



## Eastern PA to hold 2nd online Annual Conference May 20-22 General, Jurisdictional conferences moved to 2022

While The United Methodist Church's General and Jurisdictional conferences have been postponed once again until 2022, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the 236th session of the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference will meet as planned May 20-22.

The shortened Annual Conference will take place mostly online for a second consecutive year, after making history with that first-time format in 2020. The annual Clergy Session is set for Thursday, May 20, at 9 AM, and the Laity Session at 1 PM—both online. The Conference's opening worship and business session will begin on Friday, May 21, at 9 AM. And a Conference teaching session will begin at 2 PM.

The full day's session will be held as a Zoom webinar for voting members. All members must use a computer or tablet to vote on legislation using Zoom's polling feature, Non-voting members will again be able to view the session livestreamed on the Conference's Facebook page.

On Saturday, May 22, the Conference will return to Olivet UMC in Coatesville

for its Memorial Service (10 AM) to remember deceased clergy and clergy spouses, followed by its Service of Commissioning and Ordination (12 PM). Again, only families of the deceased honorees and families of clergy to be commissioned and ordained will attend the two back-to-back services onsite, along with staff and hospitality volunteers. Others may view it livestreamed on the Conference Facebook page.

### General and Jurisdictional conferences postponed to 2022

Both General Conference and the Northeastern Jurisdictional (NEJ) Conference are rescheduled for 2022. The postponed 2020 General Conference will meet August 29 – Sept. 6, 2022. The gathering has been postponed twice to ensure the safety, ability to travel and full onsite participation of its elected delegates from the U.S., Philippines, Africa and Europe. The conference site remains the same: Minneapolis, Minn.

Because of that change, the NEJ Conference will ensue in October 2022, when it will assign bishops to lead

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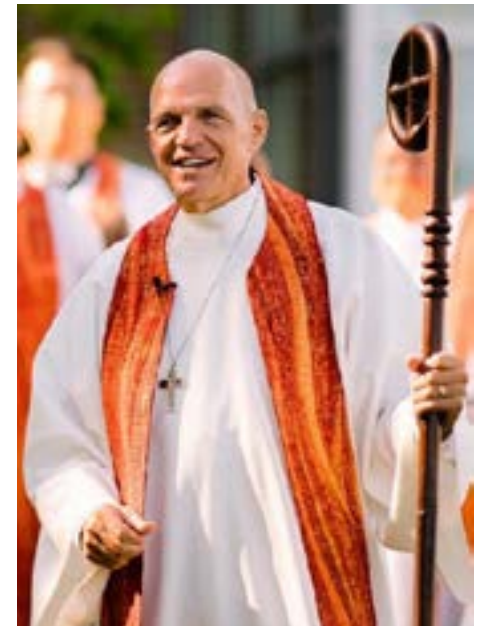
## Welcome, Bishop John Schol!

It is our joy to welcome Bishop John R. Schol as he prepares to join us and provide episcopal leadership coverage for the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference beginning September 1, 2021.

Bishop Schol has a heart for Eastern PA, having been raised in Philadelphia and having served here first in his ministry career, where his faith and leadership skills were nurtured. Here is where he developed strong values of hard work, a respect for diversity, a drive toward ingenuity and excellence, and a spirit of grace.

Bishop Schol served congregations in Saugus, Massachusetts; Philadelphia, and West Chester, Pennsylvania. In each of his congregations, worship grew,

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Up to 90 participants joined in a compelling, five-week group study of writer Isabel Wilkerson's instant classic **Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents** (2020), which examines the skeletons of America's racial caste system through social analysis and evocative storytelling. Led by (from left) the Revs. Alicia Julia Stanley, Tamie Scalise and Victor Gimenez, the Lenten book study was cosponsored by the Conference Congregational Development Team and Commission on Religion and Race.

## Conference commission leads the way to 'Dismantling Racism'

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

**D**ismantling Racism. The term, growing in use, conveys an apt understanding that this social scourge is large, systemic and complex, with many parts—and that it must be taken apart or demolished from different angles. That is how the Eastern PA Conference is approaching the stubborn sin of racism.

A busy calendar of workshops, book studies, meetings and dialogues is a good start, as minds are opened, conversations are started, hearts are convicted, and both behaviors and policies are

changed. The actual dismantling that follows can be witnessed in:

- more deliberate, interracial, culturally competent interactions;
- more successful, cross-racial pastoral appointments;
- more administrative moves to create equitable leadership, financing and growth opportunities;
- more interracial advocacy and alliances pushing for racial justice, equity and inclusion.

In its fifth year of responding to the UMC Northeastern Jurisdiction's (NEJ) **Call to Action for Racial Justice and**

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## APRIL

### WEEKLY PREACHING FORUM

Tuesdays at 2 PM, from April 6 - June 22.

APRIL 16-18

Dismantling Racism, Level 1, Virtual

APRIL 22

Policing in African American Communities Seminar

APRIL 24

This Holy Mystery: A UM Study of Holy Communion, Part 1

APRIL 24

Virtual Urban Summit 2021, Part 1

APRIL 27

"Becoming the Beloved Community" Preaching Seminar. 10 AM - 12 PM via Zoom.

## MAY

MAY 1

Relating with Clergy Spouses

Virtual Urban Summit 2021, Part 2

MAY 2

CONAM Spring Learning & Fellowship Event

MAY 2-4

FAMLP Retreat Fellowship of Associate Members and Local Pastors Annual Retreat

MAY 5-26

CDT Book Club: From Franchise to Local Dive Wednesdays, 11 AM

MAY 8

This Holy Mystery: A UM Study of Holy Communion, Part 2

MAY 15

Clergy Transition Workshop

UMW Spiritual Life Retreat

MAY 20-22

Eastern PA Annual Conference

MAY 29

Latino Holy Commission Holy Convocation and Assembly

## JUNE

JUNE 5

CR/CC Transition Workshop

JUNE 19

Basic Sexual Ethics Workshop

## JULY

JULY 13

Bivocational & Small Church Network

JULY 24

Urban Summit Mini Series

## AUGUST

AUGUST 6-8

2021 Laity Academy

# Policing in African American Communities Webinar

Thursday, April 22, 6:30 to 8:30 PM on Zoom.

Join us for an important discussion to benefit our communities...

The Eastern PA Conference Urban Commission's Fight for Floyd and Beyond Initiative will sponsor a webinar on **African Americans and Policing: Developing Healthy Police and Community Relationships** on Thursday, April 22, 6:30 to 8:30 PM on Zoom.

Participants leading the discussion will include:

- The Rev. Eric Carr, a Police Chaplain in Southwest Philadelphia and pastor of St. Daniel's UMC in Chester;
- Millicent Clark, a leader of Mid-Town Parish UMC and the 8th and Diamond Streets Neighborhood Advisory Committee in Philadelphia, and also managing director of UM Neighborhood Services.
- Jamina Clay of the Colonial Area Anti-Racism and Social Equity Alliance, a community organization created in 2020 in Montgomery County.

The Rev. Gregory Holston, pastor of Janes Memorial UMC in Philadelphia and senior advisor to District Attorney Larry Krasner, will give the "closing charge" call to action.

**REGISTER NOW FOR THIS FREE EVENT!**



## Welcome, Bishop John Schol!

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mission in the community expanded with new creativity, and new disciples were made.

For 12 years he served as the Executive Director of the Frankford Group Ministry in Philadelphia. This new, emerging cooperative ministry that aligned four United Methodist congregations grew from one staff person to more than 50 staff positions. The ministry led its community in developing better race

relations and providing social services, community economic development and community arts programs for human development. During and after his ministry there, the ministry also led its community in building and rehabilitating more than 200 housing units and served more than 20,000 people a year.

In the 1990s John Schol served the denomination by leading Urban Ministries at the General Board of Global Ministries. There he developed and led

at least two major, successful initiatives: Communities of Shalom and Holy Boldness. The Communities of Shalom initiative started more than 1,000 sites globally and trained more than 5,000 people in church and community development. And Holy Boldness developed into a collaborative urban ministry training and congregational development movement that served districts and conferences around the UMC connection.

Since his election in 2004, Bishop Schol has served with distinction as

the Episcopal Leader of the Baltimore-Washington Conference (Washington Episcopal Area) and currently as Bishop of the Greater New Jersey Conference (New Jersey Episcopal Area). He will now provide episcopal leadership to the Eastern PA while continuing to lead Greater New Jersey, as of September and at least until December 2022, following the 2022 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference.

We welcome Bishop Schol and pray for him and Mrs. Beverly Schol during these months of preparation.

**Eastern PA Conference Urban Commission**  
**Virtual Urban Summit 2021**  
Kick-off Events: April 24 & May 1  
10:00 AM - 12:15 PM on ZOOM  
*God Has Not Left Our Cities*

*And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare. —Jeremiah 29:7*

**Our Virtual Urban Summit Kick off!** Featuring dynamic presenters who will share their abundant wisdom, energy and experiences to help stir up our gifts and passion for radical, innovative urban ministry.

**Our Virtual Urban Ministry Youth Summit!** Youth will tackle hard facts with faith and strategies in a town hall summit addressing issues of violence, trauma, substance abuse, and other concerns. They will create new ways to become peer advocates and birth innovative youth ministries.

**Summit Topics:**

- Engaging our Communities in Change
- Doing Spiritually-Focused Urban Evangelism
- Pursuing Partnerships, Development & Urban Renewal
- Combating Violence Through Faith-Based Healing

**Featured Speakers:**

  
Rev. Rudy Rasmus

  
Rev. Myra Maxwell

  
Rev. Rashawn Clark

  
Rev. Joseph Daniels

**A Healing Service** will involve adults and youth serving in healing ministries in urban communities.

**Who Should Attend the Summit?**  
Urban Pastors, Laity, Deacons, District Superintendents, Missioners, Youth, and all persons interested in Urban Ministry and Ministry with the Poor.

A series of mini-Urban Summits on Zoom will follow in July, September and November 2021. Look for more information.

**REGISTER TODAY at [na.eventscloud.com/urban2021](https://na.eventscloud.com/urban2021)**

EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE  
The United Methodist Church  
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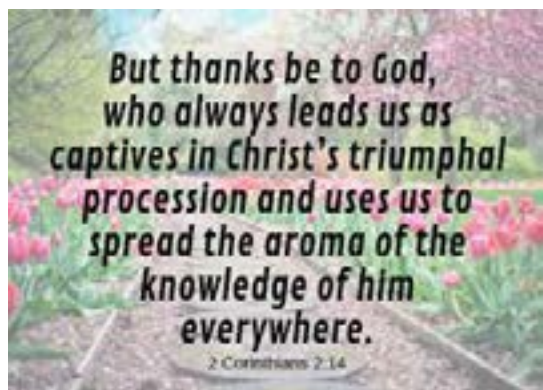


# Spreading the aroma of Christ

BY BISHOP PEGGY A. JOHNSON

An aroma is a curious thing. It can bring back a precious memory. It can remind us of a person or an event. It can be familiar or unmistakable, and it can even create a mood or enhance our energy level.

Tiny, dispersed molecules can produce powerful aromas with a big effect. In fact, aroma therapy is a multi-million



dollar enterprise, so powerful are its scents to people.

One of the most devastating effects of the coronavirus has been the loss of the sense of smell for many who have contracted COVID-19. There are even support groups for those who have lost their sense of smell, because it is so debilitating.

The Old Testament speaks of the aroma of burnt sacrifices on altars giving an aroma "pleasing to the Lord" (Leviticus 9:1). Through the centuries faith communities have used the burning of fragrant incense to symbolize the prayers of the people filling the air. The smell of it wafting through the sanctuary can add to an experience of the "holy."

One of the joys of the season of Easter are the fragrant lilies and other spring flowers blooming in great abundance and reminding us of the rebirth of

nature after a long winter season.

The Apostle Paul connected an experience of God's presence with the sense of smell when he said to the church in Corinth that God "uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere." (II Corinthians 2:14).

How do we do this? It is not the kind of thing one accomplishes with air freshener or even with a church filled with holy incense. Spreading the knowledge of Christ is also not solely about book learning or teaching information about our faith.

It is more about a way of being that demonstrates Christ by our acts of love, generosity, humility and reconciliation. Like an aroma from dispersed molecules, small signs of Christ's love can have a large, pervasive effect in the world. "Not all of us can do great things," said Mother Teresa. "But we can do small things with great love."

As "Easter people," we share the good news of the resurrection; but we also live it in subtle, grace-filled ways. Like a fragrance that lingers, an act of selfless compassion or kindness lives on like



nothing else.

Mary of Bethany humbly anointed Jesus' feet with expensive ointment, and "the house was filled with the fragrance of her perfume" (John 12:3). It was her sacrificial, extravagant gift that was the real fragrance in the room. And just as Jesus foretold, the memory of her tiny gift has spread like a fragrance across the earth wherever the gospel is preached. (Matthew 26:13).

There has long been a sweet smell in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania. It is chocolate. Milton Hershey, an early 20th century businessman, made a fortune on his chocolate business, especially with the iconic foil-covered "Hershey Kisses."

His generosity to the community was as pervasive as the scent of chocolate. Hershey built homes, parks, schools, public transportation and an orphanage, to name a few of his philanthropic gifts. ([www.hersheystory.org](http://www.hersheystory.org)). The goodness lingers on even to this day.

Pope Francis' recent visit to Iraq has left a pervasive effect on the peace process between rival faith communities in the Middle East. Peacemaking through simple acts of conversation and respect can spread a scent of hope and reconciliation like nothing else.

Be the aroma of the knowledge of Christ where you live and have



Milton Hershey, American chocolatier, businessman, and philanthropist who founded the Milton Hershey School in Hershey, PA.

influence. Be the one to give generously, the one who crosses lines of division to extend welcome and kindness. Be the one who is willing to humbly engage in small tasks out of great love for Christ.

When you emulate Christ, even in small, sacrificial ways, God notices and people will notice. The aroma will be unmistakable, and people will gain a knowledge of God like nothing else. Never underestimate the power of the aroma of Christ-like actions.



*Faithfully Yours,*  
Peggy A. Johnson

## AC 2021's diverse speakers to promote outreach, evangelism

This year the Eastern PA Annual Conference, May 20-22, will again be a time when the voices and views of diverse leaders can be heard to inform, inspire and maybe even involve members in trying new approaches to 21st century evangelistic outreach ministry.

Important traditions will be upheld—everything from singing Charles Wesley's venerable hymn "And Are We Yet Alive?" to asking new ordinands John Wesley's Historic Questions, to celebrating the holy sacrament of baptism through our Conference theme, "Come to the Water."

That invitational theme is drawn from the biblical story in Acts 8:26-40, where the Apostle Philip baptizes an Ethiopian eunuch, who is on his way

home, after teaching him about Jesus Christ. It's an old story about bringing a new faith to new believers.

Ideas for sharing the Christian faith to make new believers, while wrestling with challenges and opportunities for creative outreach ministry, will likely emerge from the wisdom of the Annual Conference's four guest speakers and preachers:

- **The Rev. Jacqueline King** will be our **Laity Session keynoter** on



Thursday, May 20, at 1 PM. A popular speaker and trainer in our Conference, she was formerly

the Director of U.S. Conference Relationships at the UMC's Discipleship Ministries agency.

- **The Rev. Dorlimar Lebrón Malavé** will be our **opening worship preacher** on Friday, May 21, at 9 AM. Part of a growing cadre of dynamic, Latinx young adult leaders in the UMC, she is the pastor of First Spanish UMC (FSUMC) in New York City, an active, urban congregation also known as "The People's Church."
- **The Rev. Frederick Douglas Powe**



**Jr., PhD**, will teach on the topic "Church Revitalization through Community Outreach" on Friday, May 21, at 2 PM. The author of several books, he is Director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, and he teaches Evangelism and Urban Ministry at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington DC.



- **Bishop Mark Webb**, leader of the Upper New York Episcopal Area, will preach at the **Service of Ordination and Commissioning** on



## Eastern PA to hold 2nd online Annual Conference May 20-22

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episcopal areas and may elect new bishops to replace those who retire. Three NEJ bishops, including our own Bishop Peggy Johnson, have requested voluntary retirement, which requires Jurisdictional Conference approval. Two, Bishop Johnson and Bishop Jeremiah Park of the Central PA Conference, will leave their posts in August to do other work as they await official retirement in 2022. Active bishops will provide episcopal “coverage” of their areas through December 2022.

### Bishop John R. Schol to cover Eastern PA Conference

As Bishop Johnson prepares to leave, the NEJ College of Bishops has chosen Bishop John R. Schol, who leads the Greater New Jersey Conference (New Jersey Area) to also cover the Eastern PA Conference of the Philadelphia Episcopal Area, beginning Sept. 1. The Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the Philadelphia Area will realign with the Baltimore-Washington Conference and be led by Bishop Latrelle Easterling of the Washington Area.

Bishops Cynthia Moore-Koikoi of the Western PA Conference (Pittsburgh Area) and Sandra Steiner-Ball of the West Virginia Conference (West Virginia Area) will share leadership of the Central PA Conference (Harrisburg Area), as Bishop Park steps down to await his retirement. All other NEJ bishops will stay in their current roles at least through the 2022 NEJ Conference.

“There will not be any changes in conference boundaries or mergers

### Northeastern Jurisdiction



happening at this time,” said Bishop Johnson.

The reduced number of active bishops and more sharing of episcopal leaders may provide a much-needed cost-savings in a fast-dwindling Episcopal Fund budget. Other jurisdictions across the UMC are making similar adjustments, while waiting to see what their conference memberships and structures will be after the next full General Conference. That conference is expected to lead to denominational division, as some congregations disaffiliate and leave with their church properties to join new denominations, prompted by disagreement with church law regarding LGBTQ

clergy and marital acceptance.

The NEJ Conference’s delegates will determine in 2022 if any—and how many—bishops will be elected to lead its 10 conferences. The UMC’s Council of Bishops is recommending that no new bishops be elected anywhere next year because of the denomination’s anticipated schism and the possibility of membership declines and financial challenges that may result.

Bishop Johnson presented some of these changes to Eastern PA Conference members in a March 1 “town hall” webinar on Zoom. But much of what she reported then has since changed. The Rev. Joseph DiPaolo, a member of the General Commission on General Conference, helped explain that commission’s reasons for further postponing the General Conference and its consideration of proposals for denominational division.

The commission’s Technology Study Team determined that trying to hold a fully online General Conference, with legislative committees and debates, was not feasible, given the variations of connectivity, electricity, translation, and 24 time zones across our global church. Thus, the Council of Bishops set the new 2022 dates for the onsite international gathering.

“We have been discerning our future for a long time,” said the Rev. Bumkoo Chung, West District Superintendent, in his town hall opening prayer. “But we put our trust in you, Lord, because we believe that your plan is better than our plans.”

Eastern PA Conference delegates elected in 2019 to the postponed 2020 General and Jurisdictional conferences will be allowed to proceed with their representation in 2022.

### Annual Conference plans, resolutions

At our online Annual Conference in May, there will again be pre-recorded reports and award presentations. But members will vote this year via the easy-to-use Zoom polling feature, rather than the e-Ballot online system employed last year. There will be no voting by telephone this time. And voting members without access to computers will need to obtain assistance from their pastors or fellow members to cast their vote.

But first Conference members will meet via Zoom on Sunday, April 18, at 3 PM, to vote on a motion to suspend the



(Clockwise from top-left) Jo Fielding, Conference Director of Administrative Services, reads comments and questions during the March 1 webinar, surrounded on-screen by other Cabinet members: the Revs. Dawn Taylor-Storm; Bumkoo Chung; Steve Morton; Evelyn Kent-Clark; Andrew Foster III (center); and Bishop Peggy Johnson. Participants not shown: Conference Treasurer James Brown and Conference Lay Leader David Koch.

Session Rules of Order and thus, allow for a second online Annual Conference with online voting. District Conferences will then convene in separate Zoom meetings at 4 PM to handle key District matters.

This year’s Annual Conference will include only six, mostly administrative resolutions that should probably draw little if any debate. The East District recommends that First UMC in Perkasio and Asbury UMC in Norriston both be discontinued. And the Conference Trustees recommend distributions of various required payments from churches that use the disaffiliation agreement authorized by the 2019 Special General Conference (*UM Book of Discipline*, para. 2553) to leave the denomination.

The Benefits Board will recommend adjustments in:

- Rental/Housing Allowances for Retired or Disabled Clergypersons;
- Advanced Funding of the Past Service Rate for Pre-82 Participants for 2023; and
- Clergy Retirement Security Program payments.

In addition, the Conference Global Ministries Team recommends approval of six Advance Special projects for second-mile church funding support.

Conference planners instituted a new system in which submitted resolutions were published in advance as Google documents for conference members to read and respond with suggested changes. March 5 was the deadline for the Conference Secretary to receive all resolutions, which were posted online and made available for members to read and offer questions and suggested changes until April 2. Final versions of the resolutions were published April 13.

Other groups and individuals that intended to submit resolutions to address various concerns have decided not to submit them, partly due to the shortened session and the expected

difficulty of using the Zoom chat section for legislative amendments and debates.

At the town hall webinar Bishop Johnson explained her decision to retire after 13 years of serving the Philadelphia Episcopal Area. She and her husband, the Rev. Michael Johnson, will move to Carrollton, Va., to live near their oldest son and his family.

“Go forth and spread the news, and help people understand the huge changes about to happen,” she urged members. “And let’s do the best we can in the meantime.”

### DIVERSE SPEAKERS-continued from Page 3

Saturday afternoon, May 22, at 2 PM. Board President of Discipleship Ministries since 2016, he was formerly a pastor and superintendent in the Susquehanna Conference and was a Harry Denman Evangelism Awardee in 2002.



Our Resident Bishop Peggy Johnson will preach and celebrate Communion on Saturday morning, at 10 AM, during the Memorial Service for clergy and

clergy spouses who died during the past conference year. Both Saturday services will be hosted again by Olivet UMC in Coatesville and attended onsite, respectively, by families of ordinands, commissionees, and deceased clergy and clergy spouses.





## 'Dismantling Racism'

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**Reconciliation**, the Eastern PA Conference is working through its own **Racial Justice Transformation Process** from various angles. Helping to lead that effort and reporting on it yearly to the Annual Conference, the Cabinet and the NEJ is the Conference **Commission on Religion and Race (CORR)**.

Through resourcing and responding to racial-ethnic concerns, the commission works to "foster intercultural competency and cooperation, live into institutional equity, and engage in straightforward, Christian conversations." But it has partners in that work among other Conference groups, like the **Healing the Wounds of Racism Core Team** that sponsors Dismantling Racism workshops—basic and advanced—for clergy and lay ministers, on behalf of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

### Dismantling Racism seminars well-attended

The next weekend-long Dismantling Racism, Level I, training happens on Zoom April 16-18, and the class is full. (The fall training is scheduled for Oct. 29–Nov. 1, also via Zoom.) But two recent Dismantling Racism, Level II, seminars also drew heavy participation.

**"The Hispanic/Latino (Latinx) Experience—Racism: the Struggle is Real!"** a three-hour seminar on Zoom drew 78 attendees. They were able to gain a wide-ranging, international understanding of history, faith, culture, racism and oppression affecting Latinx people in the U.S., the Caribbean and Latin America. Two Latina theologians—Yenny Delgado of Peru and the Rev. Agustina Luvis-Núñez of Puerto Rico—taught alongside the Rev. Nelson Rabell, a Lutheran pastor from Puerto Rico who serves immigrant and marginalized communities in Lodi, Calif.

And the Rev. Doris Kung Chi Pui Dalton, a former Eastern PA Conference staff member now working for the New York Annual Conference, taught a three-hour seminar in September 2020 on **"The Experience and Impact of Racism on People of Asian Ancestry."** That topic is even more timely now, as people of Asian heritage are being widely targeted with public insults and violence. Over 90 participants learned what many others are just learning now: the largely unknown history and impact of racism against Asian Americans.

Moreover, discussions on the psychological causes and consequences of racism have enlightened many Conference members in numerous other workshops. One virtually therapeutic gathering on Zoom, **"Racism, Trauma and Transformation,"** in October 2020, engaged people of color in frank, mutual

revelations, led by Dr. Dandridge Collins, a minister, author and trauma therapist.

And at the annual **Emotional Intelligence and Diversity** workshop sponsored by CORR last fall, participants learned about hidden feelings, ignorance and beliefs about race, culture, privilege and internalized oppression.

"I didn't know what I didn't know or even how to ask," said one attendee. "But I thank the Conference for offering programs like this because there are things I'm learning that I need to know."

### CORR, other groups work to dismantle racism

The Conference's Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM) is funded by our giving to the churchwide offering received on Native American Ministries Sunday (April 18, 2021). CONAM focuses much of its work on educating the Conference about Native American culture and concerns, including the past and still-present mistreatment of Native peoples in the U.S.

The committee partnered with another advocacy group to present a Zoom session in November 2020 on **"Race-Based Mascots,"** about the abuse of Native American culture and identities through offensive stereotypes used for sports team names and symbols.

CONAM leaders also taught a Tools for Ministry class March 13 about historical oppression of indigenous peoples in the Americas by Christopher Columbus and other explorers, aided by the Catholic Church and its infamous Doctrine of Discovery. The group will hold its next spring learning event May 2 on Zoom at 4 PM. Titled **"We Are Still Here: Outstanding Native Americans Today,"**

the program will emphasize "contemporary Native Americans who are thriving, lifting up others in their communities and making significant contributions to American society."



The Rev. Doris K. Dalton

**Whites Confronting Racism** is a cohort of White clergy who joined in intensive anti-racism training together in 2019. Members are active in CORR and other settings where they can further their learning and commitment to recognize and dismantle systemic and interpersonal racism. Several members taught a class at Tools for Ministry ("When You SEE White Supremacy, How to USE Your White Voice") that was based on their own training.

Several CORR members are also active in the Conference **Urban Commission's "Fight for Floyd and Beyond,"** campaign, in which members address concerns about racial injustice and violence in policing. Fight for Floyd and Beyond emerged from an Urban

Commission-sponsored meeting during widespread protests ignited by the May 25, 2020, public killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police.

The campaign addresses a crisis in police-community relations in communities of color, including racially motivated police mistreatment and brutality committed against African Americans. Three committees—focused on Education, Community Development and Public Policy—stemmed from that initial dialogue, and now they meet regularly to share information and insights and to plan and implement responsive actions.

In addition, the Urban Commission sponsored a Summit on the Black Church in March and has two upcoming events on deck: a two-part virtual Urban Summit (April 24 and May 1) that includes a youth component; and a webinar on "African Americans and Policing: Developing Healthy Police and Community Relationships" (April 22), as part of its Fight for Floyd and Beyond Initiative.



Panelists at the State of the Black Church Webinar, March 18. From top left, clockwise: The Revs, William Brawner, Andrew L. Foster III, Joseph Archie III, Lester Justice, Evelyn Kent-Clark, and Elmer Neal Davis Jr.

Recognizing that education is key, CORR members are involved with others in several book studies: **Waking Up White** by Debby Irving, written to help "Euro-Americans" understand white privilege; and Isabella Wilkerson's instant classic **"Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents."** That popular, revealing, six-week book study and discussion group, with over 80 participants, was co-sponsored by the Conference's **Congregational Development Team** and led by an interracial trio of facilitators.

CORR members will internally study and discuss **Plantation Jesus** by Rick Wilson, from April 29 to July 29. And there are reports of other anti-racism book studies and discussions among other groups and churches.

### Training to enhance intercultural competence

Finally, CORR teams have helped more than 400 church leaders around the Conference with **Intercultural Training** over the past few years. At Tools for Ministry



Yenny Delgado speaks on "The Hispanic/Latinx Experience with Racism"

in March a CORR team helped attendees deepen their understanding of relationship dynamics, especially in diverse cultural communities. They covered anti-racism terms that are becoming more familiar these days—implicit bias, white fragility, micro-aggressions, etc.—as well as biblical and theological foundations of serving in **Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural (CR/CC) ministry**.

"I have been given much to reflect on, pray about and begin to integrate into my being with God's help," wrote Linda Youngstrom in her evaluation of the class.

"I've discussed some of the seminar content with others at church," reported Linda Evans. "We wish to be a more welcoming church, and the information about intrinsic bias was eye opening and generated many email responses."

CORR's ongoing training and support for CR/CC ministries—in partnership with the Cabinet—includes its lively annual trainings for clergy and congregations just starting or growing into this often challenging setting for pastoral appointments. The next training will be June 5, 9 AM - 12:30 PM. Meanwhile, "CR/CC Companions" accompany and support leaders in CR/CC ministry churches.

CORR's several Conference partnerships also include the **Council on Youth Ministries** and the **Prison Ministry and Restorative Justice Team**, both of which have sponsored important anti-racism events with CORR's support. **NEWSpirit Communications** has expanded its promotion and reporting of Dismantling Racism efforts, including an expanding online presence that will soon include a searchable anti-racism media resources list on the Conference's newly designed website.

Moreover, CORR has engaged an outside anti-racism training and consulting firm to help it assess the strengths, weaknesses and impact of its efforts so far, and what needs to happen next for the Conference to become truly authentic and accountable in its quest to dismantle racism.

Indeed, Eastern PA's Racial Justice Transformation Process must lead forthrightly from greater awareness, to more advocacy and then to verifiable advancement. In the meantime, the challenge for many Conference members will be, in the words of the Philadelphia 76ers' once-popular slogan, to "Trust the Process."



## Conference youth are socially distanced but spiritually connected

Most teenagers by Saturday are no doubt tired of looking, listening and talking to computer screens all week for school instruction and social interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, Eastern PA Conference youth gladly gather on-screen twice a month for Conference Council on Youth Ministry (CCYM) meetings that for some have become like talk therapy.

“We’ve maintained an active membership throughout the pandemic, meeting virtually every two weeks,” reports the Rev. David Piltz, CCYM Coordinator. “Our meetings are for more than business. They are times for us to enjoy fellowship and laughter and to discuss important topics, such as faith, diversity, dealing with society’s -ism’s, and how to live as a Christian in today’s world.”

Conversations may become serious, but they always begin with fun questions, like “If you could be part of a house what part would you be and why?” What eventuates, said Piltz, are bonds of friendship, concern for one another, feelings of safety, honest self-expression, and simple joy.

### Youth discuss race, sexuality, abuse, other serious topics

Then meetings get deep, as the group explores topics difficult to discuss, such as race, sexuality, vulnerability, fears, abuse, addiction and so on.

“This is amazing,” said Lydia, a second-year member. “I don’t know how we go from a fun question to an in-depth conversation within 5 minutes of meeting.” Wesley, a new member, said he joined CCYM after hearing about the deep conversations that occur. He wanted to be a part of them; and he was not disappointed.

Piltz guides the youth and their adult mentors into discussions of diversity, equity and inclusion partly because all groups are challenged by the Conference to explore those concerns as part of the Northeastern Jurisdiction’s (NEJ) Call to Action Initiative. Fortunately, those concerns come naturally to these teens, some of whom may witness prejudice and exclusion in

their social settings.

In fact, the CCYM youth led the NEJ Council on Youth Ministry in a creative discussion about diversity when they met on Zoom last fall. Sarah, a talented second-year member, authored a variety of dramatic vignettes portraying the challenges of diversity that the youth performed and then discussed.

CCYM has delved into other topics in Zoom discussions led by guests who have candidly shared their own life lessons with biblical perspectives. In January they hosted a virtual rally that featured music, poetry, sharing of Scripture and stories, and profound testimonies by recording artists Tasha Layton, Keith Everette Smith and Egypt Speaks.

“Perseverance” was the rally’s focus, and the youth identified that virtue as a key element in dealing with the pandemic.

In February and March, CCYM tried something new. The youth gathered with students from Drexel University’s Open Door UM Campus Ministry on Zoom for a six-week series of inspirational talks for youth and young adults on topics like relationships and personal healing. Young poet and performer Egypt Speaks and Christian motivational speaker Lee Woodall, an ex-NFL football star, took turns leading the weekly “Fireside Chat and Prayer” sessions. Piltz is also Open Door’s Campus Minister and was able to bring the two groups together.

### Youth, college students experience chats, prayer together

“In a winter that brought many challenges, the opportunity for our group to join with students from Drexel to discuss relationships, forgiveness, and God’s ability to guide us through our difficulties was a great blessing,” wrote John McCormick, youth leader at Cedarville UMC in Pottstown. “It was awesome to witness the teens from each group offering honest thoughts and valuable questions in each Zoom



CCYM celebrated departing graduates at the last face-to-face youth gathering in July 2020 at Valley Forge UMC.

meeting. And the presenters did a great job of establishing a connection with them and making them feel comfortable and supported.”

### CCYM planning August 28 youth rally

Now CCYM is planning a rally for August 28, tentatively onsite at Covenant UMC in Bath Township, which hosted its Camping at the Crossroads youth rally in 2019. While the youth yearn to gather face-to-face again, they will follow safety precautions.

Their theme is “Time 2 (.....)” from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. The event will feature music, guest speakers, games, mission moments, youth testimonies, youth group team-building contests, and more. Registration will begin soon.

Michael Gold, Covenant UMC’s youth minister, and Jezerel Gutierrez, the Conference’s Assistant Young People’s Ministry Coordinator, are also instrumental partners in guiding CCYM’s activities. “Jezerel is incredibly supportive and passionate about teaching youth how to lead,” said Piltz, who leaves his part-time position for a new pastoral appointment in July. “She instills in them confidence that they can do things they don’t think they can do; and that helps make our rallies truly youth-led.”

## Camp & Retreat Centers foresee ‘a future with hope’

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.—Jeremiah 29:11 (NRSV)*

What a difference a year can make—especially this year, and especially for the four Eastern PA Conference’s Camp & Retreat Ministry (CRM) sites.

“Spring has sprung, and we are so excited,” writes Apryl Miller, Director of Gretna Glen Camp & Retreat Center in a recent newsletter. Despite the ongoing, debilitating pandemic, she and the other camp directors are hoping to spring forward into CRM-saving time, when their recovering sites can escape the winter of their discontent and thrive once again.

But for now, they look forward to hosting modest, mostly outdoor gatherings and retreats; more independent family getaways; and finally a cautious return to the exhilaration of summer camp.

### Gretna Glen Camp & Retreat Center

Gretna Glen, which is also excited about its [new website](#), is looking forward to hosting the return of its signature [Gretna Gritty](#), May 8. Known as the “hometown hero of mudruns,” it will again offer competitive

and non-competitive runs for teams and individuals, plus a children’s 1-mile Nitty Gritty fun run.

Before then, the camp will hold its annual Spring Work Day, April 17, for volunteers to come and help “spruce up” a camp that many have longed to see for over a year. And the monthly outdoor Free Youth Events will return April 18 and May 16.

The camp’s yearly Open House, offering a free day of tours and fun activities—including boating, fishing, games, crafts and more—will happen May 22. More camp tours and activity dates will occur in May and June, plus more weekend Family Getaways May 21-23



and August 6-8. The family outings were popular and beneficial to three of the camps during their 2020 low-summer.

[Summer Day Camp](#) kicks off June 14 and lasts till August 8. There are also Overnight Camps, Specialty Camps and the Camping in Leadership Program. Hiring staff, recruiting volunteers and other preparations are underway at all sites, with emphasis on safety in environmental improvements, training and protocols.

For Gretna Glen that includes new ventilation and air purification systems, a new outdoor amphitheater—thanks to a generous 2020 donation—more online notifications to improve communication and online videos to show how Gretna Glen will care for its campers.

Their fall calendar includes more Free Youth Events, a Confirmation Retreat (Oct. 8-10) and other seasonal outings.

### Pocono Plateau Camp & Retreat Center

Pocono Plateau’s [Summer Camp](#), for children, youth and families, runs from June 27 to August 15. Because it was canceled last year due to the pandemic, regular campers who finished high school but were unable to attend their last year of summer camp can receive an exemption to experience their “Senior Year” at camp

Continued on page 7.



Continued from page 6.

this summer. They must have attended a 2019 Pocono Plateau summer camp to be eligible.

But first the camp will host its annual Father & Son Retreat, April 23-25, and its Open House May 22 for camp tours. The Plateau also hopes to schedule more two-day Family Getaways. Last summer families safely enjoyed boating, crafts, hiking, the climbing tower, campfires, devotions, relaxation and more activities, plus dining hall meals together on their own.

The camp's usual [early fall events](#)—cancelled in 2020—will return this fall, including the Hero Dash



5K & 15K Races (Sept. 18), the Knitting Retreat (Sept. 24-26), the Men's Retreat (Oct. 1-3) and the Senior Adults Retreat (Oct. 5-8). But one important fall tradition that did happen during the pandemic in 2020 will also return this year: the Annual Woodcutter's Day, Nov. 6.

**Innabah Camp & Retreat Center**

Innabah is registering its usual variety of summer campers—Challenge campers, family campers and mainstream campers. And an outside group named Handi-Campers, designed for young persons with disabilities, is booked for 5½ weeks, starting just before Memorial Day weekend.

Generous donations have allowed Innabah, like the other camps, to bring reduced-hours staff back to full-time and to hire a part-time maintenance worker. Like elsewhere, water fountains have been replaced with touchless bottle filler stations, and ventilation units



and light bulbs are now more energy efficient.

At all the camps, during the sadly quiet 2020 summer, devoid of gleeful campers, the sweet sounds of site maintenance and repairs rang out, as hardworking volunteers' did their labors of love. And of course, there were supportive donations that poured in from various directions, including the Bishop's Appeal, a Conference Trustees gift, churches, groups and individuals—even from strangers who gave through community fundraising efforts like Giving Tuesday, Lancaster's Extraordinary Give, and the Amazing Raise.

"We thank each and every one who contributed financially in 2020," said Michael Hyde, Innabah's site director. "Your support helped us weather the difficulties associated with not being able to operate anywhere close to normal due to COVID. We are humbled, grateful, and thankful for your support."

Granted, the ongoing pandemic will force the camp to shrink its summer schedule of programs and space occupancy. "But there will still be plenty of fellowship, fun, faith, and friendship opportunities for all our campers," Hyde assured.

**Carson Simpson Farm Christian Center**

Carson Simpson Farm, at two Open Houses, April 13 and May 1 (9 AM-12 PM), will likely show off its array of site improvements, including:

- a newly renovated Edleman Pavilion;
- a vegetable garden to provide fresh food to its kitchen and to a local food pantry;
- a modified drinking fountain and hand-washing station; and
- updated lighting and new security cameras.

But first comes its Work Day, April 24, when volunteers can help the site get ready for summer camp. Camp registrations are at their highest since 2002, reports Jonathan Curtis, director. He credits their new website for part of that yield.

Meanwhile, strict guidelines are planned to protect campers and staff from COVID-19, including a 68% limit on camp occupancy,

Little Critters Preschool Camp, May 8, will offer 3-5 year-olds a brief glimpse of what camp is like, including a Bible story, a craft, a nature activity and a snack.

"We also anticipate having at least one PEACE overnight camp this summer, and we are excited about that," said Curtis. "Spring church services and retreats are minimal at the moment, but we are excited to serve whomever we can."

"I'm feeling prayerful optimism because we're definitely in a different place," said the Rev. Ron Schane, Pocono Plateau's director. Indeed, he has much reason for "prayerful optimism" after recovering from emergency heart surgery in 2020 during his camp's shut-down.

"We saw how God provided for us last year. So, with all those blessings and support from people throughout the conference and our constituents, I'm feeling good about this year. I know we won't be quite at the level of ministry that we typically do, but any ministry is good."

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Roz is one of the founding pastors at Mosaic, a new multicultural church in Dayton, Ohio, that launched with 564 people within a year. He also serves as an affiliate faculty member and Dean of The Chapel at United Theological Seminary



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**In Memoriam**

*The Rev. Theodore W. Loder - April 1, 2021*  
*Mrs. LaRue D. Spencer - April 1, 2021*  
*Mrs. Faye Stauffer - March 18, 2021*  
*The Rev. Drew A. Parsons - February 21, 2021*  
*The Rev. Harry Frederick Wooters - February 14, 2021*  
*The Rev. G. Clarke Chapman - February 11, 2021*  
*The Rev. Olivet Brown - January 28, 2021*  
*The Rev. Bonnie Alleman - January 23, 2021*  
*The Rev. Thomas H. Jenkins, Jr. - January 23, 2021*  
*Mrs. Eulala Stinger - January 22, 2021*  
*Mrs. Christine Virginia Cherry - December 27, 2020*  
*The Rev. Margaret Trice - December 13, 2020*  
*The Rev. Donald E. Ray - December 4, 2020*

Full death notices are available at  
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# Mission Link proves good things can come when adversity hits

BY THE REV. BRUNY MARTINEZ

It seemed that the year 2020 was a year of tempestuous winds to navigate.

Many congregations and people were struggling to follow new regulations and to maintain social distance from acquaintances, friends, and family. For some, these regulations were easy to follow. We are all different and appreciate life and relationships in distinct ways. The struggles that we are facing during this pandemic might bring the good, the bad, and the ugly.

In the case of the Eastern PA Conference's West Lebanon Mission Link (WLML) this pandemic provided a space for a great opportunity. As COVID-19 started to quickly spread through our world, our nation and Lebanon County, the news was about people being kept at home without incomes to sustain their families.

Some months prior to the pandemic the youth at St. Luke's UMC had the idea to place a "blessing box\*" outside the church. This box was filled with food almost every week, and it was being emptied almost as soon as it was refilled.

This small gesture pointed us to the larger idea of developing a food pantry. When the pandemic hit and people were out of work, the West Lebanon Mission Link discussed and decided there was a need to provide food. It was a need we could meet as a group by creating a food



pantry.

We committed volunteers and as much financial support as each congregation could afford. The participating congregations are:

- Mountville UMC, Pastor Bob Howard,
- Kauffman UMC, Pastor Bill McNeal,
- Ebenezer UMC, Pastor Jeff Kapp,
- St. John's UMC, Pastor Matthew Whayland, and
- St. Luke's UMC, Pastor Bruny Martinez.

Joining Martinez in coordinating the effort is Isaias "Jesse" Davila, who managed the food pantry and meal service ministry at Neuva Creacion (New Creation) UMC in Lancaster (where Martinez was once the pastor).

Our efforts began, and when an appeal for help from Lebanon County Christian Ministries was unsuccessful, West District Lay Leader Sue Grimm Mattox informed us of Blessings of Hope in Leola. We contacted them, and almost immediately the food distribution started.

Volunteers and pastors from the mission link congregations began helping on a regular basis. Non-perishable items arrive weekly. Perishable items arrive on the day of distribution, the last Monday of each month.

The pantry consistently serves 50 families. Volunteers pack the food and distribute it in the parking lot. Cars pull in, and we place



Members of the West Lebanon Mission Link receive a Herbert E. Palmer Urban Ministry Award for their collaborative food pantry ministry that also received an Urban Commission grant. Presenting the award to the Rev. Bruny Martinez (center) were (from left) the Revs. David Eckert and Myra Maxwell, who co-chair the commission. To Martinez' left are ministry partners Isaias "Jesse" Davila, the Rev. Jeff Kapp and Bob Howard.

bags in the cars with minimal contact as a precaution during the pandemic.

For 2021 the WLML successfully applied for a grant from the Conference Urban Commission\*\* and sought other monies to improve the food pantry. A local foundation provided monies for equipment: shelves, a refrigerator, and a freezer, allowing us to get perishable items ahead of time. Other contributors are Lebanon's [P.E.O. women's organization](#), our congregations and individuals who believe in this ministry.

As the pandemic evolves into a new "norm" we will add other features to the food pantry, such as information-sharing about food preparation, recipes and nutrition.

This effort is possible because of our connectional church. Each congregation is relatively small, with limited resources. But together we can impact our communities and people's lives. In Scripture James 3:4 tells us, "A small rudder on a huge ship in the hands of a skilled captain sets a course in the face of the strongest winds."

In the middle of life's storms we can make a difference and show God's love in many ways, ultimately demonstrating who we are in Christ. And good things can result when adversity hits if we work together.

*\*Blessing Boxes are honor system food pantries where people can take food who are in need. Also, this is an easy way for those who want to help others to donate non-perishable food.*

*\*\* The next round of [Urban Ministry grant applications](#) are due May 31. [Learn the guidelines.](#)*

## 2021 Annual Conference Ministry Award Presentations

Denman Award, One Matters Award, Palmer Urban Ministries Award, Narberth Grant



The Revs. Dawn Taylor-Storm and Andrew Foster III present the Discipleship Ministries One Matters Award to the Rev. John Brice and Coach Dell Jackson of St. James UMC Philadelphia.



The Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm awards the first Narberth Fund Grant to the Rev. Mark Salvacion of Justice for Our Neighbors of the Delaware Valley.



The Rev. Lloyd Speer (right) presented Denman Evangelism Awards to (from left): The Rev. Myra Maxwell (Clergy); Rev. Barbara Welsh (Clergy); William Tonnies (Youth); and Judy Ehninger (Laity).



The Revs. Myra Maxwell and David Eckert (kneeling) presented Herbert E. Palmer Urban Ministry Awards to (from left): the Rev. Jose "Ricky" Ayala and Gil Vining from New Hanover UMC Gilbertsville; the Rev. John Lewis and Lewis Wilford of Grace Community UMC Chester; Rev. Bruny Martinez and Isaias "Jesse" Davila (back) of the West Lebanon Mission Link (WLML); the Rev. Joseph Paul Grasser of Christ UMC Easton; and the Rev. Jeff Kapp and Bob Howard of the WLML.