Better Together ... Make Us One

By Ryan Krauss

“N”o one’s love for God’s church is greater than God’s love for the church,” Bishop Jeremiah Park emphasized God’s uniting love as he preached at the Opening Celebration of the 2017 Susquehanna Annual Conference. Bishop Park disclosed the Annual Conference theme for the next four years — “Better Together” — as the aspiration of a connectional church. Better Together reflects the desire of God — for the body of Christ to be one in unity.

The Opening Celebration accented the wisdom of children through Rethink Church media, addressing the question: What does it mean to have open hearts and open doors? “Everyone is invited. Come in and we’ll love you,” commented one young girl. Rev. Janet Durrwachter highlighted the thoughts of another in the Call to Worship: “No matter what [a person] is like, they are part of the church family.” Scripture lessons furthered the call to unity. J.T. Ross, an eight-year-old from Middlesex UMC, read from Isaiah 11, while Pastor Daniel Wilt offered John 17 as a unity prayer that “connects us to [all] the saints of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.” “I’m in them and you in me, so that they may be brought to complete unity.” (John 17:23)

Bishop Park openly addressed those fears which threaten denominational unity in his sermon to the Conference. “We see a dark cloud of schism hanging,” he said. Nevertheless, Bishop Park instilled, “I anticipate great things [that] God has in store for us!” The bishop then laid out the plan for the quadrennial focus: Better Together ... Make Us One (2017), One With Christ (2018), One With Each Other (2019), and One In Ministry (2020). As he called the conference to “pray, pray, pray, and pray,” Bishop Park maintained that no matter what the denomination goes through, we put our trust in God who... CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

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

The church. It’s a house of worship. A place to learn and grow. A place to use one’s gifts. A place to serve. But also a place to love and be loved - a place to be a part of the Body of Christ. It wasn’t easy growing up in the church as the daughter of the pastor. All eyes were on me and my sister. Everyone was watching for what we would do next. But on the other end of that was love.

The church gave me my first group of friends in a youth group filled with awkward middle schoolers. When my family moved right before I started high school, church was a small group of teenage girls meeting each week led by a young adult who invited me to the group as soon as I arrived in town and was a mentor I desperately needed throughout high school.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

We are the church

By Bethany Wood

The congregation of those gathered for the Annual Conference of the Susquehanna Conference worshipped together Thursday evening, May 4, celebrating the lives and resurrection of our saints.

After the soaring opening hymn, “For All the Saints,” Bishop Jeremiah Park led a prayer of adoration and illumination. Rev. Dr. Brand Eaton and Mr. John Konieczny set the tone in litany, as those we have commended to the Church Eternal were memorialized by name.

Thoughtful prayer and the beautiful, reflective solo, “Thank You for Giving to the Lord,” offered wonderfully by Kaitlyn Wise followed. The Scripture lesson, proclaimed by Kelly Kocher-Ross, Jason Robinson, and Daniel McClure echoed the 2 Kings 2:1-14 passage, speaking of the means in which generations pass the mantle to each other. Elijah is instructed to find Elisha, and pass his wisdom to him. Elijah assures Elisha that he will always be with him, but the day comes when he is taken up to the heavens. Elijah’s mantle falls and is retrieved by Elisha, who carries on the prophecy.

Rev. Dr. Charles Salisbury approached the front of the stage with a ladder and putting it down, he opened in prayer and then began to share some family history. “Charlie” is named for two grandfathers — Charles and William. Grandpa was “Big Charlie” and Salisbury’s Dad was “Little Charlie,” even though his name was Paul. Dad had two sons, Charlie and... CONTINUED ON PAGE 5
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Your gift to the Bishop’s Partners in Mission will be split equally between Mission Central and the global United Methodist Imagine No Malaria campaign.

Together we can Imagine No Debt and Imagine No Malaria!

The Bishop’s Partners in Mission

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Susquehanna Conference Bishop’s PM

For the latest news and event information, visit the Susquehanna Conference Web site at www.susumc.org
Report of the 2017 Susquehanna Annual Conference

By Jerry Wolgemuth, Director of Communications

Hershey Lodge, Hershey, Pennsylvania
May 4 - 6, 2017
Bishop Jeremiah Park

Memorable points or quotes by keynote speakers:

“No one’s love for God’s church is greater than God’s love for the church. Our Conference theme, ‘Better Together,’ reflects the desire of God for the body of Christ to be one in unity.”
— Bishop Jeremiah Park, Opening Celebration

After video clips of the building of a mosaic creation by Brookye Keeney, Altoona District Superintendent, Rev. Dr. Kathleen E. Kind, and Conference Lay Leader, John Konieczny spoke of the theme graphic, “Hands,” which pictures unity out of our diversity:

“A mosaic cannot exist without its broken components, and the pieces, once they are glazed, mortared, and grouted, come together in an art form that is better than any one of the individual pieces.”
— Leadership Report

“The song of Miriam is actually the oldest recorded Israelite hymn. Every time it was sung the Israelites remembered the time that they were delivered from Pharaoh’s horsemen. They knew in the singing that they were delivered. We, as believers in Jesus Christ, are going to be singing for a long time. So, sing the song now. The kingdom of God depends on it.”
— Bishop Moore-Koikoi, Pittsburgh Area, in her message, “Don’t Stop Singing.”

“Come, let us join hands! There is no ‘either/or’ but ‘both/and.’ God has called his people to be constantly crossing borders in Scripture; his people are called to be border-crossers also, resisting an ‘us/them’ mentality.”
— Dr. Jamie Clark-Soles, Friday morning Bible study

“In the Lord’s Supper, we join our voices with the church from across time and space in a continual prayer of thanksgiving. Viewing the Lord’s Supper for what it is, namely, a prayer thanking the God of our salvation, brings into focus the profound spiritual meaning of what is said and done during this part of worship. It is not an act to rush through, but one to form us, deep within our hearts and lives.”
— Rev. Dr. Ken Loyer, Saturday morning Bible study

How did your Conference members vote on the five constitutional amendments? (overview: tinyurl.com/lddk6tm)

Results of the vote on the five constitutional amendments were certified by Conference Secretary Rev. Arlene Beecheart, and communicated to the Council of Bishops.

Resolutions

Five resolutions were brought before the body for approval.

• Resolution One: An annual resolution on mental wellness, with dates adjusted for 2018. The resolution was approved without discussion.
• Resolution Two: Titled “Juvenile Justice,” called on clergy and members of congregations to support legislation making recordings of juvenile interrogations mandatory, as well as improving police effectiveness and protecting juveniles. The resolution passed after brief discussion.
• Resolution Three: A call for United Methodists in the Susquehanna Conference to consider WESPATH’s report of the 2016 United Methodist General Conference to adopt a resolution affirming the decision of the Joint Council of Bishops that results from this conflict. This resolution was adopted.
• Resolution Four: The resolution to support the Conference Administration in implementing new technology. The resolution was defeated.

Number of people ordained, commissioned or received into associate membership
Six ordained elders (three of whom have an ordained parent, two from this annual conference, one from the Chile Annual Conference), one ordained deacon, five commissioned/provisional elders.

Number of people retired: 25

Membership stands at 142,732, down 4,591 from the previous year.

Worship attendance stands at 54,946, down 2,602 from the previous year.

Church school attendance stands at 17,819, down 1,125 from the previous year.

Professions or reaffirmations of faith for 2016: 2,100, down 46 from 2015.

Adults and young adults in small groups for 2016: 50,965, down 2,076 from 2015.


2017 Annual Conference offerings

As of print date, the Annual Conference offerings were:

Mission Central: $23,469.44
Seminary Debt Fund: $20,967.97
Bishop’s Partners in Mission (BPIM): $48,657.90
BPIM – designated for Mission Central: $343.00
BPIM – designated for Imagine No Malaria: $3,059.42
Young People’s Ministry $7,281.88*
($1,255 A.C. Scholarships and $6,026.88 Youth Service Fund)

(BPIM – designated for Mission Central and Imagine No Malaria)

Amounts are subject to change as pledges and checks continue to arrive.

*Youth Service Fund amount does not include amounts raised through Conference Workbook and T-shirt pre-sales. See YSF total on page 12.)
I called our former pastor, Dr. Blake Unwilling to take ourselves and ministry of a that it was not pastoral ministry to into pastoral ministry.” He replied, “I several investors down that corridor, print date in Cincinnati we were served had been good. take us to retirement. settled in. Perhaps the magazine could Peggy Lee’s song, “Is that all there the Federal Reserve System between banking career was in the form of performing dance teams. We built it Liberty Weekend 1986 we launched for my wife and me satisfied the attached. local newspapers with your signature the bank’s balance sheet published in banking. Some through the fire but all through of joy. I think I hear another “pssst, hey bud ... I don’t know how God speaks to you but instead of a Cecil B. DeMille-works best. courage to tell your story. That’s how myself to these two columns. Conference 2017, I threatened a final Pssst. Hey bud ...
It is with great joy and with much anticipation that Bishop Jeremiah J. Park and Rev. Dr. Thomas Salgsigre, Director of Connectional Ministries at Administrative Services, announce the hiring of Kay Kotan as the new Director of Congregational Development.

Kotan brings a lot of experience, passion, and connectional awareness to this position. She was part of the creating team for the Healthy Church Initiative process in the Missouri Annual Conference. This initiative served as a model for our Matthew 28 Initiative. She was one of the principal creators of the initiative as well as its implementation and training. She also created the Small Church Initiative as part of the Missouri Conference Initiative.

Kotan is a sought-after speaker and workshop leader throughout the denomination, and this year she has been invited back to the Arkansas Annual Conference for a second year as keynote speaker and workshop leader. She is an ICF credentialed coach, consultant, and trainer. In addition, she is a Path One coach and has served on the faculty of Coaching@ Clergy.

She has a passion to serve churches of all sizes, and has written or co-authored twelve books. Some of those books include: Renovate or Die; A Day of New Beginnings: Helping Small Churches Remember and Discover New Paths Forward; Gear Up: Nine Essentials Processed for the Optimized Church; Building Worship Bridges: Worship to Accelerate Neighborhood Connections; Mission Possible: Structuring Your Church for Missional Effectiveness; and Necessary Nine: Things Effective Pastors Do Differently.

Kotan is an active lay person who is passionate about being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Kotan is committed to use her call as a lay person to help churches, pastors, and other lay persons serve Jesus Christ, and to help churches vision for a renewed future.

She has been married for twenty-five years to her husband, Bob. They have five children, and one grandchild. We were pleased that Kay Kotan was present for Annual Conference at the Hershey Lodge. She will begin her work with Susquehanna Conference on July 1.

The Office of Congregational Development is now part of the Connectional Ministries staff. Kotan will also be a member of the extended Cabinet.

“I know that you will join us in welcoming Kay to the Susquehanna Annual Conference. Her vast experience in the Missouri Conference and her years of involvement in parish redevelopment and new church start will be a blessing,” said Bishop Jeremiah Park.

The full Cabinet was extremely impressed with Kotan as she not only shared her call, but her vision for the future. After meeting with Kotan, the full Cabinet strongly and unanimously affirmed her gifts for this ministry with the Susquehanna Conference.

“We firmly believe that the Susquehanna Conference will be blessed by Kay Kotan’s ministry and witness.”

Paul mom called Dad by his middle name, Richard.

Salisbury talked about how he and his dad were different: Dad finished sixth grade, Salisbury was the first in his family to graduate from college. Dad was a painter and was the one nominated to paint up to the top of the steeple. Salisbury doesn’t like heights. He reflected that they were very different, but if not for this dad, he wouldn’t have life. Salisbury’s dad died at the age of 57 — the age Salisbury is now — and has been gone for 27 years. All Salisbury has left of his dad are different: Dad finished college, got married, had children, and they were very different, but if not for his dad, he wouldn’t have life.

Phyllis Weir has a heart for giving. From benevolent care to stained glass windows, her desires are to make life better for her friends and neighbors in the RiverWoods community.

Phyllis moved to RiverWoods in March of 2013. She grew up in Kalispell, Pa., and returned much of her adult life in Washington, D.C. Phyllis chose RiverWoods for retirement because she has good friends living nearby. Her brother, Robert, followed her to RiverWoods in 2014 after the death of his wife, Mildred. Neither Phyllis nor Robert had children, so it made sense that they wanted to be near each other in retirement.

After Robert death on March 4, 2016, Phyllis wanted to do something special in his memory that would honor his values and beliefs. First, she gave a very generous contribution for benevolent care, having been close to a resident who openly acknowledged receiving benefits under the Medicaid program. She knew that this kind of care is essential to ensure that residents who outline their savings, through no fault of their own, can remain in the place they call home — in this case, RiverWoods. Next, she donated a large screen television for the Ridgecrest Creative Arts room so that residents with vision challenges similar to hers would be better able to view programs broadcast there.

When Phyllis learned that the Keller Meditation Chapel in the Adams Center was in need of additional stained glass windows, she immediately agreed to donate funds to have them created. RiverWoods Chaplain Peter Geschwindner worked with stained glass artist Rick Wolf at Watson’s on the design of two windows.

One depicts The United Methodist Church’s Cross and Flame, connecting Phyllis to her Methodist roots in Kalispell. The other features a Star of David, chosen to recognize the roots of Christianity in Judaism and to honor close Jewish friends who helped Robert cope with the death of his wife and subsequent move to RiverWoods.
The celebration of Ministry held Friday evening, May 5, celebrated the ministry of incoming ordinands and retiring pastors for their dedication to the work of God. The CrossPoint United Methodist Church’s praise team brought us the opening, upbeat music that set the tone for the evening’s mood. Throughout the Scripture, reflections, and the message was the question Jesus asked Peter in John 13:15-19, “Do you love me?”

Rev. Wayne F. Heberlig engaged in a dialogue and described what Jesus’ love looks like and what it looks like to love Jesus. Love is a noun and also a verb. Love is an action, and we must show it by giving our time and resources, hopes and desires to the purposes of God.

The Scripture in John was dramatized by Scott Bower and Richard DeMarте. Pastor Christopher R. Sledge introduced his message by telling us that he is getting married this summer. He told us that during his courtship with his fiancé, Hannah, they asked each other the usual questions, and eventually Hannah asked if Kris loved her, because she wanted to know if he was truly committed to a lifetime of loving each other. Jesus asked the same question, and like Hannah, he wants to know if we are committed to a lifetime of loving and serving him. And he wants us to show him how much we love him. Sledge said that is the most important question ever asked: Are we in love with Jesus? He’s not asking us if we are growing our churches nor if we can preach a good sermon. Jesus wants to know if we love him, because he loves us and there’s nothing we can do about it. We need to listen to the still, small voice of God and allow our lives to be transformed yet again. There are times when it’s hard to love Jesus because we get lost in the rhythm of our lives. But the best part of Jesus asking “Do you love me?” is that it was a remarkable act of grace. Peter felt like a failure yet Jesus still asked, Jesus asks us the same question with the same grace. Sledge told a story to illustrate what love looks like. His sister was dying of leukemia believed that he would die when he agreed to a blood transfusion that would save his sister’s life. He agreed to donate his blood in spite of mistakenly believing he would lose his. That’s the kind of loving Jesus calls us to. He [the little boy] got it. Sledge then thanked the retirees for the many years of service that paved the way for the younger pastors. He said they still need to ask the question, “Are you in love with Jesus?” because they aren’t done. He congratulated the ordinands and cautioned them to stay in love with Jesus because that’s what will keep them going. And he addressed the Annual Conference and told us to stay rooted in Jesus because the world needs us.

Rev. Richard Noll represented the order of elders as the mantle was passed to Candidate Miguel H. Arenas. Rev. Reda E. Willis represented the order of elders as the mantle was passed to Candidate Karen L. Weiss. Bishop Jeremiah Park asked the historical questions as a final preparation for ordination. The 34 retirees were recognized for over 773 years of service.

Pastor Kristopher Sledge challenged the Annual Conference to stay in love with Jesus.
By Brenda Leigey

The Saturday morning (May 6) Bible study was led by Rev. Dr. Kenneth Loyer, who serves at Spry United Methodist Church in the York District. The congregation under Loyer’s leadership has grown in weekly attendance, and has reached out to serve the surrounding community and beyond. Loyer has written about the importance of Holy Communion as a means for a deeper Christian discipleship and renewal. The Bible study began as Loyer talked about the “sweetness” of Hershey and the opportunity to enjoy great food and chocolate. But there is a greater feast to partake of, the sweetest of feasts; the Gospel Feast as Charles Wesley referred to it in the Lord’s Supper — the feast of Holy Communion, the great banquet according to Jesus; the sweet grace and love in the presence of Jesus.

Loyer shared the words of a hymn by Charles Wesley, where Wesley called the Lord’s Supper “the gospel feast.” In this hymn, Wesley writes and uses some vivid and profound words as God led him to a deeper understanding of Holy Communion by immersing him in the Scriptures, and from the passage of John 6:56, he penned these words to a beautiful hymn:

“Come and partake the gospel feast, who loved and died for thee; O taste the goodness of our God, and eat his flesh and drink his blood. See him set forth before your eyes, behold the bleeding sacrifice; his offered love make haste to embrace, and freely now be saved by grace. Ye who believe his record true shall sup with him and he with you; come to the feast, he saved from sin, for Jesus wants to take you in. Thinking about the gospel feast, Loyer shared Scripture from Luke 22:21-30. Luke gives us an account of how Judas, one of the twelve disciples would betray Jesus the night that Jesus shared the Last Supper with his disciples. Loyer asked us to imagine what that must have been like from the perspective of Jesus. Yet Jesus let his betrayer be part of that special gathering. Judas and Jesus were at the place, sharing in the same meal, participating in the same act, but with different intentions. Judas was intent on following through with his betrayal and Jesus was intent in following through and fulfilling his purpose.

To help us better understand how we can simply gather to participate in the same activity when we may not share the same intent or be united for the same purpose, Loyer shared how his wife could tell you that they may be in the same room, even talking with one another, but she can tell when he is not really with her. Then Loyer added that true unity in Christ involves more than just being in the same place and doing the same things together; true unity in Christ involves the interior disposition of our hearts aligning with the heart of Jesus himself.

He referred to this year’s Annual Conference gathering as having a twofold theme — unity and prayer — and he asked us to consider our prayers for the church, and in particular a special prayer of the church, the Eucharistic prayer or the words of prayer associated with the sacrament of Holy Communion.

Those words are important as a prayer emphasizing the themes of thanksgiving, confession, and unity.

“In the Lord’s Supper, we join our voices with the church from across time and space in a continual prayer of thanksgiving. Viewing the Lord’s Supper for what it is, namely, a prayer thanking the God of our salvation, brings into focus the profound spiritual meaning of which we are part as we gather in the name of Jesus. It is not an act to rush through, but one to form us, deep within our hearts and minds. Communion is from the empty ritual that some might see it as today. Instead, this gift of God’s grace actually makes possible for us a fresh encounter with the living God — together as God’s people. Highlighting aspects of the liturgy in “The United Methodist Hymnal” for the celebration of Holy Communion, Loyer led us into a deeper understanding and renewed appreciation of how we can experience the sweetness, grace, and love of Jesus in our churches and lives today.

First, we begin with hearing the words of invitation to commune with Christ and with others in his name: “Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin, and seek to live in peace with one another. Therefore, let us confess our sin before God and one another.” The invitation is followed by a prayer of confession. Loyer shared that confession may be out of style in a largely therapeutic age, like our own, that teaches us to feel good about ourselves and to think the best about who we are and what we do and say. Nevertheless, if we truly wish to enter God’s presence:

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14
Ordained Elders
(left to right)
Miguel H. Arenas
Jane L. O’Borski
Rachel E. Keller Wong
Mindi E. Ferguson
Christopher R. Nauta
Brent T. Salsgiver

Ordained Deacon
Karen L. Weiss

Commissioned Elders
(left to right)
Joshua S. Wargo
Joseph S. Hopkins
Jason M. Schwartzman
Robert J. Marsh
Denise M. Haskins
2017 Class of Retirees


Local Pastors and Certified Lay Ministers

Front (l-r): Debbie Harvey, Robin L. Fillmore, Vicki L. Gossett, Bruce Levy, M. Jean McCleary

Seminary Graduates

(Left to right) Kristopher R. Sledge, Hannah M. Pratt, Deborah J. Port, Ethan T. Shearer, Donald J. Smith, Victoria R. Apiella, Nicholas S. McMichael, Bruce E. Gowe, Adam W. Miller

Advanced Course of Study Graduate

Jackie L. Condon

Course of Study Graduates

(Left to right) Duane J. Coy, William L. Westbrook Sr., Scott A. Ryan, Kurt V. Herzburg, Susan K. Knorr
"I will miss the back-and-forth conversations that we had when Jerry would say a word or a phrase, and then I would repeat or sing an old TV commercial or remind him of some bygone comedian or entertainer." — Sharon Knabugh

"I must Jerry nearly 18 years ago to a very informal interview to fill a position in the communications staff. Jerry took far more interest in my spiritual journey than in my resume — which was a good thing! At least not goshed or trained in any way to fulfill the position! That he saw I had teachable. For the better part of 18 years Jerry has mentored, encouraged, and challenged me professionally, personally, and spiritually. We have spent countless hours in dialogue, in which he listened intently, spoke earnestly and honestly, and always challenged me to be open to, and explore, other sides of our culture. Jerry's love for his wife, Budo, and family is deep and nothing short of inspiring, as is his faith. My life is richer in every way for the investment he has made in me." — Sandra Pfeffer

"Jerry, I had spent months searching for a job, but in September 2006 both you and Tom gave me a career. You did not judge me on what college degree or work experience I had, but on my skills and work ethic. You saw my artistic talent and found a way for me to use it to do God's work for the conference. I will always be thankful for the opportunity that you gave me... not only my degree, but saved in your retirement!" — Mary Eckert

"Dear Jerry: When you arrived in the Central Pennsylvania Conference, we were in great need of a Director of Communications who could move us into the late 20th and early 21st centuries. We had no electronic communication system in the annual conference — not even in the offices of the conference. In fact, about all we had was a paper. During my years of working with you, I was thrilled at the progress we made in day by day communications, as well as much better audio and visual Annual Conference Sessions. This was no small part to your commitment to learning how to do this, and how to teach the rest of us to be a part of where we needed to grow and go. Your skills have only been a part of the story. What is front and center is your Christian faith and character that underlined that community in what communications are all about. You were not only a valued member of our team, you were and still are a cherished friend in Christ." — Bishop Neil Irons

"I remember a time when I was eating lunch with Jerry, and he had his infamous Cap Cheese and Bishop Middleton (our Bishop then) came into the kitchen. He offered for her to try the Cap Cheese, that it was similar to Brie. She tried it and quickly informed him that Cap Cheese was nothing like Brie. No need to say, she didn't like it, and thankfully was a good sport about it." — Ashley Brooks

"Jerry served on the original Mission Central task force, and part of that planning included a new media studio located in MC. Jerry was often there at the close of our day (after his full day in the Conference Office), and there were many days I stayed at closing time to talk with him. I must share that those times were special — something that I most likely never shared in that way with Jerry. His openness, his sincere faith, and his willingness to share new avenues for sharing that faith were inspirational and supportive to me. THANKS JERRY! YOU DONE GOOD!?!?" — Harry Overholtzer

"I have stories to tell!!! But I won’t tell many of them because he has videos of me! What is so important to say about Jerry is that he has been and continues to be a partner in ministry in this annual conference. His call in the job is to be faithful in telling the story of what God is doing in and through the Annual Conference. Jerry has poured a lot into just print resources to excellent video production as well as giving us a beginning platform on social media. Jerry has not only passion, but a humble personality that allows Christ to shine through. Jerry – we are受限 to you for your faithfulness and your ministry! May you have many, many years of enjoyment in retirement." — Tom Salsgiver

"Dad, as you draw close to retirement, we think of the value you instilled in our lives: the importance of family, the culture of relationships and the responsibility of service. All our lives we’ve heard “I’m proud of you.” The feeling is mutual. We are so proud, and grateful." — Trina and Tammey

"The word that comes to mind when I think of Jerry is mentor. I learned so much from Jerry during my time at the conference! His knowledge about communication was vast. He taught me about storytelling, effectively, how to help people feel comfortable in front of the camera, what to do during a media frenzy and how to always try out new technology. He took the time to explain how communication tools worked and then gave me the freedom to add my own creative expression to it. He not only encouraged me to use him to help others develop their talents and for that I am so grateful!" — Brittany Spriggle-Howell

"I’ve always been in ministry with Jerry for a little over 16 years I have shared a lot!!! And I won’t tell many of these because he has videos of me! What is so important to say about Jerry is that he has been and continues to be a partner in ministry in this annual conference. His call in the job is to be faithful in telling the story of what God is doing in and through the Annual Conference. Jerry has poured a lot into just print resources to excellent video production as well as giving us a beginning platform on social media. Jerry has not only passion, but a humble personality that allows Christ to shine through. Jerry – we are受限 to you for your faithfulness and your ministry! May you have many, many years of enjoyment in retirement." — Tom Salsgiver

"The world of communications expanded far beyond my expectations in my time at the conference. Jerry taught me that knowledge about communication is vast. He taught me about telling stories effectively, how to help people feel comfortable in front of the camera, what to do during a media frenzy and how to always try out new technology. He took the time to explain how communication tools worked and then gave me the freedom to add my own creative expression to it. He not only encouraged me to use him to help others develop their talents and for that I am so grateful!" — Brittany Spriggle-Howell

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Sierra Leone Initiative

By Sandi Peiffer

The Sierra Leone Initiative was established in September of 2006 as a covenant relationship between the Central Pennsylvania Conference and the Sierra Leone Annual Conference. The initiative was reaffirmed with the formation of the Susquehanna Conference in 2010, and celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2016.

Currently, covenant churches commit to providing five or ten years of salary support for full-time pastors in the Sierra Leone Annual Conference at three levels: $1,200, $1,500, or $1,800 per year. Currently, there are 69 full-time pastors in Sierra Leone receiving support (up from 48 in 2010) but our 64 covenant holders — 52 individual churches (one from 48 in 2010) but our 64 covenant holders — have been able to achieve quite a lot; not just in our lives, but in the lives of many, many people in those communities, throughout the country. “We could not have done it alone. We have been able to raise livestock such as pigs, goats, or poultry, grow crops, establish orchards, or grow plant stock,” said Rev. Edwin Momoh, pastor of Bell Memorial UMC in Mokondo, Sierra Leone. “We have been able to raise livestock such as pigs, goats, or poultry, grow crops, establish orchards, or grow plant stock.”

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“Over the years, we have heard the pastor and church, and in several areas: it has given the pastors confidence to evangelize and bring more people into the church; churches are being spread all over the country because of the initiative; and you see more young people coming on board to become pastors. Now we have 69 pastors.”

“We have been able to achieve quite a lot; not just spiritually, we also have learned how to do missions together, we’ve been able to plant churches in all 13 districts in the country, scholarships have been given to needy school children and university students. You might think that providing scholarships is a small thing, but had it not been for the scholarships that many of us received we would not be here, we would not have attained the level of education that we now have.”

Isatu Peacock, principal of Hartford School for Girls, a United Methodist school in Moyamba, Sierra Leone, shared about the joys and blessings of the Sierra Leone Initiative with the lay members of the Susquehanna Annual Conference.

Susquehanna Conference to share the blessings of the initiative and express visions and needs of their conference. This year our visitors were Rev. Edwin Momoh, pastor of Bell Memorial UMC in Mokondo, conference secretary, and Professor of Agriculture at Jala University; and Isatu Peacock, principal of Hartford School for Girls in Moyamba, a United Methodist school.

“Over the years, we have come to realize the words of Jesus ‘that they may be one’ have played a vital role in our lives,” shared Rev. Momoh. “We could not have done it alone. Because of our partnerships we have been able to achieve quite a lot; not just spiritually, we also have learned how to do missions together, we’ve been able to plant churches in all 13 districts in the country, scholarships have been given to needy school children and university students. You might think that providing scholarships is a small thing, but had it not been for the scholarships that many of us received we would not be here, we would not have attained the level of education that we now have.”

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Partner churches might be able to help with providing tools, breeding pairs of animals, initial feed, or seeds.

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Sierra Leone Initiative

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Hearts Strangely Warmed CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of Christ through visits and meals and baked goods and prayers. The church is at its best when it shows up for others who are hurting.

I’m sure there were nudes before this, but my first big call to ministry occurred at church my senior year of high school through a very brief and informal conversation with Bishop Neil Irons. It left me confused and terrified. But the church continued to love me as I discerned a call to ministry. When my call to ministry first took me overseas and across the United States, the church was there to support me financially, remind me of their prayers, and send me cards and care packages.

In those years of continued discernment, female pastors started appearing in my life at just the right times and places. They prayed for me, told me their story, and sat with me through my struggle and doubt. Many of these women opened up their own pulpit in and in doing so, enabled me to see the gifts inside of me that God was longing to use as a leader in the church.

Through it all, I’ve seen the church shine when it loves Jesus by loving others. The love poured into me and the love I have seen poured into so many others, has made all the difference.

Rachel Keller Wong was ordained an elder at the 2017 Susquehanna Annual Conference. Here she receives her stole from her father, Rev. Dr. Dennis Keller.

Same gender conversations change hearts, create understanding

By Deb Steransky

How do we United Methodist Christians find a way forward with the shadow of the human sexuality issue hanging over us like a chisel ready to split us? According to the Committee on Same Gender, we participate in active listening at a table over a meal. Leonard Sweet says that when we talk as we share a meal, we learn who each other truly are. We learn each other’s identity and what each person’s personal journey is all about.

Following that model, a committee of fourteen people from diverse backgrounds around the conference has been meeting throughout the past year. Each has a story and an opinion. They were invited by committee chairs Rev. Beth Jones and Rev. Larry Leland Jr. to join in this conversation to ask questions of each other and to ask God for discernment as we were asked to share their life’s journey.

Four members of the committee committed to write about their experiences and while serving on this committee. Kim Bedford, of Camp Hill UMC, said she was hesitant to serve on the committee because she was afraid she couldn’t defend who she was. Instead of feeling put on the spot, she found the group to be honest, loving, and God-centered, who listened intently to her story. Ms. Bedford is in a 30-year committed same-sex relationship. She said she learned that there are always two sides to every issue and the committee came to understand each other so that we can be better together.

Rev. Arun Andrews, of New Cumberland Trinity UMC, felt overwhelmed at first when he was invited to join the committee because he felt the burden of the enormity of the task he was being asked to do. While he was unable to move away from his strict idea of what Christian marriage should look like, he said that during the discussions no one was rehashing to prepare them further their own opinion as they listened to another person. Instead, they really listened. During his prayer as he closed his remarks, he asked God to help us find our way forward by not the power of argument, but through the power of love.

Marianne Meyers, Scranton Wilkes-Barre District, also expressed her reluctance but followed God’s call to serve on this committee. Her condition for accepting her place at the table was that she was not going to try to change anyone’s mind. She just wanted to listen as people shared their deep beliefs. Meyers recognized that they were all children of God. She said not once did she encounter any hostility. She only found people who were respectfully listening and truly wanted to find an answer. She reminded us that we all serve the same Lord even if we don’t agree all the time.

Rev. Greg Milinovich, pastor of St. Paul’s Church in State College, had a different response when he was invited to join the group. He readily agreed, feeling it was time to have the discussion about human sexuality. He wanted to be part of the conversation. Eventually he realized that this was more than having an arena to voice his opinion. It was a valuable chance to hear and understand, a chance to see his companions’ humanity. He discovered they all had a deep desire to share their unity in Jesus. Milinovich found it was a microcosm of the family of Christ. The action that is needed is to actively listen to each other. The issue is bigger than arguing about it. He still believes that it’s time, but it’s time to be in conversation with others in unity of our love for Jesus in hopes of not changing minds but hearts instead.

The committee came up with no plan or agreement, but saw the community of spirit. There are no easy answers to the issue, but we must look for ways to love [one] another and show the world how much we love each other through Christ.

We closed with the Lord’s Prayer, hand-in-hand as we need to be as we pray our way forward.

Conference generosity to YSF is humbling

By Audrey Wilder, Director of Young People’s Ministry

The generosity of the Susquehanna Annual Conference is not surprising, but it is quite humbling. The Young People’s Ministry Council was approaching the transition to the Hershey Lodge with much trepidation about what the change would mean for fundraising for the Youth Service Fund. We didn’t want to see our financial support of youth ministries in our conference and across our denomination wane in a time where it was keenly needed. The grants that we have been giving out were and are making tangible differences in sharing the gospel.

In 2015 we began preparing for the potential of a shortfall in funding. We also began some creative brainstorming, considering different ways in which we could, at the bare minimum, maintain our fundraising efforts. We set our goal at just $150 more than what we raised at Annual Conference in 2016: $7,500. Again, just hoping to maintain. Never in our wildest hopes did we expect to see such a substantial sum come in.

Through the generosity of those who attended Annual Conference, the Young People’s Ministry raised $9,443.06 for Youth Service Fund. We are so grateful.

Young people told of the work and fruit of the Young People’s Ministry at the 2017 Susquehanna Annual Conference.

Slowly piling up throughout the course of the three days, many of us were brought to tears of gratitude, humility, and disbelief. Never, in recent years, had we raised such funds. In fact, since 2012, $9,443.06 surpasses our highest fundraising totals by more than $2,000.

Our team has witnessed, lived out through the people of the Susquehanna Annual Conference, God’s promise of provision in the midst of anxiety and the blessing of a ministry which is Spirit led. This has been demonstrated to us, not in digits after a dollar sign (though those are nice), but in the high fives and pats on the back, prayers offered in the aisles and hallways, a heart-felt “God Bless You” at the end of a long day, and a passion to help our young people succeed. We are truly grateful for your continued support of the young people in our conference.

For more information about Youth Service Fund or to apply for a Youth Service Fund Grant, visit igniteyoungpeople.org. The Young People's Ministry will be accepting YSF Applications through July 31, 2017.

Sierra Leone Initiative CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

“We affirm our commitment to the partnership and express our joy at having the SUSUMC journey with us, especially in the moments in our country’s history and trying moments in the UMC. We enjoy being a global church, and we’re all encouraged to continue praying God will give us a spirit of discerning who He is, and how He wants us to live for Him. And of course it’s a joy to work with Bishop Park. Together with our Bishop John Yambasu, they make a great team. We express thanks to all of those who are members of the board of the partnership for the good work that they are doing,” said Momolu.

You are invited to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the 2007 Susquehanna Annual Conference. As totals were surpassed such a significant sum of money. Again, just hoping to maintain. Never in our wildest hopes did we expect to see such a substantial sum come in. People’s Ministry will be accepting YSF grants and care packages.

PHOTOS: SANDII PEIFFER

PHOTO: SANDII PEIFFER
WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS

Why do you give? Right now, there’s an emphasis on “legacy gifts.” That is, giving something that will leave behind a witness of your generosity. It is a compelling reason to give. It creates a memorial, a remembrance. Our names become linked with something greater than our own work; we can even support this mission beyond our mortal life.

We want to know that what we leave behind has an ongoing impact. We want tangible assurance that what we offer does live on as we enter the intangible ahead of us. Somehow that idea of our legacy is a comfort. It’s a sense of control when we cannot control death, a promise of peace when we cannot yet feel it.

Yet I’d like to ask why you need a legacy. Do you want to be remembered? You are always on the mind of our Eternal Father. Do you worry you will be forgotten? He’s numbered the very hairs on your head and walked beside you when you thought you were alone.

Legacy gifts can make us look longingly behind us at the world we are leaving when we could be looking eagerly forward to something infinitely more miraculous. Our legacy gift should be given to let go of anything we have left that holds us back from running forward into the arms of our Loving God. Give a legacy gift to your church or ministry, but not for yourself. God will ensure you are not forgotten. God will provide you comfort and peace and a reason to give. God has something greater to offer than a monument or footnote in our recordings of history.

The legacy we leave is not our own, it is God’s. We’ve no need to fret about our place in history, because we rest assured the legacy gift we offer is not for us, it never was. Let that go to find something incredibly better. You cannot, will not be forgotten. Through God’s grace, you are going to live on forever.

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THE UNITED METHODIST STEWARDSHIP FOUNDATION

Our MISSION is to serve God and the Church by promoting Christian Stewardship in the effective management of all gifts to the glory of Jesus Christ.

We are on the move . . .

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BENEFITS: (fees may vary slightly due to market fluctuations)
- Variety of Stewardship Educational Services by experienced staff
- Access to high-level managers
- Socially responsible investing
- Multiple options
- Broad diversification
- Investor-established asset allocations
- On-line access to account information
- Only $1,000 to get started

SERVICE FEES

Effective January 1, 2017, the United Methodist Stewardship Foundation’s total investment management service fees are as follows:

- 1.25% on account market values up to $1,000,000
- 1.10% on account market values between $1,000,000 to $3,000,000
- 0.90% of the market value of the account balance for accounts between $3,000,000 to $5,000,000
- 0.65% of the market value of the account balance for accounts with $5,000,000 or more

OUR HERITAGE

May – 100 years ago

On May 20, 1917, Brandon Church on the Jamison City Charge reopened after extensive improvements consisting of a new belfry and bell, new pews, a new piano, paper and paint, and a horse and auto shed. Now a ghost town, Jamison City in 1917 included a Methodist Episcopal church and parsonage, and was home to a six-point charge that included church buildings in the five rural communities of Brandon, Central, Divide, Richart’s Grove, and Talmar – only one congregation of which remains today. The Central congregation purchased and relocated to the Central Methodist Protestant building in 1923, and is now Christ United Methodist Church.

Methodist services at Sylvan Chapel (Divide) stopped in the 1920s, and the building was sold to the Divide Union Church in 1936. Jamison City ceased being an appointment about 1927, and the building is now a hunting cabin. Richart’s Grove ceased being an appointment in 1970, and the building now houses an independent congregation. Brandon merged into Central in 1995 to form Christ UMC.

June – 50 years ago

The annual sessions of the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the Methodist Church were held in Williamsport Wednesday, June 14, through Sunday, June 18, 1967, at Lycoming College and Pine Street Church. The presiding bishop was Newell S. Booth, and the Conference hosts were president D. Frederick Wertz of Lycoming College and pastor Thomas J. Hopkins of Pine Street. Bishop Lloyd Wicke of New York preached at the closing ordination service on Sunday.

Saturday afternoon was devoted to the youth, and each charge sent its junior lay member of conference to Williamsport for the day. The business of the Methodist Youth Fellowship was conducted, and the featured speaker representing the denomination’s Methodist Youth Fund was college student Thomas Camp of Georgia. Organizer of the Saturday afternoon programs was Conference Director of Youth Work Rev. Bruce D. Fisher.
By Your Spirit: Jesus, Unity, and Holy Communion

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

then we had better come clean.
The prayer of confession represents an acknowledgment that sin and pain and brokenness are exposed. It is not a time for self-loathing but for God’s glory for our good. Through confession we humble ourselves before God, asking for forgiveness, asking for God to heal and to carry those wrongs that have bent our relationship before the God who fully knows us.
Our confession in unity as we commune with God, we pray as the church teaches us: “Merciful God, we confess that we have loved you not, with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against you, we have not loved your neighbors, and we have not heeded the cry of the needy.”

To illustrate the importance of confession prayer, Loyer shared a story about a friend who had the courage and faith to pray this prayer: “God, if there are parts of my life that do not honor you, if I have failed you, if I have let you down while I am still on the road, if I have sinned, if I have failed, if I have not pleased to him. Jesus began to refine us, to ask questions like, ‘Why did I pray that was sometimes uncomfortable, but she had already written a letter to God asking at times, “Why did I pray that prayer?” She almost wished she had prayed it and not prayed that way. But she came to see that through that prayer, God was molding and shaping her character. God’s response to her prayer revealed to her some additional confession that was necessary in her life.

We, too, stand in constant need of refinement and renewal, personally and as the church. Now is the time to humble ourselves. Now is the time to seek the Lord’s healing mercy and steadfast truth if we wish to remain united in any meaningful way.
The Holy Communion liturgy leads us next to appealing to God’s mercy and deliverance, and so we pray: “Forgive us, we pray. We pray to receive Christ’s mercy, forgiveness, and restoration. We pray that Christ, out of the abundance of his mercy, would forgive and restore us. This is the transformative power of God’s grace through Jesus. The word of the gospel, the good news we receive, renews and restores us as with joy we proclaim: ‘Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; that proves God’s love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!’

Good news is meant to be shared. The gospel is good news, as the very meaning of the word denotes. Certainly, the message of God’s forgiveness for us in Christ warrants a joyful response from thankful hearts, overflowing in gratitude and praise to God.

After hearing the good news of forgiveness in Jesus, the assembly gathers in song, in prayer, in the many voices of the people declare together, “Glory to God. Amen.” Then, as forgiven and reconciled people, we exchange a sign and words of God’s peace, and offer ourselves and our gifts to God.

Up to this point, we have confessed our sins, received God’s word of pardon, shared in the peace, and offered ourselves and our gifts anew to God in preparation to move forward into the movement that draws us into the presence of God through unity in Holy Communion.

Just like Jesus did, the bread and cup are prepared, blessed, broken, and shared.
The power of the Holy Spirit’s blessing to make real all that God has promised is shared with these words: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine, let them be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his death. 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 hear him at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.

Loyer shared that this story becomes our story, and we can identify with both the triumphs and the struggles of God’s people across the ages. We can see from our own lives as well the significance of remembering in this way. Loyer shared the story of the life and legacy of Rosa Parks. She worked prophetically to right a wrong — the societal injustice of racial discrimination — and she was motivated in large part by her Christian faith. Parks remained committed to the church unto death. The church life story of God’s deliverance had guided and inspired the life of this woman, a life that had, in turn, inspired others.

At Parks’ viewing in Montgomery, Alabama, in 2005, Condoleezza Rice affirmed that “without Mrs. Parks, I probably would not be standing here today as Secretary of State.” In Communion, we can share in God’s salvation as our own, or perhaps more aptly, we are claimed by that defining story, and we are called into God to live in our own day and age. God’s saving work in Christ is a mystery that we must go forward as we fix our eyes toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!”

This is a high point in the life of the community, and in our lives as believers. Here we search for God finds its earthly fulfillment. Here, by tasting and drinking of God’s abundant goodness, we experience the presence of God and with one another. We can and must be aware of them (and certainly be aware of them). But we can and must go forward as we fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfector of our faith.

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At the 2017 Annual Conference Awards Luncheon held Friday, May 5, at Hershey Lodge, the following people were presented awards for ministry, service, and support to follow their call.

THOMAS K. CARTWRIGHT
REV. DR. MAUD K. JENSEN/REV. DR. KAREN E. LAYMAN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP, given for outstanding young adults called to ordained ministry was established by the Board of Ordained Ministry to honor the memory of Rev. Dr. Kevin E. Layman. The award recipient was Pastor Thaddeus Slades, Middleburg Parish, Williamson District.

THE REV. DR. MAUDE W. STOLZ MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP, given through The Stewardship Foundation, was presented to Pastor Gloria J. Montgomery.

THE HOWARD AND ELIZABETH BROWN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARD, given for excellence in Bible study, was presented to William “Bill” Turner, Paxton UMC, Harrisburg District.

HARRIET JEAN MARLENE ATANOSOFF SPIRITUAL FORMATION AWARD, given by the Center for Spiritual Formation, was awarded to Georshanna Kunze, Calvary UMC, Dillsburg, York District.

THE LIVING DOVE AWARD is given by the Peace with Justice Committee of the Mission and Outreach Team. The individual award was given to Dr. Beverly Beck, Dallas Community Church. The church award was presented to Mount Nittany UMC State College District, represented by Patty Devers, Lee Cooper, Rev. Edward Preston, and Ellen Copper.

THE DEMAN AWARD for Evangelism is given by the Foundation for Evangelism, Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. The Clergy Award was presented to Pastor Pat Bollinger.
A broken spirit is my sacrifice, God. You won’t despise a heart that is broken and crushed.”
Psalm 51:17

“A mosaic cannot exist without its broken components, and the pieces, once they are glazed, mortarred, and grouted, come together in an art form that is better than any one of the individual pieces.”

Leadership Team report 2017 Susquehanna Annual Conference