

December 2, 2020

STATE COLLEGE DISTRICT NEWS & NOTES



Bishop Jeremiah J. Park

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
HARRISBURG AREA – SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE

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November 30, 2020

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined. (Isaiah 9:2)*

Dear Sisters and Brothers of the Susquehanna Conference,

Grace to you in the name of Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, Healer of our Brokenness, and Hope of the World!

As we experience every year, Advent is a season of waiting. When Luke tells the story of Christmas, he first reminds us of John the Baptist's birth. Zechariah has waited many years for a child. He is an old man when he learns that he will have a son, one with a special mission. Soon thereafter Mary hears that she, too, will bear a child, who will be called the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:32). And then follows more waiting.

This entire year has felt like one endless wait. For many it has been spiritually draining. Yet God's people have been here before, and each time, God has brought us to a new place of promise and hope.

We are all keenly aware that the numbers of COVID-19 cases are still increasing

rapidly. Many of the hospitals throughout Pennsylvania and our country are experiencing a serious rise in admitting COVID patients. Our district superintendents are reporting that more and more of our pastors and laypeople have tested positive for COVID. As health officials strongly believe that even more people will succumb to COVID during this post-Thanksgiving season, the full Cabinet and I are deeply troubled and greatly concerned for the health and safety of our people.

This is a very grave situation that requires a sacrificial response. For your safety and that of your friends, family, and neighbors, I, as bishop, along with the full Cabinet urge you to not conduct indoor in-person worship or gatherings for the rest of the year.

My sisters and brothers in faith, I know this is very difficult to hear. I know that not everyone wants to pause in-person worship, especially during Advent. Calls for a temporary break from public gatherings may feel like a threat to our religious freedom. But now we must put our preferences aside and do what is best for our faith communities and the larger communities in which we live.

We must work together to stop the spread of this disease. We must do all that we can to make sure that more people do not fall victim to COVID. I firmly believe this is our calling, for such a time as this.

You have done ministry in wonderful ways during this pandemic, such as through online worship, Bible study, and ministry, as well as outdoor opportunities for worship and ministry. Please continue those excellent expressions of faithfulness while not meeting in person indoors. We have provided some ideas on how to worship and minister safely during the pandemic.

You can find them at susumc.org/worship-resources.

The Psalmist says, "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5). It feels like we are in a dark night of COVID. However, our God has not abandoned us. God is providing new and different ways to be in ministry. The joy of gathering together will come again. But for now, I implore you to suspend indoor in-person worship and gatherings.

We just lighted the first Advent candle this past Sunday, the candle of hope. In the

midst of long haul of COVID fatigue, we become weary and tired and the flame of hope within us may be flickering. As I try to keep hope alive, I am reminded of a song that I used to sing a lot when I was in school in Korea. It's called, "Whispering Hope."

"Soft as the voice of an angel, breathing a lesson unheard,
Hope with a gentle persuasion whisper her comforting word:
Wait till the darkness is over, wait till the tempest is done.
Hope for the sunshine tomorrow, after the shower is gone.

(Refrain) Whispering hope. Oh how welcome thy voice,
Making my heart in its sorrow rejoice.

If, in the dusk of the twilight, dim be the region afar.
Will not the deepening darkness brighten the glimmering star?
Then when the night is upon us, why should the heart sink away?
When the dark midnight is over, watch for the breaking of day."

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19). This is the time and we are the people to whisper hope to one another. God is faithful and God's love is steadfast and endures forever. We earnestly await a vaccine and surely it will arrive.

God's light through Jesus Christ our Savior shines bright on us. May our light so shine to all people that they see that we care for them deeply; so deeply that we are willing to pause in-person gatherings as a sign of our love of God and neighbor as we keep whispering hope.

In Ministry with You,
Jeremiah J. Park

Rev. Dr. Paul Amara, Williamsport District
Rev. Catherine Boileau, York District
Ms. Joyce Davis, Conference Lay Leader
Mr. Mark Knecht, Conference Treasurer and Benefits Officer
Rev. Brenda K. Leigey, State College District
Rev. Victoria Rebeck, Director of Connecting Ministries
Rev. Barry Robison, Harrisburg District
Rev. Dr. Tom Salsgiver, Assistant to the Bishop

Rev. Gary Shockley, Director of Equipping Vital Congregations
Rev. Judy L. Walker, Scranton/Wilkes-Barre District
Rev. Dr. Gary D. Weaver, Lewisburg District
Rev. Dr. Joleen A. Willis, Altoona District
Rev. Kevin Witt, Director of Growing Spiritual Transformational Leaders

Churches Weigh Options to Reach Members During a Pandemic

The search for and implementation of new technology has become our "new normal".

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/churches-weigh-options-to-reach-seniors?fbclid=IwAR18r7492kHMOBzz79ykDjyk6nGBdhIVT0QgHO2cyMCwzcWnDdssl2wnLeQ>

ONE CALL NOW SYSTEM

For those looking for a more comprehensive means of quick communication, such as cancellations, closings, reminders, etc. consider the One Call NOW System. Their website explains, "Just record or type your message, select recipients, and push a button...One Call Now delivers your message to everybody on your designated contact list...as your choice of a phone call, SMS text message, email, or push notification — all through one handy platform and simple user interface. There is an app for quick recording and sending of messages using your phone. <https://www.onecallnow.com/>

ONE CALL TELL ALL

One Call Tell All is a company that provides a communication system which reaches out to your entire church at one time. Their system is easy to use and only takes a few minutes to record your message.

Go to <http://onecalltellall.com/> to learn more.

CHECK OUT MORE WAYS TO CONNECT:

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/local-church-learning-sessions-technology-for-worship-small-groups-and-giving>

Mt Asbury Christmas Light Show

1st Inaugural Christian Christmas Drive-Thru Light Show at Mount Asbury Retreat Center. It starts November 27 and runs through December 27, 2020, on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 6-9 pm. *Closed Christmas Day.* Enjoy the story of the Birth of Jesus as you travel on paved and unpaved roads. Then see the fun joy of Christmas today. Fun for the whole family. \$10 Donation suggested. Vehicle height

restriction of 8 feet and max 7 passengers. For more information contact mountasbury@susumc.org or 717-486-3827

Christmas Caroling During a Pandemic

If you are wondering how to include Christmas carols in worship while guarding against spreading viruses, you will find ready-to-use resources in "Fill the Night with Music," made available to you by the Susquehanna Conference. This Worship Design Studio resource includes PDF songbooks with music and narration for a 30-minute stationary "concert set" and a 10-minute moving "caroling set," accompaniment tracks to download or play from an online playlist, and a leader's guide with ideas for supplemental instrumentation and festive visuals. Find this and other tips on our [Worship Resources](#) page.

UMPH Extending Permission to use Resources for Online Worship through July 31, 2021

The United Methodist Publishing House (UMPH) is extending full permission to all churches for use of UMPH copyrighted worship materials through July 31, 2021. Due to the extraordinary challenges faced by churches and others, UMPH (Cokesbury and Abingdon Press) is assuring easy access to essential worship aids and use of the Common English Bible for online worship and studies. [READ MORE](#)

Online Workshop: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 - 10 a.m. to Noon

Both/And: Maximizing Hybrid Worship Experiences for Online and In-Person Audiences

Led by Jason Moore author, creative worship, and guest readiness coach.

This is a resource provided at no cost to clergy and laity and is sponsored by the Equipping Vital Congregations Office.

Tuesday, January 5th from 10:00-12:00

This two-hour workshop will delve into strategies on how to create powerful transformative worship with a BOTH/AND scenario so that in-person and at home worshippers participate.

This workshop will explore:

- Re-imagining worship for both/and
- How to create interactive both/and experiences
- Bringing at home and in-person audiences together in real time
- Alternative opportunities for online audiences watching in-person livestreams

- Repurposing in-person worship for online audiences
- Strategies for adapting practices for both/and
- Avoiding letting your groove becoming a rut
- And more

Register today: A link to log on to the workshop along with a handout will be emailed to you prior to January 5th

Link to register: [Both/And Workshop Registration](#)

In addition to the workshop, Jason will hold an “Open Chat” webinar on Tuesday, February 16th from 10:00-12:00 for all who participate on January 5th to discuss and share successes and troubleshoot challenges.

Equipping Vital Congregations
717-545-0525
evcoffice@susumc.org

Post Charge Conference Information

Most church conferences are complete for this year. Please remember to send your 2020 Minutes to the district office. statecollege@susumc.org

Prayers and Praises

Dick and Pam Williams – death of Pam’s mother

Licensing School 2021

February 5-7

March 5-7

April 16-18

State College District UMC

(please wear a mask when visiting our office - thanks)

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Office Phone: 814-237-4365

Website: statecollegedistrict.susumc.org

Office hours:

Mon – Thurs 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Closed Noon – 1 p.m.

Closed Fridays



*The State College District Office
will be closed December 24
Until January 4 – To observe the
holiday season. Happy Holidays!*

**If you wish to be removed from this email list, please send a note to statecollege@susumc.org*