

Clergy and Lay Delegates Restore the Shore as Site for Conference Sessions

Annual Conference Moves to Wildwood

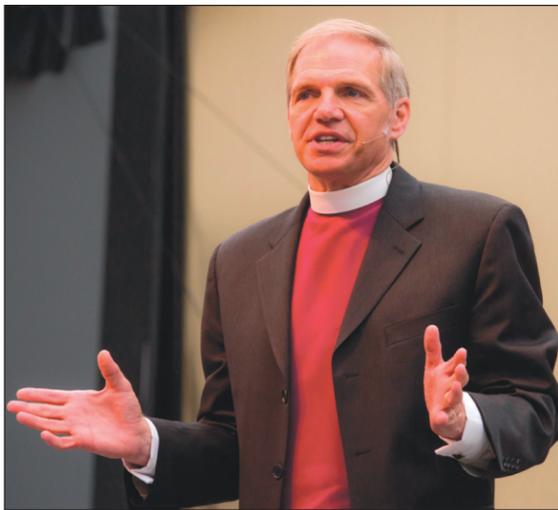
This year, the annual conference session came home to within the boundaries of the Greater New Jersey Conference. The move to the Wildwoods Convention Center in Wildwood, NJ, not only provided a venue for inspiring conferencing but also affirmed the GNJAC's commitment to providing relief and recovery to those impacted by Superstorm Sandy through the "A Future with Hope" ministry.

Vision and Mission Set

The conference adopted three pieces of legislation that will shape the future:

1. Strategic Ministry Plan.

The Strategic Ministry Plan will revitalize, grow and more effectively resource local congregations in an effort to reverse the declining attendance, baptism and membership trends in Greater New Jersey. The plan provides a roadmap to help conference ministries move from a 14% vitality rate to having 41% of GNJAC's congregations highly vital by 2018. The plan will focus on the key characteristics of highly vital congregations as outlined on the website umc.org/vital: making disciples, becoming more engaged in missions around the world, connecting with local communities, developing small groups, and strengthening leadership at all levels. Celebrating the approval of the plan, Rev. Bobbie Rambach, Co-Chair of the Strategic Ministry Task Force,



Resident Bishop John R. Schol called the 2013 Session of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference to order under the theme: *A Future with Hope*. In emphasizing the connective nature of the work of the GNJAC, the bishop remarked, "We're not looking for equal gifts, we're looking for equal sacrifice."



said: "The plan is all about resourcing congregations for mission, vitality and making disciples. We look forward to supporting the ministries that will be relevant and will transform lives in our communities and globally."

2. A Future with Hope Mission Fund Campaign.

The annual conference will raise \$12 million – an ambitious goal – to be used among 3 ministries:

- \$7 million will be used for Sandy Recovery through A Future with Hope, Inc.
- \$2 million will help eliminate deaths by malaria in Africa through support of Imagine No Malaria, and
- \$3 million will connect local churches with their communities through missions. Local churches will have the opportunity to keep 25% of all funds they raise for the



The Rev. Dr. Joy Moore energized the assembly with the call to hear the words of the prophet Isaiah in a new way; are we ready for what God has in store?

mission fund to help engage in local missions. Additional details on how churches can get involved will be provided this summer. The campaign will kick-off in the fall of 2013.

Rich Hendrickson, Co-Chair of the Campaign and Stewardship Coordinator for the Greater New Jersey Conference, looks forward to the great ministries and lives that will be changed through support of the mission fund. "I'm excited for the significant financial resources that will be made available to create life-changing ministries in our local communities, Sandy recovery and Imagine No Malaria in Africa."

3. **New Conference Center.** As local ministries and congregations grow, the conference office will need to move beyond its current capacity to a new conference center. The building will be purchased or built and will help meet

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Bishop Schol Calls Methodists to Lean into the Wind

Episcopal Address – John R. Schol, Bishop Greater New Jersey Conference ~ May 30, 2013

(The following is the text of the message shared by Bishop Schol with the lay and clergy delegates attending the annual conference sessions.)

The wind blows where it wills, you hear the sound that it makes, but you do not know where it is coming from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

When stiff winds blow, United Methodists lean into the wind with Holy Spirit power. When Superstorm Sandy blew ashore, United Methodists called forth winds of renewal with courage, determination and hope.

UNITED METHODISTS ARE LEANING IN WITH COURAGE

St. Peter's Church in Ocean City, whose ground floor was flooded and uninhabitable, along with the Lacey Church, whose community was hard hit by Sandy, began to work with others in their area, serving hundreds of people daily with bottled water, flood buckets, food, clothing and day and night shelter. The Oasis Church opened its doors and began feeding and providing clothing to thousands of people. Even in the midst of the storm, these congregations pressed on with courageous ministry

in the face of adversity.

UNITED METHODISTS ARE LEANING IN WITH DETERMINATION

Saint Paul's Church in Bay Head became the community relief station providing food, services, and supplies not only for their community, but to communities all around them. Rev. William Williams and the people of Asbury Church in Atlantic City, along with Rev. Javon Caldwell, were determined that Sandy would not define their future, so they worked with others to organize a long term recovery group and developed a plan to rebuild homes and the community.

UNITED METHODISTS ARE LEANING IN WITH HOPE

Wayne Jones and the conference relief team in the midst of providing relief have been serving as counselors and prayer partners for people who were deeply affected by Superstorm Sandy. Lou Strugala, Myrna Bethke, Aldersgate Church, Middletown Church, St. Johns Church in Hazlet have all served as chaplains and hosts to numerous volunteers who came to

the coast from across the country. Hope is being reborn through prayer, pastoral counseling and radical hospitality.

Jeremiah 29:11 tells us, "I know the plans I have for you says the Lord, plans not for your destruction but for a future with hope".

When the storms of life are raging, United Methodists lean into stiff winds with HOPE!

Today, we are living in times besieged by natural disasters and disasters of our own making. Superstorm Sandy, the Sandy Hook shooting, the Boston bombing, the Moore Oklahoma tornado, global poverty, environmental calamity, economic uncertainty, hunger – and, yes, even hopelessness.

MOVING BEYOND THE CHALLENGES WITH HOPE

We are not to turn away from the fierce oncoming winds but look beyond our present circumstances and see where God is leading us. But, when the winds are swirling all around us, how do we know which direction to lean into? We look to what the mission of our Church calls us to do – make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

God's plan for us could not be more simple, nor more crucial at this hour. We are to be a people seeking the transformation of lives and communities. And so,

- We face the growing numbers of non and nominally religious by connecting creatively with the people in our communities;
- We face the needs in our communities by increasing the vitality of our congregations;
- We face disaster with leadership and volunteers;
- We face malaria with hope and bed nets to end death;
- We face poverty and violence by moving beyond current ministry with innovative God-sized mission.

God calls us to press on to connect with the people in our communities whose hope may be shaken by the great challenges of our time. God calls us to share the good news that Jesus has made ALL of us his own! We are called to be hope for the future for such a time as this.

And there has never been a more important time for us to focus our min-

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Lean into the Wind

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istry on making new disciples, growing vital congregations and engaging in God-sized life-transforming mission. As we know, The United Methodist Church – our congregations, our conferences, and our denomination – is challenged like never before.

CHALLENGES SPECIFIC TO GNJ

I want to talk with you about some of the challenges we have. I will share some numbers and metrics with you. But before I do, I want to say a word to those who have been calling for more accountability, goals, and metrics.

Numbers without names, fruitfulness without fellowship and results without relationships are not of God. I can't be any more clear and convinced of this. We are not about numbers; we are about people - making disciples, serving the poor, welcoming and receiving people as they are.

Let me also say that names without new people, relationships without results, fellowship without fruitfulness may not be of God. It is not an either/or but a both/and proposition. We seek faith, fellowship and fruit. We want names and numbers of new disciples. We seek renewal, relationships and results.

Looking at our challenges, we may be out of balance focusing more on fellowship and relationships and not always developing the ministries that connect with new people, especially the non and nominally religious.

In the Greater New Jersey Conference, our challenges became clearer through a study of our historic trends and future projections. We found that over the last 10 years

Worship attendance declined by 20%
 Professions of faith declined by 34%
 Shared ministry collection rate declined 6%
 Baptisms declined from 3,321 to 1,882

These are discipleship trends, discipleship declines.

The Historic Trends and 2030 Projections study indicates that if we do not change what we are doing right away, by 2030 we will have only 34,770 worshipers, down 12,981 worshipers and we will have 455 congregations, down 123 congregations.

These numbers are not the problem; they are symptoms of deeper spiritual challenges we face within our conference and congregations. The Strategic Ministry Task Force through its research and listening tours over the last two years found that United Methodists have difficulty embracing new forms of worship, new technologies for communication, and new models for ministry. Because we are not embracing change or not embracing it fast enough, there is a disconnect with the growing populations of non and nominally religious people in our communities. The Strategic Ministry Task Force found that we have five challenges that call us to change.

1. The most critical challenge for us is relevancy. We are not consistently connecting with people in our communities. Many of our worshipers are different from the people in their community. When congregations do not reflect the people in their community, over time they will decline and eventually discontinue. Congregations that do not connect with a relevant and compelling ministry are not sustainable. Congregations that differ from their community in any one or more of the following ways are likely already in decline – age, class, race, culture, music, vocabulary, and use of technology. Congregations that are not connecting with the growing legions of non and nominally religious will decline.

We call pastors and lay leadership to identify the populations they are not connecting with in their community and develop relationships and ministries that capture their hearts and imaginations.

2. Our second challenge is diversity and inclusion. The Greater New Jersey Conference is one of the top five most diverse conferences in our denomination. We have reached this distinction by starting new congregations with emerging populations and growing multi-ethnic congregations. Yet, there is room to move beyond the progress we have made. Our African American, African, Asian, Hispanic, Filipino and other non Caucasian groups represents 20% of our membership, yet they are 50% of the population of the Greater New Jersey Area. Diversity goes beyond ethnicity to include people of different races, classes, theologies, ages, sexual orientation, nations, disabilities, and people new to the faith. And we need to include more people of color in the leadership of our congregations and conference. When greater diversity and inclusion is needed and people resist, God's people are to lean into the challenge of prejudice and racism with Pentecost winds of diversity and openness.

We call our congregations and conference to move beyond our present diversity, to reach a more diverse population and to increase the diversity of our leadership.

3. Our third challenge is spiritual leadership that leads congregations to become more vital. We have committed and talented clergy and laity in Greater New Jersey.

Still, shifts within our society call for a different way of leading today. The church cannot count on stability and status-quo. To meet the needs and opportunities of the rapid changes around us, we need leaders who are passionate, creative, risk taking and visionary. In our conference and congregations we need to:

- a. Call leaders with a heart for Jesus and develop them for spiritual maturity.
- b. Call passionate leaders and develop them for growing vital congregations.
- c. Call visionary leaders and develop them for leading change and resolving conflict.
- d. Call diverse leaders and develop them for cultural competence.
- e. Call younger leaders and develop congregations to support younger leaders.
- f. Call creative and innovative leaders and develop them for ministering in particular contexts.
- g. Call leaders with perseverance and develop them for fruitful ministry.

A heart for Jesus, passion, vision, creativity, desire to grow and learn, and perseverance cannot be taught.

We call the Board of Ordained Ministry and the nominations committees of the conference and our local churches to nurture, call and recruit new leaders with these qualities. We can equip them for ministry but we cannot instill these leadership qualities in new leaders. We will work with all of our present leaders to deepen your passion and creativity and support you as you grow your faith and leadership skills. When the need for new types of leadership emerges, Spirit winds guide us in new directions.

4. Our fourth challenge is the decline that many of our congregations are experiencing. Congregations are having a difficult time moving beyond their current ministry and reshaping their ministry for relevance, mission, diversity, inclusion and making new disciples. Overall, our congregations are not as vital as they once were. The report, Historic Trends and 2030 Projections forecasts that 123 of our congregations will discontinue by 2030 if we do not address congregational vitality immediately.

We call upon our superintendents, connectional ministries' team, conference leaders, clergy and lay leadership to stop investing in ministries and strategies that will not increase the vitality of our congregations.

Vital congregations are making new disciples and engaging disciples in life changing and community transforming mission. In the face of church decline, we need to stop doing the things that do not lead to vital congregations and engage in ministries that grow vitality for making new disciples and transformative mission. Yes, there will be resistance that embraces the familiar and fears change, but it is critical for the sake of the Gospel to grow vital congregations. In the face of congregational decline and resistance to change, Spirit winds melt hardened hearts and lead us to new ministries and powerful mission.

5. Our fifth challenge is to engage in mission efforts that capture the hearts and imaginations of those in our mission field, the non and nominally religious. Today more than ever, people in general, and young people in particular, want to be a part of something missionally significant. Overall, our mission efforts are too small, they are not God-sized. Repairing 300 to 500 homes of low income people is God-sized. Raising \$2 million to end deaths by malaria is God-sized. Rekindling a holy and bold mission that is worthy of God's time will take more than what we can do on our own. We need Holy Spirit fire and wisdom to reach the least and the privileged, the last and the first, the lost and the found.

We call our pastors and superintendents to envision larger, more inspiring missional efforts and to inspire disciples to engage in God-sized mission, both locally and globally. When stiff winds cloud our vision, Spirit winds are waiting to blow fresh God-sized visions.

GNJ CHURCHES MOVING BEYOND THE CHALLENGES

There are amazing examples right here in our own backyard of congregations and individual United Methodists who are leading beyond today's challenges and are leaning in with Spirit winds. They inspire us to reach beyond our challenges and become more like Christ.

WE ARE INSPIRED TO MAKE NEW DISCIPLES

Two congregations in Trenton that were close to discontinuing a few short years ago, merged together and began to reach new populations in the community. They started a breakfast ministry that invites people from the margins, the poor, the homeless, and others to dine with them on Saturday mornings. Now their congregation has more than 125 in weekly worship. This year breakfast ministries were started or further developed in Camden, Atlantic City, Pleasantville and Asbury Park.

The Clinton Church, which had two youth in confirmation several years ago, confirmed 22 new youth this past Pentecost. Their intentional ministry with youth is making new disciples. The conference also started a new Hispanic congregation through the Bound Brooke Church. Pastor Onay travelled with his family from Cuba to be the new pastor. They started an English as a second language class and are canvassing the community for new disciples. After six months, they have more than 25 in worship.

WE ARE INSPIRED BY VITAL WORSHIP

St. Mark, Hamilton Square Church has four worship services, offering a variety of worship styles at different times each week. They are attracting more than 400 worshipers by being relevant to those in their community. A senior woman from

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John R. Schol, Resident Bishop
 The Greater New Jersey Conference ~ 1001 Wickapecko Dr., Ocean, NJ 07712-4733

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FOR ADVERTISING RATES, INFORMATION and PLACEMENT
 Glenn C. Ferguson
 55 Lacey Road, Whiting, NJ 08759
 Phone (732) 350-6878 e-mail: gcf1953@gmail.com

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EDITORIAL STAFF

Glenn C. Ferguson
 Editor
 55 Lacey Road, Whiting, NJ 08759
 Phone: (732) 350-6878
 e-mail: gcf1953@gmail.com

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Capital & Cape Atlantic Districts
 Hector Burgos-Nunez
 205 Northfield Ave., Northfield, NJ 08225-1949
 Phone: (609) 484-1141
 e-mail: HectorABurgos@aol.com

Delaware Bay & Gateway South Districts
 Position Vacant

Gateway North and Raritan Valley Districts
 Glenn Ferguson
 55 Lacey Road, Whiting, NJ 08759
 Phone: (732) 350-6878
 e-mail: gcf1953@gmail.com

Northern Shore District
 Robin E. Van Cleef
 1 Mayflower Court, Whiting, NJ 08759
 (732) 350-6444
 e-mail: revrev@verizon.net

Skylands & Palisades Districts
 Jessica Stenstrom
 PO Box 115, Denville, NJ 07834-0115
 Phone: (973) 627-1041
 e-mail: dcc.youth@verizon.net

Web Address: www.UMRelay.org - Send all NEWS and PHOTOS to the staff member serving YOUR district or agency.

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Youth Group Helps Local Volunteer Fire Department Damaged by Sandy

Egg Harbor Township – Every day the Egg Harbor Township community relies on volunteer fire departments to take care of them in the event of an emergency. But on Sunday, May 19th it was the community that came to the aid of the Scullville Volunteer Fire Department.

During Hurricane Sandy, the Scullville fire hall was flooded with eighteen inches of water. Walls and floors were ruined. Fire trucks and other essential equipment were damaged. "Our hall was totally gutted," said Scullville Fire President Joshua Wilson.

Six months after the storm, the fire department isn't back to where it was, but a contribution from Asbury Church's youth group is helping them to recover. Asbury's youth group raised \$2,108 for the fire department through a spaghetti dinner.

In a ceremony on Sunday, May 19th, members of the fire department came to Asbury to thank the youth group for their work.

"It's wonderful to have community organizations that support us like this," said Wilson. "Without donations we wouldn't be able to continue to volunteer."

Conference Sessions

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the needs of supporting local congregations. The costs (both capital and operational) will not increase shared ministries because it will be more energy efficient and environmentally responsible. Rev. Lou Strugala, President of the Conference Board of Trustees, is "excited about the new possibilities of a mission and ministry center capable of serving the current and future needs and providing resources to help grow vital congregations in the Greater New Jersey Conference."

Celebrations

This Annual Conference celebrated all that God is doing through Greater New Jersey United Methodists. Participants celebrated in worship, in prayer, at meals and in plenary sessions. Among the many celebrations, three are highlighted here:

- 1. A Future with Hope, a Sandy relief and recovery ministry.** Superstorm Sandy devastated many communities along the New Jersey shoreline. More than 260,000 households and 113 churches sustained damage. In addition, five churches and seven parsonages were left uninhabitable. In the face of the storm, United Methodists joined together to provide basic human needs, comfort, shelter, and support to the affected communities. *In the last 7 months, Greater New Jersey United Methodists have:*
 - Provided relief and support for more than 80,000 people immediately after the storm,
 - Begun repair work on five homes,
 - Welcomed more than 3,000 volunteers, and,
 - Raised \$7 million toward our \$21.8 million goal.

As the conference moves into the recovery stage it is committed to repairing 300-500 homes, coordinating the efforts of 15,000-20,000 volunteers, providing case management for those affected, and raising \$21.8 million to support the ministry. Bobbie Ridgley, Director of A Future with Hope, Inc., is looking forward to the great things ahead: "It is a great opportunity for churches to connect with local communities and make a difference in the lives of people in need. I'm excited for the work ahead and to connect with our local churches."

- 2. Newly Ordained and Commissioned Celebrated.** Eight clergy and their paths to ministry were celebrated as they were ordained, seven into the Order of Elders and one into the Order of Deacons of The United Methodist Church. Rev. Shawn Callender Hogan, Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry, celebrates "that God continues to powerfully speak in our midst and that by grace, these wonderful children of God have responded. This is

a day of joy!" The service also celebrated the commissioning of six provisional clergy. God brought each one on a unique path to accept their calling into ministry: becoming a second generation pastor, celebrating a new life in a new country, serving in the military, overcoming disabilities, and serving others while being displaced personally during Superstorm Sandy. Rev. Lin Smallwood, Registrar for provisional candidates, is "thrilled to see the composition of the new candidates; the youth and diversity are a great representation of Greater New Jersey." Each of the newly ordained and commissioned possesses great leadership skills and will help build hope in and connect with local communities through their ministries.

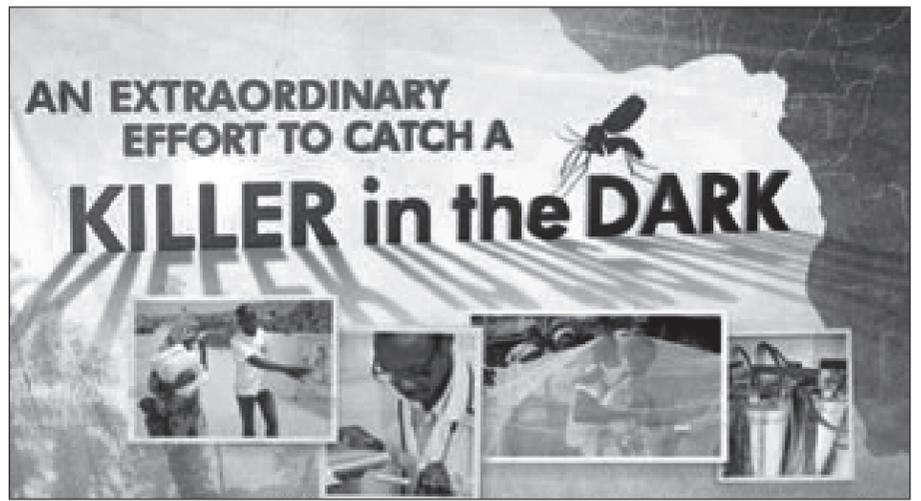
- 3. Wings of the Morning Plane Blessed by Bishop Schol.** Over the last several years, the churches of the Greater New Jersey Conference, including our church, has supported the Wings of the Morning Aviation ministry through prayer and financial contributions. Last year, the **hope** of a new plane moved **beyond** a dream to a reality when a refurbished plane was purchased to help transport **vital** supplies to remote areas of the Congo. The GNJAC raised \$250,000 for the Wings of the Morning Plane. Pilot Gaston Ntambo is overwhelmed by the generosity of Greater New Jersey and other conferences that have supported the ministry, "These are 'wings of hope' for so many. I cannot count how many lives have been saved. They're not just people – they are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, whole villages. These are people who are hopeless and helpless but they know that they can come to the United Methodists to find the hope and help they need." On Friday, Bishop Schol blessed the plane as it flew past the Wildwoods Convention Center and a crowd of cheering United Methodists. It was a special moment, to be able to experience the fruits of the churches' support for this important mission.

State of the Church Address and Leadership Report.

There were two key addresses during the annual conference session: the State of the Church Address given by Bishop Schol and the Leadership Report presented by six elected leaders. Both reports celebrated all God is doing through the Greater New Jersey Conference and identified the challenges we face.

- 1. Leadership Address.** "It's time for a courageous change." As the world is changing and the church faces a decline, it's time to step out in faith and work in new ways, allowing the Spirit to lead us **beyond** the hard times and into a future with **hope**. Projections show we will have 123 less congregations in 18 years unless we

A Killer in the Dark to Air on NBC



Each Tuesday night during this past TV season, 21.9 million people watched Pauley Perrette play Abby Sciuto, the forensic specialist on the No. 1 TV series "NCIS," as she combated formidable killers.

Her involvement in the "NCIS" storyline was key to taking down these killers. But in real life, Pauley is a United Methodist helping to take down the real Killer in the Dark — malaria. And, Pauley says, YOUR involvement is key.

Pauley narrates the updated version of the compelling documentary, "A Killer in the Dark," that will air on NBC stations through Nov. 3. Produced by United Methodist Communications in collaboration with Interfaith Broadcasting Commission, this television event features diverse voices from both the United States and Africa who work together to stop this preventable and treatable disease that claims a life every 60 seconds. First produced in 2011, this new version reflects progress, new research and scientific advancements.

Spread the word and save lives!

Thanks to your support, malaria's death rate is almost half of what it was in 2006. Let's wipe out the other half! We need your support to do it. Please contact your local NBC affiliate and request they air this lifesaving program.

To find the contact information for your local NBC affiliate and to download a sample script for emailing them, go to ImagineNoMalaria.org/killerinthedark.

Thank you!

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton
Chairperson, Global Health Initiative

make major changes. We are called to go beyond our current mission ministries and dream bigger, to be more imaginative, relational and transformative in our missional approach. The leaders indicated that the Strategic Ministry Plan, would shape the ministry of the conference. The plan will help guide us in making the necessary changes to make disciples and grow more vital congregations. Bishop Schol committed that the strategic plan would be implemented and not "sit on a shelf."

- 2. Episcopal/State of the Church Address.** Greater New Jersey United Methodists have shown great courage, determination and **hope** throughout the last year. Despite experiencing one of the most devastating storms in New Jersey history, United Methodists have pulled together to support one another and their communities. During his Episcopal Address, Bishop Schol celebrated the resilient relief and recovery efforts and highlighted some of the inspiring ministries happening in churches such as: a new Hispanic ministry, multiple second church campuses, large confirmation classes, feeding programs, ministry with the poor, growing worship services, relevant youth and young adult programs, successful small groups, and engagement in global missions. These ministries show great **leadership** by moving **beyond** the challenges we face in Greater New Jersey and toward

the goal of growing more **vital** congregations. Bishop Schol challenged the conference to reshape its ministry for strong spiritual **leadership**, relevance in our community, **mission**, diversity, inclusion and making new disciples. *(The full text of this report appears elsewhere in this edition of the Relay.)*

An Announcement you can share in your Newsletter or Bulletin:

Mighty Spirit winds were moving at the 2013 Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. The first year at the Wildwoods Convention Center proved to be a great success, with wonderful opportunities for worship, fellowship, and holy conferencing. Many hard decisions were made in order to move beyond the declining trends and begin to grow more vital congregations, including the approval of: the Strategic Ministry Plan, the building/purchasing of a new conference center, and A Future with Hope Mission Fund Campaign to begin in the Fall of 2013.

There were many moments to celebrate the ministries of Greater New Jersey as well, including new stages of ministry as seven clergy were ordained into the Order of Elders, six clergy commissioned as provisional clergy members and one as a deacon.

Throughout the Conference, Bishop John Schol challenged congregations to reshape ministry for strong spiritual leadership, relevance in our community, engagement in mission, diverse and inclusive ministries, and making new disciples.

YES, YOU ARE BEING DIGESTED!

By now, you have probably discovered the thrice-weekly GNJ Digest, your conference's electronic newsletter full of Announcements, Events, Celebrations, National News and Conference Calendar Updates. There are also special letters from the Bishop and notifications of deaths among members of the Annual Conference.

If you are not currently on our e-mail list and would like to be, please send your request to become a part of our "digested community" to communications@gnjumc.org.



Global Relay

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

Christian support in Middle East needed

BEIRUT (UMNS) — A World Council of Churches conference has issued a joint statement calling on churches and ecumenical groups to commit themselves to prayer and action to support the Christian presence and witness in the Middle East.

In the same boat ... or pup tent

BIRMINGHAM, Mich. (UMNS) — United Methodists and Boy Scouts just seem to go together, writes the Rev. Jack Harnish of First United Methodist Church. He notes that (recent) modification of Boy Scout membership rules to welcome all boys regardless of sexual orientation mirrors Methodism's commitment to be in ministry with all persons and to include openly gay and lesbian persons in our life together. And for good or for ill, their decision to restrict openly gay adults from leadership parallels our stance regarding clergy — that "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" are not eligible for ordination.

United Methodists ahead of malaria goal

NEW YORK (UMNS) — In 2008, it seemed like a daunting challenge: Raise \$75 million within seven years to end the deaths and suffering from malaria in Africa. This month, the pledge made by The United Methodist Church through its Imagine No Malaria initiative reached a June benchmark goal of \$40 million ahead of schedule.

Aviation ministry gets new wings and a prayer

DAYTON, Ohio (UMNS) — After United Methodists raised more than \$2.1 million, supporters blessed the new Wings of the Morning plane bound for medical mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The pilot, Gaston Ntambo, was trained and educated in West Ohio 20 years ago, supported in large part by Epworth United Methodist Church in Toledo and other area United Methodists.

Denomination's language guide again available online

CHICAGO (UMNS) — A United Methodist guide to the language used to describe God, first recommended for churchwide study by the 1984 General Conference, is available once again through a cooperative effort of the United Methodist Commission on the Status and Role of Women, United Methodist Women and the United Methodist Publishing House. General Conference is the denomination's top lawmaking body.

Help for improving summer attendance

WASHINGTON (UMNS) — The Lewis Center for Church Leadership at United Methodist Wesley Theological Seminary offers the "Reaching Others through Worship" DVD/CD resource. Among the tips offered are strategies and concepts for strengthening worship attendance during traditional low times, such as summer. The cost is \$75.

Archbishop of Canterbury to address British Methodists

LONDON (UMNS) — The Most Rev. Justin Welby, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, will address the annual Methodist Conference on Wednesday, July 10. It will be the first time he has addressed the conference, which this year meets at Central Hall, Westminster.

Cape Atlantic Youth Gather for Fun, Faith, and Mission at District's Lock-in



On a dark windy March evening no sleep was the objective; perhaps no sleep would be the reality, when more than 100 teenagers from quite a few youth groups, both large and small, from the Cape Atlantic District came together. They were full of energy, looking for fun, connecting in faith, ready to serve those in need and definitely excited about no sleep. Of course there were youth group leaders too who were excited, connected in faith, ready to serve those in need, but also hoping to find a place to catch a quick nap somewhere, somehow, while other leaders watched their teens.

Throughout the United Methodist churches in the southeast corner of New Jersey in the Cape Atlantic District there is youth group excitement each year when CADY (the Cape Atlantic District Youth and Young Adult

musical talents of Mr. Brian McSee of St. Paul's church in Port Republic, the host for this stop, and by the message delivered by Tug McErlane (the youth pastor at First church in Millville). "Brian had 100 teens standing up and singing praises to God. When he started 'Days of Elijah' the energy level almost blew the roof off of this 150 year old church building. Tug's message truly touched the hearts of many of the teens and we kept hearing it referenced all night long" said Pastor Dave Delaney of Central Church in Linwood.

From midnight until 2am the group took over a Bowling Alley for 'midnight bowling' with flashing lights, music, and lots of soda plus snacks to insure that the energy keeps on keeping on. More than 100 Christian teens from United Methodist youth groups having fun and being examples of Christian teens out



Ministry team) announces the annual District-wide "Lock-In" that really is not a lock-in at all. This is a must-do activity for the District's youth groups, some of whom now have young leaders who remember when they were teens going to a CADY Lock-in.

The lock-in is a progressive event that this year began at OASIS Church in Pleasantville with pizza, music, dancing and socializing. The connectional church allows young people to discover other young people alive in Christ and active in a youth group at a neighboring church. The first stop also gets the youth groups excited about their members who are participating in the Mr. and Ms. CADY competition that involves poise under pressure, talent, and other criteria that varies from year to year.

Stop number two is always the major worship phase of the evening and this year the group was wowed by the

on the town for a night! After bowling the vans headed to Central Church in Linwood for the annual CADY mission project. This year they made 350 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches which were later delivered to the homeless of Atlantic City through Sister Jean's Kitchen. Also, a wide range of activities including volleyball, dodge ball, board games, and movies, entertained the youth for the remainder of the night. The judges also reviewed their scorecards and crowned Mr. and Ms. CADY for the year. And, as the sun began to rise breakfast was served before all participants gathered in the sanctuary to share in Communion.

Every year ... teens are excited for God! Teens are ready to not sleep! Leaders are excited for God! Leaders are longing for sleep. And, every year the Cape Atlantic District brings its youth groups together "in connection" for fun, faith, and mission.



South Seaville Camp Celebrates Sesquicentennial

Join the South Seaville Camp Meeting in its celebration of its 150th anniversary beginning Sunday, July 14, through Sunday, July 28 2013.

Members of the public are welcome to join the campers during two weeks of events to honor the founders and those who have given so much of themselves to maintain the South Seaville Camp Meeting since its inception in 1863.

Many events have been planned for the celebration, including daily Bible studies, spiritual group exercise sessions, a renewal of wedding vows ceremony, hymn sings, special music performances and programs for youth through high school. A full day of women's activities is planned for July 25, featuring an arts and crafts festival, cottage tours, and shopping at the Little Acorn Shoppe. Child care will be provided for all events.

Evening services begin each night at 7:30 p.m. and will be led by various renowned pastors, including:

- Rev. Ted Osler, pastor of First United Methodist Church of Cape May Court House
- Rev. Robert Williams, general secretary of the general commission on archives and history for the United Methodist Church
- Rev. Michael Smith, pastor of the Tabernacle United Methodist Church in Erma, N.J.
- Jim Hughes, well known for bringing God's message in drama and song
- Rev. Rudy Sheptock, senior pastor of the Lighthouse Church of Cape May County
- Rev. Don Polk, senior pastor of Aldine United Methodist Church
- Rev. Dave Bailey, founder of Ranch Hope

Of special note, on July 19, an anniversary dinner will be held beginning at 5:30 p.m., followed by keynote speaker Rev. Dr. Tony Campolo. Tony Campolo is professor emeritus of sociology at Eastern University, a former faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania, and the founder and president of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education. Campolo is also one of the founders of the Red Letter Christian Movement.

For more information and a full schedule of events, visit www.southseavillecampmeeting.org

Lean into the Wind

Continued from page 2

the congregation came to one of the youth worship services where the music was pretty loud. The pastor worried what she might say. On the way out she smiled and thanked the pastor saying, "They were great...and they blew out both of my hearing aids."

The Pearl River Congregation has been becoming more relevant in worship and has now grown to the place where they are moving from a part-time to a full-time pastor this July. The Sharptown Church started a second campus congregation and are now worshipping at two sites. The second site has attracted 125 new worshippers in the past year. Kingston Church has enlivened worship with young adult leadership and has grown from 35 to 65 in worship; most of the new disciples are young adults. These are churches inspired by Spirit winds!

WE ARE INSPIRED BY NEW SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES

Hope Church, which started 20 years ago, has had a number of vibrant ministries, and none more important than their developing disciples through small groups. Cherry Hill Korean Church, which has been steadily growing has 77% of their congregations in small groups. Small groups are core to these two congregations' discipleship ministry and have helped the congregations grow to more than 500 in worship. The New Jersey Emmaus Walk ministry has been instrumental in growing disciples and engaging them in small groups. This past year, we started an Emmaus Walk for Spanish speaking disciples. These are churches inspired by Spirit winds! We are grateful for all of our congregations that are growing small group ministries.

WE ARE INSPIRED BY ENGAGING IN RISK TAKING MISSION

The conference has sponsored several trips to Haiti in the aftermath of the earthquake there and this spring the Morrow Church has led two trips to Haiti. This congregation continues to go deeper in its support of mission in its community and around the world. The Union Church almost discontinued, but new leadership helped the congregation connect with its community. Today, the church has 20 different ethnic groups and a 30 voice multi-racial, multi-cultural choir that sings at community organizations, nursing homes and medical facilities. The Galilee Church started a new computer class for seniors and recruited youth to teach the class. Intergenerational service projects are leading to new vitality. The congregation is the primary point of mission and ministry and we will be with our congregations to support them in risk-taking mission. We become like Christ when we move into the community. We thank all of our congregations that are engaged in risk-taking mission.

WE ARE INSPIRED BY GENEROUS GIVING

Our Greater New Jersey Conference congregations are rising to the challenge by generously supporting ministry in our own congregations, in the conference and the world. For the sixth year in a row you have made it possible to pay 100% of our General Church apportionments. The poor and the hungry, both physically and spiritually, from around the world thank you. You have grown the shared ministry collection rate by 2% in 2012, reversing a six year decline. We recognize these are challenging times for churches, and I pledge we will do all we can to keep funds in the local church, which is the primary place for mission and ministry. Thank you your generous giving.

Today we thank the Cape Atlantic and the Delaware Bay Districts who paid the highest percentage of their Shared Ministries. Also the Gateway South and Capital Districts had the largest percentage, over 7% increase for shared ministry. We are grateful for all of our congregations who are leading the way in generous giving.

Yes, we have challenges but we also have inspiring signs of God's resurrection power through our ministry.

NEXT STEPS

The answers to our challenges are not "quick fixes" or small changes or working harder on what we are already doing. It will require Holy Spirit transformation by the renewing of our minds and hearts as encouraged in Romans 12:1-2.

Here are key ministry actions and steps we need to take to move our ministry forward.

1. First, we will immediately work on our strategic plan, and with Holy Spirit guidance and power, use it to begin our turnaround. The proposed plan calls us to grow more vital congregations through which we will make more disciples and engage in life changing mission. I pledge to you, this plan will not sit on a shelf. In fact, in anticipation of the plan's passage, conference leadership set meetings in June and will begin working through the summer to start on the next steps outlined in the plan. Quarterly, we will communicate with you about our progress and at each annual conference we will account for our fruitfulness. With your prayers and support, and by working on each of the goals in your congregation, we will experience a renewed Wesleyan movement across Greater New Jersey. Working together on the plan, we will grow our percentage of highly vital congregations from 14% to 41%. A complete turnaround that will reverse the decline and engage the hearts and imaginations of the non and nominally religious. The wind blows where it wills, you hear the sound that it makes but you do not know where it is coming from or where it is going, so it is with everyone born of the Spirit.
2. Second, this July we will launch a new small church initiative beginning with three of our smallest congregations. Our aim is to reinvigorate discipleship and mission with a team of passionate and persevering young adult leaders. The congregations will reconnect with their communities, engage with the non and nominally religious, and grow the churches missionally. Our goal is to grow each congregation to 150 people in worship. I believe in 10 years we will have 100 congregations participating in this initiative and we will add 10,000 new worshippers over time, \$15 to \$25 million dollars for mission and ministry, 400 new disciples a year and call and equip 10 new clergy a year for pastoral, extension and mission ministry. The wind blows where it wills, you hear the sound that it makes but you do not know where it is coming from or where it is going, so it is with everyone born of the Spirit.
3. Third, over the next five years we will repair 300 to 500 homes of the poor, disabled, and elderly impacted by Superstorm Sandy. We will engage 15,000 or more volunteers and raise \$21 million, \$7 million of which we have already raised. A God-size vision for renewing our mission. Why do we do

this? When people hurt, United Methodists heal; when people lose hope, United Methodists become a future with hope; when people do not have enough, United Methodists help.

The wind blows where it wills, you hear the sound that it makes but you do not know where it is coming from or where it is going, so it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

4. Fourth, I invite you to pass and work with us on the Future with Hope Mission Fund Campaign. We seek to raise an additional \$7 million for our Sandy Relief ministry, \$2 million for Imagine No Malaria, and \$3 million for mission through our congregations in their communities. We have already raised \$1.7 million of this goal through our congregations. We will work together each step of the way to have a successful campaign through your congregation. But this is more than just money. It is about restoring hope for Superstorm battered people. It is about ending the death of children from malaria in Africa. It is about important and urgent mission right in our communities. Through this campaign we will also raise the spiritual level within our congregations. Money is important but spiritual health is essential to the well being of the mission. This is not a capital campaign, but a spiritual campaign. Therefore we will work with you to organize and implement a campaign that will grow worship attendance, involve more people in small groups, and engage more people in community mission. We will raise \$12 million dollars by God's grace and we will increase the faith of our people.

The wind blows where it wills, you hear the sound that it makes but you do not know where it is coming from or where it is going, so it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

5. Fifth, in the fall, to coincide with our Future with Hope Mission Fund Campaign, we will launch the Hope Campaign all across Greater New Jersey in collaboration with United Methodist Communications. This campaign builds on the Igniting Ministries Campaign and it will raise the visibility of our congregations in their communities. It will include mission actions and advertisements in every district. This campaign will engage thousands of people in our communities for hands-on mission service and help our communities know that when people hurt, United Methodists heal, when people are in despair, United Methodists claim a future with hope, when people don't have enough, United Methodists share, when people feel isolated, United Methodists offer open hearts, minds and doors.

The wind blows where it wills, you hear the sound that it makes but you do not know where it is coming from or where it is going, so it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

Challenging times call for big visions, bold actions and courageous disciples. This is no time to shrink behind our challenges. The journey is long and I invite you to share in the journey.

In the midst of our challenges, together, let us press on to the high calling that is before us. Let us not look back, but join together to run the race, to be the church of Jesus Christ — vital, restored, forgiven, connecting the Gospel with those at the center and the margins, those in our pews and the nonreligious in our communities. Press on for the journey is long. Hope on for the journey is long. Sing on for the journey is long. March on for the journey is long. Pray on for the journey is long.

A Great Place to Live



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METHODIST
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www.umh-nj.org

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Francis Asbury Manor
Ocean Grove, NJ
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United Methodist Homes brings quality and caring services to senior men and women of all faith traditions.

We believe these factors will make a difference to you:

1. The Fellowship Fund assures that residents will never be asked to leave due to the inability to pay the total cost of caregiving.
2. Our "aging in place" model matches professional services with the individual's needs.
3. Communities are woven into the fabric of local towns.
4. Five full service and five affordable senior housing communities appeal to all income levels.
5. Supported by an expansive network of volunteers.
6. 105 years of stability and commitment to senior wellness.

**THE JULY/AUGUST ISSUE
DEADLINE IS JUNE 17, 2013**

INDEPENDENT LIVING • RESIDENTIAL LIVING
ASSISTED LIVING • MEMORY SUPPORT • RESPITE • SHORT-TERM REHAB
SKILLED NURSING • HOSPICE

GNJAC Worship Services Continue Strong Tradition

The 2013 session of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference kicked off with a powerful and uplifting worship service through which this year's theme "A Future with Hope" was introduced. The Opening Worship showcased among other things, the diversity of the conference with Scripture read in five different languages, contemporary and traditional music, and a challenging sermon by Rev. Dr. Joy Moore, guest preacher this year, followed by Holy Communion.

During her message, which was based on Jeremiah 29:11, Dr. Moore, who is known for loving to tell stories with a theological twist, used powerful imagery to remind those present that the church indeed has a future filled with hope, but "not because of our faithfulness, given that in many ways the church has been unfaithful, but because despite that, God remains faithful", she said. In her opening remarks, Rev. Moore asked those listening, "The words of the prophet announce a big change for good, but, are we ready to embrace the good news of change in the midst of chaos and destruction?" She insisted that as disciples of Jesus Christ in the 21st century the Church needs to be clear about its role in God's mission of hope. "We are not hope. True and lasting hope only comes from God and it is the fruit of our faithfulness as disciples of Jesus Christ." Christians' role, as agents of hope, is to be faithful to God's calling to love, mercy and justice, as they speak to the world, through words and deeds, of the hope promised by God as they apply to the issues affecting the world today, such as hunger, discrimination, modern slavery, etc. Dr. Moore concluded that God's promise of Hope towards the future is "a call to faithfulness, to be different, peculiar, obedient, and promoters of the Kingdom." She added "we must be clear that the hope being offered by God is not intended for our personal and peculiar plans and/or objectives, but so that God's goodness can be fully manifested through us." In her closing remarks she invited all to be patient "as we work together to build a future with hope for our churches, communities, Annual Conference, and even our denomination. God has not forgotten us. God has not given up on us. God has a plan that is good and filled with hope."

Tribute Service

During the Tribute Service the conference remembered laity, clergy and clergy spouses who have served in the GNJ Annual Conference and have now moved on to be with the Lord since the last meeting. Those honored were celebrated for their faithful ministries in the Annual Conference. The Tribute Service preacher, Reverend Dr. Joy Moore, drawing on the biblical text from Hebrews 11:1-7, commented that "God has made amazing promises that are yet to materialize. Therefore, faith, as way of life, means living by these promises, even if we do not know how they will be fulfilled." Then, she added that "the lives of those gone before us, give us a preview through their faithful service and Christian witness of how the promises of God will look when they come." Also, the people of God celebrate the faith of these saints, according to Dr. Moore, because "through their courageous witness our faith is strengthened." Their lives also allow us to imagine what is yet to be; challenge and call us to accountability, and inspire us as we walk our own journey of faith. Just like the author of the book of Hebrews points us to those who believed, Moore added, "The lives of these men and women give us a glimpse of the beauty and richness of what heaven will look like. Through their journey of faith they showed us that God's story can indeed be our story, if

we earnestly hold on to God's promises," Rev. Moore concluded her reflection inviting all in attendance to "build a hopeful vision of the future based on God's promises and the faithful witness of those who have shown us how to actively wait for their fulfillment."

Following the sermon, there was a time of remembrance as the names of all laity, clergy spouses and clergy who had passed since the last Annual Conference were read.

Commissioning and Ordination Service

This year's Annual Conference came with many refreshing changes, including a combined Service for Commissioning and Ordination that took place on Friday night. The auditorium was full. The Spirit was at work since the very beginning during the gathering songs, and the excitement was obvious in all, especially those being commissioned and ordained. Hundreds of clergy processed along with those being ordained; the cabinet and Bishop John Schol, who was joined by bishops Alfred Johnson, Neil Irons and Felton May, all to the tune of some of the most beloved hymns in our United Methodist tradition. The ordination service featured Bishop John Schol, the GNJAC's new resident bishop since September 2012, as preacher for the occasion. During his sermon, which was both inspiring and challenging, Bishop Schol, using his peculiar and refreshing style of preaching through storytelling, invited all; ordinands, conference leaders, clergy, laity and visitors, to live their faith to its full potential and challenged all "to bring down the safety rails that we so often build along the way to avoid the natural risks of



Christine N. Day
~ Ordained to the Order of Elders ~



Cynthia Belsky Stouffer
~ Ordained to the Order of Elders ~



Kee Young Kang
~ Ordained to the Order of Elders ~



Robyne Marie Mayer
~ Ordained to the Order of Elders ~



Sandra Jean Jenkins
~ Ordained to the Order of Elders ~



Sharon Winner Burniston
~ Ordained to the Order of Elders ~



Johnathan David Campbell
~ Ordained to the Order of Elders ~



Thomas Albert Lank
~ Ordained as Deacon ~

faithful and fruitful discipleship." Addressing those being commissioned and ordained, Bishop Schol reminded them that God's miraculous acts are mysterious and that if the church is going to take part of what God is doing in the 21st century, it needs to be willing to let go of its fears and excuses, and be the servant-leaders God is calling the Church to be: vital, relevant, risk takers, and game changers. Bishop Schol also reminded them that "commissioning and ordination, is not a graduation, or the beginning of a new journey, but the continuation of a life long journey of faith that started the moment they first responded to God's call for their life."

Those commissioned as provisional elders were: Lori Beth Caulfield, Pamela Grant James, Woo Min Lee, Amarilys Gonzalez-Lopez, Jessica S. Stenstrom, and William McKinley Williams III. Thomas Albert Lank was ordained as a deacon in full connection. Those ordained to the Order of Elders were Sharon Winner Burniston, Jonathan David Campbell, Christine N. Day, Sandra Jean Jenkins, Robyne Marie Mayer, Cynthia Belsky Stouffer, and Kee Young Kang.

Further coverage of the Annual Conference sessions will appear in the July-August issue of the Relay, including the Awards and Scholarship presentations.

Commissioned as Provisional Elders



Amarilys Gonzalez-Lopez
~ Commissioned as Provisional Elder ~



Jessica S. Stenstrom
~ Commissioned as Provisional Elder ~



Lori Beth Caufield
~ Commissioned as Provisional Elder ~



Pamela Grant James
~ Commissioned as Provisional Elder ~



William M. Williams III
~ Commissioned as Provisional Elder ~



Woo Min Lee
~ Commissioned as Provisional Elder ~

Conference photos by Chris Heckert

Legislative Round-up

The clergy and laity of the GNJAC dealt with an impressive list of legislation that was brought before the assembly in Wildwood. Some were voted on with little or no comment, others elicited lengthy debate. The following is a list of the matters considered.

1. New Conference Center- The conference agreed to create a new conference office center with a budget not to exceed \$4,000,000, with most of the funds coming from a 4% loan over a 25 year term from the Conference Board of Pensions. The new center will be centrally located in the state.
 2. "A Future with Hope" mission fund resolution was approved. This creates a campaign to raise \$12,000,000; 25% will stay in the local churches, 60% will go to Sandy relief funds, and 15% will go to the "Imagine No Malaria."
 3. The report of the Nominating Committee was approved, including the creation of the Board of Directors for "A Future with Hope."
 4. Four constitutional amendments were considered and approved. They must also be approved by the rest of the denomination's body in their Annual Conference sessions before they become effective. The first added prayer to the list of things the Church will do as it seeks to build relationships with other denominations. The second amendment dealt with the dates for holding annual conference sessions. The third made a change in the title of certain persons from Lay "Speaking," to "Lay Servant" in Paragraph 32 in the Discipline. Amendment #4 dealt with the authority of Jurisdictional and Central conference to change Annual Conference numbers, names, and boundaries.
 5. The creation of the Lay Leadership Academy along with its budget of \$10,000 was approved. This will allow laity who wish to take a more active role in the local church will have the opportunity to participate in a training program created for effective leadership to be held one weekend in September of each year.
 6. The Strategic Ministry Plan Resolution focusing on "A Future with Hope-Vision, Mission, Strategy and Goals" was approved. This will begin a year-long conversation between the pastor, lay leader and church council chairperson with the support of the superintendent reviewing their congregational goals and mission strategies.
 7. The Proposed Shared Ministry Plan for 2014, aka "the budget" was approved. The total amount is \$1,443,864. Compared to 2013's figure of \$1,337,298, the budget increased by \$106,566 or 7.9%
 8. The Proposed Shared Ministry Formula Legislation was approved placing a cap on Shared Ministries from its local churches not to exceed 15% for 2014 and 2015 of their prior year assessment with no cap on decreases.
 9. The Commission on Equitable Compensation recommendations for parsonage or housing/rental allowance; accountable reimbursement expenses; vacation and housing policy were approved along with minimum salaries for full-time appointments in the local church effective January 1, 2014.
 - a. Elder and Deacon in Full Connection \$41,122
 - b. Provisional & Associate Members \$37,010
 - c. Full time Local Pastor \$34,954
 10. The Pension and Health Benefits resolution concerning 2013 Health Insurance Guidelines was approved as were other resolutions brought by the board.
 11. The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference 2014 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan submitted by the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits was approved.
 12. The resolution for the GNJAC to continue to sponsor CRSP for full-time, three-quarter time, and one-half time clergy was approved along with beginning to sponsor UMPIP for those clergy in one-quarter time appointments.
 13. A resolution to close the church in Elizabeth was approved with the exception of a portion of the resolution that was referred to The Council on Finance and Administration and Congregational Development. The referred portion had to do with the disposition of the physical property and its potential for further ministry.
 14. The Conovertown church was closed.
 15. The proposed closure of the Paterson Avenue and Madison Park-Epworth churches in Paterson were referred back to the local congregations for further consideration.
 16. The conference approved a resolution that designated the Conference Advance Specials for the year.
 17. A lengthy list of reports was approved by the consent calendar.
 18. A resolution from the Red Bank church that calls for publicizing Igniting Ministries prominently on the conference website was approved.
 19. A resolution that sought to change the formula for health insurance billing was referred to the Council on Finance and Administration and the Board of Pensions and Health Benefits.
 20. A resolution that attempted to create a method for the disposition of cemeteries of closed churches was not approved.
 21. A resolution that would re-arrange the Shared Ministry billing statement was not approved.
 22. A resolution concerning the open itinerancy and the appointment practices in predominantly Asian congregations was not approved.
 23. A resolution that called for the conference to oppose the expansion of the practice for extracting fossil fuels known as "fracking" was approved as was a related resolution that instructs the Board of Church and Society to resource congregations on the practice.
 24. A resolution on Local Church Structure and its particular tradition in Korean congregations was referred.
 25. The Mount Tabor Camp Meeting was designated as a GNJAC Historic Site in a resolution brought by the Commission on Archives and History.
- More complete information on a number of these issues can be found elsewhere in this issue of the Relay.

RELAY MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the *United Methodist Relay* is to provide print communication to the leadership and membership, clergy and lay, of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. It shall be a vehicle to tell the church's story and a forum for the exchange of ideas regarding Christian Faith and Practice.

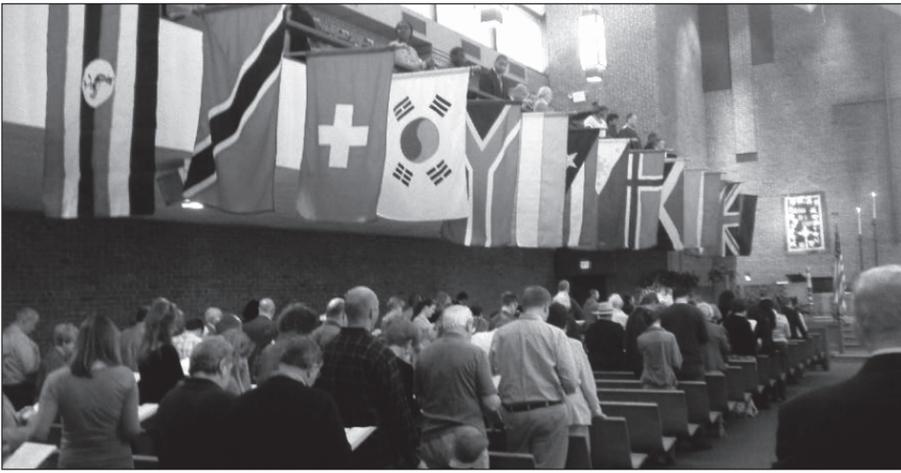
In fulfillment of this mission, its purpose is:

- to inform the readership of events and resources at local, district conference, area and denominational levels
- to promote the mission of the annual conference, the area, and the general church
- to invite discussion of and response to important and controversial key issues facing the church
- to encourage readers to grow in their commitment to diversity and inclusiveness in church and society
- to inspire readers to grow in their faith and commitment to Christ and the Church

In pursuit of this mission and purpose, we will endeavor to be:

Accurate * Informative * Interesting * Stimulating * Motivating * And sometimes, Provocative.

St. Andrew's Celebrates Diversity



The congregants of St. Andrew's, Cherry Hill, worship under the banners of the nations from which the diverse congregation originated.

This Spring, St. Andrew's, Cherry Hill, celebrated its ethnic diversity with a procession of fifteen flags, each carried by a member representing their country of origin. The flag bearers were accompanied by other members who shared the same heritage. Many wore their native dress, which added to the thrill of the occasion. Heading the procession were the American and Christian Flags. To the hymn, "We've A Story to Tell to The Nations", the procession wound through the sanctuary and then to the balcony where the flags remained during the worship service.

In her children's message, the Rev. Dr. Gina Hendrickson, said that we are all united under one flag, the Christian

flag. Each child then received their own miniature Christian flag.

Following the service, the celebration continued with a reception featuring foods from the countries represented. Everyone enjoyed sampling the ethnic delicacies and conversations, learning more about their country.

The celebration provided a moving experience that enriched the lives of all who attended.

The flags will continue to grace the narthex, as they have in the past, representing the congregation's diversity and serving as a symbol of welcome to all. For more information on St. Andrew's ministry, visit online at www.saumc-ch.org.

Bible Study Leader Invites Conference Attendees to be Agents for Creative Change

One change found at the 2013 session of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference was that Bible Study happened right in the midst of the plenary sessions instead of during an optional breakfast. Rev. Karoline M. Lewis talked to conference leaders about what it means to have hope in the church on Friday and Saturday mornings; looking at two biblical characters, the Samaritan woman at the well and Peter. Lewis joined the Luther Seminary faculty in 2007 and holds the Alvin N. Rogness Chair of Homiletics.

"How do you have a future with hope?" she asked leaders. She said that it starts with believing Jesus has hope in us, hope in us to be an active agent in creating God's kingdom.

Lewis said Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at well, found in John 4, shows what it means to have hope and that Jesus has hope in her. She said that there are qualities in the Samaritan woman that allows Jesus to have hope in her. Jesus sees potential for her being a part of creating the kingdom of God and that she has persistence because there is intentionality in hope. Lewis said Jesus also sees possibility in her that she doesn't even see in herself. She said that because of these qualities Jesus empowers her in ministry to come alongside him.

Lewis said that this is a story of boundary crossing. For many reasons Jesus and the Samaritan woman should not have been alone at the well, but the woman goes from seeing "Jesus as a thirsty Jew with no manners to someone who has something she needs," said Lewis. She pointed out that not only did Jesus see possibility in the Samaritan woman, but she saw possibility in him as well. She sees that Jesus can be the source of living water.

The main theological issue that separated Jews from Samaritans was "where do you worship?" said Lewis. "It's not about what church to go to, but where is God." She said that by Jesus replying to the woman "I am", Jesus is both revealing who he is to her, but also making the point that God is right in front of you.

"Jesus goes to the deepest place of the woman's pain. Jesus sees it, names it." Jesus has hope in her to change her identity from an outsider who has been shamed by her community to a witness.

When the woman returns to her community to invite them to come and see Jesus, she leaves her water jar, leaving behind her past and her baggage.

Saturday morning, Lewis focused her attention on John 21 and the miraculous fishing story. Lewis said in catching 153 fish, God's promise of abundance for us is revealed as we lead up to a conversation between Jesus & Peter about what it means to be a disciple. She said that in John 1 after verse 18, the word grace is never again used in the entire Gospel. "Once the word that is Jesus becomes flesh, the rest of the story shows us what grace looks like, feels like, tastes like, smells like, sounds like," she said. "It creates experiences of abundant grace." Lewis said abundant grace is what we saw yesterday with the woman at the well who receives this gift of Jesus who is the living water gushing to eternal life that never goes dry. "I want us to imagine that every time we have Communion, Jesus is saying 'come and have breakfast' just like he did with the disciples on the shores after they caught the 153 fish."

Lewis spent some time focusing on Jesus' conversation with Simon Peter when he asked "Do you love me?" three separate times. When he replies that he does Jesus said to him, "feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep". "What does love look like in the world?," challenged Lewis.

Jesus had hope in his friends. "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends," said Lewis. "Jesus is no longer their master; he is their FRIEND so they understand what he needs them to show the world."

Lewis said that what Jesus is asking of all of us is to take a risk to trust that "the Word became flesh" cannot be just words on a page. "They can't just be stories on a page that we read about Jesus," she said. "To trust and to be a disciple is not just to read the words – it is to live them, embody them and create these experiences of Jesus' grace of god's love for the world. That's what makes it possible to have a future with hope."

Lewis' final words of the two day study were, "To believe that Jesus has hope in you to be his hope for the world. You see these in both the woman at the well and with Peter. To actually be the 'I Am' in the world."

Stewardship Stories

By Rich Hendrickson
Coordinator of Stewardship Education
and Development, GNJAC



Mission Fund Campaign FAQ's

- 1. What is the timeline for the Mission Fund Campaign?**
The campaign is designed to be accomplished over a four week span during the fall of 2013. If you already run a fall stewardship campaign we hope that you will run the Mission Fund Campaign simultaneously.
- 2. How will this campaign interface with our local church stewardship campaign?**
We anticipate that this campaign would either become your fall stewardship campaign or would become part of your already planned annual campaign. We will be providing local churches with commitment cards that will have space to make commitments to both the local church and the Mission Fund Campaign.
- 3. Won't this campaign hurt giving to the local church?**
Just the opposite! The evidence shows that when people are excited about what they're giving to and when they feel a part of mission and ministry that is making a difference in people's lives they become more generous. This Mission Fund Campaign will bring in causes for people to give to and be excited about. The primary focus of the campaign is designed to help the local church identify local missions for people to be excited about.
- 4. What kind of resources will we receive from the Annual Conference in order to carry out the campaign?**
The Annual Conference will be providing promotional materials describing the campaign, including the timeline for the campaign, copies of "Three Simple Questions" to be used as a devotional by each congregation, a four-week Bible study, and four-week preaching series that corresponds to "The Three Simple Questions," and commitment cards. The other resource that we'll be supplying is Mission Campaign consultants that will help congregations with the campaign and identify how the 25% that stays with the local church might be used.
- 5. We're raising money for three different areas of focus: Sandy Relief, Imagine No Malaria, and Congregational Development. How will the money be distributed?**
When people give to the Mission Fund Campaign through their local church 25% stays in their local church, 58.3% goes to Sandy Relief, and 16.7% goes to Imagine No Malaria. So if a church collects a thousand dollars for the Mission Fund \$250 stays in the church and they would send a check to Conference for \$750 which would then be split by percentage for Sandy and Imagine No Malaria.
- 6. Is there a set dollar amount that each local church is expected to raise?**
No. Our hope is that every church will participate but there is no set amount of money that the local church is expected to come up with. The theology that we're working from is "equal sacrifice, not equal giving."
- 7. What if our church is just beginning a capital campaign, are in the middle of one, or just finishing one?**
We will work with you. We don't expect that you would run this campaign on top of your stewardship campaign, and a capital campaign. You might be willing however, to participate in the campaign by taking two special offerings per year for the three years. The promotional materials will include some fundraising ideas.
- 8. Will the resources be available in languages other than English?**
Yes. We will provide the promotional materials, Bible study, and preaching series in both Spanish and Korean. We have also been given permission by the publisher to translate "The Three Simple Questions" into both Korean and Spanish as well.
- 9. Our church has already sent money in for Sandy Relief and Imagine No Malaria/Nothing But Nets. Will we get credit for that?**
Yes. Any monies already sent in for either Sandy Relief or Imagine No Malaria, including Nothing But Nets will all go towards our campaign goals. For example, our goals for Imagine No Malaria is 2 million dollars. We've already raised \$250,000 so we only have 1.75 million left to raise!
- 10. Do you make out the checks to A Future with Hope, Inc. or to the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference?**
Payment should be made to the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference with "Mission Fund Campaign" in the memo. Although some of the monies raised will be going to Sandy Relief the Mission Fund Campaign is the work of the Annual Conference.



ALDRSGATE CENTER LOOKING FOR SUMMER STAFF

The Aldersgate Center, GNJAC's 400 acre camp in the Skylands of Northern New Jersey, is looking for counselors/program staff, lifeguards, kitchen staff, and maintenance assistants for the 2013 Summer Camp season.

Available residential positions include counselors/program staff, lifeguards, and kitchen and maintenance assistants. Applicants should be 18 or older, no experience required.

For more information and an application, email Assistant Director Jestie Higgins at jhiggins@gnjumc.org.

There are also openings in the kitchen for experienced cooks and food service personnel.

Can't spend a whole summer at camp? Aldersgate is looking for volunteer counselors too. A week of service earns you a voucher to send a child to camp!

For more information on Kitchen and Volunteer positions, email Director Walt Baker at wbaker@gnjumc.org.

You can also call the camp office at: 973-383-5978 for more information.

EDITORIAL

Gently Down the Stream

By Robin E. Van Cleef

How great is technology! So I thought as I contemplated the 2013 session of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. It would be great to be able to attend in the flesh, observing the new site in Wildwood, breathing in the brisk salt air, schmoozing again with old friends and colleagues, joining in rousing choruses of Wesleyan hymns, and witnessing first hand our new bishop in his inaugural conference in our midst.

But such thoughts were unrealistic this year. Advancing age, diminishing energy, depleted mobility and several medical appointments paralleling the three day agenda made actual attendance a virtual impossibility. What then? Virtual attendance! Via the streaming of the proceedings on the internet. What a wonderful alternative! Or so I hoped.

In addition to the streaming option, other communication avenues were offered: The marvels of social media – Facebook and Twitter – and the promise of interactive participation both within the hall and among viewers at home; Youtube with its user-generated videos and Flickr with its host of shared images. All of these seemed so alluring, but my octogenarian paranoia threw up a roadblock to entrance via these interchanges on the information superhighway.

But the streaming option seemed to be the best way to go, safe and easy and officially sanctioned and sponsored by the powers that be. How thoughtful to provide this option!

And so it was that on Thursday morning, May 29, at 10:55 a.m. I sat down at my computer and clicked on to the GNJAC website. My pulse quickened as I saw the image of our bishop. I clicked on the blue line beneath the picture, promising me a continuous flow of conference proceedings. A black rectangle replaced the bishop's image. In the center, a little circle spun around, promising great things to come. A minute went by, then two, three, five. Still no stream. Then a little pale blue box appeared with a message: "Streaming not yet begun. Check back later."

I checked back later. Five minutes later. Ten minutes later. At around 11:20 streaming had indeed begun and there was a woman on screen apparently giving a speech or a sermon. I assumed her to be Joy J. Moore, conference preacher and Fuller Seminary professor. My assumption, though correct, could not be confirmed for the sound was not operating. Moreover, the picture was subject to frequent freezes, creating an annoying, jerky stop-and-go effect.

I thought perhaps the problem lay not in Wildwood but in my modest computer. Perhaps other viewers across the conference were watching the proceedings without impediment. I decided to throw aside my paranoia and check what others were saying. I checked the Twitter feed. There were apparently many tweets – more than you would find in an aviary. Most of them had exotic identifying markers, and some of them seemed to be having the same troubles I was experiencing. "No sound." "Picture, but no sound."

Then one tweeter called *GNJAC 13* interrupted its running recital of one liners from Ms. Moore's message in order to issue an apology for the mute stream, and a promise of improved performance as the conference proceeded.

GNJAC13 was as good as her or his word. When the afternoon session opened the picture flow was smooth and as Bishop Schol launched into his State of the Church address, the sound was virtually faultless. By some miracle of grace, the bishop's message came through loud and clear.

The bishop is a skillful communicator. He began by quoting Jesus in his conversation with Nicodemus: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going." Relating this to the winds of Superstorm Sandy, he hurled words of encouragement and challenge to his listeners.

"When stiff winds blow," he said, "United Methodists lean into the wind with Holy Spirit power. When Superstorm Sandy blew ashore, United Methodists called forth winds of renewal with courage, determination and hope."

As I watched at home, he laid out his vision of a Future with Hope. "Challenging times call for big visions, bold actions and courageous disciples," he continued. "This is no time to shrink behind our challenges. The journey is long"

Following his address in which he outlined his hopes and dreams for the conference, he introduced a host of persons associated with Superstorm Sandy – pastors and laity impacted by the tempest and first responders.

And then the miracle ended. The stream once again became murky and stagnant; the picture on the screen froze and the sound once again became fragmentary and unintelligible. As the conference launched into its legislative session, this home viewer had not the slightest notion of what was going on. After a time I simply gave up.

Frequently through the day Friday I returned to the GNJAC website and tried again, only to be greeted on each occasion by disappointment. As the afternoon wore on I gave up entirely. Perhaps the remote transmission of the conference's final hours went off without a hitch. I do not know. I didn't try.

I share my sad story with you not to carp or criticize. I have nothing but admiration for our dedicated technicians who devote their time, energy and skill to the task of telling the church's story. And the hour-long glimpse of lucid transmission during the bishop's presentation shows clearly the potential that electronic communication holds for the future. So I look to the future with hope, confident that at annual conferences to come the stream will be clear and will run smoothly. Meanwhile I plan to rearrange my appointment schedule, overlook the aches and pains of advancing years, and make every effort to attend next year's session, singing those Wesleyan hymns, schmoozing with friends and colleagues, and viewing first hand the bishop and the conference, doing the church's business.

There's nothing like being on site. As I say, Technology is great. When it works.

A Word about AC Technology

On behalf of the video team, I want to offer a word of apology and explanation to everyone who experienced difficulty with the live stream during annual conference. For the most part, our streaming issues were caused by outages in the internet connection to the Wildwood Convention Center. While our partner, Good News TV, did everything possible to keep the stream live - including using a 4G cellular connection at one point - we did suffer significant downtime. We recognize that there were other problems too, including audio failures and a lack of connectivity on some mobile devices. Our entire team takes pride in this ministry and it is very important to us that our end product is useful and reliable. For those in the hall, we are also working on solutions to the lack of visibility of the screens - we know that this was another significant source of frustration. We will do everything possible to remedy all these issues for 2014.

Rev. Joe Monahan
Chair, Communications Committee

The Pennington School Celebrates 175th Anniversary



(from left) Former New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean, Head of School Stephanie G. Townsend, Dean of Students Chad Bridges, and Chair of the Board of Trustees Peter J. Tucci.

PENNINGTON, NJ — May — The Pennington School kicked off the celebration of its 175th anniversary on Saturday, May 18, with a day of festivities for alumni and current families, highlighted by a keynote address by former New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean. Kean's address was followed by a symposium led by several notable alumni speakers, including former U.S. Senator Rudy Boschwitz, Class of 1947, and Emmy-winning playwright William Mastrosimone, Class of 1966.

After an introduction by Head of School Stephanie G. Townsend, Kean, who is also the former president of Drew University, spoke to the audience about the value of education as exemplified by The Pennington School. He pointed out that his own training was as a teacher of history and "that was all that I ever wanted to be." In his inspiring talk, he made frequent references to the School's long history of excellence in education, as well as to many current events at the School.

After his address, Kean answered questions from students about politics, education, and one of his former students: Pennington's own dean of students, Chad Bridges, who studied state politics in a course Kean taught at Drew. Bridges was instrumental in arranging Kean's coming to Pennington on Saturday. Kean was presented with special gifts from middle school students and from Penny Townsend.

Following the morning symposium, an all-School luncheon was held under an enormous white tent on historic O'Hanlon Green. Board of Trustees Chair Peter J. Tucci, Class of 1979, presented the Order of the Tower, the School's highest award, to two distinguished alumni: John Biddiscombe, Class of 1963, and Georgia Manukas, Class of 1985. Biddiscombe is the former director of athletics at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn., and an active member of NCAA governance. Manukas, a Robbinsville native, is a producer and director of television programs for various networks including National Geographic, A & E, and PBS. Both were also symposium speakers during the morning events.

Alumni from all over the country returned to join current students and their families in the celebration on campus, which combined the anniversary with the annual Alumni Day. A moving memorial service for members of the School community began the day at Pennington Methodist Church. The Silva Gallery of Art brimmed with work by current students during a special reception right after lunch. The afternoon brought traditional student-versus-alumni games in soccer, lacrosse, softball, baseball and water polo as well as a Shakespearian performance by members of the senior class, a music jam involving alumni and students, and a tribute to this year's swim team and new School record holders. There was also a special reception just for alumni. The day's events culminated in a barbecue with music back under the tent, and a special laser light show.

The Pennington School, founded in 1838, is celebrating its 175th anniversary. It is an independent coeducational school for students in grades 6 through 12, in both day and boarding programs. The curriculum is college preparatory, with an emphasis on fostering the development of the whole student through academics, athletics, community service, and the creative and performing arts.



The Pennington School Class of 1963 gathered for its 50th Reunion.

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Relay Archives & Relay Reflections.

2013 Annual Conference Leadership Report

(This report replaces the District Superintendents' and Lay Leader's reports that were given formerly as separate items.)

The wind blows where it wills, you hear the sound that it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with every-one born of the Spirit. — John 3:8

We cannot see the wind, but we can see its impact. John 3:8 tells us that although we cannot always see the Spirit of God, when we trust in that Spirit, God works through us. God is at work throughout the Greater New Jersey Conference, through the many individuals, ministries and missions that we heard about yesterday.

In the midst of stiff winds, we have leaned into our challenges, reaching toward a future with hope. Yesterday we identified five challenges we face and the Spirit's call to action.

1. **Relevancy.** Recent trends and individual accounts tell us that our ministries and methods of communicating the Gospel are not connecting with non and nominally religious people.

We are called to go **beyond** present ministry and connect with the needs and gifts of non and nominally religious people in our communities through relevant messages and ministry.

2. **Diversity and inclusion.** While we celebrate that we are one of the most diverse conferences in the denomination, we can do better in reaching the diverse people in our communities.

We are called to go **beyond** our present diversity to connect with immigrants, younger generations, people of different economic classes and people who have different tastes in music and worship styles. We are also called to empower and include greater diversity in our conference leadership and congregational leadership.

3. **Leadership.** Vital ministry in today's ever changing world requires an imaginative spirit, the ability to take risks, innovate and be creative in order to meet emerging challenges and opportunities.

We are called to reach **beyond** our leadership capacity to increase the passion, vision, perseverance, creativity, innovation and risk taking within our lay and clergy leadership. We are also called to intentionally recruit even more leaders with these qualities to serve in transformational ways.

4. **Church Vitality.** Throughout our conference, many of our congregations continue to decline, discontinue, or have difficulty sustaining vital ministry.

We are called to move **beyond** present congregational experiences and grow vital congregations.

5. **Mission/outreach.** We recognize that our vision for mission and outreach does not capture the hearts and imaginations of non and nominally religious people, who want to be in service and make a difference.

We are called to go **beyond** our current mission ministries and dream bigger, to be more imaginative, relational and transformative in our missional approach.

In the face of these challenges, God is calling us to be the body of Christ.

No one is casting blame for the immense challenges we are facing. In fact, much of the Church is facing similar challenges and decline. The fact is that the world is changing - culture, conditions and means of communication.

We know you are working hard. To-

day we invite you **not** to work harder but work in new ways. Let us **not** be critical of ourselves or others around us. Let us instead be prayerful and supportive of one another and pray for each other, as we each face the same challenges together. Let us also step out in faith together into the Spirit winds that will lead us onward.

In our report, we will journey deeper with you into five key aspects of our life together:

- Our strategic ministry plan and its call to develop more vital congregations,
- Our Sandy Relief and Recovery Ministry,
- Our financial ministry,
- Our faith sharing ministry, and
- Our Future with Hope Mission Campaign.

The Strategic Ministry Plan

We are grateful to the strategic ministry plan task force. For two years they worked together to solicit input and put forth a bold vision, goals and plan to help us address our pressing challenges and to spread the Gospel throughout the region. They have engaged more than 800 people in this planning effort which included listening sessions across the conference, an online survey and conversations with conference leaders.

Don't get lost in the plan's 13 pages. In it you will find a compelling call to turnaround our annual conference. Some may ask, is there a need for a turnaround? Aren't we already healthy and a leader in the denomination? Yes, there is life changing ministry happening through our congregations and we are a leader in diversity, paying our general church apportionments and making professions of faith. But we also have challenges that are affecting our ministry to make disciples and transform communities that demand action and renewed vision.

We have lost 20% of our worshipers in the last 10 years and if we do not do something right away, projections show we will have 123 less congregations in 18 years. Our membership and our buildings are aging. We are making 34% fewer new disciples than we were 10 years ago.

Behind the numbers - The *Historic Trends and Strategic Projections Study* helped us to see something we were missing. This study helped us to see that the majority of our losses were in the congregations averaging between 125 and 300 people in worship weekly. These congregations lost more than 10,000 worshipers primarily in the last 10 years.

We currently have 73 congregations that have between 125 to 300 people in worship each week. This is about half of what we once had. We have another 20 congregations with more than 300 people in worship each week, for a total of 93 churches worshipping with more than 125 disciples weekly. These churches are only 16 % of our 580 congregations and yet they make up more than 50% of our worshipers and more than 60% of our shared ministry giving. You can see that churches with more than 125 people in worship are significant to the health and sustainability of the Greater New Jersey Conference.

All of our congregations are important to our mission and all of our congregations are valued for their ministry and witness in their community, but we cannot continue to lose 10,000 worshipers every 10 years and expect to support churches with equitable compensation, start new congregations, engage in vital urban ministry, support children and youth ministry, pay retiree health benefits, and support mission in Greater New Jersey and around the world. That is why this plan is so important. These ministries are about people and how we impact their lives.

Enacting this plan will help us grow our vitality.

Through a core group of leaders and their vision, we are committing to grow 100 of our smaller churches to have 150 people in worship each week. Healthy, vital congregations are essential for our mission.

In the strategic ministry plan, we are called to grow vital congregations from the current rate of 14% to our goal of 41% by 2018 - a complete turnaround and a path toward a sustainable mission. Here are the five key areas to focus on in the plan:

1. First, the plan calls for a complete turnaround from 14% to 41% vital congregations by 2018
2. Second, the plan says that the first priority of the conference is to resource willing congregations to help grow their vitality. We will not require participation. Vital congregations grow best when they want to participate.
3. Third, the plan says we will grow vitality by equipping spiritual leaders and congregations for faith sharing, creating worship experiences that connect with people in the community, ministering in small groups, engaging disciples in community justice and mercy ministry, and encouraging generous giving.
4. Fourth, the plan invites congregations to discuss Gospel questions that lead congregations toward faithful and relevant ministry.
5. And fifth, the plan seeks to help our congregations become younger, more diverse, and connect with the non and nominally religious in their communities.

Nothing fancy in this plan, no magical solutions. Instead, the plan focuses on the basic reason the church was formed, to be the body of Christ in the world. Your support of this plan will build on the fruitful ministry already being done in our congregations and help us move beyond our present challenges to *A Future with Hope*.

The wind blows where it wills, you hear the sound that it makes, but you do not know where it is coming from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

Our Sandy Relief and Recovery Ministry

Superstorm Sandy was like no other storm this area has experienced. One million, seven hundred thousand homes lost power. More than 260,000 households sustained damage. One hundred and thirteen churches were damaged and five churches and seven parsonages were left uninhabitable. Thousands of people were left homeless and our economy has been impacted for years to come.

United Methodists responded with passion and compassion. Our people met immediate human needs following the disaster and we set ambitious goals. Our goals included:

1. Distribute 10,000 cleaning buckets to clean flooded homes. **Exceeded!** We gave out more than 11,000 cleaning buckets
2. Distribute 1,000 health kits to families. **Exceeded!** We gave out more than 3,000 health kits
3. Provide day and night shelter for 3,000 people. **Exceeded!** We provided day and night shelter to more than 5,000 people.
4. Distribute food, clothing and basic supplies to 10,000 people. **Exceeded!** We helped more than 80,000 people.

All of this was done by more than 3,300 lay and clergy volunteers from around the conference who gave more than 58,000 hours of labor during our relief ministry.

We are now moving beyond relief to work on the following goals for recovery:

1. Provide counseling for 500 individuals and families impacted by the storm.
2. Repair 300-500 homes damaged by Superstorm Sandy, focusing on the elderly, low income families and those with disabilities, particularly when there are insufficient resources to complete repairs. Repairs have started on six homes.
3. Recruit, train, house, feed and coordinate 15,000 - 20,000 volunteers. Al Smeilus and his team from Myrtle Grove Presbyterian Church in North Carolina were here two weeks ago. Al shared with us: *The pre-trip communication was outstanding, we felt right at home the minute we walked into Aldersgate UMC. We came expecting to be focused on the construction work but left knowing it was about so much more, we became one with the families and the people of New Jersey.*
4. Provide case management for 500 households to help people access the necessary resources and information to repair their homes. We have begun our case management ministry.
5. Raise \$21.8 million. By God's grace and your and other's generosity, we have already raised more than \$7.5 million. Praise God!

With God's help and through your and others generosity we will exceed our goals.

Let us say a word about those we are serving. Sure, there are very wealthy people who live along the coast. Yes, there are a number of second homes that have been impacted by Superstorm Sandy. But, did you know that 40% of those impacted by the storm according to HUD and FEMA are low income people?

Superstorms do not discriminate. The rich and the poor were all devastated. The 300 to 500 homes we will repair through our ministry, will be the homes of the low income, the elderly and the disabled. John Wesley called us to be a people for all people but to particularly minister to the most vulnerable among us.

Some have wondered why we started a nonprofit corporation called A Future with Hope. Some have asked, isn't this the work of UMCOR, United Methodist Committee on Relief? We want to dispel a couple of myths in the hope that you will communicate with your congregation what we are doing and why. UMCOR is a gift of the United Methodist Church. They are recognized as a leader around the world. But did you know that UMCOR has three paid staff to handle all disasters in the United States? Yes, that is right, three staff people.

We are UMCOR. Together with the guidance of these three staff people, we organized an amazing response that has touched the lives of more than 80,000 people. We have been swept by Spirit winds.

UMCOR has been an amazing resource for us. They have provided consultation and raised \$3.8 million dollars for our efforts. By God's grace, we have organized a 3-5 year recovery ministry that is a God-sized vision. We started A Future with Hope because it is helping us to raise funds from a variety of sources and it protects the conference as we engage in risk taking ministry.

But, A Future with Hope is a long term strategy that will help us to raise money and mobilize people not only for the disaster ministry but also for our urban ministry, our ministry with the poor, our ministry with immigrant

Continued on page 11

Leadership Report Continued from page 10

populations, and our justice ministry. As we engage with our disaster ministry, we will move toward a comprehensive mission ministry with a God-sized vision that will move us beyond the present needs.

We are also concerned about our congregations and pastoral families. We have made more than \$900,000 in grants to our congregations and pastoral families affected by the storm to repair and rebuild not only bricks and mortar but ministry. Your contributions and the contributions from United Methodists from around the world are making a difference. Most recently we have received gifts from the Philippines and the Congo as well as a \$500,000 from our sister conferences in the Northeastern Jurisdiction. Volunteers have come from all across the United States and from the Congo. God is good. We invite your prayers and support as we make a difference in the lives of people and communities.

The wind blows where it wills, you hear the sound that it makes, but you do not know where it is coming from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

Financial Ministry

We have a number of churches that are struggling. The decline in our worship attendance and the recent recession has impacted a number of our churches. We have sought to be faithful with you by being good stewards of the resources you give through shared ministries. In spite of the challenges our churches are facing, as you heard yesterday our congregations gave \$384,110 more dollars to shared ministry in 2012 which is a 2% increase in our collection rate. This reverses a six year trend in which the collection rate declined by more than 6%. We are grateful for the generosity of our congregations.

Today we present to you the 2014 shared ministry budget of \$12.8 million. This is an increase in the apportionment budget of 2.8%.

In 2013 and 2014 we will work with our churches to increase the collection rate 2% each year so that by the end of 2014 our collection rate is at the 2005 level of 85%. This will enable us to provide more resources to grow vital congregations and keep apportionment increases to a minimum.

Among the highlights in the budget are:

1. 3% salary increase.
2. \$10.4 million for mission and ministry
3. 24% of our budget is for general church apportionments.

4. 22% is for retiree health benefits.
5. \$211,625 for youth and young adult ministry.
6. \$886,674 for clergy recruitment and lay and clergy development.
7. \$363,000 will be granted from the Harvest Mission Fund for congregational development. This is a fund from the sale of church properties that creates a legacy in which our discontinued churches assist with starting new churches and grow vital churches. While this is not included in our apportionment budget, we felt it was important enough to share with you.
8. There will be no increase to the cost of our annual conference session in 2014 because of our new location.

Also in 2014, there will not be an increase in health benefit costs to local churches. We hope this relief during 2014 will strengthen your resources for ministry.

Over the next several years we will have important financial decisions to make. We will need to decide how we will invest in vital congregations, grow our smaller congregations, start new congregations, and invest in urban ministries and ministries with the poor, all to make disciples of Jesus Christ and engage in community mission. At the same time we will keep financial increases at an appropriate rate. Going forward we will make financial decisions based on the five questions outlined in the strategic plan:

1. First, Is this Holy Spirit inspired, to lead to transformed lives, communities and congregations?
2. Second, will this help us grow/maximize more highly vital congregations?
3. Third, will this ignite innovation in our congregations/conference?
4. Fourth, will this help us call and recruit the types of leaders we seek - leaders with a heart for Jesus, passion, vision, diversity, younger, creative, and a spirit of perseverance?
5. And fifth, will this help us grow younger and more diverse?

Because resources are limited and to keep faith with our disciples who give generously through shared ministry, we will use these five questions when allocating resources in the future. We believe this will help us follow the Spirit's leading and reignite a Wesleyan movement across the conference. We will invest in initiatives that move 100 of our congregations to more than 150 worshipers weekly, start new congregations, particularly among immigrant

communities that become self-sustaining and have more than 150 people in worship weekly, and launch mission initiatives that become self-sustaining over time.

God did not call us to this place for a future of desolation. We will use our budget to invest in mission and ministries that lead us to a future with hope.

Faith Sharing Ministry

Did you know that in the late 1800's and early 1900's, Methodism was the fastest growing denomination in the world? Here in the United States, we outpaced population growth. We attracted a growing US population because we engaged in ministries with new immigrants, used small groups to form and deepen faith, and were evangelistic. United Methodists shared their faith and promoted their congregation's ministry with the people in their communities.

Our success may have led to complacency, losing our zeal for sharing our faith and introducing people to our churches. We want to rekindle the urgency and ministries that will help our congregations share their faith.

One of the ministries to help us with our faith sharing and to achieve our goals, is an exciting partnership. Over the next three years, United Methodist Communications has agreed to partner with us to provide marketing, advertising and communications support in each of our nine districts to help us draw attention to galvanizing outreach events that focus on the mission of the church. This partnership will include volunteer coordination support, event planning tools, training and \$200,000 for marketing and advertising. This collaboration will help us achieve our goals of engaging with the community and inviting volunteers from outside the church.

Over the past four years since United Methodist Communications started supporting outreach events with advertising and marketing, thousands of churches have participated and the result has been that hundreds of thousands of people have been encouraged to "Rethink Church" often with very exciting results.

In addition to the partnership to promote the rebuilding efforts, United Methodist Communications will be working with us to help us achieve our goals in the effort to Imagine No Malaria. To this end, they have already committed \$40,000 toward the cost of a field coordinator to work with the Greater New Jersey conference.

This is an opportunity for GNJ to demonstrate what God will do through us and demonstrate that a God-sized vision can be reached with GNJ disciples with God-sized hearts.

We invite you to take a moment during conference to visit the United Methodist Communications booth and find out more about how we will partner together and how your congregation can

take advantage of this opportunity and the many resources available.

Future with Hope Mission Fund Campaign

At this moment, children continue to die needlessly as a result of malaria. People are displaced and homeless from Superstorm Sandy. There is an urgency to the mission we have within our own communities and around the world. In such challenging times we dare not shrink from the opportunity to be the church, to witness to the hope and healing of Jesus Christ.

The annual conference courageously passed the Future with Hope Mission Fund Campaign. In passing the campaign, we claimed God's healing spirit over a deadly disease. In passing the campaign, we claimed hope over destruction. By supporting missional efforts through the campaign, we made a bold statement to the people in our communities that we care.

This campaign is more than raising funds, though. Through this campaign we will work with you to further deepen disciples spiritually.

For instance, we will be using Bishop Ruben Job's latest book, Three Simple Questions to shape a worship and small group series for our fall campaign.

Already, 50 lead congregations have signed on to participate in the campaign.

To achieve our Mission Campaign goals, we are using a biblical model from 1 Chronicles 29 which describes how the resources were gathered to build the temple of God. First David gave from his resources, then the leaders gave from their resources and when the people saw the generosity of the leaders, they too gave generously.

Bishop John and Beverly Schol have committed to give \$53,000 over the next three years because they believe in what God is doing and will do through the Greater New Jersey Conference.

In the 29th chapter of Jeremiah, the prophet said to the exiled people in Babylon: God has plans for you, big plans, not for your destruction but for a future with hope. The exiled people pressed on and planted gardens, built new homes, began to have families, and sought the shalom of the community in unfamiliar surroundings and circumstances. God blessed them with a future.

When we embrace the love and hope presented to us by Jesus Christ, we accept the power to inspire and rejuvenate our disciples and our congregations. We accept the power to be the great commandment and great commission in the world. There will be challenging days ahead, but let's not lose hope. Let's show the world what it means to be United Methodist strong. Let's be blown by Spirit winds that bring fresh hope, big visions for mission and vital congregations. Let's work together so that our unity will be a sign that Christ dwells in us and that in Christ all things are possible. Hope on!

OBITUARIES

ALMA JEAN CURTIN, wife of retired Greater New Jersey Conference Elder, the Reverend Carlton J. Curtin, died on May 8 in Maricopa, Arizona. A funeral service was held on May 15 at the Sun Lakes United Methodist Church, 9248 East Riggs Road, Sun Lakes, AZ 85248.

Messages of condolence may be sent to Reverend Curtin, 46053 West Windmill Drive, Maricopa, AZ 85139-7082. Memorial donations may be sent to Sun Lakes United Methodist Church.

W. Michael Campbell, AIA ARCHITECT CHURCH DESIGN AND RESTORATION

369 West Farms Rd.
P.O. Box 86
Farmingdale, NJ 07727

Phone: 732-919-2750
Fax: 732-919-2751
WMCarch@optonline.net

www.ReligiousArchitecture.com

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Greater NJ Annual Conference

A Future with Hope Mission Fund Campaign

Campaign Goal 12 Million Dollars

25% of all the money raised stays in the local church!

Sandy Relief

Superstorm Sandy was the most destructive storm New Jersey has ever experienced and was the second largest storm in the history of the United States. It left 2.7 million New Jerseyans without power and left thousands of homes uninhabitable and thousands of jobs disrupted or discontinued. Within our own family, Superstorm Sandy damaged 113 church properties and made five churches and seven parsonages uninhabitable.



Working together we will build a future with hope as we repair homes and rebuild communities

7 Million



Imagine No Malaria

In Africa, a superstorm of malaria is ending the life of one person, usually a child, every sixty seconds. This epidemic is changing the social and faith landscape of the African continent. Death by malaria ended in the United States long ago and can be eliminated in Africa as well if we work together. Our efforts through Nothing But Nets, and with our global partners have already reduced the mortality rate but there is still much work to be done.

Working together we will build a future with hope as we help bring an end to deaths by malaria.

2 Million

Congregational Development

The numbers tell of another superstorm in our midst: the stiff winds of church decline. In the last ten years we have lost 20% of worshippers, and are making 34% less disciples. This is an unsustainable path that we must turn around. The good news is that we have many congregations throughout GNJ that are growing and many more that are right on the verge of growing. How will we help encourage, empower, and equip growth now and for the future?

Working together we will build a future with hope as we grow vital congregations across the GNJAC.

3 Million



What will we accomplish?

- Raise the spiritual climate of our churches and conference by creating materials for daily devotion, small group ministry and prayer.
- Train congregational leaders in the area of stewardship, small group leadership, Bible study, faith sharing, and mission engagement in the community.
- Assist congregations to grow worship, professions of faith, small groups, outreach, and giving to the community.
- Grow the number of vital congregations.

How will we have a successful campaign?

- 100% participation by every local church.
- Provide campaign resources, materials and training to every local church to help interpret and involve the congregation in the campaign.
- Provide Mission Fund consultants to work with congregational leaders to help identify mission goals and objectives and to assist in the campaign.