



Summer Camps celebrate a challenging but successful season

“We’re back!” trumpeted Pocono Plateau at the opening of its Summer Camp in June. “We did it!” beamed Gretna Glen Director Apryl Miller (*below*) in her Summer Camp review letter in late August. In between those two cries of celebration were two historic months of unprecedented challenges, changes and safety precautions...and

nonetheless, loads of summer fun and fellowship, learning and laughter.

“The campers came, God was here, and lives were changed by Christ!” wrote Miller, rejoicing in the return of summer camp after its cancellation in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. “I am so thankful for all that truly means.”

Continued on page 4--SUMMER CAMPS.



‘Be Thou My Vision’: A Ministry Remembered

(Clockwise from top-left) At her farewell fete, July 26, Bishop Peggy Johnson and the Rev. Michael Johnson, her husband, received a multi-media fond farewell on Zoom from Eastern PA Conference leaders, church members and friends, celebrating her 13 years of providing service and leadership here. As longtime friend Carol Stevens provided sign interpretation, Bishop Latrelle Easterling, leader of the Washington Area, offered greetings and congratulations from the Northeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops, and the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm emceed the event.

The program included songs sung and signed, and a souvenir slideshow depicting the bishop’s ministry here, along with two of her favorite hymns sung by the Rev. Lydia Munoz. Bishop Johnson thanked the conference and all participants for the moving tribute. Read her final NEWSpirit (and Bishop’s Blog) essay on page 3, and enjoy some of the photos from her slideshow tribute on pages 4-5.

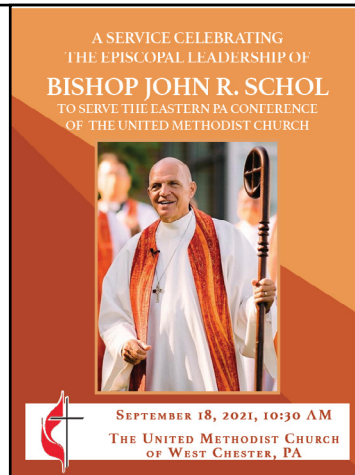
Conference to welcome Bishop Schol Sept. 18

The Eastern PA Conference will welcome and install Bishop John Schol as its next episcopal leader, on Saturday, Sept. 18, at 10:30 AM. The celebration at West Chester UMC will be livestreamed only, due to COVID and delta variant pandemic restrictions. Only program participants will be present.

Bishop Schol, who leads the Greater New Jersey Conference, becomes the Eastern PA Conference’s new leader Sept. 1, at least until the next Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference and election of bishops in November 2022.

A diverse assemblage of clergy and lay leaders, along with children and youth, will participate in the welcome celebration. The livestreamed program will include a covenant service, presentation of symbolic signs of the episcopacy, Holy Communion and special music.

Bishop Schol has met with more than 50 leaders to better understand Eastern PA, and he asks members to complete a survey to help him gather additional information.



Philadelphia pastor to lead Urban Ministries

Terry Bridges, lay-supply pastor of Midtown Parish UMC in Philadelphia, becomes the Eastern PA Conference’s new, part-time Coordinator of Urban Ministries Sept. 1. A candidate for Licensed Local Pastor, he served as a minister in Philadelphia Baptist churches for nearly 20 years, before working with UM churches.

Bridges has specialized in: Christian education; youth, young adult and family ministries; leadership



training and program facilitation; motivational speaking, counseling and conflict resolution.

“The UMC’s commitment to helping churches connect more with their communities aligns with my strong desire to see them collaborate for the health of the city and the growth of the Body of Christ,” said the new pastor and program coordinator.



UMCOR responds to crises in Haiti, Afghanistan

The United Methodist Committee on Relief is responding to suffering and loss in an earthquake-ravaged section of Haiti, providing funds to Methodists and other partners there to help Haitians who have lost their homes and family members and to buy urgently needed medical supplies for doctors and hospitals. Learn more at <https://umcmmission.org/august-2021/umcor-issues-first-grants-for-haiti-relief>.

Meanwhile, UMCOR and its sponsoring UM Global Ministries agency are working with longtime global partners to address the deadly political chaos in Afghanistan. They are aiding desperate, displaced families in the Kabul area and helping Church World Service with refugee resettlement efforts. Learn more at <https://umcmmission.org/august-2021/umcor-supports-afghans-in-need>.

You can support these critical, international humanitarian efforts—individually or through your church. Mail donations to Global Ministries/UMCOR, P.O. Box 9068, New York, NY 10087-9068 (indicate Advance Project #982450), or give online to International Disaster Response and Recovery Advance #982450 (<https://umcmmission.org/advance-project/982450>). Also, help UMCOR address the Global Refugee and Migration crisis with gifts to Advance Project #3022144. Those interested in assisting locally in the resettlement of Afghan refugees can learn more from Church World Service at <https://cwsglobal.org/take-action/community-sponsorship-2>.

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER 7

Weekly Preaching Forum resumes. Tuesdays at 2 PM. [Learn More](#). [Register](#).

SEPTEMBER 14

Bivocational & Small Church Network. Every other Month, on the 2nd Tuesday of Month, at 6:30 PM, on Zoom. [Learn More](#). [Register](#).

SEPTEMBER 18

Welcome Celebration for Bishop John Schol, 10:30 AM, livestreamed only. [Learn More](#).

SEPTEMBER 20

"Churches Emerging from the Pandemic." Virtual Seminar on Zoom. 9 AM - 12 PM. [Learn More](#). [Register](#).

SEPTEMBER 21, 25, 28

Healing Communities Training, across 3 Zoom sessions. [Learn More](#). [Register](#)

SEPTEMBER 29

Advanced Sexual Ethics, Zoom. 10 AM - 1 PM. "Impact of Pornography and the Intersection with Child Sex Trafficking and Abuse." [Learn More](#). [Register](#)

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 1 & 2

"Revealing, Acknowledging and Transforming Our Implicit Biases" sponsored by CORR. Friday from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM, and Saturday from 9 AM to 12:45 PM, Zoom. [Learn More](#). [Register](#).

OCTOBER 1-2

Laity Academy, mix of in-person and Zoom. [Learn More](#).

OCTOBER 6, 13, 20, 27

Weekly Book Club: Plantation Jesus. Sponsored by CDT and CORR. Wednesdays at 11 AM, on Zoom. [Register](#).

OCTOBER 15 & 16

Domestic Violence Workshop. Friday

October 15 from 7 PM - 9 PM & Saturday October 16th from 9 AM - 12 PM.

OCT. 23

Faith Sharing Evangelism Training w/ Olu Brown. [Register](#).

OCT. 29 - NOV 1

Dismantling Racism, Level 1, Virtual. [Learn More](#). [Register](#).

OCT. 30 & 31

Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of Francis Asbury's Arrival.

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 6

Basic Sexual Ethics, on Zoom. 9 AM - 12 Noon. Cost: \$35. [Learn More](#). [Register](#).

NOVEMBER 9

Bivocational & Small Church Network. Every other Month, on the 2nd Tuesday of Month, at 6:30 PM, on Zoom. [Learn More](#). [Register](#).

NOVEMBER 10

Order of Elders Gathering, 9:30 AM at Camp Innabah.

NOVEMBER 13

Dismantling Racism II.

2022

MAY 8

Special one-day General Conference.

MAY 20-21

2022 Annual Conference, at the Expo Center in Oaks, PA.

AUG. 29 - SEPT. 6

2020 postponed General Conference, in Minneapolis, MN.

NOVEMBER

Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference and election of bishops.



Learning to 'Handle with Care Love'

[Register now](#) for Part 2 of the 2021 Laity Academy, scheduled for Oct. 1-2, with in-person classes at various churches (if COVID pandemic guidelines allow) and also online via Zoom. Part 1, which happened totally on Zoom August 6-7, was a success, with 111 participants in 8 classes, plus a brief plenary session (shown here). Zoom recordings of those classes are now available. The 16 courses in October will teach: lay servant leadership; preaching in (English and Spanish); leading Bible Study; Christianity, Cults, and Religions; Emotional Intelligence 201; and leading in ministries of prayer, pastoral care and hospitality.

Healing Communities

Sponsored by the West Chester Mission Link and the Conference Prison Ministry and Restorative Justice Team. [Register now!](#)

Tuesday, September 21
6:30 - 8:30 PM

Saturday, September 25
8:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Tuesday, September 28
6:30 - 8:30 PM

via Zoom

 Sept. 7: Jeff Raffauf	 Sept. 14: Quentin Wallace	
 Sept. 21: Amy Banka	 Sept. 28: Chris Hardy	

Weekly Preaching Forum returns Sept. 7
Tuesdays at 2 PM, via Zoom. [Register](#).

Sponsored by the conference Congregational Development Team

Learn about upcoming October 2021 events on page 5.



Bishop Peggy Johnson - Philadelphia Area Bishop
John W. Coleman - Director of Communications, Editor
Lindsey Cotman - Graphic Design and Layout
Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm - Director of Connectional Ministries

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A Time to Keep and a Time to Cast Away

BISHOP PEGGY A. JOHNSON

The often quoted verses about time, in chapter three of the Book of Ecclesiastes, come to mind as I prepare to retire and leave this beloved Philadelphia Area. Throughout the past 13 years I have experienced many of the times that are listed in this litany of life's passages, among them: planting and plucking up, killing and healing, breaking down and building up, weeping and laughing, mourning and dancing, speaking and remaining silent.

At this moment, as my living room runneth over with cardboard cartons full of books and personal belongings, the words "a time to keep and a time to cast away" seem timely.

There have been many trips to the dumpster and Goodwill, as I sort through and discard things I no longer need. I carefully pack tangible things I want to keep and bring to our new home in Virginia. However, there are non-tangibles—some to keep and some to cast away—that are more important.

I share them with you now.

Things I need to cast away include my disappointments and lack of wisdom at times, moments when people have been hurt because of my decisions. The need to protect the system was not always in sync with my heart. Nor was the interpersonal "grist" of disagreements, misunderstandings and compromises for the sake of peace. To those who have been wounded, I offer my sincere apologies.

I give these things to God, who "works all things together for good" in the midst of human frailty. As the hymn "This is a Day of New Beginnings" (UMH, #383) reminds me,

*Then let us, with the Spirit's daring,
step from the past, and leave behind
our disappointment, guilt and grieving,
seeking new paths, and sure to find.*

Casting away is a life-giving part of moving on. The things that I will keep are vastly more in number, and they will remain with me for the rest of my life:

- The memories of vital ministries, large and small.

- The faithful, sacrificial clergy and lay people, men and women, young and mature, gifted and diverse.
- The many, hard-won victories in the struggle for justice and inclusivity.
- The rich legacy of history and that "cloud of witnesses" who have been cheering us on from above.
- Christmas Eve candlelight services at Barratt's Chapel every year.
- The outstanding music in our churches: choirs, pipe organs, pianos, praise bands, soloists, brass ensembles, drums, strings, harps, flutes, hand-bells.
- The amazing geographical diversity of this area:

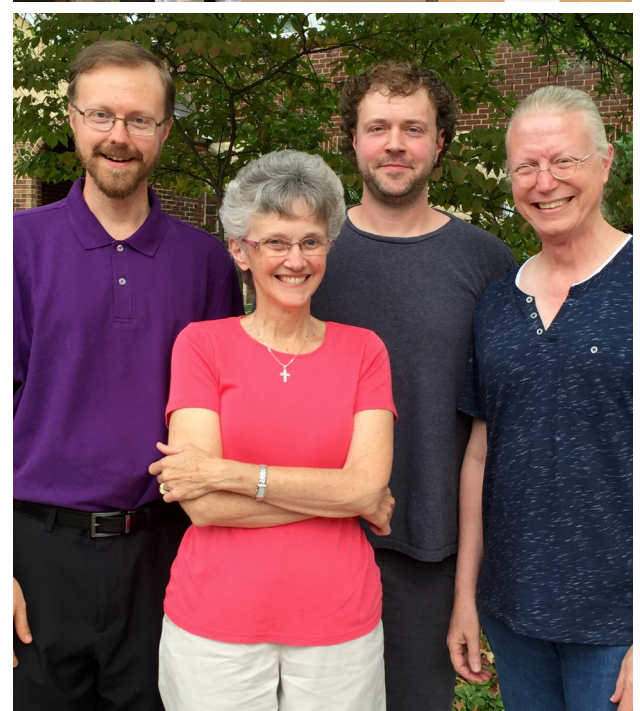
big cities, farmlands, orchards, mountains, suburbs, ocean resorts, and even an island in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay.

- The rich cultural diversity of African American, European American, Latino/Latinx, Korean, Asian-Indian, Native American, Haitian, Pennsylvania Dutch, coal miners, watermen, and the Deaf (who are a culture unto themselves).
- The many who received their "call to ministry" at our ordination services, and the young people who found Christ for the first time at our camps, youth rallies and other events.

- The LGBTQIA+ community and allies who continue to offer hospitality in many of our churches.
- The tenacious and gifted disability community, who teach the church the meaning of accessibility and empowerment.
- The wonderful camping ministries that have modeled Christian community for people who may never come to our churches
- The life-changing mission trips to: South Africa with Mission of Peace; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; India; Haiti; Spirit Lake, North Dakota; and Red Bird Mission in Kentucky.
- The ever-faithful appointive and extended cabinet members, conference staff and administrative assistants who have worked and laughed and cried with me.
- The gift of deep conversations with ecumenical and interfaith partners in leadership.
- The multi-talented extension ministry pastors serving here and in places all over the globe.

- The dynamic colleges, universities and seminaries with their rich cultural and theological diversity.
- The church anniversaries, homecomings, building dedications, charterings and potluck dinners, especially with that strawberry Jello, cream cheese, pretzel salad!
- The generous and overwhelming expressions of love and farewells sent my way in recent months.
- My wonderful spouse, Michael, who served a total of 18 churches (part-time) in both conferences (appointed and interim) wherever there was a need. He wrote numerous liturgies and prayers for every occasion, taught many workshops and Mission U courses and helped others as a certified spiritual director.

These are some of the many things I will keep. And as I remember them, I



The Johnson Family (from left): Gabe, Bishop Peggy, Pete, and Michael.

will give thanks to God for the profound blessings you have shared with me.

As I was packing boxes in the attic the other day I found a box labeled "Election." In it were various memoirs of the day I became a bishop, July 17, 2008. Among the various letters of congratulation, pictures and programs was a little scrap of yellowed notebook paper with a scripture passage on it.

I remember writing these words on my first day in the Philadelphia Episcopal Area on September 1, 2008. These words from Zechariah 7:9-10 were like a mandate from God for what I needed to do here:

"This is what the Lord Almighty says: administer true justice, show mercy and compassion to one another, do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other."

I will keep these words in my heart and in my future life; and I leave them with you to follow as well. Never cast these words away, but keep them close to your heart. And if you do these things, you will truly be the church that God intends and desires.



Faithfully Yours,
Peggy A. Johnson

Amy Botti retires after 18 years

Bishop Peggy Johnson's Executive Assistant, Amy Botti (left), shown here at a recent annual conference session, retired July 31. She was "a beloved mainstay in this conference for 18 years and will be greatly missed," said Jo Fielding, Director of Administrative Services.



'Be Thou My Vision': A Ministry Remembered

Bishop Peggy A. Johnson

Bishop of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, The United Methodist Church, 2013-2021



Summer Camps --continued from page 1.

She echoed the sentiments of her fellow directors, staff and volunteers at all four Eastern PA Conference Camp & Retreat Centers: Gretna Glen; Innabah; Carson Simpson Farm; and Pocono Plateau. "We are also grateful for parents that entrusted their children to us during this unique time."

Indeed, trust was crucial, as the virus' delta variant spread across the nation. But all our camps avoided any infections reported onsite, thanks to "an abundance of caution" in their safety protocols. That included: "Healthy Home, Healthy Camper" pre-arrival suggestions for families; COVID testing and clearances; special training for staff and volunteers; fewer camps and capacity limits; emphasis on outdoor activities; visitor restrictions; general mask-wearing; camper cohorts to manage interactions for potential contact tracing; frequent hand-washing; camp nurse instructions; and more—much more.

"For camp leaders all across the country, this summer was the hardest," Miller said. "However, it was worth it. Together, we did it! Thank you to everyone for the prayers, donations and time given to keep this vital ministry thriving." Indeed, that gratitude includes supportive churches and faithful, longtime camp directors, counselors and volunteers.

Look for more information about, images from and reactions to this summer camp season on our website. And view more of the many great photos taken in our Summer Camp Photos Album on our Flickr page.



'Great North' District clergy families regather at picnic

The "Great North" District welcomed its clergy families back to Knoebel's Park in Elysburg ("America's Largest Free-Admission Amusement Park") July 10, for their annual picnic, after last year's cancellation. Again there was plenty of festive fun, food and fellowship for the 85 attendees. Here Joan Morton (DS Steve Morton's wife) enjoys the day with granddaughter Mia.



Gretna Glen



Pocono Plateau



Camp Innabah



Carson-Simpson Farm

Seeking Justice & Mercy

For Marginalized Communities Experiencing Domestic Violence

**October 15 (7 - 9 PM)
October 16 (9 AM - 12:30 PM)**

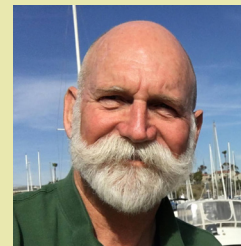
"Seeking Justice and Mercy for Marginalized Communities Experiencing Domestic Violence" will be the broad focus of this weekend Zoom webinar. The conference Domestic Violence (DV) Committee is organizing the event, its fourth annual seminar and its second held totally online.

These yearly educational events—always held during or just before National Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October—are targeted to churches but are open and helpful to everyone.

[Learn more and register now!](#)



Bivocational & Small Church Network



The Eastern PA Conference Bivocational & Small Church Network group meets every other Month, on the 2nd Tuesday of Month, at 6:30 PM, on Zoom.

The Rev. Steve Petty, a certified clergy coach and consultant, will lead a discussion at the next meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 14, at 6:30 PM. Petty's work is "Helping pastors and churches survive and thrive in these interesting times." [Learn more and register.](#)

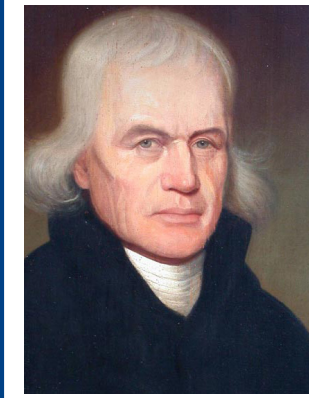


2021 Latino Commission Celebration & Annual Assembly

October 9th, 2021, at 12 PM

Location: El Buen Samaritano UMC, 129 S High St, West Chester PA 19382

Lunch will be provided. Requested contribution of \$5.00 per person.



The Asbury Crossing: Responding to Call

Saturday, October 30

Lecture by Dr. John Wigger (Asbury biographer). **Performances** by dramatist Peyton Dixon and the Philadelphia United Methodist Mass Choir. Light Fare. Free will offering. **TIME—Food & Social Hour: 2pm EST.**

Program: 3pm EST.

Sunday October 31

WORSHIP. Sermon by Bishop John Schol, Philadelphia Area. **Eucharist celebrated** by Bishop Cynthia Fiero Harvey, President UMC Council of Bishops. Invited guests from UMC & AME churches. Special Music by the Chestnut Street Singers. Free will offering. **TIME—10 am EST.**

[Register online now!](#)

Local Pastor Licensing School begins Oct. 1

The Eastern PA Conference's next Local Pastor Licensing School begins Oct. 1-2 and will run for eight weeks total but with two intervening weeks off for completion of assignments. That means six weekends of online class attendance, again via Zoom.

The total cost has been reduced from \$1,100 to \$800 to make it more affordable and to reflect cost savings. There is a \$300 non-refundable deposit due at registration, and the remaining balance must be paid by the end of the program.

Persons from other conferences are welcome to attend. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and convenience, all 2021 classes are meeting via Zoom.

[Register now, until Sept. 20.](#)

2021 Faith-Sharing

**October 23, 2021
9 AM - 12 Noon
via Zoom**

**Evangelism Training with
Olu Brown**

This training meets the Evangelism Requirement for clergy, and provides CEUs.

[Register now!](#)



Conference marks recent church transitions

The Eastern PA Conference has experienced a number of significant, even historic, church transitions in the past year, including several this summer. Thanks to beneficial partnerships, two churches have new or renewed homes; and one has gifted its historic home to a neighboring African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church. At least six churches have merged, and at least two churches have closed.

On June 13 the **Garden Church (aka Trinity UMC) in Lansdowne** completed a 10-year journey with a dedication of its new home that combines places for worship and fellowship with affordable housing for senior residents. The historic church, which surrendered its towering, former stone edifice to demolition in 2018, is now located on the bottom floor of the also new Simpson Gardens II residence for seniors, adjacent to Simpson Gardens I.

The \$12 million reconstruction project began in 2019 but was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. It now offers a smaller, more attractive and convenient worship and fellowship venue to welcome residents and neighbors.

Bishop Peggy Johnson and the Rev. Evelyn Kent Clark, South District Superintendent, joined church leaders in dedicating the church, after speaking and helping to cut the ribbon on the already occupied new



Garden Church dedication and Simpson Gardens II ribbon-cutting

apartments, along with leaders of Simpson Senior Services and state and local officials.

Hours later, the two traveled about 20 minutes to also help dedicate the new home of **El Buen Samaritano UMC** at the former home of the recently discontinued Gradyville UMC. After 22 years of sharing space at West Chester UMC, the congregation celebrated its new location with a joyous, outdoor celebration in the church's parking lot, with colorful decorations, inspiring music and prayers, gifts and testimonies. And the bishop preached in Spanish.

El Buen Samaritano's small but vibrant congregation is a bilingual, Spanish-English ministry with members representing diverse backgrounds, including many Latin American countries.

The pews at **Radnor UMC** in Bryn Mawr were nearly full—a rare sight—and the hearts of attendees were surely full as well, as Eastern PA Conference officials transferred ownership of the historic church, more than two centuries old, to the St. John AME Church in Wayne June 7. The tiny Radnor congregation, which had forged a friendship with St. John's pastor and members, merged with St. Luke UMC in Bryn Mawr.

An interracial, inter-Methodist gathering worshiped and then watched intently during the official declarations of transfer. "The time has come for this



El Buen Samaritano Dedication



Radnor UMC's former pastor, Jack Ross (left), presents the church key to the Rev. Manual Howard, pastor of St. John AME Church.

congregation of Christ's holy Church, under God's leadership, to take leave of this building," said the Rev. Evelyn Kent Clark, South District Superintendent, in reading the Declaration of Purpose.

Bishop Peggy Johnson then recalled broadly, in a Litany of Thanksgiving, the faithful discipleship of the recently departed congregation, memorializing their ministries of prayer and proclamation, sacraments and service. St. John AME Church then conducted a Service of Dedication, led by its pastor and other local AME officials in a spirit of true friendship.

Enjoy photos of the two church building dedications and the church building transfer in separate albums on our Flickr photo page.

Other recent church transitions include the mergers of:

- African Zoar and New Vision UMCs in Philadelphia;
- Asbury and Salem UMCs in Allentown; and
- Old Brick and Fox Chase UMCs in Philadelphia

In addition, First UMC in Perkasio and Asbury UMC in Norristown were discontinued in 2020, along with Gradyville UMC.

Dewees Grants deadline extended to Sept. 20

The Dewees Grant applications fall deadline, usually Sept. 1, is extended to Sept. 20 this year. Funds are given to the Eastern PA Conference "to use in the mission programs of the Church." Grants typically do not exceed \$5,000, and must be for the initial funding of a project only. Churches should send their completed applications to their district superintendents. Committees, boards and agencies should send their applications to the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, Director of Connectional Ministries. See our Funding for Ministry web page to learn more.

Plantation Jesus next conference-wide Book Club study

The Eastern PA Conference's Congregational Development Team (CDT) and Commission on Religion & Race (CORR) will collaborate again in October on a second conference-wide book study that focuses on racism in America. The weekly study, via Zoom, will gather readers for lively discussion on Wednesdays, Oct. 6, 13, 20 and 27, 11 AM to noon, to explore the racially conscious 2018 book **Plantation Jesus**.

Writer Andi Cumbo-Floyd co-wrote the book with Rick Wilson, an Emmy Award-winning media producer and writer who died in 2014, and Skot Welch, founder of Global Bridgebuilders, a consulting firm focusing on cultural transformation and inclusion. Wilson and Welch co-hosted the popular radio program Radio in Black and White.

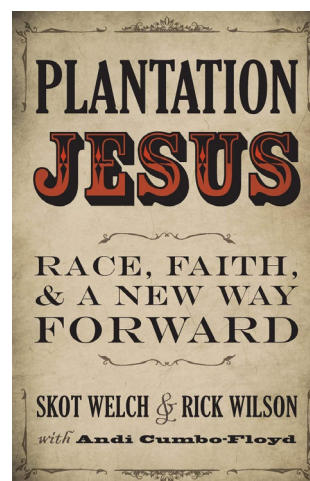
Cumbo-Floyd will lead sessions of the study, which, like the book, will cover challenging topics related to race, ethnicity, American Christianity and cultural competence. Cumbo-Floyd led CORR members in a deeply insightful, candid study and discussion

of Plantation Jesus this summer, prompting the commission to recommend it for the entire conference.

CORR members will facilitate the study, which will include breakout rooms for small-group discussion. CORR and CDT together will offer free e-books to the first 50 study registrants. The book is available in paperback, Kindle and Audible formats.

Learn more and register at

<https://www.epaumc.org/conference-calendar/october-book-club/2021-10-06>.



In Memoriam

Rev. Herbert W. Phillips - August 19, 2021
 The Rev. Amy C. Smith - July 26, 2021
 The Rev. Bruce Nobel - July 23, 2021
 The Rev. Dorothy Field - July 15, 2021
 Rev. Herbert E. Palmer - June 22, 2021
 The Rev. Janet V. Burns - June 13, 2021
 Rev. Janet V. Burns - June 13, 2021
 David C. Krause, Sr. - June 9, 2021
 Charlotte F. Murray - May 27, 2021
 Mrs. Ruth T. Brodhead - May 17, 2021
 Mrs. Barbara J. Ward - April 11, 2021
 The Rev. Nancy S. Curtis - March 5, 2021

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