

THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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Special Session Adopts Resolution to Increase Budget for Conference Office Building

By Jeff Wolfe
jwolfe@gnjumc.org

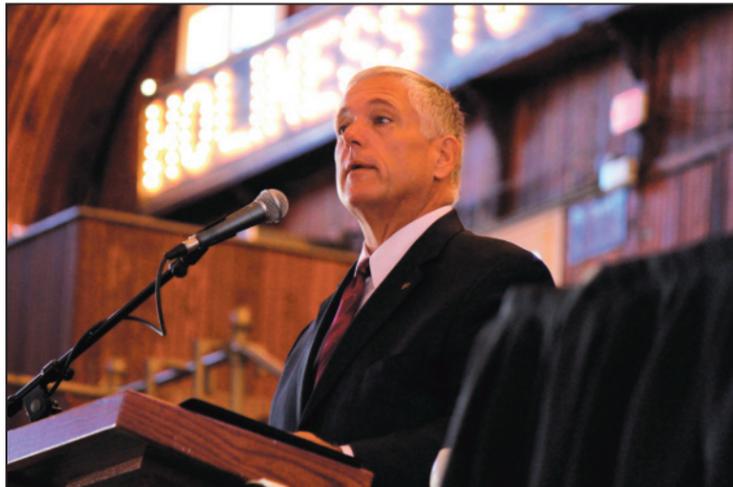
It took a lot of time, a lot of planning, and a lot of challenges along the way, but the Board of Trustees is finally realizing its vision for a new conference center.

At a special session of the Annual Conference at the Ocean Grove Great Auditorium on Sept. 27, legislation was passed to expand the budget for the new center. The new estimate has the conference center costing about \$4.7 million, though members of the Board of Trustees believe that to be a high-end projection.

After about an hour and a half of presentations, questions, and discussion from the Board and voting members, the new budget for the building was passed with an overwhelming majority by the estimated 600 who attended the session.

"The vote to provide the necessary funding to build a new conference center was not an easy decision," said Bishop John Schol. "Conference members appropriately wrestled with the need to build a new conference center and how to continue to be in solidarity with our mission and congregations that are struggling."

The board of trustees listed several reasons for the increase in cost over the original estimate for the 20,000 foot building. Those reasons included contractors charging more and including a premium because of an increase in the number of construction projects in New Jersey after Hurricane Sandy; material costs rising between 10 and 15 percent in the last



Rev. Lou Strugala, chairman of the board of trustees and president of the building team, listens to a question during the special Annual Conference Session to vote on the budget for building the new conference center.

18 months; and the conference center project being medium sized, so it is not big enough to attract larger contractors without a larger premium and it's too vast of a project for smaller contractors, which has also impacted the bidding.

"There were certain changes that occurred in the last few months that were simply out of our control," said Rev. Lou Strugala, chairman of the board of trustees, and president of the building team. "We appreciate the voting members' faith and vision throughout this process."

The original cost for the building was estimated to be about \$120 per square

foot, but that has increased to about \$175 per square foot. The board of trustees pointed out that buildings of this size and type normally cost about \$200 per square foot.

There are several reasons why this building could be completed at less cost than similar structures. The general contractor is United Methodist, the architect is a man of faith, much of the materials are being found at a good rate and the land just off exit 100 of the Garden State Parkway in Neptune, was purchased for a much lower price than most lots that size. The board also said that it has

taken several bids from subcontractors for certain jobs on the building, with a minimum of three bids for each project, and as many as eight or nine bids for some items.

One of the concerns for some voting members was that apportionments would increase to help pay for the building. Conference leaders said there are no plans to raise apportionments due to the building issue. That will at least in part be possible because the new building will include a conference room that can hold as many as 200 people, meaning the conference will not have to rent space for many of its meetings. It's estimated the increased capacity for meetings would save about \$96,000 from the budget each year.

"I and the conference leadership are committed to ensuring that the new conference center does not increase apportionments," Schol said. "Here I am grateful for the vision of the building and finance team to develop a building that will save the conference \$96,000 of budgeted expenses and create space that will increase income to the conference. It will also help us further our mission to equip spiritual leaders to make disciples and grow vital congregations to transform the world."

With the final vote approving the new building, the construction is expected to start within the next six weeks once certain building permits are approved. It is expected to take about 18 months to complete the building.

Lay Leaders Leave Academy Weekend With New Hope



Rev. Jay Brown, of Billingsport UMC, talks at the Laity Leadership Academy held at Haddonfield United Methodist Church on Sept. 10-11. About 200 lay leaders attended the event.

By Jeff Wolfe
jwolfe@gnjumc.org

Participants in the Laity Leadership Academy last month might not have been sure what they were getting into when they walked through the doors of the Haddonfield Church last month.

But they walked out of those doors knowing what they got out of the two-day conference, which discussed ways for churches to improve their worship, evangelism and small group experiences. They had a plan for taking their churches forward.

"What was so cool about having a conference like this, is that you could play and laugh and share," said Lisa Campanella of Tabernacle UMC in Erma. "It builds those connections and we are relational people. Sometimes we get

isolated inside the churches and you don't necessarily have to interact with anybody. We get kind of insulated."

One of the priorities for Conference Lay Leader Rosa Williams, who organized the academy, was to un-insulate the laity leaders and make sure they knew that what they do still matters.

"When you are laity, sometimes you don't feel you have authority or you don't feel your position can make a difference," said Patty Perez, of Vincentown UMC. "That's why I believe Rosa's vision of helping us be more useful is so important to us."

Helping supply that vision were members of the Connectional Ministry team Hector Burgos (Worship and Urban Ministry), Beth Caulfield (Small Groups) and Matthew Na (Professions of Faith

and Youth).

"We shared information and we were inspired by talking about issues with each other," Perez said. "When you are at a table with eight to 10 people, you get responses and support and that is beneficial. We walked away with information on how we would be able to get more support."

While the discussions were encouraging and uplifting, there was also an emphasis on action and application.

"They are partnering with their pastor, presenting a plan to their council members, and getting church leaders to facilitate an action plan and that's what

we want," Williams said. "We want them to go back and use the information they received and we want people to take the next step."

Campanella attended the worship section of the academy and realizes that some changes need to be made in at least some churches' worship style. One of the concerns at her church is that many who attend are middle aged or older, so things need to be done to help attract a younger audience. That could mean doing things like asking those in the pews to turn on their cell phones and take a quick "selfie" picture and post it

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Bishop Martin McLee Remembered



Bishop Martin McLee

By Jeff Wolfe

jwolfe@gnjumc.org

Bishop Martin McLee, the resident Bishop of New York Annual Conference passed on September 6th after a period of long illness. Bishop McLee was a friend to many in the Greater New

Jersey Conference and most recently joined GNJ at the Bishop's Convocation earlier this year.

The following are select reflections and remembrances shared about Bishop McLee at his passing.

"He was a dynamic preacher, creative worship leader, and a faithful and fruitful spiritual leader."

Bishop John Schol, Greater New Jersey

"I have come to personally respect and admire his leadership. I am most grateful for his deep commitment to justice, and his work on behalf of all people, but especially those on the margins. Wherever he served, Bishop McLee spoke boldly on behalf of those without voice."

Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar, New England

"I so appreciate his energy, passion, and action for justice. He didn't get boxed in to process and routine but helped us grow and dream. The UMC is stronger because of him."

Melissa Hinnen, Director of Communication UMCOR

A Message from the Bishop



**All things can be done...
- Mark 9:23**

"The expectations have increased" commented two clergy around the edges of a meeting. They were discussing the new expectations outlined in our Greater New Jersey Strategic Ministry Plan (go to www.gnjumc.org/strategicplan). They were concerned because they believed that conference leadership was going to actually follow through in leading the plan throughout the conferences and check in with clergy and congregations on their progress toward the plan.

Expectations and accountability are things we fear within the church because of past bad experiences. There have always been expectations, some very clear and some that were hidden. In a church cultural in which relationships and getting along are highly valued, expectations have not always been clear and sometimes accountability has been either heavy handed or manipulative.

The conference leadership believes we need to chart a new course for how we work with expectations and accountability. We are choosing a biblical model and in particular how Jesus worked with people. This will be a three part series that looks at all things that can be done for the one who believes (Mark 9:23). The series will talk about 1) why expectations are important in the life of the church, 2) what are GNJ expectations, and 3) Jesus' use of measurers.

I actually believe that how we have handled expectations in the past has betrayed our values of strong relationships and getting along. We believed relationships were about happiness. One of the measures used for a relational person was if when you were in their presence they made you happy. Nowhere in the scriptures is happiness an outgrowth of relationships. Instead, biblically the outgrowth of relationships are covenant, miracles, fruit, growth, collaboration, and joy. Joy and happiness are different. Happiness is created by the external environment. Good weather can make you happy and bad weather can make you feel melancholy. Joy on the other hand is a spiritual experience that grows from the inside out rather than from the outside in. Jesus' disciples experienced joy even though their work was hard.

Withholding expectations actually muddies relationships and creates confusion and leads to passive aggressive behavior. In our denominational system this is particularly true. A clergy person may pay deference to a superintendent because he or she wants a good appointment and withhold forthright conversation. A superintendent may withhold forthright conversation because he or she fears not being liked or forthrightness will lead to an unpleasant conversation. It is not the system that is the problem, it is our behavior.

When the expectations are clear and forthright, and both pastor and lay person or superintendent and pastor enter into the conversation seeking discovery and meaning, then we begin to experience covenant, miracles, fruit, growth, and collaboration, all of which produce joy.

As conference staff and elected leaders, if we want trust and better relationships, we have to get better at being clear and forthright as well as get better at engaging in conversation. When a congregation or pastor are not meeting expectations we have to move from disappointment to discovery. We have to ask questions like: Why do you believe things turned out like they did? What have you learned through your experience? What will you do differently in the future and how can I support you in removing roadblocks?

Presently we are on a journey and with prayer and mutual encouragement we will live into a new way of community that understands appropriate expectations, support and thoughtful questions are essential to relationships.

Keep the faith!
John Schol, Bishop

Bishop Schol Announces Resignation of Bruce Hartman



On Monday, September 12, Bishop Schol regretfully announced that Bruce Hartman is stepping down as the Director of Connectional Ministries. In an email to clergy, Bishop Schol shared that Hartman has had a tremendous impact on the conference during his tenure. His accomplishments have included hiring and launching a new Connectional Ministries team, leading the camping ministry through a challenging financial time and developing key resources to help our congregations become more vital.

In the email, the Bishop explained that he fully supported Hartman's decision to focus on personal and family responsibilities that need his attention and that Hartman will continue to work with the conference as a leader. He will maintain his position as Chair of the Board of A Future With Hope, his leadership in the camping ministries, and his involvement with Mosaic Ministries. Hartman stated about this change in his life, "I'm very thankful to have been involved at this level in the Conference at this critical time. The Cabinet, the leadership team and the Bishop are strong stewards for our Conference and have the vision and skills to lead us to the next stage of vitality and growth. Although I am changing my role, I leave knowing that God's plan is at work in Greater New Jersey."

Flanders Church Celebrates 225th Anniversary

The Flanders Church has announced that the congregation will be observing their 225th Anniversary in service to the Mount Olive area. The church will be celebrating on October 12 at 11:00 A.M. at 2 Park Place. The Mount Olive community and all others are invited to join the festivities.

In an age when most Methodist preaching attracted small groups of listeners, a larger following attended Bishop Asbury's preaching in Flanders. In his diary entry for Sunday, June 24, 1787, Asbury noted, "I preached in the woods to nearly a thousand people... I baptized a number of infants and adults, by sprinkling and by immersion." Hence Flanders became the natural location to build the first Methodist Episcopal Church in the region which also became a model for other new congregations.

After 225 years of joy and hard work, it is time to celebrate and remember the endless line of splendor that is Flanders United Methodist Church with a ministry of memory service as they prepare for the next 225 years in the Mount Olive area. For more information visit www.flandersumc.org

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John R. Schol, Resident Bishop

The Greater New Jersey Conference
1001 Wickapecko Dr.
Ocean, NJ 07712-4733

New Subscriptions, renewals, address changes, and corrections should be addressed to Beverly Karlovich, bkarlovich@gnjumc.org or by mail to:

United Methodist Relay • 1001 Wickapecko Dr. • Ocean, NJ 07712-4733

FOR ADVERTISING RATES, INFORMATION and PLACEMENT

Glenn C. Ferguson, gcf1953@gmail.com
55 Lacey Rd. • Whiting, NJ 08759 • 732.350.6878

All new articles, photos, letters and viewpoints should be sent to an editorial staff member listed below.

EDITOR

Glenn C. Ferguson
732.350.6878 • gcf1953@gmail.com

RELAY STAFF

Robin E. Van Cleef, Retired Pastor
732.350.6444 • revrevc28@gmail.com

Jessica Stenstrom, Senior Pastor, Sergeantsville UMC
973.627.1041 • jessie43082@aol.com

CONFERENCE STAFF

Carolyn Conover, Director of Communication and Development
732.359.1016 • cconover@gnjumc.org

Jeff Wolfe, Editorial Manager
732.359.1047 • jwolfe@gnjumc.org

Views and opinions expressed are those of the writers, and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Methodist Church, the Greater New Jersey Conference or any official or organization thereof.

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Small Group Ministry Helps Keep Hackettstown Trinity on Track

By Jeff Wolfe
jwolfe@gnjumc.org

Hackettstown UMC may look like a big church from the outside. But for the last 18 years, Rev. Dr. Frank Fowler III has had a goal of making it a little church on the inside.

That may sound like a difficult task when you have four services, one on Saturday and three on Sunday, and have about 800 people in all attend. But that goal has been made possible through the advent of small groups.

"We like to think of ourselves as a large church with many small churches within us," said Fowler, who has been at Hackettstown for 31 years. "This has always been a relatively large congregation and it has doubled in size during the small groups ministry. One of the purposes is to invite people to be in smaller more intimate settings where they can get to know one another and develop close relations to discuss and explore topics and themselves."

One of the reasons Fowler started small groups was he did his doctorate's dissertation on that topic and realized the importance of people needing people.

"I had a background in that, and I decided in 1996 that we needed to do more," Fowler said. "I did 50 hours of training for 12 people who volunteered to be leaders. We called them the Barnabas ministers to distinguish as a ministry of encouragement that comes through small groups."

What Fowler realized then may be even more relevant now. The advent of electronic devices in recent years has enabled individuals to become more isolated and less interactive with others.

"The encouragement we give is for people to be in small groups," Fowler said. "We keep challenging the cultural assumption that you don't need other people. The fact that people are coming out tells us that although people are getting that culture message of cocooning, they really want to be around others and that they need each other and need to be in connection with each other."

Fowler estimated that about two-thirds of the Hackettstown congregation enrolls in small groups each time they are offered, once in the fall and then again for the Lenten season in the spring, and

then sometimes after the Lenten season, depending on when that falls on the calendar.

He said one of the keys to attendance has been regularly surveying church attendees on what kind of small groups they would like to be in.

"One thing that works for us is that we very carefully listen and solicit topics people are interested in," Fowler said. "We ask people, and probably number one, is that they want to know more about the Bible. And parenting is a huge issue for many of our people, too."

Fowler said there are other types of small groups they offer, too. One of the offerings this fall was a topic on foods of the Bible. Another one is on stamping, where people make greeting cards for the pastors to take on visitations to hospitals and other places.

But ultimately, the goal of small groups is to take people to another place, or maybe another level, spiritually.

"Clearly for many who participate, there is the effect of a deepening Christian relationship with each other," Fowler said. "We've seen some very strong spiritual results. I've seen numerous people who have started in small groups become participants in church leadership, mission teams and organizational teams. And we trust and hope that it deepens the prayer life of participants, too."

The latest effort to draw new people into small groups at Hackettstown has been to try an online version of small groups by using meetup.com.

"It's an online platform to meet together around a common interest," said Hackettstown Associate Pastor Jennifer Smith Walz. "Now we have a way for people to come to small groups who would have never come before."

While using technology in a positive way or announcing during a church service that signups for small groups have started, Walz points out there is one highly effective way to get someone to attend a small group.

"When I give a small group leader a list of names, and ask them to do personal invitations, that is the best way to populate those small groups," she said. "That is one of the best kind of things that works."

Laity Academy Weekend

Continued from page 1

on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, to show that being at church can be a pretty cool thing.

"You have to have a vision for the future and we have to leave something behind that people can relate to," Campanella said. "Using videos and things like that helps make the service more interesting and more inspirational. We all learn and relate to things in different ways."

Campanella points out that some churches would require a shift in how things are done and says that can be difficult for some to accept.

"Listening to all of this, it energizes you and is also a little overwhelming," she said. "You can recognize that changes

need to be made, but change can be difficult to accept, even in the smallest things."

And while change can be difficult, Perez added that having support from conference leaders is important to the process.

"I hope many of the other laity sensed the same support as I did," she said. "Sometimes we get burned out trying to do God's work from a laity perspective. To have the bishop's support, and guest speakers to encourage us, and the training provided by the conference, not all conferences do that."

"I really feel the conference is taking a huge step to educate their laity."

Caulfield Follows Call To Lead Conference Small Group Ministry



Beth Caulfield believes she is in the right place as the conference's Director of Small Groups. She has extensive experience in leading small groups and is excited about the potential for expanding that ministry.

By Jeff Wolfe
jwolfe@gnjumc.org

Beth Caulfield's first career was in human resources for some of the top corporations in the world.

The next step in her professional journey involves human resources, too, but maybe in a way that is not measured in dollars and cents.

Caulfield was named the conference's Director of Small Groups earlier this year and it seems like a natural fit for someone whose heart has been heavily influenced by her involvement in small groups over the years. She believes one of the best resources for spiritual growth is to have connections with other humans.

"I have always maintained this heart for small group ministry," Caulfield said. "So, when this opportunity was presented to me, I knew it was from God."

Caulfield knows from personal experience just how important a small group can be in a person's life. She remembers when her husband's work took her family to Paris, France for three years. Being a stranger in a strange land, she started attending the American Church there, pastored by Larry Kalajainen, who is now the pastor at Island Heights church. She was invited to join her first small group by Kalajainen in Paris and it started a journey that eventually led to her to earning a Masters of Divinity degree from Drew Theological Seminary in 2013.

"We had moved to this new place and didn't know anyone and didn't know the culture," Caulfield said. "So, I joined this church and they had a Community Bible Study small group. Since they had babysitting for the kids and there would be adult company, I said why not?"

Caulfield said the first group was wide-ranging, consisting of ambassadors, refugees, fashion models and homeless people.

"We had diverse backgrounds and came from different cultures, but we understood the same Jesus Christ," Caulfield said. "We were getting into the scriptures together and as we studied, it became powerful to me. It affected my whole family and opened up my faith in a whole new way."

Eventually, Caulfield became a small group leader in Paris, but it didn't come without its fears.

"I didn't want to pray out loud," she said. "But I did do that and it gave me some leadership experience."

Caulfield said one of the biggest steps in her journey was starting a women's small group at the Edna Mahon Women's Correctional Facility and then another group at the Mountainview Correctional Facility for Young Men. She has also led Community Bible Study small groups for various denominations and churches.

"That opened up a whole new understanding of God's grace for me," Caulfield said of the prison ministry. "It addressed this judgmental nature I had about people who go to prison."

While small groups have been in place at some larger churches such as Hackettstown and Sharptown for years, Caulfield also makes it clear that small groups are appropriate for smaller congregations as well.

"Some of the small churches say 'we are already a small group,'" Caulfield said. "But this is an intentional ministry designed for spiritual growth beyond the worship service."

Small groups will be celebrated around the conference as part of worship services on Laity Sunday Oct. 19. Caulfield also shared a definition of a small group.

"Small groups are gatherings of up to 15 people that are intentionally planned for growing disciples' faith, spirituality and engagement in the world. They meet at least twice a month, are rooted in prayer, are conversationally driven, and involve study and/or outreach. Each member becomes a teacher and learner through a facilitated sharing. They build relationships with God and people and thus help make the community and the world a better place. Sunday 'Church School' classes, music ministry teams and other church groups may, or may not be a small group, depending on how their meetings are structured when considering the above factors."

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — *UMCmarket.org*, presented by the General Council on Finance and Administration, allows online shoppers to donate a percentage of what they spend back to their church or the United Methodist ministry of their choice. GCFA estimates holiday shoppers can generate as much as \$48 million in donations to ministry.

Church's domestic violence response predates NFL news

MERIDIAN, Miss. (UMNS) — United Methodists have been confronting family violence long before the NFL's response to players' assault charges was making headlines. Still, advocates - including leaders of United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men - say church leaders can do more to address a problem seldom mentioned from the pulpit.

Wingfield to lead ordained ministry division

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — The Rev. Myron Wingfield, an ordained elder in the California-Pacific Conference, has been named associate general secretary for the General Board of Higher Education's and Ministry's Division of Ordained Ministry, effective Sept. 29. He has served as interim in that position since March.

Talking about 'The Things That Make for Peace'

NEW YORK (UMNS) - Bell-ringing, dancing, music and calls to action opened an International Day of Peace symposium at the Church Center for the United Nations. Seventeen organizations, including United Methodist Women, invited participants to discuss "The Things That Make for Peace."

Historic Chicago church OKs same-sex unions

CHICAGO (UMNS) - First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple has affirmed a marriage-equality proposal that gives pastors a choice in whether to perform same-gender marriages and will support financially any pastor who does so if charges are filed.

Bishop Middleton named interim leader in New York

NEW YORK (UMNS) - Retired Bishop Jane Allen Middleton will be the interim bishop for the New York Annual (regional) Conference, from Jan. 1, 2015, through Aug. 31, 2016. Bishop Warner Brown, president of the Council of Bishops, announced that the council's executive committee has approved the assignment, recommended by the Northeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops. Bishop Martin McLee died on Sept. 6.

MARCHA approves declaration on border crisis

LOS ANGELES, Calif. (UMNS) - More than 150 Hispanic/Latino clergy and lay leaders celebrated communion through a fence on the U.S.-Mexico border, approved a declaration addressing the humanitarian crisis of unaccompanied children coming to the United States, and defined strategies to achieve their goals within The United Methodist Church.

AIDS conference: Just Save One

DENVER (UMNS) - Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey asked participants at a conference on fighting HIV/AIDS what they were willing to risk "to just save one?" The conference, sponsored by The United Methodist Global AIDS Fund, aimed to provide participants with the knowledge, resources and inspiration to take action in eliminating the AIDS virus. Charmaine Robledo.

United Methodists, Moravians consider full communion

NEW YORK (UMNS) - A draft statement "declaring and affirming" full communion between The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church is being submitted with recommendations to both denominations. The statement was completed when a joint committee met Sept. 11-13 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, for the fourth session of the dialogue between the two churches.

Watch Sexuality Discussion Live on Nov. 1

CHICAGO (UMNS) — The Connectional Table's Human Sexuality Task Force plans to hold the second of three live stream events from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. CT Saturday, Nov. 1. The panelists are members of the Council of Bishops who contributed to the book "Finding Our Way: Love and Law in The United Methodist Church," as well as the publisher and president of United Methodist Publishing House.

UNIQUE WORLD AIDS DAY EVENTS IN BERLIN, NJ

Free Concert and Special Worship Service

Berlin, NJ: On Saturday, Nov. 15, at 7:30 pm, Centenary Church, 149 South White Horse Pike, Berlin, New Jersey will kick off two days of events to commemorate World AIDS Day with a concert by the Philadelphia Gay Men's Chorus. A free-will offering will be taken with part of the funds going to the chorus and the remainder to Francis House in Camden, NJ which provides services for people living with HIV and AIDS. Refreshments will follow the concert in the church hall.

On Sunday, Nov. 16, at 9 am, Centenary will have a special worship service including prayers, and scripture offered by Lay Servants, a message by a special speaker, and a sermon by the pastor.

The United Methodist Church is committed to be in ministry with, and respond fully to the needs of persons, families, and communities whose lives have been affected by HIV/AIDS. Centenary offers this opportunity to express unity with our brothers and sisters living with HIV and AIDS, and to raise funds for their care.

Cape Atlantic Churches Make Plans to Help Unemployed



Cape-Atlantic District Superintendent Brian Roberts talks to members of the Atlantic City Economic Response Team at a meeting on Sept. 10 at the Cape-Atlantic district office in Northfield.

By Jeff Wolfe jwolfe@gnjumc.org

The casinos leave behind more than empty buildings when they close their doors in Atlantic City. There are also empty hearts, empty souls, and when it gets right down to it, empty stomachs among the thousands who have been left unemployed.

Leaders of the Cape Atlantic District of the United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey and other advocates, also known as the Atlantic City Economic Recovery Team (ACERT), met last month in an effort to fill at least some of those gaps caused by the exodus of four casinos from the city this year.

Cape Atlantic District Superintendent Brian Roberts led the meeting and emphasized that not all problems are going to be solved, or are even known, initially. "Right now this is a first wave response," he said. "The best way for us to get vital is to do something."

Two of the most basic needs discussed at a meeting attended by a combination of about 15 pastors, lay leaders and community advocates at the district office in Northfield on Sept. 10 were for food and counseling.

One of those places where food distribution has already been taking place is at Asbury United Methodist Church, which sits in the middle of casino district, just a two blocks from the Trump Taj Mahal site.

Asbury UMC provides a full meal for those in need from noon to 2 p.m. each Saturday. Part of the issue now, according to Asbury pastor Rev. William Williams III, is that the need has nearly doubled in the last few months, with more than 300 normally showing up on Saturdays.

Williams said an urgent need for his church was to find more churches to help with his Saturday Touch Ministry Feed the Hungry initiative. He said out of the 52 Saturdays in the year, there were 14 open Saturdays, mostly on the fourth Saturdays of the month. Williams said hosting a day at his church involves preparing the meals, serving them, and then doing the cleanup afterwards.

"I'm encouraged by the meeting we had and the people we had here," Williams said. "But I'm concerned for the need we have and about what we can do to help the needy. My heart goes out to all of them."

The details on exactly how and where counseling would be made available were still being worked out. Bridge Wellness Ministry was one of the groups in attendance willing to help with that aspect.

"We have to be compassionate and we need to ask how we can do this right," Williams said. "That's why we need God's wisdom."

The next ACERT meeting is scheduled for Oct. 1.



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T-shirts are only guaranteed with registrations received before October 11, 2014.

For More Info & Registration Visit:
www.festivalofhopebayhead.com

Church Extends Support to Atlantic City Workers

By Linda Bloom

Sept. 8, 2014 - NEW YORK (UMNS)

The Rev. Brian Roberts sees a storm headed for Atlantic City, New Jersey, that could inflict just as much damage as Superstorm Sandy did two years ago.

This time, the telltale signs are not fierce winds and a churning ocean but an avalanche of pink slips as closing casinos disrupt the local economy.

Since January, three casinos—the Atlantic Club, Showboat and Revel—have closed and a fourth, the Trump Plaza, is scheduled to shut its doors on Sept. 16. Another casino, the Trump Taj Mahal, has signaled it could be in trouble as well.

The response from the 63 United Methodist churches in the Cape Atlantic District, including three in the city itself, will encompass both prayer and practical assistance. As their district superintendent, Roberts already convened an Atlantic City Economic Response Team, which will hold its second meeting Sept. 10 at the district office.

Just as Sandy “was a weather storm of epic proportions,” New Jersey Bishop John Schol told United Methodist News Service, so the layoff of 6,000 or more workers has created “an epic economic storm for South Jersey which will ripple its way through the state.”

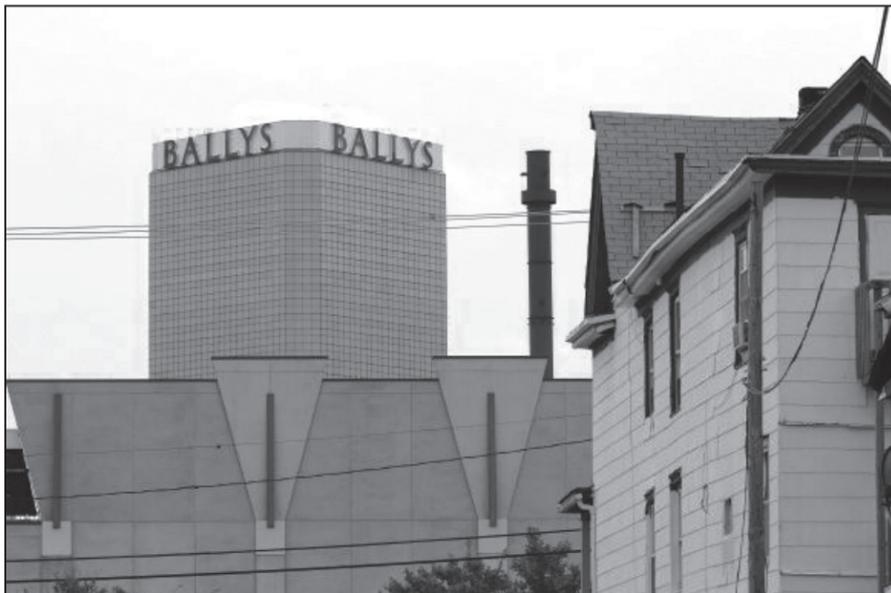
In an Aug. 25 letter to the United Methodist Greater New Jersey Annual (regional) Conference, Schol wrote about joining other faith leaders to pray and walk with those whose jobs were threatened.

“Many, maybe most of those losing their jobs are hotel workers, wait staff, cooks, and cleaning staff,” the letter said. “We prayed for a new vision for Atlantic City, for the financial health of the families and for sustainable jobs.”

The Rev. William M. Williams III, pastor of Asbury United Methodist Church, believes the church’s participation in casting an economic vision is crucial to Atlantic City’s success. “What we, as United Methodists, need to do and are trying to do is to have a seat at the table.”

Second or third layoffs

The Rev. Juliann Henry, who manages pastoral care at AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center and serves two small United Methodist congregations, noted that some casino employees are reeling now from what is a second or third layoff.



Homes damaged by Hurricane Sandy frame a view of a downtown casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Her husband, Ed Henry, 59, is a case in point. A lighting designer, he spent 27 years working for shows connected to the Trump Plaza before being laid off three years ago, but found a new position when the Revel Casino opened in April 2012. “Most of the folk at Revel that just lost their jobs had found a job after they had been laid off at other casinos,” she explained.

United Methodist clergy are among the volunteers at a clearinghouse set up last week in the Atlantic City Convention Center by Local 54 of Unite Here, the main casino workers’ union, and the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The laid-off workers can file for unemployment and get information on job search assistance. The resource center will close Sept. 10 and reopen elsewhere after the Trump Plaza closes Sept. 16.

Henry has been one of the volunteers. “One of the things that the union asked for, right off the bat, was a comprehensive clergy presence around the clock,” she said.

The United Methodist Church officially opposes the legalization of gambling, but, as Schol points out in his letter, the denomination also has members who work in the gaming business and members who gamble.

“Our concern for the people of Atlantic City and the region is because the significant layoffs will hurt families, the local community and the stability of the area. Our commitment is to help those who lost jobs by supporting them during the transition and to assist them in finding meaningful work.”

For church, mission is the same

Those most affected in his congregation at Asbury, Williams said, are members whose children and grandchildren work for the casinos, along with “a handful of members who are associated with the tourism industry.”

The church’s mission in this economic crisis is “the same mission it was through the ages—to spread the good news, to spread love,” he explained. “Maybe now more than ever we need to embody that mission.”

That could mean anything from creating a system to quickly meet economic needs to tailoring worship services to address the issues raised by the crisis. Asbury already provides food for the hungry on Saturdays. “Our doors need to be open for silent prayer, for mediation, for people to just come and sit,” he added.

Roberts said the Cape Atlantic District is moving “with haste” to form partnerships with others and provide resources such as counseling, food provisions, résumé-writing assistance, drop-in and online centers for conversation and “a heaping helping of hope.”

“We’re trying to be where they are,” explained the Rev. Clifford Still Jr., pointing out that the church has “to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ” and offer support. “There’s nothing worse than not

knowing how you’re going to feed your family,” he said.

Still leads two Atlantic City United Methodist churches, Venice Park and Hamilton Memorial, where Schol preached over the weekend. “I’m very encouraged and excited that we have a bishop who is genuinely concerned about people and people’s welfare,” Still said. “He has demonstrated that numerous times.”

Williams believes it will take courage, discernment and “a sense of mutual cooperation” in partnership with other faith groups to push for a more holistic approach to unemployment.

“Atlantic City has time and time again gone through the transition of economic instability,” he said. “Maybe now it’s time for the church to take on that position of combining a compassionate economic theory that helps us move forward with sustainable growth in all areas of a person’s life.”

‘Feels like another hurricane’

For the community as a whole, the collapse of several casinos coming at a time when the Sandy recovery is ongoing is a blow, Henry said. “It feels like another hurricane, to be quite honest.”

The silver lining in that storm cloud, she and Schol pointed out, is the experience and expanded capacity that has developed from that disaster.

A Future with Hope, the Greater New Jersey Conference’s Sandy recovery organization, currently has volunteer teams working on 15 houses in Atlantic City. Statewide, its teams will repair some 70 homes this year and anticipates finishing another 100 homes in 2015, Schol said. He expects the organization could become “the largest nonprofit housing developer in the state of New Jersey.”

A new pilot program in three Sandy-damaged communities, using the denomination’s “Communities of Shalom” model, will focus not just on rebuilding houses but rebuilding lives, he added.

The long-term recovery group in Atlantic City, of which Henry has been a part, has been very successful in providing case management for Sandy survivors. Because of that, Atlantic City’s mayor may provide funds to hire a few case managers to help the newly displaced casino workers.

“We’ve got a great infrastructure already in place,” she said. “Atlantic City has been able to really move forward in the last two years.”

Bloom is a United Methodist News Service multimedia reporter based in New York. Follow her at <http://twitter.com/umcscribe> or contact her at (646) 369-3759 or newsdesk@umcom.org

Caldwell United Methodist Church 10th Anniversary Golf Outing

In partnership with Paterson Habitat for Humanity

Monday, October 13, 2014

Knoll Country Club West • Knoll Road & Greenbank Road, Parsippany, NJ

\$170 per player (includes cart, Green fees, lunch and dinner)

Registration 10:30 - 11:30am
Lunch 11:00 - 12:00pm
Shotgun Start 12:00pm
Social Hour (Cash Bar)
5:00 - 6:00pm
Dinner 6:00pm

Send check to: CUMC Golf c/o Ken Ingra, 8 Academy Road
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For more info go to www.caldwellchurch.org
or call 973.226.4410

GNJUMC Grant Application Deadline is October 31

The GNJUMC is providing grants for clergy salary support, equitable salary support, new church starts, multi-campus ministry, new ministry, congregational development, cooperative parishes, and planning. Grants will be allocated based on demonstrated willingness and preparedness to grow vital congregations.

Also, this will be the only opportunity to apply for congregational development grants for 2015.

We have made improvements on the grant funding application process. The application is designed to be submitted electronically and only applications sent using the form electronically will be considered. Applications must be received by Oct. 31. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

Applications and questions should be sent to Ginny Kaiser at gkaiser@gnjumc.org.

Download the new Grant Funding Application at
www.gnjumc.org/grants

Simpson Celebrates Groundbreaking for New Addition



Children take their turn breaking ground for a new educational and fellowship addition at Simpson United Methodist Church.

Nancy McGaw recalls the day when someone from Simpson church knocked on her grandmother's door. Now, she will also remember the day when the church in Old Bridge broke ground for construction of a new educational and fellowship addition to its building.

McGaw told a moving story of when a neighbor knocked on her grandmother's door more than 50 years ago and asked the family to join them in worship. That one act by a faithful disciple resulted in four generations of her family worshipping at Simpson with weddings, confirmations and baptisms.

About 200 guests celebrated the milestone Sept. 22 as they sang "Marching to Zion" during the ceremony to break ground for construction.

The building is the result of a 10 year visioning process and capital campaign which raised \$750,000. Recognizing that meeting their own needs to grow as a congregation goes hand in hand with their mission work, the congregation included mission gifts as a part of their campaign. At the service, mission gifts were presented to Old Bridge Mayor Owen Henry for the Old Bridge Township Food Bank, to Carolyn Conover for A Future With Hope, to Bishop Ernest Lyght for Africa University and to Rev. Dr. Javier Viera for Drew Theological Seminary, where he is the dean.

Neighborhood Center in Camden Celebrates its 101st Year of Serving the Camden Community at Thanksgiving

CAMDEN, N.J. - For over one hundred years the Neighborhood Center of Camden has been serving those in need. The center is now seeking food donations, including turkeys and hams to be distributed during the week of Thanksgiving and to serve at our Thanksgiving meal.

This is an excellent opportunity for children and adults to learn about the needs of families living on SNAP funding (formerly Food Stamps) here in Camden. During Thanksgiving week the Center provides a "Flash Community Grocery Store" for 400 families to shop free of charge and receive turkeys as well. The Center also provides a **Thanksgiving Dinner** at Noon on Thanksgiving to an estimated 200 people in need. The Center is fortunate to have Executive Chef Lou Wilson in charge of the kitchen; Chef Lou is a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America (C.I.A.) at Hyde Park N.Y. - volunteers will learn how to carve a turkey the C.I.A. way! Volunteers will also have an opportunity to order **Chef Lou's apple pie and pumpkin pie** for pick-up on Wednesday, November 26 after 4 p.m.

The Neighborhood Center is seeking food donations and pre-registered volunteers to meet the needs of families and individuals during the week of Thanksgiving.

Volunteers from across Delaware Valley on **Monday, November 24** from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. will be receiving donated food and setting up the **Flash Community Grocery Store** in the Center's Gymnasium, On **Tuesday, November 25** from 10:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. volunteers will manage the Flash Community Grocery Store and assist community members (we anticipate 400 pre-registered families) in carrying their groceries to their cars, while serving a healthy lunch to families, and on **Wednesday, November 26** from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. volunteers will set-up the Community Thanksgiving meal and prepare food for the next day from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. On **Thursday, Thanksgiving Day** volunteers from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. prepare side dishes and work alongside our Executive Chef preparing the meal and then serve a sit down Thanksgiving Dinner to pre-registered community members (we anticipate 200 guests in need of a Thanksgiving dinner). The Center will pre-enrolled volunteers from Church Groups, School Districts, Clubs, families, and individuals for the entire Thanksgiving week.

If you would like more information, plan on collecting food or wish to volunteer, please e-mail Christa Galvin at Christa@ncicamden.com **it's not too early!**

About Neighborhood Center in Camden

The Neighborhood Center in Camden is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization serving the community of Camden N.J. Founded in 1913; the Center has been and continues to be a vital part of the fabric of Camden. Through its programs, the Center strives to make a positive impact in Camden. Today, the Center provides a childcare, school age programs, teen and young adult programs, senior programs, and a Community Kitchen that provides a noon meal to the community 365 days a year and serves up to 250 individuals daily. For more information, visit www.ncicamden.org

New Jersey Pastor Celebrates 50 Years in Ministry



Harlan and Jane Baxter with Pastor Nehil Bejarano, La Puerta Abierta UMC

On September 14, 2014 Dr. Harlan M. Baxter, who entered into retirement at the 2004 GNJ Annual Conference, celebrated the 50th anniversary of his first Sunday as pastor. The church that received the young pastor and his wife Jane in September of 1964 was Grace Methodist Episcopal Church in Union Beach. Baxter, who began serving as a student pastor while enrolled at Drew, credits the congregation of Grace Church for teaching him what it means to be a pastor.

Celebrating with him were the pastor and people of La Puerta Abierta United Methodist Church in St. Paul, MN where the Baxters now attend and where he assists, as needed, with pastoral care and preaching.



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A Day of Hope at Centenary Church

St. Paul Centenary church, in Newark celebrated for its second year, The Day of Hope, "Día de la Esperanza" on August 16th, with much celebration, praise music, outreach to the community and fund raising for the A Future with Hope campaign. "This year the congregation dreamed and worked together to raise the bar and make the Day of Hope a holistic community event that included giving away 100 school back packs, preventive health services, and fundraising for the A Future with Hope campaign, all in a family-oriented atmosphere" said

Hector Burgos, Director of Worship and Urban Ministries for GNJ, along with Rev. Chris Heckert from Morrow Memorial, Rev. Iraida Ruiz and her daughter Alexandra Seda, and Juan Bonilla from Perth Amboy, filled the air with songs that lifted everyone's spirits and shared the hope of Christ. "This was our Methodist connection, at its best. All working together to make a positive impact in the community of Newark," added Pastor Santisgo.

The Day of Hope also created an opportunity for the church to partner with UCom, the Methodist Communications



Rev. Rolando Santiago, pastor at St. Paul's.

Hundreds of people from the community participated and benefited from eye vision screening, financial advice and other community advocacy services. Children enjoyed a bounce house and face painting. Several Gateway North churches were invited to share their gift of praise music with everyone. Rev.

agency, and local business owners, who not only provided supplies for the event, but that also share St. Paul's vision of hope for Newark and have pledged to continue to support the church's efforts to make Newark a more peaceful and safe community for all.

Reported by Rev. Rolando Santiago Pastor St. Paul Centenary Church and Day Care.

Small Steps Lead to Big Leap for Jackson UMC's Preschool



Students at Sunbeam Christian Preschool at the Jackson Church enjoy a snack. The church opened its preschool this fall, the only Christian preschool in Jackson.

By Jeff Wolfe
jwolfe@gnjumc.org

Stepping out in faith can involve a lot of little hops and skips before a big leap takes place.

And that's what it took for Sunbeam Christian Preschool, located in the Jackson United Methodist Church, to become a reality.

The preschool opened in early September with 18 students from ages 2 1/2 through 5 and is the only Christian preschool in Jackson Township.

"When I came to the church in 2010, they had been leasing this space to a secular preschool," said Rev. Joe Tiedemann, the pastor at Jackson UMC. "The church made a conscious decision to move in the direction of having their own preschool because God gave us this building to make disciples for the transformation of the community and the world. When the lease for the old preschool was up a couple of years ago, we decided not to renew that lease and prepared to launch our own preschool."

While having that vision is one thing, making that into reality can be quite another. That included the not so-glorious tasks of forming a committee to see how feasible a new preschool would be, then forming a board of directors, hiring a preschool director, examining the educational curriculum the school would use and meeting all of the state regulations for school and child safety.

"We found that there were lots of preschools around, but none in Jackson that were Christian," Tiedemann said. "We decided that was a sign to move forward even though we are surrounded by preschools. We asked for help in getting prepared from other churches (including Aldersgate UMC in East Brunswick) and they were very gracious to us."

Even with the advice and help from others, Tiedemann points out starting the preschool remains an act of faith for the church. That's partly because the financial backing for the school is coming directly from the church for now, even though he hopes that can change within a couple of years.

"It's been a huge effort from so many people financially and prayerfully and in man-hours," Tiedemann said. "It's been a huge project and we are starting to see some fruits from it."

Seeing parents bring their children through the door each morning has been one of those fruits. And according to Tiedemann, about half of those children belong to parents who have been unchurched.

"We have had a bunch of students, probably half of them, come because they are engaged at the church and their parents want their children to have a Christian education," he said. "The other half come because they want their kids to have a Christian education, but they are not engaged in a local church. So, hopefully, they can become a part of our family in a deeper way."

Tiedemann also emphasized that while the Christian part of the curriculum is important, so is the more traditional educational style. The school has combined the Creative Curriculum for Preschool along with the A Beka Bible Curriculum for its four part-time teachers and one part-time preschool director to use.

"The theology is solidly United Methodist and Christianity is very much in the forefront," Tiedemann said. "I tell people we are teaching children about Jesus and preparing them for kindergarten. Some people are very heavily educationally focused, and we can't let that go."

Tiedemann says if the enrollment grows that the facility can enroll 100 children in half day programs (50 in the morning and 50 in the afternoon). For now, he's glad the church can take those small steps of growth, before making its next big leap.

"The people of this church, I give them a lot of credit," Tiedemann said. "They have had an undeterred faith through the whole process. They have stayed on task. They are doing this to make disciples, to teach people about Jesus, to engage with parents and families and to help them in the discipleship journey."

Can you keep a secret?



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Saturday, October 4th
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Saturday, November 1st
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Installation Celebrations Highlight Diversity of Conference

By Jeff Wolfe
jwolfe@gnjumc.org

A time of transition in six of the nine GNJUMC districts was finalized with an exclamation point during three Sundays in September.

New superintendents Myrna Bethke in Gateway South, Drew Dyson in Raritan Valley, Gina Hendrickson in Northern Shore, Brian Roberts in Cape Atlantic, Manuel Sardinias in Gateway North and Jisun Kwak, who is transferring from the same position in Gateway North, to Delaware Bay, each had their own unique services.

Bethke, who served as the pastor at Red Bank for the last 10 years, had the final of the six installations during an evening service at Mantua on Sept. 21. One of her main themes was to be the salt and light of the earth. Bethke used the examples of an eight-track tape, a floppy disk, and the old mimeograph machines to show how while those ideas were effective in their time; there are new and improved ways to accomplish the same things.

"We are going to have to leave behind



Gateway North District Superintendent Manny Sardinias kneels as he is prayed for by Bishop John Schol and other district superintendents during his installation service last month.



New Northern Shore District Superintendent Gina Hendrickson gives a communion cup to Nick Metros during her installation service last month.



Cape Atlantic District Superintendent Brian Roberts receives a gift from Asbury UMC Rev. William Williams III during his installation service in September.

the fear of failure," Bethke said. "Jesus brings us power, and that power allows us to break out of our locked rooms."

Part of Dyson's service on Sept. 14 challenged his churches to think of large visions. During an inspirational sermon that drew on childhood dreams and sports metaphors, Dyson, who was raised in Ocean Grove, asked the congregation to dream big. During offering the congregation wrote their dreams on cards with the headline, "I imagine a church..."

Hendrickson, who most recently has served as Senior Pastor at St. Andrew's UMC in Cherry Hill, focused on building big dreams one step at a time.

"God is collecting stones one at a time with each and every one of us," she said. "There are pastors called to serve the unique houses of God that make up the Northern Shore, lay leaders and youth leaders and committee members placed together to grow and build up a strong house of God. There is a Bishop, cabinet and Connectional Ministry Team uniquely called and placed as part of the Spirit-filled construction process. God has called and placed each and every one of us - one stone at a time - to build up the house of God."

Roberts, who had served as the Senior Pastor at St. Peter's in Ocean City for nine years, talked about the importance of the church needing to have more heat and more light. He used the analogy of a stove and when



Delaware Bay District Superintendent Jisun Kwak is prayed for by Bishop John Schol and other district superintendents during her installation service in September.

it becomes hotter, it also burns brighter. "We need to get closer to God so we can glow more," Roberts said. "Moses got close enough to God that he glowed."

Gateway North highlighted the diversity of its district. Elements of the service included liturgical dance, videos, singing in both Spanish and English and

communion. In his sermon, Sardinias, who was born in Cuba, highlighted the bright spots throughout Gateway North asking the worshipers to stand if they had bright spots in their church. Every one of the approximately 300 worshipers in the congregation stood representing the strength and potential of the district.

The service for Kwak also highlighted the diversity throughout the Gateway South district. It included a performance of the song "Jacob's Ladder" by the John Wesley church youth choir and a performance of Korean traditional fan dance performed by children in the Heasun Jung Traditional Dance Academy.

Kwak, a native of South Korea who had been the superintendent of the Gateway North conference since 2011, recalled the days when she was part of a similar dance company during her youth.

In her sermon, she also shared the importance to remember to look up in the midst of hard times.

"I can truly say there was something down in the dark that was the presence of God," she said. "He gave me the gift of endurance. I was given the gift to stand up and hold on. So remember to look up and see God's love for this great and troubled society."

Bishop Schol Attends the Hamilton Memorial Garden Dedication in AC



From left, AtlantiCare's Laura Engleman, Hamilton Memorial UMC pastor Rev. Cliff Still, GNJUMC Bishop John Schol and A Work In Progress founder and president Cookie Till enjoy the new Hamilton Memorial Garden at its dedication in Atlantic City Aug. 27.



People look over the fresh plants and vegetables before the dedication of the Hamilton Memorial Garden adjacent to Hamilton Memorial United Methodist Church in Atlantic City on Aug. 27.

Chalkboard Questions Bring About Variety of Answers at Summit

By Jeff Wolfe ~ jwolfe@gnjumc.org



Summit Church placed a four-foot high, 16-foot long chalkboard along the sidewalk next to its church for 10 weeks this summer. A different question was asked each week and there were a wide variety of responses.

Summit UMC Pastor Shawn Hogan knew that the hundreds of people who walk past the church each week must have concerns and questions about God and the world we live in. Her challenge was to find a way to engage them in a meaningful way.

She got an idea after reading a story about people being asked to post their bucket lists on the side of a building. She created what became known as "chalkboard conversations" in Summit. Each week, she placed a question on a 16 foot long chalk board posted on the sidewalk outside the church. Anyone walking past the church could stop and write an answer or a quick thought.

"The dialogue that resulted clearly included respondents of all ages and diverse languages. It reflected depth, hope, pain, and humor," Hogan said. "Every week the board was filled with words of personal reflection. Every week we celebrated how the board was giving witness to the needs, dreams, joys, and sorrows of our time."

The board was up for 10 weeks and a new question went up on it each Sunday morning. The questions included "What brings you joy?" "What question would you like to ask of God?" "What are your hopes for the world?" and "Who is your role model?"

With cold weather on the horizon, the 2014 version of the "chalkboard conversations" have come to a finish. Hogan said they would start it up again in 2015 and this time they would include pamphlets about the church and its resources.

"On the last week of the ministry, we posted a sign indicating that we would bring out the chalkboard again next year and invited all to offer suggestions for future questions," Hogan said. "The board was flooded with words of gratitude for the project."

Installation Celebrations



Raritan Valley District Superintendent Drew Dyson hears a reading from T.J. Caulfield during his installation service last month.



Gateway South District Superintendent Myrna Bethke receives a gift from her son Daniel and daughter Christa during her installation service last month.

Journeying

In Ministry with the Appalachian Hikers



by Rev. Dr. Eunice Vega- Perez/ Senior Pastor Vernon UMC

The Appalachian Trail is a 2,184 mile long public footpath that traverses the beautiful lands of the Appalachian Mountains. This trail stretching between Maine and Georgia was built more than 77 years ago. It takes 5,000,000 adult footsteps to walk the entire trail.

The Vernon United Methodist Church is geographically situated in North Jersey and is one of the many towns through which the trail passes. For many years, the Vernon church has had the awesome opportunity to interact with hikers as they come to their front doors to participate in the church's Community Dinner. As they share bread together and have fellowship with them the people of the church learn much about the hikers' lives, their families, and what motivated them to participate in such an adventure. Every single story is unique, special and interesting. On numerous occasions hikers have expressed how they have been blessed by the church's hospitality. Some of them have decided to stay and participate at the Wednesday worship service. Many of them have commented publicly how thankful they are for the kindness and generosity shown them. Many acknowledge, "You have treated us like family."

Last July, I had an amazing experience with four hikers that came to our Community Dinner. They all came from different parts of the country: Massachusetts, Virginia, Indiana and California, but met each other on the Appalachian Trail. These four hikers were quite different from each other. They were of different ages, had different life experiences, professions, faith and gender, but they all have one goal: to do something different and outside of the box. They all wanted to be in contact with nature and to explore the unknown! In no time they became friends and started to share life together in the mountains. I was told that hikers give each other nicknames. In the picture above from left to right we have "weather man"- a 20 year old young guy from Massachusetts, "Mc J" from California, "Plan - B" from Indiana, and "Sprout" from Virginia. Each one of these names reveals something about who they are. Really interesting! We had such a wonderful time together. After the dinner and conversation, we say goodbye and they went back to continue on their journey.

This experience with these four hikers reminds me, that every single day is a gift from above and that God has invited each one of us to embrace and enjoy life fully. We only live once! We are encouraged to fulfil our dreams and goals to the best of our abilities. In doing so, challenges and risks are going to be part of the equation. Like these hikers, we need to take life and challenges one day at a time with the assurance that God is with us. But more importantly, this experience makes me reflect on how God has invited all of our churches to fully embrace the particularity and uniqueness of our places and to turn them into awesome opportunities in the name of Jesus Christ. You see? Our churches locations are unique and different from each other. God invites us to take these opportunities to be vessels of God's love, peace, and mercy just where we are. Are we willing to do just that?

Shining at the Shore!



Rev. Evan Rohrs-Dodge (center) and representatives of the Broadway and Port Colden United Methodist churches from the Raritan Valley District deliver approximately 650 lbs. of donated water, snacks, paper products, and cleaning supplies to A Future With Hope volunteers at Atlantic Highlands who are working on rebuilding homes devastated by Hurricane Sandy.

28 "Angels" from Haddonfield Serve Children Through Make-A-Wish

By Rev. Tom Lank

From August 11-16, twenty-one youth and seven adults from the Haddonfield Church served children with life-threatening or life-changing illnesses and their families at a Make-A-Wish Foundation partner in Florida known as Give Kids the World Village.

For many it was not only the first time on an airplane or the first time participat-

ing in a mission trip, but the first time encountering a child who is facing the end of life. "Our job was to help them forget about the diagnoses, the doctors, the tubes and the treatments for awhile and have the happiest, most normal life they could for a week," said Beth Van Buskirk, a member of the team and a Child Life Specialist in the Virtua Hospital System.

Continued on page 11



The Mission Team from Haddonfield United Methodist Church spent a week serving children with life-threatening illnesses this summer.

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STEWARDSHIP STORIES

by Rich Hendrickson, Director of Stewardship & Visioning

Building Better Stories

It was around 9:00 am when the phone rang at the parsonage. On the other end of the line was the third grade teacher from the local elementary school. She had just overheard one of her students telling a classmate that her family had run out of money and were

beginning to break up some of the furniture so they could burn the pieces in the wood stove in order to stay warm. The family lived in a hunting camp just outside of town. She was calling our church because she had heard others in town telling stories of how we were “always doing something to help people” whether they were members or not. Being a caring church that looked out for the people of our community was our “brand identity” and we could not have been more proud.

The image of any church in the community in which it resides is based on the perceptions and substantive experiences that people have with that church, its ministries, services, and people. Typically those perceptions and experiences are articulated in stories that people freely share with others. If you want to learn about your “brand identity” and whether or not it’s a positive one, listen closely to the stories that are being told about your church. The stories will be good ones if your ministries, services, and interactions with the community build tangible value and impact people’s lives.

So, how are you known in your community? What are you known for? What are the stories people are telling about you? Is it what you want to hear? Shape your “brand identity” in a way that reflects the image and presence of God out through your church doors and into the community. Build a better story by making a difference in the name of Christ and for the sake of all of God’s people.

Haddonfield Make-A-Wish

Continued from page 10

This was a different type of mission trip for the Haddonfield youth, who in recent years have led VBS and repaired a church and school in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and built homes on a South Dakota Native American reservation and at the Henderson Settlement in Frakes, Kentucky. This time around “we weren’t swinging hammers or building things that could be seen with human eyes,” said Associate Pastor Tom Lank, “we were announcing the Kingdom of God with smiles, kind gestures, and acts of love. Give Kids the World Village is like a little piece of heaven on earth for kids that are going through hell. Our challenge was to preserve and enlarge that island of hope.”

Give Kids the World Village was initiated by hotelier and Holocaust-survivor Henry Landwirth, who vowed to never let a child die before their wish to visit Disney World or one of the other Central Florida attractions could be fulfilled. Since 1986, over 125,000 children and their families have been served, and thanks to generous partners, 140 families can stay at the village at one time. Give Kids the World relies on committed volunteers to feed them every day and cater to every need. So far more than 2.5 million volunteer hours have been logged to meet that need. Give Kids the World calls their volunteers “Angels” and this helped the Haddonfield youth connect what they were doing to their faith. The word angel, in Greek, means messenger and the Haddonfield team saw themselves as messengers of God’s love.

17-year old Cheryl Errichetti shared the following story of her experience on the mission trip: “My favorite part of the trip was when I got to work in the castle and this little boy walking in with his family was crying because he wanted ice cream. (At the village the kids can have ice cream for breakfast, lunch, and

dinner.) The mother wanted the little boy to make his star because every child that goes to Give Kids the World Village gets a star to decorate that will be attached to the ceiling of the castle. So the little boy made his star and “Stella the Star Fairy” took his star to put up on the ceiling. However once you make the star it takes about a day or so for it to be put up. So after the little boy made his star I asked him if he was going to come back to see it. His mom replied ‘No, we are heading back home today.’ So I went on my knees to the little boy’s eye level and I said ‘You know you are really special because you have a star I don’t have one and she (as I pointed to another volunteer) doesn’t have one but you do.’ I said ‘You can come back here when you are 10, 30 or even 100 and your star will be here forever.’ The little boy’s face lit up and he forgot all about his ice cream and got so happy and gave me a big hug.”

The experience was life-changing for the youth. Anthony Serano says that he wants to volunteer at Give Kids the World the next time his family goes on vacation to Disney World because it makes it all more meaningful. Following the trip a parent wrote “My daughter talked for 2 straight hours about the trip when we got home last night. She tends to be pretty quiet, even at home, so I was a bit surprised by how much she had to say. I wish you both could have heard how much this trip meant for her. I know she doesn’t realize it yet, but this is truly one of those experiences that will help to shape the adult that she becomes. It sounds a bit cliché that it takes a village to raise a child but it is true. Thank you for being a part of her village.”

For more information about this trip or Give Kids the World Village, check out gktw.org or contact Rev. Tom Lank at Haddonfield UMC – tlank@haddonfieldumc.com.

Back to Church Sunday



DeBows Church pastor Betty Gibbons surveys the scene at the barbecue that capped the congregation’s “Back to Church Sunday” festivities.

The DeBows Church celebrated National “Back To Church Sunday” on September 21st.

Special postcards were sent to people that had not been in worship for a while and to friends within the community. Large signs were placed around Jackson and at the church. All ages contributed to the worship service by singing, reading the scripture and playing the hand bells.

After worship, a cookout was held on the church grounds and the older youth played volleyball. There was a celebrative spirit at Back to Church. The event was arranged by the church’s new Youth Coordinator, Mary Ann Smith.



Volunteers In Mission Team Leadership Training

Greater New Jersey Annual Conference **UNITED METHODIST VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION** Invites you to a:

Volunteers In Mission Team Leadership Training
Saturday, October 11, 2014
St. John’s United Methodist Church
2000 Florence Ave., Hazlet, NJ
9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Who Should Attend?

If you are interested in learning more about being a UMVIM team leader or hosting mission teams this training is designed for you. Team Leader Training is required for all first time United Methodist Volunteers In Mission team leaders, but all interested persons are welcome to attend whether leading a team or not.

What is UMVIM?

United Methodist Volunteers In Mission exists to promote, encourage, and enable Christians to exemplify “Christian Love In Action” through short-term mission service in the United States and abroad. It provides opportunities for service by developing and nurturing relationships with domestic and international leaders. We continually nurture our contacts with these leaders to respond to the needs of local communities and to provide comprehensive project information.

Registration

\$35 UMVIM Manual and lunch

\$10 Lunch (Manual can be shared by leaders of same church.)

Register online at www.gnjumc.org

For more information contact the conference UMVIM Coordinator, Kathy Ahmad at kahmad@comcast.net or 732-865-3730.

**The November Issue Deadline
 is October 10, 2014**

'Celebrate with us,' Says Church of the Master in Howell as They Plan Their 50th Anniversary



SPANNING HALF A CENTURY, the Church of the Master in Howell eagerly awaits its 50th anniversary celebration November 23. It was one of several Evangelical United Brethren churches in New Jersey at the time of the merger of the EUB and Methodist denominations in 1964.

HOWELL – “Come, Celebrate with Us!” That’s the invitation sounding forth from the Church of the Master, located on Salem Road in Howell Township, as it plans for its 50th anniversary this fall.

“We invite all our friends from our Conference to come to celebrate this important occasion with us,” and “If you have been a part of our congregation in any way in the past 50 years and would like to send us a short remembrance please send it to: The Church of the Master, 110 Salem Hill Road, Howell, NJ 07731.

The climax of the celebration will come on Sunday, November 23, with a worship service and luncheon.

“We are hoping that many former Church of the Master members as well as all of our current members and friends will be able to join us,” the invitation continues.

The Church of the Master began as an Evangelical United Brethren Church in January, 1963, meeting in a Howell school with 32 people in attendance. A year later, the congregation became a

United Methodist church with the merger that year of the EUB and Methodist denominations. The present church building was completed and dedicated to the glory of God in November, 1964.

From its earliest days, the Church of the Master is taken seriously the call to minister to its community. Serving Howell for over 45 years, Oak Hill Christian Nursery School is a ministry of the church. Oak Hill offers a quality preschool learning experience in a Christian setting, and boasts over 10,000 alumni. The state-licensed, school is a member of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI).

“While other pre-schools are closing in our area, Oak Hill has been growing enormously in the past three years,” reports Pastor YoHan Baik.

In the past year, the Church of the Master has demonstrated its commitment to Christian service by anticipation in the conference Sandy recovery program, A Future with Hope.

From ancient Book of Kells to modern painted ox: Titusville Methodists to host Meet-the-Artist Night October 8



The artist and the ox: Come hear Pennington artist-chaplain Terry Galvin Anderson discuss the artistic and religious inspirations behind “Luke, the Celtic Ox,” her bovine depiction of the ancient Book of Kells, during a Meet-the-Artist Night at the Titusville United Methodist Church on Wednesday, October 8, at 7 p.m. Luke will continue to graze peacefully at the intersection of River Road (Route 29) and Church Road in Titusville until mid-October as part of the fanciful 68-oxen public “Art in the Everyday” exhibition by the newly formed Hopewell Valley Arts Council now underway throughout Hopewell Township, N. J., in celebration of the township’s agrarian past.

TITUSVILLE, N. J. – Come meet Luke, the Celtic Ox, and hear local artist-chaplain Terry Galvin Anderson discuss the artistic and religious inspirations behind the life-sized bovine statue she painted, now “prancing” on the sloping front lawn of the Titusville United Methodist Church, as part of Hopewell Valley’s current “stampede” of 68 oxen, each a unique artistic homage to this area’s agrarian past. This Meet-the-Artist Night will be held inside the fellowship hall of the Titusville church’s Education Building on Wednesday, October 8, starting at 7 p.m. Until mid-October, Luke will “graze” alongside scenic River Road (Route 29) where it intersects with Church Road in still-rural Titusville.

Luke, the Celtic Ox, incorporates a host of symbols from the Book of Kells, an intricate, gilded Celtic masterwork of illuminated manuscript containing the Four Gospels of the Bible’s New Testament, believed to have been created in either medieval Britain or Ireland around 800 A. D.

This modern-day interpretation, Anderson says, incorporates traditional and contemporary illumination techniques and symbols, such as the Celtic spiral on Luke’s forehead and curving triskeles (three-pronged emblems) on the bovine’s shoulder blades. In Celtic art, the ox, a gentle beast of burden, serves as an important symbol of strength and sovereignty. The statue is named after St. Luke, one of the New Testament’s Four Evangelists, often depicted as a winged ox or bull, a figure of Christian sacrifice, service and strength.

“My goal was to bring to life the joy of this great evangelist, artist, physician and patron of iconography by adapting the Celtic vision of Luke the Ox from the Book of Kells, into the present, in an effort to bring joy and hope to people in the everyday, and to enliven the great Celtic sacred-arts traditions in a way that people of all faiths and traditions might feel inspired,” Anderson says. “It is a joy to see so many people engaging with life, love, friendship, beauty, faith and joyful surprise through the many oxen in the

Hopewell Stampede!

“This project led me deeply into my own Celtic heritage, and returned me to the golden age of Celtic illumination, manifested beautifully in the Book of Kells,” says Anderson, who plans to present slides October 8 that depict her own spiritual journey through faith and art, while sharing examples of Eastern icons, Western illuminations, and Celtic art, all “painted prayers in honor of God’s great glory.” She anticipates lively dialogue and shared spiritual growth, she says.

Anderson, of Pennington, is a chaplain, mother, artist, spiritual director, art-workshop instructor for schools, churches, universities and retreat centers, former Ivy League joint pre-med/art-history student, long-time businessperson in the pharmaceutical industry, and ongoing student of theology and medieval religious iconography and illuminated illustration.

“Luke, the Celtic Ox” is part of the public “Art in the Everyday” exhibition of 68 life-sized painted or embellished oxen – celebrating this area’s deep and continuing farming ties – sponsored by the recently formed Hopewell Valley Arts Council and currently on display along roadsides, in farm fields and outside businesses throughout Hopewell Township, N. J. According to the Council’s website (www.hvartscouncil.org), the ox is a “significant animal to Mercer County and Hopewell Valley . . . an icon of the Valley’s agricultural heritage. With a team of oxen still plowing the fields at Howell Living History Farm (in northern Hopewell Township), the ox symbolizes strength and teamwork.”

Titusville United Methodist Church (sites.google.com/site/titusvilleumc/home) is located at 7 Church Road – at the corner of River Road (Route 29) and Church Road – in Titusville. Ample parking available.

All are welcome! Fall-themed refreshments. Great fellowship. And a lovely night out October 8. Please come!

For more information, please contact The Rev. John Wesley Morrison, church pastor, at 609/737-2622.

ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED MINISTERS & SPOUSES (ARMS)

FALL MEETINGS

October 14th 2014 @ 10:00am
Green Village UMC, Green Village, NJ

October 28th 2014 @ 11:00am
St. Peter's UMC, Ocean City, NJ

Lunch is \$10

Following fellowship, we will have a memorial Service for clergy and spouses that have died this past year.

Call Garey Hope @ 609.291.5003 by October 1 (Green Village UMC) October 15 (St. Peter's UMC) to make a reservation.



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To Celebrate 125 Years of Deaconesses October 24, 25, 26, 2014

Donations; B & B deposit \$50

Friday, 24th, 6-8 pm Benefit Supper for Allen Project with
music at St. Paul's UMC Fellowship Hall

Weekend at The Melrose B & B with 2 breakfasts
(3 blocks to boardwalk & beach)

Saturday Speaker - Deaconess Barbara Skarbowski,
Disabilities Specialist for the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

Q & A on Deaconess & Home Missioner roles, Tour of UM Home,
Allen Project site and graves of many deaconesses who served and died in
Ocean Grove when there was a deaconess home in the community.

Saturday evening meal at a local church with
more stories and community building.

Sunday worship at local churches. Afternoon free.
Participate in any or all events

CONTACT: Deaconess Helen McCahill
76 Whitefield Ave. #321, Ocean Grove, NJ 07756
732-988-1151 or helenmccahill@optimum.net



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For more information, including forum topics, speakers
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Questions? Contact Nancy VanderVeen,
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OBITUARIES

Julio C. Pantoja, retired local pastor of the Greater New Jersey Conference, died on Tuesday, August 26 in Matawan, New Jersey. A Memorial Service will be held on Saturday, September 27 from 1pm to 3pm at the Matawan United Methodist Church, 478 Atlantic Avenue, Aberdeen, 07747.

Prior to his retirement he was the Pastor at The Redeemer in Elizabeth, NJ, for over twenty years.

Messages of condolence and memorial donations, in lieu of flowers, may be sent to his widow, Mrs. Haydalina Pantoja, 6 Middlesex Road, Matawan, NJ 07747

Howard Fred Sterling, retired Elder of the Greater New Jersey Conference, died on September 17. There was a reception and memorial service on Sept. 26 and St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Paterson.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to his widow: Mrs. Irene Sterling, 35 Washington Place, Totowa, NJ 07512. In lieu of flowers, please send memorial donations to: CUMAC-ECHO, P.O. Box 2721, Paterson, NJ 07509 or The Paterson Library Foundation, 250 Broadway, Paterson, NJ 07501 (*Please note that your gift is in honor of Rev. Sterling*).

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**The November Issue Deadline
is October 10, 2014**



Saturday, October 25th • 10:00am to 12:00pm

Venice Park Neighborhood of Atlantic City

Two years ago, all eyes were on New Jersey and Sandy's devastating landfall. While that spotlight has moved on, the storm's destruction remains and many people are still suffering. Much has been done to rebuild and recover but more is needed. When the whole community is hurting, it must come together to heal.

On October 25th, A Future With Hope will hold a special 'Hope Chain' event in Atlantic City to stand with residents, recovery groups, volunteers, and local officials to help focus attention on the needs of people and communities who still need help. Participants will stand side by side, stretching from the church through the community and to the home. Items that signify relief, recovery and rebuilding will be passed hand to hand along the Hope Chain. The final item passed will be communion.

**ALL ARE WELCOME TO JOIN THE CHAIN.
SIGN UP YOUR CONGREGATION TO JOIN US!**

REGISTER TODAY

www.afuturewithhope.org/hopechain

#GIVINGTUESDAY

DECEMBER 2ND

BLACK FRIDAY
LOCAL BUSINESS SATURDAY
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AND NOW THERE'S
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WHAT'S #GIVINGTUESDAY?

#GivingTuesday is a global day dedicated to giving back. On Tuesday, December 2, 2014, the world will come together for one common purpose: to celebrate generosity and to give.

REALLY?

Yes, really! #GivingTuesday has gone viral. In fact, last year 11,000 United Methodists from 34 countries gave more than \$6.5 million all on #GivingTuesday.

HOW CAN I JOIN IN?

Join us in getting your congregation, your community, your family and your friends to support the Mission Fund for #GivingTuesday 2014. It's simple. Go to www.gnjumc.org/givingtuesday to find out more information and ways that your church can participate. There's also a link for you to make your donation online. Whatever you do, make sure you share your commitment on social media to encourage others and use the hashtag #givingtuesdaygnj.

LET'S ALL DO IT TOGETHER ON
#GIVINGTUESDAYGNJ

