

Online 2020 Annual Conference session approved

In an historic decision, Eastern PA Annual Conference members voted overwhelmingly August 26 to approve temporary rule changes that will allow for their 2020 annual conference on October 13-14 to be a Zoom videoconference webinar with electronic voting and a reduced agenda.

The vote—conducted through eBallot, a secure online voting system—tallied 508 “yes” votes and 14 “no’s,” with a quorum of participating members. The result will be a conference agenda that handles only matters required by the United Methodist Church’s *Book of Discipline* and other mandatory conference business.

That conference business includes reports on key programs and operations, and votes needed to approve an annual budget, clergy equitable salary levels, pension and health benefit plans, and Trustee Board resolutions. As always, some votes may be combined on the Consent Calendar. Non-essential

resolutions will not be addressed this year but may be resubmitted for consideration at the 2021 Annual Conference.

Because of ongoing restrictions on large gatherings, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Annual Conference and its four

District Conferences will all meet not in person but online. Forced into interactive, virtual meetings, as many churches and ministry groups have been, they will use Zoom video webinars, Facebook Live for livestreaming and the eBallot secure balloting system for electronic voting.



Top row, from left: The Rev. Evelyn Kent Clark, South District Superintendent; Bishop Peggy Johnson. Bottom row, from left: Dave Koch, Conference Lay Leader; the Rev. Jaqueline Hines, Conference Secretary.

District Conferences meet in September

District conferences will meet virtually on four different evenings in mid-September, rather than simultaneously as usual:

- **South District:** Tuesday, Sept. 15,

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Conference Council on Youth Ministries members gathered in person July 11 to say goodbye to graduates; but they gathered online in August for a youth rally. See story on page 4.

Churches adapt ministries to safely respond to pandemic

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

The coronavirus pandemic may be proving that necessity really is the mother of invention, as new ways of doing ministry are being born of necessity in churches across the Eastern PA Conference.

Like their peers around the U.S., many of our churches are adapting ministries to meet new safety challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic—that is, the need for social distancing, mask-wearing, vigilant sanitation and other measures.

For some that means offering worship, Bible study and other activities online,

using video livestreaming or video conferencing or both. For others it means adapting sanctuary or outdoor space and procedures to worship safely. But some churches have also found ways to adapt their outreach ministries so they can serve increasing needs in their hard-hit communities.

Jenkintown UMC (East District)

The Food Cupboard at Jenkintown UMC has shifted from offering food-insecure neighbors free food by allowing them to shop for desired items inside the church “store” to managing a bustling drive-through operation in the church’s parking lot.

Hundreds of full shopping bags fill tables in the large fellowship hall each Saturday morning. But they disappear in about 2 hours, as volunteers deliver them to patrons waiting patiently with their cars outside. Before volunteers leave they start prepping for the next Saturday.

“We’re committed to helping people get the food they need, and we

keep going till the last person is served,” said Melinda Bartscherer, a retired physical therapist who has directed the program for eight years. “But I really worry about people who are losing expired unemployment benefits. It’s getting bad for many of them.”

The church has made safety adjustments during the pandemic to minimize contact. One safety monitor’s sole job is to take temperatures, ask health questions and enforce mask-wearing.

But Bartscherer and her team can now also register and check people in

electronically using a website database, and they can more easily document everything for accountability to the state. The food and other help comes from Philabundance, the Montgomery Anti-Hunger Network and other partner organizations. But the ministry faces an \$80,000 deficit by the end of the year from all the adjustments and extra amounts of food needed because of the pandemic. It direly needs more help. Donation information is on the ministry’s webpage.

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Jenkintown UMC’s pastor, the Rev. Luke Billman (right) and his son Layton, help a volunteer load groceries from the church’s Food Cupboard into a patron’s car.

Conference seeks support for struggling camps

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

The Eastern PA Conference is exploring solutions in all directions to help its four Camp & Retreat Centers overcome their severe economic losses from the recession caused by the unrelenting COVID-19 pandemic. Those solutions include a conference-wide fundraising appeal led by Bishop Peggy Johnson and a proposal to sell about 50 of Camp

Innabah’s 179 scenic acres along French Creek in Chester County.

The proposal was sent as a resolution to conference members Sept. 10 for consideration at their district conferences this month and for a vote at the Annual Conference business session Oct. 13. It calls for selling the land—for expected net proceeds of approximately \$750,000—to offset the Camp and Retreat Centers’ (CRM)

Continued on page 5.

SEPTEMBER

DISTRICT CONFERENCES

- South District: Tuesday, Sept. 15, 6:30 PM
- East District: Wednesday, Sept. 16, 6:30 PM
- North District: Thursday Sept. 17, 6:30 PM
- West District: Monday, Sept. 21, 6:30 PM

SEPTEMBER 19

Dismantling Racism – Level II Workshop. on Zoom.

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 3

Leadership Launch Training Event. On Zoom.

OCTOBER 4

Practice Vote for Annual Conference. 3 PM, Zoom webinar.

OCTOBER 9 & 10

Domestic Violence Seminar, on Zoom. Friday, Oct. 9, 7-9 PM and Saturday, Oct. 10, 9 AM-12 PM.

OCTOBER 13 & 14

2020 Annual Conference. Zoom webinar and livestreaming.

OCTOBER 17

UMW Annual Celebration.

"Racism, Post-Traumatic Stress, & Transformation" on Zoom.

OCTOBER 23-25

Dismantling Racism Training, Friday 5 PM – Sunday 3 PM, on Zoom.

OCTOBER 31ST & NOVEMBER 7

Emotional Intelligence and Diversity Training. Part 1: 10/31 at 12:30 PM – 3:30 PM. Part 2: 11/7 at 12:30 PM – 3:30 PM. On Zoom.

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 14, 2020

Annual Faith-Sharing Event: Evangelism in a Changing Landscape. On Zoom.

DECEMBER

DECEMBER 13, 2020

Annual "Celebrating our Cultures" Event, on Zoom.



Dismantling Racism Level II Workshop

Saturday, September 19 9 AM to 12 PM, via Zoom

Theme: "The Experience and Impact of Racism on People of Asian Ancestry"

The Rev. Doris Kung Chi Pui Dalton, a Deacon and former Eastern PA Conference staff member, will keynote the interactive discussion. All clergy are required to take a Level II workshop within the quadrennium.

Dalton currently serves as Director of Leadership Development and Intercultural Competency in the UMC's New York Annual Conference. Ordained a Deacon in this conference, she served on the HWR Core Team for several years before moving to White Plains, NY.

Presented by the conference Healing the Wounds of Racism Core Team.



Cost: \$15
For Scholarships, contact: dtaylorstorm@epaumc.org.

Register Online at <https://na.eventscld.com/dismantling-sept-19>


UNITED METHODISTS STAND AGAINST RACISM
UMC.org/EndRacism

EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE
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When Home Hurts

Domestic Violence and Families: The Church Responds
October 9-10, 2020

Friday, 7 PM to 9 PM
and Saturday, 9 AM to 12 PM
A Zoom video-conference event
Register online to receive access information. Cost: \$10.
<https://na.eventscld.com/when-home-hurts>



Protecting Human Life. Promoting Healthy Families.
Join the Eastern PA Conference's Domestic Violence Committee for its third annual Domestic Violence Seminar. Again, we will learn more about this destructive social crisis that hurts individuals, families and communities. And we will explore how churches can respond.

After examining how domestic violence (DV) impacts women and men in 2018 and 2019, this year we will focus on families, including its impact on children and youth. Learn various perspectives from our keynote speaker, professional panelists, DV survivors and attendees. All will share their wisdom and witness—that is, their expert knowledge, their diverse views and their often-painful but enlightening experiences.

Jody Anderson, who co-chairs our conference's Domestic Violence Committee, will be our keynote speaker. Her new book *Band of Angels* comes out in October, during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

A longtime professional and church volunteer in social work and social justice, Jody is a certified child trauma specialist. She has counseled children and youth but also directed domestic violence agencies and launched a residential program to help homeless female veterans heal from sexual assault in the military.

Also, hear survivors' stories, and learn from our interactive panel discussion on "How Can the Church Respond Effectively?" and afterward, from breakout workshops. Our experts will include:

- A marriage and family therapist and campus minister who also directs our conference's Young People's Ministries program.
- A longtime county DV services director and former shelter director.
- Several clinical counselors who work with boys and men.
- A Licensed Local Pastor involved in helping domestic violence victims.
- A researcher and author who explores the church's role in addressing domestic violence.

Don't miss this in-depth, eye-opening, mind-expanding, heart-touching journey into a topic of grave concern to churches, individuals and communities who care about protecting human life and promoting healthy families. Please register online today and encourage fellow church members to join you in attending this important event.

Eastern Pennsylvania Conference
The United Methodist Church



Learn to lead more like Christ

Emotional Intelligence and Diversity training

October 31 & November 7, 2020
Attend just two, 3-hour, afternoon sessions on Zoom

Want to improve your communication, teamwork and conflict management skills?
Want to create a more welcoming, inclusive environment in your church and community?
Then, understanding and using Emotional Intelligence (EQ) can help.

Emotional intelligence is innate to everyone, and it is important for every church. In fact, it's a must-learn for church leaders who want to lead more like Christ and abide in Christ.

This training provides insights into biblical precepts and Jesus' approach to managing conflict and creating believers. It helps us understand bias, ambiguity and empathy, and to withstand the sins of prejudice and injustice, as well as fear, anger and violence.

Our expert EQ & Diversity trainers are the **Revs. David Piltz and Anita Powell** of the Eastern PA Conference Commission on Religion & Race (CORR).

Register now for only \$10:
<https://na.eventscld.com/emotional-intelligence-2020>

0.6 CEUs granted upon request.

This dual-session, 6-hour video-conferencing workshop on Zoom is scheduled for two Saturday afternoons: October 31 and November 7, each from 12:30 to 3:30 PM (just 3 hours each day).

Learn more from *What Does Emotional Intelligence Have to Do With Diversity?*
[<https://www.eid-results.org/blog/2016/6/16/what-does-emotional-intelligence-have-to-do-with-diversity>]

Sponsored by the Commission on Religion & Race (CORR), Eastern PA Conference, The United Methodist Church.

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Leadership Launch 2020

Bearing Fruitful Ministry



"If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit."
John 15:5

Oct. 3, 2020 9 AM to 11:30 AM

An interactive Zoom video-conferencing event.

All leaders are welcome and highly encouraged to attend. That includes: Connectional Ministry/Table teams and committees; Lay Leaders; Christ Servant Ministers, Certified Lay Ministers and anyone else in a church leadership role.

Free but registration is required.

Register now at <https://na.eventscld.com/leadership-2020>

Come join fellow church and conference leaders, as we discern what it means to lead well in challenging times.

Keynote Speaker: Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, New Eastern PA Conference Director of Connectional Ministries. Break-out sessions led by Connectional Table Members.

Rev. Taylor-Storm shares the following: "As ministry leaders, we are called to 'bloom where we are planted.' Even now, in this new vineyard where we find ourselves, fruitful discipleship is possible. Come and learn alongside other ministry leaders in this interactive training."

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit, apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

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Racism, Post-Traumatic Stress, & Transformation

Calling All People of Color: Clergy & Lay

October 17, 2020, from 9 AM - 2 PM
Zoom Online Meeting
Facilitator: R. Dandridge Collins, Ph. D., M.Div.
Registration Fee: \$15
Scholarships available. Contact: dtaylorstorm@epaumc.org

Register: <https://www.etouches.com/racism-trauma>

Registration includes copy of Dr. Collins's bestselling book, *The Trauma Zone*, and a copy of Romal Tune's book, *Love is an Inside Job*.

Because of your race, have you ever felt:

singled out?
marginalized?
disrespected?
ridiculed?

Have you ever raised a racial sensitivity concern and you were made to feel that you were:

going crazy?
overly sensitive?
overreacting?

Have issues of race ever left you with these feelings?

panic
anxiety
despair
depression
nightmares
rage
worry
flashbacks

theTRAUMAZONE
EXPLORING THE RACIAL TRAUMA REALITY
R. DANDRIDGE COLLINS, Ph.D.
FOREWORD BY DR. WILLIAM SHUB

We Will Highlight:

- Defining PTSD
- Defining Racism

We will be exploring practical solutions & resources.

Post-Traumatic Growth = healing after trauma.

Becoming Untethered from your trauma.

Eastern Pennsylvania Conference
The United Methodist Church
Sponsored by the Eastern PA Conference Commission on Religion and Race.

Evangelism in a Changing Landscape

2020 Faith-Sharing Event

November 14, 9 AM to 12 PM
Online Zoom Event
0.6 CEUs are available.

Free, but registration is required!
Register: <https://na.eventscld.com/faith2020>

Our featured speaker:
The Rev. Lisa Greenwood
Vice-President for Leadership Ministry of TMF (the Texas Methodist Foundation), Dallas, Texas

This one-day event will stimulate reflections on the changing landscape of our mission field—both its challenges and opportunities—and invite us into conversations about the implications for our church leaders and ministries. Congregations are encouraged to send teams to learn, strategize and prepare to grow together.

Ever feel like your church's models of ministry just aren't working anymore? Has your landscape changed, but your outlook and methods have not? Has your evangelism become salt that's lost its flavor?

We are compelled to share Christ's good news of love and grace, justice and hope. What does that call mean for us as leaders and for the churches we serve?

Lisa Greenwood works with church leaders across the UMC connection to help them understand and foster "deep change" by facilitating purposeful conversations of courage, learning, generosity and innovation. She brings wisdom and experience from serving suburban, urban and rural churches as a pastor in the North Texas Annual Conference for 20 years. She also has served on the Board of Ordained Ministry, four General Conference delegations (2004-2019), and as ministry strategist for the Horizons Stewardship Company.

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Jesus, the 'Universal Suffragist'

This summer women in the United States celebrate with pride the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which gave women the right to vote when fully ratified on August 26, 1920. This was a hard-fought battle that had its earliest beginnings at the "Women's Rights" Convention in Seneca Falls, NY, in 1848.



There were failures along the way. The Supreme Court in 1872 declared in a ruling about the 14th amendment that "all people" did not include women. One of the saddest realities of this movement was the fact that the White women



often sidelined Black women for fear that Southern voters would not support their suffrage campaign.

The "National American Women's Suffrage Association" in 1890 refused to include Black women in their ranks. Later, in a 1913 suffrage rally in Washington, DC, the White women insisted that the Black women march at the end of the parade. Racism was a consistent struggle alongside the intersectionality of sexism, even though the early movements for slavery's abolition and women's suffrage struggled hand and hand on many levels. It was a complicated time, much like today.

Even after the passage of the 19th Amendment, many Black women found it difficult to cast a ballot due to literacy requirements and poll taxes. It wasn't until the Voting

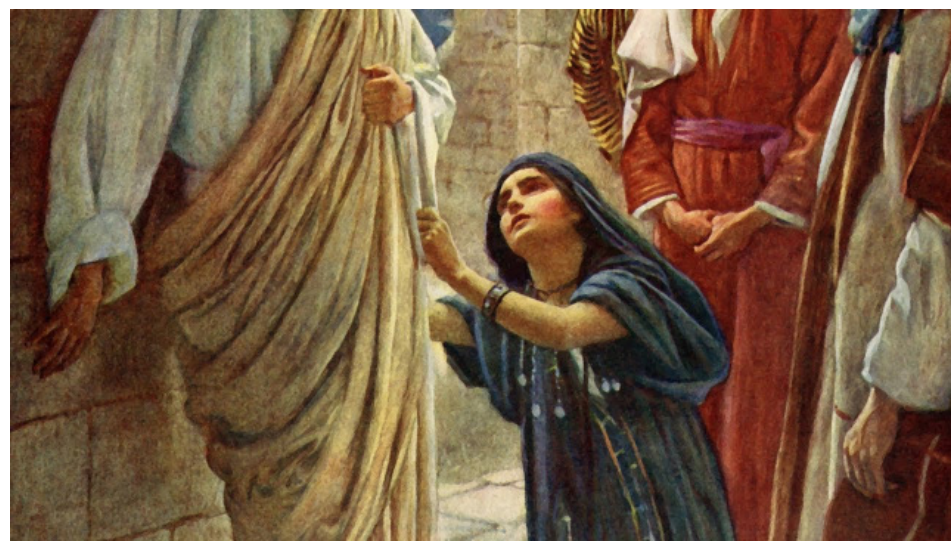
Rights Act of 1965 that Black women had the best opportunity to vote in this country. It is important to know our true history and to actively oppose current voter suppression attacks in this generation.

What does Jesus have to do with all of this? The word "suffrage" comes from a Latin word: "suffragium" which literally means "to support." The word came from a root word for "tablet" that was used to record a vote. Through the years, voting rights tended to go to majority-culture men, wealthy men, landowners and citizens. During the Enlightenment era in Europe (1715-1789) there was growing thought that there should be equal rights for all people. Along with this came a call for "universal suffrage."

Jesus was the ultimate "universal suffragist," long before Europe's Enlightenment era. In the truest sense of the word "suffrage," Jesus supported and uplifted women of all stripes: Samaritan women, Syrophenian women, women of questionable character, homemakers, his own mother, little girls, and ceremonial unclean women. He even gifted them with the highest honor of all: to be the first to tell the Good News of his resurrection.

Jesus saw all people as equals, including women, and he gave them a voice in public, engaged them in theological conversation, and allowed them to sit with the men as he taught. He healed women, forgave them, loved them and saw them as worthy of respect.

The world, and sadly the church,



19th Amendment

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

meaning of the Latin word "suffragium" is "to pray." We receive support for the work of justice and equality through the power of prayer. As we celebrate the milestone of women's suffrage, let us pray for a day when all will have the freedom to vote and to be recipients of equality and support.

References:

- *Washington Post*, August 5, 2020
- *ThoughtCo.com* - October 2, 2019
- AARP - February 28, 2020
- "Black Women and the Suffrage Movement" *Wesleyan.edu*
- "One of Divided Sisters: Bridging the Gap Between Black and White Women" by Midge Wilson and Kathy Russell, Anchor Press, 1996

continues to deny support for women. "Don't send us a woman pastor!" is something I still sadly hear each year when making appointments. The majority of our largest churches are served by men. Overall, women earn less salary than men in our denomination.

However, there are improvements coming little by little as time passes. I can see in my 40 years of ministry how attitudes, acceptance and support continue to improve. I would say that is the movement of the Holy Spirit. The influence of Jesus' teachings in his words and deeds continues to liberate women in our church, our country and our world. We still have a long way to go as disciples seeking "the transformation of the world."

As Christians we can be a part of the support system that raises up women to equality, self-determination and leadership. The same quest awaits us in regard to other groups and communities that face discrimination—such as people of color, people with disabilities, people living in poverty, and the LGBTQIA

community. Equality and equity for everyone is the only way that any of us can have true freedom and wholeness. Where can you show support and be a "universal suffragist"?

The other



Faithfully Yours,
Peggy A. Johnson



Online 2020 Annual Conference session approved

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- 6:30 PM
- **East District:** Wednesday, Sept. 16, 6:30 PM
- **North District:** Thursday Sept. 17, 6:30 PM
- **West District:** Monday, Sept. 21, 6:30 PM

Bishop Peggy Johnson, who presided over the rules-changes voting session, will speak to each of the district conferences. Districts will fill vacant equalizing-lay-member-to-conference slots for the rest of this quadrennium and will also celebrate new clergy retirees, recognize persons preparing for commissioning and ordination in October, and address other concerns.

Preparations for the Annual Conference and related gatherings have been carefully planned, during numerous meetings of conference staff and the Commission on Conference Sessions.

Practice e-voting session Sunday, Oct. 4

The next conference session-related event on Zoom will be to practice voting with eBallot on Sunday, October 4, at 3 PM. At that gathering Bishop Johnson will discuss and demonstrate the use of eBallot and other matters to be addressed at Annual Conference the following week.

Members who lack adequate access to computers or Wi-Fi service will be able to view the Annual Conference at an equipped church location in each district, where they will be able to vote by raising their hands. They must first indicate that need when they register.

Registration for the Annual Conference business session will open September 14. An invitation will be emailed to all delegates with instructions on how to register for the session. Additionally, a letter will be sent by USPS to all those without an email address in our system. There will be a \$30 Annual Conference registration fee to help pay costs for the 2020 session, including electronic voting costs.

MORE AC2020 INFORMATION

- The October 13-14 Annual Conference will include the annual, closed Clergy Session October 13, from 9 to 11 AM, and no Laity Session. The full conference legislative session will follow from 1 to 5 PM. Bishop Peggy Johnson will preside over the conference session from the Conference Office in Valley Forge, assisted by new Conference Secretary the Rev. Jacqueline Hines, Conference Lay Leader David Koch and the Rev. Bruce

Rogers, Parliamentarian, who will be off-camera.

- The annual Memorial Service for deceased clergy and clergy spouses will happen October 14, at 10 AM, at Olivet UMC in Coatesville. Onsite attendance—mostly by families of the deceased—will be by invitation only and limited to five persons, while others can watch it on livestream video.



A planning team visits Olivet UMC in Coatesville in July to decide on safety measures for attendees at the 2020 Annual Conference Ordination and Commissioning Service to be held there, along with the Memorial Service, October 14. In the foreground (from left) are Jo Fielding, Bishop Peggy Johnson, David Koch and the Rev. Johnson Dodla. In the background is Olivet UMC's pastor the Rev. Hun Ju Lee.

- After the sanctuary is sanitized, the annual Service of Ordination and Commissioning will follow at 2 PM that day (following a rehearsal the evening before). Again, attendance at the church—mostly by families of those being ordained and commissioned—will be by invitation only and limited to five persons, while others can view it on livestream video. In addition, ordinands may have up to two sponsors each to accompany them at the altar.

Bishops Johnson, Moore-Koikoi to preach

- Bishop Peggy Johnson will preach briefly at the session's opening worship service and at the Memorial Service. Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi of the Pittsburgh Episcopal Area (Western PA Conference) will preach onsite at the closing Service of Ordination and Commissioning.
- Information to register for the October 4 practice session will be sent to conference members by September 18. Instructions for using the eBallot voting system will be emailed to registrants October 3.
- Instructions to access members' eBallot portal will be emailed October 12 to all members who have registered for Annual Conference and the Clergy Session. Those who registered to attend Annual Conference at in-person locations will receive instructions for raised-hands voting there.
- The Annual Conference session and worship services, (but not the Clergy Session) will all be livestreamed on Facebook Live for guests to view.

Dual online events engage youth and youth leaders in learning

While many are avoiding public gatherings this summer during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Eastern PA Conference and its churches are making ample use of Zoom video-conferencing for meetings, worship, education and special events. And the Conference's Youth Ministries program is doing its share.

The Rev. David Piltz, Coordinator, has hosted two virtual learning and fellowship events in two months—one for youth and the other for adult youth ministers. While young participants sorely missed the social contact of an extended onsite gathering, they nonetheless appreciated the interaction, learning and good attendance they experienced in their brief time together.

Piltz and his team—including youth ministers Michael Gold and Jezerel Gutierrez—helped the Conference Council on Youth Ministry plan and cohost a virtual youth rally with guest speakers and music August 21-22. With the theme "Perfect Vision 2020," based on 2 Corinthians 5:7, the rally drew about 80 attendees, mostly youth, on Friday, from 8 to 9:30 PM, and Saturday, from 3 to 4:30 PM. Organizers said that attendance may have surpassed what an onsite event would have drawn.

Dynamic speakers, musicians

They heard compassionate wisdom and candid witnessing about the gifts and guidance provided by one's faith from dynamic Christian speakers and musicians. Topics ranged from self-esteem and relationships, to connecting with and relying on God and on one another, to the power that emerges from prayer and focusing on our faith in challenging times.

Much of the talk also focused on timely learning about the challenges and changes that can come with multicultural diversity, and also the causes and effects of systemic racism in our society. As usual, the youth planned and evaluated sessions and took turns emceeding the program.

"Our youth get opportunities to lead and use their unique gifts, while following the call of Christ in their lives," explained Piltz. "They know that faith is about knowing that God is always going to be there, no matter how dark things can get. We can all learn something from the youth and how they practice their faith in their lives."

Christian rock band Behold the Beloved performed in-between brief but engaging presentations by:



- Jen Gotzon and Jim Chandler, Christian Actors with a new movie, "The Farmer and the Belle," due out in November;
- Lee Woodall, a life coach and retired pro football player;
- Egypt Speaks, a popular spoken-word author and performer; and
- Sean Green, Behold the Beloved's lead singer.

Each presenter provided insight into how to live and walk confidently in this world by faith.

Adult Youth Ministry leaders meet

Woodall and Egypt Speaks also spoke to an earlier gathering organized by Piltz for adult youth ministry leaders, July 25. Leading Racial Reconciliation for Youth Leaders was an "experiential workshop" designed to help youth ministers and other church leaders engage with young people in "intentional conversations" on challenging and undoing racism—both explicit and implicit.

The facilitators also included Keynan Williams, a worship director and pastor to young adults at a youthful, multi-ethnic church. Individually, they explained foundations of racial reconciliation and how to effectively implement it in youth and young adult groups and church settings. The goals were to help youth leaders define cultural and generational trauma, find ways to engage youth and adults in controversial conversations, establish empathic listening and response techniques for emotional healing, understand reconciliation from a theological perspective, and create action plans for planting racial reconciliation seeds in their various church contexts.

Piltz, who is a pastor, a marriage and family therapist, and a campus minister at Drexel University, wants to have more learning and sharing events for youth ministers and leaders but also more gatherings—online and onsite—for youth. Moreover, CCYM needs and is always looking for new youth members and adult guides and leaders, said Piltz, who can be reached at dpiltz@epaumc.org or 814-883-0118.

Conference seeks support for struggling camps

Continued from page 1.

2020 operating budget deficit and an anticipated, pandemic-related deficit for 2021, plus retire Innabah's prior payroll liability.

The four CRM sites are grappling with profound fiscal challenges caused by the pandemic, as they were forced in May to cancel a number of scheduled retreats and most tragically, their summer camps—all of which deprived them of critically needed revenue. The severity of their losses has led to austerity in their response through necessary cost-cutting measures.

While cancellation of summer camps meant the loss of jobs for summer staff and volunteers, the camps have been able to retain their small cadre of year-round staff, thanks in part to the federal government's temporary Payroll Protection Plan to stem job losses. That lifeline ended in early August, without the renewal many had hoped for from the U.S. Congress.

Conference agencies, donors help

Several Conference agencies, including the Council on Finance and Administration and the Board of Trustees, and some personal donors have provided funds to help maintain staff positions. But the Camping Board anticipates a deficit of approximately \$40,000 in 2020, added to a previous, accumulated payroll debt at Camp Innabah of \$395,000 and anticipated deficits for the first six months of 2021.

"We have built four great camp sites with large programs to support our local churches' evangelism and discipleship efforts," said the Rev. Don Keller, who chairs the Conference's Camping Board. "With the pandemic, we were suddenly left to support these sites and

all the personnel and infrastructure with virtually no income. We appreciate the support of the Conference leadership and other agencies. But we need the support of the whole family to get through this time."

Uncertainty forces painful choices

The camps now have to make painful choices to reduce work hours and furlough some staff, while trying creatively to continue offering limited activities both onsite and online using their social media pages. They remain uncertain of when the pandemic will end and if they will recover.

That uncertainty is growing among many United Methodist, conference-owned camps around the U.S. And already, three have had to "indefinitely suspend their operations as a result of the strains from the pandemic," reports Jessica Gamache, Director of the UM Camp and Retreat Ministries Association.

Bishop Peggy Johnson recently appealed to Eastern PA Conference members and churches to increase support for the four camps here, as they struggle financially in the still looming shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic. In her August 27 letter she expresses hope in the support that already exists for the camps, describing them as "an important mission extension for our churches and the greater community. They are one of the most effective evangelism tools we have."

Support sought from every church

"Thus, I am asking you—churches, members and friends of our Conference—to embrace a vision of what it

would look like if every church would donate \$300 to support our camp centers and avoid a budget shortfall," she writes. "Such well-deserved generosity would help them with their already scaled-back payroll needs through the rest of this year and provide some funds to help them plan, resource and launch a new year of exciting retreats and camping adventures in 2021."

"We are so grateful for the support of the entire conference during this unprecedented time," said Apryl Miller, Director at Gretna Glen Camp & Retreat Center. "I truly believe together we can get through this period of time. This is temporary, we will be back in new and renewed ways very soon. Until then we must continue to dig deep to bridge this financial gap."

Like Miller, Keller looks forward to the day when "we will once again be praising God at our camps with our friends and leaders."

"The Camp and Retreat experience is important to the faith walk of so many of us," he explained. "The Church family is not going to let these sites flounder for long. God has a plan for continuing to meet us in these sacred spaces. We are thankful for the support of our congregations as part of that plan."

Citing the "power and possibilities of our United Methodist connection," Bishop Johnson urges members, friends, groups and churches to either

Ways to give online

The Eastern PA Conference has several online giving options for donors to support our camps. Visit the new Giving page on our conference website. Use the Annual Conference Giving menu to select Camp and Retreat Ministries. Or churches can give through the church remittances portal (#302). And finally, donors can also use our Text-to-Give option on their smartphones by calling 610-463-0244. Select "CAMP—Camp Retreat Ministry."

donate online or send checks, noting "Camp and Retreat Ministries," to the Treasurer's Office, Eastern PA Conference, P.O. Box 820, Valley Forge, PA 19482.

"Our Conference has been successful in paying down our pre-1982 clergy pension liability," she writes. "I believe we can help our beloved camps in their time of great need as well."



A family enjoys one of Gretna Glen Camp & Retreat Center's Family Getaways in August

Active, resilient Camp & Retreat Centers plan a 'future with hope'

While their recent activities were curtailed by cancellation of summer camp, the Eastern Pa Conference's four Camp & Retreat Ministry centers have nonetheless hosted limited activities onsite and online. Meanwhile, all are trying to foster cooperative relationships with area schools and offer their space and resources for profitable use. They are also selling t-shirts and seeking other ways to raise needed funds.

Now their resilience continues as they confidently plan events and activities for the fall and for 2021—all with safety in mind.

Gretna Glen, in Lebanon, welcomed hundreds of accompanied children and youth for 3-hour visits on Be@ Camp Days, where they could explore nature and enjoy boating, swimming, fishing, hiking trails, sport games and other fun-filled activities. The camp's Free Youth Nights now return monthly

through December, but at earlier hours. And there will be weekend Trail Runs from September to November, and Fall Fun Day Oct. 18.

Meanwhile, Family Getaways there have also been popular, providing numerous families with affordable, flexible, weekend mini-vacations for rest, recreation and spiritual growth. Optional activities include archery, boating, swimming, a prayer labyrinth, worship and crafts. The camp will offer more family getaways Sept. 18-20 and October 23-25.

Innabah, in Spring City, has posted colorful, online camping adventures—campfire sing-a-longs, silly staff antics, a virtual camp tour and even a Christmas in July Wagon Ride—all on its active Facebook page. Now the camp is offering six Fall Family Camp weekends through mid-November, an all-day Children and Youth Day Retreat Oct. 17, seven scheduled retreats for Challenge Campers,

and a safe, fun place for "homeschoolers" to come do school work and play several hours a week.

Pocono Plateau, in Cresco, is also hosting visitors who come to enjoy Family Getaways, and they have three retreat groups confirmed for October. A Treasure Hunt hike Sept. 19 will replace the camp's annual fundraising 5K- and 15K-races. And their annual Woodcutter's Day will happen Nov. 7. Moreover, they have already published their 2021 summer camp schedule.

Carson Simpson Farm Christian Center, in Hatboro, is also hosting retreats and picnics, but also outdoor worship services for nearby churches and Vacation Bible School classes where local children can attend, learn and be fed.

"For 2021 we are confident we will hold our summer day camps," said new director Jonathan Curtis, "and we're making needed changes to our buildings to make that a reality."

Curtis offered by far the most active and creative virtual summer camp experience, posting on the camp's Facebook page dozens of family activity videos. But he also hosted a fellowship bonfire August 24, gathering persons for worship and prayer who would have been working there as summer camp staff but for the cancellation.

"Many expressed the challenges they are undertaking this year in a pandemic and asked for continued prayer that they do not lose heart," said Curtis. "I am in awe of the resiliency they show in times that most generations cannot relate to. Seniors in high school who are unsure of what the future may hold, and new college students missing out on the connections that many of us cherished for years. Yet, with all these challenges, they still strive to remain positive and remember that God is in control."

'When Home Hurts'

Conference to explore Domestic Violence and Families

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

The Eastern PA Conference's Domestic Violence Committee will focus on children and families when it presents its third annual **Domestic Violence Seminar October 9-10**. The two-part, virtual event will be a video-conference on Zoom. Its times are on Friday evening, from 7 PM to 9 PM, and on Saturday morning, from 9 AM to 12 PM.

The theme is *When Home Hurts: Domestic Violence and Families—The Church Responds*.



"Again, we will learn more about this destructive social crisis that hurts individuals, families and communities," said the committee in announcing the event. "And we will explore how churches can respond." Register online to receive access information. The cost is \$10, and churches are encouraged to participate in ministry teams.

The committee examined how domestic violence (DV) impacts women and men in 2018 and 2019, respectively. With a goal of "Protecting Human Life, Promoting Healthy Families," this year's seminar will focus on families, including DV's impact on children and youth. Keynote speaker **Jody Anderson** and expert panelists, DV survivors and attendees will all share their wisdom and witness—that is, their knowledge,

diverse views and often-painful but enlightening experiences.

Anderson, a member of West Lawn UMC in Reading, co-chairs the conference's Domestic Violence Committee. She will highlight insights from her new book, *Band of Angels*, which comes out in October, during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. A long-time professional and church volunteer in social work and social justice, the certified child trauma specialist has counseled children and youth. But she also directed domestic violence agencies and launched a residential program to help homeless female veterans heal from sexual assault in the military.

Attendees will also hear several DV survivors share their compelling stories of domestic abuse, healing and recovery, and what they learned from those experiences. And a panel of practitioners will offer their wisdom in answering the question "**How Can the Church Respond Effectively?**" They will include:

- A marriage and family therapist who directs our conference's Young People's Ministries program. (The Rev. David Piltz)
- A longtime county DV services director and former shelter director. (Sandra Lewis)
- Several clinical counselors who work with boys and men. (Joe Henson, Tony Lapp and David Rothwell)
- A Licensed Local Pastor involved in helping domestic violence victims. (The Rev. Terry Clooney)
- A researcher and author who



explores the church's role in addressing domestic violence. (Shannon Green)

The Rev. Beth Toler, who teaches Clinical Counseling at Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem, Pa., will moderate the two panel discussions.

Don't miss this in-depth, eye-opening, mind-expanding, heart-touching

exposition of a topic of grave concern to churches, individuals and communities who care about protecting human life and promoting healthy families. Register online and encourage fellow church members to join you in attending this important event.



Jody Anderson

Beth Toler

The Rev. David Piltz



Tony Lapp

David Rothwell

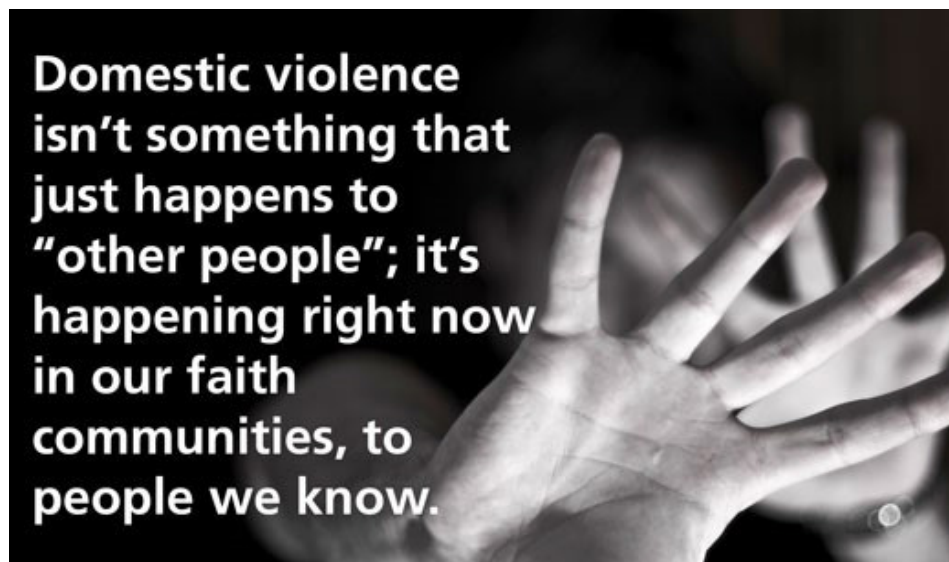
Shannon Green



Joe Henson

Sandra Lewis

Terry Clooney



Churches adapt ministries to safely respond to pandemic

Continued from page 1

Before COVID-19 they served about 100 families weekly. That number now exceeds 160 and about 10,600 pounds of food. But out of necessity, pandemic-response resources have also increased their ability to meet more needs, including volunteers making deliveries now to patrons without vehicles.

"We've even delivered to a homeless man who lives in Washington Park," said Bartscherer. "He lost everything he had from the pandemic, and now he lives in a tent. We're helping him get services through SNAP, Medicaid and Your



Melinda Bartscherer (left), director of Jenkintown UMC's Food Cupboard ministry, registers a patron for the weekly food distribution.

Way Home of Montgomery County."

Muriel Hafwich began the ministry as a small effort 25 years ago when she saw the need and gathered a handful of volunteers. Today there are about 70 volunteers who work in teams on alternating Saturdays. But many more volunteers are needed, especially as the need increases. Please contact the Rev. Luke Billman at pastor@jenkintownumc.org.

Jim Gross lives in the neighborhood and wanted to help people. He walked over to the church one Saturday to volunteer. Now as the line of parked, waiting vehicles snakes around the block, he directs them into the parking lot.

Russ Vignali, a young construction consultant and recent Lehigh University graduate, started volunteering in April, doing different tasks: directing traffic, loading bags into cars and helping to register new patrons. He saw the program's plea for volunteers on Facebook. His grandfather had died from COVID-19, and his family had to cancel their loved one's wake and funeral.

"That motivated me to help," he said. "My grandfather was a real working-class stiff, and he would have been here doing this if he could."

Mt. Zion UMC Darby (South District)

Mt. Zion UMC in Darby, which has operated a small community food pantry for 10 years, went big on Saturday, August 15. Members gave out 300 large, heavy,

boxes of free food to grateful neighbors in the church parking lot and delivered 12 boxes to homebound seniors.

The boxes were dropped off at 7 AM by Blessings of Hope, a regional food supply ministry based in the Lancaster area. Through its Hands of Hope initiative, Blessings delivers donated, prepackaged food to inner-city churches and communities, while keeping safe social-distancing rules intact. Mt. Zion purchased the boxes of fresh vegetables, fruit, meat and dry goods and had to distribute them on delivery day.

To fund this unusual giveaway, the church sought and received a \$10,000 grant from UMCOR (the UM Committee on Relief) to purchase the food. It was one of many "Sheltering in Love" grants given by UMCOR to mission partners around the world to support outreach ministries in response to the COVID-19 pandemic's economic fallout.

The church didn't stop there. "We had 20 high school seniors come by to get grocery store gift cards we were giving out," reported the Rev. Victor Gimenez, pastor. "And we registered a half-dozen of them to vote." Volunteers also shared and explained information on the 2020 Census to promote participation, he added, "because our community's residents are under-counted."

This was the church's second big Hands of Hope food giveaway, and they hope to do it again with more partners in September. "We want to use food as a magnet and offer the community more," said Gimenez, who also serves nearby Union Memorial UMC in Darby and Clifton Heights UMC. Union Memorial partnered with Mt. Zion in the food distribution effort. "We want to add COVID-19 testing because not enough of our people are being tested."



The Rev. Victor Gimenez (center), pastor of Mt. Zion and Union Memorial UMCs in Darby, prepares to load a Hands of Hope food box into a neighbor's car with help from trustee Lamont Smith (right) and Janet Smith.

"Each time we do this we get better at it," said Lamont Smith, a church trustee who shops for the church's food pantry. "We get more volunteers and get better organized. We need to raise more money to do it again."

Wesley UMC, Bethlehem (North District)

Wesley UMC in Bethlehem, PA, wasn't about to cancel its 8-year tradition of giving away thousands of back-to-school backpacks and other goodies to families just because of a daunting pandemic. While it had to curtail many of the usual, festival-like features of its annual outreach event—free food, fun entertainment, free children's haircuts and other extras—the main event proceeded safely and efficiently as planned, with a "show must go on" determination.

The church gave away 1,500 much-needed backpacks, socks and underwear to families from across the Lehigh Valley August 15, adding to the roughly 10,000 backpacks it has distributed since the growing ministry debuted in 2013.

"This year was unique in that we

Guests were asked to wear masks when speaking with the volunteers, who stood behind plexiglass stands to provide a safety barrier. "We offered to put all supplies in people's trunks," Kiefner reported, "and we created procedures to hand items to people if that was necessary to keep our community safe during these unusual times. My team was amazing."

A local newspaper covered the event with a colorful photo display, continuing the church's usual outreach to local media outlets, among its many community partners eager to help.

"Our event has always been about caring for the whole child and sharing unconditional love with everyone in attendance," said Kiefner, a communications professional who serves on the Eastern PA Conference's Communication Resource Team. "This year we couldn't share a smile through our masks; we couldn't provide them with free haircuts, and we couldn't serve them food. But we could continue to treat everyone with dignity and respect, as each volunteer shared God's love through kindness at each station."



Sue Kiefner (center in red shirt) and her annual back-to-school backpack giveaway team at Wesley UMC Bethlehem.

had to reimagine the event to be safe and socially-distanced for both guests and volunteers," said longtime church member Sue Kiefner, who has led the enthusiastic team effort since its inception. This year the church created a drive-through operation, with safety cones and posted signs, plus stations set up to register visitors, to distribute backpacks with other back-to-school necessities, and to hand out cold bottles of water to all comers.

All 50 volunteers had their temperatures checked upon arrival, signed waivers that explained the hazards of COVID-19 and were given masks for self-protection. Even the onsite porta-potty was sanitized after each use.

Wesley's pastor, the Rev. Candy LaBar calls this year's event "a great success, even more so, given the difficulties of COVID."

"Our team knew there would still be a critical need for these items, even as students navigated hybrid and remote back-to-school schedules," she said. "The team essentially had to reimagine every aspect of the event, and they did so with care and concern for our volunteers, guests and wider community. And it was truly a community effort. Donations of items and funds came from community members, church members, local synagogues and churches, and more."

She sees the church's motto, "People Blessing People," as especially timely during this "season of COVID-tide." And she is grateful for "the contributions of every team member and volunteer who helped us live into that call."

NOTE: Thanks to Sue Kiefner for providing information and photos for this story.

CHURCHES ADAPT--Continued on page 12.

Whites Confronting Racism

Anti-racism education arouses new awareness, action

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

I considered myself fairly aware before joining *Whites Confronting Racism*, but the breadth and depth of what I learned was pretty amazing. Among the things I was struck by was the powerful subtlety of racism – how we as whites participate so much in its maintenance without even being aware of our participation.

– Rev. Mark Terry, Senior Pastor, Covenant UMC Springfield, PA

One Oxford English Dictionary definition of “confront” is “To face up to and deal with (a problem or difficult situation).” So, **Whites Confronting Racism** may seem aptly named for participants of this eye-opening, mind-expanding, soul-baring anti-racism educational experience. It’s an experience that is especially timely now in our nation’s current racial turmoil and hoped-for transformation.

The Rev. Mark Terry is one of 15 Eastern PA Conference clergy and one young adult missionary—all White persons—who went through the intensive, three-session training—nine days total—in March, July and September 2019. Included were extensive reading, challenging discussions and exercises, homework assignments and more in-depth, interactive work among small groups that continues even now.

“The workshops and readings have opened my eyes (not fully yet, I know – we all have blind spots) to where I am maintaining the social contract that allows racism to persist; and I also have a greater awareness of my inner oppressor who is trying to stop me from breaking that contract,” writes Terry in a short essay. His was one of nine reflections penned by participants on the deepening impact of this unique training experience.*

Understanding White Supremacy

“I also feel I have better tools to help move white people past the simplistic understanding of racism (that is, racism is bad feelings that bad people have) to a deeper understanding of the foundational concept of white supremacy that infects all levels of our society with racism.”

“I’m grateful for the program and the impact it’s had on me and my ministry,” writes the **Rev. Shauna Ridge**, pastor of Thorndale UMC, who joined out of “concern for the growing tension around racism, and after hearing more frequently that white people need to do their own work.”



Shauna Ridge

She and other group members encountered and examined once-obscure but now more familiar racial terms and realities like implicit bias, White fragility and micro-aggressions.

What is emerging for most is a desire to influence other White people to confront injustice in the social systems that favor them and to become conscientious allies of People of Color.

“The work of dismantling racism is for white people to do,” writes Ridge, calling it “spiritual work” that one cannot do alone. “It can be overwhelming, and change comes slowly. I’ve spent more time building relationships with People of Color in my church and in the community. I choose books and movies differently. I’m attending more workshops on injustice. I’m more aware of my skin color and race, and the opportunities and privilege they’ve afforded me.”

The Rev. Robin Hynicka, pastor of Arch Street UMC in Philadelphia, introduced the *Whites Confronting Racism* (WCR) program to fellow Eastern PA clergy, after experiencing it at POWER, the Philadelphia-based, anti-racism, and justice organizing coalition that has expanded into cities and suburbs across the region.

Hynicka applied and received funds for the training from the UMC’s General Commission on Religion and Race. But continuing education funds also came from the Conference’s Board of Ordained Ministry and from participants and their churches.

Lorraine Marino, an organizational and leadership development consultant, co-created WCR and its impressive anti-racism curriculum with her colleague Antje Mattheu in the mid-1990s. In their cultural diversity work for organizations, Marino said, they often heard People of Color complain about always having to teach White people about racism, when “White people should do their own anti-racism work.... But as White persons, we must have the ability to look at ourselves honestly without feeling like we’re horrible people.”

Eliciting growth instead of guilt

Much of that revealing but non-shaming racial honesty happens in cohorts and triads, small groups where members can confront racism together, challenging and supporting one another in ways that elicit growth instead of guilt.

“I have a new set of lenses through

which I look at my community now,” said the Rev. John Keretzman, who lives in Cresco and serves Mountainhome and Canadensis UMCs. I now see how segregated our township is. There are People of Color in my neighborhood; but when I look at key social systems of our township—the Fire Company, the Rotary Club, the Historical Society—there are no People of Color there. That was eye-opening for me.”

Engage with others in anti-racism work

“We want to engage people in our Conference who are committed to anti-racism work and help them become influencers in the church and community circles where they belong,” Hynicka said.

The Rev. Tamie Scalise, pastor of Calvary UMC in Mohnton, has joined the Conference Commission on Religion and Race. A WCR team reported to the commission about their learning experience last fall. And WCR members want to work with other ministry groups and become allies in solidarity with committees and caucuses addressing racial-ethnic concerns.

“We want to be held accountable for the work we do, as we confront racism personally and within this conference and in the world,” Hynicka said. Indeed, accountability is a key commitment, mentioned often by members in a recent group interview.

“All of us would say this has been an effective use of our time and resources,” said the Rev. Andrea Brown, pastor of Grandview UMC in Lancaster. “We are better equipped now for the (anti-racism) work that people in our congregations are hungry for.”

As the **Rev. Jenny Freymoyer** tackles that work amidst the current racial confrontations roiling our nation’s status quo, she is “glad that I have this

formative experience and this support group.

“I know in my context I would not have preached the sermon I preached the Sunday after George Floyd was murdered without this group and without the courage this experience has given me.” Freymoyer serves Salem UMC in Shoemakersville. “I would not have been sending out daily messages of encouragement or talking about Juneteenth (a national holiday commemorating the end of slavery in 1865, after the Civil War). I would have been afraid of causing trouble.”



Jenny Freymoyer

Training has prepared us for this time

The Rev. David Tatgenhorst, pastor of St. Luke UMC in Bryn Mawr, agrees. “I feel this training has prepared us for this time, when folks in our churches and communities are more open to hearing and using phrases like ‘Black Lives Matter.’ They realize why it’s important, and they are ready to take the next step.

“I think there really is a thirst now for people to deepen their understanding of racism,” said Tatgenhorst, a founding member of POWER’s contingent in the prosperous suburbs of Lower Merion County. “I think this group, because of the connections we have, has something to say in our Conference. And we can help bring anti-racism to the forefront because we know we have each other’s back, and that really is a wonderful thing.”

*Read this story on our website and use the link there to read the nine inspiring essays by participants, titled “How the *Whites Confronting Racism* Program Impacts Me, My Church, and My Community.”

Conference’s ever-evolving Dismantling Racism trainings go online

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

The Eastern PA Conference’s primary anti-racism training program for clergy and lay leadership has been through numerous changes in over two decades of operation; and now it will undergo one more. Three upcoming Dismantling Racism training events—levels I and II—will both happen online for the first time, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic that has prompted many ministries to safely use Zoom video-conferencing for meetings and training events.

Dismantling Racism I—the required, basic course—will happen on Zoom



Oct. 23-25. But it will be divided into multiple, roughly 3-hour segments with breakout rooms to accommodate the challenges of learning and engaging in difficult conversations through video-conferencing and webinars. The weekend class is now full

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Conference's ever-evolving Dismantling Racism trainings go online

Continued from page 8.

with 18 registrants. Moreover, Visions, Inc., which facilitates the training, has already informed Conference leaders that all of its 2021 training events will also be done online.

A half-day Dismantling Racism II class, also on Zoom, will happen Sept. 19, 9 AM to 12 PM, with a focus on the "The Experience and Impact of Racism on People of Asian Ancestry." The Rev. Doris Kung Chi Pui Dalton, Director of Leadership Development and Intercultural Competency in the New York Conference, will keynote the interactive discussion. Dalton is a deacon and former Eastern PA Conference staff member.

Another Dismantling Racism II class is scheduled for Nov. 21 and will focus on the racism experienced by Hispanic/Latinx people. The Rev. Irving Cotto, a pastor and co-chair of the Conference's Latino Commission, will lead that half-day session.

All Eastern Pa active clergy, Certified Lay Ministers and Conference staff are required to take the basic anti-racism course once, plus a Level II Dismantling Racism training each quadrennium.

Healing the Wounds of Racism

Dismantling Racism I—formerly Changing Racism—gained a new name, new oversight and some new curriculum changes in 2019. But the new oversight is from an old source. The Healing the Wounds of Racism Accountability Core Team, which created an anti-racism course by the same name in 1996, had been acting in a limited advisory capacity for several years until its revival last year.

As co-conveners of Healing the Wounds of Racism (HWR), the Rev. David Brown, a retired elder, and Mert Shane, a Certified Lay Minister and pastor, proposed the Dismantling Racism name change to more accurately reflect the ultimate training goal—not to change racism but to dismantle it. And in taking over its supervision from the Conference's Commission on Religion and Race (CORR), they have introduced some curriculum changes requested by the Board of Ordained Ministry, which licenses and ordains candidates for ministry.

HWR trainings began after the 1996 Annual Conference passed its Plan toward the Elimination of Racism within the Eastern PA Conference. Brown and Shane, the core team's only original members, recall having accountability

teams for Euro-Americans and People of Color, four to five trainings each year and even special trainings for youth. Local "covenant groups" would organize in communities across the Conference

to discuss issues from their local perspectives and engage in other activities together. Dody Matthias, Wanda Lofton, Hilda Campbell and others provided dedicated leadership as the program grew and helped the conference become more inclusive in its mission and leadership.

New leadership, new training style

But changes in leadership, staff involvement and funding led to changes in the program, Brown recalls. Bishop Peggy Johnson brought in Visions, Inc., which revamped the training, renamed it Changing Racism and offered what some considered a gentler, less confrontational experience. Veteran "diversity and equity education consultants" Sarah Stearns and Gene Washington have facilitated the Conference trainings for Visions, Inc., ever since.

"We struggled with the (Changing Racism) title for years," said Brown, who saw the new curriculum as "more generally about personal intercultural competence and cross-cultural communication," and less about the harsh realities of historical and institutional racism. To address those realities, CORR worked with Brown and Shane to develop a follow-up, one-day learning experience, dubbed "Continuing the Conversation," in 2017.

"I would guess that a majority of our White congregations do not really know our racial history," Brown lamented. "And being in denial about that history," added Shane, "helps many people avoid the pain of that knowledge."

Indeed, our racial history as a church is a past that is still very present and still in need of healing. The Conference seems to acknowledge that fact with recent enterprises that include:

- a 2018 institutional racism audit, part of an overall Racial Justice Transformation Process;
- pursuit of perhaps the most ambitious and active efforts to fulfill the Northeastern Jurisdiction's Call to Action racial justice and reconciliation initiative;
- increased efforts to promote and support cross-racial/cross-cultural pastoral appointments; and
- endorsing racial dialogues in all its districts, plus the Whites Confronting



Mert Shane (left) and the Rev. Susan Worrell, co-chairs of Healing the Wounds of Racism (HWR) and the Commission on Religion and Race (CORR), respectively, helped lead several advanced anti-racism training classes in 2017-2019, titled Continuing the Conversation. John Coleman photo

Racism program (see related story), and the upcoming Racial Trauma and Transformation workshop for People of Color who have struggled with the lasting effects of racism in their lives and ministries.

Moreover, at BOOM's and HWR's request, Visions, Inc., has incorporated new content in the newly named Dismantling Racism I trainings, which typically draw about two dozen diverse registrants, although more participants of color are always desired. That new content includes more instruction about internalized racial oppression, the hazards of implicit bias and other topics clergy and lay ministers need to know as they engage in "making disciples for the transformation of the world," to cite the denomination's mission and motto. Some of that new content is drawn from the General Commission on Religion and Race's Vital Conversations video discussion series.

Teaching the history of racism

"Visions, Inc., has always been cooperative in accepting suggestions and is always researching and using new resources in its trainings," said Brown. He and Shane now provide a PowerPoint presentation on the history of racism in the U.S., the UMC and the Eastern PA Conference as part of each training.

The renewed HWR core team now meets several times a year to plan and review Dismantling Racism (DR) trainings. The upcoming DR II sessions are part of a series that focuses on the lives and concerns of each racial-ethnic group. Other training topics have included racist "micro-aggressions" that People of Color experience daily in America.

And as DR training events go strictly online for the foreseeable future, Brown and Shane must video-record their presentations to be viewed in advance by participants.

"This will be another step into new territory for us in the ongoing journey toward racial justice and equity," said Brown. "But it is further proof of the Conference's steadfast commitment to dismantling racism and helping our members to become the Beloved Community, more united in Christ's love and transformed by the renewing of our minds."

In Memoriam

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

The Rev. Russell W. Barr

The Rev. Russell W. Barr, retired full elder, died on July 16, 2020.

In the Eastern PA Conference, he served the Valley View Circuit and Elizabethville UMC. Rev. Barr also served as a Chaplain in the United State Air Force, as a member of Eastern PA and several other conferences.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Jacquelyn D. Barr.

The Rev. Charles R. Mudie

We received word that The Rev. Charles R. Mudie, Retired Local pastor, died on August 26, 2020. He served Cornwells Heights: Cornwells UMC. He is survived by his daughter Carol Guilford.

Mrs. Lucille S. Newhart

We have received word of the death of Mrs. Lucille S. Newhart. She was the surviving spouse of The Rev. Robert Newhart, Retired Elder, who preceded her in death in 2005.

Rev. Newhart served the following Eastern PA Conference churches: Bushkill, Chapman Quarries, Joliet: First, Tremont: St. John's, Elysburg, Oak Grove, Tobyhanna, Hazleton: Diamond, Hibernia.

The Rev. Orland D. E. Pottieger

The Rev. Orland D. E. Pottieger, Retired Full Elder, died on August 15, 2020.

He served the following Eastern PA Conference churches: Ackermanville, Annville, Akron: Mt. Zion, Terre Hill: St. Paul's, Nantmeal, Glen Moore. He also served on Extension Ministry as Chaplain at several state hospitals.

Rev. Pottieger is survived by his wife, Mrs. Barbara H. Pottieger.

The Rev. Dr. Andrew C. Simonson

The Rev. Dr. Andrew C. Simonson, Retired Full Elder, died on May 6, 2020. He retired in 1987.

Rev. Simonson served the following Eastern PA Conference churches and Extension Ministry locations: Washington Crossing, US Air Force Chaplain, Lafayette Hill Messiah, Lincoln Park Community.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Doreen Simonson, and children. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to her address at 107 Charles Boulevard, Sinking Spring, PA 19608.

Mrs. Renee Marie Thomson-Hohl

We have received word that Mrs. Renee Marie Thomson-Hohl, wife of The Rev. Timothy Thomson-Hohl, died on August 31, 2020.

Rev. Thomson-Hohl is the pastor of Ardmore UMC. His past service record is as follows: Lansdowne: Trinity Lansdowne, Wesley Foundation Campus Ministry, Havertown: St. Andrews, Trainer.



Gene Washington and Sarah Stearns of Visions, Inc.

A bountiful banquet of resourcing for ministry

BY THE REV. DAWN
TAYLOR-STORM
EASTERN PA CONFERENCE
DIRECTOR OF
CONNECTIONAL MINISTRY

One of the experiences I took for granted before the pandemic are church potluck dinners.

I fondly remember potlucks at the local church overflowing with dishes from each person's culture, a feast brimming with colors and flavors. I would always chuckle when folks unacquainted with potlucks would worry that we would end up with a table full of jello salad, thinking everyone would bring the same dish. I would reassure these folks new to the Wesleyan way and say: "There will be enough. It will be a beautiful bounty."

At every potluck meal I attended, there was always enough and all were fed. As adults, we know that sometimes folks would sacrifice as they went down the aisle, taking a little in order to make sure everyone could enjoy the feast. I especially love potlucks because each person takes time to prepare a dish, sharing their own time and talent so



that all can be fed.

As I experience connectional ministries in the Eastern PA Conference, I see servants faithfully giving of their gifts so that our churches and communities can be fed. In the past month, a team of volunteers from all over our conference headed to Gilberton, PA, to respond to the recent flooding there. Our Disaster Response Team, in coordination with our Camp and Retreat Centers, also worked to provide hand sanitizer and masks for our churches.

Encuentro (Encounter), our Latino lay ministry training program, raised up 22 new church leaders. Our Urban Commission and Commission on Religion and Race offers resourcing to our churches as we continue to work to dismantle racism in our churches and communities.

#StrongerTogether

As we face the current health pandemic and the intersecting pandemic of racism, we remember that we are a people bound together by Christ, united by our baptism. We do not walk alone. And we are truly #StrongerTogether.

My own life has been blessed by the

connectional church. Had I not been exposed to the connectional church, I would likely not be serving in ministry.

Twenty five years ago, I was studying to be a forensic psychologist, working at Elmira Correctional Facility, a maximum security prison. My home pastor sent me a letter with an application for a General Board of Global Ministries short-term missionary program for young adults. If I had never received that letter and then entered into that program, I do not believe I would be serving the church today.

Through my service with Global Ministries I was blessed to see the beauty of the connectional church. As of July 1, I am blessed to be serving as the Director of Connectional Ministries for the Eastern PA Conference, following my years of service as a district superintendent and pastor.

Jesus calls us to a connectional life, reminding us that every part of the body functions together. We exist for you, and we pray that as you experience us and the work we do, you will find an abundant, diverse feast of ministry resources, ideas and goodwill.

We also know that it will take willing, sacrificial servants with cruciform lives to lead our conference forward. We look forward to expanding our ministry as we work to live out our Eastern PA mission to **Connect Communities, Celebrate Diversity, Create Disciples and Commit to Love and Justice.**

Please know that the Office of Connectional Ministries exists to support the work of the local church. We welcome your feedback and your engagement, as we seek to provide a banquet of resourcing for your church and community where all can be fed.

Together in Ministry,
Dawn



Bishop Peggy Johnson (left) installs the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm as the Eastern PA Conference's new Director of Connectional Ministries.

'Fight for Floyd' groups seek remedies to racial injustice

BY JOHN COLEMAN

Nearly 300 participants joined an Eastern PA Conference video-conference on Zoom June 1 seeking ways to "Fight for Floyd," following the brutal, racist killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police just a week earlier on May 25.

His tragic, senseless slaughter—viewed by millions on television and evoking countless other murders of unarmed black people in America—was a defining moment for our nation. It immediately launched scores of large protest marches for justice, plus incendiary civil unrest, tense racial dialogues and some initial changes in law enforcement policies...but nowhere near enough.

Sponsored by the Conference's Urban Commission, the large online gathering posed a challenging question to which many still seek an answer: "Where do we go from here?" The two-hour dialogue, with diverse participants from across the conference and beyond, included guest speakers—criminal justice officials, community leaders and pastors—who voiced grave concerns but no sure remedies.

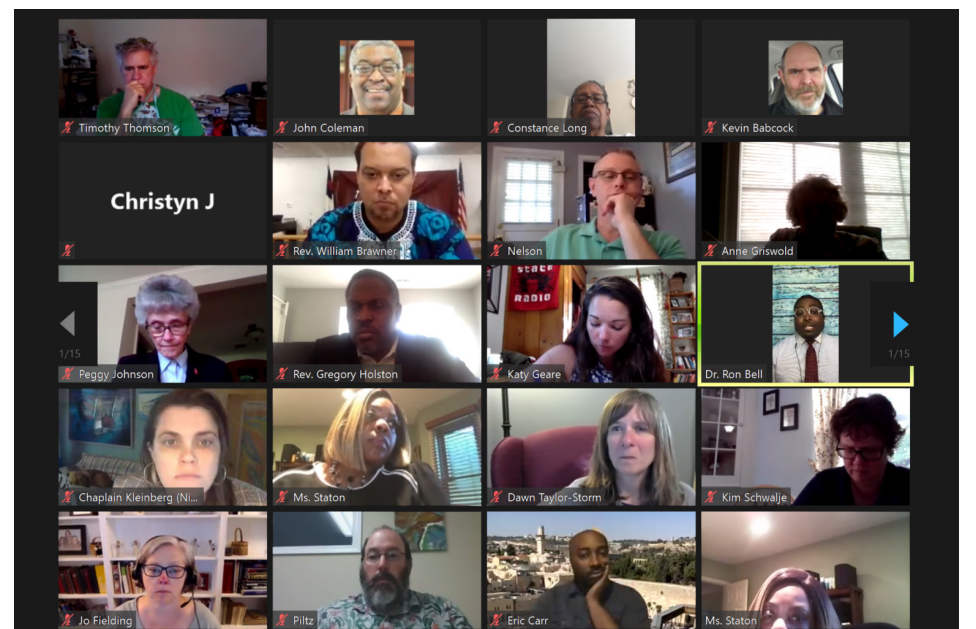
Seeking remedies is the work of three committees that emerged from that

dialogue and that meet monthly to share information and experiences and try to plan and implement responsive actions. The groups, which number more than a dozen members each and include many non-United Methodists, seek to address the present crisis of racial injustice from three directions: Community Development; Education; and Public Policy.

The Rev. William Brawner, the Conference's part-time Urban Ministries Coordinator and pastor of Zoar's New Vision UMC in Philadelphia, promptly organized the dialogue. Now he and a leadership team try to oversee and resource the committees' diverse efforts.

Brawner and the Urban Commission will convene the groups and others who want to be involved in the Fight for Floyd at a summit on Saturday, Oct. 24, at 11 AM, at Carson Simpson Farm Camp and Retreat Center. The event will also be viewable on Zoom and possibly on the Conference's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/epaumc>).

The **Community Development Committee** is co-chaired by the Rev. David Eckert, who also co-chairs the Urban Commission, along with Charise Staton. It focuses on seeking and creating interactive opportunities to bridge the divide and foster healthy relationships



between police, policymakers and community residents, especially in communities of color.

The **Education Committee** is co-chaired by the Rev. David Piltz, a pastor and Conference Coordinator of Young People's Ministries, and Gail Loney, a longtime community leader and activist. This committee focuses on seeking and creating opportunities to educate people—especially White people—about the historic and current prevalence of systemic racism and injustice. In addition, the committee wants to promote hopeful examples of candid discourse and healthy, just, redemptive relationships in communities. Members want to include schools and other centers of

influence in its educational outreach efforts.

The **Policy Committee** is led by the Rev. Susan Worrell, co-chair of the Conference's Commission on Religion and Race. It engages in informed advocacy to call for justice and equity in government and law enforcement policies and practices, especially those that unfairly victimize People of Color and other groups.

"These committees are not just meeting for conversation, although we are learning from one another," said Brawner. "This work is very important, and we need more people committed and engaged in it to find our way forward in the search for racial justice."

New District Supt. wants South District to be 'Always Faithful'

The Eastern PA Conference's South District has a new motto that seems to define its consistent approach to ministry: "Always Faithful."

"It embodies my vision and hope for us as God's people," says the new South District Superintendent the Rev. Evelyn Kent Clark. "We often have our own individual definitions of success, but I believe God honors faithfulness."

In fact, she believes God "calls us to trust Him, without doubt or fear; and He will use our tenacious, consistent efforts to achieve His will." Honoring the Lord's Prayer that "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," she says, is what leads to real success—whether big



or small.

Clark formerly chaired the conference's Order of Elders and was the pastor of two diverse congregations on the South District: New Life UMC in Drexel Hill and Trinity Lansdowne UMC, also known as the Garden Church. Yet, she values her experience of working with clergy and laity in various roles at all levels of the denomination.

Both then and now, she says, "I see God using me to assist leaders to be always faithful and to recognize the need for faithful partnership." That motto becomes more critical for her as she sees too many leaders being pulled away from their divine purpose by life's struggles, distractions and compromises.

'Manifest presence and will of God in all they do'

"My priorities in working with clergy and laity across this South District are to support, encourage and enable them to lean closer into their purpose and calling," she says, "and to show them they are valued as God's people seeking to manifest the presence and will of God in all they do."

That includes discovering new "missional strategies in this new space and time." That discovery excites her, especially the conversations she is having with clergy and laity who even now are "birthing new ministries to share the gospel and its message of salvation and transformation."

"As I visit churches around the district," says Clark, "I am experiencing worship and ministries that break the restraints of COVID-19, including those that are creatively using technology and

social media. She values "evangelistic biblical teaching and Spirit-filled, outstanding, over the top worship."

But she is aware of the challenges posed by a lack of human and financial resources in small, urban, rural and first-suburb churches.

The former secondary-school educator, musician and youth choir director believes youth and young adult ministries are crucial to the "strategic, kingdom-building work of the church." She also supports efforts across the district, conference and denomination to foster equity, racial justice and inclusiveness, such as that modeled by Jesus Christ.

"Just surviving is never good enough," says Clark. "We are living in a time when the Church can actually lead the world into a new future, one that is inspired by our spiritual vitality and our excellence in all we do."

New East District Supt. seeks excellence, starting with himself

"Excellence-Focused." That core value is what drives the Eastern PA Conference's new East District Superintendent and it is how he wants to see his district's leaders and churches operating in ministry. "Long before I started serving God through The United Methodist Church," recalls the Rev. Dr. Andrew L. Foster, III, "I was taught to give my best at a task or leave it to someone else."

Indeed, he sees Romans 12:1—"I strive daily to present myself as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God."—as his *modus operandi* for pastoral ministry and also what God "expects and deserves." Pastoral ministry is a vocation that he admits is "not for the faint of heart," but one for which "only God can equip those called according to His purpose."

And yet, Foster is equally focused on the role and importance of laity as partners in ministry.

"Every clergyperson, whether licensed or ordained, began as a layperson," he says. "This is my starting point when assessing the needs of a local church. I believe clergy and laity must act with a similar purpose but not lose sight of who they are or their specific roles in ministry."

He calls that partnership "CLAY," an acronym signifying "Clergy and Lay" being kneaded together and transformed in the great Potter's hands to empower God's creation through healthy, dedicated discipleship.

"In any church, there are always more laity than there are clergy," he says. "Therefore, I believe it is the clergy's



responsibility to equip the saints in the pew to understand who they are in the life of the church. I also believe it is the responsibility of the laity to understand their spiritual gifts and to operate in those gifts, in partnership with clergy, to bring about excellence in ministry."

The COVID-19 pandemic challenges everyone, including the church, Foster says. "But I have seen gifts of creativity come alive among the CLAY of the East District, including:

- drive-in, parking lot worship services;
- indoor worship settings that follow appropriate health guidelines;
- online Bible studies and prayer gatherings using Zoom, Facebook Live, YouTube and Free Conference Call;
- book clubs and small-group virtual gatherings.

'Genuine hearts for ministry'

"I have experienced genuine hearts for ministry active outside church walls, as members provide food and other needs for their communities," said the new superintendent. "I have participated in hard but necessary conversations on race relations. I have seen and heard hearts breaking because of restrictions against being physically present with one's congregation and with family members during some of their most difficult times. My hope and prayer for our district is that we feel the blessed assurance that God is with us."

But superintendency is not new for this "DS," after serving in that role in the New England Conference for the past three years under Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar. That followed a ministry career as a pastor and assistant pastor at four

Eastern PA churches—Janes Memorial, Clearview and Tindley Temple UMCs in Philadelphia and Grace Community UMC in Chester. All are historic African American congregations except for Clearview, where his pastorate was the church's first cross-racial appointment.

But New England's Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts (RISEM) District is where Foster supervised a multicultural mix of pastors and congregations, similar to what he faces in the East District. "I rediscovered the inter-relational nature of the church," he says, "and I return to this conference with the same intentionality of learning each local church's DNA, its stories, its hopes and challenges."

Coming from four generations of Methodist ministers, and with 14

ministers in his family, including his wife, the Rev. Lorraine Foster, the native of the Philadelphia's Germantown community and U.S. Air Force veteran says he is "grateful to be a Christian serving in The United Methodist Church." Indeed, his resume shows ample service in various conference roles beyond the local church and also in the communities where he was a pastor.

Yet, he says he knows that effectiveness in ministry requires the nurture of daily prayer, Bible reading, exercise and a healthy diet to give him strength and equanimity. With a doctorate in Marriage and Family Counseling, he says he is "thankful I learned early in ministry to balance my family life and my ministerial life."

Ebersole is new Order of Elders chair

The Rev. Tom Ebersole, pastor of Wayne UMC, is the new chairman of the Eastern PA Conference's Order of Elders. NEWSpirit asked him to comment on his new responsibilities.

I cannot imagine a deeper need over the next quadrennium than to nurture "support among peers during a stressful time of change in the Church..." (Order of Elders, UMC Book of Discipline, ¶306). Our challenge will be to renew and create relationships among the clergy that strengthen our common commitment to the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church, while mutually allowing for support, trust and holding each other accountable....(and) to accomplish this in an age of social distancing, secular divisiveness and potential rupture in our denomination.... Our task is to confront the issues that divide us, all-the-while forgiving and loving each other, reclaiming the sacred bond of

unity that makes us one. If we deny this, we deny God's call on our lives as Elders.

I do not know exactly what our Order of Elders' interactions will look like over the coming seasons of our ministry together. But with God's help, I hope to not let my sisters and brothers down as their representative on the Board of Ordained Ministry and their support in planning events and gatherings. I pray that together we share a spiritual hunger that drives us deeper into relationship with God, as we grow in our caring for one another, mutually hold each other accountable and recommit ourselves to ministry as one body called to peace.



New book club begins with *Transforming Community*

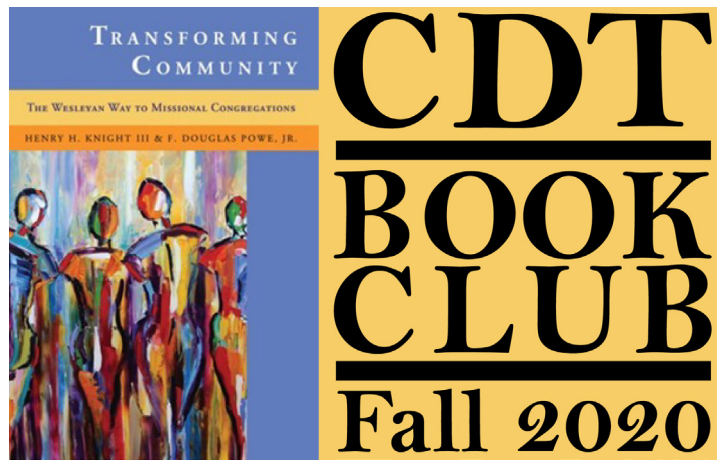
The Eastern PA Conference's renamed Congregational Development & Transformation ministry (CDT, formerly Congregational Development Team) has launched a new book club, and its first selection explores how churches can use Methodist traditions to pursue missional transformation.

Transforming Community: The Wesleyan Way to Missional Congregations looks at how to adopt John Wesley's creative way of organizing churches for active discipleship in order to form missional communities and congregations. The 2016 book, co-written by seminary theologians the Revs. Henry Knight and Douglas Powe, is intended to equip today's congregations to be more transformational.

The Rev. Kevin Babcock, the Eastern

PA Conference's new Coordinator of Church Support Services, is organizing the book club and will lead the 8-week study from Sept. 9 to Oct. 28, using Zoom videoconferencing. Registration is required; but the first 25 people to register for the book study will receive a free copy of the book.

"The nature of the church is to simultaneously be both personal and public, which creates a tension for individual churches between the pews and the community," said Babcock. "The



authors make a strong argument for community-building, both within and outside of the church, as a means of allowing this to be a holy and healthy tension."

Book Study Schedule:

September—Part One: Communities of Holy Love

- Chapter 1: Mission Beginning, 9/9
- Chapter 2: Knowing God, 9/16
- Chapter 3: A People Shaped for Mission, 9/23
- Part One Overview, 9/30

October—Part Two: Communities in Mission

- Chapter 4: The World is My Parish, 10/7
- Chapter 5: Thoughts upon Mission, 10/15
- Chapter 6: Organizing a C.O.M.M.U.N.I.T.Y., 10/22
- Part Two Overview, 10/29

Time to shine the light of Christmas! Christmas Cards to Inmates ministry resumes

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." --John 1:5

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Eastern PA Conference's undaunted Prison Ministry and Restorative Justice Team is moving forward with a modified continuation of its successful *Christmas Cards to Inmates program*, which they began in 2014. The 2020 outreach effort will launch on Monday, Sept. 14, and will end Nov. 2.

This year, the team hopes churches will prepare cards from the designs offered on their webpage (<https://www.epaumc.org/ministry/prison>). Or churches can pick up small bags of prepared cards with instructions from either the Conference Office or regional church drop-off locations. See the list on their webpage.

All signed cards, with optional messages of encouragement and hope, must be returned to these locations by the deadline of Nov. 2.



"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." --John 1:5

Churches adapt ministries to safely respond to pandemic--Continued from page 7

Hempfield UMC, Lancaster, and Memorial UMC, Quarryville (West District)

The Revs. Kevin Kresge and Chris Eden, two inventive pastors in the Lancaster area, are exploring ways to meet another pandemic-related need: safe, nurturing, equipped Community Learning Centers for young students who are not in school and lack sufficient resources for online learning at home.

"I've reached out to our local school superintendents to check on needs, and they verified that there are a number of students that do not have any or sufficient internet access to attend school virtually," said Kresge. "Districts around us are returning to part-time virtual, part-time in-person class schedules."

His church, Hempfield UMC, plans to make room available for such students to take online classes. Doing so will require sufficient bandwidth, appropriate room sanitation policies,

Safe Sanctuary protocols, and of course, trained volunteers to provide hospitality and oversight.

Eden first floated the idea on a clergy Facebook page after asking a local school superintendent if Memorial UMC could be helpful, especially to schools that must reduce class sizes and provide classroom alternatives. He has found other churches that are also interested.

Now Kresge is putting the idea into motion. "We're reaching out to four of the local school districts and recruiting volunteers to staff it," he said. "We're opening up our space the last week of September. Ideally, we'll use any press coverage we get to help inspire other churches and organizations to do the same." Kresge invites other churches to contact him to learn more.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Eastern PA Conference's Connectional Ministries Office has published a *Directory of Food Distribution Centers* involving churches across the conference. If your church's ministry is not included, please let us know about it. Write to communications@epaumc.org.

Also, is your congregation adapting its ministries or creating new ones to serve church and community members in new ways? Please let us know how, so we can report on it. Write to us at communications@epaumc.org. Thanks!



Rev. Kevin Kresge



Rev. Chris Eden

Try our easy-to-use online giving page

"In these changing times, the Eastern PA Conference is pleased to offer an online giving option to aid donors and local churches," announced James Brown, Conference Treasurer in May. The Conference has created a giving page on its website to allow members, visitors and donors to easily select and contribute online to congregations and to conference fundraising appeals.

Using a simple electronic funds transfer form, churches can receive in their bank accounts funds given through the Conference's online giving page, plus a contribution report from the Treasurer's office. And this service is now free. No fees are currently charged for

online giving set-up or transactions, thanks to the generosity of the Mid-Atlantic UM Foundation.

Donors can also give to support various Conference benevolences—including the Bishop's appeal to aid our Camp & Retreat Ministry Centers and our Conference Scholarships Fund.

NOTE: We usually receive an offering for undergraduate scholarships at Annual Conference; but with this year's conference session held virtually on

Zoom, we can't receive an offering. So members are asked to please send your gifts to support our students' higher education to the Conference Treasurer's Office or use our online giving page. Thanks!

