



Clothed in Love

Cabinet offers churches recorded Christmas worship service

Bishop John Schol and the Extended Cabinet recorded a full Christmas worship service, offering it online to EPAUMC churches for suggested use on Dec. 26.

The 54-minute long, English-language version of the worship service can be viewed on the conference's [YouTube page](#) along with Spanish and Korean-Language versions. All versions are also available for downloading from the NEWSpirit Communications' [Dropbox account](#).

While all three versions are intercultural, the Spanish and Korean language versions feature additional Latino and Korean worship participants, respectively. Their liturgies are spoken and songs are sung in their languages, and Bishop Schol's sermon is translated with subtitles.

The complete worship service begins and ends with Christmas music performed by two different bell choirs. It is the Cabinet's gift to churches to offer pastors and worship leaders a brief respite from busy Advent and Christmas activities—in other words, a Sunday off.

The worship service, titled "Clothed in Love," features a sermon by Bishop Schol, based on Colossians 3:12-17, in which he especially emphasizes the virtues of gentleness and patience, among others. Extended Cabinet members contribute an opening greeting, prayers, scripture reading, offering stewardship message and benediction.

Two lay members—a grandmother and grandchild—from Wharton-Wesley UMC in Philadelphia read a Call to Worship together, though separately on Zoom. Solo

and ensemble musicians from all four districts around the conference perform a rich variety of sacred, Christmas music.

One lively song, "Niño Lindo," popular in Latino churches but also included in the United Methodist Hymnal (#222), is performed solo by the Rev. Irving Cotto but also shown sung by Latino Commission members at their recent, annual Christmas celebration. Another highlight of the service is a 2-minute video titled "Clothed in Love," that depicts scenes of active, caring ministries in churches and communities around the conference with narration and the theme scripture woven throughout.

The Cabinet did a similar good deed in March, providing pastors and worship leaders with [a recorded post-Easter worship service](#) to use for respite from busy Lenten and Holy Week activities. In December 2020, Cabinet clergy also provided recorded Advent and post-Christmas sermons for churches to use for their online worship.

The Cabinet invites churches to show this newly recorded worship video in full or in part, on Dec. 26 or another date, either onsite in their sanctuaries or online using their preferred media. "We hope this Christmas worship service will provide a much-needed respite for our pastors and lay worship leaders who continue to serve faithfully," said the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, Director of Connectional Ministries, who envisioned and produced the video worship experience along with her colleagues.

Bishop announces 2022 Cabinet transitions; seeks 2 new supts.

Bishop John Schol announced Dec. 16 the imminent departure of two district superintendents in June 2022, and he appealed to EPA Conference members for recommendations of who should succeed them.

"I am sad that the Rev. Bumkoo Chung (right) will finish his tenure as a superintendent on June 30, 2022," wrote the bishop in a conference-wide letter, noting Chung's passion for effective evangelism and community engagement among churches. "He has served EPA and the West District faithfully. In the short time I have known him, Rev. Chung is deeply committed to leading congregations to health and vitality, growing lay leadership and supporting clergy."

Bishop Schol also expressed sadness for the departure next June of the Rev. Steve Morton (left) as North District Superintendent. Morton requested a new part-time appointment. "I have known Steve for much of

Continued on page 2--2022 Cabinet Transitions.



EPAUMC receives UMCOR Disaster Recovery grant

We are pleased to announce that the United Methodist Committee on Relief of Global Ministries (UMCOR) has approved your grant request of USD (\$417,737 on behalf of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference for Hurricane Ida and Hurricane Isaias Recovery (Project Restoration).

Those welcome words brought an Advent blessing

Continued on page 6--UMCOR Disaster Recovery grant.



The Revs. Irving Cotto (left) and Manfredo Martinez, outgoing and incoming Latino Commission chairmen, helped lead the commission's recent Christmas celebration. See [Latino Commission celebrates growth, new ministries in 2021 on page 7](#).

Inside this issue...

Page 2: 2022 Annual Conference: onsite, online or both?

Page 3: A hard-fought hope: A Message for Advent and Christmas by Bishop John Schol

Page 4: EPAUMC Extended Cabinet sets priorities for its work

Page 5: \$30 million from United Methodists in BSA bankruptcy

Page 8: New Pocono Plateau Camp director a leader in church and corporate worlds
7,200 Christmas cards sent to inmates in 13 prison facilities

JANUARY 2022

JANUARY 7 & 8

Implicit Biases Workshop. Friday from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM, and Saturday from 9 AM to 12:45 PM, on Zoom. [Download the flyer. Register.](#)

JANUARY 11

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

JANUARY 12, 19, 26, FEBRUARY 2, 9

Weekly Book Club: Being the Church in a Post-Pandemic World by Kay Kotan. Wednesdays at 11 AM. Sponsored by CDT. [Learn More. Register.](#)

FEBRUARY 2022

FEBRUARY 11 & 12

Emotional Intelligence and Diversity training, 12:30 to 3:30 PM each day.

MARCH 2022

MARCH 5

2022 Tools for Ministry

MARCH 19 & 16

This Holy Mystery: A UM Study of Holy Communion, via Zoom. 9 AM - 11:30 AM each day.

APRIL 2022

APRIL 2

Laity Session. 9:30 AM - 12:00 PM, via Zoom.

MAY 2022

MAY 4

Clergy Session. 9 AM - 12:00 PM. Details TBA.

MAY 20-21

2022 Annual Conference, at Oaks Expo Center.

2022 Cabinet Transitions ---Continued from page 1.

my ministry career and have found him to be an exemplary leader in growing churches, developing leaders and supporting clergy and laity in their ministry," wrote the bishop. "His leadership in the North District has led to innovative and strengthened ministry. He too will be deeply missed as a superintendent."

Bishop Schol asked for prayers for the Cabinet, "as we prayerfully discern and appoint two new superintendents." He also requested members' help in that process. "Please submit up to two names of individuals you believe will serve well as superintendents. I will only consider names submitted by clergy and laity for the superintendency."

[Read the Bishop's full letter.](#)

Submit recommendations to:
bishopjohnschol@epaumc.org

2022 Annual Conference: onsite, online or both?

Group surveys conference members for help with decision

The Eastern PA Annual Conference will meet May 20-21, 2022, with the usual highlights, including:

- the Ordination and Commissioning Service;
- Ministry Reports and Holy Conferencing with Resolutions;
- the Service of Passage to recognize retirees, ordinands, commissioned clergy, local pastors and Certified Lay Ministers;
- the Laity Address; and
- the Memorial Service for deceased clergy and clergy spouses.

Plus, Bishop John Schol will present an Episcopal Address as our new resident bishop.

There's even a timely, one-word theme for the Conference session—one that captures the immediacy and urgency of our times: "NOW."

What has yet to be determined, however, is where and how we will meet: either onsite at the familiar Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks, or online via Zoom as in the past two years. Or maybe both onsite and online in a hybrid arrangement to accommodate the safety concerns of some and the desires of others for face-to-face proximity.

As COVID-19 infection rates escalate, amid new variants and resistance to vaccination and masks, concerns for health and safety are rising, too. The conference Commission on Sessions discussed all meeting options and considerations at its Dec. 13 virtual meeting.

The 2022 Annual Conference has been shortened from three days to two—a savings in time and meal costs. We will forgo the customary plenary teaching session. And resolutions will again be published online early to allow for comments, corrections and changes prior to the Annual Conference.

Even the Clergy and Laity sessions are removed from the 2022 Conference agenda and will occur in advance

instead: the Laity Session on Saturday, April 2, 10 AM to 12 PM; and the Clergy Session on Wednesday, May 4, 9 AM to 12 PM. The Laity Session will again meet online. Board of Ordained Ministry leaders are deciding about the Clergy Session. And District Conferences will each convene on May 1, most likely on Zoom.

The Commission on Sessions hopes to decide in January how to meet, which may affect logistics, participation and costs for both the conference and its paying registrants. So it is asking voting Conference members for their onsite or online preferences in a new survey questionnaire. Members are asked to complete and submit the online questionnaire by Thursday, Dec. 23.

"The members of the Conference Sessions Commission are prayerfully weighing the creative options and challenges around whether to meet at the Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks, online via Zoom as in the past two years, or the possibility of a hybrid model meeting both onsite and online," reads the questionnaire introduction. "The safety of our members is of the utmost concern and we want to hear from you about your desires and concerns."

Besides choices of in-person, online and hybrid attendance, it also asks, "If a hybrid option was offered and the cost was the same as in-person, how would you attend?"

The commission is analyzing all costs, including the conference's commitment to the Expo Center venue.

The questionnaire further asks if members would attend the Ordination and Memorial services onsite if there was open attendance again next year, even if they attended the Conference business online. Finally, it asks members to judge how much COVID safety concerns affect their choice to



attend the session onsite or online.

Clergy and lay conference members are urged to respond to the survey by Dec. 23. The results should help the Sessions commission make decisions when it meets again, scheduled for Jan. 11, 2022.



Bishop John Schol - Eastern Pennsylvania & Greater New Jersey
John W. Coleman - Director of Communications, Editor
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or via email to communications@epaumc.org

A hard-fought hope

A Message for Advent and Christmas by Bishop John Schol

Pastoral theologian Frederick Buechner described what God said to Job about suffering and calamity: "You don't want to know why things happen. You want to know that I love you."

Job, one of the books in the Bible, describes the story of a man who lost everything but his life. And after losing everything else, he wished he'd lost his life too.

Job lost his wealth, his family, his friends and his health. Left utterly and completely alone, he wanted to go nose to nose, toe to toe with God and ask, "Why? Why did you allow this to happen to me?"

Can you blame Job. Who wouldn't? I haven't lost as much as Job, and I have looked God straight in the eyes and asked, "Why?"

At some level, all of creation is in a Job moment. Disasters, poverty, racism and a pandemic that has brought the world to a common experience of tragedy and loss. We have lost family, friends, time, identity, health, trust, jobs, interactions with people, innocence, confidence, and the list goes on.

It is not just what an individual has lost, but our communities and their social relationships: family, church, school, the neighborhood. People in our networks are all experiencing similar losses. Collectively, we most likely have never globally and collectively known such loss, tragedy and fear for such a sustained period of time.

You would think people would lose faith, belief in God. Nope. A recent Pew Research study found that people's faith at this moment has not changed because of the pandemic. We cling to the Advent/Christmas story in which God said, I love you.

This faith, this love, this hope does not come easily.



It is hard-fought. Just ask Job, or your friend who just lost their mother, or the parents who have been at their wits' end working and engaging children in online learning with not enough room in the house to find a quiet space for an important Zoom meeting.

It's hard, and yet, it is worth fighting for because God fought for us. A love greater than we could have imagined came as a whisper in the birth of a child.

During this Advent/Christmas season, don't forget that in the midst of the tragedy and the challenges, you are loved. And don't forget to love someone else.

It may be their only means to know that they too are loved by God.

A Blessed Advent and a Merry Christmas to each of you.

- John



'That we may be Christmas people every day of the year'

A Christmas Prayer

BY THE REV. EVELYN KENT CLARK, EPAUMC SOUTH DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

(Featured in the EPAUMC Cabinet's Christmas Worship Service recorded and offered to churches.)

O God, we come before you to express our joy and thanksgiving in this miraculous season. As we celebrate the beauty and mystery of the Christmas event, the birth of the Christ Child, we are in awe of the full scope of your love and grace toward humanity.

The proclamation of the angel Gabriel to Mary was the beginning of the Christmas story; but the glorious benefits are still blessing us in endless ways from the cradle to the grave.

We pray for those who don't know the story. We pray for us who have been called to tell the story and

more importantly to live it.

We pray for the sick in mind, body or spirit that you will grant them supernatural healing and wholeness. Help us to minister to them with love and compassion.

We pray for children everywhere, those who are waiting with starry eyes for Christmas morning. Help us to show them the Christ in Christmas and not the commercial entrapments.

And, O God, we pray for children around the globe, the poorest of the poor, who only see poverty, pain and suffering every day. Use us to be your instruments of transformation in their lives. Let them see the stars of hope and the joy of peace, and because of us the reality of food, clothing, clean water, safe housing and a good education.

We pray for all people near and far, young and old, in every situation of life. Gift us, O God, with more power, that we may be the answer to their prayers, that we may be

Christmas people every day of the year.

We bless your name and honor you, as we pray this prayer in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.



In Memoriam

The Rev. James E. Tallman - December 17, 2021
The Rev. John D. O'Neill - December 16, 2021.
The Rev. Jared J. Rardin - November 17, 2021
The Rev. Leon Frisby - November 16, 2021
The Rev. Kenneth Rowe - October 8, 2021
Mr. Efrain Reyes - September 22, 2021
Mr. Frank Abati - September 13, 2021
The Rev. Bruce Lefever - September 10, 2021
Mrs. Donna G. Martinez - August 3, 2021
The Rev. Howard K. Vassallo - July 15, 2021

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

EPAUMC Extended Cabinet sets priorities for its work

The Eastern PA Conference's Extended Cabinet, comprising district superintendents, senior staff and Bishop John Schol, is building on EPA's vision, mission and a recent survey of laity and clergy to set priorities for its work.

That conversation started in September with a survey of conference members, followed by Cabinet members' consideration of survey findings and deliberations among around the question "Why do we exist?" And then it moved to conference staff and elected leaders of ministry groups who serve on the Connectional Table, all giving feedback, perspectives and energy in developing priorities.

EPAUMC's current vision and mission statement—stating its core values and commitments—were developed in April 2017 through input from the Connectional Table and Cabinet. Its **Vision: United in Christ, Committed to Transformation**. Its four-part **Mission: Creating Disciples; Celebrating Diversity; Connecting Communities; and Committing to Love and Justice**.

The Extended Cabinet, in addition to leading and managing the administration and ministry of EPA, works together to develop transformational lay and clergy leaders. Those leaders will guide congregations to become healthy, vital and missional, as they "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." Acts 2:42-27 reflects congregations that meet together regularly for fellowship, worship and discipleship. In this model, congregations share with one another and the wider community in order to transform lives and communities.

In addition to its ongoing administrative and programmatic work, the Cabinet will focus its work on four key areas:

1. Ending the sin of racism. Strategies and goals for this area are being developed by the Economic Justice Team and will be reported to the 2022 annual conference session.
2. Recruiting and developing transformational leaders who lead congregations and ministries. The Extended Cabinet will develop a strategy and process for recruiting and equipping leaders. It has projected working with 90 laity and 90 clergy in the first few years.
3. Growing healthy vital missional congregations that are connecting with the people in the community and engaging in mercy and justice ministries in the community.
4. Strengthening the health and capacity of EPA by strengthening giving for local and global mission.

The keys to being healthy, vital, missional congregations are those that demonstrate:

1. Inspirational worship
2. Small-group learning and growth
3. Sharing God's grace through personal relationships with Jesus Christ
4. Community hands-on mission engagement
5. Generous giving toward mission

Such congregations engage in community ministry by developing ministries and partnering with others in action and service that transforms lives and conditions, particularly in efforts to end the sin of racism and oppression and to be ministry with the poor.

The Extended Cabinet sees its critical role in developing leadership in the following areas:

- Equip, coach and support leadership for excellence in ministry.
- Lead the creation of resources and programs that equip leadership to lead congregations and ministries.



Creating Disciples

Celebrating Diversity

United in Christ,
Committed to Transformation

Connecting Communities

Committing to
Love and Justice

- Provide administration and communications that serves and supports leaders and congregations to do excellent ministry.

Moreover, the Cabinet sees the importance of understanding and leveraging the EPAUMC's culture—values, beliefs and traditions—as it impacts our purpose.

Culture that enhances the purpose of EPAUMC:

- The rich tradition and history of EPAUMC that anchors our ministry in a long succession of witnesses over hundreds of years and serves as an inspiration to address today's challenges. (**HISTORICAL ANCHORS**)
- The diversity of EPAUMC that provides different approaches, cultures and understandings that allows us to better connect with a diverse and changing world. (**MAXIMIZED DIVERSITY**)
- The variety of churches and locations that make United Methodism resourceful to people of different experiences and needs. (**RESOURCEFUL**)
- The willingness to collaborate and work together on the significant challenges of our times. (**COLLABORATIVE**)

Culture that inhibits the purpose of EPAUMC:

- Fear and a culture of scarcity that makes leaders and congregations reluctant to take risks, innovate and invest in their future. (**FALSE SCARCITY TO GENEROSITY**)
- Over dependence on clergy and/or legacy leaders to lead the church (**CLERGY DEPENDENT TO SHARED MINISTRY**)
- Forming into groups by cause and similarity that creates silos and limits the transformative power through focus, collaboration and alignment to accomplish plans, goals and the mission (**SILO-DRIVEN TO COLLABORATIVE**)
- Reacting to challenges rather than planning, setting goals and supporting people to achieve the

goals (REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE)

The Cabinet will continue its discussions and share perspectives and plans further with conference and church leaders in 2022, as the EPAUMC's strategic direction and goals are finalized, communicated and set in motion.

* More about the EPAUMC Vision:

United in Christ

United Methodists are from many backgrounds, and we are united in Christ. This common ground shapes what we believe as well as what we do. We seek to be a church that models our unity in Christ, while also valuing the voices of all people at the table.

Committed to Transformation

Romans 12:1-2 calls us to change our mindset. Philipians 2:5-11 explains that we are to have the mind of Christ, to humble ourselves and serve others. Transformation involves a turning away from the beliefs, systems and ways of the world in order to reveal the truth of and provide evidence of the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

As people in EPAUMC committed to transformation, it is incumbent upon us to identify the ways that are of the world, such as poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, evil, injustice and oppression in any form. Living out this commitment calls us to speak, act and respond in ways that will create an environment that is a counter culture to the world and its establishments.

Transformation can be lived out by teaching the concepts and principles of the Kingdom, which are the opposite of the world's principles. This is our "Aha!" moment, a leap in thinking, pivoting away from what we think we know, a giant step in our faith walk, an epiphany. If you will, a revelation.

As an Extended Cabinet, we will recognize and support congregations as the missional outposts of EPAUMC for changing hearts, lives and communities to be more like

Continued on page 5--EPAUMC Extended Cabinet.

\$30 million from United Methodists in BSA bankruptcy

BY SAM HODGES | UM NEWS

Negotiators for The United Methodist Church [have reached a settlement](#) for the denomination to pay \$30 million as part of the Boy Scouts of America's bankruptcy reorganization plan.

Local United Methodist churches in the U.S. have long been leading sponsors of Boy Scout and Cub Scout troops, and the \$30 million is to be paid over three years into a trust fund for survivors of Scouting-related sexual abuse.

All U.S. annual conferences of the denomination are being asked to make a commitment to raise the necessary funds, church leaders said.

The settlement, announced Dec. 21, comes after months of negotiations, and the overall bankruptcy plan still must be approved by a federal bankruptcy court.

United Methodist leaders said the settlement they reached meets key objectives, including bringing healing and support to survivors, and absolving local United Methodist churches that sponsored or chartered BSA troops from abuse claims involving Scouting activities.

In a Zoom call about the settlement, leaders emphasized the denomination's commitment to survivors.

"We are deeply sorry for the harm that has been caused to good people through Scouting and particularly through ministries of Scouting in United Methodist churches," said Bishop John Schol, who has had a leading role in representing the denomination in the bankruptcy matter.

Steven Scheid, director of United Methodist Men's Center for Scouting Ministries, said the settlement

commits the denomination to meeting with survivors, hearing and sharing their stories, and to working to boost safety in Scouting programs and other youth work.

"If we're to be the body of Christ in the world today, it's our obligation to be a part of the healing that happens," Scheid said.

More than 9,000 United Methodist churches in the U.S. that have a history of chartering Scouting troops are among the parties voting on whether to approve the BSA bankruptcy plan. Those are

[churches that filed a "proof of claim"](#) in the proceeding, asserting rights to insurance coverage or other protections BSA might have offered.

Earlier this month, the [United Methodist negotiators were encouraging those churches to vote "no,"](#) but with the settlement, the churches are asked to vote for the plan. Those that have already voted against are asked to change their votes, and directions on how to do that are being shared through annual conferences.

With its future threatened by abuse-related lawsuits, the BSA filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in February 2020, seeking to reorganize and carry on.

The BSA reorganization plan has gone through a number of versions, but the heart of it remains a fund that would compensate some 82,000 former Scouts who say they suffered sexual abuse from adult leaders and others.

With contributions from the BSA, local Boy Scout councils, insurance companies and chartering groups, the fund was at \$2.6 billion even before the United Methodist settlement. If approved, the plan will [represent the largest sexual abuse settlement in U.S. history.](#)

U.S. annual conferences are expected to contribute to the \$30 million called for in the United Methodist settlement and have been helping already with legal fees.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints — known to many as the LDS church or Mormons — had been the largest chartering organization before cutting ties with the BSA. [The LDS church agreed in September](#)



[to contribute \\$250 million to the survivors' fund.](#)

The United Methodist Church has committed to helping other non-UMC chartering organizations raise \$100 million for the fund.

Schol said church leaders will be providing more details about the settlement in a Frequently Asked Questions format. [A press release issued just after the Zoom event](#) said the United Methodist Council of Bishops has committed to lead the church as follows:

- Work with all United Methodists to raise funds for the Survivor Trust Fund.
- Tell the story of harm done to survivors through a series of articles to be published by the denomination and by each U.S. annual conference to draw attention to child sexual abuse and call upon the church to be vigilant in working to prevent child sexual abuse in churches, homes and the community.
- Carry out a denomination-wide review of all Safe Sanctuaries and other policies to safeguard young people from sexual abuse, and update policies as necessary and ensure the policies are being followed.
- Provide opportunities for sexual abuse survivors to share their experiences with United Methodist leadership if they choose to do so.
- Work with all United Methodist ministries and with the Boy Scouts of America to continue to make programs safe for all young people.
- Provide leadership to help all BSA chartering organizations make a \$100 million contribution to the Survivor Trust Fund.

Participate as a member of the Survivors Working Group.

The United Methodist Church and predecessor denominations have worked with BSA for more than 100 years.

As of 2020, United Methodist Men — the agency overseeing the denomination's Scouting ministries — reported that more than 3,000 United Methodist churches in the U.S. chartered about 9,000 scouting units, involving 300,000 youth.



EPAUMC Extended Cabinet --continued from page 4.

Christ. Our priority is to lead congregations to connect with the people in the community and to be in ministry with the people in the community.

5 Characteristics of A Passionate Disciple, Transformational Leader and Vital Congregations

Findings from September 2021 survey of EPA laity and clergy:

Passionate Disciple	Transformational Leader	Vital Wesleyan Congregation
Servant	Excellent communicator	Welcomes All People As They Are
Life-Long Learner	Positive and hopeful	Engages People in Hands-On Mission
Humble	Visionary	Inspiring & Uplifting Worship
Compassionate	Connects and Engages Well with People	Trains People to Share Their Faith with Others and Invites Them to Worship
Prayerful	Delegates and Supports Others in Their Ministry	Offers Small Groups for Study and/or Service

UMCOR Disaster Recovery grant--continued from page 1.

last week to EPAUMC's Director of Connectional Ministries, the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, who labored for months on the UMCOR grant application. But it was also a blessing to flood-ravaged communities in dire need of the aptly named "Project Restoration."

The immediate result is a search to find and hire a Director of Disaster Response to lead in recruiting and managing volunteers, among many other tasks, and a Case Manager to help families still waiting to return to their damaged homes or be safely relocated.

EPA's volunteer Disaster Response Coordinator Robert Simcox has been organizing and overseeing the labors of Early Response Teams several Saturdays a month in Downingtown since October.

3 churches, many homes damaged by flooding

Meanwhile, Hopewell UMC has member teams doing major home restoration work there as well, in partnership with local groups. And the church has raised and contributed over \$60,000 plus supplies to the town's recovery needs.

Homes there and in Coatesville and Mont Clare were inundated by floods unleashed by remnants of Hurricane Ida in early September. Calvary UMC in Ambler and Otterbein UMC in Mont Clare were also hard-hit by flooding. Otterbein's members are hoping rehabilitation of their church can begin in January after their electricity is finally restored. They are eager to return to their upstairs sanctuary for worship.

Much more volunteer help will be needed in all of these communities and also in Eastwick a long-neglected urban community in Southwest Philadelphia near the Airport. That's where Hurricane Isaias in August 2020 brought unprecedented flooding from overflowing creeks into hundreds of homes, most without flood insurance, wreaking devastation and disrupting many lives.

Eastwick still hurting from Hurricane Isaias in 2020

Hurricane Isaias' impact continues to be felt, and many homes have been condemned. Relocation assistance is much-needed. But despite the severe extent of the damages, it was not deemed sufficient to warrant provision of FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Administration) funds, according to Eastwick UMC's pastor the Rev. Tracy Duncan.

The church, although not damaged, has been working alongside its neighbors and trying to help them for the past year. Duncan laments that families remain in homes that are still waiting to be fully restored, as the onset of winter brings heating problems.

Recovery will require time, funds and much help

Eastern PA received over 10,000 applications for assistance by late September. Recovery from all the flooding will take lots of time, lots of funds and lots of help. But the new UMCOR funds, in addition to ongoing donations from caring members and churches, may enable the conference to meet its ambitious goal to restore at least 55 homes and to help displaced families find assistance through case management, an UMCOR specialty.

"I rejoice in UMCOR's commitment to restoring communities and specifically for UMCOR's partnership with the Eastern PA Conference in Hurricane Ida and Hurricane Isaias Recovery," said Taylor-Storm, who credits Bishop John Schol, Simcox, Conference Volunteers in Mission Coordinator the Rev. Russell Atkinson, and others for much help in shaping the vision and pursuing the grant.

"We look forward to continuing the work of recovery that has already begun. May God continue to bless this effort as we move forward."



More volunteer disaster response teams are needed in 2022 to join these efforts. (From top): Conference Early Response Teams and Hopewell UMC volunteers repair homes in Downingtown. Meanwhile, at Otterbein UMC in Mont Clare, Dianne Maylen, Lay Leader, (left) and the Rev. Catherine Bowers, pastor, patiently await restoration of their church's once-bustling Mission Closet, where clothing and other needs were provided to the community. John Coleman photos

Latino Commission celebrates growth, new ministries in 2021

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN

Members of the Eastern PA Conference Latino Commission celebrated Christmas together Dec. 4, as families enjoyed feasting and fellowship, music and mirth, worship and witnessing to their faith.

The Rev. Luky Cotto, Latino Ministries coordinator, was sadly unable to join them onsite at Lehman Memorial UMC in Hatboro, as she recuperated from surgery. But she appeared on a laptop screen via Zoom, bearing the most plentiful and precious gifts of the celebration: a full report on how their various churches and ministries were blessed by accomplishments and support during this year, along with plans for the year to come.

Cotto celebrated 21 new lay missionaries trained by the commission this year through the UMC's National Plan for Hispanic/Lay Ministries. Three are now deployed as lay pastors to forge new Latino communities of faith, and six are assisting their pastors at Latino churches.

The commission also welcomed 85 participants—children, youth and adults—to its 40th Latina Semana (Latino Week) Summer Camp at Gretna Glen Camp and Retreat Center. It celebrated its annual [Convocation of the Holy Spirit](#) in May with inspirational prayer, worship and teaching. And it heard reports and elected new officers at its annual membership meeting in October.

"Generation of Revival," a [weekend spiritual retreat](#) for Latinx young adults, ages 16-27, is scheduled for Jan. 7-9 at Gretna Glen Camp & Retreat Center.

Cotto further highlighted new and growing ministries in Latino churches and communities, and three new, promising Latino community outreach efforts at predominantly Anglo churches.

Some Latino ministry highlights

El Mesias (The Messiah) UMC, the oldest Latino UMC church in Philadelphia, badly needed funds to resurface its outdoor playground to protect children in its resident pre-school program from a recent infestation of rats, amid other urgent repairs. After a [story published on the conference website](#) was shared, the church received generous aid from the Philadelphia Foundation and will receive more from St. John's UMC in Ivyland. The East District also gave the church an initial grant to help remedy the problem.

Cotto reported that Espiritu Santo (Holy Spirit) UMC in Philadelphia also received a generous donation to fix its damaged roof.

El Buen Samaritano (Good Samaritan) UMC, has welcomed 13 returnees to its youth ministry, as it regathered for onsite worship and ministry at West Chester UMC. Cristo Rey (Christ the King) UMC's new fasting and prayer ministry has drawn over 15 people, with more coming weekly. A Latino community outreach ministry started in Coatesville three years ago continues, and members are participating in the commission.

Meanwhile, Casa del Pueblo, which Cotto started 13 years ago, continues to grow in two locations—at Lehman Memorial and

at St. Paul's UMC in Warrington—with recent baptisms and confirmations. And the merger of two Latino ministries into one new congregation, Casa del Rey (House of the King) UMC in Allentown, continues to grow stronger with vibrant leadership and ministry plans, Cotto reported.

"God is moving in our congregations and communities of faith," she said, reflecting her joy visibly onscreen. But completing her joy are three new Latino outreach ministries launched at Anglo churches.

3 new Latino ministries in Anglo churches

Morrisville UMC is an especially mission-oriented congregation in a small, culturally diverse community, with neighbors from Africa, India and Latin America. In 2020 it hired Beditza Cadillo as Minister of Latino Ministry.

Haws Avenue UMC in Norristown, led by Latina pastor, Lisa DePaz, started Comunidad de Paz (Community of Peace), a new faith community, which had its first formal worship service in November, with 21 members from 12 families. The church increased outreach to its burgeoning Hispanic community in January 2020.

And Calvary UMC in Mohnton, a suburb of Reading, recently added Madeline Amill, a part-time Latina pastor, to its staff to help the church reach another largely Latino community—reportedly the largest per capita in the Northeast.

Morrisville UMC provides its surrounding Latino community with groceries and other necessities for struggling families, plus faith-inspiring Bible studies and worship, and ESL (English as a Second Language) classes.

With the blessing of her pastor, Cadillo, a longtime lay missionary leader at Espiritu Santo UMC, gladly accepted the opportunity to staff Morrisville's new ministry. She has drawn upon her creative instincts, diverse experiences and resourceful contacts to help make it a success.

Cotto helped the Rev. Wendy Bellis, who retired as Morrisville UMC's pastor in 2021, to launch the ministry. Now the new pastor, the Rev. Towanda Connelly, has taken the baton to help move it forward, notwithstanding challenges caused by the COVID pandemic, including her own bout with the virus.

"The church is located next door to a school; so, they did an after-school program and found out most of the students spoke Spanish," recalled Connelly. "We were running into language barriers, because the students were joining our church's youth ministry, to the point where the youth director had to buy a translator (online app) to communicate in Spanish."

Bellis convinced the congregation to hire someone

to direct bilingual outreach to the growing Latino community.

"Beditza has been on fire, and our connection to the community is becoming stronger," Connelly reported. "She has definitely facilitated that for Morrisville, and we do our part to help her provide what's needed. We work together."

"I love serving the Lord, and I love working with the community," said Cadillo. "And Morrisville is full of different kinds of ministries. It's been amazing just seeing the love that the congregation has for people."



Rev. Luky Cotto



Pastor Lisa DePaz at Haws Avenue UMC



Madeline Amill

New pastoral team 'a work of the Holy Spirit'

At Calvary UMC in Mohnton Madeline Amill recently joined the staff as a part-time co-assistant pastor, alongside Matthew Davis and lead pastor, the Rev. Tamie Scalise. She and Davis will be commissioned in January, said Scalise, who called the newly diverse pastoral team

"completely a work of the Holy Spirit."

Amill, from Puerto Rico, is a longtime leader at Nuevo Nacimiento (New Birth) UMC in Lebanon, led by the Rev. Elena Ortiz, which has proven to be a birthplace for many trained and eager-to-serve lay missionaries. Commuting from Lebanon, she was also hired this year as part-time pastor of a small, Latino church in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference, where she will continue to work on weekends through 2022.

Meanwhile, this lay missionary will spend weekdays learning, making connections and starting outreach ministries to serve Calvary's growing Latino community. The Rev. Nicholas Camacho, a retired pastor, formerly at West Lawn UMC in Reading, knows the area well and will guide her initially in that quest.

The ultimate team goal is not to create a separate Latino Ministry, said Scalise, but to enlarge Calvary's tent to become a multicultural, bilingual congregation with fruitful relationships—essentially a "new place for new people." The church will provide support for this effort, along with startup funds from the conference's Latino Commission and Congregational Development Team (CDT).

"I thank God for this opportunity that I knew someday would

come to pass," said Amill. "It's what I felt in my heart when I said 'One day, God will put me out there to serve our people in mission through the church.'"

Another promising Latino community outreach ministry and lay missionary assignment is being explored in Hazelton, although currently without a sponsoring church but with support from the CDT.

Latino populations are thriving in Hazelton, the Reading area, Norristown, Coatesville and other communities. The conference recognizes the need for more UMC ministries, evangelism and congregational development to serve those populations, resourced by trained missionary leadership, ample funding and strategic partnerships.

Luky Cotto, who plans to retire in mid-2022, is guiding and resourcing the Latino Commission in its efforts to address those emerging needs, while also continuing to support existing Latino churches and ministries.



Latino Commission Annual Assembly, October 2021



(From left) The Rev. Towanda Connelly and Beditza Cadillo of Morrisville UMC and the Rev. Cesar DePaz of Espiritu Santo UMC.

New Pocono Plateau Camp director a leader in church and corporate worlds

Carmen O'Shea, of the Philadelphia area, a leader in corporate finance and in discipleship, outreach and youth ministries at her local church, will become the new director of EPAUMC-owned Pocono Plateau Camp and Retreat Center in Cresco, Pa, Jan. 15, 2022. She succeeds the Rev. Ron Schane, who leaves that post Dec. 31 after 20 years.



The Annapolis, Md., native has lived in Nashville, New York City, Atlanta, and Philadelphia. She "loves to camp, kayak, hike, and be outdoors" with her husband of 18 years, Brian, a paramedic at Plymouth Meeting EMS, and with daughter Madison, a senior in high school, and son Dylan, a 7th grader. Being true animal lovers, O'Shea

says, they also have two senior rescue dogs and two cats.

"Our family is excited by the opportunity to honor the tradition of providing a sacred space set apart for children, youth, and adults to grow in their faith," said O'Shea, who looks forward to being "surrounded by the simple splendors of nature."

Pocono Plateau is one of four Camp & Retreat Centers owned and managed by the Eastern PA Conference of The United Methodist Church—one in each of its four districts. The others are Carson Simpson Farm in Hatboro, Innabah in Spring City and Greta Glen in Lebanon.

"We give thanks for the past two decades of service that the Rev. Ron Schane provided to Pocono Plateau and the wider community," said the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, EPAUMC Director of Connectional Ministry. "We pray for Ron and Robin in this time of transition, as we welcome Carmen O'Shea as the new Director of Pocono Plateau."

"Carmen's passion for camp and retreat ministry, along with her background in church leadership and financial management, is a gift to the Eastern PA's camping program," said the Rev. Don Keller, who chairs the conference's Camping Board. "We are excited to welcome Carmen, Brian and their family to the Plateau."

O'Shea, a lifelong United Methodist who enjoys camping and outdoor activities with her family, is a top finance executive at a global insurance firm. But she is also a new Drew University part-time seminary student answering a longtime call to ministry. She says she "looks forward to transitioning to a vocation that glorifies God and fosters communal and spiritual development with a commitment to stewardship of God's creation."

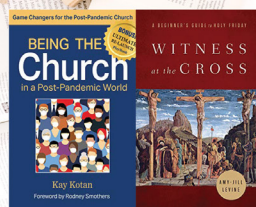
Chair of Paoli United Methodist Church's administrative council, O'Shea also plays guitar and sings in the church's Rising Son praise band, leads the youth group, and has helped organize annual events and activities in churches where she has belonged. Those activities include mission opportunities, like the Appalachia Service Project, and fundraising campaigns. "Being a true Methodist," she says, "I also love a good potluck dinner and a rousing church hymn."

Currently a Vice President of Finance at Chubb Limited, the world's largest property and casualty insurance company, O'Shea leads global teams in financial systems planning and analytics. A CPA (Certified Public Accountant), she has worked for over 20 years in the corporate arena and has an MBA in Finance from New York University.

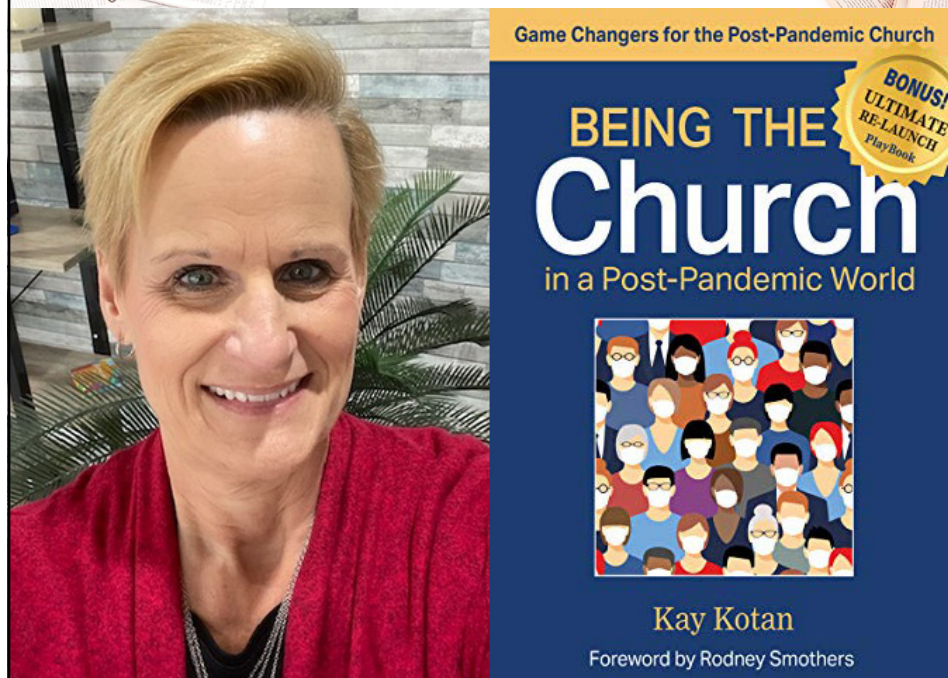
Learning for Leaders

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January 2022 Book Club

*Being the Church in a Post-Pandemic World:
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by Kay Kotan

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7,200 Christmas cards sent to inmates in 13 prison facilities

This year Eastern PA Conference members and churches again reached out to incarcerated persons with caring messages of encouragement penned on signed Christmas cards. And again, the ongoing pandemic required such determined creativity as arranging pick-up and drop-off sites at a handful of helpful churches.

The conference's Prison Ministries & Restorative Justice Team is grateful to have received and delivered 5,700 completed and signed cards to 13 correctional facilities. In addition, they appealed for, collected and distributed about 1,500 unused, unsigned cards

requested by the head chaplain of the Philadelphia correctional system's six facilities with 6000 inmates.

It was the team's first time sending unsigned cards that inmates can use to send Christmas messages to their families and friends—literally, a gift that keeps on giving. And that provision will continue as more unused cards are received.

"The chaplain was delighted to receive unused cards, and we are still accepting them, as they can be used for next year," said the Rev. Marilyn Schneider, PMRJ team chairperson. "If anyone would like to take advantage of after-Christmas sales on these cards, we would welcome

them, as long as they meet the requirements: NO GLITTER, NO STICKERS, and no written messages."

Schneider is thankful for ongoing support of this yearly outreach ministry that began in 2016. She was interviewed Dec. 15 by an Associated Press reporter for a news story about creative efforts to help inmates celebrate Christmas.

"Because of our participants, those who are incarcerated will know that people who don't even know them care about them and are holding them

in prayer," said Schneider. "This is such an important message during the Christmas season, when many are feeling especially isolated and alone. Thank you!"

