

# THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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## Equipping Clergy for Controversial Conversations

**LONG BRANCH** – The church and society is becoming more polarized by issues and debate. Congregations and the denomination are seeking ways to engage in healthy conversation. With this in mind, Bishop John Schol hosted the clergy convocation to equip clergy to lead people through controversy in congregations and communities. The 2016 Bishop's Clergy Convocation hosted more than 250 clergy and their families for a three day retreat of learning and growth.

"We live in a time in which controversy pervades the church and culture and our communities look to our clergy to lead them through very difficult conversations," Bishop Schol said. "Creating a sacred place to have these conversations and providing our clergy the tools for facilitating these conversations supports transformational leadership."

The Rev. Dr. Karin Walker, a former District Superintendent from the Baltimore-Washington Conference who has extensive experience in conflict mediation and in leading difficult conversations around important issues, was the plenary speaker for convocation with the theme "Sacred Spaces for Controversial Conversations." She believes it is life-giving and empowering for people to engage in healthy conversation when disagreeing with one another.

"We are brothers and sisters in Christ which puts us on sure footing as our common ground," Walker said. "By creating sacred space, listening for understanding, and speaking the truth in love, we can model for the world a better way of

dealing with differences."

Convocation was structured with plenary sessions, led by Walker, and small group work, led by Greater New Jersey leadership, to apply the skills discussed.

This was the first time attending convocation for Amanda Cosnett, who is the pastor at Allerton UMC in Annandale and McCrea Memorial UMC in Port Murray. She found the small group sessions particularly meaningful.

"I enjoyed the small groups a lot," she said. "We shared a lot of our own experiences and opportunities and we also listened deeply to other people. It was nice to be deeply heard as well without interruptions."

The tools presented by Walker built off the coaching work that was the focus of last year's convocation. Clergy coaching has spread rapidly throughout Greater New Jersey with more than 155 using this resource. The controversial conversations work builds on the foundation of coaching and takes it one step further.

Director of Connectional Ministries, Rev. Hector Burgos believes the ideas communicated at Convocation will positively impact clergy and congregations.

"Convocation included a video that explains the way we become closer to God is to become closer to each other," he said. "There is power in that connection that can help diffuse our disagreements. We plan to share this video resource with our churches and encourage them to explore ways to create safe and sacred spaces to be in conversation about the issues affecting their local congregation and community."



Photo by James Lee

**Bishop John Schol serves communion to Rev. Erica Munoz as she holds her baby Braelon at the Bishop's Clergy Convocation in January.**

Charlie Soper, the pastor at Epworth UMC in Palmyra, said it was important for pastors to have more strategies to

use when needed.

"This adds another tool to the tool box in terms of having conversations and

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## Rev. Gina Kim Announced As Palisades DS

In an email to leaders of Greater New Jersey, Bishop John Schol announced the appointment of Rev. Gina Kim to serve as the Palisades District Superintendent starting July 1, 2016.

Kim has served in full-time ministry for 24 years, as a youth pastor, associate pastor and senior pastor. She is currently serving as full-time pastor at Wesley United Methodist Church in South Plainfield, a vital congregation that has grown spiritually and has realized significant growth with increases in worship attendance, professions of faith, disciples in small groups, and mission engagement under her leadership. The congregation has also faithfully paid 100 percent of its shared ministries.

Kim has completed coaching training, is actively coaching several clergy, leads a PaCE group and is a circuit elder. She has grown ministries wherever she has served. She is a Stephen Leader and anticipates graduating from the Academy for Spiritual Formation in April.

Bishop Schol introduced Rev. Kim to the Greater New Jersey Bishop's Clergy Convocation on Jan. 26 to a rousing welcome by her peers who joined him in praying for her service in taking on this new role.

"Rev. Kim is a Christ-centered, spirit-filled believer who exemplifies many of the characteristics we look for in clergy," Bishop Schol said.

In his announcement, Bishop Schol outlined the characteristics he and the cabinet used in evaluating candidates and appointing Kim. These include being:

- A Transformational Leader – A Spirit-led pioneer who initiates a



Photo by James Lee

**Rev. Gina Kim shares a moment with Rev. Sony Augustin during the Bishop's Clergy Convocation in January. Kim will be the new Palisades District Superintendent beginning July 1.**

vision of what could be, develops strategies and inspires people to work together to achieve life and world changing mission.

- Passionate – A contagious love for God and people, is excited about the mission and moves people and ideas to action.
- Open - Grounded and yet embraces new ideas and learnings. A grace filled leader that is open to and embraces people who think, look, act and live differently.
- Relational - Genuine in their relationship with God and others, seeks a team experience and

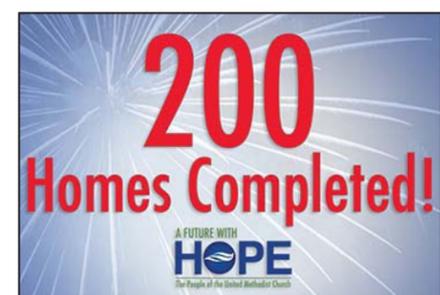
connects with others through their interests and ideas.

- A Learner – Teachable and dedicated to learning and applying new ideas.
- Creative – Doesn't let adaptive challenges stop the mission but is curious and inquisitive, takes risks and applies innovative ideas even when there is limited resources to overcome challenges.

Kim enjoys stamping, knitting and gathering with friends over good food. She is married to Chong who is the pastor at Calvary United Methodist Church in Kearny, N.J. They have a son, Mathew

who is married to Ellen and they live in Duluth, Ga.

She will be replacing Rev. Wayne Plumstead, who announced his retirement in December after 43 years in ministry serving six congregations and as the District Superintendent in the Palisades District.



A big reason A Future With Hope reached its 200th rebuild is because of the behind the scenes work that case managers do long before actual construction begins. **Story, Page 5.**

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# A Message from the Bishop



## What We Embody Says A Lot About Our Character

**Culture • Character • Competency**

**Character Counts.** It informs our decision making and where and how we spend our energy and time. When I think of people I want to follow, it is people that have characteristics that I experience in outstanding leaders. For instance one character trait that is really important to me is consistency or authenticity. I like leaders who act the same whether they are with other important leaders or when they are stuck in a line at a store. What they do consistently is more important

than their title or even their accomplishments.

Today's article is part two of a four part series on Culture, Character and Competency. Last month I talked about culture and its ability to shape a team of people and their outcomes. I said we look for leaders who are Christ centered and Holy Spirit led and practice five cultural traits within teams and their leadership:

- 1) Trust - They are trustworthy, grow trust with others and trust others;
- 2) Disagree - They are willing to disagree to find the best solutions;
- 3) Commit - They are willing to pull their weight on a team by making commitments to carry out tasks and complete the tasks on time;
- 4) Accountable - They are willing to account for their ability and allow others to challenge them when they do not deliver with excellence and on time;
- 5) Achieve Results - They work with the team and focus their energy to achieve fruitful results for the mission.

We look for leaders whose culture is team focused in these five areas. It encompass how Jesus lived with his disciples and what he expected of his disciples.

This week we add character as the second piece of what makes up a transformational leader in GNJ. "He's a real character" is a phrase that we hear about people from time to time. In this sense of the word, character generally refers to a person's personality. Character also refers to what is core to our makeup. It is reflective of the values, virtues and qualities of a person. King Solomon was known for the characteristic of wisdom, King David for courage, Peter for impetuous faith, John Wesley for spiritual piety and worldly engagement, Mother Teresa for caring, and Martin Luther King, Jr. for justice. Their commitments and daily living typically revolved around the core values of their life.

There is another side of character that makes up what we embody, the characteristics that shape how we lead. An organization needs to be clear about the characteristics it seeks in its leaders. As we look for transformational leaders to serve in GNJ we look for six character traits. These six were developed by groups of laity and clergy when we asked what character traits were needed in a leader to make disciples and grow vital congregations to transform the world. Here is what they shared:

1. Transformational - Spirit-led pioneers who initiate a vision of what could be, develop strategies, and inspire people to work together to achieve a life and world changing mission.
2. Passionate - Leaders with a contagious love for God and others who are excited about the mission and move people and ideas to action.
3. Open - Grace-filled leaders who are grounded and yet embrace new ideas and learnings. Leaders who are open to and embrace people who think, look, act and live differently.
4. Relational - Leaders who are genuine in their relationship with God and others, seek a team experience and connect with others through their interests and ideas.
5. Learning - Life-long learners who are teachable and dedicate their life to learning and applying new ideas.
6. Creative - Leaders who don't let adaptive challenges stop the mission but are curious and inquisitive, take risks and apply innovative ideas even when there are limited resources to overcome challenges.

These characteristics are important for the church at this time as we seek work toward what is next for the church. Which of the six are important and are characteristics people use to describe you? Which are ones that need further development in your life? As you serve on committees, lead Bible studies, small groups and mission teams, as you provide pastoral leadership, how are the characteristics that make up your leadership making and forming new disciples and growing vital congregations? How is your leadership transforming the world?

I invite you to lean more into the character traits that are less descriptive of your personality and more descriptive of what makes up your leadership.

Keep the faith!  
John Schol, Bishop



*Photo by Norm Cetuk*

Progress has continued on GNJ's new Mission and Resource Center as the parking lot has been paved and all of the doors and windows are now in place.

## Opening Delayed For Mission Center

The opening of the new Mission and Resource Center has been delayed due to weather and a delay by one of the sub-contractors. The concern of the trustees and building committee is to ensure the work is done well and the building is fully completed before moving in.

The original schedule called for a late February move in date with a March 1

dedication ceremony. When assured of a date that all construction will be completed, a new dedication date will be announced. We regret any inconvenience this may have caused in your schedule.

The Mission and Resource Center is located on 205 Jumping Brook Drive just off of exit 100 of the Garden State Parkway.

**The March Issue Deadline  
is February 15, 2016**



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# THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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# Mission Resources: Watch, Rethink, Go, Grow

## WATCH: A YEAR IN REVIEW OF METHODISTS IN MISSION

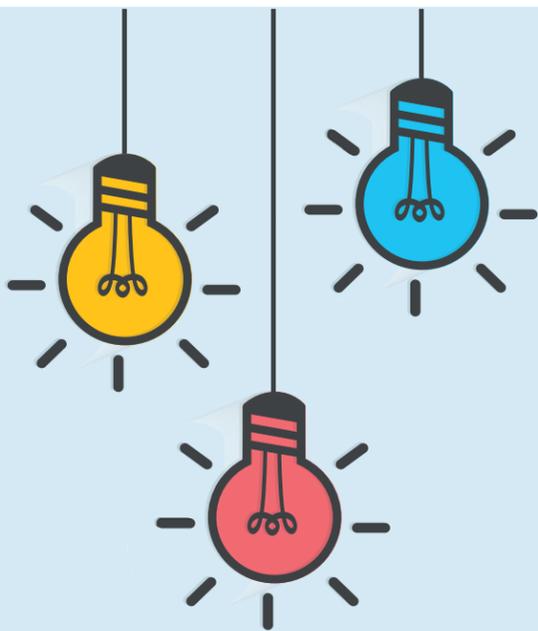
United Methodists are transforming the world through Mission. Watch and learn about the global reach and impact of our church through Global Ministries at:

<https://vimeo.com/148557114>



## GO: 5 TIPS FOR MEANINGFUL MISSION TRIPS

- 1 PRAY:**
  - Make mission trips spiritual journeys not just physical ones.
  - Invite the presence of the Holy Spirit before, during and after your trip.
  - Decide how you will create space for the movement of the Spirit.
- 2 DO YOUR HOMEWORK:**
  - Engage your team in an in-depth study of the people and places where they will be.
  - Consult sources that maintain historical integrity.
  - Create deeper connections and understanding.
- 3 CREATE FRIENDSHIPS NOT FACEBOOK POSTS:**
  - Don't think missions are museums and document every person, place or thing.
  - Get permission of those whose image you share.
  - Maintain their dignity and privacy.
- 4 EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED:**
  - Plan for something to go wrong
  - Be prepared with Plan B and C for unexpected delays like weather, sickness and transportation hang-ups.
- 5 KEEP TALKING:**
  - Make trips one-time events that develop into longtime partnerships.
  - Share a compelling story that invites interest, inspires giving and retains volunteers.
  - Use large congregational gatherings, videos, social media or newsletters to share the "why" of your mission in a powerful way.



## RETHINK: 5 SIMPLE QUESTIONS TO RETHINK MISSION

- Who is my neighbor now?
- What assets do we have to use for God's mission?
- What is God calling our church to do "for such a time as this?"
- Where have we not made a tangible impact in our community?
- Why does our mission matter?

## GROW: ESSENTIAL TEXTS FOR LEADING A MISSION TEAM

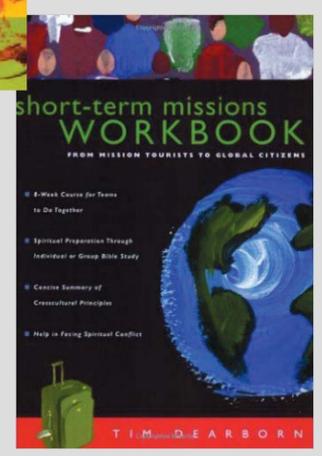
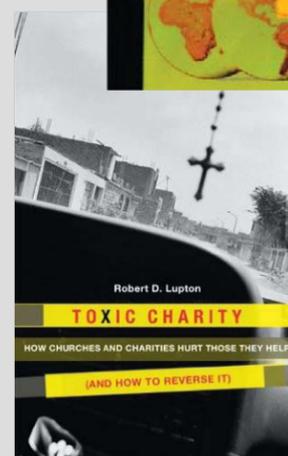
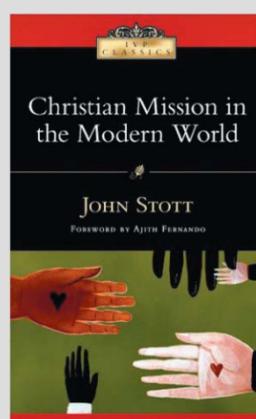
**Toxic Charity: How the Church Hurts Those They Help and How to Reverse It** - by Robert D. Lupton

**Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christ-like Humility** - by Duane Elmer

**Christian Mission in the Modern World** - by John Stott

**Mission Trips from Start to Finish** - by Lynne Ellis

**Short Term Missions Workbook** - by Tim Dearborn



## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND SUPPORT ON MISSION RESOURCES:



**GO TO:**  
[www.gnjumc.org/mission](http://www.gnjumc.org/mission)

**OR CONTACT:**  
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of Mission & Multi-Cultural  
Ministries at:

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# Syrian Refugee Grateful For Morrow Memorial's Mercy

By Jeff Wolfe  
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One Syrian refugee knew what it was like to help others in need. Now, thanks in part to Morrow Memorial United Methodist Church, he knows and appreciates what it's like to receive help in his time of need.

This Syrian refugee, a former successful businessman in Damascus, was reunited with his wife and three children in the U.S. just before Thanksgiving. The man who spoke on the condition of anonymity for this story was lucky enough to have a work visa to reach the U.S. while fleeing for his life nearly two and a half years ago. He now feels more fortunate to have a family again thanks to the kind people in the Maplewood, N.J., congregation.

"Without the help of this church, I did not have a chance to do anything," the refugee said. "They made everything possible."

The refugee said it was not only the material things that Morrow provided, like food, clothes and a place to live that mattered, but the caring and emotional support that means a lot to him and his family, which arrived the day before Thanksgiving.

"When they came here, I didn't have any resources to support them," he said of his family. "I tried to bring them here as soon as I could, but it was very complicated. The United Methodist church told me this is your family and we are your friends also. They are dealing with us like we are the only family in the world. They are the best of friends for us. We are now healthy and have good schools and are sleeping in a warm place.

"Everything here is very comfortable." The refugee and his family had been living what he says was a comfortable life in Damascus. But being a business leader and someone who was trying to

*"Without the help of this church, I did not have a chance to do anything. They made everything possible."*

— Syrian refugee supported by Morrow Memorial UMC

help widows and children in the war torn region, he became a political target for the Syrian regime.

"He developed a program to help widows from the war there," said Morrow Memorial member Dean Nielson, who is the church's co-chair of the social outreach committee on refugees. "The thing that got him in trouble was he was using his assets to create support for widows and their families."

The troubles for such people can come in almost an instant in Syria. According to First Friends New York New Jersey Director Sally Pillay, who also played a major role in the refugee's relocation in the U.S., males are targeted there and it's even possible for them to be pulled from vehicles and taken away.

"I spent 25 years building my businesses and in a half hour they took everything," the refugee said. "In our culture, the man goes to work and the woman stays at home. The man is the main supporter for the family. During this crazy war, a lot of men have been killed and a lot of families remain without any support."

And so within that half hour, the refugee's family became one of those needing support. His wife and three children, between the ages of 5 and 15, constantly relocated to safe havens for more than two years. According to the refugee and Pillay, if the father/husband flees for safety, the family is often targeted as way to lure the male to return.

"Whether it is for the government there or to be a part of ISIL (Islamic State of

Iraq and the Levant), they still want the male to fight for them," Pillay said. "They can pick you up and take you and you just disappear and the family doesn't know where you are.

"He was more in danger than his family at that point in time. The family was also in hiding. They lost everything."

While the refugee's wife and children were constantly on the move, he was also constantly worried about their safety, not even knowing if they were alive during his first weeks in the U.S., which he spent homeless in New York City.

He eventually gathered enough change from the street to purchase a phone card to call a friend, who said he had seen the refugee's family alive. Then the refugee remembered a friend in Canada who wired him enough money to survive and get support from an organization for transients in New York that helped him communicate with his family for an hour once a week. He found a public library in New York where he was allowed to use a computer and connected with a lawyer who started the process of asylum.

"The lawyers told me that that we had a case and that they support human rights," he said. "I told them the first priority was my family, but they said they couldn't do anything to get them here until I was granted asylum."

He was granted asylum in the U.S. after a little over a year and then the refugee's family had to travel to the American embassy in Lebanon to file paperwork to come to the U.S. It was another eight or

nine-month process for his family to be approved by American immigration.

The week of Thanksgiving, he had a big reason to be thankful when he met his wife and children at JFK Airport in New York.

"When I saw her at the airport I was trying to stand on my feet and I cried a lot," he said. "I kneeled and kissed her legs in front of all the people in JFK. I told her the things you did, is something no human on this planet can express his love for."

His wife is now getting some well-deserved rest.

"She did a very miraculous job," he said. "She did lose a lot of weight. She is very tired. I try to keep her sleeping and healthy. If you look into the news, there are a lot of people trying to find a safer place. We consider ourselves a lucky, lucky family."

His wife, who cannot speak English, has been especially grateful for the people at Morrow Memorial.

"She told me what she got from the United Methodist Church makes her forget all of the suffering," he said. "This is really what we believe in. The hugs and smiles, everything came from the heart. We love them very much."

The refugee, who is working on resumes and plans to begin a job search soon, said he cherishes what he and his family have now.

"We spent a night there at Morrow and there were about 100 people at the service," he said. "Everybody hugged us and had a smile. We are very proud to have such friends."

They are also happy, for the first time in nearly two and a half years, to have peace.

"The first day my family slept here in America and I looked at them sleeping, I thought there are no more nightmares," the refugee said. "This is some kind of miracle."

## Ghana Calvary Officially Joins UMC With Charter

By Paige Chant  
pchant@morrowchurch.org

In June of 2006, a small group of Ghanaian immigrants in New Jersey began studying scripture, worshipping at different houses every week, Bibles in hand. No fewer than 20 people attended on a weekly basis, and as they grew, they began searching for a place to hold worship services.

On Oct. 1, 2006, the congregation celebrated its first Sunday service in the borrowed basement of a church with 78 people, including children, attending.

Now, nearly 10 years later and 250 members strong, Ghana Calvary United Methodist Church has received its official charter into the United Methodist denomination. On Dec. 6, 2015, the congregation celebrated its journey toward full membership in the UMC by worshipping together and sharing lunch with Gateway North District Superintendent Manuel Sardinias and Bishop John Schol. It was, in many ways, a final recognition of homecoming for the community.

From the beginning, there was a shared desire to move toward membership in the United Methodist Church, in large part because of the lack of well-organized churches in the Ghanaian community. According to founding pastor Rev. Nathan Addo-Nartey, many Ghanaian Methodists found themselves attending different churches, such as charismatic or Pentecostal communities, once they settled in the United States.

"Since becoming a United Methodist church," Addo-Nartey said, "some of those members are coming back and realizing that there is now a well-structured community for them."

Located in Irvington, N.J., Ghana

Calvary has a vibrant and active youth community and a strong mission-oriented ministry. Every summer young adults from the congregation serve in a local food pantry. They have also raised funds to support education efforts in Ghana, sending between 70-100 school bags packed with much-needed books and supplies for young learners.

Through The Guild, another church ministry, the congregation raises funds to support mission work abroad. Last year it coordinated a fundraiser through UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) for a water project in Ghana, and it has already purchased a water tank for Osu Children's Home, an orphanage in Accra, Ghana.

Worship services on Sunday mornings are held primarily in English (with about 25 percent of the services being conducted in various Ghanaian languages). Services integrate traditional Ghanaian ways of worship with contemporary elements.

"We want to raise our children to continue in the same faith and culture," Addo-Nartey said. "We don't want them to lose their identity as Christians, as members of the United Methodist Church, as American citizens and as Ghanians."

The main mission of the church, Addo-Nartey says, is to reach out to the local Ghanaian community through the United Methodist tradition. Because of the church's strong roots in the Ghanaian immigrant community, one of its central ministries is serving and supporting immigrants, especially those without legal documentation.

When two church members were detained, for instance, Ghana Calvary took up a special offering to loan them money for bonds, then supported them

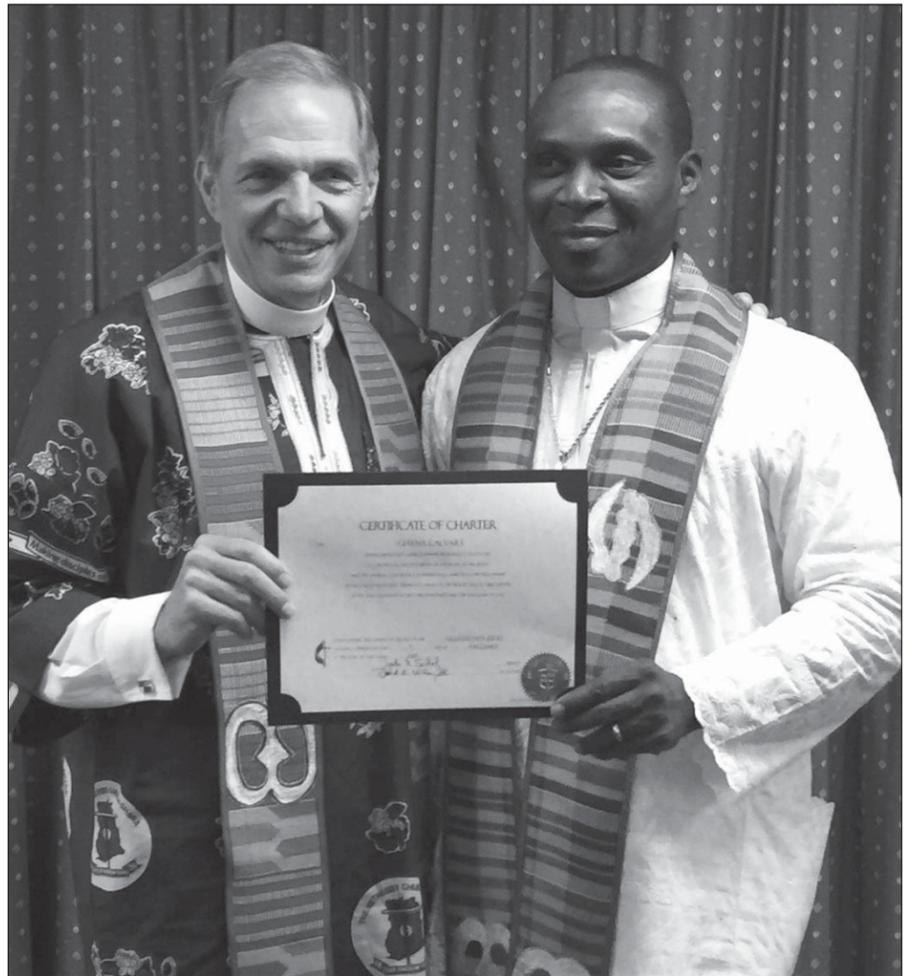


Photo provided

**Bishop John Schol joined Ghana Calvary United Methodist Church pastor Nathan Addo-Nartey when the Irvington, N.J., church received its charter to officially join the United Methodist denomination in December. A special service was held to celebrate with about 250 attending.**

through the process of attaining green cards. When other Ghanaian members received letters of deportation, the pastor intervened with letters of support, helping them to remain in the United States.

Now, Ghana Calvary is trying to extend the support of its faith community to all immigrant communities which may be facing similar situations. It hopes to partner with immigration lawyers as well

as other churches that are committed to supporting immigrants and detainees.

"There are a lot of people who come, who can help do ministry, but because of lack of proper documentation they cannot be officially involved in ministry," Addo-Nartey said. "My number one passion is to help those who are struggling with immigration status. By the grace of God we've been able to support them."

# Case Management A Key to Rebuilding

A Future With Hope, the nonprofit organization started by Greater New Jersey to rebuild homes after Superstorm Sandy, completed its 200th rebuilt home in January thanks to the more than 10,000 volunteers and the many financial donations it has received. Few people understand, however,



**LIZ McDEVITT**

that the hard work required to restore homes and lives begins long before the first trace of construction or the day volunteers show up for work. Behind the scenes in the early stages of the process, A Future With Hope's case managers work directly with homeowners and help them manage complicated issues they face as a result of the storm.

"The homeowners have to deal with so many different issues at the same time, they can easily be overwhelmed," A Future With Hope Executive Director Bobbie Ridgely said. "Our case managers not only have to understand the various problems a homeowner faces in trying to get a house rebuilt, but also understand someone who may be at the end of their emotional rope as well."

Case management is the key to a successful recovery effort. They are the primary point of contact and work together with the family to assess needs, secure resources, and create a recovery plan.

"We learned early on that we had to be more than advocates for homeowners," Disaster Case Management Director Liz McDevitt said. "We had to be a kind of expert on everything."

McDevitt admitted she was taken

aback when the vision was formed with the goal of rebuilding more than 300 homes and providing case management for 500 households. She now realizes how important those big ideas were before construction on the first house started.

"Bishop Schol said we have a big God and we have to think in a God-sized way," McDevitt said. "I went home and told my husband we may have bit off more than we can chew. But we've been able to grow tremendously by taking baby steps and sometimes even giant steps. Because we were willing to take that step, we've become quite a force."

Through the end of 2015, A Future With Hope has rebuilt 200 homes, provided direct assistance for 77 additional homes and has case managed 425 households for low income, disabled and elderly people in New Jersey.

Most homeowners working with A Future With Hope now have overwhelming complications and issues with their rebuilding efforts including insurance disputes and contractor fraud. Government programs are complex and time consuming. Mortgage companies can make things restrictive. Lifting requirements have been fluid and each municipality has its own set of regulations. The case manager works with the homeowner to help navigate all these situations and more.

Many homeowners have life experiences that complicate their situation. Some are experiencing divorce, illness or death. Others, such as those working in the casino industry in Atlantic City, have lost their job and income since the storm.

Case managers often are working with people who have given up and believe no one can help, or are angry with a system they feel has left them behind and doesn't care anymore.



*GNJ file photo*

**A Future With Hope Case managers Jay Tunncliffe and Andrea Wren-Hardin help Superstorm Sandy survivors in the early stages of the rebuilding process.**

"I think it is difficult because this is their daily life," McDevitt said. "They have to deal with this day in and day out. They are angry sometimes because they feel like it didn't need to be this way."

Ridgely understands the importance of what the case managers do.

"Now that we are more than three years after the storm, the people who have not been able to recover have the most complex situations," Ridgely said. "We've had to be more creative in the solutions we provide and sometimes that takes more time and resources."

In the last year, A Future With Hope has started offering homeowners lifting options and total rebuilds which use modular houses that are finished with volunteers.

"The early cases were some of the easiest," Ridgely said. "We started by replacing a kitchen or a bathroom. At this late stage of recovery the people in need, need more."

In the three years since the storm, the caseloads may have lessened but the time required to work with a homeowner has lengthened.

Since 2013, A Future With Hope has

had as many as five case managers working with homeowners. Each has been trained by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and have participated with county long term recovery groups which form partnerships with other agencies to help people secure resources and recover from the storm.

Currently, A Future With Hope has three case managers including McDevitt, Jay Tunncliffe who works primarily in Atlantic County and southern Ocean Counties and Andrea Wren-Hardin who focuses on Monmouth and northern Ocean Counties.

Case managers often lend a sympathetic ear and hear survivors' frustrations before a survivor can start moving forward.

"We need to validate and hear them, but we also can't get wrapped up in their emotion," McDevitt said. "The first few times you talk to a homeowner, you expect them to be angry. I know it is not directed at me, but I had to be able to diffuse that a little bit and bring them back to where they can focus."

"My job is to give them hope."

## Communities of Hope Teams Move Forward With Action Plans

By Carolyn Conover

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Congregations who participated in the first Communities of Hope training learned finding out what they had in common proved more important than figuring out their differences.

Churches and their representatives from Atlantic City, Long Branch and Atlantic Highlands celebrated completion of a six month community development training with a commissioning on Jan. 9. The intensive training taught them how to transform their respective communities by identifying assets, building alliances and developing an action plan.

Suzanne Thomas, the leader of the Atlantic Highlands UMC team, is a Highlands resident. She and her team founded the Highlands Community of Hope for a community that was devastated during Superstorm Sandy.

"We were worried about committing to such a big project," Thomas said. "Once you go to the training you realize the connection of the larger United Methodist Church. It makes a difference. The community that we created with the teams from Long Branch and Atlantic City was important to the process. I looked forward to brainstorming and learning with them. I can't wait to see how their plans prog-

ress over the next year."

The Highlands Community of Hope has a vision that sees the small borough as a community of opportunity, prosperity and wholeness. The mission is to build a coalition of groups and partners that will join to create programs and activities that foster a healthy community.

The team of seven from Highlands came into the program with an idea of what it wanted to achieve. However, the group quickly realized it needed to listen to the people in the community to find out what was needed rather than do what the congregation felt was needed.

Working with a newly elected town council member, the Highlands team created an electronic survey and distributed it to residents. The team found issues clustered in three areas: on-going flooding, community and youth services and town communications. A town-wide meeting is planned for later in February to discuss the findings with leaders and partners and put action plans into place.

Three congregations in Atlantic City joined together to make one Community of Hope team. Its plan calls for addressing low income housing needs. The team used a drone to take aerial footage of neighborhoods in need to use when working with community leaders.

The team from St. Luke's UMC in

Long Branch focused on young people. Working together with local business owners, it identified it can offer internships so young people can have more opportunities for employment.

Jill Hubbard Smith, pastor at Atlantic Highlands UMC, said the work inspires a congregation to rededicate itself to mission.

"We are working with the Community YMCA, the superintendent of schools, the borough council and more," she said. "Our members know now that our work has meaning to others."

Nicole Caldwell Gross, GNJ's Director of Mission and Multi-Cultural Ministries, led the program and met with each team throughout the training period. She was thrilled with the work accomplished.

"These congregations came armed only with the knowledge that they lived and served in communities with great need," she said. "They looked hard at their congregations and communities and asked themselves, 'What assets do we have to make the change we need to make?'"

"Their answers are a powerful witness to the work of the Holy Spirit."

Bishop John Schol, Director of Connectional Ministries Hector Burgos, A Future With Hope Board Member Patricia Morten and A Future With Hope Executive Director Bobbie Ridgely also joined the congregational teams in worship and charged them to enact their plans in God's name.



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# Hillsdale UMC Hosts Finding Joy In Justice Event

By Jeff Wolfe  
jwolfe@gnjumc.org

The equal rights journey for Hillsdale UMC's Lisa Schoelles started last summer while the same journey for Rev. Gil Caldwell began more than 50 years ago. Those journeys intersected at the church's first Finding Joy in Justice event in January.

Schoelles was inspired to do more for equal rights after marching in the NAACP's Journey for Justice last year. Equal rights have been part of Caldwell's life mission, which dates back to walking on the bridge at Selma with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King in 1965.

Schoelles recently became Hillsdale UMC's Public Theology Advocate, a title that got the attention of Caldwell. Part of the Hillsdale event included viewing the film *Selma*, which portrayed characters that Caldwell, a retired UMC pastor who lives in Asbury Park, knew personally. The evening also included a discussion with representatives from other churches in the Hillsdale area as well.

"My belief is that we too often think of theology only as individualistic and not public," Caldwell said. "I had seen the film *Selma* more than once. It reminds us of a racial history that we have yet to acknowledge, accept and use to transform the present and the future."

Schoelles said the Journey for Justice March transformed her mind into trying to do something more.

"Journey For Justice was all about reclaiming our voting rights, reforming the educational and criminal systems and working for economic and mental justice," she said. "That got me really charged up. There is so much institutional racism that we are unaware of."

Caldwell, now 82, has spent most of his life making people aware of those injustices. On his mind more recently is voting.

"The Congress and the Supreme Court have whittled away provisions of the voting rights act as though there is no longer a need for them," Caldwell said. "Despite the denials, there are some persons today who are not pleased with voting, like the election of our first black president."

The location of the Hillsdale event was also not lost on Caldwell. Not that it was a United Methodist Church, but that the church is located in Bergen County.

"Bergen County is one of the most affluent counties in the state," he said. "It has the opportunity to acknowledge and respond to the economic inequalities of these moments. The task of the church at large is to challenge inequalities, wherever they may be found."

One of the main points Schoelles



Photo Provided

From left, Rev. Marc Stutzel, of Christ Lutheran, Woodcliff Lake; Rev. Brian Neville of Hillsdale UMC; Rev. Gil Caldwell; Lisa Schoelles of Hillsdale UMC and Rev. Jenny McLellan of Calvary Lutheran Church, Allendale; share a moment at Hillsdale's Finding Joy In Justice event in January.

took away from the event was that fighting for justice is not only a racial issue, but something everyone needs to take a role in.

"We need to not be silent when there are injustices," she said. "We all have to take a stand. It's not a black and white issue, or a Democrat or Republican issue. There are prejudices across the board that need to be dealt with. We need to live our faith and stand up for people who cannot stand up for themselves."

While Caldwell has spent decades as

a champion for equal rights, he hopes that those in attendance at the Hillsdale event and those who attend other events to discuss racial issues, spend time examining their own racial history as well.

"I believe that conversations about race are about more than race," he said. "They allow us to reflect on where our racial attitudes come from, how those attitudes shape our actions and how we must, for the good of us all, be challenged and find ways to transform some of those attitudes."

## Equipping Clergy

Continued from page 1

making space for each voice in such a way that is not judgmental or adversarial, but more informational," he said. "Finding a way to make that happen in a small group, trustee meeting or smaller setting, and having people know they can talk about something on their heart is really important."

Walker also emphasized the importance of creating a space that is safe to talk about issues. She used real life examples of places where clergy can become vulnerable and shared tools to use on how to respond.

It's easy to get tripped up by the unexpected things we miss in light of all the things we do," said Ben Lee, the associate pastor at Bridgewater UMC. "Our reactions are telling about how we are feeling about ministry and lives. To give reactions that have a healing purpose,

that is going to be helpful."

The challenges of travel on the heels of the weekend snowstorm, did not deter clergy from attending or getting the most out of their time.

"Convocation was very helpful in terms of helping us have controversial conversations," said Moses Flomo, the pastor at St. Mary's Street UMC in Burlington. "Even beyond that, when it comes to dealing with issues in ministry when there are differences, this was very helpful."

Woo Min Lee, the pastor at Little Falls UMC said he left the convocation with a renewed heart and spirit. "It was refreshing to rethink about my ministry and the whole process," he said. "It gave me a chance to refresh myself."

## UMW of GNJ Offering Three NEJ Scholarships

The United Methodist Women of Greater New Jersey are offering three scholarships to attend the Northeast Jurisdictional UMW meeting at the OnCenter Complex in Syracuse, N.Y., on June 16-18. Two of the scholarships are for women under the age 35 and the other is an at-large scholarship. The scholarships will include \$500 for hotel reservations and NEJ registration. Costs for travel and meals will also be considered.

To apply for a scholarship email Marilyn Powell at mpowell56@comcast.net and answer the following questions:

1. What it means to be a United Methodist woman?
2. Why it would be important for you to attend this conference?

Also, include your church, age and district.

The deadline to email the application letter is Feb. 15.

The NEJ consists of 10 conferences with Baltimore-Washington the most southern, Western Pennsylvania the most western and New England the most northern. The UMW NEJ meeting takes place every four years to elect representatives for the national UMW team. The theme of the June meeting is "A Fresh Wind Blowing" based on the scripture in John 3:8.



Photo by James Lee

Doug Goldsborough and his wife, Joann, check in to the Bishop's Clergy Convocation which took place at Ocean Place Resort and Spa in Long Branch on Jan. 25-27.

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# Epiphany Service A Time For Worship, Thankfulness



*Photos by Seth Bechtold*

Epiphany is a celebration of the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi in Matthew 2, one of the more important religious days in the Hispanic tradition. The GNJ Hispanic/Latino Epiphany Service was held at Christ UMC in Lakewood in January. After the service, all in attendance shared in food and children received gifts from the Three Kings.



At top, Bishop John Schol delivers a message. Above left, Arelis and Mariela Mendez do their part in helping lead bilingual worship. Above middle, Rev. Rolando Santiago-Fuentes shares gifts during the children's time. Above far right, the 250 in attendance celebrate joyfully in worship.

*"You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness." - 1 Thess. 5:5*



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# Fun With Team Vital

Photos by Seth Bechtold

At right, Rev. Brandon Cho (left) and Charlie Buck, both from Morristown UMC, share a laugh as UMC of the Rockaways' Bob Sleeves looks on during a Team Vital meeting in December. At bottom left, UMC of The Rockaways' Deb DeVos and Lysette Perez have a light moment at the meeting. At bottom right, Montville UMC pastor Heather Valosin makes a point during a discussion. There are more than 50 congregations participating in Team Vital, a resource to help congregations on their path to vitality.



## Winter Respite Spells Relief



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## Kickoff Session Helps Agencies Focus On Plan

More than 75 members of all 29 agencies, boards and committees in Greater New Jersey met in January for a 2016 Strategic Kick Off Session to review goals and objectives so that all activities are in alignment with the strategic plan.

The featured speaker at the session was Lisa Greenwood, the Vice President for Leadership Ministry at the Texas Methodist Foundation. She said GNJ is certainly going in the right direction, but the key is to keep that momentum going.

"Greater New Jersey has really gotten clear on its purpose about its role of equipping spiritual leaders who can grow vital leaders and make disciples," she said. "You've defined what vital congregations are and what being a transformational leader is. You haven't left it all mushy.

"You need to put teeth into it and see what difference you can make."

One of Greenwood's goals for the session was to help each agency find ways to take part in making the strategic plan a reality.

"Sometimes we struggle in the church to articulate our purpose and the difference we are trying to make," Greenwood said. "When we struggle with the clarity of our purpose and clarity of the outcomes we want, we then tend to focus on activities. My hope is that when people think about the agency or committee they are on, they will be really clear on the differences they are trying to make."

The session made a difference to agency leaders in attendance.

"I learned how to clarify and identify our goals for 2016," said Michelle Ryoo, who is the chairperson for the Commission on the Status and Role of Women. "We need to move away from the maintenance mode toward equipping risk-taking, deeply spiritual, creative,

strategic, resourceful and transformational women leaders."

Greenwood, a life-long Methodist who has been at the Texas Foundation since 2012, says the first step in the process for some will be altering their mindset.

"A trap we tend to fall into, and it seems very faithful, is that we do a needs assessment and then we work on filling those needs," she said. "But what if we shift and ask not what the needs are out there, but what assets are out there?"

"This shift is already being done in Greater New Jersey."

Greenwood was specifically referring to initiatives such as Team Vital, PaCE groups, clergy coaching and small groups.

One GNJ committee leader believes the initiative a group takes can make all the difference.

Judy Colorado, the Chair of the Committee on Ethnic Local Church Concerns said, "changing our paradigm from a membership club mentality to discipleship paradigm" is one of the ideas she took away from the session.

Greenwood hopes the ideas generated in the Kick Off Session lead to not just action, but the right kind of action.

"My hope is to bring GNJ leaders into conversation around identity, purpose and outcomes," Greenwood said. "We want to help the local church find ways to do their work, but we don't want to do the work for them."



GREENWOOD

# Bruger To Retire As CUMAC Leader In 2017

By Jessica Stenstrom

[Jessica\\_stenstrom@yahoo.com](mailto:Jessica_stenstrom@yahoo.com)

After 27 years of dedicated service to CUMAC, Rev. Patricia Bruger will be retiring from her post as Executive Director in the summer of 2017.

"Being a part of CUMAC's mission has changed my life in so many ways. Looking back over 25 years I realize how blessed I have been to get up every day, sincerely excited to go and work side-by-side with staff, board members, and volunteers in order to care for others," said Bruger. "While I do not know what the next chapter at CUMAC will be, I am certain that those who have been on the journey, and those who will join the CUMAC family, will help shape a stronger, more vibrant CUMAC that will continue to serve as long as there are persons in need."

Bruger's impact over the time she served at CUMAC is evident by the flood of well-wishers on both CUMAC's official Facebook page and her personal one.

"She will be missed when she retires but her passion will continue on with those who she has been an inspiration to. Myself included," posted Lori Vanderra.

Another post by Barbara Smith Piccicchi read, "You have always been the moving force for CUMAC; look what it was and what it has become. It is you and your personality, your caring and giving: some very big shoes to fill."

When Bruger started her then part-time post in 1991, she was only the second paid Executive Director at CUMAC. The agency had been founded by Hugh Dunlop, a Paterson school teacher who recognized that his students' hunger was hindering their learning. It was run by Dunlop and a number of dedicated volunteers during the startup period. A few years after CUMAC was incorporated



**Rev. Patricia Bruger has overseen the growth of CUMAC since taking over as executive director of the agency in 1991.**

as a nonprofit in 1985, Bruger received the phone call that brought her to the organization.

A long-term resident of Dumont, N.J., she had only been to Paterson a handful of times and while she had been a school teacher and directed Girl Scout camps, she had never worked at an organization like CUMAC.

In those first years, she did a little of

everything. That included bagging food, driving and unloading trucks, sorting donations, counseling clients, serving as pastor to pantry and workforce clients, engaging with donors and funders, collaborating with nonprofit partners, and strategizing with the Board of Trustees. And while she would often say she wasn't sure what she had gotten into, or what to do with it, right from the beginning Bruger

had a vision for CUMAC.

She knew almost immediately that the borrowed church building CUMAC was operating from was not the right space for the work that needed to be done. It took a number of years to get others on board with her vision. Once she had others invested in the idea, it took many lessons in urban and commercial real estate before CUMAC ultimately purchased its current facility on Ellison Street in Paterson. The bigger space meant more room for the Community Closet to expand disaster relief services and The Depot to disseminate shared food resources including vital perishable goods to other feeding programs. It also meant more hands were needed to accomplish the work. Those hands were found through the growth of the Pathways to Work program and the invaluable volunteers who increased exponentially in number and hours of service.

Over time, Bruger, grew the staff as well, not just in number but also in responsibility. Together these many hands have nurtured CUMAC into a mission that each year feeds nearly 40,000 people, provides disaster relief to hundreds of families (thousands after major storms), readies hundreds of individuals for gainful employment, houses a dozen previously chronically homeless individuals, and supports more than 50 partner feeding programs and nonprofits.

"Pat's passion for our mission of 'feeding people and changing lives' is the inspiration for the entire CUMAC team to strengthen and expand our programs," said Don Matthews, CUMAC Board of Trustees President. "Her vision for CUMAC, enthusiastic leadership and advocacy for the disenfranchised have laid a strong foundation for our continued growth."

## Listening Days Set for General Conference

The 2016 General Conference of the United Methodist Church will be held at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland May 10-20, 2016. General Conference is the top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church which meets once every four years. The conference can revise church law, as well as adopt resolutions on current moral, social, public policy and economic issues. It also approves plans and budgets for church-wide programs.

The elected delegates who will be representing Greater New Jersey at the General Conference are scheduling listening days for clergy and laity to attend in each of GNJ's nine districts. The purpose of these days is for the delegates to gain a better understanding of where laity



and clergy stand on the issues that will likely be discussed at General Conference. For more information on General Conference and the issues being brought before the body, go to [www.umc.org/topics/general-conference-2016](http://www.umc.org/topics/general-conference-2016). Questions and concerns can be discussed directly with GNJ delegates at one of the listening dates listed to the right.

### Listening Dates

- Feb. 4 – Gateway South, Haddonfield UMC, 7-8:30 p.m.
- Feb. 9 – Capital, St. Mark UMC, Hamilton Square, 7-8:30 p.m.
- Feb. 16 – Palisades, location TBD, 7 p.m.
- Feb. 21 – Delaware Bay, Pitman UMC, 4-7 p.m.
- Feb. 28 – Cape Atlantic, Central UMC, Linwood, 2 p.m.
- Feb. 28 – Skylands, Butler UMC, 3 p.m.
- Feb. 28 – Raritan Valley, Bridgewater UMC, 7 p.m.
- April 12 – Northern Shore, Mission and Resource Center, Neptune, 7-9 p.m.

\*The Gateway North listening day, date and location are yet to be determined.

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# Centenary UMC Brings Cheer To Whispering Knoll

Photos by John Wooding

Rev. Anna Thomas and Director of Music Ministry Donavon Soumas of Centenary UMC of Metuchen led a group of singers and musicians from the church in a performance and singalong on Dec. 20 at the Whispering Knoll Assisted Living facility in Edison. An instrumental ensemble also entertained the residents, who gathered in the facility's front lobby with the Christmas tree as a backdrop with traditional Christmas hymns such as 'Silent Night' and 'Oh Come All Ye Faithful,' as well as seasonal favorites like 'Jingle Bells' and 'The Christmas Song.'



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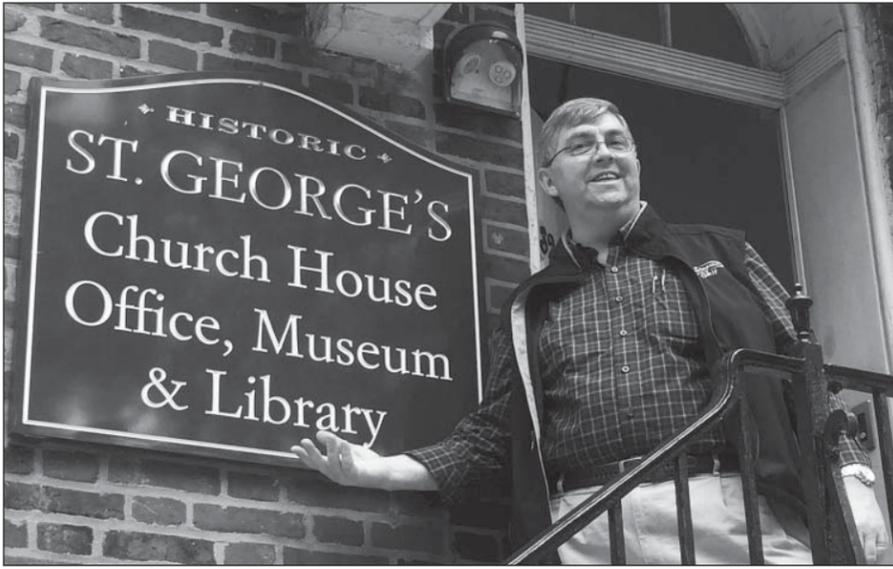


Photo by Stephanie Coutros

Rev. John Callanan stops at the entry to Old St. George's United Methodist Church House, Museum and Library during a pilgrimage on Methodist history for associates of the United Methodist Homes of New Jersey.

## United Methodist Homes Takes Spiritual Pilgrimage

NEPTUNE, N.J. — Organizations possess unique origins, histories and cultures, but they usually don't date back to the Civil War. As part of a comprehensive mission education program, Rev. John Callanan, the United Methodist Homes of New Jersey Corporate Director of Mission and Pastoral Care, recently led 35 fellow associates on an American Methodist Heritage Spiritual Pilgrimage. The two-day journey went from Philadelphia to Baltimore and back with Callanan speaking about the United Methodist Homes' history, mission, vision and values of Wesleyan identity as a United Methodist Health and Welfare Ministry.

In Philadelphia, the group visited Old St. George's United Methodist Church and Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC), two churches representing the diversity and brokenness in the early Methodist community. They contrasted John Wesley, Methodism's founder, and prominent 18th century Bishop Francis Asbury's ideals of inclusion and hope for an integrated movement.

This led to a discussion on UMH's handling of issues around race, inclusion, exclusion and privilege. Rev. Callanan invited participants, representing frontline associates, managers and leadership from all UMH communities, to give feedback on how to embrace diversity.

"The retreat is a fun opportunity to educate our associates, most of whom are not United Methodist, about our Wesleyan tradition and use the ideals,

tensions and sinfulness in the early MEC to foster reflection about our mission and values today," Rev. Callanan said.

In Baltimore, Old Otterbein UMC, dating from 1771, modeled the German-speaking traditions within Methodism. One additional site, The Museum of Early American Methodism at Lovely Lane UMC, which started as a Meeting House, helped explore the origins of the MEC.

Rev. Callanan's Pilgrimage Guide and Journal contained biographical sketches, photographs, histories, itineraries, and spiritual reflection exercises. Participants examined the history of United Methodist mission going back to Wesley, and the robust response to his example demonstrated by early American Methodism through the creation of United Methodist health and welfare agencies, including United Methodist Homes.

"The pilgrimage gave me the opportunity to understand UMH's foundation and the origins of our mission and values," said Stephanie Coutros, a digital marketing strategist and new associate.

The pilgrimage ended at Simpson House in Philadelphia, the oldest Methodist, older adult health and housing ministry in the region. UMH's oldest community, Collingswood Manor, had its roots in the same socio-religious forces after the Civil War — the need to care for widows and orphans. And being just across the Delaware River, Simpson House, most likely spurred the building of a "Methodist Home" in Collingswood.

The retreat culminated in a worship service in the Simpson House Chapel.

## Licensing School Weekends Scheduled For Local Pastors

Greater New Jersey's Local Pastors Licensing School will take place this year during four different weekends at The United Methodist Church in Washington in Washington, N.J.

The dates for each weekend are:

- Module 1, March 11-12
- Module 2, April 8-9
- Module 3, May 13-14
- Module 4, June 10-11

The registration deadline is Feb. 22.

The cost varies depending on several factors.

For Greater New Jersey: \$150 for all 4 modules or \$45 per module.

Outside of Greater New Jersey: \$300 for all 4 modules or \$90 per modules.

Payment is required at the time of registration.

The requirements for attending the school include:

- A completed registration form available here at [www.gnjumc.org](http://www.gnjumc.org).
- An email from your District Superintendent and Greater New Jersey Local Pastors Registrar Ray Schmeling ([rayschmeling@hotmail.com](mailto:rayschmeling@hotmail.com)) sent to Rev. C. Jean

McMullan, Director at [revjean@aol.com](mailto:revjean@aol.com).

- Completion of the online course: Methodism 101 on the United Methodist Communications website link to (<http://www.umcom.org/learn/united-methodism-101>)

The cost of the course is \$9.99.

One week prior to attending the school, all students need to submit:

1. A manuscript that you have preached in a congregational setting. Include information about the setting (size of congregation, average age of congregation, and other details that will give a glimpse of the setting).
2. A bulletin that was prepared for the worship service in which the submitted sermon was preached.
3. A reflection paper on a personal experience related to either Baptism or Communion. It could be something that you experienced yourself, or something that you saw, heard or felt on behalf of someone else.

To register go to [www.gnjumc.org](http://www.gnjumc.org).

## UM Homes Adds Rooms To Bridges At The Shores

OCEAN CITY, N.J. - Bridges at The Shores, a United Methodist Homes assisted living neighborhood dedicated to hospice care, has expanded from six, one-bedroom apartments to 12, just eight months after opening as the first residence of its kind in Cape May County.

This supportive environment offers an alternate to people who are unable or prefer not to receive hospice at home. Each of Bridges' 12, private one-bedroom apartments have kitchenettes and bathrooms custom designed in a palate reminiscent of sky, sea, and sand. Meaningful amenities include customized dining, Wi-Fi, salon, gym, bistro, outdoor courtyards, spacious common areas, and elegant furnishings.

"Our service expansion is an important response to strong community demand from families seeking a homelike setting and professional care for their loved ones," said Patti Smith, the marketing director at The Shores.

Care and support from a skilled, compassionate multi-disciplinary team of health professionals focuses on bringing much-needed comfort to residents as well as their loved ones. The expertise of the hospice team includes advanced, traditional and alternative therapies; 24-hour skilled nursing oversight; medication management; certified caregivers; emotional and spiritual support; personal services; and palliative care for symptom management and pain control.

## OBITUARIES

**Rev. Robert E. Davidson**, retired Elder, died Dec. 23. A service was held Dec. 30 at McVeytown Presbyterian Church in McVeytown, Pa.

Expressions of Sympathy may be sent to Mrs. Marjorie Davidson at P.O. Box 54, 17 W. John Street, McVeytown, PA, 17051.

**Rev. Eugene Foote**, retired Elder, died Dec. 26. A service was celebrated Jan. 7, at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Ocean Grove.

**Joan Bort**, spouse of Retired Elder David J. Bort, died Friday, Jan. 15. A memorial service was held Friday, Jan. 29, at Federated Church of East Arlington in East Arlington, Vermont.

Expressions of Sympathy may be sent to Rev. David J. Bort, 300 Village Lane, Apt. 2219, Bennington, VT 05201.

**Elizabeth Karcher**, Lay Member to Conference, died Saturday, Jan. 23. A viewing was held Saturday, Jan. 30 at Grace Union UMC in Blue Anchor, N.J., followed by a memorial service at Grace Union UMC.

Memorial Donations (In lieu of flowers) may be sent to Grace Union UMC, 131 East Central Avenue, Blue Anchor, N.J.

**Ruth L. Strang**, surviving spouse of Retired Elder Roland G. Strang, died on Thursday, Jan. 21. Viewings were held on Monday, Jan. 25 and Tuesday, Jan. 26 at Van Horn-McDonough Funeral Home in Lambertville, N.J. A memorial service was held Tuesday, Jan. 26 at Van Horn-McDonough Funeral Home.

Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to National Pancreas Foundation, 3 Bethesda Metro Center, Suite 700, Bethesda, MD 20814.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Kathleen Ertel (daughter), 9 Wiscasset Avenue, Ewing, NJ 08618.

# LAUGH

CLOWN MINISTRIES

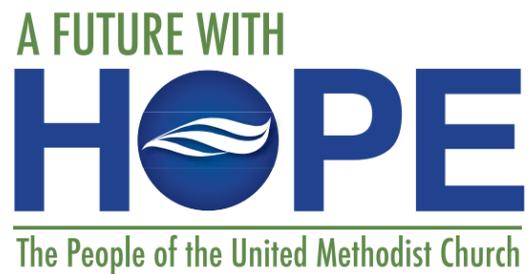
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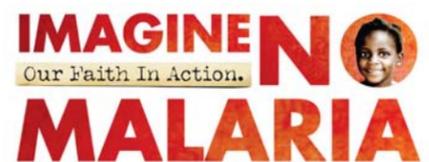
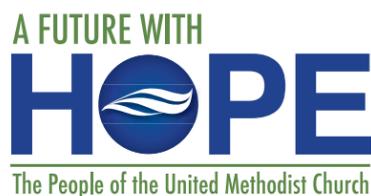
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