November 2018

A WITNESS TO MAKING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD

Susquehanna LINK is downloadable at suslink.org

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Unity: Jesus holds the future

The unity or disunity of Jesus’ followers seen by the world makes a difference in making Jesus Christ and the love of God known to the world. As far as who Jesus Christ is and the love of God are concerned, the unity or disunity of those proclaiming they believe may make it or break it in the eyes of the world. The unity of Jesus’ people lets the world know that, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Our disunity puts the gospel in jeopardy! The Gospel of Jesus Christ is at stake! Unity is about Jesus Christ. Humility and love will do it.

As a journey through the denominational struggle over human sexuality and its impact on the agenda of unity, one of the questions that I wrestle with is this one: Why do so faithful, committed, devoted, honest, honorable, and authentic disciples of Jesus Christ differ in one another so radically? They love Jesus. What am I missing? Are we disciples of a different Jesus? Did we receive a different baptism and were we confirmed to a different faith? Do you worship and serve a different God?

If not, what makes us so compelled and willing to go a different way from one another?

There was a missionary in a foreign land, and one day a boy came to him and gave him a gift. “This is for you,” the boy said to him. It was a beautiful, gorgeous shell. The missionary was delighted to receive it, but was really surprised, because he had never known of anything whatever that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. This Jesus walks with us. So God’s people, take heart. This Jesus will never let us go. Amen and Amen!

God is faithful

The following is an edited transcript of Rev. Troy Howell’s message at his installation as the Williamsport District Superintendent on October 28, 2018.

I remember saying to Bishop Park, at about quarter to ten at night, Thursday night, January 4, 2018, “The older I get, the more I realize I don’t know. But, I know one thing: God is faithful.” My life, my history, is littered with God’s great faithfulness. And, I think those of you who have had such an important part in that.

Lord God, as we pause in these moments, we are a people who sometimes need to have our heads dragged to the dust to be reminded that without the breath of life that you freely give without our asking, and most certainly without any of us earning it, we are but dust. Breathe in us, by the power and the promise of your Holy Spirit, that in these moments … we might be refreshed, revitalized, that we might be convicted: where we need the perfect accountability of our only perfect parent. Comfort us when we need your healing balm and convert us more completely to be the offering you intend for us to be. In Jesus Christ be praised. Amen.

I confess I’m not the sharpest tool in the box and I’m not the smartest person in the room … so, I’m just going to offer what God’s laid on my heart.

In seminary, I had to do an expository paper on Psalm 126 and I fell in love with it once I learned the history behind this story. It is a Psalm of people who had lost what they thought they could count on—the shining city of Jerusalem where they knew God dwelled—and they were taken by the Babylonians into captivity, where they were made to sing songs of torment and to yearn and wonder in their minds if they could ever go home, asking, “Will God ever restore us?” I love it because in that song is the tension of unbridled joy at their return to Jerusalem, even though the temple was destroyed, and their deep, deep sorrow of the reality of the human condition—when we’ve lost that which we thought was rock-solid sure. As the song goes, “The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with… (congregation: “Joy!”) And also, the other one (in Psalm 30) is: “For the night weeping may carry on, with the morning light comes… (congregation: “Joy!”) God is faithful.

In Lamentations the writer is crying out to God. In chapter two we hear that God is so disgusted and upset with the sin and the separation of His people that He stripped the Tabernacle; He made the assembly a ruin; kings and priests were scorned: the Lord spared his own altar. He laid a curse upon His own sanctuary. For those of us a little too caught up in our buildings, it’s a good reminder right now. And yet, in the midst of that—the remembering, the sadness, the loss, the nostalgia, and the pain—the writer is drawn back by God’s great faithfulness in Lamentations 3:23, now ever morning are God’s mercies, great is thy faithfulness, O God.

That’s how we can carry on, Church. The God who was, is still present, is still speaking, and is still at work.

Which leads me to another passage that became a key passage for me when I served Messiah UMC in Shippensburg. It’s Romans 12:1-3 and it’s from Eugene Peterson’s offering “The Message.”

The Apostle Paul says; “Here’s what I want to do. God helping you. Take your everyday, ordinary life—‘Anyone have an everyday, ordinary life?’—your sleeping, eating, going to work, walking and working life—and give it to God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for Him. Don’t become well-adjusted to your culture that you lost it into without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out in you, develops well-formed maturity in you. I’m speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I see the responsibilities in relation to you.”

How many of you have concerns about where this world is headed? “Where is our culture going?” “My goodness, our churches are struggling.” “Anyone have any of those concerns?” Hear God’s great faithfulness. I am a living witness that God is faithful. God’s got this, Church. God had it back when the lamenter was crying out in Lamentations. God’s got this.

The real question is, when God says to me, “Troy, are you willing to give your heart, and your mind, and your soul again, and again, and again?” That’s a struggle for me, but it’s the call of the gospel and of the cross. I want to offer thanksgiving to God for the way He has continued to grow me beyond my brokenness and my sin condition, because of the power of the church triumphant in my life.

When my wife Dawn, our kids, and I attended Trinity UMC in New Cumberland, I was involved in a variety of ministries and I taught Sunday school for the men’s Bible class. At the end of one Sunday school lesson, Rev. David Long asked, “Troy, have you ever considered ordained ministry?” and I said, “No.” He said, “Really?” I said, “Never.” He said, “Well, I’ve been observing you for a couple years and you have gifts and grace, and I just wanted to say that.”

PHOTO: SHAWN GILGORE
Give the Gifts of Joy and Love to the Young and Old!

Whether we are young or old, we love presents! But even more than presents, we love knowing that someone cares about us. Joy comes through relationships that encourage us to be all that we can be, no matter our age or stage of life. Love provides the security of knowing we are safe where we live, that we will have nutritious food, and that our medical needs will be cared for.

The residents of YOUR benevolent homes are grateful for each and every one of YOU – individuals and congregations – who provide love and joy as you support the mission of caring for the most vulnerable among us. YOUR gifts can change the world for a child, a teen, a senior.

If your church participates in receiving this special offering during Advent, please make your gift at that time. Otherwise, make your check out to Susquehanna Conference, with Benevolent Homes Christmas Offering in the memo line, and mail it to: The Finance Office, 303 Mulberry Dr., Ste. 500, Mechanicsburg, PA 17050.

For the latest news and event information, visit the Susquehanna Conference website at www.susumc.org

Find out more at www.umstewardship.org

The United Methodist Stewardship Foundation

717-766-7343 or sfcpa@umstewardship.org
The other day my oldest child was walking to the bus stop with his head buried in a book. That’s a pretty common sight so early in the morning. His attention is usually wrapped up in his latest novel and he’s not very interested in talking with friends. Later in the day, everything changes. When he comes home from school he really wants to hang out with his friends or log onto Xbox to play Fortnite. In the matter of a few hours, he goes from being concerned there are only “one” congregation. Even in a multipoint ministry, we see ourselves so many resources with so many opportunities and we see ourselves like worship attendance and giving, but plus one? Maybe it’s our competitive balance in life. Introverts and extroverts alike need some down time by themselves, but they also hit pockets of people who also are deeply apart for our own growth in love. These communities only to have the facility design hinder their inclusion. The Board of Camp Retreat Ministries heard from individuals and groups both faith based and nonprofit transformation partners who highlighted a true and expanding need, including those in leadership as clergy and lay, young people and families whose full participation hinges on these changes. The growing requests and long-term missional need inspired this project.

“Who moves me to dedicate myself to questions asked of them when sharing. So, for these reasons and most likely many more, people just do not share their faith openly and routinely. How do we go about sharing our faith in today’s world in a way that those of us who are followers of Christ can do so without being too uncomfortable? How can we share our faith in a world that is sometimes skeptical of the church and its people? Who does this work at the church today? If not the evangelism committee? We believe it starts by learning your own story in safe places at the church. A great question to ask in every Sunday school class, committee meeting, small group, etc. is “tell me about a time recently you have experienced God.” Our first step at the church is to learn our own God stories. If we start by sharing our stories in safe places like small groups at church, close family and friends, perhaps even a testimony in worship, we are ready ourselves to share our story with those in our community.

Twentieth-century religious evangelism is about starting conversations, building a relationship over time and then knowing how to share your own authentic story and experience of God in a nonthreatening way. Your story is where God is intersecting with the driver’s seat, hanging in midair and yelling uncontrollably for the first time that I can remember. Once I was out of the car I was examined by the EMT crew that came to the scene. I looked to be in worse shape than I actually was; covered in dust, glass, and some superficial blood, but I was up and about, albeit shaken, glad to be able to walk away! I rather bluntly said, “I just totaled my car.” I wasn’t able to call Meghan as my phone was lost somewhere in the wreckage, so the tow truck driver who came to the scene took me home. When I arrived home, I told Meghan the whole story, and when I saw Ellie, I just wept and wept, thinking about what could have been. I am still here, armed with a new perspective on life. In retrospect, I’ve told God that from now on I’d like a little more subtlety in answering prayers! I am so thankful for each and every day, but I never would’ve guessed that this is what I needed for that to happen.

Help Wesley Forest Extend the Wide Embrace of God

Right now major renovations are underway at Wesley Forest Camp and Retreat Center that fulfill a vision of the wide embrace of God. Historically, it has been very challenging for United Methodist congregations in the wider society who also are deeply committed to share about Christ, we find ourselves to share our story with those in our community.

Wesley Forest has been an island in the ocean. It’s a place of few. The few get tired of carrying the burden of reaching others. In essence, what happens is that everyone to be excused from the task of evangelism or process. The congregation many times feels evangelism is “covered” or processed. The congregation that is sometimes skeptical of the church and its people? Who does this work at the church today? If not the evangelism committee? We believe it starts by learning your own story in safe places at the church. A great question to ask in every Sunday school class, committee meeting, small group, etc. is “tell me about a time recently you have experienced God.” Our first step at the church is to learn our own God stories. If we start by sharing our stories in safe places like small groups at church, close family and friends, perhaps even a testimony in worship, we are ready ourselves to share our story with those in our community.

Twentieth-century religious evangelism is about starting conversations, building a relationship over time and then knowing how to share your own authentic story and experience of God in a nonthreatening way. Your story is where God is intersecting with the driver’s seat, hanging in midair and yelling uncontrollably for the first time that I can remember. Once I was out of the car I was examined by the EMT crew that came to the scene. I looked to be in worse shape than I actually was; covered in dust, glass, and some superficial blood, but I was up and about, albeit shaken, glad to be able to walk away! I rather bluntly said, “I just totaled my car.” I wasn’t able to call Meghan as my phone was lost somewhere in the wreckage, so the tow truck driver who came to the scene took me home. When I arrived home, I told Meghan the whole story, and when I saw Ellie, I just wept and wept, thinking about what could have been.

I am still here, armed with a new perspective on life. In retrospect, I’ve told God that from now on I’d like a little more subtlety in answering prayers! I am so thankful for each and every day, but I never would’ve guessed that this is what I needed for that to happen.
Do you know about QuikLINK?

QuikLINK is a regular e-mail broadcast service for clergy and lay persons of the Susquehanna Conference that highlights breaking conference-related news, events, job and classified postings, and more.

Get Connected - Join QuikLINK

If you would like to subscribe to this FREE service or post a message, email quiklink@susumc.org

Susquehanna LINK belongs to the churches of the Susquehanna Conference. You are free to reprint any of our content — with the exception of reprinted material. Articles can be cut and pasted directly from susquehannalink.blogspot.com. Graphics, posters, and photos are available by request; please email link@susumc.org

SUBSCRIBE TODAY! for FREE!

Beginning in 2019, Susquehanna LINK will be a digital publication. (see article on pages 8 & 9)

The Susquehanna LINK will be published and distributed via the Conference website, LINK blog, Conference e-communications such as QuikLINK, and District e-Newsletters, and direct email.

We will endeavor to deliver the LINK electronically to all current recipients based on email addresses in our database.

To subscribe and ensure delivery to your inbox, please send your name and email address to link@susumc.org

Current paid subscribers will be refunded any outstanding amounts.

CONFERECE CENTER PHONE NUMBERS

CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES 717-766-7441
Fax 717-766-9976
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION 717-766-5275
Fax 717-766-9976
EPISCOPAL OFFICE 717-766-7571
Fax 717-766-3210
DISCOVERY PLACE 717-766-7968
HARRISBURG DISTRICT 717-766-8224
Fax 717-766-3387
EQUIPPING VITAL CONGREGATIONS 717-545-0525

PHONE EXTENSIONS

NAME EXTENSION

EPISCOPAL OFFICES
Christy Mackey ........................................3100
Bishop Iremiah Paul ..................................3100
Griz Myers .............................................3303
Kristin Sample ....................................3104
Tom Salasigar .......................................3300
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION
Kerry Cress ...........................................3400
Christie Sims .......................................3500
Ann Watts .............................................3501
Lauren Hovamp ....................................3502
Andra Haverstock .................................3503
Darlene Eisenhart ................................3504
Jeffry Ringman .....................................3608
Theresa Hunter ...................................4104
CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES
Mollyn Inners .......................................3000
Amy Wynn ...........................................3600
Jason Mackey ......................................3601
Patricia Frye ......................................3602
Kevin Wilt ...........................................3603
Young People’s Ministry (TBD) ..............3604
Sharon Gilgore ....................................3607
Stacy Eckert ......................................3609
Sandii Peiffer ....................................3612
Janelle Walker .....................................3613

E-mail addresses at tinyurl.com/SUSUMCstaff

Susquehanna LINK is published by Connectional Ministries, Susquehanna Conference, The United Methodist Church, 303 Mullberry Dr., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
Phone 717-766-7441
E-mail link@susumc.org

Periodicals postage paid at Mechanicsburg, Pa. and additional mailing office.

Susquehanna LINK is published by Connectional Ministries, Susquehanna Conference, The United Methodist Church, 303 Mullberry Dr., Mechanicsburg, PA 17050 Telephone 717-766-7441 E-mail link@susumc.org

Subscribe by sending your name and email address (or changes) to link@susumc.org

United Methodist Student Day

Your generous gift today enriches ministry and connects students to their faith.

“I WANT TO CONTINUE SERVING MY CHURCH AND HELP THE YOUTH OF FUTURE GENERATIONS NAVIGATE LIFE AND BECOME LEADERS JUST LIKE THOSE IN THE CHURCH HELPED ME TO BECOME.”
Alicia Baucka, Gift of Hope Scholar

“For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.” — Proverbs 2:6, NRSV

Vol8 Num 6

Connect with the Susquehanna Conference on Facebook. www.facebook.com/susumc
YOUNG PEOPLE’S MINISTRY

U.M. ARMY 2018

West Chelmsford UMC

God’s ARMY in ACTION!

By Darlene Thomas
Regional Director, Northeast Mid Atlantic
U.M. ARMY

Four churches from Susquehanna Conference heard the call to join U.M. ARMY this past summer! U.M. ARMY (United Methodist Action Reach-out Mission by Youth) is a youth mission organization celebrating 40 years of ministry across the United States!

Christ UMC, Mountain Top, sent 14 adults and youth to a mission week in Massachusetts. “Our youth group joined several other groups from the Susquehanna Conference the first year we went in 2013,” said the church coordinator. “I was impressed by how the week was organized and the youth loved the total experience of fellowship, service to others, and worship. We have participated each year since. I have enjoyed not only bringing this experience to our youth, but also love what it means to me personally.”

Shiremanstown UMC (SUMC) traveled to Virginia this past summer, along with Grace UMC, Mechanicsburg. SUMC took their first group in 2006 to a mission week in Connecticut. The next year, attendance doubled and today averages between 20-25 participants each year.

Because of their strong leadership, SUMC has been recognized as an “anchor church” and has been asked to lead “start-up” mission weeks in Pennsylvania (Williamsport First UMC), Virginia, and Kentucky. As one of their adults puts it: “U.M. ARMY is an outstanding organization that not only provides training to all its participants, but also encourages youth to develop leadership skills that will be beneficial throughout their lives. It welcomes groups of all sizes and encourages participation from all ages – middle school through adult.”

New Creation Community Church, Dover, has been going to U.M. ARMY since 2014. This past year they traveled to Virginia. One of their youth served on a handicap access ramp team and expressed his experience as: “The feeling you get when you see the smile and sometimes, the tears, that come from the people we serve is unexplainable. To know that we gave her back the ability to leave her house unaided because we built a ramp. To know that we gave her something greater than all of us, we gave love.”

For more information on U.M. ARMY mission opportunities for your youth group, please email Darlene Thomas, Regional Director: darlenethomas@umarmy.org. Or visit the U.M. ARMY website at umarmy.org.

Thank you Audrey!

The Susquehanna Conference Connecting Ministries staff would like to extend our gratitude to Audrey Wilder, Director of Christian Education and Young People’s Ministry. Sensing a change in her call to ministry and with two future youth in her own home, Audrey stepped down in October. For four years, Audrey has faithfully served our youth and young adults. She has a passion for raising up the young leaders of our conference, guiding them in their journeys, supporting their ministries and helping them realize who God is leading them to become. Please join us in praying for Audrey’s future endeavors!
“While the leader was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.” — John Wesley, May 24, 1718

God calls us to tell our story so that others may come to know Jesus Christ. “Hearts Strangely Warmed” was created to share these stories about transformational encounters with the Living God.

Rev. Tom Willard

My first full day of retirement was on my birthday, July 1, 2018. Sixty-five years ago, when my twin sister and I were born, my mother weighed ninety-four pounds before she became pregnant. After giving birth to my sister ten minutes before me, she four-pound four-month-old twin boys went into a coma. I always tell folks she saw my sister and me out for three days. When she awoke three days later, she had a curious story to tell. She remembered waking up part way through her coma and seeing herself and what she described as a “figure of light” that she identified as Jesus. Walking to her, the Jesus turned and looked at her and whispered, “All will indeed be well.” In a couple of days, all was, indeed, well. It didn’t always that way.

When we were eighteen months old, I had a raging fever, and in those days, you didn’t rush to the hospital, you rushed to your doctor. And our doctor notified my mother and dad that it was unlikely that I would survive the night. And if they were people of prayer, he encouraged them to take me home and pray over me. So, my mom and dad took me home and knelt beside their bed and they prayed. And their prayer was simple, “In return for his service.”

Thankfully, my parents chose not to share that story with me until I was eighteen years old and had already been called by Christ into ministry.

On August 30, 1970, I came to know Christ personally as my Lord and Savior as part of a youth revival that swept through Perry County where I lived. It was a part of a youth Sunday service in my home church, Liverpool Church. And the speaker that morning was seventeen-year-old young women and men singing about Jesus. And we had opportunity to share our witness for Jesus Christ. And we watched that summer a number of people committed their lives to Jesus Christ as a result of what we were learning to do and to call ministry.

When I returned after the first summer, I was starting at Messiah College as a freshman. The college administration knew what I had been doing for the summer, and so my roommate and I formed a music ministry team for Messiah. My wife auditioned for that group. She made not just the group, but also my heart, and the very best partner in ministry I’ve ever had. Throughout college and seminary, we continued to have hands-on opportunities to do ministry in the name of Jesus.

On the day that I turned twenty-five, I was appointed to the district that in those days was ‘miles above the rest.’ I spent six wonderful years working with the pastors and lay people of the Wellsboro District, and loved every minute of it. It was a time of great blessing. And they are still ‘miles above the rest.’

Over the past nine years I have been privileged to minster with a congregation in a very small village eight hours out into the bush of Sierra Leone. I’ve been privileged to visit our sister church three times. The first time I came back with malaria. It took six months to get diagnosed, and I now have chronic kidney disease as a result of it. But I have to tell you that I wouldn’t trade any of it, regardless of the consequences, because of the privilege of learning to be in ministry alongside brothers and sisters in Christ in Sierra Leone.

Now after forty years of ministry, I have laid down the mantle of active service and entered retirement. This great church that we have served for all of these many years is on the brink of some of its greatest challenges and opportunities in my lifetime. My petit, now eighty-six years old, is suffering from Alzheimer’s Disease and battling severe dementia, so that I have become the keeper not just of my own memories, but of hers as well. And Christ is raising up a whole new generation of young women and he is calling to serve him within the United Methodist Church. And I continue to hear that still, small voice whisper to me, as did to my mother, “All will indeed be well.”
Sarahn Filizzi
P/T Administrative Assistant Episcopal Office

Doug Hoy
Disaster Response Coordinator

Conference Staff Updates

Sarahn Filizzi
Bishop Park is pleased to announce the hiring of Sarahn Filizzi as the new part-time Administrative Assistant in the Episcopal Office. Sarah has taken on the position that was held by Kris Sample for 15 ½ years. Kris retired the first week in October. Sarah brings a wealth of knowledge and experience with her to this position.

For six years, Sarah was on the staff of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church. While in that position, she managed and maintained their online database. Part of her job was to provide training for districts and local churches on the use of the database. Sarah will work closely with Christy Mackey, Executive Administrative Assistant to the Bishop, to continue to provide excellent communication and service to the Annual Conference. She also will work with the District Superintendents and the District Administrative Assistants regarding pastoral service records, appointment changes, and database updates and changes.

I give thanks to God for both the faithful service of Kris Sample and for God’s leading Sarah to be part of an incredible conference staff,” said Bishop Park.

Doug Hoy

It’s not a question of if, but when. A crisis can happen anytime and anywhere. Planning beforehand, response during, and recovery after are the critical stages that lessen the severity and longevity of the damage and establish life-changing relationships. The Disaster Response Coordinator (DRC) is essential to creating a network of Emergency Response Teams that can connect local congregations to their community’s needs. We are pleased to announce that Doug Hoy has joined the team as our new DRC.

Doug is a veteran of the US Army, with more than 25 years of experience serving as a Firefighter/EMT. He is specially trained to coordinate emergency responses to natural disasters and hazardous materials. Doug is a follower of Jesus who is married with two sons. As he begins his new role, he will evaluate our current preparedness as a conference and coordinate Flood Relief from this summer’s storms.

You may contact Doug via email at drc@susumc.org.

Equipping Vital Congregations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Christ even in the design of facilities. The new bedrooms, restrooms and amenities say, ‘you belong and are fully embraced.’ This is the kind of project that needs a lot of people to pitch in and help. It is a way of living out your faith and doing something really meaningful that will enrich lives for years to come."

“Project would not be possible without the dedication of some incredible, talented, and giving volunteers,” said Wesley Forest Center Director Emily Sliksi. “Phase one, the renovation of the first wing of the building, is nearing completion and was made possible by thousands of individual volunteer labor hours. These incredible men and women inspire me with their desire to use their time and talents to enrich the lives of other. Phase two will begin in the coming months and we will need many, many volunteers, and so I extend the invitation to all of you to join in. Financial gifts are also key as people express the spiritual practice of generosity by giving to this vision.”

To volunteer: contact Emily Sliksi at esliske@susumc.org.

To give: make checks payable to Susquehanna Conference and mail to 303 Mulberry Drive Mechanicsburg, PA 17050.

Note on Check – Wide Embrace Project Wesley Forest

Give by credit card: call Tricia Frye in the Camp & Retreat Ministry office at 717-767-7395.

Their Name resources at tinyurl.com/yjos3zub including a book, workshop, coordinators guide, DVD for a sermon series and an all-church small group experience to equip individuals and congregations to reach new people for Jesus.

There will likely need to be a shift in our thoughts and actions around evangelism. This shift is moving the church culture from evangelism being “committee” work to evangelism as part of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is also a shift in from an inwardly focused church to an outwardly focused church. This takes time, training and practice to create a new culture of invitation and relational evangelism. I invite you into embrace the shift. What is your first step? How will you invite your congregation to join you?
Everything on earth has its own time and its own season.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 CEV

Early History

By Dr. Milton Loyer
Conference Archivist

Following the 1968 denominational union to form the United Methodist Church, there were two overlapping conferences in the mid-state:

1. The Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church (former EUB)
2. The Central Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church (former Methodist)

As part of a state-wide plan to eliminate overlapping conferences and re-organize the United Methodist Church in Pennsylvania, as of January 1, 1970, the bulk of the former Methodist and EUB congregations would be reorganized into:

1. The Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church
2. The Central Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church
3. The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church

In our area, both the Susquehanna Conference (former EUB) and Central Pennsylvania Conference (former Methodist) had newspapers.

The Susquehanna Conference Promotional Bulletin of the United Methodist Church was a quarterly (March, June, September, December) glossy 4-6 publication whose last issue came out in September 1969.

The Central Pennsylvania United Methodist was an 8-page monthly publication whose last issue came out in December 1969.

While there may have been hopes originally to begin producing the new conference’s monthly publication in January 1970, the first edition of the 8-page publication named THE LINK, came out in February 1970.

The first color pictures began to appear in April 1992 (cover page only.)

For a time there were District supplements (Altoona and Chambersburg) included in The LINK.

A Brand New Name

Excerpt from the first issue of The LINK pictured at right

It was thought best to not use any of the names of the former papers of the several annual conferences brought together by the union.

THE LINK was chosen for several reasons. It is short and would easily identify the publication. The name also carries the connotation of the annual conference being a link between the General Conference and the local church. This monthly paper will endeavor to serve that purpose in terms of program information and promotion.

LINK Timeline and Editors

February 1970
First issue of The LINK

Dr. Arthur (“Art”) W. Stambach

Rev. Martin (“Marty”) W. Trostle

Gerald Wagner

Stephen Drachler (ending February 1995)

Bruce Fisher

Marty Wolgemuth

Gerald Wagner

Dean Snyder (ending August 1997)

Stephen Drachler

Gerald Wolgemuth

Media Director and The LINK Editor (beginning October 1999)

2009
The LINK is published bimonthly (instead of monthly)

August 2010
The LINK renamed Susquehanna LINK with the formation of the new Susquehanna Conference of The United Methodist Church

October 2011-February 2014
Susquehanna LINK published on YUDU in online pageable format

April 2014
Susquehanna LINK published on blog (in addition to print) to increase interaction with readers and ability to share stories via social media

June 2014
First full-color issue (all pages)

2016-2017
Bulk Susquehanna LINKs sent to every local church to increase exposure

2017 - present
Shawn Gilgore - Director of Communications Ministry
Sandii Peiffer - Communications Specialist

Communicating the news of God’s work in and through His people
Our Ongoing Purpose through Changing Times

By Sandii Peiffer

There is a lot of competition for people’s attention when it comes to communicating a message. The LINK is a witness to many landmark moments in the history of The United Methodist Church, our conference, and our local churches. I have delighted in sharing these stories for 15 of the past 19 years in which I have done the layout and design of the The LINK and Susquehanna LINK.

Our ongoing purpose has been to interpret the mission and vision of our Annual Conference and General Church, to promote resources, and events, and to share inspiring stories of God’s work through United Methodists in central and northeastern Pennsylvania, in an effort to equip local churches and church leaders to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Through the LINK we have:
• Shared the wisdom and insight of our Conference leaders in their respective roles
• Encouraged stories written by members of our local churches about exciting and innovative disciple-making ministries and outreach events.
• Celebrated the formation of The Susquehanna Conference (from the former Central Pennsylvania and Wyoming Conferences.)
• Shown how your Shares of Ministry are at work.
• Educated readers about many ministry callings and advertised opportunities to pursue them.
• Promoted resources and training events for making and growing disciples, mission and outreach opportunities.
• Fostered the connection between local congregations, our Districts, the Conference, and the national and global United Methodist community.
• Informed readers about innovative ministry ideas, and ways to help through disaster response.

Over the years we have tried to adapt to the many changes and upgrades in media and communications to stay relevant and meet the needs of a diverse church membership.

In addition to printing the LINK we made it available as a downloadable PDF through our Conference website for those who wanted to reduce their ‘carbon footprint.’ For a couple of years we published it in an online, pageable format on YUDU, to make it more readable on computers, tablets, and mobile devices, until the YUDU service agreement changed. We created a Susquehanna LINK blog site at www.susquehannalink.blogspot.com so that individual stories could be more easily shared by local churches through social media and church newsletters.

We tried to increase readership by sending multiple complimentary copies to every church in the conference, nearly doubling our circulation, but our budget was unable to sustain the increased costs and feedback suggested it was not an effective measure.

As we wrap this 48th year in print we have been trying to discern what would be best for Susquehanna LINK and our readers as we move into the future. We feel we can be better stewards of your Shares of Ministry by moving to an all-digital publication for the news of our local churches, our Conference, and the Global United Methodist Community. This change will allow us to help more local churches with their communications needs, to enhance other avenues of media and communication, and keep our equipment up-to-date.

Beginning in 2019 we will restyle Susquehanna LINK into a digital magazine format that will be more computer, tablet, and mobile device friendly, and easily shareable. Readers and local churches will have access to all the regular content, and perhaps a whole lot more, without the restriction of printed page limitations. Other conference communications may be incorporated into the new format.

An added bonus in our stewardship considerations is that it will reduce our ‘carbon footprint.’

Keep sending us your stories. Keep reading. Keep sharing. If you are a LINK subscriber, you will receive a full refund of any outstanding amounts.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 CEV
It's amazing how great a really lousy week can be!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Later that week I pondered that question while walking in my office in the state capital. I went home and told Dawn what Rev. Long had said. I figured she would shun the idea of the figure eight. Instead, she said, "I could see you doing that." Then suddenly I remembered that I had lied to David on Sunday. When I was about eight or nine years old—I could see myself in the chair at the table in the Sunday school classroom. I asked my parents talking about what we wanted to do with our life—I remember thinking, I wonder what God would want me to do. Immediately, I knew the answer. No. Because I wouldn't be good enough. You see, when I was growing up and the Reverend came in the room, I was smart and savvy enough to know that people's behavior and language changed. But I don't know if I ever had done my own computations and was like, No.

That Sunday I confessed, "Hey David, I lied to you. I lied to a Reverend." And David, with this great rock of a faith, said, "What do you mean?" I told him the story and then he said, "You know, Troy. Sometimes God insists on an eternal voice speaking what's going on in you, so you know that it's God, so you can be bold enough." What I told David, lied, his wife Veda said, "David wanted you to have his robe."

There are people waiting for the external affirmation of the internal stirring of the Spirit in their life. Maybe it has nothing to do with being a Reverend or a Pastor. Maybe it has everything to do with knocking off the nonsense, and the disillusionment, and the hatred, and the works of the flesh to embrace the works of the Spirit through love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness and self-control. God is faithful. Do you see why I believe that?

My grandmother, who is going to be ninety in February, when people would say—and she'd be a millionaire if she had a buck for every time she said this—she'd say, "Troy, you're getting a little too big for your britches.

When I was in seminary I was sent to Christ Grove UMC. I didn't like it because I was dangerous there. I started thinking, I've got to get this place revived—a real mistake for both of us. And after a couple years I started thinking, I'm pretty good. I can do this. I know all the 'moves,' the latest. I do have a 'groove.' Those things are great, but if they aren't grounded in Christ they're, 'a noisy, clangy cymbal.' (1 Cor. 13:1)

One week in seminary I kept having the sense, there's so much brokenness in me and in the church that I am serving that we need to make it safe for people to own it. That might lead us through. I prepared a message on owning and the balm of Gilead. On Sunday morning, I went to the pianist Carolyn Myers and said, "Carolyn, I'm going to do an anointing here, inviting anyone who might want to be anointed."

And she said, "We need to get the numbers, and just relax in meeting the world and it's woundedness. Just keep the 'environment' for a reason. Reach in them."

Reaching into the world God so deeply and personally—single parenting, and grief share small groups, and men's Timothy studies. They mention the 13th and spiritual recovery for addicts. And because we were willing to be led, the Spirit of God revealed in us our brokenness to see the majesty of Christ's wholeness.

In the preschool at Aldersgate, with kids and families of diverse and backgrounds, we said, "We are going to teach the love of Jesus." The Preschool Director and I, with Blazy used to come to my office and say "Troy, it happened again! You know that Muslim family I was telling you about? The Mom just said, 'Why do you people do this? We didn't think Christians acted this way.' Talk about a damming indict, single parenting, and grief share small groups, and men's Timothy studies. They mention the 13th and spiritual recovery for addicts. And because we were willing to be led, the Spirit of God revealed in us our brokenness to see the majesty of Christ's wholeness.

In the preschool at Aldersgate, with kids and families of diverse and backgrounds, we said, "We are going to teach the love of Jesus." The Preschool Director and I, with Blazy used to come to my office and say "Troy, it happened again! You know that Muslim family I was telling you about? The Mom just said, 'Why do you people do this? We didn't think Christians acted this way.' Talk about a damming indict, single parenting, and grief share small groups, and men's Timothy studies. They mention the 13th and spiritual recovery for addicts. And because we were willing to be led, the Spirit of God revealed in us our brokenness to see the majesty of Christ's wholeness.

No. God is faithful. Messiah UMC has seen the Bishop sent me. But, I was sent to Messiah UMC in Shippensburg and after I spent time there I never wanted to leave. God is faithful. Messiah UMC has giant pillars and the best music ministry around, a beautiful sanctuary, stained glass windows, and a great history. I was privileged to follow a great pastor, Gere Hee, who laid a great foundation. So, we prayed, where would you want us to take it? And God brought me to lend, told you to go deeper and wider as followers.

It was there that I adopted the Romans 12 passage. The denomination sent us a letter one day on fancy stationary that said, "You've been cited and identified as a Romans 12 church." And I thought, That's what? And then I read the Peterson passage: "Take your everyday, ordinary life..." and I thought Wow! God grew me there, and the church.

And I moved to Aldersgate UMC in Mechanicsburg. I didn't want to be there either, but God said, "Troy, I've got this. Stop trying to be the best, stop trying to be the brightest. Stop trying to get the numbers, and just relax in meeting the world and it's woundedness. Just keep the 'environment' for a reason. Reach in them."

TheGORITHMS God so deeply and personally—single parenting, and grief share small groups, and men's Timothy studies. They mention the 13th and spiritual recovery for addicts. And because we were willing to be led, the Spirit of God revealed in us our brokenness to see the majesty of Christ's wholeness.

It's been my great privilege to journey wherever God has placed me. I don't really have an answer for the future. other than 'I'm willing to walk with people there.' It's been God's got this. We have difficult decisions to make; sometimes about buildings, sometimes about outreach. I'm just going to leave it up to God. To go or not to go, that is the question.

"I'll kneel and anoint myself. Because they need to know their pastor is broken."

"I, Troy, I've got this. Stop trying to be the best, stop trying to be the brightest. Stop trying to get the numbers, and just relax in meeting the world and it's woundedness. Just keep the 'environment' for a reason. Reach in them."

It's been my great privilege to journey wherever God has placed me. I don't really have an answer for the future. other than 'I'm willing to walk with people there.' It's been God's got this. We have difficult decisions to make; sometimes about buildings, sometimes about outreach. I'm just going to leave it up to God. To go or not to go, that is the question.

"I'll kneel and anoint myself. Because they need to know their pastor is broken."

"I, Troy, I've got this. Stop trying to be the best, stop trying to be the brightest. Stop trying to get the numbers, and just relax in meeting the world and it's woundedness. Just keep the 'environment' for a reason. Reach in them."

It's been my great privilege to journey wherever God has placed me. I don't really have an answer for the future. other than 'I'm willing to walk with people there.' It's been God's got this. We have difficult decisions to make; sometimes about buildings, sometimes about outreach. I'm just going to leave it up to God. To go or not to go, that is the question.

"I'll kneel and anoint myself. Because they need to know their pastor is broken."

"I, Troy, I've got this. Stop trying to be the best, stop trying to be the brightest. Stop trying to get the numbers, and just relax in meeting the world and it's woundedness. Just keep the 'environment' for a reason. Reach in them."

It's been my great privilege to journey wherever God has placed me. I don't really have an answer for the future. other than 'I'm willing to walk with people there.' It's been God's got this. We have difficult decisions to make; sometimes about buildings, sometimes about outreach. I'm just going to leave it up to God. To go or not to go, that is the question.
New Digs furnishing homes, changing lives

A Dream

In 2007, Ginny Jones, a United Methodist from Carlisle, had a dream of creating a place where individuals with mental health problems could receive home furnishings for their residence, completely free.

The Reality

As the mother of an autistic daughter, Ginny knew first-hand how difficult it was for a person receiving mental health services to be able to afford home furnishings. When her daughter was ready to live in her own apartment, one without any support services, she received around $600 per month for living expenses, which severely limited the things she could afford to outfit a new home.

Ginny started collecting furniture that she saw discarded along the roadside and storing it on her front porch. Her collection quickly outgrew the space, so a friend recommended she seek out storage space at the Mission Central warehouse in Mechanicsburg. They supported Ginny’s mission by giving her a dozen pallets to store her finds. Her dream became New Digs Ministry.

Ginny started collecting furniture that she saw discarded along the roadside and storing it on her front porch. Her collection quickly outgrew the space, so a friend recommended she seek out storage space at the Mission Central warehouse in Mechanicsburg. They supported Ginny’s mission by giving her a dozen pallets to store her finds.

New Digs Ministry is most in need of volunteers. They would like to expand their hours (currently Mon., Wed., and Fri., 9am - 12pm) to meet increased client needs, but cannot do it without more volunteers. Donations of furniture and household items are made by appointment. Currently they are overflowing their space.

Monetary donations would be welcomed to help with special circumstances such as helping transport items to a clients home.

For more information www.NewDigsMinistry.org info@newdigsministry.org 717-620-9735

In 2007, Ginny Jones, a United Methodist from Carlisle, had a dream of creating a place where individuals with mental health problems could receive home furnishings for their residence, completely free.

As the mother of an autistic daughter, Ginny knew first-hand how difficult it was for a person receiving mental health services to be able to afford home furnishings. When her daughter was ready to live in her own apartment, one without any support services, she received around $600 per month for living expenses, which severely limited the things she could afford to outfit a new home.

As the mother of an autistic daughter, Ginny knew first-hand how difficult it was for a person receiving mental health services to be able to afford home furnishings. When her daughter was ready to live in her own apartment, one without any support services, she received around $600 per month for living expenses, which severely limited the things she could afford to outfit a new home.

Ginny’s ‘Jones’ passion for helping others is bolstered by her devotion to honor the words of Jesus Christ, ‘The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” — Matthew 25:40

Today, New Digs occupies a sizable corner of Mission Central, with furniture overflowing into the aisles. It has expanded to assist a variety of different people in need, from those recovering from physical losses, such as fires or floods, to migrants, and those starting over after rehabilitation, prison, domestic violence shelters, homelessness, and so on.

Currently, the ministry has received most of their referrals for U.S. Veterans returning from combat and working through rehabilitation and reintegration. Items available to clients include:

- Furniture - couches, dressers, tables, chairs, and beds
- Mattresses and box springs
- Pots and pans
- Dishes, utensils, and glassware
- Bakeware
- Small appliances and lamps
- Sheets and blankets
- Towels
- Limited larger appliances

In 2017, New Digs distributed over $943,000 worth of furniture and household items to more than 692 individuals. In 2016, New Digs volunteers donated over 8,000 hours.

Starting Over

A person or family in need is referred to New Digs through a network of 50+ referring agencies in Cumberland and Dauphin Counties including pastors, hospital staff, social workers, and other community organizations. After referral verification, the person schedules an appointment at New Digs and goes to Mission Central to work with volunteers who help them select the furniture, appliances, and household items they need. They have one week to pick up their items.

God Moments

As with any vital ministry there are many moments where God is seen at work, often in unexpected ways. New Digs and the volunteers receive many expressions of gratitude, from letters, to verbal thanks, tears, hugs, smiles and kisses.

Board President Marsha Fisher shared a story of a 6’6” veteran who just wanted a bed that he could fit in. New Digs had just received two twin box springs, but had no mattress. While the veteran was there they received a call from a donor with a 3-month-old king-size mattress. When told of the need that it met, the donor happily delivered it directly to the veteran’s house!

A mother from Harrisburg, with four children, made it to her appointment at New Digs even though her car had been stolen the previous night. She selected her items and was struggling to find a way to get them home. Marsha stepped in and called a hauler named Scott. With a laundry list of conditions to be met (cash, no waiting, no loading...), Scott reluctantly agreed to transport the items. Marsha made all the arrangements and arrived early to make sure volunteers were ready to load the truck. When confronted with some attitude from Scott, Marsha said, “My heart is overflowed so full of love at being able to help this woman. I can’t believe you don’t feel the same way. That’s gotta make you feel good!”

Scott pondered what Marsha had said and later pulled her aside to say, “Thank you. You changed my heart.” He cheerfully helped unload the truck, and he even called his brother to tell of his experience.

Delivery of items is not usually part of the New Digs Ministry, but Marsha responded to God’s leading throughout the day, and the client’s life wasn’t the only one changed. Marsha paid Scott generously and promised to call on his services again, to which he readily agreed.

Greatest Needs

New Digs Ministry is most in need of volunteers. They would like to expand their hours (currently Mon., Wed., and Fri., 9am - 12pm) to meet increased client needs, but cannot do it without more volunteers. Donations of furniture and household items are made by appointment. Currently they are overflowing their space.

Monetary donations would be welcomed to help with special circumstances such as helping transport items to a clients home.

For more information www.NewDigsMinistry.org info@newdigsministry.org 717-620-9735

New Digs Ministry INC.

A client works with volunteers Audrey Aungst (top left), Sue Craley (main photo), and Holly Nitchman (inset) to select the items she needs at New Digs Ministry, Inc., located at Mission Central.
Plains UMC celebrates 175 years of relationship building

By Joan Milligan

R elationships at the Plains United Methodist Church have been building for over 175 years. The members of the congregation and friends came together on Sunday, October 21, 2018 to celebrate this momentous event with a worship service in the morning. Bishop Jeremiah Park of the Susquehanna Annual Conference and Scranton/Wilkes-Barre District Superintendent Rev. Marian Hartman, were participants in the service, as well as Rev. Dr. Paul Amara, pastor. Other participants in the service included, Worship Leader Rachael Lohman, Liturgist Rebecca Milligan Boran, and Angie Stanton who led the children’s worship service. Presentations were made by Lay Leader Peggy Fedor and included remarks from Council Chairman Craig Davis. Davis thanked the committee who worked diligently the past several months to prepare for the anniversary celebration. Rev. Dr. Paul Amara, who now married and the father of 2-year-old Andrew, Charles and Paul, Jr., moved to Plains almost ten years ago, said his boys grew up in Plains and they feel blessed to be part of the family of the Plains UMC. Charles serves in the US Air Force. He, his wife Sara and Andrew reside in North Carolina. This church has been home to them since June 2009. Their son Charles is now married and the father of 2-year-old Andrew. Charles serves in the US Air Force. He, his wife Sara and Andrew reside in North Carolina.

The afternoon program was led by Worship Leader Rachael Lohman, and included remarks from Council Chairman Craig Davis. Davis welcomed into the church family. She talked about her experience being welcomed into the church family. She and her husband Roland joined the church last year.

Visitors to the day’s activities, John and Lois Steadle from Athens, Pa., were married in Plains UMC 63 years ago. They attended with their daughter and son-in-law, Debbie and George Gutierrez of Waverly, NY.

The afternoon program was led by Worship Leader Rachael Lohman, and included remarks from Council Chairman Craig Davis. Davis thanked the committee who worked diligently the past several months to prepare for the anniversary celebration. Rev. Dr. Paul Amara, who now married and the father of 2-year-old Andrew, Charles and Paul, Jr., moved to Plains almost ten years ago, said his boys grew up in Plains and they feel blessed to be part of the family of the Plains UMC. Charles serves in the US Air Force. He, his wife Sara and Andrew reside in North Carolina. This church has been home to them since June 2009. Their son Charles is now married and the father of 2-year-old Andrew. Charles serves in the US Air Force. He, his wife Sara and Andrew reside in North Carolina. This church has been home to them since June 2009. Their son Charles is now married and the father of 2-year-old Andrew. Charles serves in the US Air Force. He, his wife Sara and Andrew reside in North Carolina. This church has been home to them since June 2009. Their son Charles is now married and the father of 2-year-old Andrew. Charles serves in the US Air Force. He, his wife Sara and Andrew reside in North Carolina.

The history of the Plains United Methodist Church begins long before the foundation of the building was laid in 1843. The church was known as the Methodist Episcopal in 1843. It became the United Methodist Church in 1939. With the unification of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren in 1968, it became the United Methodist Church as it is known today. As active members of the community, the Plains United Methodist Church sponsors a Food Pantry with enormous support from the Plains Lions Club, and food donations from our church members and the local community. In addition, Spring and Fall clothes giveaways, Flea Market, Community Trunk or Treat for Halloween, Craft Show, and Cookie Walk are among the other events held on an annual basis.

Church members live out their faith by participating in mission programs such as; ‘Adopt a Family’ at Christmas, and Holiday Treat Bags for Shut-Ins. No one in need is turned away from the pastor’s door. The church membership also sends donations to an orphanage in the pastor’s native country Sierra Leone.

Many of these projects were initiated by former pastors including, Rev. Betty Reilly, Rev. David Gallick, Rev. Barbara Roberts, and Rev. Thurston Shumway. Some of whom were in attendance or sent congratulatory notes. Rev. David Gallick and his wife, Colleen, attended the celebration.

The youth of the church are encouraged to serve as acolytes and lectors. These capable young people already show signs that the future leadership of the church is assured. Our future is in good hands and we are confident that Plains United Methodist Church will continue as a dynamic Christian influence in our community. We have inherited a faith grounded in love and service. Our goal is to pass that faith on to generations yet to come. Our Motto is “Living for Jesus Christ through Word and Deed.”

Dinner followed immediately at The Touch of Class Catering in Wilkes Barre, Pa.

Tait Stahovic, age 11, represented the youth of the church with his observations on how the church serves the youth and welcomes their participation in church services and community projects.

One of the newer church members, Angie Stanton, a native of Puerto Rico, talked about her experience being welcomed into the church family. She and her husband Roland joined the church last year.

Visitors to the day’s activities, John and Lois Steadle from Athens, Pa., were married in Plains UMC 63 years ago. They attended with their daughter and son-in-law, Debbie and George Gutierrez of Waverly, NY.

The afternoon program was led by Worship Leader Rachael Lohman, and included remarks from Council Chairman Craig Davis. Davis welcomed into the church family. She talked about her experience being welcomed into the church family. She and her husband Roland joined the church last year.

Visitors to the day’s activities, John and Lois Steadle from Athens, Pa., were married in Plains UMC 63 years ago. They attended with their daughter and son-in-law, Debbie and George Gutierrez of Waverly, NY.

The afternoon program was led by Worship Leader Rachael Lohman, and included remarks from Council Chairman Craig Davis. Davis welcomed into the church family. She talked about her experience being welcomed into the church family. She and her husband Roland joined the church last year.

Visitors to the day’s activities, John and Lois Steadle from Athens, Pa., were married in Plains UMC 63 years ago. They attended with their daughter and son-in-law, Debbie and George Gutierrez of Waverly, NY.
Not all fires are started from scratch. Some fires burn brighter when they’re brought together.

2.) VITAL MERGERS

Vital mergers happen when two or more churches come together in a neutral location with a brand new vision to do a new thing and to reach new people.

Some of us can remember the glory days when our sanctuaries were filled almost to capacity, and there was an energy and excitement each Sunday when it was time for worship.

In our Conference, we’ve taken the “coal’s”, “firewood”, and other elements from different congregations to create new vital ministries that burn brightly.

Still there are some situations where the fire has completed its cycle. The winds change, the paths become overgrown, and sometimes a once-flourishing fire may completely go out.

Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, so are the churches we refer to as re-starts.

3.) RE-STARTS

This is when a new faith community emerges from a congregation that has come to the end of its life cycle. It is hard to see one of our fires go out, but God has a way of doing a new thing in sacred spaces. We mourn those faith communities that come to the end of their life cycle, but we honor and celebrate the ministries they make possible. New fires burn in places where old ones once thrived.

Our final strategy for making new fires is what we call multi-site.

4.) MULTI-SITE

This is when an existing congregation has a blazing fire then goes and starts something new in another location. Some of our ministries are burning so brightly, that we can launch new ministries from them. Creating a new fire isn’t easy... but once we get it going, it feels pretty amazing.

If your church is feeling the call to start something new, please contact the office of Growing Effective Churches and let’s talk about it.

There are three levels of engagement or interaction for these four strategies. They are:

1.) Kindle
   - when you are first learning about the four strategies and which one is right for you.
2.) Spark
   - when you go deep into one of the strategies, learning more about it so you can start that fire.
3.) Ignite
   - when you are actively participating in one of the new strategies.

In consultation with Paul Nixon, the Path 1 strategist for the Northeast Jurisdiction, we pulled together a team of nine people to serve as a vision team for New Places for New People ministries in the fall of 2017.

Paul: Path 1 reached out to all the ministries in the Northeast Jurisdiction and Susquehanna Conference was the first to jump. You [decided] now is the time when your hearts are ready to make some new places for new people and we are delighted to be partnering with you.

You have put together a pretty amazing team to do some really great new things for God.

One of the team members is Pastor Hannah Sledge.

Hannah: I decided to join the team because I was really excited about our conference thinking intentionally about how to reach new people for Jesus. We gathered together for a weekend in November, 2017, and we prayed, discerned, and brainstormed together about the future of the church. We wrestled with some tough statistics, like over one-third of our neighbors are not part of a faith community. Out of that wrestling we found hope, and a new vision was born to create an empowering movement of diverse disciples who will create new places for new people. I am excited to be a part of this continued work.

Path 1: There’s a lot of strategies and you very prayerfully picked four that are each designed to allow existing congregations to have a part in the fun and action. So often we think new church development is something other than what the rest of us are over here, like a separate movement or community going on from the rest of us, while we work on strengthening our churches and revitalizing. But this whole process involves us to put away that kind of thinking, and to realize that every church in this Conference has the possibility of being a part of God’s new things that are going to happen.

Hannah has been nicknamed the “Kindling Queen” because she’s been working hard on kindling conversations throughout the Conference.
Order your Advent studies now!

Even though Thanksgiving hasn’t arrived yet, it’s not too early to order resources for Advent! Order early to avoid disappointment, as quantities are limited. Choose from the following titles:

**The Gift of the Nutcracker**, by Matt Rawle (2018). Rawle looks at this Christmas classic in a new way: through the lens of faith. He uses the iconic tale to help us understand God’s greatest gift of the Christ child and of the kingdom Christ came to build. 4 sessions.

**Home for Christmas: Tales of Hope & Second Chances**, by Justin Coleman (2018). This study explores the real-life stories of formerly incarcerated men and women as they find work and opportunity through Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles. As we hear about their struggles, we recognize the Advent themes of hope, love, and peace in their lives. 4 sessions.

**Faithful: Christmas Through the Eyes of Joseph**, by Adam Hamilton (2017). As the earthly father of Jesus, Joseph’s place in the Nativity story is sometimes overlooked, but contains valuable lessons for all of us. 4 sessions.

**The Redemption of Scrooge**, by Matt Rawle (2016). Based on Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol, this study explores the world of Ebenezer Scrooge, Tiny Tim, and the Cratchits, with an eye to Christian faith. Along the way we will meet the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come, and learn about living with and for others in a world blessed by Jesus. 4 sessions.

**Christmas Gifts That Won’t Break, by James Moore (2017). As we journey through Advent, we reflect on the unbreakable gifts God has given us: hope, love, joy, and peace…and of course the greatest gift of all: Jesus. 5 sessions.**

**Not a Silent Night: Mary Looks Back to Bethlehem, by Adam Hamilton (2014). Hamilton begins at the end, with Mary at the crucifixion and the resurrection, and then travels back in time to Jesus’ life and ministry unfurls, ending at the beginning: with the Christ Child being born in a stable. 5 sessions.**

**Sent: Delivering the Gift of Christmas**, by Jorge Acevedo (2015). God sent Christ at Christmas. And Christ sends us. Each session is led by a different presenter, all of whom are clergy. This study was born out of a story about Advent or Christmas, followed by a lively discussion among the presenters. 5 sessions.

**Down to Earth, by Mike Slaughter (2016). Have we ever really grasped the miracle that took place in Jesus’ birth? We will be challenged in this study to respond to this miracle with down-to-earth love, humility, lifestyle, and obedience. 4 sessions.**

**Finding Bethlehem in the Midst of Bedlam, by Jeremy Moore (2015). This study explores how God comes to us even in the midst of chaos and how we can, in turn, be a light to the world, especially during the Christmas Season. Christmas or confusion, Bethlehem or bedlam… which will you choose this year? 5 sessions.**

There are numerous other Advent studies from which to choose. Go to our website, www.discovery-place.org. Click on “online catalog.” You can search by title or author and read full descriptions of the resources listed above. You can also choose “advanced search” and under subject, select Christmas/Advent to see a complete listing of all Advent resources we offer. Place an order directly from the online catalog, call us at 717-766-7968, or e-mail discovery@susumc.org.

God’s blessings to you as we celebrate the upcoming season of thankfulness, joy, and hope. Serving Christ with you,

Joni Robinson

---

**Ordering Information**

- Send your order to: The United Methodist Stewardship Foundation, 3901 Hartzdale Dr. Suite 110, Camp Hill, PA 17011
- Phone: 717-766-7968; Toll Free: 800-272-0113
- sfcpa@umstewardship.org

**Local Church Resources**

- Register by November 30 at tinyurl.com/BCR-2018reg
- Free resources for your local church can be found at www.discovery-place.org

---

**Connect with Us**

- Twitter: @SusquehannaLINK
- Facebook: @SusquehannaLINK
- Instagram: @susquehannaLINK
- Pinterest: @susquehannaLINK

---

**Thanksgiving Resources**

- “Glorify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together.” Psalm 34:3
  - What a wonderful Thanksgiving invitation! We praise him with our holiest joy and love. Join me in praying that we are shown how to please him with this “thanksgiving” through our words and deeds.
  - We were blessed to recently have Dr. Mark Vincent lead one of our webinars. In it he reminded us of the difference of offering God our “first fruits” with the idea that there is more to come versus offering a tithe to be done with our “obligation.” One is worship and the other is transactional. He also gave us the comparison of two barns in the Bible. Jesus’ parable showed us a man who tore down his old barns and built larger new ones to store up wealth for himself. The other story in 2 Chronicles showed us how Hezekiah ordering storehouses be made to distribute the people’s offerings more equitably. Jesus’ parable showed us a man who tore down his old barns and built larger new ones to store up wealth for himself. The other story in 2 Chronicles showed us how Hezekiah ordering storehouses be made to distribute the people’s offerings more equitably.
  - Isn’t there something wondrous and holy in thanks giving? We share in the fruit of the spirit which is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Romans 8:28 tells us that we have the “firstfruits of the spirit” (plural!) and we have more blessings to come. Yet, it’s even more beautiful that we have more to come to give to glorify the Lord and exalt his name. From the firstfruits of the spirit only can we truly “do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but rather ask one another how we can, in turn, be a light to the world, especially during the Christmas Season. Christmas or confusion, Bethlehem or bedlam… which will you choose this year? 5 sessions.**

---

**Local Church Resources**

- Register by November 30 at tinyurl.com/BCR-2018reg
- Free resources for your local church can be found at www.discovery-place.org

---

**Connect with Us**

- Twitter: @SusquehannaLINK
- Facebook: @SusquehannaLINK
- Instagram: @susquehannaLINK
- Pinterest: @susquehannaLINK

---

**Thanksgiving Resources**

- “Glorify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together.” Psalm 34:3
Mrs. Doris L. Baughman of Berwick Pa., wife of Rev. Warren L. Baughman, Jr., died at home on Monday, October 22, 2018.

Rev. Richard F. Brenneman of Elizabethtown, Pa., retired Elder, died on Saturday, October 27, 2018 in the Masonic Healthcare Center. Among his survivors is his wife, Lynne Brenneman.

Rev. Golden A. Gaither of Brogue Pa., Retired Elder, died Friday, September 7, 2018, at Rest Haven, York, PA. Among his survivors was his wife, Barbara H. (Hess) Gaither.

Mrs. Marion E. Geary of Pottsville Pa., spouse of Retired Elder Rev. Carl D. Geary, died on Thursday, October 11, 2018.

Warren A. Heil, Jr. of Elmhurst Twp., Pa., died on Friday, October 26, 2018 at Hospice of the Sacred Heart Inpatient Unit in Dunmore, Pa. Warren served for many years as an Annual Conference lay member and was elected as a delegate to both the Northeastern Jurisdictional and General Conferences. see article below.

Mrs. Donna L. Schroeder of Beaverstown Pa., spouse of retired Pastor Thomas D. Schroeder, died Wednesday, October 17, 2018, at Pleasant Acres, York PA.

Rev. Charles H. Zimmerman of Red Lion Pa., Retired Elder, died Sunday, September 30, 2018 at home. Among his survivors were his wife, Nancy J. Zimmerman, and his daughter, Rev. Jane A. Harrison.

Mrs. Nancy J. Zimmerman of Red Lion Pa., widow of Rev. Charles H. Zimmerman, died Tuesday, October 9, 2018. Among her survivors is her daughter, Rev. Jane A. Harrison.

Tribute to Warren Heil, Jr., lay delegate to General and Jurisdictional Conferences

By Lisa Bender
Head Laity Delegate
General Conference 2019

The Susquehanna Conference Delegation to General Conference 2019 is mourning the loss of one of our faithful laity members, Warren Heil, Jr., of Asbury UMC in Scranton.

Warren was diagnosed with cancer a year ago. Side effects from treatment kept him from attending our annual conference in June, however he was able to join the delegation for a meeting in late August with Bishop Park. Warren shared his hope that he could be part of our delegation to General Conference 2019 in St. Louis in spite of his illness. In mid-October, however, he was admitted to hospice care. He passed on to his final reward with his Lord on Friday, October 26.

Warren had been involved beyond his local church starting at age 12, serving annually as a lay member to the Wyoming Conference. He was elected by Susquehanna Conference to the 2012 Northeastern Jurisdictional (NEJ) Delegation and again was elected to serve as a 2016 General Conference and NEJ lay delegate. He took these elections very seriously and was honored to be involved, studying hundreds of pages of documents prior to voting, and participating in the election of bishops at the NEJ conferences.

We thank God for the witness of Warren’s spirit and of his commitment to Christ and the larger church. We extend our sympathy to Warren’s parents, Gail and Warren Heil, Sr., and his sister TerriAnn.

Changes to Laity Delegation for General Conference 2019

The death of Warren Heil, Jr. has caused a change in our laity delegation for General Conference 2019. When a delegate is unable to serve, delegates elected after that delegate move up one position. Therefore, the revised list of lay delegates is as follows: Lisa Bender, Milton Loyer, Layne Miller, Anne Horton, and Kirby Hickey. The two reserve delegates are now Paul Ilyes and Toni Oplinger.

Photos of these delegates and their email addresses are posted on the conference website at susumc.org/GCDelegates. Delegation members thank you for your prayers as we prepare for General Conference 2019.

Photos of these delegates and their email addresses are posted on the conference website at susumc.org/GCDelegates. Delegation members thank you for your prayers as we prepare for General Conference 2019.
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.

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:

2017-18 - “Better Together: Make Us One”
2018-19 - “Better Together: One with Christ”
2019-20 - “Better Together: One with Each Other”
2020-21 - “Better Together: One in Ministry to All the World”

I believe that God has plans to give our church hope and a future. I am already beginning to excitedly 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,
Bishop Jeremiah J. Park