

THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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Youth Inspired After First IGNITE Weekend

By Jeff Wolfe
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WILDWOOD – They came from far and near and in large groups and small groups, but a large majority of the 700 youth and their leaders that attended the IGNITE Conference October 3-5 left with a sense that they were all one in spirit.

"The programs were really great, but what was really cool was having a bunch of other kids our age to worship with," said Josh Bae, who attends the youth group at Cornerstone United Methodist Church in Hasbrouck Heights.

The keynote speaker was Preston Centuolo, who told stories of his personal struggles as a youth and encouraged the audience members to depend on God.

"I liked his message of 'don't let life push you down,'" Bae said. "Just go forward with God. He already has you."

One of the highlights of the conference came Saturday night. Centuolo asked those who had never accepted Jesus Christ as their personal savior and those who wanted to make a recommitment to come forward. It was estimated that about 500 youths did come forward, with those making new commitments taking a blue glow stick and those recommitting taking a red glow stick. The rest of the crowd was handed a yellow glow stick.

After Centuolo finished his message, and with the lights down and glow sticks in the air, the band Starfield took the stage for a concert.

"I definitely think the last night was a highlight," said Becky Montross, who attends the youth group at Trinity UMC in Hackettstown. "The band had us all going and I think we all had a really good time."

Magician Justin Flom opened Satur-



More than 700 attended the first Ignite Youth Conference at the Wildwood Convention Center last month. The event was held from Oct. 3-5 and featured a concert, keynote speakers and a magician.

day night's program. Flom has appeared on the Ellen DeGeneres Show, is a regular performer in Las Vegas and is featured on a SyFy Channel magic show Wizard Wars. Flom told the crowd that he got his big break when he shared his faith in a YouTube video called "Soldiers Deck of Cards." The video has more than 4.7 million views.

"I really liked the magician," said Max Lister, who attends Pinelands UMC youth group. "And I really liked playing the games and hanging out in the hallway."

There were several games for young people to play before and after the scheduled programs, such as ping pong,

foosball, basketball, shuffleboard and air hockey.

Another highlight was Sunday worship which coincided with World Communion Sunday. During worship, young people were asked to fill in cards with their commitments from the weekend. The conference will mail these cards back to the youth leaders in six months to distribute to those who attended as a reminder of the weekend and their commitments to Christ.

The other featured speaker for the weekend was anti-slavery activist Zach Hunter. The program packed weekend also included the Jamie McMillan Band,

which performed and led worship, VH1's Ellie Lee who was the emcee and Ground Zero Masters Commission, a group of college age students who performed stomp routines, skits and assisted with several aspects of the weekend.

The biggest help for most of the young people in attendance was knowing and being reminded to trust God in all circumstances, a common theme in Centuolo's messages.

"He helped me a lot," said Kaylynn Hyslon, who lives in Port Norris and attends Buckshutem UMC. "He let us know that if we have hard times or problems, not to give up on ourselves."

Hope Chain Commemorates 2nd Anniversary of Sandy



Photo by Brittney Reilly

The Hope Chain in Atlantic City linked the church to the community and to a home under construction with A Future With Hope.

By Carolyn Conover
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ATLANTIC CITY Hope was delivered to Atlantic City on Saturday October 25th through a chain of people which linked the Venice Park United Methodist Church to a family's home being rebuilt by A Future With Hope.

Approximately 150 participants stood

side by side and passed items symbolizing recovery from church to home through the community in a visible demonstration of how it takes partners from all walks of life to aid in recovery, whether they are church members, community leaders, neighbors or volunteers.

Atlantic City Mayor Don Guardian spoke at the event and echoed that theme. He declared, "There was so

much work to do, Atlantic City simply could not recover without the help of faith-based groups like A Future With Hope."

A brief service led by Bishop John Schol started off the day's activities. Bishop Schol remarked on the progress that A Future With Hope has made in the two years since Superstorm Sandy hit our shores. "A Future With Hope has be-

come the most robust long term recovery organization in the state, helping more than 340 families in the recovery process through our case management team."

He also shared the most recent statistics for A Future With Hope. In the two years since the storm, A Future With Hope has rebuilt nearly 100 homes including 28 in Atlantic City. More than 8,500 volunteers from 38 states have helped in the rebuilding efforts, putting in more than 181,000 hours of volunteer labor. That labor is valued at \$4.65 million. The Bishop also thanked our 15 host sites and other United Methodist Churches who help house, feed and supply our volunteers.

The message of the day was that all of us must work together to make great things happen.

Reverend Cliff Still, pastor of Venice Park UMC, agreed, "I'm happy to be a part of this event. We all wouldn't be here if it weren't for the connection. That's why we are United Methodists. We work together to get things done."

That connection was fully evidenced. Standing in the chain were local United Methodists and those from all over the state including Medford, Pemberton, Red Bank and Long Branch, among others. They stood side by side with residents from the community, homeowners who lost everything in the storm, local government officials including the mayor,

Continued on page 6

A Message from the Bishop



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

Part 2 of 3 in a series of articles on expectations of United Methodists in Greater New Jersey

When Beverly and I were married 36 years ago, we had very clear expectations:
We would love each other for life.
We would be faithful to each other.
We would strive to model God's love in our relationship with one another.
These three expectations have served us well, particularly when we did not always agree.

Last month I shared that expectations have always been a part of ministry, but they have not always been spoken. The leadership of GNJ has adopted an approach of clarity, accountability, resourcing and support as it clarifies expectations. In this article I will share with you the mutual expectations in GNJ.

Why Are Expectations Important

The world needs passionate Christ-like disciples to stir up faith, hope and justice. More and more, passionate Christ-like disciples are being formed in vital congregations. Our conference is spending more of its resources (time, money and leadership) on congregations that are working on their vitality. To grow vitality, our expectations are changing.

In GNJ, we have three sets of expectations:

1. Mutual expectations,
2. What congregations and spiritual leaders can expect from conference leadership, and
3. What conference leadership expects of congregations and spiritual leaders.

Mutual Expectations

As United Methodists, we have three simple rules:

1. Do no harm
2. Do good
3. Stay in love with God.

These three rules are eloquent in their simplicity and challenging in their living. I find when I live these expectations I am centered, at harmony with others and one with God. I invite all GNJ disciples and spiritual leaders to commit to these three simple expectations.

What Congregations and Spiritual Leaders Can Expect of the Conference Leadership

1. We will provide quality and timely service that is practical and meaningful for the vital church we are becoming.
2. We will develop and offer quality resources to equip spiritual leaders to make disciples and grow vital congregations to transform the world.
3. We will be responsive to your needs for making disciples and growing vital congregations to transform the world.
4. We will be forthright about your direction and progress in making disciples, growing vital congregations and engaging in your community.
5. We will assess all decisions through the lens that the local church is the primary place for mission and ministry in the world.
6. We will do everything we can to unburden you from completing forms and participating in activities or meetings that do not have a direct impact on making disciples and growing vital congregations for the transformation of the world.

What Conference Leadership Expects from Congregations and Spiritual Leaders

We have three expectations.

1. Do your best to make disciples and grow vital congregations for the transformation of the world.
2. Engage connectionally by supporting one another in ministry and giving your full share of shared ministry apportionments and billings that helps to resource and equip spiritual leaders to make disciples and grow vital congregations for the transformation of the world.
3. Share with us when we are doing well and how we can do better to help you make disciples and grow vital congregations for the transformation of the world.

I believe by working together we can achieve all three sets of expectations. Much of what I have shared is clarified in more detail in our strategic ministry plan that you can find at www.gnjumc.org/strategicplan. In the plan, you will find nine goals that are essential to our United Methodist witness in Greater New Jersey and the health and vitality of our congregations. By 2018 we plan to:

1. Increase churches growing in worship attendance from 33 percent to 51 percent
2. Start 90 new faith communities
3. Make one new profession of faith for every 17 worshipers
4. Include 75 percent of our worshipers in a small group
5. Increase the number of young adults in small groups from 2,820 to 3,200

6. Increase our racial ethnic worshipers from 20 percent to 25 percent
7. Include 40 percent of our worshipers in a community or world mission project
8. Grow mission giving to \$320 per worshiper
9. Raise \$12 million for a global mission (Imagine No Malaria - \$2 million), a regional mission (Sandy relief and recovery - \$7 million) and a local mission project identified by each congregation (\$3 million).

These are challenging goals and expectations. From time to time I encounter disciples that are afraid that they will not meet expectations. While we expect every congregation will set and pursue goals each year, we do not plan to use the expectations and goals as a report card, but as a starting point for conversation. We will ask you questions to continue to shape your leadership and congregation. These questions include: What are you learning as you work on your goals? What progress have you made? Where did things not go as planned and what will you do? What support do you need to reach your goals?

We are in the midst of a challenging season as a church. The culture has shifted and the ministry that connected with people in the community is not always connecting today. It is not the message, in fact people in the culture today say, *I like Jesus, I am just not too sure about the church.* The message connects but what we are doing and how we share the message is not always connecting with the culture. Let's work together on this and explore and encounter what God has for us next. I believe in you and what God will do through you.

Keep the faith!
John Schol, Bishop

STAY CURRENT

Sign up for our weekly enewsletter and get Conference updates and news sent to your email each Wednesday. The Greater New Jersey Digest is full of news that affects our Conference, meeting announcements, job openings, and more.



To sign up, simply send your email address and request to gnjdigest@gnjumc.org

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Burgos To Lead Churches Into Vibrant Worship Experiences

By Jeff Wolfe
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Rev. Hector A. Burgos wasn't sure if he had what it took to be a worship leader when he was a 15-year-old. It turns out he had the one quality that mattered the most.

"My pastor knew about my passion for worship and music," he said. "I used to play keyboards and sing in youth gatherings, but I had no formal education in music. I remember the day my pastor invited me to lead the praise band, he said I had everything that is needed for being a good worship leader, which was a heart for God."

"Whatever you bring to God, God will use, if it comes from the heart."

Even though a lot has changed for Pastor Burgos since he was a teenager, his desire and passion for others to experience God in a meaningful way through worship has not. Burgos used that heart to be a minister for the past 10 years in Greater New Jersey before being appointed as the conference's Director of Worship and Urban Ministry earlier this year. Part of Burgos' ministry now is to help churches enrich their worship experience. He works with the clergy and worship leaders to develop best in class practices in worship.

Burgos believes worship is about hon-



Rev. Hector Burgos who started leading worship at the age of 15 began as the Director of Worship and Urban Ministries earlier this year.

oring and glorifying God and embracing the gift of grace that God shares with us through Jesus Christ.

"For worship to be transformative, the attitude of our hearts has to be one of surrender, which is a very difficult concept in our culture," Burgos said. "Our worship not only honors and magnifies God, but it is also for our own edification and strength. Worship helps us develop a Christ-like character."

He believes vibrant worship inspires people to live with that type of character in their daily lives.

"What we do in church is a rehearsal of life," he said. "In worship, we remem-

ber who we are and who we can be in Christ. Ultimately, worship is a way of life. It means living in responsible obedience to God, doing no harm, doing all the good we can, and growing in our relationship with Jesus Christ. Everything we do in our daily lives can be an expression of worship. From how we care for those in need, to the way we treat our family and neighbors."

When it comes to designing an inspiring worship experience, Burgos believes a variety of people and formulas are needed to be effective.

"We want to make sure we are relevant to specific church sizes and specific worship styles," Burgos said. "We will work to create a community of collaboration and sharing of resources. We have a lot of very creative pastors and worship leaders that are doing amazing and innovative things in worship from whom we can all learn and benefit."

He emphasized that people use a wide range of approaches in worship.

"Every generation experiences God in a different way," he said. "If we are to become more relevant, we need to ask how people are experiencing God today. We need to build bridges so they can experience God in worship in more meaningful ways. Worship needs to provide language and a voice to people. It needs to speak to the struggles, hopes

and aspirations of the congregation and community."

Burgos emphasized that it's important for churches to be sensitive as they undergo conversations about ways to enhance their worship experience.

"Change, when it comes to worship is very delicate because worship is very close to the heart," he said. "These conversations have to be surrounded by love and a clear understanding as to why we are having a change conversation. It's about bringing more people closer to God."

Burgos has a heart for people in urban areas as he is also responsible for the formulation of urban ministries strategies

"Urban settings provide a unique opportunity to the church to witness to the love of Christ, address issues of justice and develop programs and initiatives that have a lasting impact in the local community," he said.

Burgos, along with Bishop John Schol and Director of Mission and Multi-Cultural Ministry Nicole Caldwell-Gross attended a Bishop's Cohort in Detroit last month to look at new ways in which churches in urban centers can be more effective in their ministry in the community.

"We are exploring the many ways to partner with local churches and communities to revitalize our urban churches," Burgos said. "We want to be agents of transformation in our urban communities."

Denville Preparing For Large Leap Into Small Groups

By Jeff Wolfe
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Dale and John Simms hadn't really planned on starting a small group ministry at Denville United Methodist Church. They also didn't plan on a 1.7 ton tree falling on their house during Hurricane Sandy either.

As a result, they created a bond with fellow worshippers who helped them cleanup and repair their damaged home. Now the Simms fully believe the entire congregation could benefit from having stronger personal connections. So, they went to their pastor, Rev. Ed Carll, to talk about starting small groups in at Denville and he was fully supportive.

"People in the congregations were great in helping us in whatever way they could," Dale Simms said of the storm damage cleanup. "Ed was a God-send to us at that time and there were just so many people who were wanting to do things for us."

"It made you feel important and that you were an important part of the church. The relationships that may not have been there before happened because they were reaching out to us when we were in a time of need."

The Simms had been part of a small group at a different church a few years ago, and believe the idea will work well at Denville.

"The big thing is to create relationships between parishioners," John Simms said. "I see the same faces every week at church. We say, 'hi,' but we don't really know each other. We may know the names and faces, but that is all we really know. We are just trying to bring the



Denville UMC is beginning a small groups program and among those to attend the first leadership meeting were (front left to right), Denville Pastor Ed Carll, Glenda Haase, Marcia Brands, and (back left to right), Dale Simms, Lee Haase and Gabrielle Carll.

membership of the church into closer contact with each other.

"That way they can share their good news and bad news with each other and can share common interests. We can bring together people who normally just pass each other in the hallway."

The small group concept is not completely foreign to Denville. There have been more informal men's and women's groups and Carll and the Simms make it clear they want those to continue.

They do, however, want all small groups to have some intentional time to build better personal and spiritual relationships for the church that has about 125 in attendance each Sunday.

"We had an ASP (Appalachian Service

Project) team that went and helped with the Appalachian Church Project and they spoke when they came back," Dale Simms said. "They said they feel more connected to the church now because they have a relationship with the people they went on the project with."

The Simms' noted that small groups don't just happen. After coming up with the idea last spring, they called Rev. Beth Caulfield, the Director of Small Groups for the conference. She had a meeting with leaders at the church and recommended they attend the Laity Leaders Academy to learn more.

Then in September, Caulfield spoke about the importance of small groups at Denville's rally day. She is also scheduled

to do training for small group facilitators at Denville this month. The hope is to have a full startup of small groups in January or February.

"We started the conversation last spring," Carl said. "Then Beth came and she really encouraged John and Dale. She preached on our rally day and we set up a table and people went up and shared their ideas for small groups."

Dale Simms said that the boost from Caulfield gave them the confidence they needed to move forward and helped create more enthusiasm about small groups in the church.

"Our congregation is great and people are really good about stepping forward and trying something new," she said. "People are really buzzing about it."

One of the more unique groups being formed is centered on high adventure hiking and climbing, which is being started by the Simms' niece.

"She had been looking for people who want to do high adventure things like rock climbing, but people don't always want to go," Dale Simms said. "There are already six people in that group who want to do a similar type of thing. There is not only the spiritual element, but a friendship one too."

John Simms points out that they also don't want to limit the small groups to just those who attend Denville.

"Although the focus is to draw people together initially, you should always be looking to expand your group," he said. "We don't want to be excluding people for any particular reason. We don't want a clique mentality. We want these groups to be inclusive."

Game Changers Summit Examines New Ways To Reach More People

By Jeff Wolfe
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The use of smartphones and other new technology is already a factor in drawing new people to a church. How churches use this technology could be a key factor in how many people attend a particular church in the future.

That was one of things that GNJUMC Bishop John Schol learned when he attended the Game Changers Summit hosted by United Methodist Communications in Nashville in September.

"The No. 1 way today that people find a local church is through the web,"

the Bishop said. "People read their web pages and then make choices about what churches they are going to visit. If you don't have any web presence you are most likely not going to be looked at in the community."

Schol pointed out that it's not just a matter of having a web page for a church, but it is also important to show a church's activity by using social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

"It's a very effective way to communicate with people," he said. "For example, Mosaic Ministry in our conference, has some special services, and they promote it through social media. They've picked up

about 10 young people because of that."

One of the major focuses of the summit was also to discuss how communications is helping fight the Ebola virus in Africa. With the advent of cell phones in Third World countries, that technology is helping at least some areas protect themselves from the deadly virus.

"It's been very instrumental there because much of what needed to happen was education," said Schol, who was among the 240 people from nine countries at the summit. "The United Methodist Church has been quite involved in sending text messages to clergy and then clergy can share what needs to

be done with their congregations. Cell phones are common in Africa so this has been an effective way to communicate with urgency."

The Bishop added that it is important for local churches as well to embrace new ways to communicate with people in their immediate area, though it may be a difficult concept to accept initially.

"We need to show people that technology is not an end, but is a resource to get on with the mission of making disciples and transforming the world," he said. "Churches and organizations that use technology and use it well tend to see better engagement by people."



GLOBAL RELAY

Brief Reports from around the world via United Methodist News Service and NewsScope

Ebola's Ripple Effect Felt in Several U.S. Churches

By Kathy L. Gilbert and Sam Hodges
United Methodist News Service

DALLAS — We come in expecting a celebration, a day of worship, but it always turns into a funeral," said the Rev. Emmanuel Shanka Morris, pastor of Spencer Memorial United Methodist Church, Charlotte, N.C.

Morris is Liberian and so are nearly nine out of 10 members of his church; another 10 percent are from Sierra Leone. Since the Ebola outbreak began, every Sunday one or more members of the congregation reports the death of another family member in the two West African countries hit hardest by the deadly virus.

The church is observing five days of praying and fasting in the month of October. Using 2 Chronicles 7:11-22 and Ezra 8:23 as guiding scriptures, each Wednesday from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. people of the congregation intercede for the people of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

Morris was born in Greenville, Sinoe County, Liberia. His associate pastor, the Rev. Colston Wuor-Gabie Morris is also from Liberia.

Grief and support

Across the United States, United Methodist churches with native Liberians and Sierra Leoneans are telling similar stories of grief and suffering, while trying to rally support for medical relief.

Albert B. Travell, a member of First United Methodist Church in Arlington, Texas, had seven family members die from Ebola in July.

"The daughters of my brother were preparing a body (another sister) for a funeral and became ill," Travell said. The family thought she died from malaria.

"We have a tradition in Liberia when someone passes away, family members stick around so many days before burial and after burial they cook and everyone eats from the same bowl," he said. His nieces started getting sick and dying one after another.

Now the remaining family is having trouble getting food.

"I am trying to send them some money so they can buy food. I am praying by the grace of God, everything will be all right soon," Travell said.

Helping their families

Many Liberians living in the U.S. are stepping up contributions to family members and friends because so many people are unable to work and are not getting paid, said the Rev. Richard L. Stryker, executive director of ethnic ministries for the North Alabama Conference. He is also a native of Liberia.

"My wife has lost an aunt, although not to Ebola, we wonder what role the strain on the already degraded health system played in her death from sickness," Stryker said. His wife also lost a high school classmate to Ebola. Four out of eight people in her classmate's family also died after waiting days for an ambulance to arrive to take them to the hospital.

"Sanitation, communication, lack of facilities remain major problems for the prevention of this disease," he said. "I believe people from the West that are going to help assume a certain level of basic care that is nonexistent."

Heart of Africa

Lovers Lane United Methodist Church in Dallas has long supported a hospital in Liberia founded by two of its members, Betty and Peter Weato. Now, because of Ebola, the church is raising funds for medical supplies for Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The church's Heart of Africa Fellowship includes members from 10 African countries, including Liberia and Sierra Leone. On Oct. 19, the Rev. Stan Copeland, Lovers Lane's senior pastor,

led the group in prayer about Ebola and announced a churchwide prayer service on Ebola for Sunday Oct. 26.

"None of our people have been infected, but they've been upended," Copeland, who has traveled twice to Liberia, said in an interview.

Bishop John K. Yambasu, episcopal leader of Sierra Leone, said he and Bishop John G. Innis of Liberia co-signed a letter requesting that all medical and other relief items go through UMCOR.

"This is still the case," Yambasu said. However, he noted that some partners in the denomination had a schedule of shipments of non-medical supplies such as school supplies and equipment even before Ebola.

"These are sent directly to us. For instance, one of our partner churches has shipped an ambulance to Sierra Leone which cannot be channeled through UMCOR," he said, adding that UMCOR staff are aware of that shipment.

Since the end of July, all non-Ebola related conference staff have been asked to stay home in order to avoid the risk of contracting Ebola while using public transportation. "Only the Ebola response team and the administrative staff come to work every day," Yambasu added.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief recommends that people who want to help send money through the International Disaster Response Advance, said Emily Miller, associate general secretary for the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries.

Shipping goods presents several problems, Miller said. Ports are clogged, and even if goods are unloaded, United Methodist conference staff must take time to pay customs and get the goods delivered.

Ebola spawning prejudice

Dallas became a focus of news coverage when Thomas Eric Duncan of Liberia was admitted to the city's Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas and diagnosed with Ebola — the first such diagnosis in the United States. His subsequent death, the infection of two nurses who cared for him, and the quarantining of people who had contact with him all raised anxiety in the city, Copeland said.

Copeland noted that African members of Lovers Lane United Methodist have faced extra prejudice during the Ebola scare, an assertion confirmed by Eric Pratt, lay leader of the Heart of Africa Fellowship and a native of Sierra Leone.

"Even your neighbors that you used to play and laugh with, they start to shun you," said Pratt, who has lived in the Dallas area for 29 years and owns a limousine service.

Pratt said Copeland and Lovers Lane have shown strong support for Africans. That was echoed by Melvin Morgan, a Heart of Africa Fellowship member who recently lost his sister, Victoria Jackson, and two nieces to Ebola in the family's native Liberia.

"It is a blessing for me and my family to be part of this congregation," he said. "In times of needs and difficulties, they have been there."

Morgan hopes the United States and other wealthy countries will pour resources into West Africa, to help arrest Ebola. He acknowledged feeling a range of emotions on learning loved ones in Liberia had died of the disease.

"As a human, I weep, because Jesus himself wept," Morgan said. "But as a Christian, I also put on my faith, because the Bible says with God all things are possible."

*Gilbert is a multimedia news reporter for United Methodist News Service in Nashville, Tennessee. Hodges, a United Methodist News Service writer, lives in Dallas. Contact (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.

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Bishop Schol Among Those Who Visit Detroit In Latest Cohort Mission Experience



A Bishop's Cohort Group met in Detroit last month to explore new forms of urban ministry. Among those attending were, from left, Bishops Michael McKee (North Texas), Sally Dyck (Northern Illinois), Deborah Lieder Kiesey (Michigan Area), Gregory Palmer (West Ohio) and John Schol (Greater New Jersey).

By Mark Doyal
*Michigan Area
Director of Communications*

DETROIT - In the 1940s, Metropolitan United Methodist Church on Woodward Avenue in Detroit, Michigan was the largest United Methodist congregation in the world. Each Sunday, over 7,000 members filled the enormous sanctuary. Today, Metropolitan has about 400 members and approximately 240 in attendance, but that is good news for the church. Attendance is up about 15 percent this year and for those pouring themselves out to care for the needs of a recovering city, it is a sign that The United Methodist Church is growing once again in the city of Detroit.

In early October, Michigan Area Bishop Deborah Lieder Kiesey invited a group of U.S. urban bishops and their staff to talk about new life in the church and visit entrepreneurial ministries in the city of Detroit. The tour is part of a multi-year effort by six bishops who are seeking how to best lead the church in urban ministry.

Among those attending were GNJUMC Bishop John Schol, along with conference connectional team ministry personnel Nicole Caldwell-Gross, the Director of Multi-Cultural Ministries and Hector Burgos, the Director of Worship and Urban Ministries.

Two years ago, with the encouragement of the Residential Bishop's Learning Forum, this learning cohort was formed to explore effective new forms of urban ministry. The bishops have sought out ministries trying new styles of worship that engage in sustainable community economic development and embrace all including the poor, those in recovery, former inmates and people with developmental issues.

The cohort was also comprised of Bishops Sally Dyck (Northern Illinois), Gregory Palmer (West Ohio), Deborah Lieder Kiesey (Michigan Area) and Michael McKee (North Texas). They, along with Bishop Schol, have visited two major cities each year. Bishop Martin McLee (New York Area) also took part in the cohort until his death in September. His delegation continues to actively participate in this initiative.

After decades of decline, Detroit is working to recover. Covering more than 139 square miles, the city bottomed out in 2013 when it became the largest

OPEN DOORS. OPEN HEARTS. OPEN MINDS.
*We extend a warm welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, gay, filthy rich, dirt poor and knuckleheads. We extend a welcome, too, to those who are crying newborns, skinny as a rail or could afford to lose a few pounds.

We welcome you if you can sing like Beyoncé or like our pastor who can't carry a note in a bucket. You're welcome here if you're "just browsing," just woke up or just got out of jail. We don't care if you're been sprinkled, dunked or if you're afraid to wade in the water.

We extend a special welcome to those who are over 60 but not grown up yet, and to teenagers who are growing up too fast. We welcome single moms, distant dads, starving artists, tree-huggers, latte-sippers, vegetarians, and junk-food eaters. We welcome those who are in recovery or still using addicts. We welcome you if you're having problems or you're down in the dumps or if you don't like "organized religion," we've all been there.

If you blew all your offering money at the casino, you're welcome here. We offer a welcome to those who think the earth is flat, work too hard, don't work, or are here because grandma conscripted you to come.

We welcome those who are inked, pierced or both. We offer a special welcome to those who could use a prayer right now. We welcome tourists, seekers, doubters, bleeding hearts ... and you!*

Director of Mission and Multi-Cultural Ministry Nicole Caldwell-Gross found this prayer in a church in Detroit during the Bishop's Cohort visit last month.

municipality in U.S. history to declare bankruptcy. For more than half a century Detroit experienced the departure of millions of people fleeing the city for the suburbs. Like other main-line denominations, United Methodist membership mirrored that decline. Since 1959, 60 local churches have closed their doors. Today 16 Detroit churches remain and only nine are able to support full-time pastors.

Still, like Lazarus coming back from the dead, there is a spirit of determination and creativity that has taken over in the aptly named Detroit Renaissance District of United Methodist churches.

"When all things are falling down you have the opportunity to be incredibly creative," shared the Rev. Dr. Melanie Lee Carey, District Superintendent of the Detroit Renaissance District and one of the planners for the cohort city tour, "It's a fresh start and we can try anything."

The cohort visited about a half dozen ministries while in Detroit including Cass Community United Methodist Church where the Rev. Faith Fowler and her mission ministry staff have brought sensible solutions to the spiritual and human needs of the area.

"They didn't need handouts," Fowler explained, "They needed jobs."

Cass Community Social Services, founded by the church, now employs over 100 local people, most of whom would struggle to find jobs with living wages.

Cass has accomplished this by capitalizing on the traits most employers would consider weakness. Realizing area neighborhoods were filled with thousands of abandoned tires, the church collected them and recycled them into mud mats and stylish sandals called Detroit Treads which are sold through a website. To help employ those with developmental disabilities, Cass started a document shredding company, hiring those who cannot read the confidential legal and medical documents they destroy. In addition, Cass operates medical clinics, a series of homeless shelters and other resource service programs to support their community. The impact has been incredible and has, in turn, helped keep the church vibrant. On Friday evening, in one of the toughest neighborhoods in Detroit, the bishops were able to witness and participate in a standing room only worship service in the Cass warehouse.

In 2012, when the Rev. Patricia Gendarilla arrived at her new church, El Buen Pastor on Detroit's southeast side, there was no heat and more mice than members. She explained to the cohort how she went door-to-door to meet families and build trust in the mostly Hispanic and Latino neighborhood.

"I knew if we put our hands in with the people it would be possible," said Gendarilla.

Many in the neighborhood felt that main line churches had abandoned them over the years. Her embracing ministry led to a core group of families attending. Soon, they were able to raise \$50,000 to repair the church. A Facebook page created a tight knit community of hundreds of un-churched members who now gather to celebrate and worship. The church has built a community soccer field and developed out-of-the-box partnerships with area businesses. In two years, the ministry has grown from 10 people to hundreds attending their events.

What links Detroit's thriving ministries and those the cohort witnessed across the country is creativity, local relevance, permission giving, inclusivity, diversity, encouragement of new and self-differentiated leaders and a focus on outreach. The bishop's cohort is planning to visit more cities in 2015 and will report on its findings. The group is encouraging prayer for our cities and commitments from annual conferences to invest in collaboration and new models of urban ministry.



Tuition Discount Offered to Children of Clergy

Allegheny College will offer a 50 percent discount on tuition to children of United Methodist clergy, beginning in fall 2015 with the class that enters that year. As the College celebrates its bicentennial in 2015, the discount affirms its relationship with Methodism, which dates to 1833 and continues today in its affiliation with The United Methodist Church (UMC).

The Ministerial Discount Policy applies to students who meet the following criteria:

Unmarried, legally dependent children under age 24 of United Methodist ordained Deacons and Elders in full connection, good standing, and under full-time appointment by the Annual Conference, or of retired or deceased United Methodist ministers with the same credentials.

Students in their first four years who are seeking their first baccalaureate degree, excluding summer sessions and Experiential Learning seminars.

Students who are full-time and remain in good academic standing with the College.

"This discount will help keep an Allegheny degree affordable for clergy families, and hopefully bring more United Methodist students to our student body. We see it as a win-win situation," said Jane Ellen Nickell, College Chaplain.

For details about the discount, contact the Allegheny Office of Financial Aid at 814-332-2701, or look for the application on their website (sites.allegeny.edu/finaid/scholarship-opportunities).

Allegheny College is a national liberal arts college where 2,100 students with unusual combinations of interests and talents develop highly valued abilities to explore critical issues from multiple perspectives. A selective residential college in Meadville, Pa., Allegheny is one of 40 colleges featured in Loren Pope's "Colleges That Change Lives," among many other guidebooks, and is the only UMC-affiliated institution of higher education within the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference.

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The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey



The Ignite Youth Conference was held during the first weekend of October at the Wildwood Convention Center and had more than 700 in attendance.

Leaders Believe IGNITE Movement Just Beginning

By Jeff Wolfe
jwolfe@gniumc.org

Rev. Matthew Na hopes the first IGNITE Youth Conference isn't just the beginning of an event that is expected to take place annually for years. He hopes it's the beginning of a spiritual journey for those who attend.

That's the type of vision Na, the Director of Professions of Faith and Young People, has for the event and the individuals who attend it.

"If anything in this first year, all we did was 'buy the land,'" said Na, referring to the parable in the 13th chapter of Matthew. "We know there are precious pearls here and now and in these next few years we want to start cultivating the soil. We want to continue the process of bearing fruit. We believe so many more seeds would love to be a part of that. God wants to feed those who are hungry."

Na said survey results from youth leaders after the conference indicated everyone left inspired.

"I think they have a hunger for more, now, too. They are saying, 'so now what?' They have a hunger, anticipation and desire for more," said Na who organized the weekend, along with the initial planning laid out by Rev. Erica Munoz, who formerly held the position of Children, Youth and Young Adult Coordinator for the Conference.

The date for next year's conference is Oct. 2-4 and will also be at Wildwood. Na said the plan is to keep the same basic structure in place for the event.

"The general rule of thumb is that we want to have inspiring and quality offerings like we had with the speakers, artists and musicians," he said. "And then we want to give them some freedom in between to chew on what they have heard."

What Na and conference leaders are considering at the moment is having three regional IGNITE events throughout the year leading up to the big weekend in Wildwood. No dates or locations have been confirmed for the regional events yet.

"We want to be closer to home for at least some of these folks," Na said.

One of the signs that the conference was successful is that after the final session on Sunday morning there wasn't a mass exodus by the over 700 attendees. In fact, almost all of them lingered, talked, took pictures and played games in the main hallway as the crowd gradually thinned out.

"The litmus test of a good event or good conference is that it pushes you forward," Na said. "People aren't left just saying this thing was good or that thing was bad. They left saying now what's ahead?"

Conference leaders believe there is a bright future for the event and believe the attendance could double next year.

"I give thanks to God particularly for how I experienced the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ at the IGNITE Conference," Bishop John Schol said. "Powerful worship, transforming testimony and life changing preaching led to more than 500 youth giving their life to Christ for the first time or recommitting their life to Christ. I was overwhelmed with a sense of awe watching the Holy Spirit move among the young people."

Cape Atlantic District Superintendent

Commitment Card

During Ignite, young people made commitments to change their lives and help transform the world. The following is a sample of what they wrote on their cards:

I will be myself and no one else.

I will introduce more people to Christ and bring more people to our youth group.

I will look deeper into my heart to find out what God wants me to do.

I will not be afraid to show the light of God to the people around me.

I will share my story and how the church helped me in my time of trouble.

I will change the way I think about myself and everyone around me.

I will be the voice and not the echo.

I will honor God by not running away from the path set before me.

I will inspire someone every day.

I will speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Brian Roberts liked what he heard youth and leaders talking about after the conference was over.

"To say it was a moving weekend is an understatement," he said. "It was powerful. It was excellence squared. 'Awesome!' These were some of the comments I heard about the bands and speakers that led worship, performed and touched the hearts of those gathered. IGNITE lived up to the definition of the word, causing young lives to catch fire with God's Spirit and teens to find new life and energy through a relationship with Christ."

Hope Chain Continued from page 1

and other recovery organizations like the Atlantic City Long Term Recovery Group and the Salvation Army. Even the Emergency Medical Team on call for the day, joined in the chain as a show of support.

Reverend William Williams III from Asbury UMC, Reverend Frank Brown from St. Paul's UMC in Port Republic, and Reverend Still passed communion down the chain. After communion pieces of chalk were passed down so that partici-

pants could draw a line on the sidewalk showing the unity between the church, the community and people in need of assistance. Many also wrote prayers and messages of hope. After passing the benediction person to person, the participants returned to the church for a brief reception. Culinary students from Respond Inc., based out of Camden, served chili cornbread, cider and sweet potato pie.

Each of the items passed in the Hope Chain were blessed by the Bishop and included tags of inspiration:

Flood Buckets - Immediately after Sandy, many homes had to be cleaned up before repairs could begin. Using donated supplies delivered in FLOOD BUCKETS like these, the first rays of hope shined throughout the region.

Crow Bar - After the storm, many homes had to be partially or entirely demolished because of the extensive storm damage. This CROW BAR represents the hard work of letting go of the old that must precede recovery and renewal.

Hammer - Recovering from a storm takes strength of spirit and body.

Homeowners and volunteers alike are learning to focus that strength, like a HAMMER, to bring about the needed change.

Nails - After so much had to be taken apart, these NAILS represent houses and lives being put back together. Simply having walls again was a huge step for many storm survivors.

Paintbrush - After serious construction, a little PAINTING marks a stage when recovery eases back into normality. A little color goes a long way!

Broom - After sanding, sawing and general dirty work, the newly recovered home needs a little sprucing up. This BROOM signifies the final stages of rebuilding.

T-square - Soon after measuring and marking, homeowners use this T-SQUARE to hang shelves, pictures, and other decorations to transform a rebuilt house into a recovered home.

Welcome basket - Nothing is better than a home-cooked meal! These WELCOME BASKETS allows storm survivors to once again share a family meal in their newly-renovated home.

Bible - In Scripture we find the inspiration that lifts up our spirits and empowers us to be agents of hope. "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

Jeremiah 29:11

Chalk - Use this CHALK to draw a line connecting you to your neighbors, so that the line will stretch from church to home. This will serve as a visual symbol of the link between congregation and community.

Benediction/Prayer - May the God of Hope fill you with Joy and Peace.



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Hope Chain participant holding a crow bar.

Greater New Jersey Celebrates World Communion Sunday

World Communion Sunday was observed in a variety of ways around Greater New Jersey on Oct. 5.

In Wildwood, Bishop John Schol led about 750 youth and youth leaders in communion at the IGNITE Youth Conference. Bishop Schol made note of the significance of the day, the importance and meaning of communion and how the wave of communions were gradually taking place across different time zones.

In Atlantic City, Asbury UMC hosted communion taken by different denominations. In an afternoon service Asbury UMC, joined with St. Peter's United Methodist Church of Ocean City, Welcome Holy Spirit Pentecostal Church of Atlantic City, and a representative of Atlantic City Urban Partnership (ACUP), which represents over a half dozen United Methodist Churches in the area, to hold a special worship service. The churches represent the connectional partnership that leads and implements the weekly feeding ministry held at Asbury. The service allowed the different churches to celebrate their mission of feeding the hungry and homeless. African-American, European-American, and Spanish-American cultural traditions were represented during the celebration.

The praise band from Welcome Holy Spirit Pentecostal Church, which shares the sanctuary with Asbury United Methodist Church on a weekly basis, and whose first language is Spanish, started the service with worship songs in English and Spanish. A message on Christian

unity was delivered by Asbury Lay Leader Allen Maddox. In a sign of unity, retired local pastor, Alma Dobson, of Asbury, Rev. Gerardo Garcia, of Welcome Holy Spirit Pentecostal Church, and Pastor William Williams III, the Senior Pastor at Asbury, led those present in communion.

Near the end of the service, a community prayer was lifted for Asbury's Touch Ministry, also known as Feed the Hungry. Several people stood and spoke in their native languages recognizing the Holy Spirit at work.

"At the close of the prayer, it was evident that the rallying theme was an unmistakable, resounding transformation of lives," Williams said. "What a powerful decree. Praise God for the anointing of the Holy Spirit that rained down upon us all on World Communion Sunday."

Princeton UMC celebrated the day with a bagpiper leading a processional march down Nassau Street after its 9:30 and 11:30 a.m. services.

Princeton also serves a diverse congregation and part of its service was to celebrate that as well. Its processional included church attendees carrying signs that said "welcome" in several different languages.

"With nearly three dozen nationalities represented at PUMC, we welcome all people, no matter where they are in their faith journeys," Princeton Senior Pastor Rev. Jana Purkis-Brash said. "World Communion Sunday calls the church to reach out to all people and model diversity among God's children."



Photo by Robin Birkel

Bagpiper Chip Swartz and Rev. Jana Purkis-Brash lead the congregation down Nassau Street to celebrate World Communion Sunday at Princeton UMC.

Nomination Process for General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegates Announced

Greater New Jersey will be electing delegates for the 2016 General and Jurisdictional Conferences of the United Methodist Church during the Annual Conference in Wildwood on May 28-30, 2015. The nomination process will be open from December 15, 2014 through February 15, 2015. The 2016 General Conference will be held in Portland, Ore., May 10-20, 2016 and the Northeast Jurisdictional Conference will be held July 13-16, 2016 in Lancaster, PA.

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church meets once every four years to consider the business and mission of the global church. Four clergy and four laity from Greater New Jersey will be elected to serve at the 2016 General and Northeast Jurisdictional Conferences. An additional four clergy and four laity from Greater New Jersey will be elected to be delegates to the Northeast Jurisdictional Conference only. The Jurisdictional Conference elects new bishops to serve within the Jurisdiction.

Website pages with specific instructions and requirements for nominations will be available in December. All nominations will be made electronically. Weekly updates on the process will be published in the Digest starting in November.

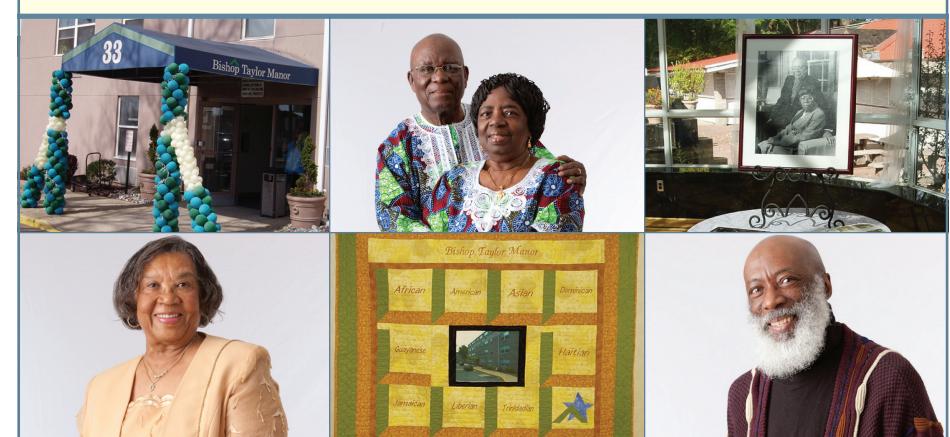


One of the final events to take place at the IGNITE Youth Conference in Wildwood was the more than 700 in attendance taking part in World Communion Sunday.

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Friendship's Potato Run a Stabilizer for CUMAC

By Victoria Diaz
CUMAC Community Engagement Coordinator

When your food pantry is going through a food shortage, fear starts to kick in around the building. *What happens if we run out of food? Will we need to turn someone away? What if our clients are forced to go hungry this week?*

Though CUMAC has been faced with this situation time and again, supporters always seem to be nearby, ready to extend a helping hand and deliver resources when they are needed the most. We have been very fortunate in this regard, but still the fear is there.

In the world of pantries there isn't a whole lot of stability: our operations and our clients are subject to the donations and funding we receive. Weeks can go by without sufficient support. The pantry and our clients are forced to make due. With all the uncertainty of food shortages and the rise of hunger, our staff has come to look forward to brief times of stability.

What does this stability look like? It's the regular collections on our behalf, the friendly faces that volunteer for events, the supporters that put hunger on their calendar and keep it there and the voices that light up our day with a phone call.

The best thing about a ringing phone is you never know who might be on the other end. It might be a struggling family discovering for the first time that they're not alone, a potential volunteer or, sometimes, a voice of support. Last week we received a phone call from Friendship United Methodist Church, a group that's been calling us for the last 15 years.

This was a sweet moment of relief.

Located in Monroeville, N.J., Friendship is surrounded by open space and farm land. In 1999, the pastor of the church made an arrangement with a local farm to help CUMAC and New Jersey's hungry. The deal: after all of the farm's commitments for the season had been fulfilled, the pastor would buy its surplus of potatoes to donate to families in need. The owner of the farm agreed and for the last decade and a half the church has been giving these potatoes to our pantry.

Every September, Friendship calls us to arrange the pickup. This yearly event is warmly referred to as the "The Potato Run" by the CUMAC staff. Leaving early in the morning, CUMAC's drivers head to Salem County to pick up a truck full of potatoes — usually weighing between 7,000 and 12,000 pounds.

With so many potatoes to load, the farmers use special machinery to essentially shoot all of the potatoes into the truck. Nowadays our drivers come prepared, with huge boxes and pallets, but in 1999 our team had no idea what to expect. Thousands of loose potatoes made their way on our truck that first year without any easy-to-move containers.

"We spent hours trying to get all the potatoes off the truck!" said Debbie Fletcher, CUMAC's office manager. "We've come a long way."

While things have certainly changed with the pickup process, The Potato Run remains as important as ever, providing a huge boost to our pantry after our busiest summer to date.

The potatoes — provided by Coombs Farms this year — are bought at a



With the help of Friendship UMC, CUMAC received about four tons of potatoes from Coombs Farm in Salem County last month.

reduced price, but can still cost up to several hundred dollars. Fortunately, the kind parishioners of Friendship hold fundraisers and collections to cover the cost of the donation. Victoria Hahn, who has been organizing the collection for the last few years, truly enjoys the experience.

"It's something we love doing," she said. "I reach out to the farm in July to see how the season is going and we follow up right until pickup day. Some seasons are better than others, but it's a great opportunity to help those who need it."

We are grateful for supporters like

Victoria, Friendship UMC, Coombs Farms and all the kind, familiar voices on the other end of the line. These are the voices of stability that get us through the most challenging of times. With their support, our work is made possible and, together, we are making a difference in our community. Thank you to all the voices of stability!

To support CUMAC's mission to feed people and change lives, call 973-742-5518, e-mail info@cumacecho.org or visit www.cumacecho.org

Asbury United Methodist Church 129th Anniversary

Theme

"Never Would Have Made It Without You: FAITH, HOPE & LOVE"

Sunday, Nov. 16, 2014 at 10 a.m.

1213 Pacific Ave, Atlantic City, NJ 08401

Program Chairperson, **Mrs. Carolyn D. Pendleton**

Youth Director, **Ms. Sonia Massie**

Assistant to Pastor, **Rev. Alma Y. Dobson**

Senior Pastor, **Rev. William M. Williams III**

Guest Speakers, **Bishop Alfred Johnson**

GNJUMC Bishop, **John Schol**

Jersey Shore Jazz Vespers @ 4:00pm
Featuring Robin Van Duzee



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STEWARDSHIP STORIES

by Rich Hendrickson, Director of Stewardship & Visioning

The "Unemployment Rate" Impacts the Local Church

The latest statistics from the Bureau of Labor show that New Jersey's unemployment rate is currently 6.5%. Unfortunately the unemployment rate in most of our churches hovers around 80%. If 20% of the people do 80% of the work in any given church, than we're looking at an extremely high "unemployment rate" in most of our congregations. What would it mean to the ministry you would be able to accomplish in your local setting if you were able to bring that rate down significantly? Here are some helpful hints on how to address the unemployment rate in your church:

Provide short-term, hands-on ministry experiences: A one day or weekend opportunity may help those who are new to the church get involved and will be a great way to introduce the idea of community missions to the congregation. In our current culture, short-term opportunities work best also because of the time constraints most people live under.

Avoid generic announcements and invite people individually: Too often we stand up in church and announce that we need help with this or that and then we're surprised when no one responds. Identify those who may have gifts to bring to the particular ministry you're recruiting for. Also, look to get those involved who may be too shy or lack the self-confidence to believe they have anything to bring to the work.

Preach and teach the importance of service: Describe, motivate and offer opportunities for service inside the walls of the church and beyond. Be specific in what you're asking, what's expected and the time commitment involved. Help connect those interested with those already involved. Do everything you can to make it easy for people to say "yes."

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*Financial assistance for those agreeing to serve
at least five years as a member of our conference.

Join Family and Friends in Hawaii

Avoid the cold this winter. Join family and friends in a fantastic once-in-a-lifetime trip to beautiful Hawaii.

The Galilee UMC 2015 Holy Land Tours will travel to San Francisco and Hawaii on

February 12th - 22nd, 2015

The group will spend two days in San Francisco, then fly to Hawaii, where they will board Norwegian Cruise Line, "Pride of America," and cruise five islands.

The price includes all costs: inside cabin \$4210; ocean view \$4,753, balcony \$4961. A deposit of \$500 is now due with the final payment due on November 30, 2014.

For more info

Call Virgie Kelly at 201.387.1522 or the church at 201.567.0009

The touring group of Galilee has previously visited South Africa, Israel, Alaska, Zimbabwe, Brazil, Ghana, Egypt, China, Thailand and many, many other exotic and interesting destinations. Rev. Sherrie Dobbs Johnson is Pastor of Galilee United Methodist Church.

New Medical Plan For Retirees Set To Take Effect January 1

The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits (CBOPHB) has announced the implementation of a new retiree medical/prescription plan which will go into effect Jan. 1, 2015. The new conference plan, United Healthcare Group Medicare Advantage National PPO Plan, will replace the Medicare Companion Plan because as of Jan. 1, 2015, the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits will no longer offer a Medicare supplement plan. The United Healthcare plan is a custom group medical/prescription program for Greater New Jersey.

"The CBOPHB is committed to providing quality health insurance for our retirees," said conference Benefits Manager Alexa Taylor. "The Board worked diligently with its health insurance broker to provide a customized plan they anticipate will provide better coverage, with lower out-of-pocket costs to our retirees."

The United Healthcare plan provides 100 percent coverage for services provided by any doctor or any other licensed medical professional who accepts Medicare assignment, anywhere in the U.S. The provider does not have to be part of the United Healthcare network in order to receive the maximum benefit.

The conference dental plan will continue with Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ and retiree eligibility for the dental plan will remain the same.

In October, a letter was sent to everyone in the retiree plan asking to confirm personal information on file with the Social Security Administration. If this information was correct or was corrected

at that time, no further action is necessary. Participants will be enrolled in the plan electronically, with no enrollment form required.

All enrollees must have valid legal personal information including the correct legal name and an address that is NOT a post office box. This information must match what is on file with the Social Security Administration. While a P.O. Box may be used as a "Preferred Mailing Address," a P.O. Box is NOT allowed as a legal address.

Enrollment will be rejected and coverage delayed until a valid legal address is provided.

If a participant has not already reported a legal address changes, contact Ann Marie Jedlicka at our broker's office immediately at Annmarie.jedlicka@willis.com or at 1-888-676-6767 ext. 4.

To help our retirees understand this new coverage, United Healthcare representatives will present the new plan at several locations throughout the state: 10 a.m., Nov. 5 at Chatham UMC, 2 p.m. Nov. 5 at Hamilton UMC in Neptune, and 2 p.m., Nov. 6 at Haddonfield UMC.

There will also be a teleconference at 1 p.m., Nov. 7. The number to dial into the teleconference is 866-233-3842 with the participant access code of 334769. Participants in the call will have the same opportunity to ask questions as those who attend a live presentation.

United Healthcare Customer Service will answer any questions about the plan and its benefits, and can be reached at 1-877-714-0178, TTY 711, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week.

Multi-Cultural Celebration To Focus On Worship And Praise

By Judy Colorado

Team Leader, *The Ethnic Local Church Concerns Committee*

Diversity is one of the key elements of our strategic plan. To celebrate our diversity and cultural heritage, all are invited to worship and fellowship during a multi-cultural celebration sponsored by the Ethnic Local Church Concerns Committee from 4 to 7 p.m. Dec. 6, at St. John's United Methodist Church, 2000 Florence Avenue, Hazlet, N.J.

To align the focus to the conference strategic goals, Rev. Nora Colmenares, Assistant General Secretary on Mission and Evangelism of the General Board of Global Ministries, will speak on developing multi-ethnic ministries in local churches that are in transitional communities. A step by step review of the grant application process will also be highlighted in order for churches to take the opportunity to apply for next year's Ethnic Local Church Concerns grant funding.

The goal of the committee is to work alongside churches that are seeking to initiate innovative multi-ethnic ministries in response to the needs of their communities and grow vital congregations. The committee is encouraging every local church in every district to participate and have a meaningful celebration. The committee would like churches to celebrate through praise and worship together in a unique and diverse way as well and affirm our United Methodist heritage.

The celebration will include cultural entertainment and native food from all continents, nations and cultures. The committee is looking for cultural presentations for the evening. Anyone interested in sharing dance, music, or cultural presentations should contact Judy Colorado at judy@colorado.org.

Everyone is invited to share in the meal and can bring an ethnic dish to share that can feed at least 50 people. Dessert and drinks will be provided. To add color to the festivity, we encourage everyone to wear their native dress or national outfit.

It is our goal to have inclusive participation from all local churches in the conference. We hope and pray that our gathering will enhance our awareness of the rich diversity we have in our conference, not only of the many countries and nations we represent, but also of the many gifts and graces we have as United Methodists.

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**The December/January Issue
Deadline is November 10, 2014**

Top Court Affirms Rev. Frank Schaefer's Reinstatement As Clergy

By Linda Bloom

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (UMNS) - The Rev. Frank Schaefer will remain a clergyman in The United Methodist Church.

In a ruling made public Oct. 27, the denomination's top court upheld a June decision by a regional appeals committee to reinstate Schaefer's ministerial credentials, modifying the penalty imposed upon the Pennsylvania pastor after he was found guilty last November of violating church law by performing a same-sex wedding for his son in 2007.

"The Judicial Council upon careful review of the decision of the Northeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Appeals in the matter of the Rev. Frank Schaefer and the questions of law presented by the counsel for the church finds there are no errors in the application of the church law and judicial decisions," said Decision 1270. "The penalty as modified by the Committee on Appeals stands."

In its decision, Judicial Council also recognized the fact that "some within the church do not support this outcome today."

The ruling came during the Judicial Council's Oct. 22-25 fall meeting in Memphis, Tennessee, and followed an oral hearing on the case. The Rev. Christopher Fisher, who served as counsel for the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference during Schaefer's trial, appealed the decision of the committee on appeals to Judicial Council.

Penalty imposed by trial court

Fisher raised a question before the council on whether Schaefer lost the right to appeal his case by disobeying the penalty imposed on him.

During the Nov. 19, 2013, penalty phase of the trial, the full penalty imposed was an immediate 30-day suspension,

followed by a written report to and interview with the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Board of Ordained Ministry "regarding his call and his willingness to uphold the Book of Discipline in its entirety." Not being able to do so would evoke a call to surrender his credentials to the annual conference.

Schaefer's written report concluded with his commitment "to working together with my clergy colleagues, providing a ministry to all people under my care, continuing to advocate for our LGBT community within the UM Church while using proper channels toward changing the discriminatory language and provisions in our Book of Discipline."

When asked, Schaefer told the board of ordained ministry he could not uphold the Discipline in its entirety and would not voluntarily surrender his credentials. The board's chair then said Schaefer's ministerial credentials would be taken from him.

The trial court did not describe a voluntary surrender of credentials as a requirement, the Judicial Council found, nor is there any record that Schaefer "engaged in any sort of flagrant disobedience to the trial court penalty."

'Mixing and matching' penalties

The Northeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Appeals used two previous Judicial Council decisions — Decision 240 and Decision 725 — as a basis for its June 24 decision that the trial court's "compound penalty" improperly involved the "mixing and matching of penalties that are designed to be distinct." One of those was a penalty based on a future possibility rather than a past or present act.

In general, a trial court "may stipulate conditions" for ending a suspension as



The Rev. Frank Schaefer (third from right) stands with family and supporters during a prayer service for unity at Court Square Park in Memphis, Tennessee, prior to the Oct. 22 oral hearing on his case by the United Methodist Judicial Council. Schaefer was found guilty in a November 2013 church trial of performing a same-sex wedding ceremony for his son but regained his clergy credentials upon appeal.

part of the penalty of suspension, Judicial Council said.

In this case, however, the council said "the trial court combined aspects of two discrete and distinct alternatives, suspending the Rev. Schaefer for 30 days and then crafting a subsequent proceeding, in which another body, namely the Board of Ordained Ministry, was given the power to change the suspension to termination by the surrendering of his credentials, depending on what assurances the Rev. Schaefer was able to provide regarding his future conduct."

That action violated church law and was "the primary basis for changing the penalty of the trial court," the council said. The Northeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Appeals is granted the authority to do so by the Discipline if the penalty "is not higher than that affixed at the hearing or trial."

The decision acknowledges the tensions within The United Methodist Church

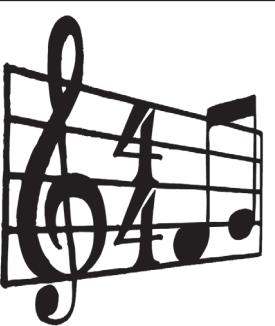
on issues related to homosexuality.

The ruling notes that some may see the appellate committee's decision as "a flagrant disregard for parts of the Discipline" and some "may have wished the trial court's penalty had been differently constructed so as to meet the requirements of the Discipline and impose a harsher penalty."

However, the Judicial Council pointed out, its task is to "review the process and decisions of the trial court and the appellate process in order to determine if any parts of the Book of Discipline were violated or were interpreted in error."

The Rev. Kabamba Kiboko, a council member, was not at the Memphis meeting. The Rev. Timothy K. Bruster, first clergy alternate, took part in the decision.

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



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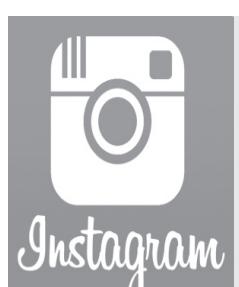
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OBITUARIES

GILBERT F. BENNETT, retired Elder of the Greater New Jersey Conference, died on October 19. A Memorial Service was held on November 1 at First United Methodist Church, Moorestown.

Messages of condolence may be sent to his daughter, Barbara Witkowski, 879 Golf View Rd., Moorestown, NJ 08057.



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