



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
HARRISBURG AREA – SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE

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*“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be people of courage; be strong.
Do everything in love.”
(1 Corinthians 16:13-14)*

*“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations . . .
And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
(Matthew 28:19-20)*

June 30, 2020

Dear Lay and Clergy Members of Susquehanna Conference,

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

It breaks our hearts to hear that COVID-19 is still spreading and surging in our country and the world. Coronavirus-related situations are continually evolving. Plans we put in place a week or even a few days ago have had to change. As we prepare for the future, the best we can say is, “For now, this is our plan.” Knowing that conditions may change, we must stay nimble and be willing to quickly alter and adjust well-laid plans.

We’ve had to make some changes to our plans for the 2020 Annual Conference. Here are our plans for conference session, the clergy session, and additional celebrations:

ANNUAL CONFERENCE, Saturday, October 3, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

We will be connected to hold the 11th Session of the Susquehanna Annual Conference with the theme **“Better Together: One in Ministry to All the World.”** Let’s remember that, under these unprecedented circumstances, we are still called to be a church alive in the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Our commitment to ministries of healing, justice, and peace for all grows stronger for such a time as this.

This session will be held virtually (online). We will not meet in person.

Good News Television Ministry (GNTV) and our own information technology providers will facilitate our meeting. We will participate, including voting, via an internet platform provided by the GNTV staff. GNTV has helped many annual conferences hold their sessions online.

Before the day of session, we will schedule opportunities for members to learn and practice using the online meeting platform. We will announce these soon. Training is required for all voting members.

Registration, available online only, will be open Aug. 3-21. Because of critical deadlines, we encourage you to register as early as possible and on time.

Only those laypeople and clergy who are eligible to vote will register. Prior to Oct. 3, voting members who registered for session will receive a link and an identification code for the voting process.

Visitors will not register. The session will be livestreamed, so anyone interested will be able to watch the proceedings.

Workbook: You will be able to download the workbook from susumc.org after Sept. 1. It will contain only those reports related to the agenda. All other reports will be posted after Oct. 3.

Agenda: Because of the limited time set aside for this conference, we will attend only to essential business. The agenda as determined so far is attached.

Fee: To offset the cost of the virtual session, each session member will pay an administrative fee of \$25 at registration. The registration information (to come) will provide more details.

CLERGY EXECUTIVE SESSION, Tuesday, September 22, 9:00 AM

This will also be a virtual meeting. All clergy, as well as lay members of the Board of Ordained Ministry, will receive registration and other information soon. We expect the meeting to conclude by noon.

Those who, by Discipline, are eligible to vote on matters related to the ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy will receive a link and an identification code for the voting process. Those eligible are ordained deacons and elders, and lay people and local pastors who are members of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

The Board of Ordained Ministry workbook will be made available to each person registered for clergy session.

RETIREMENT RECOGNITION AND MEMORIAL SERVICES, Saturday, October 31

We value the opportunity to celebrate those clergy who are retiring and to remember those saints who have gone before us in the past year. Because social-distancing recommendations may well continue into the fall, we are now planning small celebrations at one of our churches. The invitation list must be very limited in order to provide for safety protocols. **Please note that there is a possibility that these events will be held virtually.**

The retirement celebration is expected to take place in the morning and the memorial service in the afternoon of Oct. 31. These services will be livestreamed to allow all interested to take part virtually.

ORDINATION SERVICE, Saturday, November 7, 10:00 AM to Noon

This important event in the life of the annual conference will take place in person, but with a very limited number of people present. We are still working out details to make sure this is a sacred and safe event. Others will be able to participate via livestream.

As these events draw closer, I ask that you continue to pray for our communities and our churches, as well as for the nation and the world. Please pray that God will hold God's people in grace and care. Please also remember the Sessions Committee, the Board of Ordained Ministry, the Cabinet, and those who are diligently preparing for these critical events.

Let us also ask God's blessing and guidance for our beloved church, our annual conference and its upcoming gathering, and the connectional covenantal work and services we observe and fulfill every year.

Together in Ministry with You,

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Jeremiah J. Park