of connectionalism by enabling me to form strong relationships with clergy, congregations, conference staff and communities. Furthermore, my associations extended beyond Eastern PA into the broader community of The United Methodist Church.

It is within this context that I experienced much grace, support and encouragement. Being in ministry with a local church, annual conference, jurisdiction, as well as within the denomination is a witness to God's intention for a global community.

In Eastern PA, with its diversity of backgrounds and theological perspectives, I have witnessed love, faithfulness, prayerfulness, compassion and above all else, a commitment to Jesus Christ.

To serve among you has been my privilege. My prayer is that you will continue seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit as you live into the vision and mission: "United in Christ, Committed to Transformation: Creating Disciples, Celebrating Diversity, Connecting Communities and Committing to Love and Justice."

Finally, as I stand on the brink of "retirement," I realize that I never saw myself as one to "stop working to live a leisurely life." Probably, that is why it took 72 years for me to make that decision.

Now that I am "of age," I have chosen to exercise my freedom to reframe exactly what "retirement" means for me. So, for me, retirement is simply God's way of transitioning me into a new appointment, where I will receive new assignments. Stay tuned ...

With gratitude for the privilege of serving,

- Anita



## Conference tries to grow Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural ministry 'This is not a project but a journey'

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

The Eastern PA Conference Commission on Religion and Race (CORR) holds its annual Ministry in a Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Context (CR/CC) Workshop Saturday morning, June 6, for pastors and church leaders beginning or ending their first year of a cross-racial or cross-cultural pastoral appointment.

For the second year, trained CORR members will conduct the workshop, teaching and stimulating dialogue about the joys and challenges of CR/CC ministry. Until 2019 General Commission on Religion and Race (GCRORR) staff led the annual training. And for the first time, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the workshop will transpire online via the increasingly popular Zoom videoconferencing venue.

The training helps clergy and congregations serving in this special form of ministry to increase their intercultural competency and deepen their understanding of inclusiveness and cross-cultural relationship dynamics. Participants—including pastors and members of church Staff-Parish Relations Committees and Administrative Councils—are equipped with practical communication tools and resources so they can become more intentional and effective in their ministries together.

The Rev. Anita Powell, Director of Connectional Ministries, and other CORR leaders reported to the Cabinet in May on the progress and challenges of this still-developing initiative. The Revs. Susan Worrell and Alicia Julia-Stanley co-chair the commission.

Growing CR/CC ministries may be one of the conference's most visionary and challenging undertakings in years. Currently, there are about 50 CR/CC ministry appointments in the conference, including associate pastors and deacons. Ministry in such cultural bridge-building settings can be both risky and rewarding, with a lot at stake.

Two top GCRORR executives—the Revs. Grace Pak and Giovanni Arroyo—have provided years of orientation, training and assistance. Both have commended Eastern PA as the leading conference in strategically advancing CR/CC ministry.

The role of district superintendents is crucial for carefully making promising CR/CC appointments and extending help and guidance where needed. But also crucial are the Resourcing Team and Mentoring Team, both trained and deployed by CORR to help congregations

involved in, or interested in, CR/CC ministry.

The Resourcing Team has trained more than 150 persons in the past year, basically offering resources and an orientation to CR/CC ministry.

"We want CR/CC ministry to someday become a norm in the Eastern PA Confer-



**The Rev. Grace Pak, of the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCRORR), leads an Eastern PA Conference Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Ministry workshop. Now trained conference CORR members lead the training,**

ence," Powell likes to say, voicing a vision that is ambitious but perhaps doable in such a racially and culturally diverse conference as this one. First, however, the conference needs to be "strategic and intentional" about building awareness and interest in CR/CC ministry among more pastors and churches, CORR leaders told the Cabinet.

Meanwhile, the Mentoring Team has connected with 25 CR/CC pastors and congregations.

They are assigned in pairs by district superintendents to guide and support CR/CC clergy and congregations, not to evaluate them or resolve conflicts.

A key need and challenge is to identify and enlist "gifted laity" to be a part of this ministry, organizers say. That includes those who have attended the conference's Dismantling Racism I and II and Emotional Intelligence and Diversity trainings offered several times a year.

"Our goal for this initiative is to help fulfill the conference's vision statement: *United in Christ, Committed to Transformation*," said Powell. She published in November 2019 a first-time, detailed manual to guide this work, titled **Crossings: Ministry in a Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Context**.

Powell once served in a CR/CC appointment at West Chester UMC and then planted Church of the Open Door, an intentionally multicultural congregation. She retires in June, after laboring for years to bear fruit in the CR/CC vineyard.

"This is not a project but a journey," she said, "an effort to shift our conference's culture toward greater cultural competency and inclusiveness. This important work needs to be continued and advanced."