Call to Annual Conference

“I pray that they will be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. I pray that they all will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me.” (John 17:21)

“By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.” (from the “Great Thanksgiving”)

Dear Sisters and Brothers of the Susquehanna Conference,

Grace to you and peace from the Lord Jesus Christ.

We will gather in holy conferencing as the Susquehanna Annual Conference from Thursday, May 4, thru the end of the Ordination Service on Saturday, May 6. Our 2017-2020 quadrennial theme is, “Better Together.” This year we will gather around the sub-theme, “Make Us One.” We will spend time in reflection and prayer around Jesus’ priestly prayer for unity of his followers as recorded in John 17. Our speakers will help us to deepen our understanding of and commitment to unity in Christ.

The Bible Study leaders this year will be Rev. Dr. Jaime Clark-Salvael, New Testament Professor at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, and Rev. Dr. Kenneth Loyer, lead pastor of Spry United Methodist Church, York.

We live in a very divisive society, even within the church. Unity as a people and as a church is seriously challenged and threatened. I am compelled to work for unity among God’s people in witness to the beloved community of Christ for such a time as this. With all seriousness, intention, and focus, we are to be determined to be one out of many. Let’s be reminded that unity doesn’t mean uniformity or common agreement on everything; rather, unity is about God’s desire for us to keep growing up bigger, wider, deeper, and higher than the differences we may have for the sake of the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

We will spend significant time throughout the Annual Conference in prayer. In a visible expression we will live out what Jesus desired for his disciples to be united in prayer. May 4 is also National Day of Prayer, so we will be joining with other people of faith around the nation in prayer. The week following Annual Conference will be our conference’s opportunity to pray for the whole church and the Commission on A Way Forward. We will be hearing more about this prayer opportunity as we get closer to our designated time. We believe that a praying way forward is indeed a way forward in unity.

I am also grateful that clergy members of our annual conference will preach at two of our worship services. Rev.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Hearts Strangely Warmed

“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, 1738

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.

Emma Dickinson

Emma Dickinson, of Trinity United Methodist Church in Hummelstown, is a seventh grader with a heart for God and a love of all things farming, especially chickens. Her science teacher, Lori Fischer, encouraged Emma to use her love of chickens to “do something bigger” and introduced Emma to her friend Tanya Weaver, a mission/aid worker in Zimbabwe, Africa.

Emma discovered that there are a lot of people in Zimbabwe living with HIV/AIDS, and that Zimbabwe doesn’t have much rain, so they are experiencing massive drought and famine. She is using her knowledge of farming and raising chickens, and doing some additional research, to come up with a sustainable way for the people of Zimbabwe to be able to raise chickens as a food and income source. She is looking into what breeds of chickens might be best suited for the conditions and also what foods can be grown locally in the challenging climate to feed to the chickens. According to Weaver, the current chicken breeds consume too much water and feed, which drains family budgets and eliminates all profits.

Chickens need a basic diet of carbohydrates and protein. “My chickens love to eat mealworms!” exclaimed Dickinson, and she knows that mealworms are a great source of protein, are easy to raise, and require little moisture. In warm climates, mealworms develop and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12
Because you care, you give. And because you give, the Benevolent Homes can continue to care for those in need among us each and every day.

Please continue to be generous and faithful throughout the coming year. Our residents—your friends and neighbors both young and old—are depending on you.

Monetary gifts designated for Friends of the Homes can be sent to:
The Finance Office, 303 Mulberry Dr., Ste. 500, Mechanicsburg, PA 17050.

United Methodist Home for Children
umhcservices.org
Bethany Village
bethanyvillage.org
Normandie Ridge Senior Living Community
NormandieRidge.org

Quincy Village
quincyvillage.org
RiverWoods Senior Living Community
RiverWoods.org

United Methodist Homes Wesley Village Campus
Unitedmethodisthomes.org/location/Wesley-village-campus

The Young People’s Ministry Council recognizes that teens are struggling and we want to offer a chance for everyone to struggle together.

Join Us
March 12, 2017
Park Forest Village UMC
for
#thestuggleisreal

This Youth Rally will have live music, interactive worship, mission, group building, and topical small group discussions. Topics for discussion will include things that teens struggle with daily.

These events are FREE
For more details and to register go to
www.igniteyoungpeople.org

Questions? Contact Audrey Wilder - owilder@susumc.org
Award nominations open for Annual Conference

Do you know an outstanding United Methodist clergy or lay person or congregation who you think should be recognized and honored at Annual Conference for their discipleship and achievements? You have the opportunity now through March 15 to submit nominations for the 2017 Annual Conference awards. Those selected will attend a special awards luncheon at Annual Conference in May. Use the information below to request award nomination forms.

Harry Dennman Award
The Foundation for Evangelism sponsors this award in three parts – for one clergy, one lay person, and one youth who show outstanding achievement in evangelism. Contact Rev. Dr. Tom Salisbury at 717-766-7441 or tsalzgiver@susumc.org.

Harry Hosier Award
Our Commission on Inclusiveness gives this award to an individual or congregation that moves people from dependence to independence; works with people who are downtrodden to empower them; and helps a congregation move from inactivity to lively worship. Contact Pastor Sarah Kim at 814-505-5094 (cell) or skim@susumc.org.

Bishop D. Frederick Wertz Award
Given by Lycoming College in memory of Bishop Wertz, this is given to a clergy or lay person who has rendered exceptional service to God through the church. Contact Rev. Jeffrey LeCrone at 570-321-4112 or lecrone@lycoming.edu.

Howard and Elizabeth Brinton Award
Given by the Conference Missional Board in memory of former missionaries, this award is given in two parts; to an individual and to a congregation showing excellence in mission support and practice. Contact Rev. John Kutz at 717-534-2262 or jkutz@susumc.org.

The Flying Dove Award
Given by Lycoming College in memory of Bishop Wertz, this is given to a clergy or lay person who has rendered exceptional service to God through the church. Contact Rev. Jeffrey LeCrone at 570-321-4112 or lecrone@lycoming.edu.

The Conference Peace with Justice Team presents two awards. One is to recognize the soul’s sincere desire. God will bless us and our witness abundantly. I look forward to greeting you at the new, exciting, and “sweetest place on earth” for our time together at the Annual Conference this May.

Bishop Jeremiah J. Park
With You in Christ’s Ministry, Jeremiah J. Park
EDITORIAL
To whom much is given . . .

There are 7 billion people living on planet Earth. If Earth’s population consumed at the rate of those who live in sub-Saharan Africa, the planet could sustain 15 billion people. If everyone on the planet consumed at the rate of persons living in North America, the planet could sustain 1.2 billion people. . . . much is required. (Luke 12:48)
What will “make America great again?” The answer lies in America’s response to the hollow cries of starving children, the despairing voices seeking safety, the shuffling footsteps of those yearning to breathe free. God calls us, “trust with much,” to jointly find creative ways to respond to those whom God so loves.

REV. DR. DENNIS OTTO
Director of Congregational Development

To whom much is given . . .

In the vast majority of churches where I have done consultations and workshops, similar questions and wishes emerge early in our time together. Those questions are framed: “What program can we do to get more people in the church?” “What is the conference going to do to help us get more people?” “What will attract people to our church?” The wishes follow: “If only we had the right pastor who could attract the people. . . . I wish the conference would. . . . leave our pastor longer. . . . move our pastor sooner. . . . I wish what to do. . . . stop telling us what to do. . . .” “I wish things would go back to the way they were. . . . I wish the church would get into the twenty-first century.” My response is simple . . . There is no magic wand! We are all made out of pixie dust! Making disciples is not magic, not the lack of the pastoral lottery, and surely is not some slick program. Making disciples is about relationships. It is about three basic relationships:

1. Disciples building relationships with those who do not know Jesus Christ.
2. Building new or deeper relationship with God through Jesus — new relationships for those who don’t know God and deeper relationship for those who do.
3. Creating a community that builds relationships with new followers and invites them into a full fellowship.

The redundancy in using “build” and “relationship” in all three areas is intentional. Relationships seldom just happen. People build relationships, and that takes time. Despite the many rapid things in our world, from microwave cooking to our digital devices, building anything takes time. Having been involved in three rather large building projects as a pastor, I remember my impatience with them. Each one took somewhat longer than expected, unexpected issues were uncovered, and what looked right on paper looked different in 3-D reality. Relationships are like that, aren’t they? They take time and have unexpected twists and turns.

Build relationships with those who do not follow Jesus. Most church folk have few friends who are not also church folk, and we generally think that is a good thing. Actually, it means that making new disciples is almost impossible. Those who follow Jesus need to spend less time with other followers and more time building relationships with neighbors, coworkers, the parents of our children’s friends, etc. so that we have the opportunity to share our faith.

Build relationships with God through Jesus Christ. The business of our lives — even, or maybe especially, our church lives — often keeps us from developing a genuine and deepening relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Unless we begin to look, love, and speak like Jesus, our witness is muted. When we do have the opportunity to share, most followers are not sure how to help someone take the first or next step in their relationship with Jesus. This needs to be part of “Following Jesus 101.”

Create a community that builds relationships. Both before and after people commit to follow Jesus they need a community that engages them. Many of our churches just don’t have room for people. It’s like the seats are full. Far from it! Is that our relationship capacity is maxed out and so new people receive a friendly handshake but are not engaged as new partners in the journey. There may not be a magic wand or pixie dust, but we have the power of God, the grace of Jesus, and the presence of the Holy Spirit working in and through us to make disciples.

GROWING EFFECTIVE CHURCHES

There is no magic wand

FROM WHERE I SIT
Confession and two questions

I have a confession — and then I want to ask two questions. My confession is that from Thanksgiving through the week of Christmas, I saw and I heard on the Hallmark Channel and the Christmas movies. Please don’t judge me. I know that they are pretty sappy, sweet, with much the same story line. But by the time Advent and Christmas rolls around, that’s exactly what I need.

One of the stories this season featured a woman stranded in a small town. There she met a widower (with a daughter) who owned a Christmas tree farm that had been in his family for three generations. And, yes, true to most story lines of these stories, he was about to lose the farm because the trees were no longer selling as much as they had been.

Shocker — the job that the stranded woman had was with an agency that helped companies brand their product. In other words, people helped companies be identified and stand out in the market place so they could sell more and be more effective — just what the tree farm needed.

Spoiler alert — she was able to do this for the tree farm so that they would not lose the farm and they became successful again. And of course, the woman and man fell in love and formed a new family, including her daughter.

I got to thinking about this movie and our churches. Thus, one of my two questions: What is the brand of your church? Another way to ask that question is, what is your church known for in the community?

Are you known as the church that is growing so fast? Are you known as the place to go for children’s ministry, youth ministry, senior adult ministry? Is your church known as the church that is all over the community, involved in missions with the community? Is your church known as the church where everyone is welcome, no matter what they look like or what they act, or no matter what their backstory is? Maybe your church has the best day-care/ nursery school in the community.

Maybe your church is known as the church that can’t get along with each other. Or maybe your church is the church that has the longest running spaghetti dinner, the best rummage sale, the best Easter eggs in the community. Maybe your brand is the fact that you haven’t changed worship style, or haven’t started a new outreach ministry in years.

One of the questions I think we need to grapple with is what is each of our church’s brand? In other words, what are we known for in the community?

One way to find out your brand is to ask the sales people at the convenience store, the waiters at the restaurant in your community, the employee at the gas station, or people in the neighborhood these questions: “Can you tell me where (church’s name is) located? What do you know about them? Have you ever been there?”

If you are too well known, it is great to ask a friend or family member who doesn’t go to your church to ask these questions. The second question that is even more important is, does that for which we are known fulfill our mandate to make disciples of Jesus Christ and the transformation of the world? In other words, that for which we spend the most church time, resources, and energy — is that helping us make disciples or is it “good things” but not really “disciples.”

Does our children’s ministry, youth ministry, senior adult ministry, outreach ministry, spaghetti dinners, Easter egg sales help us increase our own discipleship and help us make new disciples? In the past year, or even six months, we need to ask, with all our work, how many new people have we brought to Jesus Christ?

I love the Hallmark movies because they make me feel good. They don’t change who I am, but I get warm all over feeling and, for me, that’s part of the Christmas holidays.

But the church is ordained and created by God for more than warm all over feelings for us and our members. We are marked by Jesus Christ who expects, wants, and even commands us to go out and to warm all over feel — to do all to that we can to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Share the Good News!

When you are finished reading Susquehanna LINK, please give your copy to someone else who might be interested.
Implement the new Ministry Plan and Initiatives as adopted by the 2012 Annual Conference Session

Adjust the structure as necessary to achieve desired results.

Begin regional deployment of resources to empower local churches to respond to the plan’s focus.

**#thestruggleisreal**

**Youth Rally, Gettysburg**

By Audrey Wilder
Director of Young People’s Ministry and Christian Education

“Because of what I experienced at #thestruggleisreal Rally, I will go up to others if I see them struggling and help.”

~ Youth from Gettysburg rally

“Because of what I experienced at #thestruggleisreal Rally, I will look more to God to help me with my struggles.”

~ Youth from Gettysburg rally

“Because of what I experienced at #thestruggleisreal Rally, I will listen with more intent to what my youth are saying.”

~ Adult youth leader, Gettysburg rally

Gettysburg UMC graciously hosted the first #thestruggleisreal Youth Rally on Sunday, January 8. Youth and their adult leaders from Harrisburg, Altoona, and York Districts gathered to acknowledge their struggles, realize they are not alone, and find hope that they can cope with their struggles through the power of Christ and the love of their neighbor.

Everyone participated in a wonderful worship service lead by the youth of the YPMC and Blessed Praise Band, a youth praise band from Loysburg UMC. Youth then spent time with others outside of their youth group in small group discussion and support, team-building activities, and assembling “blessing bags” to hand to homeless individuals in their own community. Adult youth leaders attended a training on “Helping Teens Struggle Well.” Over a great meal including sloppy Joes, mac-n-cheese, and ice cream sundaes, youth and adults talked in their youth groups about what they had experienced and learned about struggling together.

Registration for the remaining event is available on-line at www.igniteyoungpeople.org. Registration closes one week before the event date.

March 12, 2017
3-7 p.m. – Park Forest Village UMC
1833 Park Forest Ave., State College

This event is free to all youth groups. The YPMC asks that you please pre-register your group on-line in order to adequately prepare materials and meals. www.igniteyoungpeople.org

Also be watching the Young People’s Ministry Instagram and Facebook pages for video clips of what our youth are struggling with @youngpplministry @igniteyoungpeople

Online Registration for Summer Camps is NOW OPEN

go to susumcamps.org to register today

Bishop and Mrs. Park, (center) visited St. Paul’s UMC in Scranton recently and posed for a photograph with Congo refugees who have made the church their spiritual home.
How to have a courageous conversation in a small group or Sunday school class

By Rev. Chris Barbieri and Rev. M. Scott Hughes

Most of us were taught as children to avoid talking about politics and religion. Lately, however, it has seemed impossible to avoid talking about either. The 2016 presidential election is over and has exposed how fractured, fearful, and divided we are as a nation. The reality for most small groups is that they are already talking about religion, and many have found it difficult to be part of the conversation. How do we engage in healthy conversations that bring us closer together and closer to God in such a politically charged environment? Though often seen as a refuge from the political nastiness, the church can serve as the best place for these contentious conversations.

Our culture has fallen seriously ill with confirmation bias, and we too easily surround ourselves with sources that only feed our opinions and biases. Often our beliefs are subconscious. Internet tracking software closely monitors what we click and view and feeds us more “news” in line with our beliefs.

It takes courage to enter into conversations when we know we will be fogged up front that we may be starting from places of disagreement. However, if we can be brave and enter these conversations, we soften the surface of our相似，and just very different plans to achieve those goals. As leaders in the church, how do we plan and facilitate these courageous conversations?

First, you must establish a framework. A group covenant provides the ground rules for conversations and fosters a culture of respect and safety. There are several sample small group covenants available here, or you can create your own. Whichever covenant you choose, be sure to convey these key ideas: respect for each participant, a commitment to listening, and a willingness to learn.

Part of the human condition is a subconscious desire to confirm previously held beliefs. By definition, we learn only when our assumptions may be exposed to places of division. Small groups and one-time or an ongoing group. It takes courage to enter into conversations when we know we will be fogged up front that we may be starting from places of disagreement. However, if we can be brave and enter these conversations, we soften the surface of our beliefs. By definition, we learn only when our assumptions may be exposed to places of division. Small groups and one-time or an ongoing group.

A good framework should have a group leader, a facilitator, and a trusted facilitator, and conversation plan. The group covenant provides the ground rules for conversations and fosters a culture of respect and safety. There are several sample small group covenants available here, or you can create your own. Whichever covenant you choose, be sure to convey these key ideas: respect for each participant, a commitment to listening, and a willingness to learn.

How do we engage in conversations with people who experience racism, sexism, and poverty. The facilitator must be trusted by the group. The facilitator needs to be clear about his/her role when the group gathers. While the facilitator may have opinions about a topic, he/she must not be perceived as supporting one side or the other. Rather, the facilitator is there to ensure all sides are fairly represented and that the covenant is followed. The facilitator reminds group members about the covenant they have agreed to and calms, no matter how anxious others may be.

A conversation plan is also essential. This may include large-group discussion, small-group time, prayer, and silence. Several sample conversation methods can be found in this article.

Do not overlook the importance of introductions in your plan. Be sure the group has time to get to know one another. It is important that each participant sees all other participants as human beings with hopes and fears—not as “the enemy.” There are numerous techniques for handling introductions.

You will want to customize this relational time, depending on whether you have a one-time or an ongoing group. Second, everyone should commit to deep, active listening. Too often, we think we are listening when we really are just thinking about our next turn, and that makes us angry, that is precisely the moment that might be key to our growth. It is a pivotal moment from thirty years ago. An African-American co-worker was on a romantic date with his wife when he was pulled over and treated roughly by the police. A carjacking had recently occurred, and this person was pulled over because they were a black man driving a nice car. The police realized their mistake after a few minutes and apologized, but, needless to say, the date was ruined. Hearing that story helped me appreciate for the first time that everyone is not treated equally and fairly, in spite of our many laws. A false assumption died, but real growth occurred.

A Final Word

Talking politics in our partisan and divided country can be risky. Taking the time to be deliberate and intentional in creating the proper environment for conversation can go a long way toward setting the stage for learning and growth. This important work can bring healing to places of division. Small groups and Sunday school classes are ideal places for Courageous Conversations. Jesus prayed that his followers would be known for how they loved. May we all treat one another such that Jesus’ prayer is fulfilled.
The annual Fall Fest at Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Mechanicsburg began six years ago. It was initially an attempt at creating an event for the members of Aldersgate to gather together informally and get to know each other outside of their three Sunday services. After a few years they decided to make it an outreach event, demonstrating hospitality and a welcoming bridge to the community. Church leaders decided everything would be free – food, entertainment, games and activities – and prayed the people in the neighborhood would see it and come be a part of it.

Aldersgate’s mission statement is “Reaching with the heart of God for the lives of our community.” Until 2016 there had never really been a theme to the Fall Fest event, apart from fun and fellowship. Then they thought, “Unless we’re doing something specifically to lift up the gospel, what are we doing?”

So in 2016 they made an effort to bridge into the community with the gospel of Christ by celebrating what God is already doing out there. Having a family background of law enforcement, Rev. Troy Howell suggested that they celebrate emergency responders from the surrounding communities. “A lot of [emergency responders] I’ve talked to feel battered and unappreciated,” reflected Howell. So they invited local and state police, emergency medical services, firefighters, and other emergency responders from Mechanicsburg, Enola, and Camp Hill to a time of celebration, recognition, and community interaction.

October 16 was a perfect fall day. An 11 a.m. worship service was held outside on the expansive lawn area next to the church, open for all to attend. Folks brought lawn chairs and blankets to sit on. The service included a time of singing worship music (for all the surrounding neighborhood to hear!), a time of recognition, honor, and prayer for the emergency responders who attended, offering them a token of appreciation for their service to our communities, and a message from Rev. Howell. He referenced the passage from Philippians 2:5-8, “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness ... he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross.” (NRSV). Howell noted that the selfless, life-risking work that emergency responders do reflects and demonstrates the altruistic heart and love of Christ in the most real way. “They lay down their lives every time they get a call.”

After worship the Fest began. There was plenty to choose from; sampling and voting in a chili cook-off, plenty of free food (hamburgers, hot dogs, fries, baked goods), interacting with the emergency services folks and their equipment, checking out classic cars, family entertainment (magician/balloon artist), a band playing classic rock and pop tunes, face painting, games (like cornhole and ga-ga ball), bounce houses, and more. The afternoon was wrapped up watching an ice sculptor from Chambersburg create a beautiful ice carving honoring the emergency services.

The Fall Fest was well attended. Many church members brought their friends and neighbors, and invited their local emergency services personnel to attend and be honored. Families from the church pre-school came. Neighbors came. “We challenged the worshipping body that day to consider next time they see an [emergency responder] on duty somewhere, to offer them a thank you for serving in that role.” Howell is hoping that future Fall Fests might be used to honor other people who serve our local communities, such as doctors, nurses, and educators.
Jesus Make Us One

Annual Conference
Lodge, Hershey, Pa.
December 13, 2016, witnessed the culmination of the seventh Preaching with Power program in the Susquehanna Conference, held at Middlesex UMC in Carlisle, Pa., the 12-week program, taught by Middlesex UMC associate pastor Dr. Dilip Abayasekara and co-facilitated by speech coach Tony Crocamo, was completed by six pastors: lay servant Eugene Emerick of Neidig Memorial UMC, Harrisburg District; Rev. Ho Shik Kang of Wesley Mechanicsburg, Harrisburg District; Pastor Ruth Liples of Mt. Zion/Orange, Scranton/Wilkes-Barre District; Pastor Wanda Minnick of Oval UMC, Williamsport District; Pastor Jerry Schmidt of Tri-County Parish, Williamsport District; and Pastor Jay Saldaña of Unity Parish, State College District. Chief guests were Bishop and Mrs. Jeremiah Park. In addition to a delicious luncheon, the event included short sermons preached by the six PwP graduates and addresses by Bishop Jeremiah Park and Harrisburg District Superintendent Rev. Barry Robison. Also present were Rev. Marian Hartman, Scranton Wilkes-Barre District Superintendent, and Rev. Beth Jones, Williamsport District Superintendent.

Bishop Park spoke on the meaning of proclaiming God’s word and shared some personal reflections that highlighted the power and joy of the preaching ministry, which naturally led to singing by all. Rev. Barry Robison rose to the occasion of giving “a few appropriate remarks” in a manner reminiscent of President Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg address, which suited the occasion and inspired the audience, which included spouses, mentors, and friends of the PwP graduates and visiting Bishop Jerry Diggs of the Pentecostal Conference in Baltimore.

The PwP graduates received certificates of completion and continuing education credits as well as the personal congratulations of Bishop Park and the three district superintendents present. Fittingly, the event was concluded by singing ‘Sent Forth by God’s Blessings.’ Preaching with Power is grounded on four pillars: biblical theology, the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the aim of giving spiritual sustenance and guidance to the congregation, and the use of effective approaches to sermon construction, organization, and delivery. The next Preaching with Power program will be held fall 2017. The location is yet to be decided. Any interested preacher (clergy or lay) is invited to contact Dr. Dilip Abayasekara at 717-648-1080 or DAbayasekara@susumc.org.

By Dr. Dilip Abayasekara

Dr. Dilip Abayasekara
Rev. Jan Hughes, Host Pastor, Middlesex UMC
Rev. Ho Shik Kang of Wesley Mechanicsburg, Harrisburg District; Pastor Wanda Minnick of Oval UMC, Williamsport District; Pastor Jerry Schmidt of Tri-County Parish, Williamsport District; and Pastor Jay Saldaña of Unity Parish, State College District.

Bishop Jeremiah J. Park

Preaching with Power graduates Pastor Wanda Minnick and Pastor Jay Saldaña being congratulated.
Conference Center welcomes new staff members

Theresa Hunter
Conference Administrative Specialist

It is with great pleasure that the Susquehanna Conference welcomes Theresa Hunter to the staff as an administrative specialist. Originally from East Patchogue, New York, Theresa relocated to the Harrisburg area ten years ago. She joins us after five years as an executive assistant / paralegal for the vice-president of real estate law for Rite Aid Corporation in Harrisburg and, prior to that time, held financial positions in businesses in the Harrisburg area. Theresa will lend her skills in several areas in the conference office, including Safe Sanctuaries, the Conference Loan Fund, and trustee matters. Theresa lives with her two sons, Chris and Ronnie, and her parents, Gladys and Hollis, in the Harrisburg area. She enjoys crafts and spending time with family and friends. Please help us welcome her in God’s love.

Andra Haverstock
Conference Treasurer/Comptroller

Lori Haagen (pronounced Haygen) comes to the Harrisburg District administrative assistant position with 27 years of experience as an administrative assistant in the corporate world. She is a Mechanicsburg High School and YTI Career Institute graduate, with a license in massage therapy and has an active Career Institute graduate, with a license in massage therapy and has an active career in massage therapy and has an active career in massage therapy and has an active career in massage therapy and has an active career in massage therapy and has an active career in massage therapy and has an active career. A member of Neidig Memorial Church, Lori enjoys spending time with her family and friends. She is a member of the choir and leads the bell choir, as well as being Christian education chair.

Rev. Barry Robison
Harrisburg District Superintendent

Pastor Lourdes Stevens
New York District Administrative Assistant

As an author and publisher of four books, Lourdes Stevens joins the York District Office as administrative assistant. Lourdes was born in Manila, Philippines, and attended college at Colegio de San Juan de Letran where she was awarded a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration Management and Marketing. She also attended college at Catonsville Community College in the U.S. Learning foreign languages, history, and cultures are special accomplishments to Lourdes who speaks Tagalog and Korean in addition to English. Lourdes is a local pastor in the Susquehanna Conference as well as a lay speaker. She also holds a position as a director of hospitality and small groups in the York District. Previous work experience included coordinator of children’s ministries and other ministries in addition to volunteer service in her community.

For twenty-four years Lourdes has been the refuge. She enjoyed her volunteer experience at the refuge located in nearby Penns Creek, four years. She has been an active member of the Lewisburg Garden Club, serving as its treasurer for four years.

Eight years ago, Alice began a new adventure as a volunteer at T&D’s Cuts of the World. A wild animal refuge located in nearby Penns Creek, T&D’s provides permanent homes for rescued animals. She started working as a docent every Saturday, greeting visitors and guiding their experience at the refuge. She enjoyed her volunteer work so much she decided to help every Friday throughout the entire year, feeding animals and cleaning cages. “The biggest honor was being handed the keys, providing me with the privilege of feeding the animals,” Alice said. “I’ve had wonderful times there. I pinch myself thinking about how lucky I am to be involved, surrounded by the animals.”

Alice also actively volunteers at Albright’s central office on the RiverWoods campus and at the First Presbyterian Church in Lewisburg. One of her favorite projects is Operation Christmas Child, organized by Samaritan’s Purse, which fills shoeboxes with school supplies, personal hygiene items and toys, distributing them to children all over the world. She began packing boxes in 1995, and now goes to a processing center in Baltimore annually to assist with the 12 million boxes that are donated. “It’s a special environment — a fellowship,” Alice said. “I do it to serve the Lord and get so much out of it myself. It’s a simple gift but the impact is profound — for the child, family, and community.”

Alice Marquart is a shining example of being called to serve, and Albright is proud that she is part of our family. Albright, celebrating 100 years of service to the Susquehanna Valley, invites you to continue your mission by joining us at one of our six locations. Visit www.albrightcare.org for information on senior living, day programs, giving, or volunteering.

The call to serve

2017 District Informational Finance Meetings

For Pastors and those involved with the Finances of your Church

March 21, 2017 - Aldersgate UMC
Harrisburg District
1480 Jerusalem Road, Mechanicsburg, PA 17005-2012

April 21, 2017 - St. Paul’s UMC
York District
750 Norland Avenue, Chambersburg, PA 17201-4218

May 24, 2017 - Good Shepherd UMC
Altoona District
1660 Clay Avenue, Tyrone, PA 16686-0180

More details will be coming soon.
Check asumc.org often for updates.

Topics for Discussion:

- Accounts Payable
- Bank Finance Practices
- Church Benefits
- Conference Finance Web Page
- Equitable Compensation
- Loan Fund
- Property & Casualty/Auto Insurance
- Shares of Ministry - Curation
- Shares of Ministry - Reinvestment
- Student Aid
- Tax exempt (501c3) and Requirements
- Workers Compensation

Begin the process of evaluating the results of the current plan
Design a strategy to listen to our churches and their needs
Develop the appropriate guiding adaptive questions to be considered as we look ahead

We are ... Better Together

2019
And perhaps missions are in her future confirmation classes at Trinity UMC soon.

Emma is joined by sister, Annie, for a musical opportunity for them to learn more about what they really needed is taken care of.” She hopes people's faces when something that is wanted to own a farm someday.”

"Some of what I have been doing comes to help her share about her project and gain the funding needed to put it into action. "I love seeing the expression on the chicken farming in Zimbabwe, and to register, go to "I love seeing the expression on " "With the announcement of this new scholarship, we reaffirm our commitment to educational access and ministry excellence for our future clergy leaders." An additional benefit of the scholarship program is the required financial wellness curriculum offered through EY Financial Planning Services. EY (formerly Ernst & Young) has provided financial planning services to retirement plan participants in Wespath-administered plans since 2005. Scholarship awards will be contingent upon the completion of a financial wellness curriculum, valued at $2,500 to $3,500 to the student. The curriculum through EY includes assistance with cash flow; personal savings and debt management; retirement savings strategies; investment allocation decisions; understanding tax issues; and estate and insurance planning. Scholarship recipients will complete a financial wellness assessment, a customized and comprehensive financial plan, and a personalized guidance consultation with a licensed planner. Those interested in the Excellence in Clergy Leadership Scholarship may apply with the Office of Loans and Scholarships at www.gbhem.org/scholarshipapplication. Scholarship application will be open between January 3 and March 1 of each year. Interested students should indicate that they are applying for the “Excellence in Clergy Leadership Scholarship” on the first page of the application. For more information on the Office of Loans and Scholarships, visit http://www.gbhem.org. About GBHEM: As the leadership development agency of The United Methodist Church, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry’s mission is to prepare global leaders for a global church and the world. Every elder, deacon and licensed local pastor benefits from our training and candidacy programs. Many young adults find help in clarifying their vocation and God’s call on their lives through our leadership and discernment programs. Follow us on Twitter and Facebook: @gbhem.
WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS

Being an “open door”

“Our past United Methodist slogan leaves us the impression that this is a description of us or whether “open” is a verb, an action for us to do. Yet the manner in which you respond, your life hinges on a bigger question. The question is: “When we describe ourselves as open, how are we? Is it because of what we show others or the true meaning we know deep in our hearts and minds? When we “open” hearts, minds, and doors, how do we? Are we talking about doing this to ourselves or others? Or for ourselves and others?”

How? With great force or a gentle knock?

“We are called to be open when the cold of the world in weather and news tempts us to huddle in the warmth of our own comfort and community. Instead of self-improvement, we must dream of church and world improvement too. So many talk about building bridges and taking down walls that they forget to look for a doorway.

Look hard and open your heart and mind. Is there a door to that broken relationship or to that new possibility that should be tried first before doing all that work on bridges and walls? What doors do you have to open this year? How will you be an open door?”

As we start Lent, let’s remember January comes from the Latin for “door” and February from the Latin word for “purification.” God calls us to be open to newness and to humility as we march forward into this next holy season. Only he can guide us through our doorways together with him. How?

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; and it will be opened to you.” (Matthew 7:7)

For more information contact Phyllis Bowers at (local) 717-766-7343 or (toll-free) 1-877-619-5974 or e-mail pbowers@umstewardship.org

OUR HERITAGE

January – 100 years ago

On October 11, 1917, the United Methodist Clergy with direction from the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the State of Pennsylvania made an application to form a corporation, to be “the first all-cottage home for children.” The name was not well received and religious training of children was specifically “for the purpose of establishing and conducting an institution for the maintenance and religious training of children committed to its care.”

Because that name was not well received by church members, it was later changed to “The Methodist Home for Children.”

Until funds could be raised to purchase a location in a farm setting, it was decided to establish a temporary home. In 1919 a large Victorian home at 318 W. Main Street in Mechanicshurg was purchased and refitted to begin the ministry. In 1921 the Rupp farm adjoining the borough of Shermantown was purchased, and in 1926 the children were transferred to what was said to be “the first all-cottage home for children.”

Today, the United Methodist Home for Children Inc. continues to provide residential care, individual and family counseling, adoptive placement, permanency services, and other ministries in the name of Christ.

February – 50 years ago

The Board of Evangelism of the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the Methodist Church organized a spiritual life retreat from February 24-26, 1967, at camp Greenie Hills. Ernest Logan of the General Board of Evangelism led the gathering and promoted THE TWELVE – a national movement within the denomination where persons were disciplined to proceed beyond prayer and Bible study to witnessing for Christ and visiting those outside the church.”

Participants in THE TWELVE commit themselves to “attend group meetings, pray daily for each other, volunteer their services, and share their faith.” Those attending the retreat were trained to present and encourage witnessing in their congregations either within THE TWELVE movement or as part of a local evangelistic thrust.

PLEASE NOTE

Due to renovations in the conference office and the re-location of permanent services, and other communications, we will be closed for the month of March.

All requests for materials needed by April 15 should be sent to us by February 28, 2017. Please return materials due in March as you finish with them.

We are sorry for the inconvenience and appreciate your patience and understanding. Thank you!

Joni Robison
discovery@susumc.org
717-766-7968 or 800-682-2615

COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

call for 2019 General Conference

Sets forth actions to involve the whole church in prayer and conversation.

St. Louis Islands. Due through an affirmative vote at their fall meeting this week, the United Methodist Council of Bishops expressed their intent to call for a special session of the General Conference in either February or March of 2019 and asked the business manager of the General Conference to move forward with exploring venues and a bid search.

The Constitution of The United Methodist Church provides that the Council of Bishops may call a special session of the General Conference possessing the authority and exercising all the powers of the General Conference. Business to be considered during such a session would be limited to the purpose defined within the call, which also would include the time and place.

The Council’s action stops short of making the actual call for a special session, which is expected to come at some point after the Commission on a Way Forward begins its work.

The Council’s Executive Committee brought the recommendation to the full Council for consideration and action after exploring the feasibility of meeting in either 2018 or 2019.

“A requirement that materials be in place at least 230 days before such a session makes it unlikely that the Commission could complete its work in time to meet that deadline during such a 2018 meeting, so 2019 seemed to us to be the best option,” said Bishop Bruce R. Ough, president of the Council. “The purpose of broadening the time frame to either February or March is to afford more flexibility in finding a suitable and available location.”

Such a special session would be composed of delegates to the preceding General Conference - or their lawful successors - unless a conference prefers to have a new election.

The Council received a report from the moderators of the Way Forward about composition of commissions in place, a plan for the first meetings and a strategy for communication.

The Council also voted to approve a recommendation from the Executive Committee to initiate a conversational model of the Way Forward Project, which will include annual and central conferences that would parallel the work of the Commission on a Way Forward. The Council also will be free to structure the process and timeline according to the specific needs and context of their area, using some suggested questions as a starting point.

Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett and Bishop AlGWinn, co-chairs of the Praying Our Way Forward Initiative, announced the second phase of the appeal, which involves each conference making a commitment to come together in prayer during a designated week. The effort would begin January 1, 2017, and continue into 2018. The first phase involved a commitment from bishops for daily prayer focused on the selection and initial efforts of the Commission.

“We want the church and the Commission to be ‘closer together’ as we move forward, led by God. This prayer emphasis puts us in a posture where as a church we are asking and listening for God’s leadership,” said Bishop Wallace-Padgett. “Our prayer focus is twofold: We are praying that God will help us to more effectively discern the will of the church. And we are praying to be one in Christ.”

Shared: We are inviting persons to: pray daily for the church’s effectiveness in fulfilling our mission of making disciples and for the church. As part of the work of the Commission on a Way Forward participate in their conference’s week of prayer; fast weekly as they ask for that of The United Methodist Church and our future Bishop GWinn said the Council is working in partnership with the Prayer Room, which has developed a website called UMCprays.org. “The website features many tools and resources to help you to plan your week of prayer,” said Bishop GWinn. “Each week will feature information during a designated week in the conference that is praying that week, including a prayer-focused blog written by the bishop in that area.

United Methodist Communications
umcpresscenter.org

Bishop’s Partners in Mission

Interested in saving lives and restoring hope? Bishops Partners in Mission is recruiting ambassadors

Dr. Dilip Abhayaskara,
Field Coordinator
Bishop’s Partners in Mission

The churches and people of the Susquehanna Conference have responded to the appeal to save lives from malaria (which no Malian can rest here locally, nationally, and internationally by reducing Mission Central’s debt. They have contributed more than $560,000, and

Free resources for your local church can be found at www.discovery-place.org

For information contact Phyllis Bowers at (local) 717-766-7343 or (toll-free) 1-877-619-5974 or e-mail pbowers@umstewardship.org
Trinity United Methodist in Bellefonte celebrates 200 years

By Frank Ready, Center Daily Times

On Sunday morning, Pastor Chris Passante made the rounds at Trinity United Methodist Church in Bellefonte.

He posted to extend a warm welcome to each of the visiting parishioners, receiving in return what had to be some very cold handshakes.

Passante said that a typical Sunday service usually packs in about 70 bodies or so into the pews, but he was concerned that the low temperatures might keep his flock at bay — even on the church’s 200th anniversary.

Fortunately attendance wasn’t a prerequisite for everyone — anyone — to claim a stake of ownership in the festivities.

“We celebrate as a family but we also celebrate as a community outside these walls,” Passante said.

That celebration will continue all year long, from a brief intermission for college.

“On a day like today it’s time to reflect and think about how good God has been to us,” Passante said.

Parishioners singing during a service celebrating the 200th anniversary of Trinity United Methodist Church in Bellefonte on Sunday.

“This was hardly their first opportunity. The congregation was founded in 1817, but according to Passante, the physical church didn’t come along until 1875.

Bettie Kantner has been attending church almost her entire life aside from a brief intermission for college.

“I can sit in church and I can name everybody in the church,” Kantner said.

A big part of what keeps her coming back is the sense of warmth and camaraderie she feels among the other parishioners.

On to Glory

In the November issue of Susquehanna LINK, the name and photo of Pastor Bruce E. Gowc was inadvertently omitted. As a young adult, Bruce was elected to the Rules Committee of the Northeast Jurisdiction.

We apologize for this omission. — Editor
Susquehanna CONFERENCE: The United Methodist Church

Communications DNA in a Capsule

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Who, me? Is it I, Lord?

God’s Calling: We’re here to help.

Enlistment and Interpretation Committee
The Board of the Ordained Ministry – Susquehanna Conference UMC

Join Us
March 25, 2017
at Paxton UMC
3550 N. Progress Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110

If you are college aged or older questioning whether you are being called to the ordained ministry, the ministry of the local pastor, or certified ministries; this event is specifically for you. Join other men and women who are wondering, “God are you calling me?”

Cost: $20.00 – includes lunch and materials

Deadline for Registration: March 1, 2017

For additional information go to susumc.org
or contact Rev. Sandy Kraft at skraft@susumc.org

A new way to engage with Susquehanna LINK

Find us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/susumc

Check us out on Facebook for the latest news, resources, classifieds, events, and more ... We’re using social media to engage and equip the local church in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Susquehanna LINK - February 2017 15
Periodicals Postage PAID Lancaster, PA

February 2017

THE CHURCHES OF THE SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE, THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

February 2017

“He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection.”

Psalm 91:4 (NLT)

Emma Dickinson is a seventh grader with a heart for God, the people of Zimbabwe, and farming. She has discovered a new way to feed chickens. Emma is sharing her knowledge of raising chickens where there isn’t much rain. Read her story beginning on page 1.

www.facebook.com/susumc

“like” us on Susquehanna Annual Conference 2017 - 2020

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

I ask you to begin your prayers for our holy conferencing to be held May 4 - 6, 2017 at the Hershey Lodge and Conference Center.

I believe that God has plans to give our church hope and a future. I am already beginning to excitingly anticipate what God has in store for the Susquehanna Annual Conference. May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace as we trust in God, so that we may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

(Romans 15:13)

With You in Christ’s Ministry,
Bishop Jeremiah J. Park