

Annual Report 2021 Justice and Witness Committee

The Penn West Conference Justice and Witness Committee met via Virtual Meetings for the past year every month, except for the month of December, taking a break for the holiday. During this time, we reflected deeply on the many lives affected by the Black Lives Matter protests, Covid-19, crushing medical debt, pastoral relations, and even foreign relations. We brought in speakers, debated avenues of change, and had uncomfortable conversations that stretched our perceptions and beliefs.

As committees and as a team, we accomplished several goals and are working on future ones that we hope to see fulfilled in the coming year(s):

- Work with churches to become more accessible to the differently-abled with assistive devices.
- Encourage interracial understanding between churches between predominately black and white churches by doing dinner and discussions in the Southwestern region.
- Abolish medical debt campaign (runs from February 1-April 30 2021), which helps low-income families suffering throughout the Penn West Conference.
- Brought in speakers such as Rev. Jeffrey Wilson of Johnstown, PA, who spoke about a racial incident in Bedford, PA; Joshua Sayles, from the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, who spoke of Israel/Palestinian relations; and Donald Hammond, a committee member, who spoke about racial inequality in American; all provoked discussions and furthered work in various committees.
- Created a calendar of Social Justice Sundays, approved and ready to distribute for further reflection by the conference.
- Drafted and sent a letter to the Attorney General of Bedford County asking for more transparency after hearing from Rev. Wilson.
- Sent many informative links to books, virtual meetings, and information to further discussions and complete tasks.
- Continue to work on a broader understanding of how churches can be a more welcoming and inclusive community for minorities.
- Continue to work on how pastors and churches are matched appropriately.

Submitted in good faith,

Roxanne Tuinstra
Chair, Justice and Witness Committee