Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar’s 60th Birthday Worship Celebration

April 6, 2011, 7 p.m.
Bishop Violet L. Fisher Preaching
St. John’s United Methodist Church, Hazlet, NJ

You are invited!
Please RSVP to your District Superintendent’s office or Ginny Kaiser at the conference office

See story, page 3

BULLETIN:

Bishop Rounds Out Cabinet with Kwak, Plumstead

OCEAN — In dramatic moves that saw sweeping changes in his cabinet, Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar has named two new district superintendents, bringing to five the shifts in the nine-member body with the new conference year. The new superintendents effective July 1 will be:

- The Rev. Jisun Kwak, pastor of Centenary Church Metuchen, to the Gateway South District.
- The Rev. Wayne J. Plumstead, Coordinating pastor of Park Church, Bloomfield, and First Church, Montclair, to the Palisades District.

The Bishop, in his statement announcing the appointments, spoke glowingly of the new superintendents and their dedication to ministry.

“I am delighted to have both of them as our newest colleagues of the cabinet,” the Bishop declared, “and I am confident that both districts and the conference will be blessed by their leadership.

The announcement came after the Relay deadline, preventing a full report in this issue. See the April issue for a fuller account.

In announcing the appointment, Bishop Devadhar cited Mr. Costello’s earlier work on Gateway North. "The decision to appoint Rev. Costello to the Gateway South District is made with an eye to the need to begin initiatives of a similar kind, linking the churches of Camden with other churches in the District for the sake of effective ministry," he wrote. "He is a tireless colleague in ministry and we pray that God will bless him in this new undertaking. I am excited that he has agreed to make this shift in order to best utilize his experience and gifts for ministry in a new location in these days."

Dr. Costello indeed brings a wide range of skills and ministries to serve in his new assignment. Costello, in addition to his theological training, he holds a law degree and is a licensed attorney in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. He is a popular teacher, preacher and seminar leader of stewardship campaigns across the country. A General Evangelist of the United Methodist Church, his areas of expertise include endowment programs, capital campaigns, and local church revitalization efforts.

In the Gateway North District Costello has developed the innovative Gateway Urban Project, creating partnerships with urban and suburban

(Continued on Page 5)
EDITORIAL

Care for the Pastor is Good Pastoral Care

Many hours spent behind desks working at computers; sitting in meetings at the local church and at district or conference events; snacking on doughnuts, bagels and pastries prior to and during fellowship time; lining up for pot luck suppers; eating on the run between hospital and nursing home visits; snacking in front of the television late at night. This is a list of some of the reasons United Methodist clergy (and no doubt clergy of all stripes) have become overweight, out of shape, dependent on multiple medications, a strain on the medical/health insurance system, and bad examples to their congregations. It doesn’t take more than a cursory glance around any gathering of clergy these days to see bellies straining at the last hole in belts, or people huffing and puffing to make it up short flights of stairs. Someone has pointed out that any gathering of United Methodists offers a case study of the obesity issue.

In a recent mailing to promote a clergy wellness seminar at Drew University, Professor Virginia Samuel noted:

“Clergy were once among the healthiest of all the professions and enjoyed low rates of heart disease, diabetes and depression. Since the 1980’s clergy health across denominational lines has steadily declined. They now show among the highest rates of heart disease, obesity, diabetes and depression of all professions. Research shows that there exists a vocational problem and not a denominational problem relative to clergy health.”

One inference to be drawn from the research is that clergy have taken on far too much of a burden in their work as congregations have shrunk, giving has declined, and the available pool of volunteers has, in many places, dried up. Though United Methodism has always considered the work of the Church to be a partnership between laity and clergy, the expectation of many congregations is that the clergy will be held responsible for the condition of the Church and if there is something lacking, the clergy will find a way to fix it. Such expectations are not only a deviation from the covenant clergy and laity share in their common ministry, but they place a significant well being of the clergy at risk.

There is, of course, a co-dependency issue at work here. There are many clergy who feel the need to be indispensable and who try to please everybody and so voluntarily take on more than they are able to do, or at least able to do well. The result is that they get overly busy, spending inordinate amounts of time doing things others could do as well if not better. Whatever the pastor’s gifts may be, they are often going to waste because he or she is spending time performing tasks that are extraneous to their calling.

The frustration, stress, and exhaustion that come from trying to do too much lead many to develop bad habits. Lack of adequate sleep, irregularity in their devotional lives, lack of exercise, and declining morale contribute to some clergy’s developing eating disorders. An additional complication to this problem is connected to the exponential increase in the technologies that are available to the churches. Clergy who are beyond a certain age and life experience are simply not equipped to develop webpages, maximize their Facebook page, maintain a blog, Tweet on a regular basis, know how to create Excel spreadsheets, do computer-aided graphic design, and employ the never ending array of other tools that come with the new technology. Not only do these things take the time of the pastor who has some facility with them, but they frustrate those who don’t and further add to the general feeling that the vocation is getting away from them.

The role of the clergy and its relationship to that of the laity is being constantly reviewed by the General Conference, and in recent years there have been significant changes to the Book of Discipline in this regard. Primary attention has been focused on the “sacred space” where “there shall be no distinction between host and guest” proves to be artificial and evaporates in the recognition of the new-found unity. Thus the biblical stories help us to realize not just that hospitality is an important virtue, but even more that in the context of hospitality, guest and host can reveal their most precious gifts and bring new life to each other” (Henri J. M. Nouwen, Show Me The Way: Readings For Each Day of Lent, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1992, p.13).

As we shall explore the shadow of the Cross in the Lenten season, may we reflect and examine our own understanding of hospitality. “Conversion of hostility into hospitality” is a powerful Christian witness! There are many stories in the Bible that reveal to us the blessings of converting hostility into hospitality! Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mother Teresa, and scores of other Christians have demonstrated to us that it is possible to do it today!

During this Lenten season we may make necessary efforts to search and find the gifts in persons we encounter – some who we like, others of whom we may not be fond. Let us name the gifts especially in those toward whom we may be hostile. And having named them, let us pray for them as well.

May we look for an opportunity to be their hosts, so that they are not “fearful strangers” to us, but rather are our “guests” in whom we see and acknowledge the “the promise they are carrying with them”?

What if it becomes the norm of our day, the norm of our lives as Christians? Know this: If this becomes the norm, our churches will be bustling with all kinds of ministries and missions in our communities, Christians? Know this: If this becomes the norm, our churches will be bustling with all kinds of ministries and missions in our communities, Christians? Know this: If this becomes the norm, our churches will be bustling with all kinds of ministries and missions in our communities, Christians? Know this: If this becomes the norm, our churches will be bustling with all kinds of ministries and missions in our communities, Christians? Know this: If this becomes the norm, our churches will be bustling with all kinds of ministries and missions in our communities, Christians? Know this: If this becomes the norm, our churches will be bustling…

“God loves you all and so do I” In Christ’s love,

Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar

Drew Theological School Classes Without Quizzes

“Keeping the Pastor Healthy”

Dr. Virginia Samuel
Associate Dean of Contextual Learning, Drew Theological School

Friday, February 25, 2011

9:30 am – 12 noon
University Center, Room 123

For additional information and registration go to: www.drew.edu/theo/cue.
Or e-mail: Nancy VanderVeen, Coordinator of Continuing Education at nvanderveen@drew.edu or call 973-408-3084

REMEMBER TO JOIN US ON THE DREWS...
**United Methodists Called to ‘Alcohol Free Lent’ for 2011**

The General Board of Church & Society (GBCS) has issued a call to United Methodists to observe an “Alcohol Free Lent” challenge this Lent season. The call follows requests by Myers Park United Methodist Church in Charlotte, N.C., whose members responded to a 2009 call for United Methodists to participate in the preparation process, serving as an example to others. The call to “remain Alcohol Free during Lent” is meant to inspire an alcohol-free Lent for the entire church and open to the public. **United Methodist Relay**

**Traditional Pre-Lenten Gathering Extended to Laity This Year**

OCEAN GROVE — The jutting jaw, the handsome hawke-like features are all there. So is the message, as the Jersey Shore awaits the arrival of a third generation of the Graham clan. Will Graham, grandson of Evangelist Billy Graham, will lead a three-day Jersey Shore Celebration at the Great Auditorium here May 20-22 along with local church and civic leaders. The 36-year-old evangelist will preciously match his aged grandfather who first preached in Ocean Grove in 1955, when he was 36.

“I know God will do amazing things along the Jersey Shore over the coming months as the churches gather to bring about this event,” said Graham. “From my conversations with area leaders, it is obvious that this is already at work here and that there is excitement for the proclamation of the Gospel.”

The Jersey Shore Will Graham Celebration is a not-for-profit corporation, operating under the direction of a Celebration General Committee led by Chairman John M. Taylor, M.D. Area volunteers representing churches and denominations across the region will participate in the preparation process, worshipping as a unified church at the Great Auditorium. "We eagerly anticipate Will’s presentation of the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people of New Jersey," says the Rev. John Devadhar who is one of the vice presidents of the celebration. Also on the executive committee is Ocean Grove CEO Scott Hoffman. Also in the leadership is Laity into the Lenten is resource assistant Leo Park, who served on steering committee and not on the prayer committee. "I am so happy and grateful to God that we have such wonderful opportunity to help bring the message, and to pray for God’s blessings upon the work of Will Graham in the US and around the world."

All preparations will be directed by a Graham Association official, and a group of trained and experienced staff will help guide preparations. Additional staff will be hired locally.

All Celebration programs will be free and open to the public. Those without Internet access, may contact The Graham Association (www.foundationforevangelism.org). www.gbcs.org/alcoholfreelent.

**A SPECIAL INVITATION**

On April 6, 2011 at 7:00 PM, clergy and laity of the Greater NJ Annual Conference will gather at St. John’s United Methodist Church in Hazlet for Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar’s 60th Birthday Worship Celebration.

Bishop Violet Fisher will be the guest preacher.

You are invited to join the festive occasion.

In various cultures there are certain birthdays that are particularly significant, even though they involve a variety of motivations. In Jewish religious celebrations the bar-mitzvah takes place at age 13. In the Hispanic culture 15 years of age is a time of great celebration. How often have you heard, “…sweet sixteen” as the reason for a party? For many years, twenty-first birthdays have traditionally been important events in U.S. A. And 65 is the familiar age to gather Social Security checks. At 72 United Methodist clergy must retire.

In Asian cultural, the sixtieth birthday is quite noteworthy. Traditionally, it signifies the “Fourth Stage of Man’s Life.” At that point a man could have gone through birth and childhood, grown into adulthood, and lived the days of family life. Historically, age sixty is a time of surrendering oneself to God. In ancient lore “Sanyasa” called for renunciation of all ties, relations and wealth. It called for a life of spiritual wandering without beard or home. In modern times “Shastipoorthi” (i.e. “the completion of 60 years”) is still cause for celebration. It is a time of emphasis on spiritually motivated thought, word and deed.

It is appropriate that clergy and laity of the Greater NJ Annual Conference would gather to acknowledge the birthday of our episcopal leader who has certainly surrendered his life to God. The “Shastipoorthi” worship, fellowship, laughter and celebration will remind us of his entrance into the “Fourth Stage of Man’s Life” well before his 60th birthday.

Please RSVP to your local District Superintendent’s office or by calling Ginny Kaiser (732-359-1043) at the conference office.

**STEPHANIE HAND**, whose engaging blend of old-time revivalism and 21st Century style roused and energized the General Conference last June, will address separate pre-Lenten gatherings for clergy and laity March 8 at St. John’s Church, Hazlet. (Photo by John C. Goodwin)

**Denman Nominations Sought**

The Conference Board of Discipleship is seeking nominations for the Harry Denman Evangelism Award to be presented at the 2011 Annual Conference. Awards will be made in three categories: lay, clergy, and youth.

Nominations must be received by April 15, 2011.

Nomination packets and history of the awards can be obtained at www.foundationforevangelism.org. Those without Internet access, may contact Rev. Doug Spencer at 856.629-6459 or by mail at 159 South Main Street, Williamstown, NJ 08094.

**WASHINGTON, D.C. — The General Board of Church & Society has issued a call for United Methodists to have an “Alcohol Free Lent.” The call is part of a larger “Alcohol Free Lent” challenge issued by Myers Park United Methodist Church in Charlotte, N.C., whose members responded to their Bishop, William H. DeWes, challenge.”**

The General Board of Church & Society is one of four international general program boards of The United Methodist Church and resources the General Board of Discipleship (GBD). It has offices on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.
When United Methodists start electing clergy delegates this spring to the denomination’s fall general conference, several new groups will be eligible to vote for those representatives.

The new categories of electors for the 2012 General Conference were clarified by the denomination’s Judicial Council, in a special called session Feb. 12. The new categories — related to election of clergy delegates to the church’s annual (regional) conferences — are the result of the adoption of Amendment 19 to Paragraph 35 of the Constitution of the United Methodist Church.

As interpreted by Judicial Council in a special called session, Feb. 12, those now eligible to vote are:

- Full clergy members.
- Provisional members who have been judged by the annual conference to have completed the educational requirements and have been elected to provisional membership.
- Local pastors who have met two criteria: they have, by either of two options as determined by the annual conference, completed their denominational or central conference's specified level of education; and they have been appointed by the bishop and served for two consecutive years. Voting which time no withdrawal of the appointed status has occurred.

Amendment 19 legislation was part of a long-term effort by the United Methodist Rural Fellowship, the National Fellowship of United Methodist Local Pastors and other groups to expand the pool of those eligible to elect delegation members, said the Rev. Roger Grace, the rural fellowship president.

Many rural churches, he explained, are served by local pastors. But since the previous Book of Discipline, local pastors were not allowed to vote on legislation to the top legislative meetings.

“We always felt that was unfair to the churches,” he said. “We felt the pool should be enlarged.”

The 2008 General Conference redefined the petition and adopted what became Amendment 19. That action later was ratified, as required, by the annual conference. The Judicial Council clarified the amendment by Judicial Council, in a special called session in Dallas to consider the matter.

As certified, amendment of Division Two, Section VI, Article IV of the constitution reads:

“The clergy delegates to the General Conference, at the jurisdictional or central conference level, shall be elected from the clergy members in full connection, provisional members or local pastors eligible to vote for clergy delegates, and provisional members or local pastors who have completed the educational requirements and local pastors who have completed course of study or an M.Div. degree and have served a minimum of two consecutive years under appointment immediately preceding the election.”

What can be inferred, however, is that any local pastor who has met the educational requirement or has been appointed, either full-time or part-time, for two consecutive years immediately preceding the election, and has been deprived of an appointment during those two consecutive years of appointment, shall be eligible to vote on clergy delegates,” the decision said.

Issue of clarity

The Judicial Council noted that it “cannot predict what, if any, position the Judicial Council will take on the General Conference is silent” or “create a different standard.”

As stipulated by the Book of Discipline, only the annual conference “has the authority to decide whether and when those requirements have been completed by each eligible to vote for clergy delegates to General Conference, jurisdictional conference or central conference.”

Those eligible to become delegates also are qualified to cast ballots for others, as are associate members of the denomination.

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The days of street demonstrations in Egypt provided some tense moments for New Jersey United Methodists who, like many other foreign visitors, were forced to escape the unsettled political situation there. But with the help of their Egyptian tour hosts, U.S. travel planner and the congregation back home, the 18-member tour group from the Bridgewater United Methodist Church found seats on a Jan. 31 flight to Rome, where they rested, took refuge and thought before returning to the United States on Feb. 3.

"We are thankful for all of the prayers we felt surrounding us at the time," the Rev. Vicki Miller Brendler, lead pastor, told United Methodist News Service in a telephone interview from her hotel in Rome.

Constant protests calling for an end to the 30-year rule of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak continued on until Mubarak’s ouster Feb. 11 following massive but largely peaceful demonstrations in Cairo’s Tahrir Square, according to Egyptian officials.

But the future of the Middle East nation is anything but certain at this point, andéléments around the world have expressed both hope and concern about the situation.

The Rev. Stephen J. Sidorkar, Jr., top executive of the United Methodist Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligion, noted that it is difficult to conclude whether the events in Egypt are part of a political or Islamic revolution. "I don’t see the symbolism of Islamic extremism at work at this moment," he said. "It certainly warrants ongoing watchfulness." The situation in Egypt reminds Thomas Kemper, chief executive of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, of the peaceful revolution in East Germany. Despite Egypt’s former president receiving a stab wound, "what we are witnessing today in Middle East, ‘to have peace built on injustice is never a lasting peace,’" he said.

On its website, the World Council of Churches offered prayers for Egypt "for the safety of citizens, for wisdom and noted that it is difficult to conclude whether the events in Egypt are part of a political or Islamic revolution. "I don’t see the symbolism of Islamic extremism at work at this moment," he said. "It certainly warrants ongoing watchfulness." The situation in Egypt reminds Thomas Kemper, chief executive of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, of the peaceful revolution in East Germany. Despite Egypt’s former president receiving a stab wound, "what we are witnessing today in Middle East, ‘to have peace built on injustice is never a lasting peace,’" he said.

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Costello (Continued from Page 1)

Churches. In the summer of 2010 about 1,000 children participated in Bible study tours and pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Greece and Turkey, and Benson has traveled over 75 countries with his wife, Marjie, and other United Methodists. The council’s call for peaceful dialogue. Costello, the Rev. Michael Kinnamon, the UMNS photo by Carl Rockefeller. Examen in Newer Living”

www.umh.rnj.org
A Friend in Mission is a Friend Indeed

By Harriett Olson

A hundred years ago, leaders of Protestant mission organizations met in Scotland under the watchword, “evangelize the world in this generation.” U.S. Azariah, an Indian Tamil speaker engaged in mission with India’s Telugu speakers, brought a perspective from a country viewed by the delegates as a mission “territory.”

He offered praise for the commitment of people who had been senders, missionaries and for those who had supported them. Yet he made a stirring plea for a change in attitude saying “You have given your goods to feed the poor. … We also ask for friends.”

Send us friends.

In the years since, mission organizations, congregations and humanitarian organizations have struggled in this area. It is so tempting to take what we “know” and apply it to what we think another person needs. Perhaps you have heard it said that if your only tool is a hammer, you treat everything as if it were a nail. Of course.

In addition, problem-solving approaches isolate us from relationship with individuals being served and tend to position them as an object rather than a person—a person with a name, a face and made in the image of God. Not long ago, on a chilly, gray Saturday afternoon, I was part of a small group of women gathered around a kitchen table at Emma Norton Services, in St. Paul, Minnesota.

We shared stories in a familiar routine—many different paths had brought us to Emma’s place.

Whether the arrival came after living in a car, losing a home to Katrina or this doesn’t work particularly well.

a comedy routine on DVD by a Christian comedian. A holistic approach includes opportunities to look at the roles of good nutrition, regular exercise, laughter, prayer, and worship in getting fit and staying healthy.’

Pastor Kraft is no newcomer to the concept. In 1988, The Fellowship of Merry Christians began observing Holy Humor Sunday the week following Easter. The practice comes from the ancient Greeks who said that “God played a joke on the devil” by raising Jesus from the dead. Dr. Kraft, then pastor of the Manatao Church, designed and led Holy Humor Sunday services and has continued to do so for the past 13 years, first at Manatao and now at Glassboro.

Rather than focusing on humor in church once a year, the Humor & Health Hangout raises awareness of the fun in life and gives everyone an opportunity to look on the light side of each month, Dr. Kraft notes. The first organizational gathering was held February 23 in the church’s Fellowship House on State Street. First Church is the first in the state to host a Hangout.

More information is available by contacting the church at 856-881-3205 or visiting the church’s website, http://www.glassboromethodist.org.

Glassboro Methodists to Explore Benefits of Laughter

GLASSBORO — The Fellowship of Merry Christians, a Michigan-based organization with more than 10,000 members dedicated to the proposition that humor, anchored in faith, is a major strength that is found there for life’s struggles. Ms. Dean is a faculty member of Princeton Theological Seminary and added her perspective on leadership with youth in the 21st century.

Included in the event was the annual conversation with Bishop Devadhar and the clergy and spouse talent show which seems to get better each year. Bishop Devadhar also shared communion with the group in a service led by Reggie Albert, pastor of the church in Manasquan. Music for the convocation was provided by Randall Bean, pastor at Dover.

The final day of the convocation began with snow falling outside and the threat of much more to come but even the prospect of a difficult drive home didn’t detract from the warmth of the spirit felt by those in attendance.

Bishop’s Convocation Celebrates Transformational Leadership

Lancaster, Pa. — More than three hundred clergy and spouses arrived at the Doubletree Resort at Willow Valley in late January, anticipating a rewarding experience at the 2011 ministry of covenant groups and the strength that is found there for life’s struggles. Ms. Dean is a faculty member of Princeton Theological Seminary and added her perspective on leadership with youth in the 21st century.

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Bishop Devadhar introducing Rev. Kenda Creasy Dean.

Bishop’s Convocation. Those expectations were met and surpassed as the participants enjoyed their time away; time to rekindle friendships, relax tired bodies, and opportunities invigorate their minds. Leading the event as guest speakers were the Rev. Jorge Acevedo and his wife, Cheryl, as well as the Rev. Kenda Creasy Dean. Acevedo is the lead pastor of Grace UMC in the southwest Florida area around Fort Meyers, co-author of The Heart of Youth Ministry with Hule Goddard, and contributor to Circuit Rider, Good News, and Our Faith Today.

Jorge’s presentations underscored the theme of the convocation; Disciples Transforming the World Through Our Gifts by sharing his thoughts and practical advice on transformational leadership. Meanwhile, Ms. Acevedo led the spouses in conversation around the suffering domestic abuse, each story illustrated falling down and climbing back up. Each one of us had looked for hope and help in some good places and some bad, making decisions every day to make this “chance” work for us and for our children.

Emma Norton Services, which is supported by United Methodist Women, provides a safe place for the women as well as a range of support services. However, these women are the key actors in their own lives; they’re the ones who persevere and who decide what kind of support fits their needs.

Those who serve at Emma Norton reinforce the residents’ own commitments with physical, spiritual, emotional and practical support, but the work is shared — it’s mutual. As I offered some of my own story that afternoon, I had no illusions about my ability to “fix” the vulnerabilities that surrounded these women or their families.

Of course, this doesn’t mean that we stop giving what we have. We advocate for funding needed services, jobs training and more. We develop a network of personal support and prayer.

But, the basis for our work is mutuality — working with each person, rather than around him or her (or even worse, “for their own good”). We are family, sitting around the circle together in a mutual quest for wholeness, safety and health — perhaps to be friends sent to one another.

United Methodist Women members and other members of The United Methodist Church will be responding to the gospel call to service through the Change the World Weekend, on May 14-15. We recognize that mission is not only about contribution but also about companionship, so not much is where we are but who we are in that place, not the mere completion of a project but a side-by-side journey of faith.

I invite you to envision yourselves as friends sent to be in relationship with those in need. I think you’ll be glad you did.

Click here to see Bishop Devadhar introducing Rev. Kenda Creasy Dean.

We currently manage over $4.45 million for member churches and other investors.

Since 2008, our fund has had an annualized return of 5.44% compared to a 3.53% blended benchmark consisting of the S&P 500 and a Barclays fixed income index

The United Methodist Foundation and the Conference’s planning, consultation, education and training services are provided free of charge to GNJAC churches.

For additional information contact K. Edward Jacob, President at 732-747-4891 or ejacob@7739@yahoo.com or Jay Kim at the GNJAC Office 732-359-1032.
COLLINGSWOOD — In the Gospel of Mark 12:28 one of the teachers of the law asks Jesus, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” Jesus answers in verses 30-31, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.” (NIV)

In December Embury Church here had a birthday party for Jesus; where in this small chapel church over 150 individuals and families gathered to sing, praise God and fellowship with one another. What was unusual about this gathering? This small church would not have been able to have done this by themselves. Embury is part of a cluster of five congregations in the Gateway South District, working together in Christ’s name. When these five churches gather together they are able to do what one church cannot do alone. With the support of the Westmont, Emmanuel-Oaklyn, Francis Childs, and Audubon churches, Embury was able to feed over 60 homeless individuals, have a youth praise band, and a live nativity. They also provided gifts to those in need. There were children, youth, young adults, and less individuals, have a youth praise band arranged by the Audubon church. A play on the meaning of Christmas was presented by the youth group from Bridges Lutheran Church, Camden. Five small churches having a vision and the desire to serve the Lord made a huge impact in many lives that day.

When I was married I became obsessed with planning my funeral. It had nothing to do with my husband Ed. Nor was I concerned about homicide, suicide, or accidental death. As pastor of a rural church in northwestern New Jersey I’d been observing how people are laid to rest and I felt the need to make my final wishes clear. “Honey,” I say to Ed, “Don’t let anyone put anything inside my casket.” I’m not interested in a panel embroidered with my favorite non-profit’s logo lining its lid. Nor do I need the remains of my body naked inside to have an impact. I signed the documents with Ed, because I knew he would read them through. But there was one at the living nativity that was part of the Birthday Party for Jesus at Embury Church, Collingswood, when five area churches pooled their resources late last year in order to show the love of God to the community.

NOVEL NATIVITY. Well, there may not have been a llama in Bethlehem, but there was one in Collingswood, where the living nativity that was part of the Birthday Party for Jesus at Embury Church, Collingswood, when five area churches pooled their resources late last year in order to show the love of God to the community.

VIEWPOINT

A satirical look at Funeral Plans

by Marcia Krause Bilyk

When I was married I became obsessed with planning my funeral. It had nothing to do with my husband Ed. Nor was I concerned about homicide, suicide, or accidental death. As pastor of a rural church in northwestern New Jersey I’d been observing how people are laid to rest and I felt the need to make my final wishes clear. “Honey,” I say to Ed, “Don’t let anyone put anything inside my casket.” I’m not interested in a panel embroidered with my favorite non-profit’s logo lining its lid. Nor do I need the remains of my body naked inside to have an impact. I signed the documents with Ed, because I knew he would read them through. But there was one at the living nativity that was part of the Birthday Party for Jesus at Embury Church, Collingswood, when five area churches pooled their resources late last year in order to show the love of God to the community.

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Once again, responding to the vote of the lay and clergy of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, The United Methodist Relay is pleased to keep our readers informed regarding the reports of Shared Ministry giving for 2010. This sum of the shared带给us the ANNUAL CENSUS and the Annual Conference's portion of the shared ministry participation percentage for each local church.

The following table represents the shared ministry percentage paid by the local church toward 2010 billings. Billings are a combination of expenses including the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) that provides clergy with a pension for their years in ministry with the United Methodist Church; the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) which provides death, long-term disability and other welfare benefits to eligible clergy of the United Methodist Church and their families; The Local Church Property and Liability Plan (LCP&L) that provides protection to all members of the local church who are involved in volunteer activities, and the Annual Conference Worker's Compensation Insurance.

We hope this report once again shows our churches are making toward a full response to the Shared ministries asking. We applaud each congregation in its effort to measure up fully in its stewardship.
VITAL CONGREGATIONS

What’s Your Plan?

By Douglas Ruffle
Coordinator of Congregational Development, GNJAC

The message of John (Chapter 5) recounts the story of an encounter between Jesus and an infirm man beside the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. The infirm man had been there, posted by the pool, for 38 years. The first thing that Jesus said to the man upon seeing him was, “Do you want to get well?” It was a good question. If the man had by lying there for 38 years seeking a cure for his infirmity, one would wonder if he really wanted to be well. In 38 years he could not come up with a plan of wellness. The man was ready with an excuse: “Sir, when the water is stirred, I don’t have anybody to put me in the pool. By the time I get there, somebody else is already in.” The pool of Bethesda was known for its curative powers. One had to get into the pool when its waters were stirred.

I reflect on this passage of scripture in light of churches that have been going along for years without any plan of action for making disciples of Jesus Christ. Like the infirm man, why can’t they come up with a plan? Too often, the church is filled with excuses for why they don’t have a plan.

• “We’re too old.”
• “We live in an area where there are a lot of non-Christians.”
• “It’s the Pastor’s job.”

Jesus told the man to get up and carry his bedroll and to start walking. And he did.

The passage in the Bible underscores Jesus’ willingness to cure even on the Sabbath. Yet, Jesus’ first question still resonates. “Do you want to be well?” You would think that in 38 years the infirm man could have elicited the help of others. He could have come up with a plan to make sure he could enter the pool when its waters were stirred.

The challenge is there for many of our United Methodist Churches. What is your plan for making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world? What are the goals and strategies to help you realize your plan?

The Office of Congregational Development exists to help churches come up with a plan. We have resources and tools to help. Give us a call or send us an email to start the conversation. Email: druffle@gnjumc.org. Phone: 732-359-1046

Philadelphia Church Tour Gives Insight Into Black Methodism in the City

PHILADELPHIA — All the agony and ecstasy, the conflict and cooperation of Philadelphia churches through the years will be revisited at a February Conference of the segregated Central Jurisdiction, and Zoar Church, founded by Harry Hoosier, known as “Black Harry”, and regarded by Bishop Asbury as one of the most gifted preachers.

The Greater New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania-Delaware Conferences

Regional Disabilities Conference

Keynote Speaker: Ginny Thornburgh

Internationally recognized expert in inclusion of people with disabilities in the church, Dr. Religion & Disability, American Assoc. of Persons w/Disabilities, Washington, D.C.

Audience: Pastors, Staff, Church Schools, Committee chairs, members

Aldersgate United Methodist Church

2313 Concord Pike, Wilmington, DE 19803 • (302) 478-2575 or www.aldersgatede.org

POCONO PLATEAU, Pa. – DREAM Big is a weekend event focusing on the themes of justice and immigration, will be held here April 8-10 for United Methodist youth, 16 to 25 years of age from the Northeastern Jurisdiction.

Open to youth and young adults interested in understanding the broken realities of the immigration system and specifically how the DREAM Act affects their communities and churches, the three-day event will discuss biblical imperatives to do justice and learn how to create communities that welcome and receive immigrant young people.

The tour bus will depart from St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, founded by Absalom Jones. Rev. Bishop Asbury as one of the most gifted preachers, known as “Black Harry”, and regarded by Bishop Asbury as one of the most gifted preachers.

The tour including lunch will be $20 for adults. Deadlines for the two tours are, Spring, March 26 and all, August 27.

The April Issue Deadline is March 5, 2011

Stewardship Stories

By Rich Hendrickson
Coordinator of Stewardship Education and Development, GNJAC

The Importance of Planned Giving

“Son/daughter I need to talk to you about what will happen to my financial affairs after I’ve gone.”

These words may be some of the most difficult words you’ll ever have to utter to your children, and for your children they may be the most difficult to hear. Nevertheless, you owe it to your family to ensure that no misunderstandings arise over your estate. The reality is “You can’t take it with you.”

To whom might you give?
Your heirs? Other charities? Have you considered including the church in your will?

Why make a gift to the church?
It may be to say “thanks” to God for the many blessings. You may have few heirs or none at all. You may have heirs that no longer need more. You may wish to honor the memory of someone special. There are biblical reasons or a passion for a particular ministry. You’ve always given to the church, so why stop now?

To whom might you give?
It may be to your local congregation in general or to a specific ministry within your local church. Or it may be for a specific ministry within the Annual Conference.

How do you give and how much?
It’s a personal decision which might be a dollar amount, percentage, stocks, property, life insurance etc. To receive helpful information when planning your will, contact your local church or Conference Office. Also contact your financial advisor or accountant and lawyer who specialize in wills and estate planning.

“Planned gifts give people one last chance to contribute.”

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The aim of the retreat is to:
• Discover the realities and consequences of our broken immigration system
• Relate and connect with diverse United Methodist youths from the Northeast Jurisdiction
• Engage in political advocacy
• Act out your faith by advocating for justice
• Mobilize your communities for immigration reform

Cost of registration is $25. Travel scholarships are available. For information and registration, log on to http://www.umc-gbcs.org/dreambig.

Revvamped Relay Website Now in View

Relay Online is back. After a long hiatus due to technical difficulties, our website is back in operation.

The Relay Online web site has now been completely revamped and updated through February, 2011. All prior editions are accessible and available from the site going back to June, 2009. As stated on the Archives page, due to limited server space, when a new month is added, the oldest month will be removed off the web site. Nonetheless, the older editions of Relay Online, which are linked on the web site can still be requested in electronic form by e-mail.

The Gospel Lessons page now displays a new lesson each DAY instead of each week. These lessons are being provided by Eldersgatede.com with their specific permission.

“The April Issue Deadline is March 5, 2011

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 Lay Leadership Workshop, March 26

OCEAN — A GNJAC-sponsored Leadership Workshop for local church lay leaders and lay-at-large members of the annual Conference will be held March 26 at St. John’s Church, Hazelt, Led by Rosa Williams, Conference Lay Leader & Mel Hooper, Conference Director of Lay Ministries, the workshop will explore the role and responsibilities of local lay leaders, scriptural guidelines to local lay leadership, and clergy and lay leadership partnership. In addition to formal presentations, there will be question and answer sessions.

The event will begin with registration and refreshments at 9:30 a.m., followed by workshop sessions running from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

To register, participants may contact Ginny Kaiser at the conference office, by phone at 732 359-1049 or e-mail gkaiser@gnjumc.org

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Master of Sacred Theology  Doctor of Ministry  Doctor of Philosophy

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DREW THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

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March 13 — Breakfast with Bishop Devadhar
HADDONFIELD NJ — Bishop Sudashana Devadhar will be at Bethesda Temple church at 11:30 a.m. Rhoads is located in historic Saddlertown in Haddonfield NJ. A continental breakfast will be a part of the event. For further informations and directions call Rev. Alice Cook at 856-661-9366.

March 18 - 19 — (God Youth Event

EAST BRUNSWICK — Using the latest trends in technology and media, this retreat at Aldersgate and Calvary Korean churches will focus on self esteem, self worth and self image. The workshop will be a springboard to a real relationship with God. For guys and girls ages 16th grade. Cost: $50 for youth, $20 for chaperones. Deadline for registration, March 10. FFI and registration forms, visit www.gnjumc.org.

April 2 — Regional Disabilities Conference

WILMINGTON, Del. — Ginny Thorndour, internationally known expert on inclusion of persons with disabilities will keynote this conference jointly sponsored by the GNJAC and Benne-Del Conference, at Aldersgate Church here. FFI: Contact pastorjackieburgess@verizon.net

April 8 - 10 — DREAM Big Retreat

Pocono Plateau, Pa. — Northeastern Jurisdiction youth — 16-20 — invited to this three day retreat considering the issue of immigration.

April 16 — Historical Tour

PHILADELPHIA — The historical Black Connexion comes alive in visits to a number of churches that contributed to the spiritual development of the City of Brotherly Love. Visits to Old St. George, Mother Bethel, Tindley Temple and others. Registration deadline, March 26. See story.

June 1 - 4 — Annual Conference

KING of PRUSSIA, Pa. — “Disciples Transforming the World: Through our Gifts” will be the theme as clergy and lay meet together at the Valley Forge Conference Center to transact the Lord’s business, elect delegates to General Conference and find inspiration for the year ahead.

July 13 - 17 — Youth 2111

LAFAVETTE, Ind. — Youth 2011, the four day national youth gathering for the United Methodist Church at Purdue University will bring together top United Methodist leaders, the best ecumenical speakers, bands and talent and thousands of youth from all around the nation for what is sure to be a life-changing event. For information about the event and bus transportation from the GNU conference office, log on to www.gnjumc.org

July 22 - August 1 — Taize Pilgrimage

GNJAC — if you are between 16 and 29 years of age you are invited to join Bishop Devadhar and chaperones on a weeklong spiritual development experience. Additional adults may request to attend as event. For information about the event and bus transportation from the GNJ conference office, log on to www.gnjumc.org

April 17 — Historical Tour

PHILADELPHIA — The historical Black Connexion comes alive in visits to a number of churches that contributed to the spiritual development of the City of Brotherly Love. Visits to Old St. George, Mother Bethel, Tindley Temple and others. Registration deadline, August 27. See story.

October 3 — India 2011 with the Bishop

GNJAC — Eleven days of discover on the Asian sub-continent where the passion of Jesus Christ is beyond. Send items of conference-wide interest to the Opportunity File at Editor@umrelay.org or UMRelay, 1 Mayflower Ct., Whiting, NJ 08759.

MARY LOU BALLENTINE, retired GNJAC elder, died January 25, 2011. A memorial service was held January 29 at the Succasunna Church with interment following. Ms. Ballentine began her ministry as a member of the Northern New Jersey Conference in 1967 and a year later was appointed minister of education at Mor- row Memorial Church, Maplewood. In 1975 she was named pastor of Epworth Church, Elizabeth. Other appointment were Union Village, Green Village, and Succasunna. In 2002 she was granted incapacity leave and was retired in 2008. Messages of condolence may be sent to her husband, Clifford Ballentine at 345 Center Grove Road, Randolph, New Jer- sey 07869.

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 Corinthians 5:1

WILLIE MAE NANTON, retired elder of the Greater New Jersey Conference, died January 19, 2011. Pastor Nanton entered the ministry of the Southern New Jersey Conference in 1963 and was appointed to St. Mary Street Church, Burlington, in 1997 she was transferred to Cadekate – Astbury Church, Trenton. She entered the retired relationship in 2004. In addition to her pastoral ministry she also conducted a weekly radio program on Station WIMG.

Mrs. Nanton is survived by two sons, Andre and Christopher, and a daughter, Michelle Scott

ALICE JANE HELMS, wife of the Rev. Jay Helms, retired GNJAC elder, died January 21, 2011 at Pitman Manor, with a private funeral service following on February 5. Interment will be at the Woor- druff United Methodist Church Cemetery, Woordruff. Mrs. Helms was a registered nurse. She is survived by three sons, Mark, Paul and Timothy, six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Messages of condolence may be sent to her hus- band, the Rev. Jay Helms, Reverend Helms, 535 N. Oak Avenue, Apt. 503C, Pitman NJ 08071. Memorial donations may be made to the American Diabetes Association, P.O. Box 11454, Alexandria, Virginia 22313.

Are You Being Digested?

Did you know the communications coordinator published the GN Digest, an electronic newsletter, several times each experience week? Each week there are multiple editions full of Announce- ments, Events, Celebrations, National News and Conference Calendar Updates. There are also special letters from the Bishop and notifications of deaths among members of the An- nual Conference. If you are not currently on our e-mail list and would like to be, please send your request to join our list to communications@gnjumc.org.

MARCIA’S MELODIES

Over the Christmas holidays, the new an- them, “Mary,” was performed in several churches. This anthem has been very pos- itive. The idea of writing the song in the first place was to give women a song to sing which featured Mary, the mother of Jesus. That means the basic tune is quite simple.

Later a friend asked for the same song arranged for choir. As a result of these requests, we have a new song named, “Mary” in three different ar- rangements.

The song is appropriate for Christmas and for Easter, but because of the message in the song, it could well be used during Lent, and also very ap- propriate for Mother’s Day. A good friend said to me, “Yes, Marcia, this is the message we proclaim, from the Mother’s point of view.” My desire is that the song will become a standard in church repertory, because it honors the Lord Jesus Christ, and also honors his mother, Mary, most blessed of all women.

The song, “Mary” is available from:

Marcia’s Melodies
32 Pitman Avenue
Ocean Grove, NJ 07756
Phone: 732-988-3191
or call: (732) 938-2665

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The GNJAC’s Program Staff exists to empower and resource local churches in making disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world!

Contact Us Today!

Contact Information:

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DRuffle@gnjumc.org

Rev. Erica Munoz  
EMunoz@gnjumc.org

Rev. Rich Hendrickson  
RHendrickson@gnjumc.org

72% of your Shared Ministry dollars stay in Greater New Jersey supporting local churches, conference committees, and boards and agencies in all areas of ministry.