

A Future with Hope -Jeremiah 29:11
Greater New Jersey Conference
Strategic Ministry Plan Summary

Vision

We see a church like Jesus Christ—radical spirit and humble, teaching and healing, soul saving and soul tending, leader and servant, unbound and outbound.

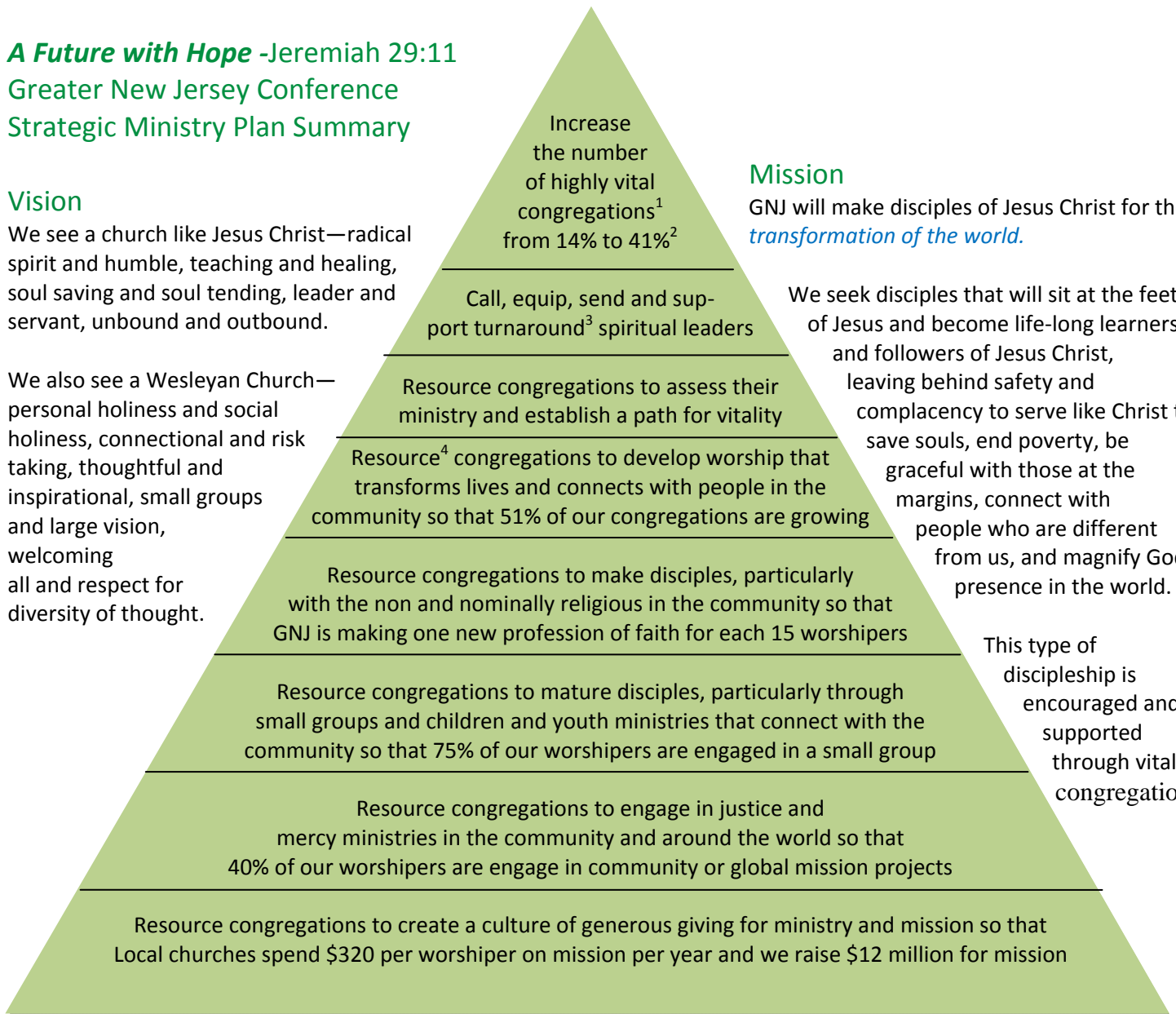
We also see a Wesleyan Church—personal holiness and social holiness, connectional and risk taking, thoughtful and inspirational, small groups and large vision, welcoming all and respect for diversity of thought.

Mission

GNJ will make disciples of Jesus Christ for the *transformation of the world.*

We seek disciples that will sit at the feet of Jesus and become life-long learners and followers of Jesus Christ, leaving behind safety and complacency to serve like Christ to save souls, end poverty, be graceful with those at the margins, connect with people who are different from us, and magnify God’s presence in the world.

This type of discipleship is encouraged and supported through vital congregations.



¹**HIGHLY VITAL CONGREGATIONS** are inwardly transformed and missionally outbound. Vital congregations are Spirit-filled, forward leaning communities of believers that grow over time, welcome all people (Galatians 3:28); make disciples of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20); and serve like Christ through justice and mercy ministries (Micah 6:8 and Luke 4:17-21).

²**FROM 14% TO 41%** is a complete turnaround and transformation of the way we do ministry. It will require a full commitment to follow the way of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit, align conference ministry with congregations. Building on our Wesleyan tradition, we will focus on processes, equipping, innovation and experimentation.

³**TURNAROUND LEADERS** assess the gifts and needs of the congregation and community, set a courageous vision and goals, and inspire and equip the congregation to make new disciples, grow worship, grow disciples’ faith through small groups, engage the congregation in life changing mission, and increase giving to mission and ministry. Ephesians 4:11-12

⁴**WE WILL RESOURCE** congregations and spiritual leaders that are ready and desire to become vital and more like Christ. We will resource for three stages of ministry – explore, engage and evolve. We will resource congregations and spiritual leaders by coming along side of them and assisting them with their development plans. Congregations that desire to continue as they are we will work with as legacy congregations.

1 **STRATEGIC MINISTRY PLAN**

2 *A Future with Hope - Vision, Mission, Strategy and Goals*

3 *I know the plans I have for you says the Lord, a future not of destruction but a future with hope -Jeremiah*
4 *29:11*

5 A RICH HISTORY FOR AN IMPORTANT FUTURE

6 The Greater New Jersey Conference (GNJAC) has uniquely positioned itself with hope, courage and
7 creativity for the emerging opportunities and challenges of the 21st century. The journey began in
8 New Jersey in the mid 1700's as a Methodist lay person, James Early, organized class meetings in
9 Southern New Jersey. At the same time, George Whitfield, an inspiring evangelist in the New
10 Brunswick Area had many new believers convert to Christ and Methodism in response to his
11 preaching. Their efforts launched the Methodist movement in New Jersey.

12 As Methodism throughout the colonies grew, Southern New Jersey Methodists were a part of the
13 Philadelphia Area and Northern New Jersey Methodists were part of the New York Area. In 1968,
14 the New Jersey Methodists became one episcopal area served by one bishop and began to work
15 together; although the two conferences remained distinct conferences. In 2000, the conferences
16 merged and formed GNJAC. For the last 12 years, GNJAC has been deepening spiritually, working to
17 establish an infrastructure for ministry and strengthening relationships for collaborative mission.
18 Today we are called to build on our history to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation
19 of the world.

20 In addition to developing the infrastructure and relationships, GNJAC has been taking bold steps to
21 become more diverse. Today we are one of the five most diverse conferences in the entire
22 denomination. We are weaving the rich traditions of African American, European, Caribbean, Indian,
23 Korean-American, Latin American and Filipino-American disciples and congregations into the fabric
24 of our conference. New Hispanic, African American, Korean-American and Filipino-American
25 congregations have contributed to our evangelistic history. We are making room for theological
26 diversity and continuing ministries of social action and evangelism, justice and faith sharing. A future
27 with hope is being embraced.

28 A GREAT COMMANDMENT AND COMMISSION

29 Our unique history positioned us for the great commandment – *to love the Lord our God with all of*
30 *our heart, soul and mind and to love our neighbor* (Matthew 22:36-40) and the great commission to
31 *make disciples* (Matthew 28:16-20). The church, the living body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27) is the
32 primary mission center and the vehicle for calling, equipping, sending and supporting disciples to
33 love God completely, to love our neighbor and to make new disciples. It is through and for the local
34 congregation that spiritual leaders are called, equipped, sent and supported for ministry (Ephesians
35 4:11-12).

1 Through the ages, the calling has remained the same but how we live the calling has changed as
2 contexts, new technologies, cultures, communities and circumstances emerged and evolved. The
3 computer and the use of electronics, social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as other
4 media for communicating the Gospel are transforming the way we communicate faith and do
5 church.

6 Throughout the centuries, the church has been one of the most stable institutions because it builds
7 on a tradition that has served and informed our future. We have a rich Wesleyan tradition that has
8 shaped our values and actions. The Methodist movement initiated new ways of reaching the non
9 and nominally religious and developed practices for maturing disciples. These methods were
10 viewed by many as non-traditional and risk-taking. It is our reliance on familiar practices without
11 drawing on our vibrant tradition to develop new practices that threatens our future. Some
12 congregations have been too slow to change and therefore the message seems irrelevant to the
13 culture and world around us. Jesus too had difficulty helping the religious people of his day adapt to
14 an emerging culture that was looking for a different future. Jesus was able to capture the essence of
15 the tradition and infuse it with God's grace through parables and healing so that the Gospel was
16 relevant and powerful for people.

17

18

FIVE AREAS TO ADDRESS

19 Today, we sometimes have difficulty honoring the past and embracing new forms of worship,
20 communication and ministry so that we connect with the legions of non and nominally religious
21 people in our communities. Through listening tours across the conference and in every district, five
22 areas were highlighted as key areas to address.

23 1. Relevancy – We are not consistently connecting with our communities with a message and
24 ministry that is meaningful and purposeful. A recent study conducted for the Greater New
25 Jersey Conference, *Historic Trends and 2030 Projections* indicated that churches whose
26 worshipers are different from the people in the community are not sustainable because
27 they are not connecting with the people in the community. These congregations will likely
28 decline unless they connect through meaningful ministry and engage the people in the
29 community as partners in ministry who have God-given gifts to offer the church and the
30 world.

31

32 2. Diversity and Inclusion – We are in the top five most diverse conferences in our
33 denomination. We have started new ethnic congregations and grown multicultural
34 congregations. In the midst of our forward leaning commitment to diversity, there is still
35 room to grow. Our racial ethnic diversity represents 20% of our membership, yet the racial
36 ethnic diversity in the state of New Jersey is almost 50% of the population. Diversity is also
37 more than ethnicity. Diversity includes people of different races, classes, theologies, ages,
38 sexual orientation, disabilities, and people new to the faith. Our future mission calls for

1 open, welcoming and engaging congregations and conference leadership. Our church needs
2 to be shaped by the great diversity of our region as was the early Christian church as
3 reported in Acts 10.

4

5 3. Leadership – The culture within our nation and Greater New Jersey in particular, is evolving.
6 Leadership skills that were once effective for a more stable church and time need to be
7 reshaped for a new generation of believers. We need to recruit/call and develop both clergy
8 and lay spiritual leaders to meet the emerging challenges we face. In our conference and
9 congregations we need to:

- 10 a. Call/recruit for a heart for Jesus and develop for spiritual maturity
- 11 b. Call/recruit for passion and develop for growing vital congregations
- 12 c. Call/recruit for vision and develop leaders for leading change and resolving conflict
- 13 d. Call/recruit for diversity and develop for cultural competence (how to understand
14 different cultures and community needs as well as how to interact, communicate
15 and lead within multi-cultural contexts)
- 16 e. Call/recruit younger leaders and develop congregations for supporting younger
17 leaders
- 18 f. Call/recruit for creativity and innovation and develop leaders for ministering in
19 particular contexts
- 20 g. Call/recruit for perseverance and develop leaders for fruitful ministry

21

22 4. Congregations – Many of our congregations are having a difficult time reshaping their
23 ministry for relevance, mission, diversity, inclusion and growth. As congregations struggle
24 with finances and worship attendance we are experiencing more conflict. Overall, our
25 congregations are not as vital as they once were. The Report, *Historic Trends and 2030*
26 *Projections* forecasts that 123 of our congregations will discontinue by 2030 if we do not
27 address congregational vitality immediately.

28

29 5. Mission – Some of our practices in ministry have made us less sustainable and the ways we
30 articulate our mission are not capturing the minds and imaginations of the non and
31 nominally religious. Sometimes it is because our focus is more about our need than those
32 we serve and sometimes our vision for mission is too small. Rekindling a holy and bold
33 mission that is worthy of God's time will take more than what we can do on our own. We
34 need a Holy Spirit fire and wisdom to reach the least and the privileged, the last and the
35 first, the lost and the found.

36

37 The Strategic Plan that follows has been shaped by the listening sessions attended by more than 700
38 disciples across the conference.

39 The concerns expressed about our difficulty in being relevant, growing more diverse, calling and
40 equipping leadership, growing vital congregations and presenting a compelling mission are
41 confirmed in the trends of GNJAC over the last 10 years

- 1 • Worship attendance declined by 20%
- 2 • Professions of faith declined by 34%
- 3 • Shared ministry collection rate between 2006 and 2011 declined from 86% to 79%
- 4 • The number of churches declined from 610 to 578
- 5 • Baptisms declined from 3,321 to 1,882
- 6 • The number of children and youth in our congregations declined from 28,581 to 25,271
- 7 • 50% of our active pastors are over 57 years old and 50% of our members are over 58 years
- 8 old

9
10 By Contrast

- 11 • Population in GNJAC area has grown by 5% in the last 10 years
- 12 • Today 50% of GNJAC area residents represent an ethnic group while GNJAC membership has
- 13 only 20% who represent an ethnic group
- 14 • The average age of GNJAC area residents is 37 while the average age of GNJAC is 58
- 15 • It is estimated that 25% of the residents and 33% of young adults in the GNJAC area are non
- 16 or nominally religious

17
18 The *Historic Trends and 2030 Projections* study indicates that by 2030 we will have only 34,770
19 worshipers (today we have 47,751) and 455 congregations (today we have 578). GNJAC and its
20 congregations will become more irrelevant and will not sustain its ministry and mission or its
21 congregations unless together we focus ministry, connect with the non and nominally religious, and
22 intentionally work to grow younger and more diverse. **The answers are not “quick fixes” or small**
23 **changes or working harder on what we are already doing. It will require Holy Spirit transformation**
24 **by the renewing of our minds and hearts (Romans 12:1-2).** This requires a major shift in the way we
25 think and do ministry both as a conference and as congregations:

- 26 • From *managing* clergy and congregations **to being in relationship with** clergy and
- 27 congregations
- 28 • From Conference *programming* **to** Conference *resourcing* local congregations
- 29 • From *telling* clergy and congregations *what to do* **to supporting** clergy and
- 30 congregations *to innovate and create* how they will make disciples and transform
- 31 the world in their context.

32 These shifts are grounded in our relationship with Jesus Christ and are guided by His ministry as
33 reported in the Gospels.

34 It requires the conference to rethink how it leads, resources and supports clergy and congregations
35 so that we can more effectively make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

36 Keys to our future are calling and equipping spiritual leaders, growing more vital congregations and
37 making hard choices about what we do and what we stop doing. We need to identify our gifts and
38 strengths and be infused by Holy Spirit passion to reach new generations of believers and engage in
39 life changing mission. In the midst of our challenges, we claim a future of hope.

1

A WORD ABOUT VITAL CONGREGATIONS

2 The Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table have committed to work with congregations,
3 conferences and general agencies from 2012 through 2023 to grow more highly vital congregations.
4 Highly vital congregations are ones that grow over time. The denomination's *Call to Action Study*
5 and further research with our congregations found that highly vital congregations are inwardly
6 transformed and missionally outbound. Vital congregations are Spirit-filled, forward leaning
7 communities of believers that welcome all people (Galatians 3:28); make disciples of Jesus Christ
8 through the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20); and serve like Christ through justice and
9 mercy ministries (Micah 6:8 and Luke 4:17-21).

10 Vital congregations evidence their vitality through: A) Life-full stories being told - stories about
11 changed lives, new disciples and transforming ministry. B) Fruitfulness that is evidenced by new
12 disciples being made, number of disciples in small groups for learning and faith formation, number
13 of disciples engaged in worship and mission, and generous giving by disciples, particularly to
14 mission. C) Life changing ministries that build up the community of faith and transform lives and
15 social conditions in the community and the world. Vital churches have powerful stories, fruitfulness
16 and life changing ministries.

17 Life-full stories, fruitfulness and life changing ministries are fostered in vital congregations through

- 18 • Inviting and inspiring worship
- 19 • Engaged disciples in mission and outreach
- 20 • Gifted, empowered and equipped lay leadership
- 21 • Effective, equipped and inspired clergy leadership
- 22 • Faith forming small group ministries
- 23 • Strong children and youth ministries

24

25 These measurable activities provide guidance for where we need to give our attention for sustained
26 growth over time.

27 Growing vital congregations is critical for reaching new generations of believers, raising up new lay
28 and clergy leadership, growing younger, becoming more diverse, growing disciple's faith, and
29 engaging in vital justice and mercy ministries. Vital congregations are providing a future with hope.

30

31

GOSPEL QUESTIONS

32 We can begin to work on vision, mission, objectives and strategies and even make good progress but
33 fail in our calling because these become works rather than faith, tasks rather than purpose, and
34 answers rather than a quest to live the Great Commandment and Commission.

1 One of the significant challenges before us is having congregations face the important questions of
2 our time. These questions include but are not limited:

- 3 1. What is a disciple? Why do we make disciples? How does discipleship differ from
4 membership? What does it mean to make a disciple? Is making disciples enough or are we
5 seeking maturity from our disciples? What do mature disciples do? How do we mature
6 disciples?
7
- 8 2. Why does the local congregation exist? What is the purpose and role of a congregation?
9 What does it mean to be the body of Christ today? What is a vital congregation and what
10 are the signs and measures of vitality within your congregation?
11
- 12 3. What is a spiritual leader and how is a secular leader the same and different? How will we
13 call, equip, send and support spiritual leaders?
14
- 15 4. What does it mean to transform the world? What in the world needs to be changed and
16 why? Why do we want to transform the world? How will we change lives and the
17 community?
18
- 19 5. Why are we challenged to connect with young adults and the non and nominally religious?
20 What can we learn from this new culture called *mosaics*? Who is the *mosaic* generation and
21 what do they value? How do we relate and connect with young people and why isn't the
22 message connecting as it once did?
23
- 24 6. How would you describe the people that worship with you? How would you describe the
25 people in your community? Is there a difference? How do/will you bridge differences? What
26 new things do you need to learn? How will you connect with the people in your community?
27
- 28 7. So that... Why be engaged by the vision, mission, objectives and strategies outlined in this
29 plan? What difference will it make and how will we be different? What are the ministries
30 you do so that you make disciples, grow the vitality of your congregation, grow spiritual
31 leaders, become more like the people in your community, and become younger and more
32 diverse?
33

34 The *Gospel Questions* provide opportunities for exploration to help congregations down new paths
35 rather than *the same old path* with the same results we have been experiencing. Every congregation
36 and conference leadership group is called to engage in holy conversation by asking these Gospel
37 questions in order to give shape to their ministry.

38

39

1

WE ARE CALLED

2 We have a rich history and we have important challenges ahead. Our present course is
3 unsustainable. In the midst of these times, God is waiting for us to take the first step, saying *I have*
4 *not brought you to this place for a future of harm, but a future with hope.* (Jeremiah 29:11)

5 We are called by God to re-imagine what it means for us to live the Great Commandment and the
6 Great Commission in this age. We are called to a new vision of growing younger and more diverse,
7 of connecting with the non and nominally religious in our communities, calling and equipping
8 leaders for this age, increasing the vitality of our congregations and engaging in life-changing justice
9 and mercy mission. We are called to communicate the faith story with passion and relevance and
10 engage with the community with what is essential to them. We are called to be the George
11 Whitfield's and James Early's of our time to shape new generations of believers. We invite the Holy
12 Spirit to reignite within our leaders and congregations a movement that transforms lives and
13 transforms communities. It will require change, not small changes but reorientation to becoming a
14 culture of innovation, and experimentation. It will require building on our tradition and courageous
15 risk-taking to forge a new future. We are poised for *greatness*, a Great Commandment and the
16 Great Commission rooted in Christ and freed for this time. The following vision, mission, goals,
17 objectives and strategies will lead us into *a future with hope.*

18

VISION

19 We see a church like Jesus Christ—radical spirit and humble, teaching and healing, soul saving and
20 soul tending, leader and servant, unbound and outbound.

21 We also see a Wesleyan Church—personal holiness and social holiness, connectional and risk taking,
22 thoughtful and inspirational, small groups and large vision, welcoming all and respecting diversity of
23 thought.

24

MISSION

25 Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

26 We seek disciples that will sit at the feet of Jesus and become life-long learners and followers of
27 Jesus Christ, leaving behind safety and complacency to serve like Christ to save souls, end poverty,
28 be graceful to those at the margins, connect with people who are different from us, and magnify
29 God's presence in the world.

30 This type of discipleship is encouraged and supported through vital congregations.

31 The Mission of GNJAC is twofold: 1) Assist spiritual leaders to connect with their greatest joy and the
32 world's greatest need by calling, nurturing, equipping, sending and supporting them to grow and
33 support a new vision of discipleship. 2) Resource congregations to deepen their love for God and
34 connection with the community as they become spiritual innovators much like the first century

1 church but for 21st century realities. We will resource our congregations to engage in and live the
2 Gospel questions of our time.

3 GOAL

4 We are called to ignite a great commandment and commission movement throughout GNJAC to
5 **grow the number of highly vital congregations from 14% to 41%** and connect and reflect the
6 communities we serve.

7

8 OBJECTIVES (TO BE ACCOMPLISHED BY 2018)

- 9 1. Increase the percentage of churches growing in worship attendance from 33% to 51%
- 10 2. Start 90 new faith communities¹ (2 per year in each district and charter five as new
11 congregations – at least half of the new faith communities comprised of residents from the
12 immediate community)
- 13 3. Decrease the number of worshipers it takes to make a new profession of faith from 17 to 15
14 (presently we make one new profession of faith for each 17 worshipers)
- 15 4. Increase the percentage of worshipers in small groups from 43% to 75%
- 16 5. Increase the number of young adults in small groups from 2820 to 3200
- 17 6. Increase our racial ethnic worshipers from 20% to 25%
- 18 7. Increase the percentage of worshipers engaged in mission from 8%² to 40%
- 19 8. Increase local church dollars spent on mission per worshiper from \$280 to \$320³
- 20 9. Raise \$12 million through a mission campaign through our congregations for a global
21 mission (Imagine No Malaria - \$2 million), a regional mission (Sandy relief and Recovery - \$7
22 million) and a local mission project identified by each congregation (\$3 million). We are also
23 raising an additional 10 million for Sandy Relief and Recovery from foundations, government
24 sources, denominational sources and large donors. Of this additional \$15 million we have
25 already raised \$6.3 million and another \$2.9 million committed through a national volunteer
26 base for a total \$9.2 million.

27

28 GNJAC STRATEGY

29 Call, equip, send and support spiritual leaders to grow vital congregations

30 *A spiritual leader has the depth of faith and the leadership qualities and skills to inspire and equip*
31 *people to grow vital congregations, make new disciples and engage in justice and mercy mission.*

32 *A vital congregation is a congregation that transforms lives and communities and grows over time.*

¹ A new faith community includes a new church start, second site ministry, new worship service

² Presently we only ask for people who go on mission trips in statistical reports. In the future we will also ask how many disciples are involved in community ministry through the congregation

³ \$320 is more in line with other conferences in our jurisdiction.

1 Congregational Foci

- 2 1. Evangelism—sharing our faith so that others come to faith
- 3 2. Worship
- 4 3. Mission - community justice and mercy ministries
- 5 4. Children, youth and young adult ministries
- 6 5. Small groups that practice and live the Wesleyan Means of Grace
- 7 6. Stewardship

8

9 Conference Foci

- 10 1. Learning opportunities for lay leadership and pastors
- 11 • Lay leadership teams and clergy develop their own learning plans focusing on one of
- 12 the six congregational foci which the conference resources and supports. A
- 13 yearlong resourcing plan rather than one time workshops or district events
- 14 2. Resourcing congregations for learning through
- 15 • Connecting prayer
- 16 • Learning and resourcing groups
- 17 • Identify discipleship/congregational development plans and resource
- 18 congregational teams rather than individuals from the congregations to facilitate
- 19 hope, renewal and a path toward vitality within congregations, the conference will
- 20 work with congregations once every five years to assist each congregation to do a
- 21 self-assessment. The assessment and plan for renewal and vitality will use
- 22 resources from paragraph 213 of the Book of Discipline and a process developed
- 23 through the annual conference.
- 24 • Calling and recruiting leadership
- 25 • Clear expectations
- 26

27

HOW WILL WE MAKE DECISIONS

28 We will allocate resources - time, people and money - to grow more highly vital congregations, make
29 and mature disciples and engage in community and world transforming mission. The following are
30 questions to serve as guideposts for missional decision making.

- 31 1. Is this Holy Spirit inspired to lead to transformed lives, communities and congregations?
- 32 2. Will this help us grow/maximize more highly vital congregations?
- 33 3. Will this Ignite innovation in our congregations/conference?
- 34 4. Will this help us call and recruit the types of leaders we seek - leaders with a heart for
- 35 Jesus, passion, vision, diversity, younger, creative, perseverance?
- 36 5. Will this help us grow younger and more diverse?
- 37 6. What will we stop doing in order to do this?

38

39

1 VITAL CONGREGATION'S FOCUS AND STRATEGIES

2 *Innovative Worship* that magnifies God and inspires followers of Jesus Christ

- 3 1. Worship teams infusing Holy Spirit creativity and inspiration into worship that is relevant
- 4 and connects with people in the community
- 5 2. Worship that connects with the non and nominally religious⁴
- 6 3. Passionate preaching that connects emotionally with worshipers and leads to decisions to
- 7 be more like Christ
- 8 4. Thoughtful preaching to increase faith and theological understanding and help disciples
- 9 apply the scriptures and faith to daily living (introduce more topical sermons and worship
- 10 series)
- 11 5. Lift up God sightings⁵ and positive stories in preaching and worship about the church, it's
- 12 disciples and progress toward mission and ministry goals

13

14 *Innovative Evangelism* that connects with new generations of believers

- 15 1. Inspire belief so rooted in God's grace that disciples invite new generations of believers to
- 16 experience God's grace in Christ
- 17 2. Regularly after the sermon invite disciples to renew an aspect of their life
- 18 3. Engage disciples to tell their faith story and invite others to worship (FRAN⁶)
- 19 4. Create a culture of radical hospitality and follow up with visitors
- 20 5. Connect with the non and nominally religious in the community

21

22 *Innovative Small Group Discipleship* that is maturing disciples and engaging disciples in their calling

23 and purpose

- 24 1. Start more small groups, mature disciples through small groups, practice the *Wesleyan*
- 25 *Means of Grace*⁷ and invite new group members
- 26 2. Call and equip new small group leaders
- 27 3. Start more ministries with children, youth and young adults

⁴ The non and nominally religious are people who are often spiritual but feel the church has become too institutional or lost connection with people's souls and journeys.

⁵ God sightings are times and spiritual moments where God is revealed in powerful ways

⁶ FRAN is a resource to help disciples invite Friends, Relatives, Associates and Neighbors to worship and ministries

⁷ The *means of grace* are ways God works invisibly in disciples, hastening, strengthening and confirming faith so that God's grace pervades in and through disciples. The *means of grace* are both works of piety and works of mercy.

Works of Piety – These include prayer, fasting, reading, meditating and studying the Scriptures, regularly attending worship and healthy living, regularly receiving the sacraments, Christian conferencing (accountability to one another), and Bible study.

Works of Mercy - These include doing good works, visiting the sick, visiting the imprisoned, sharing faith, feeding the hungry, giving generously to the needs of others, seeking justice, ending oppression and discrimination (for instance Wesley implored Methodists to end slavery), and serving with the poor.

1 *Innovative Mission* that is merciful and just toward the poor and the marginalized

- 2 1. Engage disciples with the poor, marginalized and people in need in our communities
- 3 2. Create a mission movement in the congregation so that more disciples are passionate about
- 4 their God calling⁸ and live their purpose in life
- 5 3. Regularly invite disciples to serve in the community and go on mission experiences

6
7 *Innovative Stewardship* that increases giving for ministry and mission

- 8 1. Conduct ongoing stewardship awareness to help disciples understand why we give, what is
- 9 biblically expected of disciples, and inspires disciples to *step up* in their giving
- 10 2. Inspire disciples to give generously to ministry and mission every week
- 11 3. Conduct a mission fund campaign that raises money for Sandy Relief and Recovery, Imagine
- 12 No Malaria and assists our congregations to become more vital

13

14 PASTORAL AND LAY LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES

- 15 1. Coach lay leadership to grow deeper in their faith and increase their leadership
- 16 effectiveness
- 17 2. Engage the congregation in setting courageous mission and ministry goals and inspire and
- 18 lead the congregation to reach these goals
- 19 3. Preach, teach and communicate so that disciples are inspired, growing in faith, increasing
- 20 biblical understanding and are making a decision to change their lives
- 21 4. Lead disciples to grow in small groups, grow children, youth and young adult ministries, and
- 22 share their faith
- 23 5. Grow worship, stewardship and the number of new disciples

24

25 CONFERENCE MINISTRY FOCUS AND STRATEGIES

26 *Leadership Development Ministry* to grow more vital congregations so that we make more disciples

27 and engage in transformational mission

- 28 1. Assist clergy and lay leaders to identify leadership development needs and support and
- 29 resource leaders to grow their faith and skills for growing vital congregations and connecting
- 30 with their communities
- 31 2. Direct leadership development toward making and maturing disciples, engaging in
- 32 community and world transformation and growing vital congregations
- 33 3. Recruit, grow and support turnaround⁹ leaders
- 34 4. Recruit, grow and support young adult clergy and lay spiritual leaders

⁸ Everyone is called by God for the ministry of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12)

⁹ A turnaround leader assess the needs and strategies of a congregation and community, sets a courageous vision and goals and inspires and equips the congregation to make new disciples, grow worship, grow disciples' faith through small groups, engage the congregation in life changing mission, and increases giving to mission and ministry.

1 *Sandy Relief and Recovery Ministry* to engage United Methodists to repair homes, rebuild
2 communities and renew lives

- 3 1. Repair homes of low income, disabled and elderly individuals in collaboration with long-
4 term recovery groups
- 5 2. Rebuild at least three communities impacted by Superstorm Sandy using the Communities
6 of Shalom strategy
- 7 3. Organize volunteer host sites to house and deploy 15,000 volunteers
- 8 4. Recruit young adults throughout GNJAC to work on Sandy Recovery
- 9 5. Renew lives through counseling and spiritual support

10

11 *Urban Ministry* to develop our presence in greater New Jersey area cities, grow vital urban
12 congregations, address poverty, and develop urban communities

- 13 1. Start new and strengthen existing Communities of Shalom
- 14 2. Identify common funding and training strategies for our mission focused congregations and
15 mission centers, which includes Respond, Center for United Methodist Aid to the
16 Community (CUMAC) and Neighborhood Center
- 17 3. Start new urban faith communities with new and emerging populations who are
18 underserved
- 19 4. Utilize *A Future with Hope* to raise grant funds for urban ministry
- 20 5. Engage mission teams to serve in our urban communities

21

22 *Poverty Ministries* to meet the immediate needs of the poor and address the systemic causes of
23 poverty

- 24 1. Educate disciples across GNJAC about poverty and the root causes of poverty
- 25 2. Create a network of churches and mission centers that are working with the poor to end
26 poverty
- 27 3. Identify one area of poverty that GNJAC will address together as a way to give witness to the
28 region of the *Great Commandment*

29

30 *Imagine No Malaria Ministry* to help end deaths by malaria in Africa

- 31 1. Educate disciples across GNJAC about the killer diseases in developing countries and how we
32 can end deaths by malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS
- 33 2. Raise our fair share to support the United Methodist Imagine No Malaria effort

34

35

1 *Multi Ethnic Ministry* to increase the diversity of our conference and our sanctuaries on Sunday
2 morning

- 3 1. Start new faith communities to reach existing and new immigrant populations
- 4 2. Start and engage in ministries that serve immigrant populations using tools such as English
5 as a Second Language and Justice for Our Neighbors
- 6 3. Equip clergy and congregations for cross cultural appointments
- 7 4. Recruit and equip ethnic clergy and mission personnel to serve the church and community
- 8 5. Grow our relationships with partner conferences outside the United States (Korea, Africa,
9 Argentina and Russia)

10

11 *New Faith Communities¹⁰ and Congregational Development Ministry* to reach new and younger
12 generations of believers

- 13 1. Start new communities of believers through mission activities and small groups that may
14 emerge into congregations
- 15 2. Support congregations to start second and third campuses
- 16 3. Start new congregations with new immigrant populations and in growing suburban and ex-
17 urban communities
- 18 4. Lead congregations to identify their strengths, challenges, opportunities and to develop a
19 ministry plan to become more vital
- 20 5. Resource congregations in relationship to their context, ministry plan and stage. Resourcing
21 will be in alignment to a congregation's self-identify and their stage of ministry. Stages
22 include:
 - 23 a. Exploration – The congregation wants to explore their purpose and who God is
24 calling them to become. The congregation may be exploring a particular ministry or
25 the congregation's overall vision and mission.
 - 26 b. Engagement – The congregation's vision and mission is clear and the congregation is
27 engaging in making new disciples, growing all disciples, and engaging disciples in
28 ministry according to their calling and purpose.
 - 29 c. Evolving – The congregation has explored and engaged in its purpose and God is
30 calling them to be something new. It may be a new ministry, or organizational plan,
31 or a second campus, or daughtering a new church start, or adding a building
32 addition or a new building or any strategy or ministry that evolves the congregation
33 into becoming a new creation in Christ.
 - 34 d. Legacy – The congregation has decided their best years are behind them. The
35 congregation wants to continue in ministry as it is and explore the legacy to share
36 with future generations.

37

¹⁰ A new faith community includes a new church start, second site ministry, new worship service

1 *Young People Ministry* to reach new generations of believers

- 2 1. Start new faith communities with a focus on younger generations of believers
- 3 2. Call, equip and support young adult leaders exploring ministry vocations
- 4 3. Start young adult communities using available parsonages or other property that builds
- 5 discipleship and mission communities to assist young adults to explore vocation, develop
- 6 congregations and engage in justice and mercy mission
- 7 4. Yearly youth retreat to reach thousands of youth across the conference where youth are
- 8 invited into a relationship with Jesus Christ and are equipped for daily living
- 9 5. Camping ministry that changes lives, engages young people and their families to grow
- 10 deeper in their faith and becomes self-sustaining
- 11

12 CONFERENCE STAFF AND LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES

- 13 1. Organize and carry out ministry so that the congregation is the primary source of mission
- 14 activity and focus resources to help congregations grow younger, become more diverse, be
- 15 more mission minded, mature disciples faith, and reach new generations of believers
- 16 2. In collaboration with congregations, identify congregational types and resource
- 17 congregations according to their type
- 18 3. Engage with pastoral and lay leadership so that they grow spiritually
- 19 4. Lead pastors and lay leadership to continually improve their ability to lead the congregation
- 20 to make disciples and transform the world
- 21 5. Support pastors and lay leadership so that they experiment in ministry and take risks for
- 22 Christ
- 23 6. Lead the conference to start new faith communities to grow GNJ younger, more diverse,
- 24 more mission minded and reach new generations of the non and nominally religious
- 25 7. Allocate time and resources to maximize reaching our goal and objectives
- 26 8. Provide quality service and ministry to our congregations
- 27 9. Engage with congregations and clergy so that pastors stay longer in their appointment
- 28 10. Organize conference-wide change the world weekend to model mission in the community
- 29 11. Organize conference-wide radical hospitality weekend as Christ's witnesses in our
- 30 communities
- 31 12. Organize a conference-wide lay movement so that laity are leading local ministries, reaching
- 32 new generations of believers and developing new leaders, particularly young adult leaders
- 33 13. Steward conference resources faithfully
- 34

35 NEXT STEPS

36 Important to moving the Strategic Ministry Plan forward is for the conference to align resources –
37 money, personnel, activities and time with the strategic ministry plan. Alignment is ensuring that

1 each aspect of the conference life and ministry connects with one or more aspects of the plan and
2 that resources (money, personnel, activities and time) have a direct correlation to an objective and
3 strategy and that the resources are carrying out the mission and moving toward the vision.

4

5

CONFERENCE LEADERSHIP NEXT STEPS

6

1. Review the conference budget and organize the budget in alignment with the plan and
7 allocate/ negotiate any necessary shifts within the budget to carry out the plan. If a
8 congregation has not set goals, engage in a process and set goals by fall 2013 charge
9 conference. – Council on Finance and Administration and the Primary Task Team (PTT)

10

2. Review present staffing and organization and change as necessary the current staffing
11 configuration so that GNJ is properly staffed to implement the plan – Personnel Committee,
12 Council on Finance and Administration and PTT

11

12

13

3. Assign staff to the plan so that each goal and strategy has a staff person assigned – PTT
14 executive committee and bishop

14

15

4. Each agency of the conference review the plan's goals and strategies and develop a plan to
16 carry out its ministry collaboratively with other boards and committees of the conference so
17 that every agency is supporting the implementation of the plan – PTT

16

17

18

5. Review the present ministry of the conference and negotiate with agencies and staff what
19 they will stop doing because the activities do not directly impact moving the plan forward –
20 PTT

19

20

21

6. Develop evaluation tools and define the metrics that guide and evaluate conference staff,
22 agencies, conference ministries, pastors and congregations in relation to the strategic
23 ministry plan – PTT executive committee, board of ordained ministry, board of laity, cabinet
24 and personnel committee

22

23

24

25

7. Lead every congregation once within every five years through a mission and ministry study
26 using materials from Paragraph 213 of the Book of Discipline (these resources may include
27 additional resources such as Natural Church Development) to assess congregational health,
28 vitality, and mission to assist congregations to make decisions about how it will fulfill its
29 calling and purpose. - PTT executive committee and extended cabinet

26

27

28

29

30

8. Design a resource that will assist congregations to engage in the Gospel Questions outlined
31 in the plan – extended cabinet

31

32

9. Develop an appropriate timeline for the strategies, activities and objectives – PTT executive
33 committee and extended cabinet

32

33

34

35

CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP NEXT STEPS

36

1. Engage in a year long conversation using the Gospel questions starting January 2014 –
37 Pastor, lay leader and church council chairperson with the support of the superintendent

37

Resolutions to the 2013 Annual Conference

- 1 2. Review their congregational vital congregations goals and identify progress and next steps –
- 2 Pastor, lay leader and church council chairperson
- 3 3. Work with the superintendent to identify an appropriate timeline to engage in mission and
- 4 ministry study using materials from Paragraph 213 of the Book of Discipline and resources
- 5 developed by staff – Pastor, lay leader and church council chairperson and superintendent
- 6 4. Identify how the congregation will carry out the congregational strategies identified in the
- 7 plan – Pastor, lay leader and church council chairperson

8

9 We trust God is leading us to a future with hope as we continue to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit
10 to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

11

12