

THE RELAY

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Easter Miracle Celebrated At Elim UMC

By Jeff Wolfe

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Easter is about tragedy triumphed by a miracle and that's what Elim United Methodist Church and the Manantial de Vida Pentecostal congregation celebrated on April 12.

The two congregations came together with the community to hold a combined worship service in the church parking lot to give thanks for their own Easter miracle.

On Easter Sunday, April 5, a few hours after the Elim congregation finished its Easter service and just as the Manantial de Vida Pentecostal service was starting, the ceiling of the church collapsed.

While 14 people were taken to the hospital after the ceiling collapse, all were treated and released by Easter Sunday night. So there was reason to celebrate the following Sunday.

"The mayor, police chief and fire chief, all agreed it was a miracle and that God really protected the congregation," said Elim UMC pastor Rev. Leo Park.

"I saw what happened. I wonder myself, how did all of those people come out of it?"

The two congregations came together for a joint community service in the parking lot.

"The idea was from our congregation and there were two main things that we wanted to do," Park said. "First, we wanted to thank God for what He has done for us on Easter Sunday. Many people asked why this happened. We don't know why. But we do know what God has done for us and we thank God for His protection.

"The second reason was to comfort the members of the Hispanic congregation. We are the owner of the building and



Photo by Jay Park

Members of the Elim UMC and Manantial de Vida Pentecostal congregations hold hands during a prayer at their Easter Miracle service in the Elim UMC parking lot on April 12. The service was a celebration for no one being seriously injured when the Elim UMC ceiling collapsed during the Manantial de Vida service on Easter Sunday.

we are brothers and sisters in Christ. We felt the call to comfort them."

Park said most of the service was done in Spanish, with small parts being done in English and in Korean. Rahway Mayor Samson Steinman also spoke to the 300 people in attendance.

"He gave a powerful speech," Park said. "He acknowledged that God truly protected the congregation. It was a powerful service."

Park believes God's power was a part of the entire process, which included one woman who appeared to be seriously

injured at first being released from the hospital Sunday night. Park and Gateway North District Superintendent Manny Sardinias made hospital visits to those who were injured.

"It was miracle after miracle," Park said. "We had more than 75 people that came out of that disaster without anyone being seriously injured. As I was walking out of the emergency room after the last person was released, I just lifted up both hands to praise God."

Other United Methodists in the conference came out in full support of the

two congregations both by joining in the service and by offering hospitality.

Woodbridge UMC will host the Elim congregation and Trinity UMC in Rahway will host the Manantial de Vida congregation until decisions are made about the building.

Park believes miracles for the approximately 150-year-old Elim church are not finished. "We hope to repair it," Park said. "I believe another resurrection will happen in that building."

Park said the building, which is

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North Hudson Community A New Path For 6 Churches

By Jeff Wolfe

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The communities of Union City, Weehawken, West New York, North Bergen and Jersey City share the common threads of being next to or very near the Hudson River, sitting in the shadow of New York City and home to six United Methodist churches.

Those churches, spread throughout those cities, are binding together in what is called the North Hudson Community Development.

This format, which will officially begin July 1, will involve having two full-time pastors and two local pastors serving the six churches. It's a new concept to try and help create new ministries in those communities.

"Our idea is to put together these six churches and instead of placing a part-time pastor in each church, make one community church," Gateway North District Superintendent Manny Sardinias said.

"They are going to share a lot of work. The idea is to develop new ministries out of those churches while keeping the ministries that they have.

For example, one of the churches has a wonderful homeless ministry that serves breakfast to the homeless every other week."

Two of the four pastors are already



Esther Morales, top left, Joel Ajo-Fernandez, top right, Benny Pillot Leoteau, bottom left, and P. Cesar Miyares will lead the North Hudson Community Development initiative.

in place. Esther Morales has been at Emanuel UMC in Union City for about

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Asbury Park pastor collecting instruments for Haiti. **Page 3**

Rockaway UMC starts bilingual service. **Page 6**

Andrew Forrest to talk about 'the nones' at Annual Conference. **Page 9**

Sen. Booker Works With Clergy



Bishop John Schol, left, and Rev. Jack Johnson of Marlton UMC, right, met with Sen. Cory Booker at the senator's Newark office and other religious leaders to discuss important federal legislation on poverty and the federal prison system. Sen. Booker agreed to a series of town hall meetings with the religious leaders around the state that will discuss poverty and racism, particularly reflecting on the book, "The New Jim Crow."

A Message from the Bishop

This is the second of three-part series called "Mind, Yet, Next."



Yet

While growing up, my family vacationed at my aunt and uncle's home in Georgia. As a young boy these were very long car rides. Invariably, several times along the way, one of my brothers or I would ask, "Are we there yet?" My father or mother would answer, "Not yet."

The phrase, *not yet* is a hopeful phrase. The word *yet* communicates that at some point we will arrive.

In schools, teachers use the grade of an F to represent failure. The word failure communicates finality. What if, instead of a grade representing failure, teachers instead began to use a grade of, *not yet?*

I believe the word *yet* creates a sense of possibility and hopefulness. It invites partnership between the student and teacher. It communicates the possibility that the student has the ability to master the subject. I believe the word *yet* also changes a teacher's reference point from "will not succeed" to "what's next?" I believe it also reframes the teacher's perspective to, "What can I do to partner with the student to master the subject?"

God is a *not yet* God. The Bible is filled with stories of God not losing faith in humanity. When Jonah turned his back on God, God pursued Jonah for a greater mission in Nineveh. Although Peter denied Jesus and turned his back, it was Peter who became the leader of the emerging church. Paul was pursued by God while persecuting Christians because God saw possibility.

The staff and conference leadership are taking a *not yet* attitude with our clergy and congregations. We believe all of our congregations are filled with people who are creative, resourceful and whole. When the district superintendents and I evaluate clergy and congregations on the road to vitality, we will not use words like "does not meet expectations", "poor" or "failure".

Instead of these words, we will use *not yet* because we believe God has more for the church and its leaders. We are in partnership with our pastors and congregations to understand, change, turnaround, and extend the mission of making disciples and growing vital congregations to transform the world.

One of the resources we use with clergy, and in the future with a congregation's key lay leadership, is coaching. The coach approach begins by recognizing that God has made each of us to be creative, resourceful and whole. It is the role of conference leadership to help pastors become fruitful spiritual leaders and churches to become vital congregations.

It does require partnership. The partnership invites clergy and congregations to fully engage in exploring what's the next right thing for the congregation. What would it look like if congregations stopped using these phrases:

- We can't
- We do not have the resources
- We are not interested in changing
- We are too small

and started using the words *not yet?*

One specific area of ministry that we are using the *not yet* concept is with our smallest congregations. We have 99 congregations with less than 20 people in worship. I recently met with two of our smallest congregations and I was blessed by their desire to be faithful and fruitful. They want to grow and they want to serve the community. They had a *not yet* attitude. We are currently piloting two strategies with our smallest congregations.

1. Mosaic Ministries organizes a group of small churches in a parish and engages young people to lead the congregations. The young people work together as a team and receive supervision and guidance from conference staff leadership. We are also partnering with Drew School of Theology to use students and the class room to grow the mission of the congregations. In our Mosaic churches we have experienced growth and *not yet*.

2. Parishes in which smaller congregations are partnered with larger congregations. The smaller congregation becomes a campus of the larger congregation. The larger congregation provides leaders and servant disciples to encourage the smaller congregation's growth. In our pilot churches, we have experienced growth and *not yet*.

In the midst of a disciple's journey and a congregation's ministry, I invite you to use *not yet*. I invite you to think of possibility grounded in God's hope for the church and the world.

Yet,

John Schol, Bishop
The United Methodist Church
Greater New Jersey



Rahway mayor Samson Steinman speaks to the Elim UMC and the Manantial de Vida Pentecostal congregations during the Easter Miracle service on April 12.

Easter Miracle

Continued from page 1

insured, has been undergoing inspections to make sure the rest of it is safe so that it can be declared a safe zone. Once that happens, he said, volunteers will clear out the fallen ceiling, a 30-foot

square piece that was made of plaster, tin and wood.

"When we do cleanup we will need help," he said. "Right now, there is no time estimate for when we can start getting it fixed."

And there is no estimate of how many more miracles just might happen at Elim UMC.

Photo by Jay Park

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Pastor Making Musical Change In Haiti

By Jeff Wolfe
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ASBURY PARK — Rev. Sony Augustin loves his native Haiti and loves music. The pastor at First UMC in Asbury Park wants to hear more children playing music on his visits to Haiti twice each year.

That is why he has started collecting musical instruments to be sent to schools in Haiti. Augustin's Haiti music instrument mission is just beginning, but he hopes it has a long lasting and positive influence.

Augustin, who has been in the U.S. for 30 years, and the pastor at First UMC in Asbury Park for 15 years, said, "We want music that uplifts people."

Augustin has aligned with the Petit-Goave and Duplan United Methodist Churches in Haiti as places to send the instruments. The churches have also arranged to have a music teacher give lessons. Augustin points out the reason it is important to teach music in churches is because each church also has a school. But it is rare for a child of any age in Haiti to have a chance to learn to play music.

"When a child has a musical instrument in Haiti, it is like a gift from God to them," Augustin said. "It is not so common there and they cherish that instrument."

Augustin says a church with a school can have as many as 1,000 students, many of which seem eager to learn how to play instruments.

"The goal is to deliver as many instruments as possible to Haiti before school starts in September"

"I have talked to the students," he said. "They are excited to know the program is coming to the church."

Augustin is accepting new and used instruments, noting that many Haitians know how to repair used instruments that might not work properly.

"In Haiti, they don't make instruments, but they know how to fix them," Augustin said. "If you give them something new, they will be happy. And if you give them something used, they will be happy be-



Rev. Sony Augustin checks out a trumpet among the instruments that he has collected to send to schools in Haiti so children can learn how to play music. Augustin, a native of Haiti, is the pastor at First UMC in Asbury Park.

cause they will be able to use that, too."

Augustin hopes the music will help bring some level of happiness to families.

Augustin says the instruments can get to Haiti in a variety of ways. Some of the smaller ones, such as several flutes that he already has, can be packaged in one box and mailed. Others, he said, can be taken as luggage to Haiti. Augustin said

the goal is to deliver as many instruments as possible to Haiti before school starts in September.

Augustin started sending instruments about a year ago and currently has about a dozen instruments including two keyboards, a saxophone, a trumpet along with the flutes, waiting to ship.

"Hopefully," he said, "they will eventu-

ally be able to organize a small band for the churches and schools."

Instruments for Rev. Sony Augustin can be mailed to First United Methodist Church, 910 Grand Avenue, Asbury Park, NJ, 07712. Augustin can be reached at pastorsony91@yahoo.com or at 1-732-775-2693.

Highlands' Recovery Remains Work In Progress

By Chris Carter
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The people of Highlands live in a tight knit community that is proud of its clammy heritage and idyllic location next to Sandy Hook. They have weathered plenty of storms through the years, but few have so drastically altered the landscape as Superstorm Sandy, figuratively and literally.

Bulkheads, jetties and other anti-erosion and beachfront preservation feats of engineering protect Highlands, but the confluence of a full moon, high tide, and a bee-line path perpendicular to the shore made Sandy different. Flooding turned roads on the lower-lying, north-eastern side of Route 36 into canals. The municipal government, including the borough hall and the police department, has had to relocate to trailers because of Sandy damage. The community center which serves seniors and children sits vacant and gutted. Every citizen and employee in the town has been affected by the storm.

Even now, 30 months since Sandy hit, many residents of Highlands and the surrounding communities need help getting back to normal. A survey of the streets quickly reveals half rebuilt homes

A FUTURE WITH
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Recovery Results

Here is a look at A Future With Hope's Superstorm Sandy recovery results through the end of March:

Homes complete: 137
Homes under construction: 37
Homes in Queue: 22
Volunteers: 9,164
Host Sites: 15
Hosting Capacity: 383

and abandoned properties.

One building, a few lots away from the gutted borough hall, is the former United Methodist Church of Highlands which is

now the highest-capacity volunteer host site and Northern regional office for the Sandy relief organization A Future With Hope. Volunteers during the first months after Sandy helped repair the host site, outfitting the sleeping quarters, full bathrooms, offices and communal spaces that staff and successive volunteers teams would need.

"We want residents of Highlands and the entire Jersey Shore to know there is still an opportunity to rebuild," A Future With Hope Executive Director Bobbie Ridgely said. "We, in partnership with other community organizations, are here to provide assistance".

Finding those residents and helping them through the recovery process is one of the top priorities of A Future With Hope's Sandy recovery efforts.

The bureaucracy of local, state, federal, financial and insurance entities can be challenging and confusing, which is why disaster case managers assist homeowners in plotting their path to recovery.

Many people have gotten stuck in the process and some have given up hope. Finding people who have, for whatever reason, been stalled in their recovery process is a priority because those people are the most vulnerable.

To help the people of Highlands continue its path to recovery, A Future With Hope has partnered with the St. Bernard Project to find homeowners in town who still need assistance. St. Bernard Project was founded to help rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, and the agency formed a chapter based in Sea Bright to help in Sandy recovery. Staff from both organizations recently canvassed Highlands to determine which homeowners may still need help connecting with resources to rebuild.

Two and a half years is a long time to be out of one's home or in the process of rebuilding it. By reaching out personally through their partnership with the St. Bernard Project, A Future With Hope is hoping to build trust with the community so that more people can recover from Sandy.

A Future With Hope has completed 11 homes in Highlands with over 800 volunteers staying in the former church. Since the canvas project began, homeowners in Highlands have been responding by phone, post or in person to A Future With Hope and St. Bernard Project's outreach. They have the capacity to work on dozens of more homes in the area and the hope is that the two organizations together can reach more people.

Toms River Easter Egg Hunt Turns Into Outreach

By Jeff Wolfe
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Rev. Mark Fieger has seen a lot in his 25 years as pastor at St. Andrew United Methodist Church in Toms River, but he didn't expect to see more than 600 people show up on the church grounds for what was billed as the 10,000 Easter Egg Hunt on the last Saturday in March.

It was a first-time event for the church which made a lot of first-time contact with families who said after the event they were interested in attending St. Andrew.

"It was just unbelievable," Fieger said of the turnout. "I'm figuring that maybe we would get 200 or 300, but it ended up being 600 plus. Oh, me of little faith. It was just a really neat thing. A lot of people said they were interested in coming here to worship. It was just so positive."

"We are seeing new people come into the church now. It makes a difference when you are meeting people with kindness."

Fieger said what also made a difference for the event was working with the local Silverton Volunteer Fire Company and its women's auxiliary, which helped advertise the hunt.

"Since we partnered with them, the flyers were able to go out to the elementary schools," Fieger said. "The fire company was ecstatic with the whole event. They were saying it was incredible with how many people showed up."

Fieger said they actually ended up using about 13,000 plastic eggs, but the event wasn't simply about letting the children collect eggs then go home.

"We had the fire company bring the Easter bunny in, we had a lot of breakfasts that were served for free by our United Methodist men's group, there



More than 600 people showed up for the first 10,000 Easter Egg Hunt at St. Andrew UMC in Toms River. The family oriented event has led to new people attending the church.

was face painting, arts and crafts and our choir director even had a spontaneous concert with kids using tambourines and drumsticks," Fieger said. "Everybody in the church was involved. We had our youth group and our men's and women's groups doing things. It was incredibly organized."

Part of the organization was to collect all of those plastic eggs afterwards. That included giving away free bags of popcorn to the children who returned their eggs.

"The back field that we held this on is just behind the parsonage," Fieger said. "I walked back there the next day and there was not one egg left."

What was left, Fieger believes, are the feelings of goodwill that the church

showed to the community.

"It was a wholesome family activity, especially for the little children," he said. "What they walked away with here is a Christian community, along with the fire company, that didn't charge a penny. It was awful great and it was free."

Fieger said he was told there would have been even more attend, but the hunt happened to coincide with the Little League opening day parade in Toms River.

"People said there would have been a lot more show up," he said. "Going back, we have done different events, like your typical dinner and one time we even sponsored a circus. So things are always evolving, but this event was just great. This was just pure grace."

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Small Groups Blossom For Laity Academy Churches

By Beth Caulfield
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They were planted and watered with grants in the fall, tended to through the winter and now the first blossoms have sprouted from the small groups track of GNJ's Laity Academy II.

Leaders from 18 churches came together for a six month follow-up session to the Laity Academy II training event held in September. At that time, laity received six hours of targeted training on the importance, goals and how-tos of setting up small group ministries for cultivating vital congregations. They left with specific action plans for their churches. Some applied for grants that were made available by the conference to aid in their endeavors.

Denville Community Church, St. Paul's UMC of Bayhead, and Succasunna UMC each gave formal presentations of their new ministries.

St. Paul's small group ministry has grown to six groups with 65 participants. Bruce Hilner, the Small Group's Coordinator for St. Paul's, said the groups are focused around a Bible study and also feature a weekly time for the small group leaders to get together. Hilner added the constant communication and prayer between leaders is key to the success of this ministry. The grant the church has received is being put to use for purchasing curriculum which supports the training and needs of leaders. St. Paul's is also exploring new ways of building small groups that support young families' participation.

While Succasunna already had several small groups in place, the Laity Academy II training pushed it to start a new group. Kim Germain and Jennifer Antonich shared about the church's new Congregational Care Ministry small group to provide consistent care to members of their church in need of encouragement,



The Laity Academy Small Groups Leadership Team of Mark Halverson (Somerville UMC), Beth Caulfield (GNJ Director of Small Groups), Jack Scharf (Morristown UMC), Jean Charles (Blairstown UMC) and Jim Silkenson (Cranberry UMC) discuss small group plans at a recent meeting.

fellowship, and/or prayer. The leaders also have plans for creating a covenant for the ministry's members and bringing in outside speakers to continue to grow the group's care-giving skills.

"I often have people asking me for info on different groups, and the excitement about joining a group is obvious," Denville's Dale Simms said. "People are drawn to the fun and activity within the groups. It has been a positive ministry."

Denville has gone from no organized small group ministry in July to having 20 small groups in March. These groups include Bible studies, book discussion clubs, a parents with young children support group, a sermon discussion group, quilter, prayer shawl and sewing groups, a gardening group and a high adventure/outdoor group that rock climbs, snowboards and does other adventure activities and more.

Simms said the church followed the action plan from the Laity Academy. The church also named leaders, surveyed the congregation's interests, trained leaders, advertised the groups and set a launch date. Simms said some of the challenges the leaders identified include keeping the groups focused toward all the goals of small group ministry, such as being intentional about discipleship and prayer along with deepening relationships.

Jack Scharf (Morristown), who led the small groups leadership team at the Laity Academy reminded all to select a Small Groups Ministry Coordinator, choose small group leaders carefully and prayerfully and to continue to pray for their small group leaders. He said it is important to periodically celebrate small groups during worship services and to not be afraid to "sunset" groups.

"If a group begins to fizzle out (sun-

set), it is OK," he said. "Some groups are only seasonal and should not continue. Consider starting both short-term groups and long-term covenant groups to match the varied needs of your church."

The Laity Academy team, including Conference Lay Leader Rosa Williams, was thrilled with the turnout and progress of the participants.

"This was an excellent show of laity leadership and accomplishment," Williams said. "I am pleased that we are resourcing and connecting such fruitful ministry efforts."

The next Laity Academy is scheduled for Sept. 11-12. Interested churches are encouraged to make plans now for their leaders to attend.

If you have questions about small groups, contact Director of Small Groups Ministry & Spiritual Visioning Beth Caulfield at bcaulfield@gnjumc.org

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Rockaways Shares Love With Bilingual Service

By Jeff Wolfe
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When Lysette Perez became the senior pastor at the United Methodist Church of The Rockaways nearly two and a half years ago, she not only paid attention to those attending the church, she took notice of who wasn't there.

"When I looked around at the Hispanic community, I found that it was growing and I thought that this might be a good opportunity," Perez said. "The statistics of the community and the program of outreach for low income families showed that there was a real possibility for ministry."

"That possibility has turned into a reality in the last year as Perez's church has started a bilingual service on Sundays at noon. That follows a communion service that takes place each Sunday at 8:30 a.m. and a traditional family service that starts at 10:30.

"We didn't have anything at the time when I came," Perez said of the Hispanic service. "It was taking a step. You have some traditions that are there and that are important, but you need to try something different and new sometimes."

Perez found in her research that 21 percent of The Rockaways community was Hispanic. She also discovered that a backpack program run by the church in conjunction with local schools to provide food and other items to low income families went mostly to Hispanic families.

Perez has also done translating for some of the Spanish-speaking people when they come in to pick up the backpacks.

"I found myself as the only person speaking Spanish," she said. "For the older people, I was translating."

Now a lot of translation takes places on Sundays, with the 10:30 service being translated from English to Spanish and the noon service being translated from Spanish to English. Perez says it does take a little extra time to prepare, but it has been more than worth it.

"It is some more work," she said, "but at the same time we are reaching out to different people. On Wednesdays we also have a bilingual service and we sing short songs in both English and Spanish." She said there are a few times a year



Children from the UMC of The Rockaways take to the stage during the church's vacation Bible school last year. The church had more than 60 children attend from its diverse community.

when the church comes together for one big service. She noted there were more than 200 at a confirmation service in December and nearly 150 attended a combined Easter service. In all, the average attendance has risen from between 50 and 60 to more than 90 total for the three combined services.

"It takes time to grow," Perez said. "What we have been trying to do is offer options to people so they can praise God and have a way to reach out to God and we have been able to keep the attendance growing."

She pointed out that one of the reasons for the growth is because of the congregation's willingness to be diverse. Those who attend The Rockaways also

include African Americans, Asians and Caucasians.

"There was an openness to being a multi-cultural church," she said. "With a multi-cultural perspective, that makes it easier to welcome people the way they are."

One of The Rockaways' welcoming ministries is its vacation Bible school. Perez said the church had 66 children attend last year and has started the process of opening a day care center.

"Somehow we lose them (from coming on Sundays), not because of the children, but because of the parents," Perez said.

"So we are working on starting a day care with the intention of it being an outreach ministry and having a Christian

perspective."

Perez says having perspective with everyone is important in such a diverse community.

"Sometimes it involves taking risks and also being involved in the community," she said. "The community knows what the church is doing and the last year and a half we have been involved in some interfaith services. Sometimes it helps if you can think a little differently."

Perez says that nothing different happens without one key element taking place first.

"The first thing I do is pray," Perez said. "I decided to pray for the Latino-Hispanic community when I got here. Prayer was the No. 1 step."

UMC Of Absecon Goes Back To The Tracks for Lent

By Jeff Wolfe
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Members of the United Methodist Church of Absecon spent Advent giving away goody bags and good news to commuters at the Absecon train station. Their outreach showed its fruits when three of the people they connected with at the station joined them for Christmas Eve worship.

As a result, they decided to return to the train station just a few blocks from their church during Lent to show the same hospitality.

Once again, the nourishment they offered, both physical and spiritual, was well received.

"We went back for Lent because we had such a very good experience with people the first time," Absecon Lay Leader Barbara Sabath said. "We wanted to continue that and our team that went loved it. It was a real good witness and outreach."

The group from Absecon would show up at the station at 6:30 a.m. and stay until 9:10 a.m. to greet people boarding the train to Philadelphia. Sabath said some church members who couldn't come helped pack the 100 bags with a muffin or granola bar as well as some information about the church.

"Some weeks we would give out all 100 bags, but usually it was between 85 and 90," she said. "We were very, very blessed. We had conversations with

people going to Jefferson Hospital for surgery, and they would ask us what was up. We would say can we pray for you, or they would ask us to pray for them."

But those weren't the only kind of conversations that took place.

"One week we had a college student we talked to, and then the next week he came back and said he was considering God in his life," Sabath said.

"It was kind of neat because the stories would continue on each week sometimes. And then some of us would see people that we knew from time to time, too."

Sabath also said there were at least two people who asked for Bibles one week, then returned to have them given to them the following week.

"We knew we had some relationship building to do," she said. "A couple of people wanted Bibles so the next week we were able to give the Bibles to them. There were a few who would say good morning, but didn't want anything and that was fine, too."

Sabath admitted that some members weren't sure how they felt about participating in this kind of outreach. In the end, they admitted it worked out pretty good.

"For some of our people it was a brand new thing," Sabath said. "For some, it was really stepping out of their comfort zone to do this."

They realized that once you do it, it's not as hard as they thought. They engaged in conversation with what



Some of the members of Absecon UMC to help with the All Aboard For Lent campaign at the Absecon NJ Transit station were, from left, Jeff Kwan, Bob Boyd, Bill Whittles, Barbara Sabath and Lisa Whitaker.

people's needs were and they became really invested in this."

Sabath said about four of five church members would come out each week all between the ages of 25 and 70.

"Some came early with us and then went to work," she said. "We were just a few blocks from the church. We could point out the church's steeple from the train station."

Sabath said that Bishop John Schol's

original Advent challenge relayed to the church through Cape Atlantic District Superintendent Brian Roberts was one the church simply could not afford to pass up.

"When we saw the challenge, we said we have to do this," Sabath said. "We are in Absecon and we have a train station, so we can't not do this. So we put it out there and we had four or five come out the first week and they were excited about it."

Annual Conference Speaker To Discuss 'Nones'

By Jeff Wolfe
jwolfe@gnjumc.org

When Rev. Andrew Forrest takes the stage as the teaching speaker at the 16th Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey he'll be talking about the "nones."

No, that's not a misspelling for another denomination's dedicated female leaders. It's a reference to people who do not, and have not, attended churches. Reaching the so called "nones" is one way that churches can find growth. Forrest will be speaking at 8:45 a.m. on Friday, May 29, in the West Hall of the Wildwood Convention Center, where conference will be taking place May 28-30

"I'm going to be talking about how we reach the 'nones'," said Forrest, who has been the pastor for five years at a United Methodist church called Munger Place, in Dallas, Texas. "The 'nones' are not affiliated with any church, so it's important how we gauge their interest and how we talk to them. Those are the ones we really need to reach."

Munger Place was started as a satellite congregation of Highland Park UMC

A New Path

Continued from page 1

a year and Joel Ajo-Fernandez is the pastor at the United Methodist Church of Union City.

Joining them in July will be Benny Pillot Leoteau and P. Cesar Miyares. Morales and Pillot Leoteau are each natives of Puerto Rico while Ajo-Fernandez and Miyares are each of Cuban descent.

"The population is about 80 percent Latino and most of the churches are linked to the community around them," Sardinias said.

"The churches are not merging, but working and linking together. Some of them are just eight blocks from each other. You want them to develop a sense of community so that they can do programs together."

Sardinias says there has already been discussion of combining resources to bring in a gospel singer as well as combining to do their own musical performances and dramas.

"The singer is something that can be paid for by all of the churches," Sardinias said. "But if anyone of them tried to do it by themselves, it would not be doable."

Morales and Ajo-Fernandez have been having combined bilingual Bible studies with three of the churches on Mondays and Fridays.

"Right now, I call this the transition period," Morales said. "We have different people with different backgrounds who speak different languages."

"We are having a great time with them. It has been very rich because the experiences that they bring are very different."

Morales says the North Hudson team is planning to bring a lot of new and different experiences to each of the communities where the churches are located.

"This has been very well planned," she said. "We are thinking about doing services where we can each have continuity to our sermons. That way, if a different pastor follows up the next week, they can follow up on the same topic."

They plan to have a barbeque in July and will join together for a Christmas concert in December which will bring the congregations together and reach out to the community.

"We plan to invite all of the churches to the barbeque," Morales said. "One of the things we want to do is include the community and people who are not from the church." Morales knows the North Hudson Community Development is a step in the right direction.

"I have a lot of faith in this project," she said. "We have to learn to share talents and resources. It has been a very good start."



ANDREW FORREST

in Dallas. Forrest said a big percentage of new attenders at Munger Place have been "nones."

"When we did a survey of where our new members were coming from, 61 percent of them were not members of a church previously," Forrest said.

"That was a real interesting statistic to us. Where are they coming from and how are we reaching them is what I've been interested in."

Forrest spent part of his childhood in West Africa as his parents were missionaries. He says that may have helped him find unique ways to communicate.

"Being part of a different culture," he said, "maybe that helped me learned to talk to people in a little different way."



Forrest recognizes that every church is different, but he also believes there are similarities that apply to all churches.

"Every situation is unique, but some of the things I want to talk about can apply to any situation," he said. "Learning to talk to outsiders is applicable to any situation. I think it will be relevant to everybody there."

Other Annual Conference highlights include:

- Bishop John Schol's Episcopal Address at 3 p.m. Thursday
- Workshops starting at 2 p.m. Friday. They are: Time Management for the Christian Leader by Ken Willard; Communicating Faith in the 21st Century by Jennifer Rodia; Covenant Discipleship Groups for Local Churches by Rev. Dr. Vicki Brendler; Preparing the Banquet: Worship Planning as Hospitality by Jorge Lockward; The Irresistible Church by Rev. Matthew Na;

The Joy Of Giving by Rev. Dr. Rich Hendrickson; and Urban Missions by Rev. Faith Fowler.

- Packing meals for the Stop Hunger Now mission project at 2:15 p.m. Friday.

Youth & Young Adult Evening from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday. It will include food, worship, a message, games, youth planning and visioning, young adult planning, visioning, and prayer. The Youth and Young Adult Room will be available throughout Annual Conference with tables, floor cushions, computers, and a lounging area before, between, and after sessions. Friday afternoon the youth and young adults will be participating in the Stop the Hunger Now service project.

- Conference awards at 11:30 a.m. Friday. The previously announced award winners are Brielle Hohne, Denman Evangelism Award – Youth; Charlie Burch, Denman Evangelism Award – Laity; Rev. Frank Davis, Denman Evangelism Award – Clergy; Manasquan UMC, Bishop's Congregation Award; Rev. Jackie Burgess, Christian Unity Award Clergy; Rev. Dr. Jisun Kwak, the Helenor Alter Davison Award and Rev. Don Gebhard, the Francis Asbury Award.

PINELANDS CENTER

Registration is now open for summer camp at Pinelands Center at Mt. Misery!

JULY 12 - AUGUST 8, 2015

JULY 12-18

Taste of Camp: Grades 1-3

Camp-A-Palooza: Grades 1-5

You Can't Do That at Camp!: Grades 6-8

Soul Survival Outpost: Grades 6-8

Leaders-In-Training: Grades 9-12

JULY 19-25

Ninos Para Cristo y Jovenes Para Cristo: Grades 1-12

Aldersgate Music Camp at Pinelands: Grades 6-12

JULY 26-AUGUST 1

Taste of Camp: Grades 1-3

Camp-A-Palooza: Grades 1-5

Pioneer Adventure Outpost: Grades - 3-5

Soul Survival Outpost: Grades 6-8

You Can't Do That at Camp!: Grades 6-8

Veg n' Venture: Grades 9-12

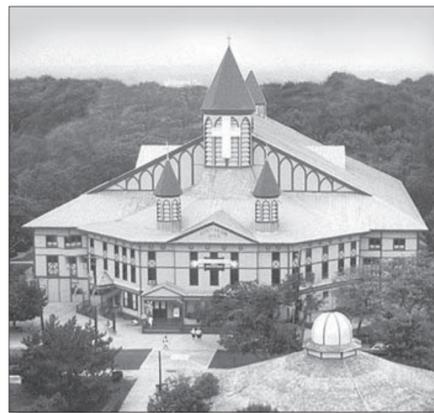
AUGUST 2-8

Delaware Canoe: Grades 9-12

Register at: www.pinelandscenter.org



The United Methodist Church
of Greater New Jersey



Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association

1869 - 2015

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE OCEAN GROVE 2015 SUMMER SEASON

www.oceangrove.org 732-775-0035

SUNDAY SERVICES

June 14-10:30am Rev. David Epstein, Senior Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, NYC, NY
 June 21-10:30am Dr. Luis Palau, International Christian Evangelist, Luis Palau Association, Portland, OR
 June 28-10:30am & 7:00pm Pastor Ray Bentley, Senior Pastor, Marantha Chapel, San Diego, California
 July 05-10:30am & 7:00pm Dr. David Ireland, Senior Pastor, Christ Church, Montclair, NJ
 July 12-10:30am Dr. David Olshine, Chair of Youth Ministries, Columbia International College, Columbia, S.C.

7:00pm 61st ANNUAL CHOIR FESTIVAL

Directed by Dr. Jason Tramm

July 19-10:30am & 7:00pm Rebecca Manley Pippert, Founder, Salt Shaker Ministries, Louisville, KY

146th ANNUAL CAMP MEETING WEEK

July 26-10:30am Rabbi Jonathan Cahn, President, Hope of the World Ministries, NYC, NY
 7:00pm Pastor Lloyd Pulley, Senior Pastor, Calvary Chapel, Old Bridge, NJ
 Aug. 02-10:30am & 7:00pm Rev. Steve Wende, Senior Pastor, First Methodist of Houston, Texas
 Aug. 09-10:30am & 7:00pm Chaplain Barry Black, 62nd Chaplain of the United States Senate, Washington, DC
 Aug. 16-10:30am & 7:00pm Rev. Dr. Tony Campolo, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Eastern University, St. Davids, PA
 Aug. 23- 10:30am Bishop John Schol, Bishop of the Greater New Jersey Conference of the United Methodist Church
 7:00pm SACRED MASTERWORK CONCERT
 Aug. 30-10:30am & 7:00pm Rev. Steve DeNeff, Senior Pastor, the College Wesleyan Church, Marion, Indiana
 Sept. 06- 10:30am Dr. Douglas Strong, Dean of the School of Theology, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, Washington
 Sept. 13- 10:30am Salvation Army Commissioner Barry C. Swanson, Territorial Commander, USA Eastern Territory

BIBLE HOUR

9:00-10:00am Monday through Saturday
 Bishop Janes Tabernacle

June 22-27 Pastor John Spencer, Lead Pastor, Coastline Calvary Church, Gulf Breeze, Florida
 June 29-July 04 Rev. Dr. J. Ellsworth Kalas, Senior Professor of Homiletics, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY
 July 06-11 Iva May, Director of Chronological Bible Teaching Ministries, Olive Branch, Mississippi
 July 13- 18 Dr. David Olshine, Chair of Youth Ministries, Columbia International College, Columbia, S.C.
 July 20-25 Pastor Christian Andrews, Lead Pastor, Park Church, Red Bank, NJ

146th ANNUAL CAMP MEETING WEEK

July 27-Aug. 1 Pastor Ken Smith, Senior Pastor, Princeton Meadow Church, Princeton, NJ
 EVENING SESSIONS: Boardwalk Pavilion
 July 27 & July 28-7:30pm Pastor Lloyd Pulley, Senior Pastor, Calvary Chapel, Old Bridge, NJ
 Wednesday, July 29 Ocean Grove Summer Band- Sacred Hymns

Aug. 3-8- Rev. Glen Conaway, Pastor, Trinity United Methodist Church, Mullica Hills, NJ
 Aug. 10-15- Rev. John Groth, Retired Chaplain, USAFR, Dover, Delaware
 Aug. 17-22- Dr. James Fleming, Director of the Biblical Resource Center, LaGrange, GA
 Aug. 24-29- Chaplain Jack Lea, Executive Director, National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces, Arlington, VA

THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT



August 6th & 7th- Join 100,000 leaders for this annual injection of vision, skill development and inspiration simulcast to OG.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Biblical Resources Seminar: Mon. Aug. 17 to Fri. Aug. 21, 10:30 am -12:30pm Community Room. Led by Dr. James Fleming. Seminar fee \$125. Continental Breakfast
"Biblical Issues and Conflict in the Middle East" In this series of talks, we will explore the roots of tension in "hyper" fundamentalism, as well as in the history of the Middle East. Then we'll learn to shape our response to terror through our study of biblical principals of love, power, and justice.

Women's Conference Simulcast:

Saturday, April 25- 9am registration 10am -5pm Priscilla Shirer - Live Simulcast Held in the Youth Temple, \$25.00 per person (see our website)
 Saturday, September 12- 9am registration 10am -5pm Beth Moore- Live Simulcast held in the Youth Temple, \$25.00 per person (see our website)

CHRISTIAN SHOWS IN THE GREAT AUDITORIUM

Friday, June 26- Bridgefest Concert Event 6:30pm- www.bridgefest.org

Friday, July 24- Steven Curtis Chapman 8:00pm

BEACH FESTIVAL

June 27- Bridgefest w/ Bridge FM- www.bridgefest.org.

MONDAY EVENINGS ON THE BEACH

July 6, 13, 20 & Aug. 3, 10- 7:00pm "Under the Umbrella"
 Open to all women. A relaxing time of fun, friendship and a focus on God! Look for the pink striped umbrellas on the beach located in the Middle Beach area.

TUESDAY EVENINGS ON THE BEACH

Tuesday Evenings June 30, July 7, 14, 21, 7pm: "Don't Be Afraid."
 Bible Study with Rev. David Cotton, Chaplain, Jersey Shore Medical Center. On the beach just south of the Beach Office.

FOR A COMPLETE LISTING OF ALL EVENTS

Purchase tickets online, see on our website:

www.oceangrove.org.
 OR CALL OGCMA @ 732 775-0035

Clergy Learn To Dig Deeper Through Coaching

By Jeff Wolfe
jwolfe@gnjumc.org

"When I think of coaching, a couple of words come to mind, being focused and being positive," said Rev. Lorraine Priestly-Smith, pastor of First UMC in Freehold.

Smith was one of approximately 100 clergy who signed up for coaching at the Bishop's Convocation in January. Three months into the eight month program, Priestly-Smith is finding the experience worth it.

"One of the things I particularly like is how questions are being asked during a session," Priestly-Smith said. "Not only are they relevant, they are extremely thought provoking. By not giving easy questions, the coachee is required to dig deep, which leads to somewhat of a discovery process."

"We really do have the answers inside of us. We just need to be asked the thought provoking questions that will help us generate those answers."

When the Coach Approach to Skills Training to ministry was introduced at the Bishop's Convocation in January, many people didn't know what to expect including Rev. Larry Oksten, of First United Methodist Church in Glassboro.

"When we did the training at convocation I was intrigued," he said. "I found it beneficial even at the training sessions. I was curious to learn more about it and

I thought I would give it a shot. I was just willing to see what it was about."

Both Oksten and Priestly-Smith have plenty of experience as pastors, Oksten has been in the ministry since 2002 and Priestly-Smith is in her eighth year. They each appreciate that coaching is not some type of job evaluation tool, but a way to discover more gifts they already possess.

Oksten noted that one of his questions was if coaching would be a lot like mentoring, which takes place when an experienced pastor guides a new pastor. Oksten found coaching to be much different.

"The thing that struck me is that there is a huge difference between coaching and mentoring," he said. "As a mentor, you come in as an expert and you come really close to telling the other person what to do. With coaching, I already know what to do, but the coach is there to help me work it out."

One of the how-to things Priestly-Smith appreciates is the flexible way in which coaching can be done.

"I like the informality of the process," she said, "and I like how personalized the approach is. I find coaching to be advantageous, but at the same time it is very non-invasive. It is also conducive to individuals with busy schedules and the fact that it can be done on the telephone is very helpful."

Oksten believes that if coaching is



GNJ clergy participate in a coaching training session last month at St. John's UMC in Hazlet.

helpful to a pastor, it is also helpful to that pastor's congregation.

"It's helped me with everything from time management, to planning, strategy, and visioning," he said. "It's been a definite help to me and subsequently for the church, too."

The next coaching season is scheduled to begin in September and the goal is to have more than 300 pastors

coached by the fall of 2017.

"Even though we've just started this training, we are already seeing the benefits of it," said Gateway South District Superintendent Myrna Bethke, who serves as champion of the coaching initiative. "We hope many more will take advantage of something that has the potential to help them grow as people and as pastors."

PaCE Peer Groups A Key Resource For Pastors

By Jeff Wolfe
jwolfe@gnjumc.org

Rev. Dr. Linda Ross knows all about the journey of being a pastor. Thanks to joining a cohort group started a little less than two years ago, she no longer feels like she is traveling that journey alone.

Ross is one of eight women clergy that make up the 8 On Fire cohort or PaCE group, who meet together regularly to grow in their spiritual, physical and emotional wellbeing through study, devotion, retreat and fellowship with the purpose to become stronger women of God.

Ross, who is the pastor at First United Methodist Church in Mays Landing, is glad she pursued the group.

"I had felt especially isolated because I am in South Jersey and a lot of my friends are up in North or Central Jersey," said Ross, who has been a pastor for 11 years. "This group has been valuable to me and rejuvenated me to continue the ministry with the energy to do what I need to do."

As a way of resourcing clergy and growing turnaround spiritual leaders, United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey is entering a pilot phase of PaCE, peer learning groups for pastors. PaCE, which stands for Pursuing Clergy Excellence, is designed to help clergy grow spiritually and professionally.

"Cohort groups are one of the best ways to develop clergy excellence," said Raritan Valley District Superintendent Rev. Dr. Drew Dyson, who is leading the PaCE initiative. "One of the key questions we have to ask of all of our resourcing, is what does it mean for the congregation that I serve?"

Ross says her growth since joining 8 On Fire has been noticeable to her congregation based on comments she has heard from them.

"I think that growth has been attributed to this group," Ross said. "We hold each other up and encourage each other and that has helped me be more confident. The congregation sees the value of clergy wellness and being active in a group like this."

Part of being active includes being committed to the group with attendance at meetings and communicating regularly by texts and emails. That commitment has also included doing studies designed

What Is PaCE?

1. **PaCE:** Pursuing Clergy Excellence
2. **PaCE defined:** Peer learning groups that help shape pastoral identity, imagination and develop leadership excellence.
3. **Size:** 6 to 10 members
4. **Meeting times:** Once a month for three hours.
5. **Commitment time:** One year
6. **Launch Date:** October, 2015
7. **Key Goals:** Build trusting environment, reduce isolation, explore ideas through shared experiences, provide multiple viewpoints, be encouraging and challenging, unlock creativity, engage group in deep conversations.

to help each member grow spiritually and personally. One of those studies came in the book "A Hidden Wholeness" by Parker Palmer.

"He talks about living the undivided life, where your soul and your role meet," Ross said. "That's where you need to be. That's deep stuff. It talks about how your role as a pastor meets what's in your soul. You learn the questions to ask to get down into your soul. That was invaluable to me."

Dyson says there will be two different kinds of PaCE groups for clergy. One will focus on a self-directed curriculum put together for a group's specific context or learning goals. The other is to design groups around the five markers of vitality. The facilitators for the PaCE groups will be conference district superintendents and members of the connectational minis-

tries team. There can be between six and 10 members in a PaCE group.

While there is definitely serious times for a PaCE group members, there is also at least a little time for fun. And Ross says that's important, too.

"The other constant that happens

every time we meet, is that within two minutes, we are laughing," Ross said.

"We laugh at different things and it is so freeing to have a place to do that. We can take ourselves too seriously sometimes and we've learned to lighten up and how to support each other."

Garden Planting Begins At Neighborhood Center

By Jessica Stenstrom
jessica_stenstrom@yahoo.com

A community project is underway at the Neighborhood Center in Camden. Partnering with the Children's Discovery Museum and M'Kor Shalom Synagogue, planting has begun at the center's urban garden.

Hundreds of seedlings will be planted in the garden, which will also feature an outdoor kitchen. The garden will have pumpkins, berries, lettuce, cabbage, onions, corn, peppers, tomatoes, broccoli, carrots, cucumber, zucchini and potatoes. In addition there will also be apple, plum, pear and peach trees planted.

"We are really excited," said Mike Landis, executive director at the Neighborhood Center. "The children and teens are learning about the process from farm to table."

Students from the center's teen leadership program have become especially involved in caring for seedlings in the greenhouse and planting, said Landis. He said they are often in the greenhouse during free time after the community meal they share together.

The main objective of the Teen Leadership Academy is to prepare local teens for success during and after high school by equipping students with the resources, knowledge, atmosphere, and a safe space to grow. Teens are also

taught the life skills necessary to sustain themselves financially, physically, and mentally.

The process of farm to table from an urban garden emphasizes the message of sustainability.

Tomatoes, carrots and onions have already been planted, said Landis. All vegetables produced by the garden will be used in the center's daily hot lunch which is offered to members of the community.

Landis said that masonry work would soon begin. The center has begun collecting the 9,000 bricks that are needed to build the garden patio. On Earth Day, the center's project was collecting used bricks from the city in an effort to reduce, reuse and recycle.

The mission of The Neighborhood Center is to generously love its neighbors with abundant service and hope today and every day. Focusing on a two generation approach to lifting families out of poverty, the center is committed to providing a safe space for academic achievement, athletic accomplishment, and a flourishing arts program.

If you would like more information about the Neighborhood Center in Camden, go to <http://www.ncicamden.org/> or find them on Facebook. To volunteer with the urban garden or the center's other ministries, contact Christa at christa@ncicamden.com.

RELAY ISSUES ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE
 Back issues of the Relay are available at www.gnjumc.org/news/issue

Nepal Relief Challenge Is Accessing Rural Villages

By Linda Bloom
newsdesk@umcom.org

Accessing rural villages in Nepal affected by the massive April 25 earthquake remains a significant challenge, say United Methodist missionaries there.

Katherine T. Parker is assigned by the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries to the United Mission to Nepal. She said the latter agency is working to bring assistance to Northern Dhading, where it has existing partnerships and knowledge of the local population.

Many villages in Dhading, a district immediately west of Kathmandu, have high rates of earthquake damage, but reaching those areas is difficult.

"We are exploring both porters and mule trains as well as helicopters," Parker said in an email to United Methodist News Service. "However, helicopters seem to be in short supply and high demand."

As the earthquake's death toll climbs past 7,000, the United Methodist Committee on Relief and other faith-based partners in the ACT Alliance are continuing to respond. Some 8 million people are affected and 3.5 million are in need of food assistance.

Nearly \$317,000 in online gifts for UMCOR's Nepal emergency and related Advance projects and missionary support through the Board of Global Ministries had been donated by Monday morning, May 4. UMCOR's partners include the United Mission to Nepal and Global Medic.

Priority on poor and marginalized While the focus in Dhading for United Mission to Nepal will remain on the poor and marginalized, "the specific emphasis and some approaches will change" because of the earthquake, Parker noted.



Earthquake survivors make their way past piles of rubble in Kathmandu, Nepal. Accessing affected rural villages remains a significant challenge, say United Methodist missionaries assigned there.

"We have already been working on community-based mental health issues and trauma healing throughout Nepal and anticipate an increased role here," Parker explained, adding that community-led total sanitation also will remain a priority.

United Mission to Nepal has been working with several relief agencies to respond to immediate needs after the earthquake, especially CASA from India, a member of the ACT Alliance and partner with UMCOR on other disasters.

"My personal role in the response has been changing day to day, but I continue to provide support to the effort, while also conscious of other responsibilities in our work in long-term development," Parker said.

In a May 4 situation report on its

website, United Mission to Nepal reported that a team of paramedics has arrived in Dhading from United Mission Hospital Tansen, and were waiting to be dispatched to North Dhading.

Warehouse space for relief supplies also has been identified in Dhading and teams of volunteers have been trained and are ready to depart, with plans to start distribution to some 8,600 households by the end of the week.

Five districts have serious damage Dr. Mark Zimmerman, a United Methodist missionary and medical doctor serving in Kathmandu as director of the Nick Simons Institute, called Dhading one of the five districts outside the Kathmandu Valley that were most seriously affected. The others are Gorkha, Rasuwa, Nuwakot, and Sindhupalchok, he noted in an

April 29 report.

How To Help

Donations to support the response to the earthquake in Nepal and other international disasters can be made online through UMCOR Advance #982450. Checks also can be made out to your local United Methodist church. Write UMCOR Advance #982450 on the memo line and put in the offering plate.

UMCOR health kits meet the practical needs of communities affected by disaster. As UMCOR works to assess needs in Nepal, donations help replenish UMCOR's health kit inventory. Go to umcor.org for more.

April 29 report.

"There are regions of these districts with 90 percent of houses uninhabitable; food, housing, and sanitation are acute issues," he wrote in his observations. "The districts of Lamjung, Dolakha, Makwanpur, Kabre, and Lalitpur suffered moderate effects, other districts are minimal."

The World Health Organization has linked with Nepal's Health Ministry "to coordinate an impressive deployment of medical teams from across the world," he said.

"In addition to these, the Nepal army has linked with military teams from other countries."

U.S. Marines have now arrived in Nepal, according to a May 4 report from National Public Radio.

As immediate needs are met, public health issues will become more prevalent, Zimmerman said.

CONFERENCE HAPPENINGS



More than 200 people enjoyed the Women's Good Friday Breakfast at the Holiday Inn in Logan Twp. The breakfast, which had women from 34 churches attend, is sponsored by Sharptown North UMC.

Sharptown North Hosts Good Friday Breakfast - Women from 34 churches surrounding Woolwich Township gathered at the Holiday Inn in Logan Township for a Women's Good Friday Breakfast sponsored by Sharptown North, a campus ministry of Sharptown Church in Pilesgrove. Some 222 women celebrated Easter at this event. Kristin Helms, who was commissioned as a Deacon in 2014 by GNJ, was the featured speaker. Dr. Helms spoke to the theme "Life...It Is What It Is...Or Is It?" by challenging the women to put their faith into practical application by meeting the physical and spiritual needs of those in their own neighborhoods who are without hope and struggling to survive.

Emley's Hill UMC 225th Anniversary Celebration - Emley's Hill UMC in Cream Ridge, will celebrate its 225th anniversary with a special service on May 17. It will be a historical service conducted just as it would have been in 1790. The hour-long service will also feature historical re-enactor Peyton Dixon as he specializes in 1770s Methodism. There will be food provided to all who come. For more information, visit their website: www.emleyshillumc.org.

Christ United Methodist Church to host Musicfest - Christ United Methodist Church in Piscataway will have its third annual Musicfest of Praise from 4 to 8 p.m. on June 13 featuring the Christian band Unspoken. Musicfest takes place on the church's lawn and in lieu of admission, the church asks concertgoers to come with lawn chairs and donations of nonperishable food. The church's Shepherd's Shelves ministry, in collaboration with other organizations, distributes the donated food to families in Piscataway and surrounding communities. Opening for Unspoken will be Relinquish, a Virginia-based band that has performed extensively on the East Coast, and Messiah's Quest, the Christ United Methodist Church praise band. For more information contact the church at cumcoffice@verizon.net or at 1-732-463-1517.

Zion Community UMC Gives Teddy Bears To Police - Zion Community UMC in Clarksboro consecrated 15 hand-crocheted teddy bears and blankets made by Zion's Crochet Ladies. The teddy bears will be placed in each of the East Greenwich Township police cars and will be a comfort to any child in a stressful situation where an officer is called. While replacements are always ready, it is the church's fervent prayer that none would ever be needed.

Covenant UMC Spring Concert - Covenant UMC in Plainfield will have its spring concert at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, May 31. Mark Miller will be the concert organist. Tickets are \$20, and are \$10 for seniors. Also performing will be The Brass Ensemble, harpist Patty Turst, soloist Deborah Ford, Voices of Covenant and The Umoja Imani Choir with Aaron Brown directing.

Leonia UMC Hosts Peace Walkers - Leonia UMC welcomed 30 people who had walked from the nuclear facility plant in Oak Ridge, Tenn., and were on their way to New York where the Five Year Review of the UN Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was being discussed at the United Nations. The church's floors in class rooms, the gym and chapel were made available for the weary walkers who came from around the world. Volunteers provided meals and a local restaurant offered the walkers free pizzas. The walkers left the next morning with flags, signs and the monks in colorful robes, to join thousands in New York demanding that nations eliminate their nuclear arsenals as they agreed to do in the treaty.arsenals as they agreed to do in the treaty.



Pastor Richard Workman and Chief of Police Barry Jenkins hold a blanket during a consecration ceremony at Zion UMC in Clarksboro where teddy bears and blankets were given to the local police to give to children as comfort when needed.

STEWARDSHIP STORIES

by Rich Hendrickson, Director of Stewardship & Visioning

Right Financial Team Important For Churches



The importance of a well-trained, well-informed, effective stewardship team in the local church cannot be overstated. In many of our congregations the work of stewardship is simply included in the duties and responsibilities of the finance committee. The finance committee is very important in every local church, monitoring and managing the church's financial system. However, stewardship work is also important and takes an entirely different skill set than those we often ask to serve on finance.

Stewardship folks need to be good storytellers. Effective stewardship needs to be intentional, year-round, and focused on the lives that are being changed through the ministries of the church. Scott McKenzie and Kristi Miller in their book, *Climb Higher: Reaching New Heights in Giving and Discipleship* are helpful in describing the work of the stewardship committee.

"Your stewardship committee needs to serve as ambassadors for the ministries of your church and share their enthusiasm with others as often as possible," the book says.

So this year create a stewardship team if you don't already have one in place. It doesn't have to be a large committee; two or three people might be enough. Look for folks who are already good stewards, who are enthusiastic about the ministries of the church, and who can effectively tell the story of the church's ministries to the members, friends, constituents, and beyond.

If you need help in identifying, recruiting, training, and/or empowering your stewardship committee contact Rich Hendrickson at RHendrickson@gnjumc.org.

OBITUARIES

GARY BRENNAN, pastor of Colonial Manor UMC died April 21. A memorial service was held April 26 at Colonial Manor UMC, Woodbury.

In lieu of flowers, please send memorial donations to a food bank of your choice in memory of Pastor Gary or perform a random act of kindness in his memory.

Messages of condolence may be sent to his wife Christine Brennan at 14 Blanchard Drive, Deptford, NJ, 08096.

CHRISTA GRANT, retired Diaconal Minister died March 31. A memorial service will be held privately. You are invited to sign the guestbook and access the obituary at www.musgroves.com

In lieu of flowers, please send memorial donations to The Cascade Manor Foundation, a non-profit organization with the main purpose of supporting Cascade Manor residents who have outlived their resources. Contributions can be sent to The Cascade Manor, 65 West 30th Ave., Eugene, OR, 97405.

Messages of condolence may be sent to her husband Andrew Grant at 74 West 29th Ave. Apt 1105, Eugene, OR, 97405.

CAROLE ANN WAGG, retired local pastor died March 22. A memorial service was held March 30, at Turning Point UMC.

In lieu of flowers, please send memorial donations in Carole's memory to a charity of your choice that works to serve the homeless or poverty stricken.

Messages of condolence may be sent to her daughter Barbara Seidle at 616 Greenway Avenue, Ewing, NJ, 08618.

PATRICIA LYNN RICHARDSON-NEWMAN, surviving spouse of Rev. Kenneth Richardson died March 14. A memorial service was held March 21.

In lieu of flowers, please send memorial donations to Kanawha United Presbyterian Church at 1009 Virginia St. E., Charleston, WV, 25301 or Hubbard Hospice House at 1001 Curtis Price Way, Charleston, WV, 25311.

Messages of condolence may be sent to Dr. Robert G. Newman at 2807 Hart Street, Charleston, WV, 25304.

JUNE J. WATT, widow of Reverend John D. Watt died April 6. A memorial service is scheduled for May 9, 2015 at 11 a.m. at Zerr Chapel (Cornwall Manor), 1 Boyd Street, Cornwall, PA, 17016.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to the Watt Family care of Mr. Kenneth Watt at 8 Montgomery Street, Hamilton, NY, 13346.

Watoto

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Steel Beams In Place For New Conference Center



Photos by Brittney Reilly

The new conference center started to take its form in the middle of April as the steel beams were delivered and put in place. The conference center is estimated to be finished either in late 2015 or early 2016 assuming there are no more significant weather delays like there were this past winter.



Cross Of Flowers



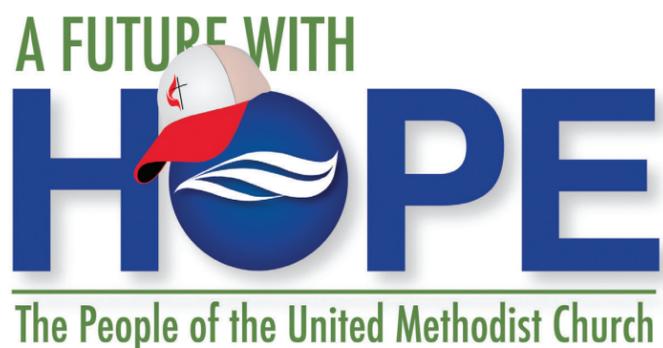
Community UMC of Roselle Park continued its tradition of adorning the sanctuary with a lily cross on Easter Sunday. The cross is made up of 92 lilies that are donated by the congregation in honor of or in memory of loved ones.

INTRODUCING TWO NEW BOOKS BY REV. JERRY CROSSLEY

HOLY WAYS IN HOLIDAYS and
THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN: OUR PROBLEMS, HIS PRESENCE
Both books are based on 2 Corinthians 4:18

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An estimated 10,000 people have not been able to repair their homes from the damage caused by Superstorm Sandy. Many of these people have not been able to return home nearly 3 years after the storm. As the effects of Superstorm Sandy are further removed from the news, A Future With Hope and the United Methodists of Greater New Jersey are still on the ground helping people who may be lost and forgotten in the recovery.

WE'VE COMPLETED REBUILDING 137 HOMES TO DATE WITH A GOAL OF COMPLETING ANOTHER 100 BY THE END OF THE YEAR.

To continue to raise awareness of the needs of Sandy survivors and to raise money for our work, A Future With Hope is partnering with the Thunder and the BlueClaws. A portion of the ticket sales goes directly to fund recovery.



TRENTON THUNDER

7:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 9th



LAKEWOOD BLUECLAWS

7:05 p.m. Wednesday, June 17th

PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS

AND SIGN UP YOUR YOUTH GROUP FOR BETWEEN INNINGS ACTIVITIES AT

www.afuturewithhope.org