



March 6, 2022

## “Have Mercy!”

Those two words are often said in our liturgy on Sundays, but I’ve also heard them uttered when one is surprised by something, as a plea for something to stop. I’ve uttered those words both ways in the past week or two, as horrific events have unfolded. Just as violence was etched into Jesus’ body during the last hours before his death, the world is witnessing violence being imposed on the flesh of those in Ukraine. The world is doing what it almost always seems to do, which is to choose hate over love, war over peace, violence over gentleness.

During the Lenten season, it’s been a good trend that some have sought to add a spiritual discipline rather than subtracting a human pleasure – for example, to pray more often rather than ceasing to eat chocolate or meat. Yet, I wonder if this might be a good time to retrieve at least one of the partial reasons for this sacred season – and that is the focus on repenting, of seeing the errors of one’s way more clearly and acknowledging that reality before God. In the end, perhaps this is time to simply to ask for mercy, to ask God to have mercy on us, on others, who so often choose death over life, hate over love, and war over peace.

But acknowledging our need for mercy and asking for such mercy is not the final act of repentance. Repentance is also about not going in that same old direction towards death, hate, and war, but turning around, and choosing life, love, and peace. This is not something just for those moments when the world collectively shows us its shadows, but is meant for me, for you, and the old hurts and hates and personal wars we’ve gathered up in our hearts over the years that we haven’t quite dealt with, that we haven’t quite repented of.

I think this will be a “have mercy” season for me, when I ask God for mercy, and I ask it of others, and I ask it for those who don’t feel they need it at all. And I remember what God has done in Christ to make such a mercy possible, for me, for others, for all the world.

*Rev. Kevin J. McLemore, PSEC Associate Conference Minister for Search & Call*

## Hope Rising: A time of Healing & Inspiration MA-AUCE’s first ever Hybrid Conference.

The Mid-Atlantic Association for United Church Educators (MA-AUCE) is inviting all Pastors, Faith Formers, & Ministry Leaders to share in a time of healing and inspiration. Ministry and faith formation can take a lot out of us during “normal” years, and the past 2 years have been anything BUT “normal.”

Come join ministry leaders and faith formers from the New York to Virginia as we gather to share stories, reflect on what has been working for us in ministry, brainstorm what could work in the future, and take some time to refresh ourselves as we prepare to lead our ministries into new areas.

This year, for the first time, the MA-AUCE Conference is being held as a Hybrid Event from Monday, March 28<sup>th</sup>-Wednesday March 30<sup>th</sup> 2022 at the Tuscarora Inn & Conference Center in Mt. Bethel, Pennsylvania. While all are welcome and encouraged to join us in-person, the opening worship and evening sessions on Monday and Tuesday, and the morning session and closing worship on Wednesday will be offered via Zoom for those who wish to attend virtually.

For those attending in-person, Covid Protocols will be followed: Covid vaccinations and masks will be required. All rooms will be single occupancy.

Come join us to make some connections, refresh, and find hope again in the work of God we are called to do in this challenging time.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact Margie at [fotomap19@gmail.com](mailto:fotomap19@gmail.com).

**When: March 28-30, 2022**

**Where:** Tuscarora Inn & Conference Center, Mt. Bethel, PA

**Cost:** In-Person - \$300 (single room, meals & programming included)

AUCE Member Discount - \$257

Commuter (Tuesday Only) - \$75

Online Only - \$50 (Monday & Tuesday evenings, & Wednesday morning)

Register using Tithe.ly: <https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/4879107>

