



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
HARRISBURG AREA – SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE
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“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

(John 17:20-23)

Dear Clergy and Laity of the Susquehanna Annual Conference,

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

The Committee on Sessions, the Full Cabinet, and I are very pleased to announce the 2017-2020 Quadrennial Theme: “Better Together.” This phrase reflects what a connectional church such as ours is all about. It affirms and celebrates the stronger and bigger mission and ministry we can accomplish as a connectional church. It also points to the mandate of unity for Christian witness as it sums up the spirit and the focus of Jesus’ prayer for the oneness of his disciples. In the Gospel of John chapter 17, Jesus repeats these words of prayer: “They may be one as we are one.”

Prayer connects the people of faith to God’s way and God’s future. Prayer is an unequivocal expression of faith that, no matter what we go through, we put our trust in God and we know that God is in charge. As we face the unprecedented challenge of the unity of our church, we are to rely on God for a breakthrough by the gift and power of prayer more than anything else. A way forward in unity that our church is looking for starts with Jesus’ prayer for the oneness of his followers and our prayers to be an answer to his prayer. Indeed, a way forward is a praying way forward. Susquehanna Conference will take on a journey of faith toward unity by the means of prayer for such a time as this.

In sync with the ardent prayer of Jesus for oneness, each year we will lift up a prayer that we offer at the Lord’s Table as a theme:

2017 – “Better Together: Make Us One”

2018 – “Better Together: One with Christ”

2019 – “Better Together: One with Each Other”

2020 – “Better Together: One in Ministry to All the World”

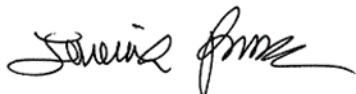
We will saturate the conference with prayers throughout the sessions. The spirit of prayer will then overflow to the following week and beyond. Starting this January, each annual conference of the United Methodist Church will take a week of praying our way forward on behalf of the whole church. Our week is May 7th to 13th, 2017. Numerous moments of prayer during the annual conference sessions and many gatherings for prayer throughout the conference in the following week will be offered.

As a nation and as a church, we are aware of a heightened presence of fissures and an acute sense of division. However, we are to be witnesses that, no matter where we may come from, "We are one out of many." That's our destiny as a nation. That's Christ's mandate for his followers. It is my hope and prayer that our Susquehanna Conference serves as a sign of unity for our church and community. We are better together for a Christian witness of healing and hope, reconciliation and harmony, and peace with justice. Indeed, we are better together for the mission of the church: To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

I ask you to begin your prayers for our holy conferencing to be held in 2017 from May 4th to 6th at the Hershey Lodge and Conference Center. I believe that God has plans to give our church hope and a future. I am already beginning to excitingly anticipate what God has in store for the Susquehanna Annual Conference.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace as we trust in God, so that we may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

With You in Christ's Ministry,

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Jeremiah J. Park