

**2019-2020 Charge Conference Report  
Epworth United Methodist Church  
Inviting All – Bob Joynson & Kenny Mahan – leaders**

The Inviting All Ministry Teams are divided into 5 groups:  
Inclusive Ministries, Social Justice, Food Ministries,  
Ecumenical/Interfaith and Outreach Ministries

**Inclusive Ministries**

- **Fire/Reconciling** - As a reconciling ministry, this group will continue to minister with LGBTQIA+ persons and live out the Epworth visions to "explore faith and embrace community". Reconciling Ministries Bible Study presented two courses during this past year: (1) an eleven-week version of the course between September 5 and November 14, 2019 in conjunction with Faith and Israel UMC's with 26 participants, and (2) a one-day version of the course on February 1, 2020 at Wesley UMC in Dover, DE with 29 participants.
- **Deaf Ministries** - This ministry has continued to be very successful, with the 9:15 Sunday service currently being deaf interpreted and made available through video links at the Epworth web site.
- **Interpreters** - Epworth continues their desire to expand deaf community programs. To be able to do this we are constantly looking for additional interpreters and ideas to best fulfill their needs.
- **Recovery Groups** - Epworth continues to "embrace community" by opening its doors to all support groups. This successful initiative has proved successful providing meeting space to multiple groups. We've had to temporarily curtail these meetings due to Covid-19 restrictions.
- **theskatepark@epworth** has continued on as a wonderful outreach to the younger community. While not officially an Epworth Ministry, the park is hosted on the Epworth campus – a quasi zero-dollar lease. They have a Board of Directors who oversee the park, raise funds, pay for insurance and repairs – in turn, they report to the Epworth Trustees.
- **The Boys & Girls Club of Rehoboth** continue to lease space from Epworth. Attendance had been steady during the 2019 school year. Covid-19 forced a temporary closure of the B&GC at Epworth; although we are looking to reopen this summer pending relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions.

**Social Justice** Social Justice continued during the past year to act on Epworth's Vision to explore faith and embrace community in multiple ways among which are the following:

- Our **Green Team** partnered with Delaware Interfaith Power & Light in March to host a Climate Conversation in Fellowship Hall. Open to all neighboring faith communities, the program was well-attended and resulted in many thoughtful ways we can continue to work for environmental justice.
- **Reconciling Ministries Bible Study** conducted an 11 week course again last year with clergy co-facilitators from Epworth, Faith/Israel and a lay leader from Zion UMC as well as our own Scott Strickler. This was a true multi-faith experience.
- **Bridging The Divide** met in a day-long retreat in January bringing together representatives from Epworth, Faith and Israel UMCs. Out of this cooperative session, action plans were developed designed to bring this interracial group closer together both spiritually and socially.
- Our **Interfaith** ministry has now become a **Multi-Faith Ministry** including Epworth, Seaside Jewish Community, the Islam Society of Central Delaware, St. Peter's Episcopal and Faith/Israel. During the past year this group organized a shared dinner program held in small groups at member's homes and participated in a Service Day honoring Bryan Stevenson where youth from the several faith communities gathered at the Milton Historical Society to assemble

“Dignity Packs” for folks being released from Sussex Correctional as well as learning of Mr. Stevenson’s life as set forth in the exhibit at the historical society.

Looking forward as we come out of the restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 virus, we have a number of goals and projects in mind:

- The **Green Team** plans to develop action plans to implement some of the suggestions coming out of the Climate Conversation. Earth Day scheduled for April 19 will be rescheduled.
- **KIVA** and **Fair Trade** will continue to grow in small loans made and coffee sales respectfully.
- The **Multi-Faith** ministry hopes to expand its activities in the community through another Service Day, a Clergy panel during Peace Week and a “Sisters” panel promoting small ongoing interfaith groups among other events.
- Finally **Social Justice** will consider what role Epworth should be playing to combat hate in all forms in our community.

### Food Ministries

- **Food Rescue** – What started out as a crate of vegetables weighing just 10 lbs. has blossomed into a Ministry that collected more than 3,700 lbs. of food per week in 2019, helping to feed approximately 1,300 deserving souls per week. Even with Covid-19 restrictions in place, our food rescue collection is currently keeping pace with 2019.
- **Food & Love... (thekitchen@epworth)** – as of the end of May 2020, Food & Love has served on average 90 meals, both eat-in and carry-out, every Sunday afternoon for the past 431 weeks. Five teams made up of approximately ten to twelve volunteers mostly from Epworth and one team made up of fifteen volunteers from The Seaside Jewish Community rotate Sundays. The teams come in on Thursdays or Fridays to do their “soup prep” for the meal.

From the end of March to the end of May 2020, because of COVID-19 and face to face seating restrictions, meal preparation became take out only and was increased from 90 to an average of 130 per week. Volunteers were limited to four people in the kitchen at a time with an additional two people to bag/box the meals and two people to distribute them in cooperation with the Good Sam’s program on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays.

- **Hospitality/Fellowship** - a dedicated group of volunteers-keep this ministry working! Support is provided for many activities such as funerals, weddings, luncheons, and of course, Sunday fellowship time. New volunteers are always welcome.
- **Turkeyville** – the name affectionately given to the Epworth Annual Free Thanksgiving Dinner is an overwhelming success each year. Started in 2008, the year Epworth moved to the Holland Glade Road campus, this dinner has grown each year. This year, approximately 825 meals were either served, carried out or delivered. God is good.
- **ISOP...** during 2019 the **International Student Outreach Program** completed its 17<sup>th</sup> year of serving the J1 Visa students who come from other countries to the area to work during the summer, their college bumper break. Volunteers from Epworth, The Seaside Jewish Community and a couple of other local churches served over 100 meals each Tuesday evening from Memorial Day through to Labor Day. Our ISOP support has been canceled for 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

### Ecumenical/Interfaith

- **LRAC** - This is the Lewes/Rehoboth Association of Churches which provides the funding for many of the community outreach programs, such as: food bank, CRC, scholarship monies, and West Rehoboth student/community needs. They are almost entirely funded from the funds that the New Life Thrift Store makes from selling donated items. Epworth's Pastor is a member along

with 2 other Epworth church members. Epworth also has members who volunteer at the Thrift store.

- **CRC... the Community Resource Center** - this is an outreach program of LRAC. This program is growing all the time due to the large homeless population in the area as well as those persons affected by the seasonal work in the area. CRC provides funds, food, shelter, and support in many ways. Our **Food Rescue** ministry provides food to the CRC.
- **Seaside Jewish Community Center** - Epworth is proud to be partnered with the Jewish Community Center through many programs. They are involved with our Food Pantry, the ISOP program, Food Rescue, Social Justice projects and whenever they feel called by God to participate. They have even provided funds for some of these projects! They are our community friends through God!

**Outreach Ministries** The Outreach Ministries of Epworth look for ways to connect with non-church people and meet them “where they are” in their faith and life. This is a new ministry area... less than 2-years in the making.

- **Community On Tap** – an off-site ministry that studies as a group the meaning of the previous Sunday’s Sermon and book studies. COT is held at the Iron Hill Restaurant and Brewery on a weekly basis looking to bring people from the local community together. It is designed for conversations that are at the intersection of faith and life. Attendees may order food and drink as they choose. They gather in the side meeting room. During the COVID-19 closures, COT met via ZOOM. They are currently on hiatus.

Iron Hill Restaurant holds several fundraisers during the year that benefit the Outreach Ministries of Epworth.

Finding Your Place,  
2019 Charge Conference Report  
Submitted by Cathie Lewis, Finding Your Place Ministry Leader

Finding Your Place is the Ministry Team that focuses on Belonging classes, small group study, Youth programs and Sunday school. Mickie McManamon is the staff representative.

Belonging classes have been offered at various times during the past year. These classes have three sessions held once a week. 31 new members have joined Epworth during the past year. There have been no new Belongings classes since the state mandated shutdown in March.

Small group study classes have continued to grow over the past year.

- Two Education Fairs were held to introduce new classes, allow questions to be answered, and time to sign up.
- In the Fall, groups were formed to study **Making Sense of the Bible**. Lenten book study groups were formed to read and discuss **24 Hours that Changed the World**.
- Small groups read and discussed other books of interest and relevant to their growth in faith.
- Reconciling Ministries Bible Study presented an 11-week course sponsored by FIRE and Bridging the Divide. This was a joint ministry of Epworth, Faith, and Israel UMC's. The classes were held at Faith UMC.

Service groups also play a significant part in Finding Your Place.

- WINGS has reached 20 members and continues to volunteer as a group and provide information about volunteer opportunities. Members have served the community by making masks and by writing inspirational notes for nursing homes and to be distributed by Good Sam.
- Simpson's Men's Group meets monthly to plan and host a golf tournament to raise money for food ministries in the church and community.

Sunday school continues to be an important part of this-ministry.

- A Children's Message is included in the service each Sunday. This has continued as we have had our services online.
- There has been an average of 22 children attending our Sunday school classes including Confirmation.
- An online Sunday school has started which includes a video bible story by one of our teachers.
- Vacation Bible School was held in July as a join program with Faith and Israel UMC. It included age's preschool through adult participants.

The Youth Program at Epworth continues to be a focus for Finding Your Place Ministry. We hope to continue and expand experiences for our youth that involve scripture, as well as activities, service, and relationships with other youth groups.

- During the first half of the year, our Youth Group included middle and high school age students. The focus was on working together and planning for the Youth Rally in January.
- The youth have formed separate Middle School and High School groups. Two leaders have been found for each group and have made Bible Study, service and fun activities the focus of their meetings. They meet once a week and have continued to have Zoom meetings since the church has shut down.
- Youth and parents have signed a contract outlining their rights and responsibilities.

Family Ministry has continued at Epworth this year.

- Rev. Todd Schultz held sessions at Iron Hill Brewery to provide a community book study group.

Last of all, Epworth is a Safe Sanctuary church. We have included an anti-bullying policy, developed by the Safe Sanctuary Committee. We work to continue to provide a safe and secure place for our children and youth.

Looking Ahead:

Finding Your Place ministry will continue to provide the small groups that are an important part of the Methodist Church.

- We hope to develop a strong youth program with the new leadership provided by our new Associate Pastor, Rev. Bo Gordy-Stith.
- Explore meeting opportunities for expanding small group study for adults on Sunday.
- Increase our support for the Sunday School Program.
- We are hoping to find more substitute teachers and a coordinator for Sunday school when classes resume.
- Provide Bible School experiences for all ages. This may include a conference-wide, online, Vacation Bible School.

# Connecting to God Charge Conference Report 2019-2020

## Connecting to God (CTG)

Ministry Team Leaders: Murray Archibald (Ministry Leader), and Rev. Vicki Gordy-Stith and Doug Yetter (Staff Program Managers)

### The Year in Review

Throughout the 2019-2020 church year, the Connecting to God Ministry Team worked to better connect our congregation and our community to God, and to find ways to create worship inspired by our vision of Exploring Faith, Embracing Community. The CTG Team created ways to enhance the worship experience at Epworth—and evaluated the results as each season passed.

- CTG Core Team members: Murray Archibald, Rev. Vicki Gordy-Stith, Doug Yetter, Aleta Thompson, and Karen Mahaffie. (In 2019, the Team included Rev. Vicky Starnes and Rev. Todd Shultz).
- Under the guidance of the CTC Core Team, Ministry Coordinators carried out the ongoing work of providing a spirit filled worship experience for our congregation. Ministry Areas include Music (Chancel Choir, Memorial Bell Choir, Praise Team and Band, and Special Music), Ushers, Worship Design, Altar Team, Scripture Readers, Communion Stewards, Acolytes, and the Worship Design Production Team.
- Under the leadership of Epworth's Director of Music Ministries, Doug Yetter, our vibrant music program continued to support and enhance our worship experience at Epworth.
  - Between rehearsal and worship experiences, the Chancel Choir, Memorial Bell Choir, and Praise Team members provided approximately 8,700 hours of volunteer service.
  - Continued to focus on technique and improve the musicianship of all three music groups and welcomed eight new members to the department.
  - Produced the fourth annual Christmas musical experience Yule Love It—Again!, with over 70 musicians including the Chancel Choir, Praise Team, Wind Quintet, and the 32-voice CAMP Rehoboth Ensemble.
  - Currently searching for new ways to bring deeper musical content to our online services, with limited human resources.
  - Currently working to create a healthy and safe space for our singers and ringers to return to worship in a COVID-19 environment.
  - Worked in person (and virtually) with our accompanist to expand musical knowledge and keyboard skills.
  - Continued to work with paid professional and volunteer musicians in worship and community outreach.
- The CTG Core Team created and installed worship visuals for all church seasons including Pentecost, Ordinary Time, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week and Easter.
- The Worship Design Production Team assisted with setup and breakdown of seasonal worship graphics and décor in the sanctuary and narthex.
- Worked collaboratively with all the mission areas to create a welcoming and inspiring worship experience that allows all participants—members and visitors—to explore their faith and embrace the community around them.
- The CTG Team continued in 2020 to provide Worship Visuals for recorded and Facebook Live worship experiences during the time of COVID-19 lockdown.

### Looking Forward—Opportunities and Challenges for 2020-2021

Over the next year, the Connecting to God Team will continue to create and implement inspiring worship experiences that fulfill our mission of Exploring Faith, Embracing Community.

- The team will work with church leadership to provide inspiration throughout the time of COVID-19 and the reopening of the church when it is time to do so.
- CTG Team Leaders will continue discussions, design of visuals, and analysis of the worship experience at Epworth.

Submitted by Murray Archibald, 6-2-20

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2020 Charge Conference Report  
July 1, 2019- June 30, 2020  
Demonstrating Care  
Janet Taylor-Smith, Ministry Leader  
Mickie McManamon, Ministry Manager

Demonstrating Care  
*Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.*  
Romans 12:10

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*For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink....*

Matthew 25:35

*Good Sam*

- Good Sam helps those in need with food from the food pantry & financial help with transportation, rent & utilities.
- In the past year, the Good Sam team stayed steady at 20 volunteers, counting several who joined to help out with Good Sam Mobile.
- The ministry leadership reached an agreement to trial a weekly budget for certain services provided, such as clothing and utilities, based on expected contributions throughout the year. This trial had just gotten underway when the pandemic halted normal operations.
- As a response to the pandemic, Good Sam partnered with Food Rescue to temporarily become Good Sam Mobile, a curbside service. Families in need of food can drive up & select from a wide variety of donated food three times a week.

*Food Pantry*

- Volunteers average 25 hours per month managing the food pantry.
- The Pantry benefited from Revolution's Reverse Advent project for the third consecutive year. Eleven volunteers spent 24 hours helping sort through and repackage the donations.
- As a result of the pandemic, this ministry has been filling a cart from the Pantry for Good Sam Mobile 3 days a week.
- The Food Pantry exemplifies Epworth's mission to embrace the community -- and Christ's exhortation to feed our hungry brothers and sisters.

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*Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.* Proverbs 16:31

*Leashes of Love*

- This team raises the spirits of assisted living residents by sharing their furry friends.
- Currently, 15 dogs participate on a regular basis, averaging 4-6 dogs per visit.
- Leashes of Love continues to grow, as 7 new members were added this past year.
- Two certification classes were held last year, and are continued as the need arises.
- As a response to the pandemic, Leashes of Love sent cards to the nursing homes, telling them that they miss them & hope to see them again soon.

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*Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.* 2 Corinthians 9:7

*Christmas Joy 365*

- In 2019, this ministry provided Christmas Joy for 52 families including 143 children.
- The Cookie Walk returned becoming the most successful fundraiser, selling about 220 dozen cookies. Many volunteers wrote tags, and sorted & wrapped gifts. Special thanks to the women's service organization WINGS for baking cookies & helping at this fundraiser.
- Breakfast with Santa grew, serving about 180 people.
- The proceeds from the *Yule Love It* concert was shared with the Music Dept.

- After 2019, the decision was made to eliminate the Gingerbread Contest, as after 2 years, its profits were minimal. Moving forward, focus will be on the more profitable events.

#### *Stitchers of Love*

- In the last year, this ministry has increased their selection of handmade items: scarves (older children & adult Baptism, Confirmation), prayer squares & prayer bears (children who are ill), and angel wings (infant Baptism, adults who are ill).
- The current project is selling items at the craft fair- money donated to Christmas Joy 365.
- All items have tags with a prayer on them & identification as coming from Epworth.

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*Bear one another's burdens, so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2*

#### *Stephen Ministry*

- Stephen Ministers are congregation members trained by leaders to offer one-on-one Christian Care to people who are going through tough times, and assist the caring ministry team with healing services.
- Conducted Stephen Minister Training for 7 recruits from Oct. 7, 2019- Mar. 14, 2020.
- As a result of the pandemic, Stephen Ministers have been reaching out to check on members of the congregation, reaching-parishioners in crisis.
- Through the Covenant between Faith & Israel & Epworth UMC, Stephen Ministers jointly support each others' ministry.

#### *Card Ministry*

##### *Card Making*

- Using upcycled greeting cards, this ministry makes beautiful new cards for everyone's enjoyment, communicating with love like Christ to others.
- Congregation is helping support with donations of new & used materials.
- Card Making meets twice a month, with typically 3-5 attending. There are currently 12 categories of cards, hoping to expand with new categories of "Quiet Moments" & a section for children's use.
- New members were added through the Education & Volunteer Fair in the Fall.

##### *Card Sending*

- This ministry continues to grow both in the # of cards mailed to the people on the Joys & Concerns list and the # of volunteers who send the cards. The # of card senders increased from 6 to 10.
- Looking Forward, our goal is to shorten the time receiving new requests, obtaining their addresses, and notifying card senders.

#### *Flower Ministry*

##### *Flower Arranging*

- Flower Arranging takes the bouquets down from the altar & arranges them into small vases in preparation to deliver to those in need of cheering up.
- This dedicated ministry achieves its mission by 'recycling' chancel flowers into smaller arrangements providing uplifting messages that your church family is praying for you.

##### *Flower Delivery*

- Flower Delivery distributes those altar bouquets to Beebe Hospital, nursing homes, or to a recuperating individual at home.
- This ministry coordinates the donation of the altar flowers to the recipients of the flower arrangements. In a typical week, 6 arrangements are prepared for delivery.

#### *Receptions*

- This ministry depends on volunteers to help orchestrate the receptions by serving food, and cleaning up after.
- To streamline the volunteer sign up, reception volunteers can now sign up on an online program, Signup Genius.



*Pastoral Care*

- This team is Epworth's first responders that deliver immediate pastoral care to our congregation. Members provide much needed comfort & prayer in difficult situations.
- They respond to emergency calls from ER, sit with family members, anoint sick and dying, and communicate needs for prayer with the congregation.
- Additionally, on the 1st Sunday of the month, Pastoral Care carries out communion to Cadbury, Brandywine, Harbor Health & the homebound.

*Looking Forward- Opportunities & Challenges for 2020-2021*

Challenges- Communication

- *Volunteer Need* All of the ministry teams listed depend on volunteers. In order to enlist volunteers, the word needs to be broadcast through various avenues: mentioned at pulpit, printed in Bulletin & Newsletter, and sent in an email to the congregation.
- *Cross Teaming* Ministry can be utilized more to allow additional fundraising support to these ministries.

Opportunities- Embrace the Community

- *Spread the Word* Epworth must increase their promotion of these wonderful programs using multiple channels: newspapers, radio, and social media. Getting the word out will increase community interest & involvement.
- *Interdenominational Partnerships* Join with other churches in areas of mutual interest. Embracing common goals, churches can work together, broadening their volunteer base.

### Imagine The Possibilities – Capital Campaign

- We have almost completed the second year of the three-year campaign. To date we have received approximately \$600,000 in pledged and unpledged revenue.
- The mortgage balance is now under \$500,000 with approximately \$350,000 still outstanding in pledges. We fully expect the mortgage to be paid off within about 3-4 years. What a blessing.
- Our current payment amount is under \$6,000 a month and with the next amount being applied to the principal, will be just under \$5000 a month. This has been an amazing journey. At one time in the not so distant past, the mortgage amount was near \$3 million and the payments over \$17,000 a month. What a wonderful gift for our church

### Overall Financial Health/Budget

- 2019/2020 started out on a remarkably high and strong path. Our Stewardship campaign was very successful with more money pledged than in recent history and more pledges overall. Going into the third quarter of the year, we were ahead in revenue and had held expenses to within budget limits.
- COVID 19 IMPACT has been significant.
  - Since we stopped meeting in person, our revenue is down over \$42,000 for the 2 ½ month period beginning mid-March.
  - If this trend continues, it constitutes almost a 20% reduction in our revenue stream over a year long period.
  - On-line giving has increased significantly but even those increases do not make up the loss we are seeing by not having the collection plate and in person services. Our congregation has been impacted by unemployment and we recognize that giving at current or past levels may not be possible.
  - Other expenses have increased dues to on-line worship and giving
  - Revenue is also decreased due to lack of rental in the church facilities and the potential reduction in rent from the Boys and Girls club
  - One large expense increase was the new HVAC system. This was a \$250,000 expense that is being paid over an 8-year lease arrangement. At the time this was approved, there was no thought that something like a Pandemic would develop. This has added about \$43,000 a year to our expenses.
  - The projected deficit for the coming year was estimated to be around \$100,000
- As a result of the ongoing concerns and not having a clear picture as to when we will be back to whatever the new normal is, the Finance Team recommended the Board pass a 6 month budget rather than a full year one.
- Expenses were cut wherever possible. Some reductions in operating costs were included because of not have the building utilized.
- Included in the budget is a reduction in some staff hours. These are due to the lack of work related to their job responsibilities because of the building being closed.
- The Governing Board approved the budget at a meeting held May 27, 2020.
- We have made the appeal for the upcoming Stewardship campaign for monies to be solely pledged to the general fund and hope for a successful campaign.

### CARES ACT – Payroll Protection Program

- Shortly after it was announced, we applied for and received the loan/grant money for the PPP. We received a little over \$174,000 based on our payroll costs over a 2 ½ month period.
  - This can convert to a grant if utilized for payroll purposes within a finite period. Both the Treasury and SBA continue to 'update' the rules for this conversion. The Finance team is working closely with the staff to try to get as much of the loan converted to a grant as possible. This money is a stop gap funding source and it allowed us to continue to pay our staff for the 8 weeks following our receiving it.

2020 Charge Conference Report  
Staff/Parish Relations committee (SPRC)  
Monica, Chair

Celebrating the past-Giving Thanks for the Lord's Work through SPRC

- Welcomed new members: Nancy Logan, Rob Linder
- Confidentiality agreement signed
- Certified Lay Leader Gwen Osborne
- Records and documents placed on the iCloud to ensure continuity
- Pastor evaluations were completed and submitted on time.
- Staff evaluations to be completed by the end of June for review in July. Salary adjustments to be made based on performance and financial status
- Rev. Vicky Starnes retired as of December 31, 2019. Church profile updated and submitted to conference leadership for the selection of Epworth's new pastor. This was accompanied by a letter from SPRC to include strengths, critical needs, and expectations. Met with Bishop and D/S in October and accepted Dr. Rev. Vicki Gordy-Stith as Epworth's new pastor.
- Rev. Todd Schultz will transition to a new assignment at the end of June 2020. Rev. Bo Gordy-Stith will transit to new associate pastor.
- Outreach ministries to meet regularly with Staff leadership to ensure ministries are in line with Epworth's mission
- Kitchen Sexton role filled by Cara Wilson
- Cemetery caretaker role, Jay Stevenson, will require two signatures for future deeds
- Administrative Assistant, Diane Young, retired. Barbara Kurtz was hired. This is a 25 hour a week position.
- Volunteer youth leaders have been engaged. Mike Reynolds, Joy Gordy-Stith and Joe Masielo are the current leaders
- SPRC worked with Finance and Governing Board to make decisions regarding COVID-19 adjustments to staff hours and roles

Looking Forward-Opportunities and Challenges for 2020-2020

- Continue to pursue the goals as identified in the Strategic Plan
- Support Epworth's mission of Exploring Faith and Embracing Community while we navigate through our journey on the Way Forward

Monica Chmielewski  
Chair, SPRC

2020 Charge Conference Report  
Epworth UMC Board of Trustees  
Chet Sprague, Chair

Due to the corona-virus pandemic, the Trustees have not been able to meet the last several months and have been asked to reduce spending on the facilities. As a result, we have not been able to complete all the activities that we had been considering. We expect that this situation will continue for most of the next church calendar year, but we also anticipate reduced wear and tear on the building due to the reduced usage. We will continue to work with the Stewardship Committee to spend money only where it is necessary. Prior to the virus, we were able to accomplish the following:

2018-2019 Summary of Trustees' Activities:

- Major project of the year was the replacement of the HVAC system, which was in need of replacement with several of the units not operating.
- Worked with the Cemetery Committee and Stewardship Committee to revise the Perpetual Care Fund Policy and implement new practices to guarantee sufficient funds to maintain the Cemetery in perpetuity.
- Completed an energy assessment conducted by the University of Delaware Mid-Atlantic Industrial Assessment Center. Began implementing many of the recommendations.
- Continued providing security at all church services and other activities through our standing Security Team.
- Replaced one water fountain with an environmentally friendly fountain with the capability to fill water bottles.
- Authorized Skate Park to repave part of the parking lot near the Skate Park.
- Facilities Team ongoing with repairs done as follows:
  - Continued replacement of inefficient lighting with LED bulbs.
  - Painted Room 3 of the Preschool.
  - Inspected and upgraded the sprinkler system.
  - Re-wired steeple lighting.
  - Re-programmed outside lighting timers.
  - Stripped a, waxed and coated all the floors in the building, while closed for the pandemic.

2020-2021 Issues:

- Caulking of doors and windows
- Skate Park rest room
- Sound Board and entire Sanctuary sound system to be addressed

2020 Charge Conference Report  
Susan Jiménez, Chair Governing Board

*The Message, Psalm 91 – ... "GOD, you're my refuge. I trust in you and I'm safe!" That's right—he rescues you from hidden traps, shields you from deadly hazards. His huge outstretched arms protect you— under them you're perfectly safe; his arms fend off all harm. Fear nothing—not wild wolves in the night, not flying arrows in the day, Not disease that prowls through the darkness, not disaster that erupts at high noon. Even though others succumb all around, drop like flies right and left, no harm will even graze you. You'll stand untouched, watch it all from a distance, watch the wicked turn into corpses. Yes, because GOD's your refuge, the High God your very own home, Evil can't get close to you, harm-can't get through the door. He ordered his angels to guard you wherever you go. If you stumble, they'll catch you; their job is to keep you from falling. You'll walk unharmed among lions and snakes and kick young lions and serpents from the path...."*

**Significant projects/programs/accomplishments:** We did have a seamless transition, saying farewell to Rev. Vicky Starnes and welcoming our new pastor Rev. Dr. Vicki Gordy-Stith. Pastor Vicki has been warmly embraced by the congregation and community. This year has been unpredictable and unprecedented in every aspect of our faith community. As a governing board we demonstrated care and caution as we followed the direction of state and local guidance in limiting access to our building and establishing safeguards for staff and volunteers alike.

We continue to meet as a board thru Zoom technology (as do our various committees and mission areas) and it has been an efficient and effective means of communicating and staying connected and ultimately conducting church business. We planned to conduct a Ministry Audit this spring but now the audit will be combined with the Re-Launch Plan.

We approved a major replacement of our HVAC system which was overdue, and the new system is an upgrade in technology meeting the current needs of the building facility.

**Highlight new projects/ministries launched:** Rather than launching new projects/ministries, I would describe our work as re-designed ministries to fit the needs of our community and congregation. Like many other churches, we are holding virtual worship and addressing the food and other needs of the community through food collection and distribution. We have participated in a new card ministry to send special messages to food recipients and donors. We are members of a county wide coalition addressing community needs during the Pandemic and we have also contributed gifts to local high school graduating seniors.

**Looking forward - opportunities and challenges for 2020-2021:** We have established a Re-launch Task Force that will chart the path for re-opening our facility, re-evaluating our more than 90 mission areas, and creating new ways to be in community. Our Guiding Principles are: Keep People Safe, Create Community, Make Disciples, Serve; not unlike John Wesley's guidance to Do no Harm, Do Good, Stay in Love with God. We strongly believe that as we face the "new-normal" God will continue to lead and guide our path.

*"Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Philipians 4:6*

# 2020 Charge Conference Report

## Gwen Osborne Lay Leader 2017 – 2019 and Mike Tyler new Lay Leader for 2020 – 2023

This year started off with mixed emotions. We said good bye to Rev. Vicky Starnes, welcomed our New Pastor Vicki Gordy-Stith. Later we had our associate Pastor Todd leave earlier than we had expected. We look forward to Associate Pastor Bo Gordy-Stith joining us in July 2020

For 2019 we received into our family 39 new members, which is almost double from the 21 new members from 2018. We feel that this is direct relationship to the renewed possibility of the changes to the traditional plan. Although, we have not seen any movement due to the Covid crisis.

We have been doing our worship on face book live, which is a blessing that we can reach our congregation and others that may never have entered our doors. We do miss the community worship and are working towards positive changes that may allow us to start back with our new services with the congregation.

Mike Tyler, the new Lay Leader has been working with me for the past year, as we want a smooth transition. He has done an excellent job and has a wonderful loving spirit. Our church family will be blessed to have as Lay Leader.

Mike Tyler goals for 2020 – 2021:

- 1) Meet with the new Pastoral staff Vicki and Bo, to determine their expectations of being Lay Leader.
- 2) Meet with staff and volunteers members of each ministry, stating their goals and objectives for the New Year.
- 3) Continue his spiritual knowledge through study and classes at the Dover Academy. He has currently finished 2 courses.
- 4) Work with the Governing Board on the process of re-opening our church. Also to find ways to connect with our congregation during this crisis.
- 5) Work with other churches to prepare for the next conference in May to determine our way forward.

Gwen Osborne goals for 2020:

- 1) Continue to be a resource for Mike while still allowing him to become the Lay Leader God sees for our church.
- 2) Continue to work with our new Pastors, Vicki and Bo, to insure a smooth transition to Epworth.
- 3) Continue my spiritual path, and see where God takes me in the New Year.
- 4) I have completed the CLM course (which was one of my goals for last year)
- 5) I will be working with Kristin Weschler as the Lay partner during her internship at Epworth from August 2020 – May 2021.

In conclusion, my being the Lay Leader for the past 3 years has been the most fulfilling position. I have grown not only in this position, I have also grown spiritually. I only hope that I have given our congregation what they have needed in a Lay Leader. I am very grateful for Epworth congregation, staff, and leaders for their continued support for the past 3 years. I will miss working with each one of them.

# Bridging the Divide Status Report

Greetings and God's blessings to each and every one of you. We hope that this e-mail finds you all in good health, in body, mind, and spirit, and that your strong and abiding faith is sustaining you throughout this time of trial and tribulation.

When last we gathered, at Camp Arrowhead on January 25, for a retreat focused on bonding, on healing, and on planning for the future, we agreed upon an agenda to build and strengthen our ministry by undertaking five key projects: (1) a joint concert highlighting choirs and musicians from all three of our churches that would serve the dual purposes of bringing our congregations closer together and raising funds for one or more community organizations; (2) a joint Good Friday service that would focus on healing and racial reconciliation; (3) a series of quarterly covered-dish potluck meals; (4) a youth initiative designed to increase outreach to and involvement of young people and also to encourage inter-generational dialogue; and (5) the creation of a joint ministry involving congregants from all three of our churches that would serve as a model for the development of other future ministries.

Unfortunately, as we all know, our agenda was brought to an abrupt halt by two outside events that have largely been beyond our control—the covid-19 pandemic and a series of restrictions on individual and church activities adopted in response to the pandemic. Most notable among these restrictions have been (1) stay-at-home orders restricting the mobility of anyone who is not an “essential worker,” (2) prohibitions of large gatherings of people, and (3) restrictions on access to church facilities due to the elimination of in-person worship services and the closing (with limited exceptions) of offices and meeting spaces. The impact of these restrictions is well illustrated by using one of our proposed projects, the joint choir concert, as an example. Several weeks ago, Doug Yetter, Epworth's Director of Music Ministry, indefinitely halted rehearsals for all three of Epworth's choirs (the Chancel Choir, the Praise team, and the bell choir). Due to scientific evidence that choral singing is conducive to spreading the covid-19 virus and has already resulted in at least one substantial outbreak, Doug indicated that it may be months, if not years, before Epworth's largest choir, the Chancel Choir, can be reconvened. In addition, the restriction on large gatherings in confined spaces, which will probably be one of the last restrictions to be lifted, would prohibit any gathering such as the joint concert fundraiser that we were envisaging (as well as the joint worship service and the joint covered-dish events).

Our ministry, Bridging the Divide, is still here and alive in our hearts and our spirits. We have not abandoned our ultimate goals or our short-term objectives. In many ways, the events of the past few months (including the well-publicized shootings of unarmed black people) have strengthened our belief in the critical importance of our efforts to bring healing and reconciliation to our broken and suffering communities and to strengthen the relationships among our three churches. As Paul put it so concisely in his second letter to the Corinthians, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” (2 Cor. 5:18).

Nevertheless, there is a consensus among us that we are not yet ready to resume working on the implementation of our previously agreed-upon plans. During our deliberations on this matter, one of our members persuasively argued as follows: “I don't think we are going to be able to plan much of anything this year. People are out of work, trying to make ends meet, some are experiencing mental health issues; simply put it's going to take some people a long time to recover from Coronavirus Pandemic; lives have been turned upside down.” We are especially cognizant that all three of our congregations are filled with people who are particularly susceptible to this disease. The disproportionate and devastating impact of covid-19 on our African-American communities and our elderly population have been well documented and many among us suffer from diabetes, heart conditions, obesity, compromised immune-suppression systems, or other pre-existing health conditions that require us to be extra vigilant in protecting ourselves and our loved ones.

We therefore ask you to be patient with us in our decision to defer action on the implementation of our previously agreed-upon plans. Feel free to contact any of us with any suggestions you may have or if you would like to discuss these matters further. We will attempt to keep you informed of any opportunities to participate through Zoom gatherings or otherwise in events that are related to the broader work of Bridging the Divide. Please know that you are all in our prayers and we pray that our ministry, our objectives, and each of us will remain in yours.

The BTD Planning Committee  
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