



Mount Gretna UMC

Happenings



While the United Methodist Church's General and Jurisdictional conferences have been postponed once again until 2022, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the 236th session of the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference will meet as planned May 20-22.

The shortened Annual Conference will take place mostly online for a second consecutive year, after making history with that first-time format in 2020. The annual Clergy Session is set for Thursday, May 20, at 9 AM, and the Laity Session at 1 PM—both online. The Conference's opening worship and business session will begin on Friday, May 21, at 9 AM. And a Conference teaching session will begin at 2 PM.

The full day's session will be held as a Zoom webinar for voting members. All members must use a computer or tablet to vote on legislation using Zoom's polling feature, Non-voting members will again be able to view the session livestreamed on the [Conference's Facebook page](#).

On Saturday, May 22, the Conference will return to Olivet UMC in Coatesville for its Memorial Service (10 AM) to remember deceased clergy and clergy spouses, followed by its Service of Commissioning and Ordination (12 PM). Again, only families of the deceased honorees and families of clergy to be commissioned and ordained will attend the two back-to-back services onsite, along with staff and hospitality volunteers. Others may view it livestreamed on the Conference Facebook page.

General and Jurisdictional conferences postponed to 2022:

Both General Conference and the Northeastern Jurisdictional (NEJ) Conference are rescheduled for 2022. The postponed 2020 General Conference will meet August 29 – Sept. 6, 2022. The gathering has been postponed twice to ensure the safety, ability to travel and full onsite participation of its elected delegates from the U.S., Philippines, Africa and Europe. The conference site remains the same: Minneapolis, Minn.

Because of that change, the NEJ Conference will ensue in October 2022, when it will assign bishops to lead episcopal areas and may elect new bishops to replace those who retire. Three NEJ bishops, including our

own Bishop Peggy Johnson, have requested voluntary retirement, which requires Jurisdictional Conference approval. Two, Bishop Johnson and Bishop Jeremiah Park of the Central PA Conference, will leave their posts in August to do other work as they await official retirement in 2022. Active bishops will provide episcopal “coverage” of their areas through December 2022.

As Bishop Johnson prepares to leave, the NEJ College of Bishops has chosen Bishop John R. Schol, who leads the Greater New Jersey Conference (New Jersey Area) to also cover the Eastern PA Conference of the Philadelphia Episcopal Area, beginning Sept. 1. The Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the Philadelphia Area will realign with the Baltimore-Washington Conference and be led by Bishop Latrelle Easterling of the Washington Area.

Bishops Cynthia Moore-Koikoi of the Western PA Conference (Pittsburgh Area) and Sandra Steiner-Ball of the West Virginia Conference (West Virginia Area) will share leadership of the Central PA Conference (Harrisburg Area), as Bishop Park steps down to await his retirement. All other NEJ bishops will stay in their current roles at least through the 2022 NEJ Conference.

“There will not be any changes in conference boundaries or mergers happening at this time,” said Bishop Johnson.

The reduced number of active bishops and more sharing of episcopal leaders may provide a much-needed cost-savings in a fast-dwindling Episcopal Fund budget. Other jurisdictions across the UMC are making similar adjustments, while waiting to see what their conference memberships and structures will be after the next full General Conference. That conference is expected to lead to denominational division, as some congregations disaffiliate and leave with their church properties to join new denominations, prompted by disagreement with church law regarding LGBTQ clergy and marital acceptance.

The NEJ Conference’s delegates will determine in 2022 if any—and how many—bishops will be elected to lead its 10 conferences when they reconvene following General Conference. The UMC’s Council of Bishops is recommending that no new bishops be elected anywhere next year because of the denomination’s anticipated schism and the possibility of membership declines and financial challenges that may result.

Bishop Johnson presented some of these changes to Eastern PA Conference members in a March 1 “town hall” webinar on Zoom. But much of what she reported then has since changed. The Rev. Joseph DiPaolo, a member of the General Commission on General Conference, helped explain that commission’s reasons for further postponing the General Conference and its consideration of proposals for denominational division.

The commission’s Technology Study Team determined that trying to hold a fully online General Conference, with legislative committees and debates, was not feasible, given the variations of connectivity, electricity, translation, and 24 time zones across our global church. Thus, the Council of Bishops set the new 2022 dates for the onsite international gathering.

“We have been discerning our future for a long time,” said the Rev. Bumkoo Chung, West District Superintendent, in his town hall opening prayer. “But we put our trust in you, Lord, because we believe that your plan is better than our plans.”

Eastern PA Conference delegates elected in 2019 to the postponed 2020 General and Jurisdictional conferences will be allowed to proceed with their representation in 2022.

Annual Conference plans:

At our online Annual Conference in May, there will again be pre-recorded reports and award presentations. But members will vote this year via the easy-to-use Zoom polling feature, rather than the e-Ballot online system employed last year. There will be no voting by telephone this time. And voting members without access to computers will need to obtain assistance from their pastors or fellow members to cast their vote.

This year's Annual Conference will include only six, mostly administrative resolutions that should probably draw little if any debate. The East District recommends that First UMC in Perkasio and Asbury UMC in Norristown both be discontinued. And the Conference Trustees recommend distributions of various required payments from churches that use the disaffiliation agreement authorized by the 2019 Special General Conference (UM Book of Discipline, para. 2553) to leave the denomination.

The Benefits Board will recommend adjustments in:

- Rental/Housing Allowances for Retired or Disabled Clergypersons;
- Advanced Funding of the Past Service Rate for Pre-82 Participants for 2023; and
- Clergy Retirement Security Program payments.

In addition, the Conference Global Ministries Team recommends approval of six Advance Special projects for second-mile church funding support.

Conference planners instituted a new system in which submitted resolutions are published in advance as Google documents for conference members to read and respond with suggested changes. March 5 was the deadline for the Conference Secretary to receive all resolutions, which are now posted online and available for members to read and offer questions and suggested changes until April 2. Final versions of the resolutions, with any revisions, will be republished by April 13.

Other groups and individuals that intended to submit resolutions to address various concerns have decided not to submit them, partly due to the shortened session and the expected difficulty of using the Zoom chat section for legislative amendments and debates.

At the town hall webinar Bishop Johnson explained her decision to retire after 13 years of serving the Philadelphia Episcopal Area. She and her husband, the Rev. Michael Johnson, will move to Carrollton, Va., to live near their oldest son and his family.

"Go forth and spread the news, and help people understand the huge changes about to happen," she urged members. "And let's do the best we can in the meantime."

-- John W. Coleman



Saturday, May 22, 2021

9AM-until sold out

HERE IS WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP MAKE THIS A SUCCESSFUL VENTURE:

- **Bake goodies.** Please have all baked goods individually wrapped due to Covid.
- **Bring your treasures to the church;** place them on the tables provided in the Ebenezer Room. You can help with sorting. You can also help by signing up for a two-hour shift to sell our wares on Saturday, May 22nd.
- **Please bring usable household items.** No clothing, no electronics or appliances (stoves, refrigerators, TV's etc.). No broken items – treasures only, please.
- **We will begin to collect on May 9, 2021.**

Please call Carolyn Burns at the church office, 717-964-3241 with any questions. Carolyn is in the office Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. You may also contact Melissa Warner at: 717-468-7665.



YOU ARE INVITED TO OUR WEEKLY ZOOM PRAYER MEETINGS
THURSDAYS AT 7PM

You are invited to join Pastor Marilyn and members of our congregation as they come together on Zoom to pray for the joys and concerns of friends and family, our nation and the world. The group was formed during the Covid lockdown and continues to be a time of fellowship and taking our cares to God.

ZOOM can be done on a laptop, tablet or smart phone. If you have email: the church will send you an email every week with the link.

BUT PLEASE NOTE--ZOOM calls can also be made from any cell phone by dialing in to the phone number that is in the weekly email.

Don't forget: We still have an email Prayer Chain that is coordinated by member Sarah Ellis. You may call the office with prayer requests at 717.964.3241 or email them directly to Sarah at stellis999@gmail.com .

If you have any questions, feel free to call Pastor Marilyn at 717.269.8613

Mt. Gretna UMC Disability Ministry

2021 Update

“To Relieve suffering, in our community and beyond, through our members ministries.”

The Mt. Gretna UMC Disability Ministry is very pleased to announce the first three disability awards of 2021.

1. Lebanon Vision Corps: A new Apple I-Pad was provided to a local elderly woman who is an amputee, confined to a wheelchair, and has a significant vision impairment. She lives independently and will use the device to make doctor appointments, order groceries, complete banking transactions, communicate with friends, and make arrangements for transportation. She is thrilled with the new device; which was specifically configured by Vision Corps IT personnel to accommodate her vision impairment. She is extremely grateful and was thrilled with her new Apple I-Pad and the Disability Ministry's ability to provide a rapid and efficient response.

2. Quest Inc.: A monetary award was approved to provide funding for specialized programs; which include a broad range of services to physically and intellectually challenged individuals. More specifically, the award will be used to provide individualized job training for both physically and intellectually disabled adults in order to, empower them with the necessary skills required to transition successfully into jobs within the mainstream of our local communities. Moreover, for those individuals that are not quite ready to mainstream, other types of rehabilitative services will be provided and tailored to each person's specific needs.

3. Susquehanna Service Dogs (SSD): A monetary award was approved for SSD to fund the training of a service dog. The service dogs are trained by SSD for the following jobs: mobility assistance, autism, seizure, facility, hearing, in-home, psychiatric, and companion roles. The award will cover all expenses incurred during a 1month period; which includes training, veterinarian care, and food. Dogs trained by SSD proceed through a rigorous training period of up to 24 months before graduation and placement. We are excited about this new partnership. Executive Director, Deb Tack, will facilitate a future presentation by one of their volunteers during an upcoming Sunday service. Yes, the presentation will also include a volunteer dog. Specifics regarding a possible date/time will be made available to the congregation in the near future.

Anyone interested in learning more about SSD can navigate their website on-line at:

<https://www.khs.org/what-we-do/assistance-dogs/>

The Mt. Gretna UMC Disabilities Ministry is available to all members of the congregation, their immediate family, and extended family members. All inquiries and responses are conducted in a confidential manner, in person, or over the telephone. The nature of any inquiry/request will not be transmitted, discussed, or responded to via email or on any social media applications. Points of Contact are Pastor Mike Remel or Randy L. Swope.

Finally, we heartily welcome any offerings to support the Disability Ministry.

My Kindest Regards,

Randy L. Swope

Mount Gretna UMC Fresh Start Ministry

2021 Update

March 2021, denotes the beginning of the fourth year for the Mt. Gretna UMC Fresh Start Ministry in partnership with Lebanon County Christian Ministries (LCCM), Lebanon, Pa.

Due to the pandemic the Fresh Start meals provided on the first Monday of each month have been changed from an indoor family style dining arrangement to a nutritious cold lunch offering. The cold lunch is delivered by the Mt. Gretna UMC volunteers to LCCM and delivered later the same day by LCCM staff to the Fresh Start Program participants. The monthly census for the LCCM Fresh Start Program fluctuates throughout the year. During 2020, the program had experienced a low of 2 individuals in one month to over 30 individuals later in the year. Deviations in the Fresh Start Program census are typically contingent upon the time of the year. The winter season has typically produced the highest census numbers.

A typical cold lunch includes: Italian sub or wrap, individual serving size bag of chips, fresh fruit, individually wrapped desert treat, fruit juice box, and bottled water.

The feedback and comments that we have received from LCCM about the new meal plan for the Fresh Start recipients has been overwhelmingly positive. The effort required to both plan and provide the meal each month has become streamlined and efficient.

In addition, this update is also intended to provide our congregation with an opportunity to remember our beloved and late brother, Bob Lauver, who recognized the need for a Fresh Start Ministry, worked determinedly to establish the ministry, and secured the necessary funding to launch the ministry. Moreover, Bob's many years of personal experience in feeding the homeless in numerous environments enabled all the volunteers participating in the ministry to contribute equally by simply following his direction and leadership. Anyone working alongside of Bob during a Fresh Start offering would always experience a special delight watching him smile while he handed-out ice cream sandwiches, popsicles, and ice cream cones to everyone at the end of a meal. Bob was a devout Christian who reinforced the teachings to all of us. Why we are here, what for, and what we need to do for anyone less fortunate or experiencing difficult times.

Finally, all offerings to support the Mt. Gretna UMC Fresh Start Ministry are always appreciated. We can all look forward to continuing this worthy effort within the midst of our homeless local community.

**Kindest Regards,
Randy L. Swope**

MGUMC Financial Snapshot

March of 2021

Category	Year-to-Date 2021	Year-to-Date 2020	Dollar Change
Offerings	\$30,306	\$33,230	(\$2,924)
Contribution from Endowment	\$9,501	\$9,501	\$0
Other Income	\$1,826	\$1,981	(\$155)
Total Operating Income	\$41,633	\$44,712	(\$3,079)
Total Budgeted Expenses	\$53,232	\$47,335	\$5,897
Budget Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$11,599)	(\$2,623)	(\$8,976)
Drendall Endowment Balance	\$2,849,955	\$2,239,021	\$610,934
Endowment Annual Grants	\$0	\$0	\$0

The above table is a snapshot of 2021 year-to-date results compared to 2020

Explanation of categories

Offering: Envelopes, Plate, Church School, Beacon and Building fund

Contribution from Endowment: The grant amount received from the endowment for operational expenditures of the MGUMC.

Other income: Miscellaneous, Flowers, Bible study, Endowment grants

Total Disbursements: Budgeted expenses for operation of the church

Surplus/(Deficit): This line states how well the receipts of MGUMC is offsetting the budgeted disbursements.

Drendall Endowment Balance: Period end balance of the assets in the endowment

Endowment Annual Grants: Grants other than the “Contribution from Endowment”. Distribution of grants for 2021 is scheduled in May of 2021.

UPCOMING MAY MEETINGS:

- **Wednesday, May 12 @ 7PM – Administrative Board Meeting (via ZOOM)**
- **Wednesday, May 19 @ 7PM – Endowment Committee Meeting (via ZOOM)**
- **May 20-22 – Annual Conference (Pastor Mike & Pastor Marilyn unavailable except for emergencies)**