

# THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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No. 1

## Morrow's Love At Work With Syrian Family

By Jeff Wolfe

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MAPLEWOOD - Morrow Memorial UMC did what it always does when deciding to help a family in need.

This action of compassion, however, received much more attention than any of its members or pastor, Rev. Brad Motta, could have anticipated. That's because this particular family just happened to be Syrian refugees.

There have been calls by politicians, including New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, to suspend entry of Syrian refugees into the U.S. in the days and weeks after of the Paris terrorist attacks. While Motta understands the concerns, he says that's no excuse to not help others.

"We can have fear at first, but you can't live in fear because that is not going to take you anywhere," Motta said. "You see some of the violence out there and we fear that violence. We are rational people. But you can't walk around in fear all the time.

"You can live in fear and not have a life or live in compassion and the message of love and have a magnificent life."

What has happened in and around Morrow since it was first publicized the church was sponsoring a Syrian refugee family that arrived the day before Thanksgiving has been magnificent in many ways.

Morrow has received hand-written letters from all around the United States applauding it for taking compassionate action. Along with receiving individual donations from the Maplewood community, there has been full support from Mayor Victor DeLuca, the local Girl Scout troop has made contributions for the family, a Jewish boy decided to donate money to



Photo by Jeff Wolfe

Among those who have helped in Morrow Memorial UMC's sponsoring a Syrian refugee family were (from left) Andrea Wren-Hardin, Kathy Finch, Dorothy Wetzel and Rev. Brad Motta.

the Syrian family as his Hanukkah gift and an atheist family is now sending its children to youth group at Morrow.

"We had a Jewish boy give money to a Christian church to help a Muslim family," said Dorothy Wetzel, Morrow's Director of Global Outreach. "I think that is the God of Abraham being united."

Motta wasn't sure what to think when on the Friday after Thanksgiving the CBS2 New York television truck showed up at Morrow unannounced. Motta believes someone at CBS2 knew of the family coming through a Maplewood community Facebook post. He agreed to go on air to talk about why and how the church was helping the Syrian fam-

ily. Then, the following Tuesday, he appeared on MSNBC's Live With Kate Snow to talk about the topic as well.

"As soon as the interview on MSNBC was over, people were stopping me in the hall there and saying our church is doing amazing things," Motta said. "I even got an email from their booking person who said they were thankful for what our church was doing."

All this came just 10 days after Motta presented the idea of sponsoring a Syrian family to the church board, which it unanimously approved, in what was originally a finance meeting that turned into an outreach discussion.

"It was one of those meetings where

we were going over finances and we kind of got to the point in the meeting where everybody was putting all of their papers away," Motta said. "And then I said, we have some things to talk about. I said this need has come up and we would like to explore sponsoring a Syrian family. It was immediately talked about and then everyone voted to do it."

The opportunity for Morrow came about in part because of associate pastor Rev. Brenda Ehlers being on the board of First Friends New York New Jersey. Part of the First Friends ministry is to visit immigrants seeking asylum being held in detention facilities. They cannot

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## St. Andrews Fills Need At Pantry

By Jeff Wolfe

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CHERRY HILL - They come with little or no money and sometimes with an empty stomach, too. Then they leave with a grocery cart of food and a heart filled with appreciation.

That's been the mission of the Cherry Hill Food Pantry, which was co-founded by St. Andrews UMC in Cherry Hill, since it started in 2007. The pantry has grown from a small room in a church basement to a recently opened store front in a shopping center. The pantry is open twice a week, receives between 70 and 80 people each time it is open and has 900 families registered in its database.

"This is my fourth trip here and it has been so helpful," said a woman named Abigail, who is retired and lives on a fixed income. "I'm on social security and sometimes my money runs out before the month does. They have been wonderful to me here."

The families are allowed to come in once a month and each family representative is checked in by computer before being helped along by a volunteer to pick out the food.

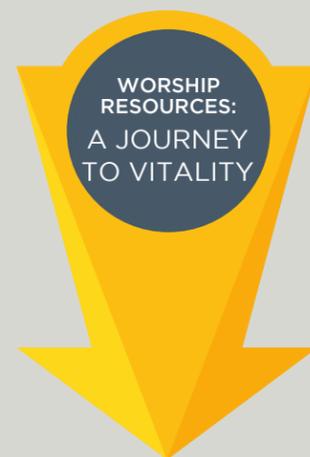
"If we didn't have this, I don't know we would eat sometimes," said another

*Continued on page 7*



Photo by Jeff Wolfe

Volunteer Kenny Ferguson, who attends St. Andrews UMC in Cherry Hill, helps people select food from the shelves at the Cherry Hill Food Pantry in December.



This month is the fifth in a series of pages highlighting stories and information about the markers of vitality.

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February issue: **Missions**

### What's Inside...

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UM Filipinos keep Christmas tradition with special services. **Page 6**

BlueClaws volunteer for A Future With Hope. **Page 7**

# A Message from the Bishop



## Who we are - Culture • Character • Competencies

*You don't have everything you need but you make it work with what you have.* That is how I define working class. I grew up in a working class family and neighborhood. Along with my faith, it helped define how I live, how I approach work and even how I approach living my faith.

For instance, an important scripture passage for me is from the book of James, *faith without works is dead* (James 2:17). I tend to be action oriented rather than talk and observation oriented. Don't misunderstand me, talking and analysis are critical for service and engagement, but a lot of talk tends to frustrate me and too

much analysis can lead to paralysis. I encourage people to learn from their mistakes rather than ponder and talk about something until we are sure we are right.

Today I begin a four part series about culture, character and competencies. Who we are says more about what we do and how we do things. While individuals have culture, character, and competencies, so do congregations and organizations. Understanding and living out of a healthy culture, character and ability strengthens the mission and fruitfulness of a congregation or organization.

I began by sharing about a cultural aspect about my own life, working class. It is not just a way of approaching life or problems, but a value and attitude for my living. Congregations and organizations have a set of values, beliefs and attitudes that make up their culture.

It is important to clarify something right away: Culture is neither good nor bad. It is who we are. For instance, a team working on ending cancer may be innovative, pioneering, experimental, entrepreneurial, and dedicated. Those adjectives could also describe a drug cartel. It is not their culture *but what they use their culture for* that determines whether the culture is organized for good or bad. Working class culture can lead to creative problem solving and it can also lead to over work and burnout.

We are better off not judging someone's culture, particularly when it is different from our own culture, but seeking to understand it instead. When a congregation or organization is using their culture for harm, I have found it is better to find the positive aspects of their culture and nudge it toward the mission of God. For instance, a culture of loyalty can lead to exclusion by being loyal to only one group of people or one set of traditions. This loyalty can get in the way of the new thing God wants to unfold. How do we move a group of loyal people to be loyal to God and the new thing God wants to do rather than being loyal to the past and those we know?

Culture can be powerful and transformative. Recently a denominational leader came to meet with some of our staff and conference leaders to learn more about The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey. At the end of her visit, she sat down with me and said, "I have never been to a conference like this. When I came through the door I was warmly greeted and engaged in a delightful conversation with the receptionist. Someone came to get me and walked me to my appointment. I was asked if I wanted coffee and was taken to the kitchen where I saw the Dean of the Cabinet cleaning some dishes in the sink. Throughout the day people were prepared for the

conversations and spoke positively about their ministry, the pastors and the congregations. I sat in on a meeting with the bishop to talk about an important strategy and people disagreed with the bishop, even forthrightly at times, and a better answer came from the conversation. Does this happen all of the time?"

"Yep, that's GNJ," I said.

This is who we are. You can't work here unless you are willing to do the dishes and set up chairs. You have to be warm and assertive. You have to love God, your ministry, the people you work with and the pastors and congregations you serve. That's pretty much our culture. If you don't fit in this culture, it is not going to be a pleasant work experience for you and you probably won't last.

That's the power of culture. It guides, directs and affirms wanted behaviors. It corrects and challenges behaviors that are not in alignment. That's why it is so important to understand culture and affirm and nurture the culture within a congregation or organization.

There is aspirational culture that congregations and organizations desire. In the midst of change, they can make the mistake of abandoning the present culture for something new and better.

For instance, imagine if we could nudge a drug leader's innovation, dedication and entrepreneurship in a different direction. What if we could build on the innovative, dedicated, and pioneering culture and nudge it toward community development rather than drugs? In some of the most transformative work this is exactly what has occurred.

It is the same with our congregations. We may not need to get rid of the old culture in our congregations, but transform it into something life changing. Maybe we need only to *add to rather than change* the culture.

Our GNJ staff continues to affirm our culture of hospitality, hard work, loving and believing in our mission, and forthright conversation. GNJ also has an aspirational culture that we want to add. Our aspirations build on Patrick Lencioni's healthy team values: 1) trust, 2) disagreement, 3) commitment, 4) accountability, and 5) attention to results.

We talk about these traits as our aspirational culture. We are not there yet, we are working toward them. Claiming aspirational culture as who we are can be dangerous. Imagine if we said that these five traits were our culture and someone new came and did not find us trusting or was reprimanded for disagreeing. The person may not stay or even worse stay and talk negatively about us. Imagine if a congregation put on their sign board, "all welcome" and when someone different showed up encountered a congregation that ignored them. Many congregations describe themselves as friendly but never befriend a new person or mostly stay in their cliques.

Your congregation and organization has a culture. It is better to identify what is positive about your culture and build on it rather than trying to change your culture. It is better to nudge your culture to be more Christ mission centered. When people are behaving badly, nudge their good cultural values in a positive direction. Adding new values to a culture is appropriate but never say it is your culture until you have been practicing it for a while.

The culture Jesus tried to instill tends to be the things GNJ staff are working on – growing trust, disagreeing with the status quo when it is not kingdom work, committing to God and the mission, being accountable for their actions and bearing fruit by paying attention to results.

I invite you to explore the culture within your congregation and organization. Ask how is your culture moving the mission of God forward and how you can grow and reinforce the culture for greater mission fruitfulness?

Keep the faith!

John Schol, Bishop

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## Sacred Spaces for Controversial Conversations BISHOP'S CLERGY CONVOCATION January 25-27, 2016



# THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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# Worship Resources: A Journey to Vitality

# 2016

## Setting New Year's Worship Goals

Fill in the blank with the appropriate number and hold onto this page all year long to track your progress!

- Guests become regular attenders
- Baptisms
- New musicians on your music team rotation
- Coaching sessions with your music director/worship leader
- Minutes that each person who serves spends in prayer and devotion
- Youth or young adults participate in worship planning

## Recommended Resources

### BOOKS

Creativity Inc., by Ed Catmull  
 Overflow, by Lovett Weems Jr. and Tom Berlin  
 Lasting Impact, by Carey Nieuwhof

### WORSHIP ALBUMS

Everything and Nothing Less, by Chris McClarney  
 Covered: Alive in Africa, by Israel and New Breed



For More Lent and Easter Resources, Check Out:

[www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship](http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship)



For other great ideas, try Pinterest!



## 7 Ways to Get People to Return the Week After

Sure, Christmas Eve and Easter Sunday are packed. How do you get someone to return after the holidays? Adapted from [www.ChurchCommunityBuilder.com](http://www.ChurchCommunityBuilder.com)

### SMILE!

Have your hospitality team, greeters, and ushers be welcoming and smiling. Make a difference with a friendly face!

### BE READY FOR CHILDREN

Receive children in a stress free, simple, and reassuring way. Help visitors feel comfortable by helping get their kids where they need to be making them feel safe.

### GET EMAIL ADDRESSES

Ask for email addresses on attendance cards. Give away a PDF of your sermon manuscript when people sign-up for your e-newsletter.

### OFFER AN EASY PATH TO ENGAGEMENT

Don't do a total "data dump" on new visitors. Give people two or three ideas for their next steps to get involved.

### CONNECT PEOPLE

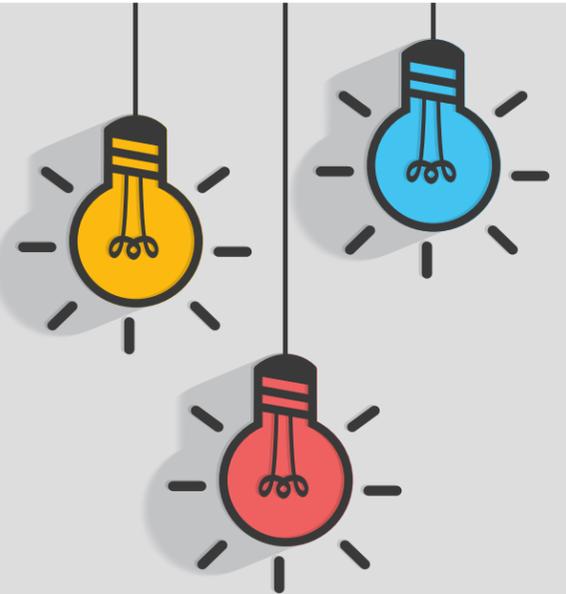
Follow up with visitors. Talk about opportunities for their next steps. Plan a clear process to connect to new people to impact the holiday and throughout the year.

### USE TECHNOLOGY

Use the mobile version of your website or a Facebook group to manage members and visitors. Simplify interactions with visitors using simple slides with scrolling announcements.

### PRESENT GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

Tell stories of transformation in your community and invite everyone to give. Understand that a check or online gift is a great indicator that someone wants to get more involved.



## LENT WORSHIP IDEAS



### ASH WEDNESDAY

Impart ashes in the community at train stations, grocery stores, coffee shops or bus stops.

Try hands-on worship experiences such as anointing with oil, modeling clay or placing smooth stones.

Create prayer stations where families can pray together.



### PALM SUNDAY

Have children, choirs, or hand bells process with palm branches.

Fold palms into crosses.

Lay palm branches across the aisle or entryway of your worship space.



### MAUNDY THURSDAY

Serve the Passover Seder, or a full meal.

Place a wash basin and towel on the altar, or wash congregants' hands or feet.

Using painters tape, line a labyrinth on the floor where people can walk, pray and reflect.



### GOOD FRIDAY

Conduct a Tenebrae service from light to darkness.

Write sins on an index card, nail the card to a wooden cross or burn the card in a fire pit.

Create a prayer wall with post-it notes.



### EASTER SUNDAY

Download an Easter "Welcome to Worship" or "Intro" video.

Give away a free gift, such as a small devotional book, to each family.

Donate lilies to local businesses, hospitals, law enforcement and schools with a small sign or tag from your church, "With appreciation during this Easter season."

For additional information and support on worship resources:



Go to: [www.gnjumc.org](http://www.gnjumc.org)

Contact Eric Drew, Director of Worship at

[edrew@gnjumc.org](mailto:edrew@gnjumc.org)  
 908-627-1337

# Kugler Leads Federal Prison Chaplaincy

By Rev. Melissa Hinnen  
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According to the Rev. Heidi Kugler, the most rewarding part of her new role as Chaplaincy Administrator for the Federal Bureau of Prisons is helping community members, inmates, and correctional staff, identify and claim their God-given potential. An elder in full connection of the United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey serving in extension ministry, Rev. Kugler has served in federal prison chaplaincy for 13 years.

In her previous position as Assistant Chaplaincy Administrator, she was responsible for developing national religious policies and programs and supervising the Chaplaincy Services Coordinators who provide direct assistance and support to the Religious Services departments in all 122 federal prisons. She says this new "sacred honor" provides executive oversight to the agency's religious accommodation and pastoral care.

As a pastor, Kugler appreciates the ways Greater New Jersey has supported her ministry and how faith communities partner with people who are incarcerated. In 2002, she became the first woman chaplain to serve at the all-male Federal



*Photo Provided*  
**Greater New Jersey elder Rev. Heidi Kugler has served in federal prison chaplaincy for 13 years and was recently promoted to the lead position of Chaplaincy Administrator.**

Correctional Institution at Fort Dix, N.J.

"The church stands in the midst for victims of crime, incarcerated inmates, families who have loved ones behind bars, those in law enforcement, and people who are in need of God's grace and reconciliation upon release," Kugler said.

Kugler recalls visiting an inmate who

had just been taken into custody.

"He was experiencing trauma as he recognized the full loss of being locked up," she said.

As she visited with him, he began to connect with his own humanity.

"This is an isolated incident," she said to him. "This is not the substance of your life, don't let it be. This is not at all how God sees you."

Kugler said she could visually "see the peace . . . the incarnational moment of transformation begin anew in the life of that individual."

Chaplains also minister to staff and because law enforcement is a high stress profession, it is important to be pastorally present with staff and encourage them. Chaplains offer opportunities for stepping back, praying, and recognizing God in the midst of challenging work situations as well as personal life changes and day-to-day pressure.

Ensuring that chaplains are culturally competent is another key area that Kugler addresses. While each chaplain is endorsed by a religious entity and leads worship out of their faith tradition, they also ensure that inmates from all faiths have what they need to practice their religion. Working in an advisory role with

agency staff at all levels, Kugler explores how to best offer quality religious programming and accommodations.

While she acknowledges that overseeing the religious needs and all that it encapsulates for people is a potentially overwhelming job, she firmly believes that nothing is impossible with God.

"We make note of the obstacles and shift our focus to what is possible," she said.

Spiritual disciplines such as actively praying and staying in communication with God allow Kugler to keep herself open as a vessel of God.

During higher-pressure times, she says she is even more intentional about replenishing with family time, meditation, and prayer.

"Chaplaincy and ministry can cause burn out," Kugler said. "As the Chaplaincy Administrator, it is important that I model what it means to be a healthy leader, spiritually and emotionally, and with our families."

*The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and Rev. Kugler, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Federal Bureau of Prisons or the Department of Justice.*

## Calvary UMC Helps Make Thanksgiving Special In Keyport

By Jeff Wolfe  
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Calvary UMC in Keyport provided more than food on Thanksgiving. It provided emotional nourishment to dozens of people in need during the holiday.

Calvary did so by participating in an annual community event that provides Thanksgiving dinners to people throughout the town.

"It was a great day for us," said Calvary UMC member Laura Hallam, who helped coordinate the church's role in the day. "We made sure we sat down with folks and asked how they were doing. We shared a cup of coffee, told them about our thrift store, and welcomed them to our different functions."

Part of the reason for taking part in the day was to inform people the church is available and willing to help.

"We are trying to find ways to let the community know we are there," Hallam said. "We are trying to get involved with the people."

Calvary pastor Gene Chamberlin added some fun to the day by using his computer to project football games on a big screen.

"Everybody thought that was great," said Hallam. "We had CDs playing Christmas music during the commercials and whenever there was a pause in the game, we tried to fill the time with something pleasant."

The Thanksgiving event was started five years ago by local businessman and former Mayor John Merla, who now owns a sandwich shop in Keyport called Reds. He said he and seven volunteers from the Knights of Columbus started feeding a few hundred people. This year the official count for people fed in the town was 823.

"We are fortunate to have so many people," Merla said. "There were more than 500 man hours put in this from start to finish. Next year I think we will top 1,000 people."

Among the served are those in assisted living facilities, a senior citizens high rise building, shut-ins that request a meal and police and emergency services personnel who are on duty.

"We have doubled our capacity from four years ago," Merla said. "When I started doing this I was by myself with a crew of seven."



*Photo by Laura Hallam*

**Women wait their turn to serve a Thanksgiving Day dinner to some of the 75 people who came to Calvary UMC in Keyport.**

According to Merla, overall there was more than 1,000 pounds of turkey, 300 pounds of ham and 100 pies. Hallam said Calvary donated 10 of the turkeys.

Businesses around Keyport donate the majority of the turkeys, hams and other sides. Volunteers begin cooking the turkeys on Wednesday night. The

food deliveries begin at 11 a.m. and go on throughout Thanksgiving Day until 6 p.m.

Hallam expects Calvary to continue with its role in feeding and meeting people in the future.

"For our first time doing this, we served a lot of people," she said. "We will be ready to do this next year, too."



### 2015 Statistical Reports

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The United Methodist Church  
of Greater New Jersey

## MAY 22-24

### SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 2016 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

*Beginning in 2016, annual conferences will begin on Sunday evenings and last through Tuesday. The dates are May 22-24, 2016; May 21-23, 2017; and May 20 - 22, 2018.*



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# Mission and Resource Center Dedication Day Is Scheduled

By Jeff Wolfe  
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The new Mission and Resource Center (MRC) will be dedicated Tuesday, March 1 and open to the conference for tours. The MRC, located on Jumping Brook Road in Neptune just off of exit 100 of the Garden State Parkway, is a 20,000 square foot facility that will house staff offices, a learning center, a video studio, and conference rooms.

"We are looking forward to the opening of the Mission and Resource Center and using it for training and mission planning for the congregations of Greater New Jersey," Bishop John Schol said. "It will be a grace-filled place where people feel welcome and a spiritual center where disciples plan mission, worship and grow in faith."

One of the Center's features is the large learning center room on the first floor that can seat as many as 250. That area can be partitioned off so if there are smaller meetings, more than one can be scheduled at the same time.

Some events already scheduled for the Center include Greater New Jersey delegates who are preparing to go to the General Conference in May and to the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference in July and the Laity Leadership Academy

in September.

The first floor of the Center, along with the conference meeting area, will include spaces for visiting clergy and laity to do work, a kitchen and dining area and a soundproof video and recording studio that can be used by churches or rented out. The second floor of the building will house offices for staff members.

Staff and the Trustees toured the Center in early December. An intentional design choice in the Center is the use of natural light. The current GNJ office has harsh artificial light with just seven windows in the building. The Center has large glass windows surrounding the building and most of the offices have natural light.

Good financial news about the Center was announced in November when the Board of Trustees signed an agreement with a buyer for the Wickapecko Drive building in Ocean, N.J. The sale is a key step enabling GNJ to fund the MRC without a mortgage. The sale of the building and good financial stewardship will mean the building will be paid off by the time the MRC is dedicated.

"God is blessing GNJ with a wonderful resource, financial stability and the opportunity to strengthen our congregations through the Mission and Resource Center," Bishop Schol said.



*Photo by Brittney Reilly*  
 Bishop John Schol gives a tour of the Mission and Resource Center to GNJ staff in early December. The building is expected to open in late February and the dedication ceremony is scheduled for March 1.

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The United Methodist Church  
*of Greater New Jersey*

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## SAVE THE DATE

for the opening of the new Mission and Resource Center of the  
 United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey



**Dedication service and tours March 1, 2016**

More information will be available in the new year.



## Filipino-American United Methodist Caucus Keep Christmas Traditions With Services

*Photos by Seth Bechtold*

The Filipino-American United Methodist Caucus of New Jersey welcomed Bishop John Schol to the Simbang Gabi worship and gathering on Dec. 20 at the Springfield Emmanuel United Methodist Church. Simbang Gabi is a Filipino tradition which includes nine days of worship services leading up to Christmas. Filipino-American (Filipinos) United Methodists in New Jersey relive and affirm the Simbang Gabi tradition which has become an integral part of their faith journey.



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## Morrow Shows Love

*Continued from page 1*

be released from those facilities until receiving federal and state clearance. Their stays in the detention centers can last up to five years.

The father of this Syrian refugee family had been in the U.S. for two years, seeking asylum after undergoing persecution and torture in Syria. However, his wife and three children had been in hiding and moving around Syria to avoid the same thing happening to them.

The father and the rest of the family had some contact during that time as the family had electricity one hour a day and would use some of that time to communicate. Motta said, though, the mother was beginning to give up on her hope of the family being together again.

"After about a year and a half, the mother said she felt she would never get out," Motta said. "She didn't think they would make it."

The Syrian father was receiving support from International Rescue Committee, which made the request to First Friends to help this family.

So, just eight days after the church council voted to help a family, they were reunited in time to celebrate an American Thanksgiving.

"At that point we thought they would pretty much need everything," Motta said. "We just began contacting people who had expressed an interest in helping to give them a place to stay and someplace to go for Thanksgiving. We got a spreadsheet and just made a plan. We had a place for them to go for Thanksgiving in a half an hour.

"Then we started getting donations with Morrow people wanting to help and the community reaching out. It was just a great opportunity for people to see and live the Christian life and to know that we are a church that welcomes people."

The quick response by the Morrow congregation, too, was no coincidence.

"We had an organization and a congregation ready," Wetzal said. "We got the call and started getting people alerted. There were so many people ready to help."

The Syrian family spent its first night

together in approximately two years in a hotel room on that Thanksgiving Eve. Those helping the family were reminded of the things taken for granted in the U.S.

"When the water worked in the hotel room, one of the kids came out and asked if they should be saving it," Ehlers said. "They were used to getting electricity for an hour a day and water once a week for an hour, so when they had water, they would save it."

Ehlers added that when the Syrian family was asked if they knew what Thanksgiving was about in the U.S., their first response was "Black Friday."

And while there may be some truth to that, it wasn't the only stereotype the people of Morrow had to educate them on.

"These people are coming from an area of fear and violence," said Kathy Finch, the treasurer at Morrow. "So when they hear what some of our politicians are saying, it just enhances that fear."

Bishop John Schol is also glad to hear that fear is not ruling out compassion.

"We are proud of Morrow Memorial United Methodist Church and any other Greater New Jersey United Methodist Church who welcomes Syrian refugees," he said. "It is the sign that Christ is in our midst. While we are aware that our governor is opposed to welcoming Syrian refugees, we recognize it is our calling to welcome the immigrant and to share radical hospitality."

Part of Morrow's hospitality is to enhance the family's ability to become self-sufficient and create a trusting atmosphere. A big step in that direction took place at a special evening service at Morrow on the first Sunday in December that the Syrian family was invited to and attended.

"This family walking in here had the faith and trust that this community would be a welcome and open place and we were able to meet that trust," Morrow Lay Leader Andrea Wren-Hardin said. "It was one of the most powerful experiences to see. What an example of Christmas and how Christ taught us to live."



### RELAY ISSUES ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE

Back issues of the Relay are available at  
[www.gnjumc.org/news/issue](http://www.gnjumc.org/news/issue)

# BlueClaws Volunteer In Recovery Effort

By Carolyn Conover  
[cconover@afuturewithhope.org](mailto:cconover@afuturewithhope.org)

During the three years since Superstorm Sandy, A Future With Hope has learned that partnerships are the key to recovery. Few partners, however, bring their own mascot.

Buster the BlueClaw was on hand on Wednesday, Dec. 9, as staff members from the Lakewood BlueClaws joined A Future With Hope for a day of service helping rebuild a home in the Belford section of Middletown.

Jim DeAngelis, the BlueClaws Vice President of Community Relations, helped arrange the day and shared his own recovery story as the BlueClaws staff of 20 were grading the outside of the Belford home.

"I live in Seaside and my house was also affected by Sandy," he said. "I was amazed at the volunteers who came immediately after the storm to help. There is still so much need and most people in the area don't realize it. We are happy to be a partner and volunteer with A Future With Hope."

"The BlueClaws have a wonderful staff. My staff should be at the office, but instead they are here giving their blood, sweat and tears."

A Future With Hope first partnered with the BlueClaws this summer when they sponsored a baseball game to help raise awareness of the continuing needs of people who had suffered loss from Sandy. Volunteer teams from Wisconsin and Pennsylvania as well as United Methodists from around New Jersey joined A Future With Hope during the game. Staff members gave out information at booths and A Future With Hope videos played on the big screen. Even John Schol, the Bishop of the United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey which founded A Future With Hope, threw out the ceremonial first pitch of the game.

Kevin Fenstermacher, Director of Group Sales for the BlueClaws, says this kind of work is one of the reasons he loves working for the minor league baseball team.

"This is the reason why the BlueClaws



Photo by Andrew Ryoo

Lakewood BlueClaws mascot Buster and the BlueClaws office staff pitched in to help with some work being done at a home in the Belford section of Middletown in December.

are successful," Fenstermacher said. "We are out supporting people. These are the same people who come out for us. This is our community."

One of the unexpected surprises of the day was when the homeowner stopped by to visit the team. "When you aren't doing this work every day, it is special to meet someone who has been so impacted," Fenstermacher said. "Meeting him put a face to Sandy recovery."

A Future With Hope is one of the most robust Sandy recovery organizations working in New Jersey. Through November, it has completed rebuilding 196 homes with the support of more

than 10,000 volunteers. An arm of the United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey, A Future With Hope has a goal of rebuilding more than 300 homes and has received widespread support from organizations such as the American Red Cross, the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund, the Robin Hood Foundation and the United Methodist Committee on Relief, among others.

As a BlueClaws Charities Community Partner, A Future With Hope also received a \$1,500 grant from the organization.

"The BlueClaws raise money throughout the year with events like golf outings,

bowling days and celebrity waiter evenings at local restaurants," DeAngelis said. "Every year, we give back to our community partners."

To find out more about the BlueClaws Charities Community Partners Program, go to [www.blueclaws.com](http://www.blueclaws.com) or contact Jim DeAngelis, Vice President, Community Relations at [jdeangelis@blueclaws.com](mailto:jdeangelis@blueclaws.com).

To find out more about A Future With Hope, go to [www.afuturewithhope.org](http://www.afuturewithhope.org) or contact their help hotline at 732-359-1012.

## St. Andrews Fills Need

Continued from page 1

woman at the pantry in an early December visit. "Usually I use coupons when I go to another store to save money. Coupons are a big friend of mine. But this saves me probably a \$100 or so."

The pantry offers a wide range of food, including fruits, vegetables and frozen meats, as well as a large variety of non-perishable items. The food comes from the South Jersey Food Bank, Philabundance, several area supermarkets, two local restaurants and food donations from various organizations, including schools and sports teams, throughout the Cherry Hill area.

"All of the food is up to date," said food pantry board president Michael Doyle, who is a long-time member at St. Andrews. "The way we have it set up now, it kind of resembles a supermarket. Everything we have is given away."

Doyle said there are now 13 churches of various faiths that help with the volunteer effort. The new site, located in a storefront just off the intersection of Brace Road and Haddonfield Road, includes six industrial size freezers and four regular refrigerators to keep the meats, fruits and vegetables cold. There is also a back entrance where food is delivered to a storage room where it is sorted.

"We saw this location and we went to the mayor's office and he helped get us

in here," Doyle said.

This location did require putting in a new floor, purchasing shelves and also installing new lights. But the result was moving from a 1,900 square foot area at St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Cherry Hill to a 4,200 square foot building. It's quite different now than when the pantry first opened.

"We started out in a 10x10 room at Cherry Hill Baptist," Doyle said. "We started out feeding five families and then pretty soon we were running out of food."

While many places are willing to donate, it is the pantry's responsibility to pick up the food. That means some volunteers have their SUVs full of food on some evenings and deliver it to the pantry. Doing the pickup as well as helping when the pantry is open can be a rewarding job.

"It's very satisfying," said St. Andrews member Ken Ferguson, who volunteers regularly. "I'm lucky enough that I have never been hungry. One thing I know though is that the Lord wants us to take care of people."

Another thing that Doyle and other volunteers have noticed is that as time goes on the need continues to grow.

"This time of year, hunger is on everyone's minds," said Food Pantry Executive Director Janet Giordano during the first week of December. "While we appreciate everything we get, we need to remember hunger goes on all year round. Hunger doesn't take a vacation. People are just as hungry on Aug. 1 as they are in December."

St. Andrews volunteer Daniel Proulx



Photo by Jeff Wolfe

Volunteers assist those who need food at the Cherry Hill Food Pantry in early December. The food pantry is open twice a week.

says volunteering to help year-round is a win-win situation.

"We've just kept coming as a church group over the years and it's been great,"

he said. "It's nice to be with the people. They are always so appreciative and it feels good to give them something."

# Ad Campaign Promotes GNJ Hispanic Churches

By Jeff Wolfe  
[jwolfe@gnjumc.org](mailto:jwolfe@gnjumc.org)

When Christ UMC pastor Iraida Ruiz De Porras found out her church in Lakewood was going to be featured in a billboard advertising campaign, she knew it was a good thing. It's turning out better than she thought.

Christ UMC was one of five Greater New Jersey Hispanic-oriented churches to receive advertising grants from United Methodist Communications (UMCom) to promote the Advent season on billboards, Pandora radio, door hangers, mass mailings and placements on selected websites. The requirement for the grant was for each church to update their profile on Find-A-Church at [umc.org](http://umc.org) and create a Facebook page.

The other churches involved were First UMC in Union City, Iglesia Presbiteriana Metodista Unida in West New York, Oasis UMC in Pleasantville and Wesley UMC in Trenton. The campaign lasted through Christmas.

"We are very, very grateful for this," Porras said. "It has created a lot of energy and has lifted everyone's self-esteem about the church. They are very positive about things in the church now."

Christ UMC has an English and a Spanish speaking service each Sunday. Porras said there was an increase of nine in attendance in the English service in the two weeks after the billboards became visible, including a family with two children attending Sunday School.

The Lakewood billboards appear in two places on Route 9 and one on Rt. 528.

"The members are so excited about what's going on, they are telling other people and their friends about it," Porras



Photo by Iraida Ruiz de Porras

This billboard features Christ UMC in Lakewood. It was one of three billboards placed throughout the Lakewood area to feature the church as a result of a grant from United Methodist Communications.

said. "Word of mouth of has helped, too."

Porras took photos of the billboards and had them made into small cards. They were then taken and given out with undecorated ornaments at church.

"I ordered cards that looked like mini billboards," Porras said. "Then I gave them clear ornaments for each person to design so they can give out the ornaments with the cards that have our Christmas Eve and Cantata service times on them."

"We prayed for the people who will be receiving them, too."

A ripple effect of the billboard campaign for Christ UMC was the creation

of a church Facebook page. Porras says the page has nearly 100 likes now and that it has more than 450 views.

"The fact that people are viewing it has been a positive for us, too," said Porras, who was a pastor in Puerto Rico for two years before spending the last eight years in Greater New Jersey. "I've been getting friend requests from all over the United States."

The first request for the ad campaign was made by GNJ Director of Connectional Ministries Hector Burgos this summer.

"This is the first time UMCom has partnered with Hispanic/Latino churches

nationwide for this type of campaign so we are excited that five GNJ congregations were selected to participate in it," Burgos said. "The promotional campaign provided a unique opportunity for local congregations to connect with new people in the community and increase awareness of our Hispanic/Latino ministries in urban areas with a fast growing Hispanic population."

Porras said it has been enjoyable to see the enthusiasm spread throughout Christ UMC.

"It's been great and exciting for the church," she said. "It was unexpected. God is good."

## Award Nominations Set For Annual Conference

Each year, individuals and congregations in Greater New Jersey are recognized at Annual Conference for their discipleship and achievements. Nominations for these awards are being accepted through Feb. 1. Award requirements and submission details are listed below.

### Helenor Alter Davisson Award

Sponsored by the Commission On The Status And Role Of Women (COSROW), the Davisson Award is awarded to a woman who is an active member of the United Methodist Church, has strong leadership skills, demonstrates vision, passion, resilience, sense of purpose, inclusiveness, perseverance, and a willingness to work with and stand for the status and role of women in ministry. Nominees must be an active member of the United Methodist Church (both clergy and laity), and exhibit work and ministry supporting the vitality of the church by empowering women and minorities.

The award is named after the first woman ordained in the United Methodist Church tradition.

Nominations can be sent to Rev. Michelle Ryoo, 60 Cedar Street, Ridgefield Park, NJ, 07660. She can also be contacted at 201-213-6827 or at [MichelleMRyoo@yahoo.com](mailto:MichelleMRyoo@yahoo.com).

### Denman Evangelism Award

Sponsored by The Foundation for Evangelism, the Denman Award recognizes a clergy member, lay person or a youth pastor who has an outstanding personal evangelism ministry. The award is named for the founder of The Foundation for Evangelism, Henry Denman. This award is made possible by partnering with annual conferences across the country. The nomination form is available at <http://foundationforevangelism.org> and must be filled out, mailed and received at the GNJ office by the Feb. 1 deadline.

### Christian Unity and Interfaith Relationships

The Commission on Christian Unity

and Interfaith Relationships has an award for an individual and a congregation that are fruitful in the area of Christian Unity and Interfaith Relationships. Questions may be directed to Rev. Jessica Campbell at [pastorsjandj@hotmail.com](mailto:pastorsjandj@hotmail.com) or by calling (845)-893-9267.

### Seese Scholarship

The Harry A. Seese Memorial Scholarship for continuing education for clergy. Each year this award is given to a pastor whose plans for continuing education will lead to strengthening ministry in the local church. Guided by Rose Seese of Gibbsboro, his widow, and supported by ongoing gifts, the scholarship honors her late husband, the Rev. Harry A. Seese, who died while serving Medford UMC.

Application procedures and eligibility requirements can be obtained by contacting Ginny Kaiser at the GNJ Connectional Ministries Team, (732) 359-1043, or (877) 677-2594, ext. 1043.

### Church History Awards

The GNJ Commission on Archives and History has three awards: The Robert B. Steelman Methodist History Award; The Ethnicity History Award related to a non-English speaking, or culturally diverse or native congregation; and The Digital Church History Award.

The nominations can be presented in written, audio or visual media. A local church history needs to include historical dates, memorable, famous events or people and images of former and present ministers. More details and resources can be found at [www.gnjumc.org/archives-history](http://www.gnjumc.org/archives-history).

The nomination should indicate any or all categories the church would like to enter in a cover letter. Any prior local church history that is five years or older needs to be updated before submission.

For any information needed from the archives, contact Walt Jones, Conference Archivist, at [WaltRetired@optonline.net](mailto:WaltRetired@optonline.net). All submissions must be sent to Mark Shenise, GCAH, 36 Madison Avenue, Madison, NJ, 07940.

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 is January 15, 2015**

# Annual Conference Legislation, Report Procedures Are Outlined

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey's Annual Conference is scheduled for May 22-24 at the Wildwoods Convention Center. One part of Annual Conference is reviewing reports and also voting on submissions for changes in legislation.

A submission process must be followed and the deadline to submit reports and legislation changes is Feb. 15. All submissions must be sent to Regional Services Manager Cari Cruz at [ccruz@gnjumc.org](mailto:ccruz@gnjumc.org).

According to GNJ rules, all reports and recommendations to be included in the Pre-Conference Workbook for 2016 must be submitted in writing to the conference secretary and signed by the author (Rule 3-19 a, b). Please refer to the page titled Instructions for Submitting Reports and Recommendations (Legislation) at [www.gnjumc.org/2016-annual-conference](http://www.gnjumc.org/2016-annual-conference).

All GNJ boards and agencies are expected to submit a report.

Legislative recommendations include nominations to be approved at the Annual Conference session, proposals, resolutions and motions. Recommendations may be proposed by any committee, commission, agency, clergy member, lay member or local church.

Anyone submitting a recommendation is expected to attend the Annual Conference.

All reports and recommendations must be emailed to Cruz to allow time for processing and printing the Pre-Conference Journal which will be mailed to members in mid-April. For questions concerning these procedures, please contact GNJ Secretary Dave Wiley at

973-464-9298 or [conferencesecretary@gnjumc.org](mailto:conferencesecretary@gnjumc.org).

### Submission Instructions

Reports and recommendations also must be emailed to Cruz. Documents can be sent as a Word file in an attachment or included in the body of the email. PDF files will not be accepted.

Include the name and contact information (phone and email) of the person submitting the material and the person who will present the report or recommendation at the bottom of the final page of the report or recommendation.

For legislation recommendation, indicate at the top of the first page of the recommendation whether or not the recommendation has a financial impact on the GNJ budget. Recommendations with financial implications will be given to the GNJ Council on Finance and Administration for review prior to Annual Conference (Rule 8-71). Also, title the recommendation.

The recommendation must have one of the prescribed styles: "WHEREAS ..." or "RESOLVED, that ..." or "BE IT RESOLVED, that ..." and include a rationale under the heading of "RATIONALE" with the recommendation which include the argument for the recommendation. Also, use bolded text for proposed additions to the Rules of Order and strike through for proposed deletions.

Reports and recommendations received after the Feb. 15 deadline will not be published in the pre-conference journal and will not be addressed at the 2016 Annual Conference without special permission from the Bishop.



*Photo by Linda Heshtag Ellwein*

**A member speaks to the body during one of the 2015 Annual Conference Sessions at the Wildwoods Convention Center.**

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# Leonia Creates A 3rd Place For Youth

Rev. David Wehrle used to watch middle school students stroll by his church every day after school. Now, he's happy they are walking into his church each Friday.

Leonia United Methodist Church, a 125 year-old congregation where Wehrle serves, has made a place for those middle schoolers to come at the end of week. It's called THIRD Place, coming after home and school.

"For the last few years, I've been watching hundreds of students walk past the church property before and after school," said Wehrle, the pastor at Leonia UMC. "I've frequently thought that the church ought to get to know these youth and figure out how we can serve them . . . be an empowering and positive influence in their lives."

The influence began in November of 2014 and now every Friday, Leonia Church opens its doors to middle school students from 3 to 5 p.m. The purpose of the program is to create a "third place" for youth between home and school where they can spend time with one another and simply have fun.

Two of Leonia UMC's staff and several members of the congregation serve at

THIRD Place on a weekly basis. It also allows adults to build healthy intergenerational relationships with the middle school students. The program has grown from hosting 30 students when it started to 80 students currently.

Leonia UMC is rediscovering its role in the community by seeking out the needs of the community and experimenting with ways to meet them.

In 2013, the church ran a "listening campaign" called "#forLEONIA" at local events and using social media. The goal of the campaign was to ask what the church could do for the local community.

"One of the most frequent things we heard was that there needed to be more positive options for pre-teens and teens to do in their free time," Wehrle said.

That feedback became the inspiration for THIRD Place, an unstructured and safe youth center for Leonia middle schoolers.

"We are trying to meet the needs of students so that they experience the love of God," said Sung Woo "Aiden" Lee, the Director of Student Ministry and Worship at Leonia. "The THIRD Place offers us an opportunity to show Leonia middle schoolers how much we care about them.



Photo by Aiden Lee

Middle school students enjoy their time during the THIRD Place program that happens every Friday from 3 to 5 p.m. at Leonia UMC.

We hope that the THIRD Place will show people that our church loves the Leonia community and so does God."

The students certainly seem to love THIRD Place.

"Everybody talks about it at school," said Nate, an eighth grader, who attends THIRD Place regularly. "My friends and I look forward to it every week."

Part of the attraction is the no-pressure atmosphere.

"THIRD Place gives the middle schoolers a chance to relax and use up their energy after five days of school

and is a great way for them to begin their weekend," said Carol Suter, a THIRD Place volunteer at Leonia. "They can play video games, ping-pong, basketball, and enjoy a popcorn and a soda with friends."

There is little doubt that Leonia United Methodist Church is meeting a serious need, but the church is also finding real hope by making new friendships in the community.

"Every week," Wehrle said, "I run into parents and other adults who thank me for what the church is doing."

# GNJ Makes Hires For New Disciples, Visual Arts Positions

Greater New Jersey announced in December that it has hired Trey Wince to fill the position of Director of New Disciples.

The Director of New Disciples leads and inspires biblical and theological understanding of making new disciples and increases the number of new faith communities and professions of faith within GNJ congregations. This position is key to moving forward GNJ's strategic plan, specifically in increasing the number of new disciples in congregations and starting 90 new faith communities by 2018.

Wince has 15 years of ministry experience and has served as Pastor of Kingston United Methodist Church since 2012. Prior to living in New Jersey, he served as College Director (serving students at Vanderbilt, Belmont and Lipscomb Universities), and Director of Young Adult Ministries at First Presbyterian Church in Nashville, Tenn. Before serving in Nashville, he served as an international missions coordinator with



WINCE



LEE

Joshua Expeditions.

He is a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary and Baylor University, and holds a Certificate in Youth Ministry from the Center for Youth Ministry Training through Memphis Theological Seminary.

"We are blessed to have Trey take on this position," said Director of Connectional Ministries Rev. Hector A. Burgos. "He will round out our team and provide leadership in a key area of our strategic plan.

"Trey's passion for ministry with millennials and the unaffiliated, along with his experience in church planting will be instrumental as we continue developing strategies and resources to equip transformational leaders and congregations to connect with people in the community."

Wince starts his new position Feb. 1.

In a concurrent announcement, the conference selected James Lee to serve as the Manager of Visual Arts.

The Visual Arts position is responsible for producing all audio and visual elements for GNJ's communication needs. With the pending move into the Mission and Resource Center with a dedicated studio space, the video capabilities and the growth potential for this position is expanding.

Lee is the former associate youth pastor at Calvary Korean United Methodist Church and the owner of his own videography business, James Lee Films. He has been working in cinematography for the last five years and sees his new position as an extension of his ministry. He has worked with the communications team in the last year on projects for Team Vital, Communities of Hope and Mosaic Ministries. He is a graduate of Rutgers University a

nd Drew Theological School.

"James produces excellent work and we are excited that he can lead us to grow our audio and visual capacity," said Carolyn Conover, Director of Communications.

Lee starts his new position on Jan. 4.

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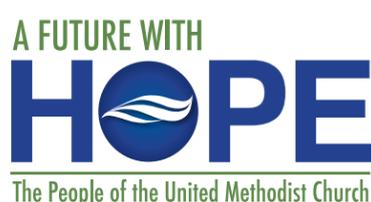
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