



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
HARRISBURG AREA – SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE
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Our Conference Vision:

“Alive in Christ together, the Susquehanna Conference will embody the beloved community of disciple making congregations.”

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Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

Grace to you in the name of Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, Healer of Our Brokenness and Hope of the World!

The Order of Elders of the Susquehanna Conference, in conjunction with the Order of Deacons, the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members, and the Cabinet, is sponsoring the 2017 Bishop’s Day Apart for our full-time and part-time clergy and pastoral leaders which will be offered on two different dates in two different locations. You can attend the 2017 Bishop’s Day Apart on September 11th at Lightstreet United Methodist Church or on September 12th at Mt. Nittany United Methodist Church. I am very excited and pleased that the Rev. Dr. F. Willis Johnson, Senior Minister of Wellspring Church, an intergenerational United Methodist church plant in Ferguson, Missouri, and Vosburgh Visiting Professor of Ministry and Social Engagement at the Theological School of Drew University, will be our guest speaker.

The Conference Leadership and I are committed to be a more inclusive and diverse annual conference. In that regard, the Susquehanna Conference has engaged the resources of the General Commission on Religion and Race. Already our conference leadership and staff are participating in workshops and events to address the opportunities, challenges and concerns that can come from broadening our understanding of racial and ethnic diversity. We are in the process of developing an overall conference strategy as part of our response to the Northeastern Jurisdiction’s Call to Action for each conference to have a systematic plan to address racism. These efforts are just some of the practical and tangible ways to live out the vision of our conference as disciple-making congregations that embody the beloved community.

As people of faith, the agenda of racial relations is extremely important and we must address racism related issues and concerns in regards to our own attitudes as well as institutional/societal racism. This year’s Bishop’s Day Apart is focused on this unfinished agenda. Together with the laity of our conference, we are to be intentional learners as to how we can build up the beloved community that Jesus had in mind where racial justice and reconciliation is fulfilled. Violence, hatred and bigotry have no place within the kingdom of God. In light of the most recent clash at Charlottesville, VA, our pursuit of and witness to the biblical vision of the beloved community is to be intensified.

As you read earlier, the meeting on Monday, September 11th, 2017, will be held at Lightstreet United Methodist Church at 1640 Main Street, Bloomsburg (located in the village of Lightstreet) and then on Tuesday, September 12th, the meeting will be held at Mt. Nittany United Methodist Church at 1500 East Branch Road, State College. This continuing education event will begin at 9:30 AM; and it is anticipated that the event will conclude by 3:30 PM. The cost is \$30 for clergy and \$20 for students/retired clergy. This price includes your lunch and a copy of Dr. Johnson's book, *"Holding Up Your Corner: Talking about Race in Your Community"*. All full-time clergy are required to attend. (Any request to be excused needs to be directed to the Order of Elders in care of the chair, the Rev. Jean Blackie). Recognizing that some clergy and CLM's are bi-vocational, all other clergy and CLM's are invited and encouraged to attend this educational opportunity. Please go to www.susumc.org/index.php/2017-bishop-s-day-apart to register, if you haven't already.

As clergy members of the conference, we share a mutual covenant of respect, integrity, accountability, and commitment to one another. I strongly encourage every pastor to avail themselves to the event and expect you to join your sisters and brothers in this year's gathering for the Bishop's Day Apart. I look forward to greeting you at one of these meetings.

With You in Christ's Ministry,

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Jeremiah J. Park