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God Continues to Do New Things in the Susquehanna Conference

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In the first article we wrote as your new Bishops, we proclaimed and firmly believed that God was about to do a new thing in that new day and time. Since then, God has been faithful in keeping God's promise of doing many new things!

We have been witness to churches in the Susquehanna Conference that have moved in new ways in faithful service to Christ. While COVID was difficult and devastating, many of our churches were determined to begin new ministries and new online expressions to be in ministry with new groups of people. God is blessing these churches and their efforts.

Since the passage of ¶2553 in 2019, some congregations have had difficult conversations about disaffiliation. The overwhelming majority of our churches and clergy in the Susquehanna Annual Conference are remaining United Methodist. Some members of disaffiliating congregations have already switched their membership to churches that are remaining United Methodist, thus creating new relationships and opportunities for ministry. We are also using this season to look at ways to be in ministry with new people in new places.

As your Bishops, in collaboration and partnership with the Cabinet and Conference Leadership, we are following God's desire for new ways of doing our ministry of supervision. We are experiencing some natural transitions in our congregations and our conference, allowing all of us to dream of new ways of doing our ministry of supervision. Through these transitions, we believe that God is pointing us in some new ways of being an Annual Conference, Districts, and local churches.

As we have prayed and discerned God's will for doing a new ministry, we are excited to announce that we will begin a new model of supervision for pastors and for churches. With these natural transitions, God is providing a unique opportunity for God's church to continue to new things – even in supervision.

Reverend Barry Robison is finishing his eight years on the Cabinet and tenure as Dean. He will retire at this Annual Conference. He will be the new Director of Relationships and Stewardship Development for the UM Foundation of PA.

Reverend Cathy Boileau also recently announced her retirement, effective July 1, 2023. Cathy has been a strong supporter of local churches, a tireless worker and a loving, caring Superintendent of the York District. She has worked with many churches to help them move out into mission opportunities both in the district and throughout the world. Cathy will spend time in her retirement continuing to be a clergy member of the Susquehanna Conference and spending time with her beloved husband, Mike.

In addition to the transition of leadership openings in the Harrisburg and York Districts, we recognize transitions in church and communities as some churches disaffiliate which will require a nimbleness in supervision.

Beginning July 1, there will be five Conference Superintendents to provide supervisory care and oversight. To accomplish this new form of supervision, we will be creating five supervisory areas. The supervisory areas will include the areas of the former seven districts. We are not recommending redistricting as part of this supervisory plan. We are simply reorganizing and creating supervisory areas.

The five Conference Superintendents will be: Paul Amara, Brenda Leigey, Judy Walker, Joleen Willis, and Gary Weaver. As already announced, Gary Weaver will also serve as the Dean of the new Cabinet.

The following are the Conference Superintendents and their coverage area:

1. Paul Amara will cover churches within the Williamsport District as well as most churches within the Lewisburg District. The office for this coverage area will be the current office located at 2420 Nottingham Road, Williamsport.
2. Brenda Leigey will cover churches within the State College District, as well as portions of the Lewisburg and Altoona Districts. The office will continue to be at 1200 Haymaker Road, State College.
3. Judy Walker will cover churches within the Scranton/Wilkes Barre District and some churches within the Lewisburg District. The office will still be located in the Trucksville UM Church, 40 Knob Road, Trucksville.
4. Joleen Willis will cover churches within the Altoona District and portions of the York District. They will begin to look for office space possibly within a local church in the Altoona Area.
5. Gary Weaver will cover the churches within most of the Harrisburg District as well as portions of the York District. This coverage area will continue to utilize the former Harrisburg District Office in the Conference Center. Gary and Cindy will move to what is now the Harrisburg District Parsonage.

As we shift to a new model of supervision, we will also be shifting some district offices. The York office will work toward closure by July 1, 2023.

The Lewisburg Office will stay open only through the retirement of the current Administrative Assistant which will be December 2023. She will also provide support to other coverage areas as needed in this time of transition.

There are some important facts as we begin to move into this new model of supervision.

1. These decisions are made with the full understanding that God is expecting God's church to always be open to change for a new day and for new possibilities. These decisions are made out of a sense of newness and possibility.
2. These coverage areas will allow the new number of churches/charges per Superintendent to remain similar to the current numbers.
3. The boundaries of the coverage areas have been made for the most part around county lines. This will make it easier to do things across former district lines.
4. There will be new ways of supervision. One way is to utilize effective local pastors and elders as ministry partners to do some of the ongoing work of ministry in the coverage area.
5. Every church and every pastor will have a Superintendent with whom they will relate and have direct contact.
6. Current district committees will work with the Conference Superintendent to determine what is the best way to accomplish their tasks.
7. This current change in supervision will position the Susquehanna Conference well for whatever General and Jurisdictional Conference may decide about number of Episcopal areas and number of Bishops.
8. This new way of doing supervision will also allow us to be nimbler and provide new ways of being in ministry.

We will keep you updated as things progress. In the coming weeks we will release a conference map showing the new supervision areas. Included with that map will be the number of churches and charges in that new area.

We welcome your questions. Feel free to send an email to our office or to your current Conference Superintendent. We will be working on an FAQ sheet to put on the Conference website.

In this season of transitions, we celebrate that God is providing transitions and openings for us to do ministry and supervision in a new way. Now is the time for bold action and ministry – following where God is leading.

In Ministry with You,

Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi & Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball

Resident Bishop

Resident Bishop