

THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

Volume LXI

JUNE 2017

No. 6

Annual Conference Rejoices in GNJ's Next Generation

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

WILDWOOD – Investing in young people and the future of GNJ was a top priority at the 2017 Annual Conference in Wildwood last month. GNJ approved a Next Generations Student Ministry plan challenging conference leadership to set bold goals.

Rev. Hector A. Burgos, Director of Connectional Ministries, led a Leadership Address that included remarks from Rev. Sang Won Doh, Chair of the Connectional Table and Senior Pastor of Calvary Korean UMC in East Brunswick, Conference Lay Leader Rosa Williams, Rev. Vanessa Wilson, Chair of the Commission on Religion and Race, Rev. Debbe Barnett, Chair of the Council on Youth Ministries, and Rev. Blair Goold, Chair for the Council on Young Adults. These leaders shared a God-sized vision of a Next Generation ministry plan that seeks to integrate camping ministries, IGNITE and campus ministries.

The plan was developed by GNJ leadership in partnership with the consulting firm Ministry Architects, and after meeting with 112 stakeholders. These included youth, young adults, parents, youth workers, campus ministry workers, camp staff, pastors, and conference staff with an additional 110 people completing surveys related to camping, collegiate and student ministries.

The approved plan commissions church leaders to work with congrega-

tions to have 12 or more active youth engaged in faith formation and discipleship in their community. It also seeks to develop ten college campus faith communities with 75 or more students, reinvigorate a 21st-century camping experience, grow IGNITE to 5,000 participants and develop 1,000 leaders to lead student ministries throughout GNJ.

"The goal is to create a vital and sustainable students ministry," said Burgos. "Strategic priorities include raising new generations of enthusiastic disciples of Christ who are connecting, engaging in and leading ministry in congregations and participating as healthy young people within a global society."

Rev. Gabrielle Martone of Broadway and Port Colden UMC's expressed excitement over the initiative.

"I grew up in the conference, was nurtured and educated in this conference and spent much of my childhood at Aldersgate," she said. "I am passionate about helping to raise the next generation of disciples, and especially looking for ways to engage with 18-30-year-olds as they navigate young adult life and their faith. I am particularly excited to see how Next Gen will help resource small churches to help raise their kids well. As a 24-year-old clergywoman, I understand the deep need to engage and raise up well the next generations- these will be the folks who will do church better than I can, whom I will one day pass my mantle."

By reframing and rebranding the current Camps and Retreats Board, which



GNJ youth join in praise at the 2017 Annual Conference in Wildwood. A Next Generations Student Ministry plan was passed by the conference to set goals and prioritize for the future. Photo by Shari DeAngelo

is an affiliated 501c3 organization, as the GNJ Next Generation Ministries Board, the plan establishes strong leadership for all GNJ initiatives related to youth. It serves to coordinate and collaborate the

work of the Councils on Youth and Youth Adults, the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries, a Camps and Retreats Committee, and a staff action team for operations.

Shared Ministries Formula Passes to Benefit Churches, Enhance Mission

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

WILDWOOD – Church leaders rejoiced with the passage of the 2018 budget at the 2017 Annual Conference in Wildwood last month, approving a flat 16.3%, a significant decrease from 2016's average rate of 17.2%. This change results in a \$900,000 reduction in the Greater New Jersey budget.

The new formula is expected to free up resources that will remain at the local church level, providing room to build upon and or start ministries and missions and invest in the next generation.

"These resources are needed to develop the next generation," said Director of Connectional Ministries, Rev. Hector A. Burgos.

The new flat Shared Ministries formula of 16.3% for all local churches provides an immediate financial benefit for 83% of congregations, recognizing that local churches are the doorway through which people become a part of the church.

"This is where the resources must be strengthened," said Bishop John Schol. "It's on the mission fields in our communities where we need to invest so that lives can be changed for the transformation of the world."

Rev. Earl Kim of First UMC of Montclair and Verona UMC, along with his church lay leader and lay member, discussed the new reduced Shared Ministry formula with his congregation.

"All of us appreciated the effort that the Conference made to lessen the burden of the local church," said Kim. "One additional thing remarked by our lay leader



The cross at the 2017 Annual Conference was adorned in vibrant colors as this year's "Rejoice" theme brightened the Wildwoods Convention Center. Photo by Shari DeAngelo

is that as we grow our church and expand our ministry more and more, which means increasing our expenses more, we might still have our Shared Ministry increased a little bit, even though the new formula will reduce our basic share. So, let us grow more and share more!"

Regenerative Ministries

Regenerative ministry and mission are focal to the budget that seeks to raise

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AmeriCorps and Two Future's With Hope

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

LITTLE EGG HARBOR – Lindsey Jesberg squinted through paint speckled goggles, dipping her brush to finish a stroke along the bottom of a home she had spent the last few weeks refurbishing. New Jersey was starting to grow on the California native who was sensing a bittersweet end to what had become a proud, impactful life experience.

Jesberg was one of several volunteers, ages 18-24, from across the country who partnered with A Future With Hope through the AmeriCorps NCCC Atlantic Region over the month of April to help New Jersey residents with their future as they work on a future of their own. The civil society program supported by the U.S. federal government, foundations, corporations, and other donors

engaging adults in public service work offers an educational award toward student loans or future schooling.

"What I think is really cool is that a lot of people use this program as kind of a catapult for their future and we're here working with A Future With Hope," she said. "So we're helping people with their future as we're working on our future as well."

Jordan Brown, an AmeriCorps team member from Roanoke, VA, was surprised that there was still so much going on nearly five years after Superstorm Sandy.

"It's been eye opening for me that disasters go a much longer way than we might anticipate," he said, recognizing that he had encountered many vulnerable New Jersey home owners who had been cheated out of their money and

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Pictured above: The AmeriCorps NCCC Atlantic Region team stands out front of a rebuilt home in Little Egg Harbor after more than a month working with A Future With Hope. Photo by Josh Kinney



2017 Episcopal Address

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey
 May 22, 2017
 John Schol, Bishop

The Why of GNJ

North Korea is testing missiles for nuclear war heads to eventually reach the United States. Leaders are using poisonous chemical weapons on their own people. There are rumors of war, talks of border walls, efforts to cut health care, churches are closing, our sons and daughters and grandchildren are addicted to heroin, and racism, xenophobia, classism and sexism are in our communities and congregations. The world needs the grace and teachings of Jesus Christ. The Gospel's message is as urgent today as at any other time in our history.

While some talk of the end times, which we have heard in every generation, others believe these are the times God has called you for, to be God's healing and redemptive love.

I rejoice that God's grace is at work through disciples of Jesus Christ who are stirring up faith, hope and justice in communities and in the church. Through the Holy Spirit, these disciples are transforming lives and making disciples. More often than not, we are finding these disciples in our most vital congregations. That's why we call and equip spiritual leaders to grow vital congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

We have amazing disciples who are stirring up faith, hope and justice in the community. Suzanne and Keith Dice of the Red Bank UMC started *The Backpack Crew* whose motto is, "it's hard to be awesome when you are hungry". Each Friday, The Backpack Crew delivers to schools 175 back packs filled with food for students who are on the breakfast and lunch program at school and who often do not have enough food on the weekend. They are working with church and community volunteers and they are inviting people to church through the ministry.

Abena Abusa, in addition to chairing the staff pastor relations committee at the New Brunswick Church, collaborates with 15 community organizations to host seminars and programs on immigration, homelessness and healthcare for the poor.

Kristen Skrobaneck stirred up hope and justice through Trinity Church in Mullica Hill by starting *Your Place at the Table* to feed people. She has collaborated with a bank to offer budgeting classes, local farmers to provide fresh food and the Rotary Club to increase food contributions.

What do children walking home with backpacks or the homeless in New Brunswick or people who need a meal in Mullica Hill do when they see our disciples stirring up faith, hope and justice? I think in their own way, they say, REJOICE!

Rejoice! God is not done with us. God has a future with hope for us!

Rejoice

To rejoice is to recognize that God is in the mix, God is the author and creator of the church and every good work we do together. God has, is and will continue to guide our ministry and progress.

Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice. We choose joy because happiness isn't enough. Happiness is dependent on an outside stimulus to generate good feelings within. Joy is rooted in a redeeming faith and eschatological hope, a future conviction that no matter how bad things seem, everything works for good for those who love God. -Romans 8:28

Happiness is breaking an attendance barrier on Easter Sunday morning. We feel a sense of accomplishment. Joy is the one family who comes back following Easter Sunday because the Holy Spirit stirred in their heart. They continue to come and go through a complete transformation of their faith, how they parent and how they engage in the world. The family decides to be baptized together. That's joy.

Joy is sustained by a hope that lives at the edges of faith that is rooted in the conviction that God's grace prevails, that love wins, that Jesus Christ makes all things new, that we will see the new city, the new Camden, the new Newark, the new Atlantic City, the new Jersey City, the new Trenton and every city, town and community in GNJ renewed, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared for you and for me. Rejoice! -Revelation 21:21

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THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

John R. Schol, Bishop
 The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey
 205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune, NJ 07753

Rev. Christopher Heckert, Chair, Commission on Communication
 856.429.0403, ext. 209 | heckert@haddonfieldumc.org

RELAY STAFF

Josh Kinney, Editorial Manager
 732.359.1047 | jkinney@gnjumc.org

Carolyn Conover, Director of Communication and Development
 732.359.1016 | cconover@gnjumc.org

Brittney Reilly, Online and Digital Communication Manager
 732.359.1040 | breilly@gnjumc.org

Denise Herschel, Contributing Writer
nj6pack@yahoo.com

Rev. Melissa Hinnen, Contributing Writer
melissa.hinnen@nyac-umc.com

New Subscriptions, renewals, address changes, and corrections should be addressed to Beverly Karlovich, bkarlovich@gnjumc.org or by mail to:
 United Methodist Relay | 205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753

FOR ADVERTISING RATES, INFORMATION and PLACEMENT
 Josh Kinney, jkinney@gnjumc.org

The United Methodist Relay (USPS 343-360) is published monthly by the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Office of Publication: Office of the Bishop, 205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753. Periodical Postage Paid at Red Bank, NJ and additional entry offices. Mailed free to selected lay leaders and clergy of each church. Others may subscribe at the rate of \$9.50 per year. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to UNITED METHODIST RELAY, 205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753.

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2017 Episcopal Address

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Rejoice in Our Progress through the Strategic Plan

God is doing a new thing through GNJ and we rejoice in the progress we are making. In 2014 we embarked on a bold strategic plan that said we are going to turn things around. We built on our past and moved to the edges of faith where today we are finding hope and joy. Since starting on the strategic ministry plan, just three short years ago, together:

- We developed five new resources to accomplish the plan - Team Vital, Coaching, PaCE groups, the Laity Academy and Communities of Hope.
- We aligned our budget, staffing, ministries and superintending to focus on congregations and moved more energy and resources into the mission field.
- We increased the number of disciples in small groups from 43% to 79% in our congregations.
- We increased the number of disciples engaged in hands-on mission from 8% to 50%.
- We increased mission giving from \$349 per worshiper to \$356, that's a quarter more million dollars going to mission. Our churches raised \$5,452,346 million to combat malaria, rebuild homes and lives following Superstorm Sandy, and engage in mission through our congregations.
- We started 26 new faith communities.
- We grew vitality from 16% of our congregations being highly vital to 34%. Listen to this, we have also made significant progress in a new area of measurement that tests how well our congregations are doing on moving forward the five markers of vitality. Forty-four percent (44%) of our congregations are moving the markers forward. We have the third highest percentage in the United States. The turnaround is taking shape.

Rejoice for all God is doing in and through us. These numbers represent people, lives changed, disciples engaged and people served. We are about people and God's healing and redemptive grace for their lives.

Rejoice in our Commitment to Excellence

God's love is at work in and through us and others are noticing. Our Vital Mission Partner, A Future With Hope received the Innovative Program of the Year award from NJ VOAD. A Future with Hope has now repaired 256 homes, with 11,810 volunteers from 46 states and 3 countries and raised more than \$17 million dollars.

Our new MRC, The Mission and Resource Center won the New Good Neighbor Award from NJ Business and Industry Association and NJ Magazine. This award is for development projects that contribute to NJ's economic growth and are aesthetically beautiful. The MRC is becoming a resource being used by churches, Vital Mission Partners, regional ecumenical gatherings, community organizations, Drew School of Theology and the Northeastern Jurisdiction. More ministry, more service to the community and the MRC is saving us money and it is paid for. Now that's worth celebrating!

We do not go looking for awards, but we seek to serve God with excellence. Recently the denomination recognized serving God with excellence in our communications team who earned six awards. Our sister Vital Mission Partner, United Methodist Communities, formally United Methodist Homes, won four communications awards. That's 10 communications awards in GNJ. The most within the denomination.

It hasn't been easy, but we are experiencing joy in what God is doing through us. One of the places that has been hard is making new disciples or professions of faith. I am happy to report that two of our congregations are receiving The One Award from the General Board of Discipleship because they grew in the numbers of professions of faith.

The first is Emmaus Church led by Don McMahan. The congregation went from zero professions of faith to eight in 2016. The second is Panther Valley Church led by Ninabeth Metcalf. The congregation went from zero professions of faith to six in 2016.

These two churches are connecting more with the community, creating inspiring worship, developing youth and small group ministry, developing a culture of hope and inviting people to receive God's grace through Jesus Christ.

Please join me in congratulating and thanking Rev. Metcalf, Rev. McMahan and the laity for their leadership and commitment to making new disciples for the transformation of the world.

Rejoice! God is at work through GNJ.

Our Challenges

While we rejoice, we are not without our challenges. James said:

"When you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing." -James 2:1-2

While we have much to be joyful about, our congregations, world and denomination are experiencing challenges.

Denominational Fear and GNJ Conviction

As a denomination, we are not of one mind about homosexuality. Some are saying we cannot stay united. We hear that we will divide. I disagree. The church has never fully agreed on anything. In the past we were divided over slavery, ordination of women, and segregation. United Methodists found a way to come back together.

What if this time we said, "We will not let our differences divide us but allow our common mission to guide us. Let's model what it means to be diverse culturally, ethnically, geographically and theologically and guided by common mission."

Let it begin with us. Let GNJ lead the way.

To do this we will need to move to the edges of our faith where hope and joy live. I will be a bishop of the whole church. I will work to ensure people, ministries and congregations are not hurt as we move forward. While some talk of division, I intend to keep GNJ together as one conference. A place where orthodox, progressive and middle viewpoints can thrive and grow. Where liberals and conservatives can draw upon their rich understandings to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This will be a significant challenge. Let joy be our aim, not happiness, joy in diversity not happiness in uniformity.

If the denomination maintains its present policies, I want all our clergy to be pastoral as they serve their communities and unique contexts. I want all our congregations to live out their calling. Our unity will not be in a theology or polity but in Jesus Christ and the mission of the church - *to reach new generations of disciples and engage in transforming lives, communities and the world.*

If our denomination changes its polity, I will not make appointments to intentionally disrupt the practices and theologies of a congregation. I will not draw attention to our differences creating division in our congregations or GNJ, but call attention to how Jesus loves us even more because of our differences. Jesus gathered people who were different from one another and united them toward a Gospel vision of God's reign. We can be diverse and thrive! We can be unique and work together toward a common mission! We can understand the scriptures differently and remain united in Christ Jesus. I rejoice in our diversity.

As I serve as bishop of the whole church, I ask you to serve with me as leaders and disciples for the whole church no matter our theological or political views. After all, when we worked on Sandy homes, no one asked us our view on LGBTQ people. No one asked us when we sent kids home with backpacks full of food our theological view point. Instead they pointed to the love we had for them and one another and thought, this is what companions of Jesus looks like.

Let unity in diversity begin with us. Let GNJ United Methodists lead the way.

World Challenges

I am deeply concerned about the geopolitical shifts in our nation and world and call all of us to a faithful and biblical response by the church. The scriptures have been clear from the beginning, we are called to welcome the stranger, the refugee and the immigrant. In a world where leaders engage in rhetoric that heightens conflict, we are called to stand firm in our values and engage in conversation that glorifies God and witnesses to the life of Jesus. In a world, whose aim is happiness through wealth, pleasure and consumption, we are called to move to the edges of our faith to choose joy, service and sharing.

The congregations that are bold in offering a more Christ-like way, will capture younger generations, deepen the faith of their disciples, and model for the world the first century church.

Let it begin with us. Let GNJ United Methodists lead the way.

Congregational Challenges

While we are witnessing renewed growth and vitality in many congregations, we also saw 301 churches decline in worship attendance and five churches discontinued or merged in 2016. Today we are 18 congregations fewer than five years ago. In 2013 we commissioned a study that said we would be 123 congregations fewer by 2030. Our challenge is the culture has changed and we are not adapting fast enough. We are not connecting with new and younger potential disciples of Jesus Christ.

It does not have to be this way. We do not have to follow the pack, we can change. We can connect with the people in the community. We can continue to create new worship and ministry experiences.

The Greenhouse Church that we launched last year to connect with millennials is now worshiping 90 disciples in two sites. We can connect with new and younger generations to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Let it begin with us. Let GNJ United Methodists lead the way.

We rejoice with Paul in our challenges, knowing that challenges produce endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us. -Romans 5:3-5

Path Forward

The challenges seem daunting, but the path forward is clear, critical and doable. The path is not hard and it is not elaborate, it focuses on four pillars to support a growing GNJ mission: passionate faith, transformational leaders, vital mission congregations, and money.

Path Forward, Passionate Faith

Deep, passionate faith is the first of the four pillars to grow our mission. Passionate faith is a source of joy and it attracts new generations of believers. Passionate faith is contagious.

Sometimes things get in the way of our deep passionate faith. Emotion, for example can be dependent on outside stimulators – a fiery sermon, an upbeat song, or inspiring reading – then we are manufacturing faith that requires one inspirational moment after another. Think of Jesus' life or Paul's life, both exemplified deep faith but we read of only a few emotional experiences in their lives. Instead, their faith welled up from within.

Passionate faith welcomes wisdom and thinking. It harnesses both inspiration and knowledge. It is not reactive but deliberative -- based in prayer, study and experience.

Passionate faith is enthusiastically living your faith every day – *enthusiastic, faithful, everyday!*

Passionate faith is nurtured, shaped and deepened through three key ministries of the church – worship, small groups and hands-on mission in the community. In fact, these three vitality markers increase disciples' participation in the other two vitality markers, generous giving and making new disciples. Focus on worship, small groups and hands-on mission and the rest will follow.

That's why we will continue to equip church leaders to lead worship, small groups and mission. Team Vital, Communities of Hope training and lay leadership development will all focus on developing passionate faith through these three markers of vitality.

Passion is also grown through young people. Their enthusiasm and youthfulness inspire faith in others. A group of GNJ leaders developed a comprehensive student ministry plan so that by 2027, GNJ will produce:

- A vibrant youth ministry in 60% of our congregations attracting 12 or more teenagers per church,
- An innovative campus ministry on 10 college campuses reaching more than 1,000 students a year,
- A 21st century premiere camping experience for students and
- An IGNITE experience that attracts 5,000 students annually.

I invite you to come along with us and create a *Next Generation Ministry* that will attract and make passionate student disciples of Jesus Christ.

Path Forward, Transformational Leadership

Leadership is the second pillar for our path forward. Leaders, both lay and clergy, set the pace, tone and direction for disciples and the congregation. GNJ's pacesetter leaders exhibit one or more of three types of leadership: *fruitful, transformational, and apostolic.*

We believe every leader can be **fruitful**, growing the health and vitality of the congregation. Fruitful lay and clergy leaders increase vitality by growing worship, small groups, hands-on mission, giving to mission and making new disciples.

Sheila Brown of Milton UMC is a fruitful leader. She first led the children's ministry, where the Sunday School and VBS have experienced growth and is one of the most vibrant children's ministries in the Skylands District. Sheila is now leading the evangelism ministry. She approaches ministry with a passion for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, and is a great equipper of others in leadership in her own congregation and throughout the district.

Luana Cook Scott through passion, strategic outreach and engaging laity has led Milford UMC to be highly vital in four years. They grew worship, small groups and community outreach and the congregation moved from 0% Shared Ministry giving to 100% in four years. There is movement from uncertainty to faithful response and engagement.

We believe that lay and clergy leadership can excel to be **transformational** leaders. Through the Holy Spirit, transformational leaders change lives and change the culture and attitude of the congregation. They lead the congregation to be more welcoming of all people, make new disciples and engage the congregation in ministry and mission with the people in the community.

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2017 Episcopal Address

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Three years ago, Roebing UMC was on the verge of closing. That changed with the arrival of McWilliam Colon. Under his leadership, the average worship attendance went from 20 to 35 people, Shared Ministry and billings were paid in full in 2015 and 2016. The congregation began to reflect the diversity of the community. New programs were added that connected the church to the community, such as a food program, a music school, a blood drive and lots more. He is a transformational leader because he has changed how the church thinks about itself, mission and the community.

Haddon Heights UMC led by Ayn Masker, has grown from an average of 38 to 60 worshippers each week. They have explored new worship styles and services, and are connecting with the families of their preschool through the pastor's music lessons to the children in the school. The church has started a new worship service at a McDonald's. Ayn is a transformational leader because she is changing how people think about worship.

We believe there is potential for many of our leaders to be **apostolic**. These are mission driven leaders who find and make a way when others do not see a way forward. They multiply people, gifts and resources.

Peter, Paul, John Wesley, Francis Asbury, Harriett Tubman, Mary McCloud Bethune, Anna Howard Shaw, Henry Appenzeller, Pat Bruger and Wilbert Mitchell are apostolic leaders. When others did not see a way, they found a way. They created movements, organizations, ministries and systems to sustain and grow the mission.

GNJ leadership is committed to come alongside all willing and ready lay and clergy leaders to develop their gifts and potential to be a difference maker in the life of the church and community.

To strengthen lay leadership, we are in the process of creating a laity leadership development initiative that will bring all laity training under one umbrella and create a seamless program for laity development.

For clergy, we are creating a leadership development plan to assist clergy to be fruitful and to increase the number of transformational and apostolic leaders.

We are also committed to further develop local pastors. We are working with Drew School of Theology to develop local pastors training to strengthen and grow present and future local pastors so they do not have to travel 200 or more miles to attend classes.

GNJ leaders will be inter-culturally competent and a 10-year plan for developing intercultural competence among our lay and clergy leadership has been developed to guide us. Fruitful, transformational and apostolic leaders all desire to be better at understanding and connecting with different cultures.

Today I give thanks and rejoice for the leaders of GNJ. I find we have leaders who are highly committed, want to learn, build relationships and seek results. You collaborate and take more risks for the mission. GNJ leaders bring me joy and I am honored to serve with you. I thank God for you.

Path Forward, Vital Missional Congregations and Hope Centers

Vital congregations and mission centers are the third pillar. Vitality, growing the passion and fruitfulness of a congregation or mission center is life giving. Every time one congregation becomes healthier, all congregations become more vital. Let me illustrate:

Six years ago, Calvary Korean UMC was going through a very challenging time. They lost more than 60% of their membership. Today, they are one of the five fastest growing United Methodist Churches within the United States. It was not an easy turnaround. They had conflict. They had significant financial challenges. A newly appointed apostolic leader, Rev. Sang Won Doh got the congregation working together again. They built their small group ministry, refocused their mission in the community and around the world and connected with community. They started a new worship service for young adults and then built upon that and started a second site worshipping community. They have been a significant supporter of the Mission Fund and increased their Shared Ministry commitments, fulfilling 100% or \$114,593 in 2017. Calvary Korean UMC is a highly vital congregation that all of us can be proud of.

Vital congregations are the third pillar of our path forward. Through Calvary UMC and many other congregations, the witness and mission of GNJ is being strengthened. As you do your part in and through your congregation, collectively God's love heals lives and transforms the world through The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey.

Rejoice!

We are seeing more and more congregations develop their vitality by:

1. Making new passionate disciples.
2. Creating inspirational worship,
3. Forming faith through small groups,
4. Engaging the community in mission and
5. Giving generously to mission.

In addition to vital congregations we are developing Hope Centers. Hope Centers have robust outreach ministries for children and youth, and provide services to the community. By the end of this year we will have five Hope Centers and 12 by the end of 2018. We are also working with seven congregations to repurpose their property to be a worship center and community center to address the needs of the community. Our urban centers are leading the way in this effort. Jersey City and Atlantic City churches have started conversations about how to transform their property into hope. These preliminary plans create church space, day care, affordable housing, senior housing and retail and offices. For some this may be hard to grasp but for the

congregations and community, it is hope for their future.

To grow more vital congregations and Hope Centers, we will continue to offer Team Vital and Communities of Hope training and assist congregations in learning from each other through Bright Spots ministry. Bright Spots are learning from congregations who are excelling in growing the five markers of vitality. Peer to peer or congregation to congregation learning is one of the most effective ways to grow vitality.

I thank God for all our congregations and rejoice in the congregations that are growing their vitality.

Path Forward, Money

Money is critical to our mission. While the church is consolidating, the mission need is growing. This consolidation has affected congregations' income. This is why the Council of Finance and Administration created a 2018 budget DECREASING the amount we apportion churches by \$894,542.

The Council on Finance and Administration changed the budget formula to a fixed percentage instead of a fluctuating amount that we apportion churches. The amount is 16.3% and CFA has also set a goal to decrease the percentage to 15.6% which is below the 2003 apportioned percentage.

I rejoice in the wisdom and leadership of CFA. I also call all of us to be more resilient. As the culture shifts, the church needs to identify how it will change to connect to make new generations of believers and regenerate itself.

While we are reducing the amount we apportion churches, we are developing other streams of income for the mission of GNJ. The increase of the United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey from \$4 million to \$40 million and an anticipated \$42 million by the end of June is because more churches are investing through the Foundation. Thank you. This has allowed us to create a staff team that will work with congregations on fundraising and raise funds through foundations and individuals. We have set a goal for the Foundation to be more than \$100 million by 2022.

Two of our other nonprofit corporations, A Future With Hope and Next Generation Student Ministries, formally the GNJ Camping and Retreat Board, will raise money for the ministries they oversee. These two organizations and the Foundation will support GNJ administration, building and communications ministry through the use of shared resources and services. While we reduce the amount we apportion to churches for Shared Ministries, we are increasing other giving avenues so that we will not just sustain our mission; we will grow it. I rejoice in the visionary and innovate leadership who are creating the opportunity for a regenerative GNJ.

Rejoice, God will See Us Through

We have great days ahead and we are engaged in a high-risk path that seeks to create a passionate church that is missionally engaged and reaches new generations of believers. It seeks new avenues to sustain the mission financially and to declare God is not finished with us yet!

It will take courage, collaboration and a focused determination to grow leadership, passionate disciples, vital congregations and money. We will choose risk over accepting the status quo, and learn through failure. We cannot tolerate trying to just maintain who we are, but accept that God is doing a new, big thing right here in Greater New Jersey.

Let United Methodists of GNJ lead the way.

I rejoice that God has entrusted us with the future of Christ's Church, that God has given us the minds, leadership, congregations, resources and rich cultural diversity for the journey. I rejoice that we have made strong progress on what we said we would do four years ago. I rejoice for this is God's time, this is GNJ's time, this is the church's time to be the difference.

REJOICE!

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June 16 – August 31

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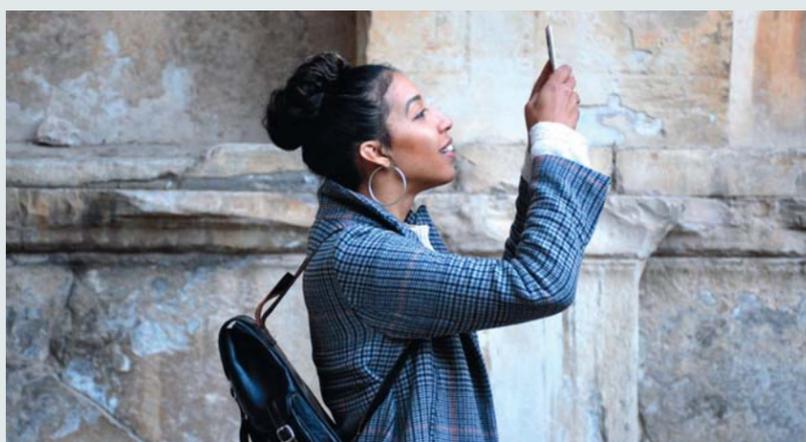
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Grow your church in the community by creating a social media account that is consistently maintained with news, events and stories of your church.



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- 2 YOU ONLY GET ONE FIRST IMPRESSION**
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- 3 GET TO THE POINT**
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- 4 TRACK YOUR STATS**
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USE HASHTAGS. Instagram, Twitter and now Facebook are driven by hashtags. If you’re not familiar, it’s when you place the pound sign in front of a word to make that phrase a searchable category so everyone else who uses that hashtag can see your photo or tweet. This helps you make connections and grow your network. For instance, try using #GNJ or even #UMC!

USE DEMOGRAPHICS. If you are trying to reach Gen X and boomers, use Facebook. If you want to go younger, use Instagram and Twitter. Engage your youth to post on Instagram and show the best pic of the week on your worship screen.

PACE YOURSELF. As a general rule, don’t post more than three photos in a row or more than once every three hours. If you post more often than that, you run the risk of overloading your followers’ and tempting them to unfollow.

TIPS FROM GNJ’S COMMUNICATION TEAM

- Captivate your readers with visual language and get to the point in a descriptive way.*
 - Josh Kinney, Editorial Manager
- Use wide shots to identify your location, and then get close-ups to give your viewers an intimate feel for the setting.*
 - James Lee, Manager of Visual Arts
- Simple is better. Stick with a minimalist design and decide what content is most important for users to focus on.*
 - Brittney Reilly, Online & Digital Communication Manager

GNJ Challenged to Become Intercultural Bridge-Builders

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

WILDWOOD – “What greater time for the church to be the church than when there’s so much division?” Erin M. Hawkins, General Secretary of the General Commission on Religion and Race asked the 2017 Annual Conference in Wildwood last month. “This is the work Christ beckons us toward.”

Hawkins, a lead official of the denominational agency that cultivates racial inclusion and the full participation of all people into the work, witness and life of the United Methodist Church, stood before Greater New Jersey leaders, teaching on intercultural competency.

A 10-year intercultural competency plan was approved by the 2017 Annual Conference to develop laity and clergy to be more culturally fit so that GNJ strengthens and grows diversity, inclusion and collaboration. Hawkins challenged United Methodists to be “bridge-builders” and “pillars of hope” in their communities.

The plan is being developed by a Cultural Competency Task Force made up of a diverse, wide-ranging collective of GNJ leaders. Rev. Giovanni Arroyo, a Provisional Elder of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference who serves on the staff of The General Commission on Religion and Race facilitated the task force, acting as a resource for GNJ. Arroyo also led a workshop at the 2017 Annual Conference on what it means to be a cultural bridge maker.

Arroyo explained that churches don’t always match their communities. “There’s a gap between who we are and who we’re called to be in mission with,” Arroyo stated, showcasing a chart comparing GNJ with the State of New Jersey. “In GNJ, we’re 79% white and 21% people of color while New Jersey is 59% white and 41% people of color,” he said. “Is our church matching our society?”

As one of the denomination’s most

diverse conferences, GNJ has 114 of 511 congregations that are multi-cultural. Nine languages are spoken on any given Sunday during worship and there are 146 cross-racial, cross-cultural appointments. However, there is significant room to grow.

The GNJ Intercultural Competency Plan calls for ambitious goals for 2027 including:

- GNJ racial/ ethnic professing membership increases from 18,882 to 19,448
- The number of multicultural congregations/faith communities increases from 114 to 175
- GNJ racial/ ethnic active clergy increases from 186 to 204
- GNJ women active clergy increases from 36% to 45%
- Average active clergy age is reduced from 55 to 50

The plan can be found on the GNJ website in the pre-conference journal addendum.

Hawkins’ and Arroyo’s participation in the conference brought to life the urgency of the plan

“There is no us and them,” Hawkins said. “We are all them if we look closely enough. We are the oppressor, the excluded, the wounded, and the oppressed. We are all of it.”

Hawkins challenged GNJ leaders to build and sustain bridges that are capable of handling tension and compression. She used metaphors of a physical bridge; its cables and pillars as strong elements that keep the bridge grounded in the community and lives of people.

“Without the support, the church can’t build a bridge between people who are torn apart,” she said, “It can’t be a church of justice without the supportive elements.”

Being culturally competent, Hawkins explained, meant that the church is a balancing form of hope and love in a community. She commended GNJ for a decade-long commitment to intercultural



Erin M. Hawkins, General Secretary of the General Commission on Religion and Race addressed the 2017 Annual Conference on the topic of intercultural bridge-building. Photo by Josh Kinney

competency, saying that “Sturdy, strong bridge building will take time.”

“Are you willing to be a pillar in your community?” she asked the crowd. “It’s not just one group’s job, it’s everyone’s job, and no one is to be blamed or shamed.”

Arroyo’s workshop stated that reaching more people, especially those who are younger and more diverse, were ways to bring about cultural competence in GNJ and impact the mission field.

“Intercultural competency helps us to

have the love of Jesus and the ability to connect with those who have different experiences,” he said. “We need this in order to be relevant.” Arroyo concluded his workshop by saying, “This isn’t something we need to add on. This is something we need to be doing as part of our discipleship, as children of God.”

Hawkins echoed Arroyo’s words when she asked the audience to acknowledge that everyone had their own story. “If I am not willing to see myself in the person whose perspective I disagree with, I cannot be useful to the cause of Christ to build a better humanity.” She continued, “We don’t do this because we want to be politically correct or because diversity is trendy, but because we want to be disciples of Jesus.”

Rev. Gina Kim is the District Superintendent of the Palisades District, one of the most diverse districts in the nation. She said she sensed a need for intercultural competency as she traveled throughout her district.

“I hear a desire for better and more training,” she said. “It takes a long-term commitment to increase intercultural competency and I thank God for GNJ’s long-term plan.”

As Hawkins’ message came to a close, she introduced what she dubbed ‘the new LAW’ which stands for ‘Love Always Wins.’

“Are we willing to be on the winning side?” she asked, departing the stage. “The end of the story has already been written. It’s just a matter of if we want to be a participant in that story.”



GNJ Clergy sing praises and stand before the stage waving blue streamers at the 2017 Annual Conference. Photo by Shari DeAngelo



Rev. Gina Hendrickson, Northern Shore District Superintendent joyously makes her way through the Wildwoods Convention Center. Photo by Shari DeAngelo



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GNJ Rises Against Hunger

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

WILDWOOD – Music pulsed throughout the East Hall of the Wildwoods Convention Center as more than 200 volunteers working in unison systematically and excitedly helped package 30,000 meals in just an hour and a half.

2017 Annual Conference attendees joined forces with Rise Against Hunger’s effort to feed people around the world with a bold mission to end world hunger by 2030. Formerly known as Stop Hunger Now, the rebranded nonprofit gave Annual Conference attendees a loud, lively activity to support the world’s most vulnerable.

For the fifth year in a row, GNJ has taken part in the noble endeavor, packaging a total of 150,000 meals. This year, volunteers nearly doubled as churches, groups, and individuals from Wildwood and the Cape May County community were invited to join participants.

“The volunteers at this event are charged up and ready to work,” said GNJ Lay Leader Rosa Williams. “Besides learning what is going on in the conference, this is an event that keeps people coming back year after year, to be a part

of something that’s bigger than any one person, and takes many hands to make.”

The organization, founded by a United Methodist minister in 1998, focuses on mobilizing a global network of hunger champions that package nutritious meals to distribute to partners in countries around the world who are best able to address the causes and effects of hunger based on their local presence and expertise.

Rise Against Hunger’s monitoring and evaluation process ensures the meals distributed by partnering countries are used as a tool to change lives by promoting education, improving students’ health and nutrition, addressing gender inequalities, stimulating economic growth and fighting child labor.

For the last four years, the United Methodist Church in Madison has been involved with Rise Against Hunger after student assistant Chelsea Jackson brought up the idea for the program when she started at Drew Theological Seminary. Last year, the Madison Rotary Club sponsored a meal packaging event similar to Rise Against Hunger called End Hunger 3.6 which emphasizes the fact that every 3.6 seconds someone dies of malnutrition or starvation. Along



In just an hour and a half, over 200 GNJ volunteers packaged 30,000 meals at the 2017 Annual Conference with Rise Against Hunger. Photo by Shari DeAngelo

with other local organizations and Drew University students, Madison UMC joined the initiative and helped package 100,000 meals.

“Rise Against Hunger not only allows our clergy and lay leaders an opportunity for hands-on service but also educates participants around the root causes of hunger,” said Rev. Hector Burgos, Director of Connectional Ministries. “It helps them imagine new ways to be in mission

in their local communities and the world.” Burgos applauded the organization for recognizing that ending hunger is more than just feeding people but also expanding hunger-fighting programs through regenerative mission.

This year’s meals will be shipped from Rise Against Hunger’s Philadelphia warehouse to impact thousands across the world.

Shared Ministries

Continued from page 1

funds through grants and other funding sources. A Future With Hope, created by GNJ in response to Superstorm Sandy, is living into its name by becoming the mission arm of the Conference. Key to a five year projection of the budget is A Future With Hope continuing its proven track record of funding itself through donations and grants. Expenses associated with A Future With Hope and funded independently, offer a window to reduce the Conference budget and lower local church’s Shared Ministry.

In a similar way, creating shared services with the United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey, opens an opportunity for resources that are shared rather than fully funded with the Conference budget. Sue Goodman, Interim Director of the Foundation, took the stage at Annual Conference to speak on behalf of the Foundation’s work with its investment partner, Wespath, the largest faith-based reporting investor.

“Through Wespath’s Godly, socially responsible investments, GNJ is becoming strengthened,” said Goodman. With more than \$22 billion invested including over \$20 million in New Jersey affordable housing initiatives and a charter school in Newark, Wespath is using women and minority-owned firms that achieve above market benchmarks.

Congregations are encouraged to learn more about investing through the Stewardship Foundation with Wespath in a mutually beneficial relationship. As more GNJ churches invest with Wespath through the Foundation, more resources will be returned to local churches through the work of GNJ.

The budget’s five-year plan to reduce Shared Ministries calls for more churches to fulfill 100% of their commitment. Over



This year’s Annual Conference session opened with a service to commission and ordain 22 clergy on Sunday evening, May 21. Bishop John Schol’s powerful sermon invited leadership to choose joy over happiness, to move to the margins of faith and practice real life joy and hope in one’s leadership. In addition, 37 clergy were recognized for their more than 700 years of service at the closing worship on Tuesday, May 23. Pictured left, Heather Valosin jumps for joy following her ordination. Above right, Karline “Kay” Dubuisson becomes the first Haitian woman to be ordained in GNJ. Photos by Shari DeAngelo

the last several years, fulfillments to Shared Ministry have increased in local churches, last year hitting 88%.

With a giving rate anticipated to reach 90% by 2018, leaders had more reason to rejoice at the potential of uncharted and untapped opportunities to grow disciples and vital congregations in GNJ.



Pictured above: The “Rejoice” themed stage inside the Wildwoods Convention Center at the 2017 Annual Conference. Photo by Shari DeAngelo



Rev. Dr. Varlyna Wright, Capital District Superintendent delivered a message on casting anxieties on God during the Annual Conference’s Service of Remembrance. As a catalyst for growth in congregations, Wright has served 65 churches for the past 6 years and will soon embark on a new life chapter as she retires and relocates to Georgia. Photo by Shari DeAngelo

WE’RE ON

Check out a video resource archive of GNJ produced videos!
YOUTUBE.COM/GNJUMC

United Methodists to Celebrate in Ocean Grove in August

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

OCEAN GROVE – Bishop John Schol will kick off a summer celebration in Ocean Grove on Sunday August 6, at The Great Auditorium in downtown Ocean Grove. In collaboration with the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association, the United Methodist celebration will include bible studies, beach fun, and a family picnic. Clergy, laity, and congregations throughout GNJ are invited to gather in this historic setting at the Jersey Shore to worship, sing, receive communion together, and hear a sermon from Bishop Schol. GNJ clergy and their families are invited to return on Monday, August 7

“We’re excited to have Bishop Schol preach and teach,” said Rev. John Di-Giamberardino, Chief Operations Officer of the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association. “It is great to have a day focusing on United Methodists in New Jersey.”

The three day schedule includes:

Sunday, August 6
9:00 a.m. | Pavilion Praise A time of worship led by Rev. Dr. Gina Hendrickson, Northern Shore District Superintendent and sponsored by St. Paul’s UMC in Ocean Grove and the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association.
10:30 a.m. | Worship Service | Great Auditorium Led by Bishop John Schol on “Soul Saving”
5:30 p.m. | GNJ Choir Participant Dinner Registration required during sign-up
7:00 p.m. | Night of Worship | Great Auditorium
Led by Bishop John Schol on “Soul Tending” and including
GNJ Mass Choir Experience

Communion
Monday, August 7
9:00 a.m. | Bible Hour | Bishop Janes Tabernacle Led by Bishop John Schol on “Do You Have Soul”

9:00 a.m. | Children’s Bible Hour
12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. | Clergy and Family Appreciation Lunch

Clergy and families are welcome to enjoy a day at the beach and explore the town of Ocean Grove.

Tuesday, August 8
9:00 a.m. | Bible Hour | Bishop Janes Tabernacle Led by Bishop John Schol on “Do You Have Soul”

9:00 a.m. | Children’s Bible Hour
Clergy and families are welcome to enjoy a day at the beach and explore the town of Ocean Grove.

A GNJ Choir

Joining Bishop Schol on Sunday night, will be Eric Drew, GNJ’s Director of Worship, who is amassing singers from around GNJ to join in a special United Methodist choir experience.

“There’s nothing better than inviting a mass choir, and as many Methodists as we can get, to come together to worship through song, prayer, word and table,” he said. Drew hopes to have as many as 250 join the choir from throughout GNJ.

Anyone interested in singing in the GNJ choir can sign up on the GNJ website. Choir rehearsal will begin at 3:00 p.m. on August 6 in the Great Auditorium followed by a special dinner with the Bishop at 5:00 p.m.

“It’s exciting to be a part of a major milestone for the relationship between Greater New Jersey and the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association,” said Drew. “I’m grateful for Ocean Grove’s vi-



A GNJ Night of Worship featuring Bishop Schol and a GNJ Choir, as well as a Clergy Appreciation Day will be held this August in Ocean Grove. Photos by Josh Kinney

sion to fill the Great Auditorium with Methodist’s worshipping on Sunday night; that community and setting have been so important to United Methodist history – especially creatively in the UMC.”

Drew expressed enthusiasm over the chance to connect the Methodist tradition of past songwriting which engaged the culture of the time and sharing some of his own music in which he hopes to engage the timeless message of the Gospel with sounds from modern culture.

Last month, Drew released a uniquely Wesleyan full-length worship album titled “Center of It All.” Produced by Kurtis Parks, Drew wrote and performed the 11 songs on the album and created a free worship resource kit for churches including sheet music and chord charts. Half of all proceeds from the album go to benefit the GNJ Mission Fund and the other half toward creative worship

endeavors in GNJ.

Clergy Appreciation Day and Beach Party

To round out the celebration, clergy and their families are invited to join in fellowship and fun on Monday, August 7 in a day set aside to show appreciation for GNJ clergy and their service. The Bishop will lead a morning Bible hour and a picnic for clergy and their families will be shared on Pilgrims’ Pathway. Enjoy a day at the beach or spend the afternoon shopping at Ocean Grove’s unique gift shops.

There is something for everyone at the GNJ celebration in Ocean Grove. Clergy, laity, families, and congregations are encouraged to attend the unique summer experience. For more information and to register, go to www.gnjumc.org/ocean-grove-night-of-worship-clergy-family-beach-day/

Hearts Moved and Lives Changed Through Red Bird Mission

By Denise Herschel
Nj6pack@yahoo.com

NEPTUNE - The Red Bird area of Kentucky is deep in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains. And while the immense countryside and rugged mountain ranges are a sight to behold, within this area of the country there is also extreme poverty and high unemployment rates. The lack of jobs, inadequate housing, and isolation of this rural region has resulted in the Red Bird area, and the counties of Bell, Clay, and Leslie included in the top twenty poorest counties in the U.S.

For the past 17 years, Neptune Township’s Hamilton UMC members have made it their personal mission to return to Beverly, Kentucky each summer to assist the needs of Eastern Kentucky residents where 17% of the population lives below the federal poverty level. Named the Red Bird Mission, this year’s trip will take place August 12-19.

Jessie Tilton, Youth Pastor and Mission Team Leader of Hamilton UMC, said she has been on the Red Bird Mission journey 15 times. She became involved during her teens while attending the youth program at her church.

“I go year after year because this place and these people have become like a second home to me. To work in an area where there is so much need is an honor where we serve as God’s hands and feet in this community. Hamilton UMC has a heart for missions and Kentucky was first brought to our attention by the youth director 16 years ago. We were introduced to Red Bird Mission Work Camp and have attended the camp each summer since that time,” she said.

According to the Red Bird Mission website, the work camp is for improvements to homes in the area. Each year there are more than 3,000 volunteers who repair over 200 homes and help im-

prove living conditions for area residents. Founded with just a school in 1921, today it has grown to a full-service mission of the United Methodist Church, the only one of its kind in the country, serving more than 14,000 people annually.

Hamilton UMC Pastor Jessica Campbell added that this would be her third summer going to the Red Bird area and she is elated to take the trip once again with her fellow church members.

“Going on the mission trip has been a deeply transformative experience for me in not only in getting to know the members of my congregation but also in seeing how we are serving as God’s hands and feet in the lives of the Appalachian people,” she said. “The first year I attended we repaired the roof for a family. The foundation of a house we worked on was supported by newspapers and trash that they could stuff into the walls of the house. Last year a team went and built an outdoor staircase for an elderly man while another team replaced a window for a family’s home in the community.”

Despite the long road trip to Kentucky, Campbell said that she is looking forward to the journey and plans on going as long as there is a need or she is able.

Tilton agreed and continued, “This mission is a real hands-on immersion experience. People learn and get to see and live the life of someone they would never have met before. I love watching people change on these trips. It’s a real eye-opener to the real problems people are plagued by in this world.”

“Scripture repeatedly calls us to the marginalized and the least, the lost and the last,” said Campbell. “Inwardly it is such a joy to know that we have made a difference in the lives of others. We were created to be generous, and this mission is a wonderful way for all to serve others generously.”

To learn more about the Red Bird Mission visit www.rbmission.org

IGNITE YOUNG ADULT EXPERIENCE



SATURDAY, SEPT. 30

IGNITE 2017 CONFERENCE

Young Adults ages 18-25 are invited to take part in the first ever IGNITE experience customized specifically for them. A Young Adults workshop, time of fellowship and connecting, and a dinner will be served in addition to a concert performance by Christian hip-hop artist Tedashii and singer, song-writer Meredith Andrews. Come meet, fellowship, connect and network with other young adults in GNJ!

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www.ignitenj.org/young-adult-experience

The July 2017 Issue Deadline is June 23, 2017

Second Year Arts Festival Defies Weather, Draws Crowd

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

MONTCLAIR - Tents and umbrellas dotted N. Fullerton Street and the lawn of First UMC in downtown Montclair. Gray clouds and drizzles couldn't keep the crowds from music blaring under a covered outdoor stage, sweet smelling treats, and the bustle of colorful activity. On Saturday, May 6, the church and various community partners hosted the second annual N. Fullerton Arts & Crafts Fair where artisans, crafters, kids groups, organizations, food vendors, and musicians set up shop for a day of community bonding.

"We had a great success last year, but no doubt, this year's event brought the community a much greater joy as we had more than 30 vendors including the YMCA of Montclair, a local animal shelter, Whole Foods of Montclair, several food vendors, jewelry makers and live musicians," said Rev. Earl Kim, Senior Pastor of First UMC.

This year, the festival co-hosted the

event with the Montclair Center Business Improvement District and had Chase Bank as a sponsor. The town, widely known as artistic and culturally diverse with its own art museums, film festival, galleries and unique restaurants, was a natural fit for the church's arts festival outreach to an already creative community.

"The congregation here believes this event is a creative and effective way to open the church to the community," said Kim.

The free, outdoor event pressed on despite inclement weather, drawing families, children, and passersby's. From face painting to kid-friendly art activities, food tasting, and free health screenings, the amount of vendors and musicians nearly doubled from last year.

"We prayed the rain away," said Nicole Peaks, a church member of nearly 16 years who organized the music with new and repeat acts. By the end of the festival, Peaks had a stack of business cards from musicians wanting to be a part of next year's event.

"It was really an uplifting time," she



The N. Fullerton Arts & Crafts Festival at First UMC in Montclair has become a big hit for the creative community. Photo provided

said. "People from the community seemed to really enjoy it, and we raised money to benefit Christian education programs and just made our church presence known."

Former President of the UMW and now the organization's Treasurer, Peaks is active in the Montclair church's music scene and hopes to continue growing the festival.

For Peaks, building a social media presence for an event like the N. Fullerton Arts & Crafts Fair is key. She encourages other churches to step out in faith, use

their talents and make connections in their communities.

"Even a small church can make a big difference," she said. "Use your contacts, seek out your town's business improvement district or a local art gallery to partner with. Simply setting up face painting, arts and crafts, bubbles, carnival popcorn, a barbecue and music for kids is a great, inexpensive way to reach a community and get started."

Next year, the church anticipates a larger crowd, more vendors, musicians, and better weather.

Apostles in our Midst: Frank Fowler and Trinity UMC, Hackettstown

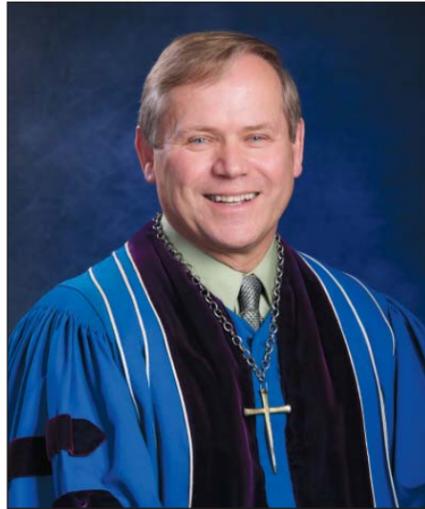
A 2017 Series on Apostolic Leadership in GNJ

Mission: For Trinity UMC in Hackettstown, mission is central. Whether around the corner or across the globe, this outbound, missional congregation challenges its members to step outside their comfort zones to see life and faith through a different perspective and grow spiritually. Those who have gone on mission trips report back to the congregation during worship, which has led others to subsequently join mission trips.

For the last 17 years, groups from Trinity join thousands of volunteers from around the country in rural central Appalachia to help repair homes for low-income families. The ministry not only seeks to provide struggling families with assistance, but also promotes and emboldens volunteers to return to their communities with a passion for service, renewed compassion for others, and a fresh appreciation for their place and purpose in the world. Throughout the year, teams from Trinity host three fundraisers: a roast beef dinner, Christmas tree sale, and a banquet auction, to raise necessary funds for their trip.

Trinity youth actively serve their immediate community, Northern New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. The "Midnight Run" team at Trinity has conducted monthly midnight and breakfast runs into New York City. Each month the youth collect clothing, bags of toiletries, and food to distribute to the homeless at various stops. Youth also partner with "The Porch" – an inter-church holistic ministry dedicated to presenting the love of Christ to the youth of Washington, D.C. The program strives to make disciples of Christ by providing a safe and welcoming space for the youth of D.C. to know, receive and respond to God's love and healing.

Every year, teams from Trinity venture into the deaf communities of Peru; a country with limited educational opportunities for the hearing impaired. The church also sends groups to the Dominican Republic to partner with International Child Care's Community Health Programs, providing therapy training and supplies for developmentally disabled children, parents, and healthcare workers. Groups also travel to neighboring Haiti to serve children and missionaries, providing supplies and participating in various work projects. In addition, the church has partnered with a Methodist pastor in the Philippines for the last 15 years, helping to work against the challenges of extreme poverty, tsunamis, and political violence. Through the congregations continued financial support, Bibles, Christian education materials, instruments for youth praise bands, and



Rev. Frank Fowler of Trinity UMC in Hackettstown. Photo provided

salaries for teachers have been made possible.

Trinity's missions include a food pantry and a community-wide Thanksgiving program. The church partners with Carmen Ministries which works in state correctional facilities, seeking to afford youthful offenders the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel while also assisting them in the pursuit of continuing education. Through 'Trinity House'; the church's community outreach, free weekly classes in English and Spanish as a second language have been offered over the last ten years.

Apostle: Rev. Dr. Frank Fowler serves as senior pastor of Trinity UMC in Hackettstown, the church he grew up, was confirmed, and called to ministry in. His ministry has included a passion for the local church and a strong emphasis on helping people grow in discipleship through hands-on mission.

"I am particularly passionate about challenging younger people to embrace these experiences," he said. "For younger souls are especially ready to grow and change."

Fowler has led by actively engaging himself in mission.

"The signs over our church's exit doors announce 'you are now entering the mission field,'" said Fowler. "And our congregation increasingly believes and lives that."

Fowler earned a B.A. from West Virginia Wesleyan College, an M. Div. from Wesley Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. from New York University. As an ordained elder of GNJ, Fowler has served local churches for 43 years and has taught classes at Centenary University and Drew Theological Seminary. He is married with five children and six grandchildren.

CUMAC Community Closet a Sanctuary for Tough Times



CUMAC's Community Closet is helping to provide for those in need, supporting those struggling in the Paterson region. Photo provided

By Adrian Diaz
adiaz@cumacecho.org

PATERSON – Despite working full-time, Angela has been a regular at CUMAC in Paterson for a few years. Despite working full time, she often finds herself struggling to make ends meet and keep food on the table for her and her son.

CUMAC, a nonprofit organization dedicated to feeding people and changing lives has worked to alleviate hunger and its root causes for those in need in Paterson, Passaic County, and Northern New Jersey for over 30 years. The organization's Community Closet also has clothing and houseware for those on a tight budget.

When Angela recently received a phone call that her father, "Papi" had suffered a massive heart attack, she knew exactly where to go for assistance in help.

For Angela, the entire event came as a huge shock. At just 51-years-old, Papi had always been a picture of health. "He was healthy all the time, and he was always there for us," she said. After the heart attack, Papi was rushed to the hospital needing immediate surgery. The surgery left him weak and unable to use his right arm.

"His heart stopped twice in the hospital. They saved him," Angela said. "I have to thank God."

After months of therapy and recovery,

Papi finally came home. However, he was too weak to work, and his family worried about his extra medical expenses. Using CUMAC's disaster relief services, Angela was able to leave CUMAC with a shower chair, a cane, a walker, a special pillow that accommodates new medical needs, and many other items to make her father's recovery as comfortable as possible. Her family says those items would have been too expensive in stores, much more than they would have ever been able to afford.

Although Papi has a long road ahead, he continues to be in good spirits. Since coming home he's needed another surgery, but he's currently in rehabilitation and Angela and family are thrilled to see him progressing every week. With his new supplies, he has the support he needs to be more independent, and the family is thankful.

Every time Angela comes to visit CUMAC's Community Closet she's greeted with a big hug. As she and her family continue to tackle challenges, the CUMAC team is ready to lend a helping hand or a listening ear.

"CUMAC is a blessing to a lot of people in need," said Angela. "I'm grateful for all the people who work here, helping people."

For more information and to volunteer or donate to help CUMAC make stories like Angela's possible, please visit www.cumac.org

AmeriCorps and Two Future's With Hope

Continued from page 1

taken advantage of in the hurricane's tumultuous aftermath.

"The work that we're doing, I just remind myself why I'm here. This is what I was looking for," said Kandace Major, a volunteer from Detroit, MI. "Being able to come and change someone's life." She continued, "I'm really proud to be working with A Future With Hope, because they're doing really good and there's a lot to be done."

The group laughed as they painted, having grown close over the month-long project despite being from different cities and states and coming from a vast variety of backgrounds. In spite of the storm's devastation, the rebuilding effort was able to bring about meaningful friendships that would have never existed otherwise.

"If I can just see one house through, I know that that's someone else who gets to go back home," Major radiated, rinsing her paintbrush.

According to Jesberg, a common

thread among her team was being humbled by the fact that so many families were in need of so much help.

"To think that people are still not in their houses," she said, shaking her head, peering out at the Little Egg Harbor bay. "It's just incredible to see the impact Superstorm Sandy had on all of these communities."

Jesberg praised the opportunity to work with A Future With Hope. "It's nice to know there's still a program that's out there helping because I can only imagine if I went through this thing myself how much I would want my family to be back home."

The group set down their tools and clamored together out front of the house for a final photo before packing up and heading back to their home states.

"We're just so appreciative that we've been out here and able to help as much as we can even with just one house," said Jesberg. "Because that's one house closer to recovery."

In 2017, an estimated 3,000 families



Lindsey Jesberg, an AmeriCorps NCCC Atlantic Region volunteer, puts the finishing touches on a home rebuilt by A Future With Hope in Little Egg Harbor.

Photo by Josh Kinney

affected by Superstorm Sandy are still in the recovery process and need help building their homes. As one of the last recovery groups on the ground, A Future With Hope has rebuilt 256 homes and hosted more than 11,810 volunteers.

All Saturdays through the summer are open for volunteer teams of 10-20

people to join ongoing projects in southern Ocean and Atlantic Counties including Little Egg Harbor, Atlantic City, and Brigantine. Give back this summer and organize a team to help bring families home. Visit www.afuturewithhope.org/ volunteer to find out more and sign up to transform lives.

GNJ Receives Ranch Hope Christian Partner Award



Bishop John Schol and Rev. Dave Bailey at Sharptown UMC on May 11, where GNJ was honored with the Ranch Hope Christian Partnership award. Photo provided

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

ALLOWAY TWP - Greater New Jersey was the honored recipient of the Ranch Hope Christian Partnership Award on May 11 at Sharptown UMC in Pilesgrove. The faith-based community organization in Alloway held its 53rd annual Founder's Banquet at the church, hosting Bishop John Schol as the year's featured speaker.

Serving children, youth, and families by fostering environments that transform lives empowered through Christ-centered love and compassion, Ranch Hope offers residential care treatment for adolescent boys and teenage girls. Founded in 1964 by Rev. Dave Bailey and his wife Eileen, the ministry includes behavioral healthcare services, special education services, summer camps and

adventure based services and outpatient counseling.

"We are so appreciative of the financial and volunteer support the United Methodist Churches have given to the Ranch over our 53 years," said Bailey, who was "delighted" to have Bishop Schol as the banquet guest speaker. "I am personally grateful to the Methodist Church congregations for their continued enthusiastic support of our ministry. They have been with us from the very early days and throughout the Ranch's history."

In addition to the ministry's Alloway campus, Ranch Hope has a thrift store at Cowtown Flea Market in Pilesgrove and Cranberry Plaza in Pennsville as well as the Strang School and Camp Edge in Alloway. For more information about Ranch Hope and how you can get involved with their mission, visit www.ranchhope.org

GNJ Youth Among Top 5 Fundraisers for 30 Hour Famine Event

By Mike Ralph
mralph@trinitymullicahill.org

MULLICA HILL - For the sixth straight year, the youth at Trinity UMC in Mullica Hill participated in World Vision's 30 Hour Famine to help feed and support children in developing nations.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of students in the U.S. — and thousands more around the world — unite through World Vision's 30 Hour Famine to feed hungry children and families. Together, these students learn about hunger, raise money to fight hunger, go hungry for 30 hours and change the world.

Before the fast, 30 students from Trinity invited church members, neighbors, friends, and family to donate to their cause. During the event, these students participated in activities and watched videos that helped them better understand global. Additionally, the team served locally by making lunches for Kid's Alley in Camden and serving at the city's Salvation Army Kroc Center. The team broke the fast with Communion and a feast.

Trinity's hunger team surpassed their goal of \$12,000. With over \$15,000 contributed, they were one of the top five national fundraisers for this year's 30 Hour Famine event. In the church's six years of participation, their group has raised nearly \$60,000 for World Vision. World Vision is a global Christian humanitarian organization that partners with children, families, and their communities to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.



GNJ youth at Trinity UMC in Mullica Hill were among the top 5 national fundraisers for this year's 30 Hour Famine event, raising over \$15,000 for World Vision. Photo provided

Because the youth met their goal this year, they got to shave the head of their

youth director, Mike Ralph. "Losing my hair is an easy price to pay for the work

that our students did and the children whose lives will be impacted," said Ralph.

CONFERENCE HAPPENINGS

Order 2017 Annual Conference Journals

2017 Annual Conference Journals will be available for download on the website in the Fall. All retired clergy may receive a hard copy of the 2017 Annual Conference Journal for free upon request. Hard copies are available for a fee of \$20. Go to gnjumc.org/2017-annual-conference/2017-journal-order-form to buy.

2017 Peace with Justice Grant Recipients Announced

St. Paul's UMC in Ocean Grove and Galilee UMC in Englewood are this year's Peace with Justice Grant recipients. St. Paul's Allen Project, Inc. will transform a former parsonage into a homeless prevention site for women and children. The Galilee church will use grant funds to expand their prison ministry.

United Methodist Family Fun Days at Dorney Park

Dorney Park and Wildwater Kingdom in Allentown, PA, is hosting United Methodist Family Fun Days, June 23-25. Save on a great day of fun for your family, church, youth group, small group, or organization. Visit dorneypark.com to purchase discounted tickets.

OBITUARIES

Margaret F. Yeager, Lay Member to Conference, died on May 22. A Celebration of Life took place on May 26 at The Chapel at Boucher Funeral Home in Deptford, NJ. Memorial Donations (In lieu of flowers) may be sent to Fairview Village UMC, 1463 N. Chesapeake Rd., Camden, NJ 08104. Expressions of sympathy may be sent at www.boucherfuneralhome.com/obituaries/Margaret-Yeager

Rev. Dr. Jay K. Helms, Retired Full Elder, died on May 20. A Celebration of Life took place on May 26 at Woodruff UMC in Bridgeton, NJ. Memorial Donations (In lieu of flowers) may be sent to the United Methodist Communities at Pitman, Attn: Pam Piccone, 535 North Oak Ave., Pitman, NJ 08071. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Mark Helms, 15 E. 2nd St., Moorestown, NJ 08057

Karen M. Hoenigsberg, Lay Member to Conference, died on May 16. A Celebration of Life was held on May 20 at Trinity UMC in Ewing, NJ. Memorial Donations (In lieu of flowers) may be sent to Trinity UMC, 1985 Pennington Rd., Ewing, NJ 08618. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to: Attn: Jacqueline Behl Utz (mother) and Andrea Trayner (sister), Trinity UMC, 1985 Pennington Rd., Ewing, NJ 08618

Joan A. Gough, Spouse of Retired Elder Rev. Raymond Gough, died on May 21. A Celebration of Life will be held on June 30 at Vincentown UMC in Vincentown, NJ. Memorial Donations (In lieu of flowers) may be sent to A Future With Hope, 205 Jumping Brood Rd., Neptune, NJ 07753 or The National Parkinson Foundation, 200 SE 1st St., Suite 800, Miami, FL 33131. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Rev. Raymond Gough, 2960 Tampa Rd., Apt. 224, Palm Harbor, FL 34684.

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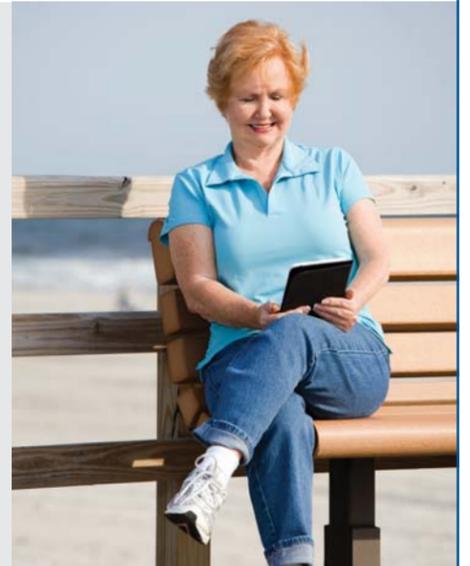
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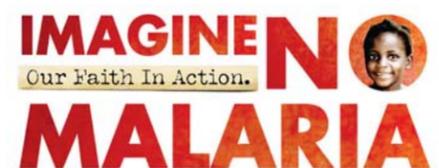
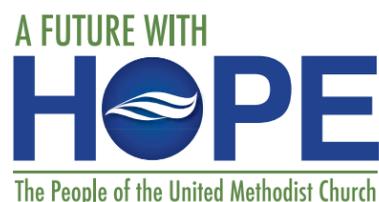




A MOSQUITO BITE CAN KILL

Malaria kills one child every 30 seconds, about 3000 children every day. Over one million people die from malaria each year, mostly children under five years of age. These children do not have to suffer and die. Malaria is preventable. The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey has partnered with Imagine No Malaria to help prevent this terrible disease.

**HAVE YOU AND YOUR CONGREGATION JOINED
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