Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds...

Hebrews 10:23-24 NIV
Prayer is an unequivocal expression of faith that, no matter what we go through, 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 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)
The past few weeks have left many hurt, angry and outraged as we have witnessed the deaths of unarmed Black persons at the hands of police and racism; Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and the countless others whose names are known only to mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and friends.

Many bishops have worked to amplify and magnify one another’s voices. The words of Bishop Bruce Ough, resident Bishop of Minneapolis area, were a clarion call to the crisis before us, “There is more than one pandemic ravaging Minnesota and our country at this time. In addition to fighting COVID-19, we are besieged by a pandemic of racism, white supremacy, and white on black or brown violence.”

The voice of Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, resident Bishop of the Baltimore-Washington area, gave power to the realities, “Being Black is not a pre-existing condition; being Black is not justification for probable cause; being Black is not to be inherently suspicious nor suspect. Being Black is a gift from Almighty God and a manifestation of an aspect of God.”

These prophetic voices and those of others have provided words when we had none.

As bishops of the United Methodist Church, we ask every United Methodist to reclaim their baptismal vows to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

We ask every United Methodist to name the egregious sin of racism and white supremacy and join together to take a stand against the oppression and injustice that is killing persons of color.

As bishops of the whole church we affirm the peaceful protests as a means of giving voice where it is needed most.

We are clear that it is beyond time for all United Methodists to act. It is time to use our voices, our pens, our feet and our heart for change.

We join with other church leaders and boards and agencies of the United Methodist Church to add strength to the message that we will no longer remain silent nor complicit but must act now!

As a next faithful step we ask United Methodists to read all they can on the subject of anti-racism and engage in conversations with children, youth and adults. Have conversations with coworkers and friends. These will not be easy but they will help us gain a greater appreciation for one another. In a recent podcast, “Unlocking Us,” lecturer, author and podcast host, Brené Brown, hosted author, historian and American University professor, Ibram X. Kendi who said, “By not running from the books that pain us, we can allow them to transform us. I ran from anti-racist books most of my life. But now I can’t stop running after them – scrutinizing myself and my society, and in the process changing both.” May we listen not only with our ears but with our hearts and run after books, podcasts and conversations that transform entire communities.

For at least the next 30 days, we ask every United Methodist everywhere to join in prayer at 8:46 a.m. and p.m. for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, the time the officer held his knee on George Floyd’s neck. Do this for at least the next 30 days. Pray for all persons of color who suffer at the hands of injustice and oppression. Pray for our church as we take a stand against racism. Imagine the power of a concert of prayer heard around the world.

And finally, to borrow from Bishop Easterling once again, “The time is now. Dismantle the architecture of whiteness and white supremacy; stop creating, implementing and supporting policies that perpetuate economic injustice; stop the dog-whistle political maneuverings which incite violence against people of color; commit to being an anti-racist; stop over-policing Black and brown bodies; stop using deadly force in ordinary police interactions with Black and brown people. Stop killing us.”

May the God of Grace and Peace be with you.

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey
President - Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church

Please watch the video, “Dismantling Racism: Pressing on to Freedom” at tinyurl.com/yyd9dlg5j

For more information and resources visit UMC.org/EndRacism
Pastoral Letter from the NEJ College of Bishops

We, the College of Bishops of the Northeastern Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church, prayerfully stand with our pastors, members and churches during the aftermath of the recent deaths of unarmed African American people at the hands of law enforcement officers and citizens across our nation. We decry the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and countless others.

The racist system and structures that permeate every facet of life in the United States including health care, employment, education, wealth, the criminal justice system and housing infects our churches as well. In the face of these injustices we often embody the words of the prophet Jeremiah by treating “the wound of God’s people carelessly, saying “peace, peace’ when there is no peace,” because there is no justice (Jeremiah 6:14).

The devastating effects of racism are many and every time we forget that each person is made in the image of God, we are all harmed. We have witnessed the murder of African Americans numerous times in the past in this country and it seems when the protests pass, we go back to our old ways and progress gained becomes lost. Ideas and systems that support white supremacy continue unchecked in our churches, communities and national politics. Human suffering among people of color that we have witnessed recently, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, is yet another reminder of the inequities in our racist society that has continued because we have been slow to work for justice.

In the long history the people called Methodists, when we have not been our best selves, The Methodist Church created the Central Jurisdiction (a segregated conference of African American Methodists). When we have been our best selves, we have labored for abolition, voting rights, civil rights and most recently we have been working to end mass incarceration.

The 2016 Northeastern Jurisdiction Conference entered into the Call to Action on Racial Justice to address our complicity in perpetuating a culture of racism and white privilege in our church. We initiated many proactive steps to address the systemic racism in our jurisdiction. However, it has fallen short and needs to continue with even more urgency and passion.

The white bishops of the NEJ, in consultation with the bishops of color, declare the following:

**We confess the racism and white privilege** that is a part of our denominational heritage and our organizational system.

**We pledge to take personal responsibility** to challenge theologies and practices that promote or accommodate structural and systemic racism and replace them with systems of justice and equality. We call upon our baptismal vows to remind us to “renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, to reject the evil powers of the world and repent of our sin.”

**We pledge to repent of our personal racism**, our failure to hear the cries of our brothers and sisters, our silence in the face of racial injustice, our valuing of law and order, possessions and power more than lives, and our complicity with police violence. We will follow our statement on “Criminal Justice” as found in our Social Principles, which calls for an overhaul of our justice system.

**We pledge to be accountable to our sisters and brothers of color**, engaging with them in a process of reconciliation for our churches in order to bring change to our denomination’s system and structure.

**We pledge to bring our prophetic voices to the public arena**, lead our congregations to confront our racism and call for the accountability of all law enforcement officers who abuse their positions of power, authority and privilege. If while performing their duties they violate the law, they should be terminated. We further pledge to work to transform our criminal justice system, and create a denomination that exemplifies equality for all.

**We pledge to further educate ourselves**, our leaders and members in order to dismantle those systems for the sake of all God’s children. We encourage Annual Conference leadership from each conference in the Jurisdiction to engage in a four-week Bible Study sometime in the fall so together we may discern how to equip clergy and laity to address the evil of racism from a faith perspective.

The NEJ College of Bishops, a multi-ethnic group, hold our jurisdiction in prayer during this challenging time. We are also marching with you on the streets of our cities, naming the names, calling out our public leaders for advocating violence against peaceful protesters, and mobilizing our churches for action and response. It is our prayer that this time of crisis will become an opportunity for transformation and that the church can be a moral light that leads to peace with justice. Together we can accomplish this through the power of the Holy Spirit.
How Long, O Lord, Will You Look On?

“How long, O Lord, will you look on? Rescue me from their ravages, my life from the lions!” (Psalm 35:17)

June 2, 2020

My heart is breaking as I write this pastoral letter to you. My heart cries with the Psalmist, “How long, O Lord, will you look on?” My soul is restless and disturbed. I keep praying, “Show me the way I should go” (Psalm 143:8), as I pray for people in harm’s way while violent clashes continue and escalate. Lord, have mercy! Christ, have mercy!

It is with deep anguish, sorrow, and then righteous anger that I watched in abject horror, along with millions of people, the slow death of Mr. George Floyd. We all heard him cry out, “I can’t breathe.” We watched in stunned silence as he lay constrained and gasped his last breaths under the choking knee.

Today we are confronted by two killers who steal breath. The corona virus shortens the breath of its victims. Racism chokes the breath, both figuratively and literally, out of its victims and suffocates righteousness from society. Life requires breath. Is breathing not a basic right?

The breath of God, however, fills people with renewed life. We remember that Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). This past Sunday, we read in Acts 2 about the Pentecost experience of those early believers.

While they were gathered in a house in Jerusalem, they heard the rush of a mighty wind and flames like tongues of fire rested upon each of them. People who had come to the city from many nations were able to hear, in their own languages, these Spirit-filled believers speak of God’s good news in Jesus Christ.

This breath of God changed the direction of history. It inaugurated the coming of the realm of God, a focal message that Jesus frequently proclaimed. It’s intriguing that the Risen Christ used his forty days between his resurrection and ascension to speak about the realm of God (Acts 1:3). We are reminded that Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” The work of building the realm of God continues. Now we must act with courage and conviction as God’s breath of justice and righteousness in our time and place.

The miracle of Pentecost was one of both speaking and hearing. We must claim the miracle of speaking. Those of us who claim Christ’s name cannot stand idly by and allow racism free rein. We must condemn, boldly and loudly, the sin of racism. God’s people are to speak up that racism does not have a place in God’s reign.

We must also claim the miracle of hearing. We must hear the stories and the truths of victims of racism to whom we have turned a deaf ear. We must learn their language of suffering, pain, frustration, anger, hope, and resilience. We must amplify their voices.

I invite you, my sisters and brothers, to a time of prayer for the Pentecost miracle of the tongues and ears and to repentance. We must fall on our knees and ask God to open our mouths and ears and ask for God’s forgiveness for our silence when we should have spoken out and our speaking when we should have been listening.

We in the Susquehanna Conference are called in our vision and mission to embody the beloved community of Christ. Martin Luther King Jr. broadened the term “beloved community” to describe a society in which no one goes hungry or homeless, racism and bigotry would be overcome by an inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood, and love and trust would triumph over fear and hate.

Beloved communities do not allow racism and prejudice to flourish. Beloved communities do not accept discrimination and violence against those who are different because of pigments of skin. Beloved communities do not, through silence, permit institutional racism. Beloved communities do not allow the cries of the oppressed to echo unanswered for generations.

As the believers at Pentecost told of God’s deeds of power, so must we raise our voices to proclaim the good news of God’s justice, righteousness, and promise of reconciliation and new life for those who turn from wicked ways. Let us as individuals and as a conference join together and rededicate ourselves to bringing the beloved community of Christ to fruition so that all may be free from the chains of hate and fear.

We are the season after Pentecost. It’s about the fresh breath of God that creates the wind that changes the direction of human destiny toward justice, reconciliation, and peace. Let the hallowed wind of the Spirit ignite the holy fire of passion for and commitment and dedication to the vision of the Beloved Community of Christ, for such a time as this.

“How long, O Lord, will you look on?” As I utter those words, I must ask myself and each of you, How will we in church hasten the heralding of God’s reign? Indeed, we are in this together.

With You in Christ’s Ministry,

Bishop Jeremiah Park

Bishop Jeremiah Park urges all Susquehanna United Methodists to watch a new video, “Dismantling Racism: Pressing on to Freedom” (tinyurl.com/9dilg5) in which the United Methodist Council of Bishops announces a denomination-wide sustained effort to eradicate racism.

For more information and resources visit UMC.org/EndRacism
It has been over three months now since I joined the Susquehanna Annual Conference staff as the new director of connecting ministries. Even though the COVID-19 safety protocols have prevented me from getting around the conference and meeting you, the wonder of online meeting platforms have helped me get to know a few of you.

In a way, coming to Pennsylvania has been like a homecoming. I have not actually lived here before. I grew up in Chicago and was not raised United Methodist; I joined the church as a young adult. Some time after that, my mother gave me an old, small book; a Methodist hymnal published in 1849. You can see from the photo that the book was inscribed in 1876 to Elmer E. E. Carr of Pittsburgh. He was my great-grandfather.

The United Methodist Church has been my spiritual home for a number of years now. I am an ordained deacon, and I have had the opportunity to serve the church in a number of roles: director of communication for the Minnesota Conference, an editor for the United Methodist Publishing House, and director of deacon ministry development for the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. I’ve attended six General Conferences. All these have given me connections that I look forward to putting to work for the United Methodists in Susquehanna Conference.

One of the ministries of the deacon is to help people discern the ways God calls them in ministry—be that lay or clergy. As part of that, we help people find the resources, training, and guides who can help all of us use our gifts the best we can to help transform the world into the realm of God. It is a joy to have the opportunity to do that.

This year has been a particularly difficult time for the church to be the church, as you well know. The pandemic and the necessary health protocols have required us to find new ways to provide corporate worship, Bible study, pastoral care, and ministry to our neighbors. We’ve been flying the plane while we build it.

The world is changing in other ways. Attending church is not the social habit it once was. People still wonder whether there is a God. They want to make a difference in the world. Some people are not looking for that in a Sunday-morning church service. Yet that is what we are accustomed to doing.

The United Methodist Church has been struggling with significant differences among its people. Conflicts in the nation sometimes spill into our congregations. It’s a hard time to be the church! It is also a great time to be the church. All this upheaval means that we can try new things. We can reexamine why we are the church, and imagine new ways to invite people into Christian discipleship.

Easier said than done, I know. That is why Kevin Witt, Gary Shockley, and I work as a team to help you find what you, lay and clergy, need to lead your churches to reflect the love of God in your neighborhoods. And we also offer our listening ears. We are available to hear what is on your minds and hearts as you seek to be faithful, even while not knowing what the future will bring.

And we see many reasons for hope! I am hopeful, and grateful to be among you as we show a hurting world the healing and new life that comes from the light and love of Christ.
Growing Spiritual Transformational Leaders

2020 Camp Comeback Campaign - Together We Can!

KEVIN WITT
Director of Growing Spiritual Transformational Leaders

KIM SHOCKLEY
Coordinator for Pathways of Spiritual Leadership

“Give thanks to God in all circumstances for this is God’s will for you Christ Jesus”.
Thessalonians 5:18

The Blessing

Camp and Retreat Ministry holds a very special place as sacred common ground for us all. Thousands from our congregations and wider community grow closer to God at our centers. We find inspiration to actively live the love of Christ wherever we go. Children, youth, and adults thrive in an atmosphere of deep valuing. They become more intentional in their faith journey, try new things, meet new people, and become more resilient in life. Many clergy and laity identify camp and retreat experiences as profoundly important in helping them hear and renew their calls to leadership. They return home inspiring others to deeper meaning, relationships of love, and action for good in the world. A wide spectrum of religiously affiliated and non-profit groups pilgrimage to our centers, too. These community partners clarify their vision and make plans that serve a multitude of people with a great diversity of needs, so they may have “life more abundantly”. God has gifted us with Camp Penn, Greene Hills, Mount Asbury, Sky Lake and Wesley Forest.

The Challenge

The COVID-19 virus spread across the globe requiring nations and local communities to take action to mitigate the harm and to protect others from contracting the disease. For our Susquehanna Conference Camp and Retreat Ministries along with vast majority of UM Camp and Retreat Centers in the U.S., this means the suspension of retreats this Spring along with all Summer Camps. We, also, face reduced guest group reservations for the Fall. The revenue from retreats and camps is a large, essential part of the ministry budget. Even with good stewardship and extreme cost-cutting measures, the year-end deficits for our local camp retreat ministry is projected to be $300,000 and could reach $350,000. Fortunately, your Camp Retreat Ministry Board, the staff, and dedicated volunteers have taken steps to keep the ministry healthy and financially sound prior to this crisis. By fully utilizing savings and dipping deep into operational reserves, the amount remaining to be covered is approximately $87,000. This must be raised with your help as generous congregations and donors who care about these special places, their ministry, and their impact.

The Opportunity

Together we can meet this challenge! Churches, groups, and individuals are already stepping up in support. Join the Camp Retreat Ministry Board, the staff, the Cabinet, camper families, congregations, and individuals who have already made generous donations and pledges. We are excited and tremendously grateful to announce that gifts and pledges received to date exceed $35,000. Widening the circle of giving is vital, in order to raise the remaining $52,000.

Here’s how you can help.
• Give generously as you are able. (We know some may be struggling now, also. Though you may want to give, you cannot right now. We give thanks for the many other ways you give support.)
• As a congregation, prayerfully consider donating your normally budgeted camp scholarship funds that were unused since summer camp was suspended. Several churches have done this, and it makes a big difference.
• Share the need with your circle of friends, family, and community. If people know how much it matters to you, they often will be generous in their support. We can help you with sample letters, social media appeals, etc. Contact Kevin Witt, kwitt@susumc.org

• Regularly check out the 2020 Camp Comeback Campaign page on the Conference website or the Quiklink to follow what giving opportunities are currently underway and our progress together in reaching the goal.
• Connect us with people who would find it meaningful to support camp and retreat ministry.
• Share stories and quotes with us about why camp and retreat ministry is important to you and others. This helps a lot and is very meaningful for donors.

We can do this together with grateful hearts and a spirit of joy. God has blessed each of us to be a blessing. Let's create an opportunity out of a challenge. It is a chance to express our love through financial generosity and other forms of support.

To Make a Donation:
• Online - https://susumcamps.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=179
• By Check Payable to:
The Susquehanna Conference
c/o Camp & Retreat Ministry
303 Mulberry Drive
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

Note on the Check: For Camp Comeback Campaign
Thank you !!!!
A few years ago, I was asked to speak at a United Methodist Men’s event on the topic: What Makes a Vital Church. I spent considerable time crafting my message supported by a few dozen PowerPoint slides and a couple of handouts. As I was being introduced, I had a thought, which I later credited to the Holy Spirit. As I made my way to the podium that thought crystallized into these words: “Your church will only be as vital as you are.” I thanked the group for inviting me, spoke those ten words and sat down. I sat for maybe a minute and returned to the podium where I delivered, I think, one of the most effective messages of my ministry.

“Your church will only be as vital as you are.” I think sometimes we look for church vitality to come from many things except perhaps the most important— from within ourselves and our own vital walk with God. If I am not intentionally tending to my own spiritual vitality six days a week the seventh day is not likely to have that much effect on me and subsequently the church. Spiritually transformational congregations are populated by spiritually transformational people who are guided by spiritually transformational leaders. See the flow right there?

I’ve been working on a clear and crisp definition of a vital congregation. Here’s what I’ve come up with thus far: “Vital congregations have a biblical understanding of why they exist, understand their purpose in their cultural context, have defined values and expectations of behavior, and strive to create spiritually transformed people who pattern their behaviors after Jesus to spiritually transform the world.”

If Covid-19 has taught us anything it’s this. Vital congregations really don’t need buildings, choirs, hymnals, bands, pews, bulletins, greeters, refreshments or three-point sermons to transform lives. Now, before you come to tar and feather me, let me add. I LOVE buildings, choirs, hymnals, bands and all that other stuff. I PREFER to have these things. But these things are NOT what makes the church vital. What makes your church vital depends a great deal upon what you do during the week to nurture your relationship with God AND nurture your relationship with other people who are nurturing their relationship with God. When we gather (virtually or in-person) we find ways to celebrate how we’ve experienced God’s presence in our lives and how God has worked through us so that others experience God too.

If we were never again allowed to go back to the way things were before Covid-19 would the God-project called “church” somehow cease to exist? Would we never again hear from God? Would our relationships with fellow believers’ end? Would we stop caring about others? Would we cease to talk to people about the difference Jesus has made in our life? Would the Holy Spirit quit pestering and empowering us? Would we care less about the work of social justice and reconciliation?

We’ve learned so much through the trials of the first half of this year. We learned that we could quickly pivot how we “do” worship (from live to virtual) to accommodate our flock AND (even more importantly) reach out to those around us who have not yet met the Shepherd. We found creative ways to care for one another through phone trees, FB live Bible studies and prayer meetings, front porch care packages, food collections and distributions to the needy, partnerships with local government, other non-profits and social service agencies to make sure all the people of our wider parish are cared for.

As we move or have moved fully into “green” I’m concerned. When we’re back in our boxes doing the things we used to do as a church will we forget the lessons we learned this first half of 2020? We’ve had to measure effectiveness in a whole new way. Will our vitality again be measured almost entirely by what happens on Sunday morning and get validated in a statistical report to the conference? Will we lose connection with the new flock who found us online and joined us in a simpler form of worship. Will they still recognize and connect with us when we default to streaming worship the way we used to do it. The way WE’VE always liked it.

For a couple months now we’ve managed to live in a new world without most of the things that always defined us, and guess what? We’re STILL the church. Hopefully, we’ve relearned that the church Jesus established isn’t defined by a neatly arranged package full of things we take out every seven days, play with, box up and then leave behind for the next seven days.

I can’t expect the church to be more vital than I am because the church is ME, and the church is YOU… wherever we are!

If you haven’t taken advantage of the forced sabbath given you by Covid-19 to reflect on your own spiritual vitality, it’s not too late. Talk to your pastor about resources that might help you. Invite a few trusted friends to join you in a conversation about this.

Here are three helpful links you might visit for more ideas.
https://tinyurl.com/yajhrvp
https://tinyurl.com/y7pthfi6t
https://tinyurl.com/y7gdfq5

You are never alone! The Equipping Vital Congregations Team is always ready to encourage and support you. Let us know how we can help!

With joy and gratitude,
Gary
Bishop’s Retirement Postponed
May 27, 2020:

It has now been announced that the postponed session of the 2020 General Conference will be held August 29 to September 7, 2021 and the Jurisdictional Conferences will be held November 10 to 12, 2021. I am writing to you so that you may have the most up to date information regarding Episcopal assignments and coverage as they relate to this unprecedented situation.

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church outlines the process for the retirements and assignments of Bishops. Specifically, ¶406 speaks to the process of Bishop’s assignments. “The jurisdictional committee on episcopacy, after consultation with the College of Bishops, shall recommend the assignment of the bishops to their respective residences for final action by the jurisdictional conference...” That paragraph also indicates that “the date of assignment for all bishops is September 1 following the jurisdictional conference.”

The Discipline does not address the possibility that General and Jurisdictional Conferences could be postponed. Clearly, we are in an uncharted time in the history of The United Methodist Church.

With the postponement of the General and Jurisdictional Conferences, the Council of Bishops, the five Colleges of Bishops, and the Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy have been in prayer, discernment, and dialogue. Having never been in this situation before, we want to be faithful to the leading of God’s Spirit as well as the spirit of the Discipline.

As the Jurisdictional Conference assigns Bishops to Areas and the College of Bishops is responsible for the episcopal coverage of the annual conferences in the Jurisdiction, Bishop Peggy Johnson, President of the Northeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops, announced the plan for episcopal supervision for the Northeastern Jurisdiction until the 2021 postponed session of Jurisdictional Conference.

As you may know, I had requested for an early retirement effective September 1, 2020. I would like you to know that, under the current circumstances and in sync with the Jurisdictional Conference in 2021, my retirement is postponed.

COVID-19 has brought many significant changes in all aspects of our lives. Sometime ago, when the Cabinet had a time of devotion, we had a moment of pondering this question: “What has this virus taken away from me?” Among other things, I thought of “plans” I had. As you would imagine, Lisa and I had many immediate and long-term “plans” for our life in retirement. Now, many are gone at least for some time. I am reminded of a passage in scripture: “Many are the plans in one’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.” (Proverbs 19:1)

Together God has placed us in this time and place for longer than any of us imagined. I know that, as we join our hands and hearts with each other, we will continue to be disciples of Christ to bring healing and hope to the hurting world with the love of Jesus.

I have come this far by the grace of God. I have my total trust that this grace will lead me on. As we look forward to God leading us into God’s preferred future for an extended time, I covet your prayers.

Please know that my dear thoughts and prayers are with God’s people of the Susquehanna Conference, that together we will continue be faithful to be the church alive in mission for such a time as this.

With You in Christ’s Ministry, Bishop Jeremiah Park

Thank you!

I thank God for you, the clergy and laypeople of the Susquehanna Conference. The challenges confronting our ministries this year have been enormous. I have seen you rise to them with creativity, dedication, resilience, and faithfulness. Our churches continue to be beacons of God’s love, even if in different forms, during these uncertain days.

Since March 6, when the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Pennsylvania, to now, when we know of more than 82,000 cases, we have been watching and wondering how the virus would progress and what stringent steps would be required. Nevertheless, ministry has not stopped. Our clergy and leading laypeople are working harder than ever to provide worship, pastoral care, spiritual growth, outreach ministry, and witness, while observing practices that can protect lives. Thanks be to God for you!

However, now as we are preparing to enter a fourth month of life in a pandemic, we are all getting weary. The strain of learning new technologies and making other adjustments in addition to meeting our usual responsibilities is demanding and exhausting. Lay and clergy alike miss the cherished experience of worshipping alongside others. And we long for the comfort of the familiar.

I know that our pastors are receiving pressure from people to reopen our church buildings and resume worship and other activities now. Some are insisting that they no longer can wait to return to in-person worship and gatherings. We can identify with that feeling. All of us long to experience again the warmth of God’s people gathered for worship.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14
Re-opening with Biblical Caution

Douglas Hoy, Conference Disaster Response Coordinator

W e have just spent the last few months isolated from our friends and family. While our time under stay-at-home orders pales in comparison to the six months Noah and his family spent on an ark full of animals, it certainly would not be a stretch to say our lives have been just as hectic. Parents have been teleworking, if they have not been laid off or lost their jobs. Kids had to adjust to online schooling. Everyone is wearing a mask almost everywhere they go, attempting to maintain social distance while doing so. And, we are all looking forward to the time when we can return to living a somewhat normal life. How do we prepare for and transition back to the routine we once had? It may take much longer, and look much different than we think.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest re-opening America will require us to progress together using “social distancing and other daily habits” that will allow for the reduction of exposure to COVID-19. The Commonwealth offers more specific guidelines for Pennsylvanians to follow such as maintaining six feet of distance from each other, limiting gatherings to less than 250 people, avoiding non-essential travel, and wearing face coverings, to mention a few. Some believe this approach is sound and will allow us to achieve an acceptable level of safety and security, while others think the guidelines are overly cautious. Bishop Park urges churches to establish task forces that will carefully consider plans to re-introduce in-person gatherings and take steps very slowly.

“The government has set safety protocols for the common good,” Bishop Park says. “We as United Methodist Christians, however, are called to an even higher standard.”

As an emergency management professional, I can understand and appreciate both sides of this conversation. And, I could make an argument for either decision with the confidence it will meet the needs of those who will be affected. As the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator, part of my responsibility is to advise the Bishop on such issues, as they pertain to re-opening the churches within the Conference. Unlike my civilian counterparts, I have the unique ability to seek guidance and direction from scripture during the decision-making process.

I am convinced God has been in the business of disaster response and training disaster response specialists since He created the heavens and the earth. He used Noah during the Great Flood. In Genesis, we learn that Noah built the ark in preparation for flooding that would decimate the earth. He, his family members, and two of every kind of animal spent over a year in the ark - 40 days of rain and floods, then an additional 11 months on the ark waiting. During that time, Noah wrestled with the idea of when it would be safe to return to dry land.

Noah did not just open the doors of the ark, drop the ramp, and let the animals run free. He took some precautions. First, he sent a raven, then doves, to determine if the flood waters were drying up. According to scripture, the process took months before Noah was satisfied the waters had subsided and it was safe to leave the ark. Imagine standing on the side of the ark, looking down and seeing no water, yet still not being permitted to leave.

Returning to worship will require an exercise of the same level of caution used by Noah. It will take time and there will need to be protective protocols in place. Face coverings may need to be worn. Sanitizer stations should be in place. We will still need to consider social distancing and limiting contact. And, it will not be easy.

We may be looking down from our “ark,” watching as the church across town opens its doors in apparent dry land. Even within our own denomination, churches will be doing things differently. Our neighbors may be transitioning in unique and dissimilar ways based on the county in which they are located, the size of their congregation, the wishes of that congregation, and its ability to provide a safe worship environment.

As we consider what it means to make this transition, re-open churches, and return to a semblance of normal, remember to use caution. Consider the safety of your congregations, develop a strategic plan to make that transition, and let the Holy Spirit guide your decision. Moving forward with caution will allow you to preserve the health of those in your congregations and eventually celebrate that good health and abundant life with which God has blessed us. It is the first thing Noah did after re-opening the ark.

In-Person Worship by Phases

I t would be an understatement to say that, since the beginning of March, we have struggled to understand this pandemic. We have suffered physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Together, we have waited for guidance, followed instructions, and wondered what the next steps will be. We have asked what the future holds for us as believers.

The Wisconsin Council of Churches recently expressed the idea that our future “depends not only on the behavior of the virus, but on the actions of people – as individuals, churches, communities, and governments. The way forward will not be a matter of following a timetable, but of faithfully discerning the signs of the times, and responding accordingly” (https://www.wichurches.org/2020/04/23/returning-to-church/). Bishop Park’s recent
IN-PERSON WORSHIP BY PHASES

RED PHASE
- Stay at home.
- Gatherings of more than 10 prohibited.
- In person church services and non-essential ministries should cease.
- Communicate plans to congregation.
- Begin to plan for transition to YELLOW PHASE.

YELLOW PHASE
- Stay at home restrictions lifted in favor of aggressive mitigation.
- In person gatherings of 25 or less, with all safety precautions in place. (leadership, ministries, small group Bible studies, church office staff, etc.)
- Communicate plans to the congregation.
- Begin to plan for transition to GREEN PHASE.

GREEN PHASE
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces. See the CDC guidelines: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html
- Limit gatherings (worship, fellowship, and other) to 250 people.
- Maintain social distance and require worshipers to wear face coverings.
- Make worship child-and-family friendly rather than offer nursery service.
- Train hospitality teams to provide a safe and sanitary experience.
- Avoid using items that many people will touch (i.e hymnals, bulletins, Bibles, and offering plates.)
- Project the service content or guide the congregation while leading.
- Invite people to drop their tithes and offerings into a basket you provide.
- Forego singing.
- There is no safe means of offering communion at this time.
- Invite passing the peace/greetings that do not involve physical contact.
- Continue online services to allow the vulnerable continue to experience worship.
- Communicate plans to the congregation.
- Continue to plan for transition to an ALL CLEAR PHASE.
- Be prepared to move back to YELLOW or RED PHASE, if necessary.
words of encouragement indicate that our response, as a Conference, has been one of continued ministry “to provide worship, pastoral care, spiritual growth, outreach ministry, and witness, while observing practices that can protect lives.” We have continued our ministry in new and unique ways while observing those practices.

In the book of Hebrews, we are told of a group of Christians who faced similar circumstances. They struggled and endured suffering. During that time, they were encouraged to remain steadfast in their faith and persevere. Hebrews 10 calls them to “hold unswervingly” (v. 23) to the hope they professed “spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (v. 24), and continue meeting and encouraging each other (v. 25). In a nutshell, the Hebrew writer seems to be urging Christians to find ways to reinstate their desire and ability to continue in ministry until the day came when they could meet in person again.

OUTSIDE WORSHIP
As we plan to return to in person worship, our thoughts turn to what that may look like. Our churches are forming committees to search for ways to accomplish that, while observing the practice of protecting those who are at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19. As plans are being made, it is imperative to utilize biblical caution, be safe, be strategic, and be Spirit-led. And, we must keep in mind that returning to in-person worship may look different from, church to church and across the Conference.

Of course, the safest way to worship and preserve the health of those in our congregations is hold services online. However, we know from our experiences during the past few months that our members are eager to resume meeting, encouraging, and continuing worship, mission, and ministry in face-to-face gatherings. One opportunity to achieve this may involve conducting outside worship services. The guidelines and recommendations that follow can provide you with some insight into what that experience may look like.

SOCIAL DISTANCING IS THE NEW NORMAL
We are all familiar with the practice of social distancing. And, this should continue during outdoor worship. Groups from different households should be spaced at least 6 feet apart, further if your outdoor venue will allow it. You should be prepared to bring your own seating to help reduce the need to sanitize your church’s resources. Additionally, pastors and worship leaders should be positioned further than the socially distant six feet. It is recommended that at least 25 feet be achieved between them and the closest attendees. Finally, while the risk of spreading the virus may be reduced when outdoors, encouraging the wearing of face coverings and urging those in high-risk categories to worship from home is still recommended.

A TOUCHLESS EXPERIENCE
One of the reasons for meeting in an outside venue is to reduce the need for sanitizing and disinfecting the church prior to and after services. Therefore, you should expect to have a “touchless” or “limited contact” worship experience. Hospitality teams and worship hosts should be present to provide you with direction when you arrive. They should be trained in the safety protocols offered by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. You may also see signs and posters displaying clear directions about what is expected.

You should also anticipate that passing of the peace and other person-to-person contact will be discouraged. Please do your best to avoid engaging in handshakes, hugs, and similar greetings that break social distancing protocols and engage in verbal greetings or gestures, such as waving to celebrate our coming together, good health, and abundant life with which God has blessed us.

To further provide for a touchless experience, you may be encouraged to continue mailing your tithes and offerings or utilize your church online giving platform. Food and beverage service should not be provided. Although, you may want to consider bringing your own. Just remember...
to refrain from sharing outside your immediate family who is worshiping with you in that socially distant circle. You may also be asked to refrain from entering the church building. And, portable restroom facilities and wash/hand sanitizing stations may be available. If they are not, access to restrooms may be limited and should be cleaned/sanitized regularly.

**SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT**

Meeting outdoors does not come without challenges. And, from the time you arrive, until the service has concluded, every measure should be considered to provide for the safety of everyone in attendance. Because some churches will utilize their parking areas for outdoor worship, parking may be a challenge. You may see additional volunteers directing traffic in and around your church. Please allow yourself additional time to move through this process and follow their directions.

Because you are meeting outdoors, there will undoubtedly be some confusion. People will be unloading their chairs, walking around the parking lot or adjacent worship area, and making every attempt to adhere to the instructions being provided. This means they may not be as focused on the movement of traffic. Those who generally require assistance during our normal worship services may need additional time and assistance to get situated. Remember to use additional caution as you enter, travel through, and exit the parking area.

**TAKE COURAGE**

While we may not understand the trials before us, God does. He has gone before us. Be strong and courageous as you face these trials and uncertainties. Know He “will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged” (Deuteronomy 31). And, celebrate and worship in His name.

**Prayer of Good Courage**

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

--Eric Milne-White, Kings College, Cambridge

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**Please visit the COVID-19 UPDATE page on the Conference website www.susumc.org/covid-19/ for ongoing updates and information.**

Susquehanna Conference COVID-19 information can be found at www.susumc.org/covid-19/
and fellowship.

Nonetheless, I know that God calls us to put the needs of others above our own. This virus is quite contagious, as well as deadly. Because it’s possible to catch the virus but not develop symptoms, we may carry it unknowingly and risk infecting others. The virus is still among us, so we must still take precautions with all seriousness.

The government has set safety protocols for the common good. We as United Methodist Christians, however, are called to an even higher standard. The life and ministry of Jesus teaches us that we must give primary consideration to the most vulnerable and oppressed, and care for them even before ourselves. John Wesley’s first rule for Methodists is “Do no harm.” Honoring our Christian baptismal vows and our identity as United Methodists requires that we do all we can to protect others’ basic needs, including their health.

I urge you, then, to continue your carefully consider plans to re-introduce in-person gatherings and take steps very slowly. This transition should not be a quick one. Our conference has prepared a checklist for moving your church into the Green Phase. (Visit https://www.susumc.org/covid-19/ and click on “SUSUMC Green Phase Guidelines.”)

COVID-19 is still spreading and surging at an alarming rate in many parts of our country. The concern for resurgence of infection is real. As the resident bishop, I call on our churches to continue to observe the utmost safety precautions as a matter of faithful discipleship. Despite the painful delay in resuming worship and activities in person again, we can be assured that God is still with us; God is still our God. As we put our hope in God, let’s not grow weary. God is faithful. God does and will provide for us.

My prayers continue for you in gratitude for your diligent leadership and unwavering Christ-like care of our people and our neighbors for such a time as this.

With You in Christ’s Ministry,
Bishop Jeremiah Park
The 2020 Camp Comeback Campaign is an opportunity to provide much needed financial support for our beloved Camp and Retreat Ministry in this year of COVID-19. The suspension of Spring Retreats and Summer Camps has deeply impacted necessary revenues for the year. $87,000 from generous donors will be needed to help cover the gap. We will be launching various giving opportunities over the next several months as part of the Camp Comeback Campaign. Please, consider your financial giving to support these powerful experiences and places of sacred common ground where so many grow closer to God and are inspired to lives of Christian love that bless the world. See p. 7.

A Helpful Resource to Support Children Who are Grieving

All of us experience loss and grief, especially in this time of global pandemic and uncertainty. Children can become the “forgotten mourners” because they lack the life-skills needed to process grief in a healthy way. Parents are looking for help to support them. Author Gary Alan Shockley’s children’s book, My Heart Sings a Sad Song, is the journey of a young bunny who grieves the death of someone he loves. Family and friends create the space for JoJo to “feel his feelings” and listen to his honest questions about life and death. Together they find their way to a joyful commemoration of life.

The book contains a helpful guide for adults working with children and several activity pages for drawing and writing letters. It is a great gift for churches to give to children and adults who are experiencing grief.

“My heart was touched, and my soul comforted by the caring and loving spirit in what Gary has expressed here. This lovely book will be a tremendous gift to grieving children and their families in need of healing, comfort and restoration.”

Bishop Jeremiah Park

My Heart Sings a Sad Song is available at www.hopespring.biz and at all major book sellers. Gary will personally sign each book and address a short note of encouragement to whomever you like.

Visit tinyurl.com/ybj2ojm to hear Gary share some tips for helping children—and all of us—face our emotions during difficult times, including the grief we may be feeling during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

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The first General Rule as United Methodists is to “do no harm.” United Methodist Volunteers in Mission leadership understands that many project sites rely on teams to assist in serving the community. These teams come from nearby, from another state, sometimes from another country. Some homeowners and missioners may have recovered from COVID-19. Some may be carriers. Some are not infected. All want to serve. One of the worst unintended effects of mission work throughout the ages has been the spread of infectious disease. Remember that you bring other things with you when you bring the Gospel.

The federal disaster declaration includes every state and territory with most states presenting shelter-in-place and social distancing guidelines. These guidelines for US project sites are designed to assist in determining when and if to suspend teams for the summer and how to prepare the site for future teams. All sites should adhere to public health and safety protocols in order to protect employees, homeowners, and missioners.

For the latest updates in regard to COVID-19, please visit Centers for Disease Control.

General Guidance for International Service
The State Department still has a Level 4 ban on international travel at the moment. At Level 4, insurance is not available to teams traveling internationally. It is recommended that teams do not travel without travel medical insurance.

General Guidance for US Project Service

• Suspending teams for the summer
  » Make this decision based on the guidance of the governor, bishop, and county health department. Pay attention to their direction about school closure, lifting stay-at-home orders, and the time when small groups are permitted to gather again.
  » Make this decision with the guidance of the board of directors or other governing body.

• Guidelines for Hosting teams
  » Follow CDC guidance on cleaning and disinfecting facilities.
  » Post reminders for hand washing, awareness of symptoms, etc.
  » Provide prevention supplies:
    • Hand sanitizer
    • Disposable face masks
    • Eye protection
    • Cleaners and disinfectants
    • Gloves for food preparation and cleaning
  » Other considerations
    • Avoid buffet-style meal service. Have kitchen crews prepare dishes. This includes sack lunch preparation.
    • If the dishwasher does not meet standards for sanitation, consider asking teams to bring paper products (not Styrofoam) to be discarded after each meal. Provide adequate trash receptacles.
    • All touch surfaces should be thoroughly wiped down with approved cleaners prior to team arrival and as the team prepares to leave.
    • Consider ways to assure safe distancing on the work site, in the dorm, dining area, and meeting space.
    • If possible, provide washer and dryer facilities for any laundering needs.
    • Screening protocol on arrival
      • Take temperature
      • Ask about general health
      • Ask if the missioner has been in contact with anyone who had COVID-19
    • Provide space for isolation if someone reports symptoms.
    • Arrange for outdoor projects to assure minimal contact between homeowner and team members (painting, deck or ramp building, landscaping, roofing). Make accommodations for rest room facilities so team members do not have to enter the home. (i.e.: portapotties)
    • Children’s ministry (VBS) should be suspended until additional guidance from CDC and local officials is available.
    • Have a plan in place to safely transport a team member who develops symptoms of COVID-19.

• Guidelines for leading a team
  » Follow the guidelines of the CDC for travel both inside and outside the U.S.
  » Follow local guidelines from municipal, county, and state health authorities. Also, know the guidelines for the locality where the team intends to serve.
  » If it is determined that it is safe and lawful to serve, continue to make arrangements for proper social distancing and PPE for team members, and sanitize surfaces and equipment.
  » Each team member will sign the Team Member Liability Waiver.
  » Protocols for the interruption of transmission of the virus will be

www.umvim.org now includes resources from all five jurisdictions in one place
By Stephanie Titzel, Director of Development and Communications, Mission Central

We are so grateful for the generosity and support of UMC churches, pastors and parishioners! Your support has ensured that Mission Central continued to be open throughout this pandemic and continued to serve connecting God’s resources with human need.

During this pandemic, the bright spot has been the “God Moments” we have witnessed. Some of these include:

• At the start of the pandemic, we reached out to hospitals, local police stations, and medical facilities to donate our N95 masks. This program was hugely successful and the need far exceeded what was available. As such, we started a campaign to raise $5,000 for N95 masks. (Our goal was 2,500 masks.) We surpassed that goal and were able to connect over 3,000 N95 masks with those in need.

• The pandemic, we began a program to connect with school districts throughout the conference and provide food, health, hygiene items, clothing, candy, medical supplies (and more!) for those in need. This program began from one phone call and now we have contact with over ten school districts throughout the conference, and we are ready to add more!

• A woman called in dire need of a bi-pap machine for her husband. Their bi-pap had been destroyed in a fire and insurance was unwilling to purchase a new one for him. We have seen a lot of c-pap machines come through the door but no bi-pap machines. While looking through the back, Laurie remembered that three c-pap machines had come in. One was a bi-pap! We were thankful we were able to make that connection.

• A program to combat homelessness called asking for some hygiene items. They were desperately in need as their residents hadn’t been able to shower for 8 weeks due to facility shutdowns. We gave them hygiene items and detergent. Later, they called asking for larger towels. We had only 13 towels but were able to reach out to Bethesda Mission who donated the remainder.

• Bethesda Mission received 300 half-gallon containers of ice cream. They were unable to resource them quickly. Oddly, we had sprinkles, ice cream cups and spoons, but no ice cream! Through this partnership, we were able to provide “Sundaes to Go” for students and families via drive and go!

We continue to see “God Moments” each and every day and they remain bright spots among this pandemic. Thank you for your support. Your financial gifts, donations and prayers are most appreciated!

Thank You for Your Continued Support of Mission Central
Communicating cross-culturally to help create real change

By John W. Coleman, Director of Communications
EPAUMC - from resourceumc.org

For church leaders to effectively communicate beyond their congregation and culture — that is, to reach a broader, dissimilar audience — they should try to forge a true, interpersonal connection with those persons they want to reach. But it would help to also do some homework.

How do you connect? You “go ye therefore” into the new milieu — preferably with an arranged invitation and host — not to teach but to learn, “not to be understood but to understand,” as St. Francis of Assisi would counsel.

Then you meet and greet various people, talk a little, listen a lot and learn as much as you can. Then learn some more.

Be curious and compassionate, non-judgmental and transparent, friendly but unforced. Make new friends. Yes, it can be easier said than done, but it’s always doable if you “open wide your hearts,” in the Apostle Paul’s words (2 Corinthians 6:11-13).

At some point you should read recommended books and articles, view recommended television programs and other media content, visit recommended websites and social media pages. Do it “for the culture” (a popular hip-hop expression) — not to change your culture but to transcend it.

Our United Methodist mission is “To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” But we are learning today that our church needs transformation as well, especially in how we understand the world in all its diversity, where Christ calls us to go and to be.

Are your church members talking about matters of race, culture and social justice? Are they able to do it from a non-ethnocentric perspective — that is, not seeing their own race and culture, their own limited understanding of social justice as standard or superior? And are they able to appreciate the contrasts and commonalities that exist among different races, cultures and social experiences?

Communicating such insights and values with your congregation internally can help with that. Use your church website, newsletter, bulletin, audiovisual presentations and social media to educate members about races, cultures and justice concerns, to encourage them to seek and learn more, and to engage them in new, formative outreach encounters and experiences. Consider using these communication tools to share information available at umc.org/EndRacism and to encourage others to visit and share the page.

Collaborate to arrange ongoing cross-racial, cross-cultural conversations, Bible and book studies, celebrations, worship and special programs, Sunday school, vacation Bible school and other activities. Start small, but as soon as possible, plan, prepare and promote together a yearlong calendar of meetings and events. Don’t be narrow-minded, but reach beyond your United Methodist connection to engage people and churches of other pan-Methodist and non-Methodist denominations.

Celebrate racial-ethnic histories, heroes and heritage months of the year:
• Black/African-American (February)
• Asian/Pacific American (May)
• Hispanic/Latino (mid-September to mid-October)
• Native American (November)

Celebrate Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day and Jubilee Day, celebrated by many Black Americans on June 19. The day honors the day in 1865 when President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation (1863), which freed the slaves, was read to enslaved African-Americans in southern Texas, months after the Civil War had ended. More Americans should realize that the freedoms we celebrate on July 4th, Independence Day, were freedoms denied to Americans of color for many decades.

Learn and share partner churches’ histories as you share your own. But acknowledge and lament where racial prejudice, discrimination and even oppression may have caused separation and alienation. Don’t avoid tough but illuminating conversations; keep them grounded in Christian love and mutual respect. Maybe use Jesus’ Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-10) as a touchstone for your discourse.

The talks may be tense at times, possibly even traumatic for some. They may even require the aid of a group counselor or a helpful video resource to guide such inter-cultural dialogues. But they should be always prayerful and influenced by the
redemptive power of the Holy Spirit.
Participating churches should also share visions and plans for their futures. Perhaps those may alter as this outreach ministry grows and creates new energy, ideas and selfless aspirations, maybe even a new or deeper appreciation of our shared responsibility to pursue racial equity, peace and social justice for all.

Work together to ensure that these outreaching, connective efforts do not become stale or aimless or fail to grow. Celebrate milestones. Form close bonds of friendship. But also be fruitful and multiply. Keep identifying and enlisting fresh leadership and new approaches. Constantly invite others to join — maybe even guests who are not a part of the participating churches. Remember Jesus’ Great Commission. Always be outreaching.

Try using **video-conferencing** and **live-streaming** platforms to widely share personal and group testimonies, interviews, dialogues, town hall meetings, produced video stories, cultural arts and celebrations.

Let your churches and communities know what is happening in this ministry. Share in digital, print and video media honest, well-told stories of minds, hearts and lives being transformed. The stories and the talent able and willing to communicate them will expand.

**Tell your local news media.** Don’t hide it, but instead “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

Others will be drawn to your light. This is about making disciples and helping to transform both the church and the world. So, be creative, mission-focused, strategic and honest. And always be faithfully sharing the gospel internally and externally, using new words and new ways to grow and enhance your witness.

Want more ideas? Here are some offered by Cathy Bruce, Kentucky Conference Director of Communications:

Be open to different musical genres. Have your choir/musicians experiment with different styles of music. Try finding old standards but with a twist, a version that’s reminiscent of a different culture.

Pair your youth group with another youth group from a different culture/ethnicity. Young people are always more than willing to learn from one another and to see one other as just people.

Share with your congregations the rich history of HBCUs ([historically black colleges and universities](https://www.hbcu-conference.org)) affiliated with The United Methodist Church.

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**News From Bishop Jeremiah Park**

**Another Cabinet Transition**

June 25, 2020

This letter is to let you know of another transition in the Cabinet. The Reverend Greg Myers, Clergy Assistant to my office who served on the Full Cabinet, has reduced his hours and responsibilities. As of July 1, Greg will be ¼ time. While he will no longer be a member of the Full Cabinet in this new position, he will continue working closely with the Board of Ordained Ministry and the Episcopal Office for clergy administrative services. Greg will continue to care for things such as the clergy report for the Clergy Session and other matters related to keeping and updating clergy records. He will also continue to serve and represent the Episcopal Office and me in a limited way.

I cannot begin to thank Greg enough for his service and his ministry among us. He served the former Central Pennsylvania Conference, the former Wyoming Conference, and the current Susquehanna Conference with distinction and commitment. When Greg retired the first time in 2011, after 40 years in ministry, he was recognized as an outstanding pastor as well as a District Superintendent. However, Greg’s first retirement only lasted a few hours before Bishop Jane Allen Middleton appointed him Clergy Assistant to the Bishop.

When I was assigned to the Susquehanna Conference as the Resident Bishop, I was blessed to have Greg in ministry with me. Although he was classified as part-time, he gave himself completely in this role. Indeed, Greg has worked tirelessly for these past 9 years. I cannot thank him enough for all that he has brought to and has given to the Susquehanna Conference. His contributions to the Office of Bishop, to me personally, and to the Cabinet have been exceptional and exemplary. Greg’s voice has been highly valued around the Cabinet table. Greg is a committed witness for inclusiveness, diversity, and justice. In Christian love and compassion, Greg challenges the way things are and is always helping persons to hear the voices of all people. I give thanks to God for Greg’s ministry for who he is as a colleague and a follower of Jesus Christ. I am overwhelmed with gratitude for Greg’s contribution to my office and to the Susquehanna Conference.

I celebrate Greg’s wanting to take more time to spend with his wife Deb and his family and to pursue his personal hobbies. However, I am grateful that he is willing to continue to stay on as part of the Episcopal Office and share his gifts and vast knowledge and experience and wisdom with the Annual Conference.

Please join me in thanking God for Greg’s continuing ministry among us. While he will be missed at the Cabinet table, may he continue to find joy and fulfillment with health and strength in the next chapter of his journey.

With Thankfulness,

*Bishop Jeremiah J. Park*
WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY
Your generous gift today enriches Christianity around the world
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4

“All that I am doing now is to prepare me to make a difference.”
— The Rev. Cangfu Wang, World Communion International Scholar

Please make check payable to your local church or give online at UMCgiving.org/giveWCS.
Chaplain David Dearing has been serving at RiverWoods Senior Living Community for less than a year and never expected the dramatic changes that would take place on campus due to restrictions put in place in March because of COVID-19. Serving as a senior living community chaplain during a global pandemic is an experience no one could have been prepared for.

Instead of holding a Sunday morning worship service in Marlow Hall, Chaplain Dearing is doing a live broadcast of the service on the campus television channel. He said, “I am trying to focus the Sunday service to provide comfort and hope to our residents and give them something to look forward to in the coming week.”

In addition to the weekly worship service, Chaplain Dearing is broadcasting other programming throughout the week including hymn sings, devotionals, piano music and bible study. He said, “There are times when I am serving as the camera and sound person, pianist, soloist and preacher. It took a bit to get the hang of things, but now I’m comfortable with the routine. I’ve definitely never done this before, but I’m pleased to do it.”

For nursing care residents who are tired of being in their rooms all the time, Chaplain Dearing has been assisting with activities he can do one on one with residents. He also has been showing Flexamatic exercise videos Tuesday and Fridays, and movies in the afternoon, to offer entertainment and some physical fitness.

He said “Everyone has different gifts that they bring to the table and we are all stepping up to assist in ways we may never have before. It’s all about the residents and helping them through a tough time where they are out of their normal routine, and visits have been severely restricted to keep everyone safe.”

Chaplain Dearing explained why he came to RiverWoods to serve as chaplain saying, “I feel that God wants me here to do this work and use the gifts that I have. I love music and I can share that with our residents. I do feel this pandemic has brought people closer together. I am seeing so much teamwork here.”

He also noted that people are looking for ways to help at RiverWoods during the pandemic and beyond. He recommends making a financial donation. “Any amount given can make a difference. Whether it’s to purchase a tablet to provide a resident with the ability to communicate with loved ones or for art supplies in our Memory Care residence, financial contributions can make a wonderful impact on the lives of our residents.”

Chaplain Dearing is a shining example of being called to serve, and Albright is proud that they are part of our family. Albright invites you to continue your mission by joining us at one of our six locations. Visit albrightcare.org for information on senior living, day programs, giving or volunteering.
SUSQUEHANNA UMC
CAMP & RETREAT MINISTRY

CHRISTMAS LIGHT DRIVE

We are looking for donations of new/gently used LED Christmas Lights for our New Drive-Thru Christmas Light Show at Mount Asbury Retreat Center, Beginning November 27, 2020

New Donations can be made on Amazon Wish List - Mount Asbury Christmas Light Show

Light Donations Drop Off:

Mount Asbury
1310 Centerville Road
Newville, PA 17241

Wesley Forest
58 Wesley Forest Lane
Weikert, PA 17885

Greene Hills
5125 Manor Drive
Alexandria, PA 16611

Please Call Patty Weidman at 717-486-3827 with questions or pick-up arrangements within 40 minutes of Carlisle.
Greetings from Discovery Place!

After being completely closed for many weeks, Discovery Place is now open on a limited basis. We will not have regular office hours for the remainder of the summer, but we will be checking and responding to emails and phone messages regularly. Since most of the staff in the Conference Office are continuing to work remotely, Discovery Place will remain closed to walk-in visitors until at least September 1, 2020.

As classes and small groups resume meeting, take advantage of the fact that many folks are eager for fellowship. We encourage you to submit requests for materials. You may call us at 717-766-7968, email us at discovery@susumc.org, or place an order through our online catalog on our website: www.discovery-place.org. Your order will be sent as soon as possible upon receipt of your request. Please continue to check the Discovery Place website for further scheduling updates, as changes may occur throughout the summer.

As many folks are dealing with fear, anxiety, and stress in these uncertain times, here are some suggestions of resources that may be helpful for your group. We have multiple copies of each of these on hand.

Unafraid: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times, by Adam Hamilton
Anxious for Nothing: Finding Calm in a Chaotic World, by Max Lucado
Fearless: Imagine Your Life Without Fear, by Max Lucado
Unshakable Hope: Building Our Lives on the Promises of God, by Max Lucado
Why? Making Sense of God’s Will, by Adam Hamilton

If You Want to Walk on Water You’ve Got to Get Out of the Boat, by John Ortberg
Goliath Must Fall: Winning the Battle Against Your Giants, by Louie Giglio
Faith Lessons: Walking With God in the Desert, by Ray Vander Laan
Fear of the Other: No Fear in Love, by William H. Willimon

To read descriptions of these resources, go to the online catalog at www.discovery-place.org, and search by title or author. Clicking on the DVD number will enable you to read a summary of each study. If you are interested in a study on a particular subject or for a particular age group, use the “advanced search” feature and search by subject using the drop-down menu. You can place an order directly from that search by clicking on the resource number to bring up the description, and then clicking “add to cart.”

I look forward to serving you in the weeks and months ahead!

Joni Robison
Adult God’s Calling Event

Adult God’s Calling Event

August 8, 2020
9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

A Workshop for those discerning a “Call to Ministry”

YOU are invited to join other men and women who are pondering the question, “God, where are you calling me?” If you are over eighteen and wrestling with a possible call to pastoral ministry, come and hear more. You’ll receive information on ordained, local pastor and certified ministries paths within the United Methodist Church. You’ll also share your call story with peers in small groups and discuss connections to calls in the Bible. Our God’s Calling Event now includes a leadership training session so you’ll learn new skills and tools to bring back to your church as an added benefit for attending.

Cost: $20 – includes materials and certificate of completion

Deadline to Register: August 1, 2020

Please contact Rev. Sandy Kraft at skraft@susumc.org or click here to register: http://scboom.org/index.php/resources/god-s-calling-event

Dismantling Racism

July 20, 2020
Info at right
https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050e4caea72aa1f58-dismantling

God’s Calling

August 8, 2020
Info at right
tinyurl.com/y9s8y6yb

Virtual 2020 Susquehanna Annual Conference

October 3, 2020
See page 25
www.susumc.org/annual-conference/

World Communion Sunday

October 4, 2020
This offering supports a diverse mix of national and international ethnic young adults to make a global impact for Christ.
tinyurl.com/y93qwkrb

Virtual Celebration of Ministry and Memorial Services

October 31, 2020
See page 25
www.susumc.org/annual-conference/

Virtual Service of Commissioning and Ordination

November 7, 2020
See page 25
www.susumc.org/annual-conference/

7 p.m., Monday, July 20, 2020

Pastors Kris Sledge and Lenore Hosier have been working with our conference leadership to develop a grass-roots movement seeking to eradicate racism within the boundaries of our Annual Conference and the wider community. Their hope is that this becomes a priority for the Susquehanna Conference, and, working towards that goal, have developed the following approach to this movement:

The Anti-Racist Movement of the Susquehanna Conference heeds the call of Christ and our Bishops to dismantle racism in all forms that it presents itself.

Three Fold Approach

1. Educate our white clergy persons and laity to recognize their own privilege and implicit biases.

2. Encourage actively anti-racist leadership, congregations, and communities who oppose racism and its harm, while working diligently to form relationships and systems that heal, love, and create justice.

3. Embrace and equip clergy of color and congregations they serve for fruitful cross-cultural appointments and mutually supportive collaboration in life and ministry.

Kris and Lenore would like to invite both laity and clergy from the Susquehanna Conference to a time of dialogue on July 20th at 7 p.m. with Dr. Todd Allen, Vice President of Diversity Affairs at Messiah College, to discuss issues of race in our churches, our communities and in the world. There will be a time of Q & A and additional resources for those interested in going a bit deeper. We will use the ZOOM platform, so interested persons are asked to register to gain access to the link and so that we can follow up for future involvement.

https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050e4caea72aa1f58-dismantling
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 live-streamed, 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.

CELEBRATION OF MINISTRY AND MEMORIAL SERVICES
Saturday, October 31
10:00 AM to Noon
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 live-streamed to allow all interested to take part virtually.

SERVICE OF COMMISSIONING AND ORDINATION
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 live-stream.

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,
Bishop Jeremiah J. Park
Remembering Our Heritage

DR. MILTON LOYER, Conference Archivist

July – 100 years ago
The new United Brethren church building in Tower City, Schuylkill County, was dedicated by Bishop William Bell July 11, 1920. That brick building replaced the congregation’s original frame 1872 structure. A Christian Education addition was dedicated in 1958. The Evangelical congregation in Tower City followed a very similar path, erecting a frame structure in 1872 and replacing it with a brick building in 1922. When the Evangelical church was destroyed by fire in 1947, the 1920 UB building became the home for the united congregation until 1978, when Tower City’s former EUB and Methodist churches, then named Zion and Wesley united to form Christ UMC.

The Methodist congregation in Tower City had also started with a frame building in 1888 and replaced it with a brick structure in 1918. It was in this 1918 former Methodist building, using the pews and altar furnishings from the former EUB building, that the united congregation ultimately worshiped until the present modern building was erected with the help of the conference’s Church Builders Club in 1991.

August – 50 years ago
On August 16, 1970, the first Spanish language service of a new community outreach was held in Harrisburg in the Derry Street UMC chapel. Rev. Emilio Martinez, of the Harrisburg Teen Challenge, led the service. As reported a few months later in THE LINK: “The trustees of the church gave their unanimous approval for this ministry. The work has grown and now both morning and evening services are being conducted as well as a church school for the children. A request has recently come for permission to use the chapel for a midweek service.” Unfortunately, United Methodist efforts over the years have failed to sustain enduring ethnic ministries in the area. Derry Street began as a church plant of the Boas Street [First] United Brethren Church in 1889, and in turn gave birth to the Twenty-Ninth Street congregation in 1924. First UMC, Derry Street UMC and Twenty-Ninth Street UMC all ceased operating in 2019, although the latter building continues to serve the newly-formed congregation known as The Journey.

We’re using social media to engage and equip the local church in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
Check us out on Facebook for the latest news, resources, classifieds, events, and more ...
Mrs. Carol Harrison of Camp Hill, Pa., widow of Rev. Leroy J. Harrison, died Tuesday, June 9, 2020. Obituary: tinyurl.com/yaxunnax


Pastor L. Ed Moore Jr. of Belleville, Pa., retired local pastor, died Friday, May 15, 2020 at Valley View Haven, Belleville, PA. Obituary: tinyurl.com/y7tcqzlf

Rev. John L. Rauch of Chambersburg Pa., Retired Elder, died Wednesday, May 20, 2020. Among his survivors is his wife, Joanne H. Rauch. Obituary: tinyurl.com/y87g6ydd


Rev. Ellen J. Evans of Binghamton, NY, Retired Elder, died Wednesday, May 27, 2020 at Lourdes Hospital, Binghamton, NY. Among her survivors is her husband, Rev. Norman A. Evans. Obituary: tinyurl.com/ybb8jztx
Susquehanna Conference
The United Methodist Church

Better Together
One in Ministry to All the World