

# THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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No. 10

## Hearts Ablaze at Largest IGNITE to Date

By Josh Kinney  
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WILDWOOD – The energy, excitement, and exhilaration was unprecedented at the third annual IGNITE youth conference on Sept. 30-Oct. 2.

Approximately 1,200 youth attended the event at the Wildwoods Convention Center under the theme of “Let There Be Light” based on the Bible verse 1 Thessalonians 5:5 which says, “You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.” Bellarive, the popular Christian worship band that performed throughout the conference, also has a song titled “Let There Be Light” off of their latest record which helped to tie the theme together musically.

Featured speaker William Green, an Atlantic City native and former NFL star, shared his inspiring testimony of finding abundant life, not in a career, success, or another person but solely in God. The evening proved monumental in the lives of hundreds of youth as they stood up and made first-time or renewed commitments to Jesus Christ.

“IGNITE was such an incredible time,” said Skerrit Bwoy, who served as the event’s Christian DJ. “It was such a blessing to see hundreds of people commit their life to Jesus.”

This year, IGNITE attendance grew tremendously, and for Director of Worship and IGNITE coordinator, Eric Drew, that was worth celebrating.

“In a world that says church is no longer relevant and young people don’t



Over 1,200 students, grades 6-12 came out to the 2016 IGNITE youth conference in Wildwood, Sept. 30 – Oct. 2.

Photo by Josh Kinney

care, we’re growing here in Greater New Jersey and kids are going deeper in their faith,” Drew said. “We had non-church people come this year, too. There’s a lot in motion to continue reaching more

students who are then going into their communities, living differently and making an impact.”

The success of IGNITE 2016 came in part due to the diversity of featured

voices from various backgrounds, perspectives, and places. From renowned Christian author and speaker Laurie Polich Short to nationally recognized artists

Continued on page 8

## Haddonfield UMC and Respond Inc. Celebrate 50 Years of Partnership



Respond Inc. Executive Director Dr. Wilbert Mitchell celebrated 50 years of serving the nonprofit on Sunday, Sept. 25 at Haddonfield UMC. Photo by Josh Kinney

By Josh Kinney  
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“Raise your hand if you have ever seen a U-Haul at a funeral?” Bishop Schol asked the congregation of Haddonfield UMC on Sunday, Sept. 25. Not a hand was lifted in the silent crowd. Schol answered, “Of course not, because when you die, you can’t take anything with you.”

Schol joined the congregation to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Respond Inc, a charitable nonprofit in partnership with the church that has unleashed the love of God in the city of Camden for five decades. The church, which was in the midst of exploring a series about love in



action, took a Sunday to celebrate the impactful work of the nonprofit created by community residents to enhance and promote the economic independence and general welfare of individuals and families in Camden. The mission of Respond Inc has been carried forth in the

Continued on page 4

## Leaders Equip for Ministry at Laity Leadership Academy

By Josh Kinney  
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As a primary resource for laity in Greater New Jersey, the Laity Leadership Academy on September 13 provided a day of learning, discussion and brainstorming for participants to grow in their spiritual leadership. Attendees were invited to choose one of four tracks which included strategic planning for small groups, new approaches to worship, preaching, and social media.

In addition to exploring new ideas, the day was immersed in creativity, sharing, laughter and relationship building. GNJ Lay Leader Rosa Williams, who organized the academy, wanted lay leaders to come away feeling empowered and

prepared to apply what they learned from the event.

“Everyone who came was really impressive,” said Director of Worship Eric Drew who led the worship track. “They were highly engaged in a way in which they could take ideas back to their local church communities and implement them.”

Drew’s track explored both the organizational and creative side of worship as well as incorporating video and multimedia. The session inspired leaders to plan creative worship services in collaboration with their pastors, use the arts to bring the worship experience to life, create calendars and integrate new spiritual gifts into the worship committee.

Continued on page 5



GNJ LAUNCHES  
PODCAST | page.6

ARCHER UMC YOUTH  
WINS “AMERICA’S  
GOT TALENT” | page. 7

TRINITY UMC  
HACKETTSTOWN  
YOUTH APPEARS ON  
“SURVIVOR” | page. 6

# A Message from the Bishop



## Embracing Both Traditional and Contemporary – Facing Our Controversies

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” - Ephesians 5:25*

Today these words sound pretty tame. It is a traditional expectation in every Christian marriage -- spouses should love each other just as Jesus loved.

Paul wrote these words in a time that was very different -- when women were treated inferior to men and were considered property. He broke with the traditional view of how men were

to view and treat women with contemporary thinking by instructing husbands to love your wives just as Christ loved. Believe it or not, he was a contemporary thinker.

Paul was forging a new concept in the roles and relationships of men and women not only in marriage but in their role in the church.

In the first century there were controversies between traditional and contemporary thinking just as we experience in the 21st century church.

Today I write the second in a three-part series on what's next for the future of The United Methodist Church. For this series I am “mashing” two words that often do not go together to illustrate how people with divergent views can come together.

At the May 2016 General Conference Session, the delegates voted to establish a special commission to determine the shape and order of the church in light of our different views about LGBTQ people (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer). The Special Commission is to identify a way forward in light of important theological differences concerning the ordination and marriage of gays and lesbians.

In my first article I wrote about graceful controversy. In a graceful controversy, disciples:

- Seek God and understanding rather than winning,
- Understand that just because people disagree with you or your interpretation of the Bible doesn't mean they're bad or wrong,
- Bathe the controversy in prayer and seek the Holy Spirit's discernment, and
- Seek solutions through a deeper relationship with God and with others, especially with those that do not agree with you.

What does it look like to value traditional and contemporary thinking at the same time?

Our churches already know how to do this. Some of our most conservative churches break with tradition and only use contemporary worship each Sunday. Some of our most liberal churches only have very traditional worship services.

Jesus and Paul worked with both traditional and contemporary views. Paul was working to move the church in new directions and he complemented women who were leading the church (Romans 16:1-2 and Philippians 4:2-3) and in another context told women to be silent in the church (1 Corinthians 34-35). I believe Paul would be pleased that The United Methodist Church has embraced women in leadership roles including ordaining women clergy and consecrating women bishops.

I believe it is possible to be orthodox and break with orthodoxy on certain beliefs and to be liberal and keep very traditional practices and hold traditional beliefs.

Jesus also exemplified the ability to embrace both the orthodox and the liberal. At one moment he said, I did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17-18) and at another moment he defends his disciples for breaking the Sabbath law (Mark 2:23).

How could Jesus and Paul embrace divergent beliefs? By recognizing text and context as important to discerning God's desire for the community of believers. They honored the sacred historic scriptural text and recognized it needed to be understood within new contexts.

In the study of the Bible, this is called hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is taking into consideration the context of a situation. Another form of interpretation is called exegesis which only looks at the words of the text. For example, if someone says, “This tastes good,” and that was the only information we had, we would believe he or she likes what's being served for dinner. If we could see the facial expression, understand their dietary habits, and hear their tone of voice, we might come to the conclusion that they are being sarcastic about their dinner of liver and onions. Text and context are both essential and Jesus and Paul were always reflecting on the text and the context. That's why they could seem to be traditional and contemporary in their teaching

The text provides a faith tradition that is instructive for our faith and beliefs.

The context provides a contemporary understanding and informs how we put our faith and beliefs into practice.

To be orthodox and liberal, traditional and contemporary is to recognize and embrace difference and to become more comfortable living in the midst of tension and controversy. I believe that a person who is more orthodox in his or her theology can deepen their faith by embracing contemporary understanding and practices. I also believe that someone of liberal theology, goes deeper by embracing biblical traditions.

In the first century, Paul was moving an emerging church forward in its

understanding that women are gifts of God who can lead in the church. He did not fully arrive to where God has led us today in the 21st century, but he was moving the church forward.

Jesus had the divine understanding to find truth in things that seemed to oppose each other.

Love anchored both Jesus and Paul's teaching. Paul said husbands love your wives. Jesus said I did not come to abolish but to fulfill the law. What was Jesus filling the law with? God's grace, God's unconditional love.

This means making room for differences, both orthodox and liberal. As United Methodists, we will see our way through our controversies by embracing traditional and contemporary faith as we fill our beliefs and practices with God's grace and unconditional love.

In the midst of the controversy, to love means listening and seeking to understand someone's views -- whether traditional or contemporary -- without dismissing them as primitive, unfaithful or even unchristian. Let love be our aim in our relationships and controversy.

Keep the faith!

John Schol

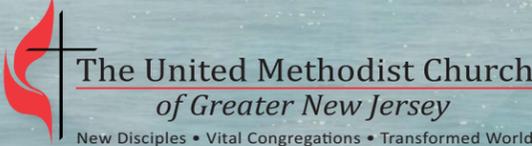
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January 23 - 25, 2017

# BISHOP'S CLERGY CONVOCATION

OCEAN PLACE RESORT  
LONG BRANCH, NJ

Registration Opens on November 1, 2016



The United Methodist Church  
of Greater New Jersey  
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# THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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# WHO ARE YOU INVITING THIS CHRISTMAS?

As Christians, Advent means we **prepare for the birth of Christ.**

As church leaders, Advent means we **prepare to reach more people** to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world.

LAST YEAR IN GREATER NEW JERSEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES...

- 25%** More people worshiped **Christmas Eve** than during a typical Sunday.
- 15%** More people worshiped **during the Advent season.** <sup>1</sup>

## 60% OF AMERICANS GO TO CHURCH DURING ADVENT. <sup>2</sup> WHY?



TO HONOR JESUS



TO HONOR TRADITIONS



TO BE WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS



TO GET IN THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

# HOW ARE YOU PREPARING?

*If invited, 57% of people who don't attend church would be likely to go at Christmas.* <sup>2</sup>

### FOCUS ON YOUR NEW WORSHIPERS:

- Advertise programs and series that begin in the New Year
- Get out into the community and serve
- Have a GREAT kids ministry ready for families who are visiting
- Hand out invitations to Sunday services on Christmas Eve
- Set up a welcome station for new visitors
- Greet people in the parking lot
- Remember that follow up is important
- Get everyone's name and contact information

### FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND SUPPORT CONTACT:

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 Director of Worship  
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\*1 VitalSigns Dashboard.  
 \*2 LifeWay Research 2015 Findings on Church Attendance During Christmastime.

## Haddonfield UMC and Respond Inc. Celebrate 50 Years of Partnership

Continued from page 1

provision of comprehensive services in child care, a senior adult center, programs for the homeless, rental housing and home ownership, youth services, employment, economic development and associated programs that help people help themselves.

Drawing from the Bible verses of 1 Timothy 6:18-19, Schol praised the congregants for continuing to give of themselves, encouraging a "just give it away" attitude regarding generosity.

"God's love heals and transforms communities," Schol preached. "We want to unleash that love through relationship building. What does it look like to start to share and give it all away now?"

Created through a joint venture of residents of the North Camden community and Haddonfield UMC in 1967, Respond Inc assigned Dr. Stanley Menking as a Minister of Mission from the church to meet with the community and survey needs. Childcare for parents who were in school or training for employment became the highest priority. Led by Executive Director Dr. Wilbert Mitchell with the help of Menking and Dr. Charles Sayre, former senior minister at Haddonfield UMC, Respond Inc was set into motion.

Haddonfield UMC Pastor Chris Heckert introduced Mitchell, who briefly addressed the congregation before Bishop Schol's sermon. He said he would lead Respond Inc for another 50 years if he could.

"People ask me, 'What do you do at Respond Inc.?' said Mitchell. "What they should ask is 'what don't you do?'"

The organization has provided child-care services for approximately 50,000 infants and children for 50 years including generations of families. They have successfully provided the educational foundation for children who have gone on to become teachers, lawyers, nurses, and business professionals. Through their culinary arts job development center, Respond Inc has trained approximately 44 students annually with 75% of graduates gaining employment. Additionally, Respond's automotive technology training program and repair shop have partnered with Subaru of America to provide internships.

When Robert Moore signed up for the culinary arts job training program at Respond, he was homeless and jobless. Now he lives in transitional housing and works as an assistant manager at Five Guys restaurant in Moorestown.

"What I've learned is that even when things seem hopeless, determination can make the difference," Moore said. "And so can spirituality. I plan to depend on that in my work and my life."

Bishop Schol used Respond Inc's example to encourage the sharing of gifts, money, and time.

"Nobody earns the love of a disciple," Schol said. "We love because God first loved us." Schol spoke on how a mindset of scarcity and a feeling of being a 'self-



Sporting Philadelphia Eagles and Pittsburgh Steelers baseball caps, Bishop Schol and Rev. Chris Heckert stand before children's church at Haddonfield UMC on Sunday, Sept. 25. Bishop Schol delivered a sermon and celebrated the church's partnership with Respond Inc. Later that day, the Eagles went on to beat the Steelers. Photo by Josh Kinney

made' person hinders generosity. He shared memories of cutting lawns as a youth and earning a decent wage in the 1970s but reminded the congregation that although he was a hard worker and appeared "self-made," behind the scenes his parents had given of themselves to provide and help him along.

"When I caught that generosity from them, my life really began to take off," Schol said. "God has blessed us, and

we want to bless others. Fifty years ago Haddonfield UMC did something generous in Camden to raise up the lives in that community. Just look at how far Respond Inc. has come today."

Schol went on to say, "Don't deny your children and grandchildren the opportunity for them to see you be generous with your time, talents and money. That's what it means to be a follower of Jesus; helping to disciple someone else into generosity."

## Churches Respond to CUMAC. More is Needed.



CUMAC's 2016 summer volunteers display teamwork. Photo provided.

By Adrian Diaz  
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With summer being especially hard on food pantries and the clients they serve, CUMAC was able to serve over 5,000 people facing hunger.



CUMAC, which stands for Center for United Methodist Aid to the Community, feeds people and changes lives. It works to alleviate hunger and its root causes for those in need in Paterson, Passaic County, and northern New Jersey. CUMAC is also an advanced special of the United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey.

In an effort to prevent a major food shortage this year CUMAC held a summer food drive competition and the response from United Methodist Churches in Greater New Jersey was overwhelming. Twenty three United Methodist Churches contributed to the food drive bringing in close to 5,000 pounds of food! Without this boost to CUMAC's food supply, many of neighbors in need would have been unable to keep food on

the table this summer.

Serving our community brings us great joy, but with so many individuals and families in need of assistance, the threat of running out of food and supplies is ever present. United Methodist Churches in Greater New Jersey also stepped up for the annual school supply drive. Members of over 30 different churches donated backpacks, notebooks, pens, pencils and everything in between. Along with donating supplies, many of these churches sent teams of volunteers to help sort and pack the items. With their support, CUMAC reached more kids than ever — over 600 backpacks full of supplies were given out to local students in need. With these supplies, local youth will be ready to learn and expand their horizons this school year.

CUMAC's programs are year-round. One in five children in New Jersey struggle with food insecurity and CUMAC continues to serve thousands of individuals and families with nowhere else to turn for help every month.

CUMAC's warehouse is especially low on baby food, formula, pasta, rice, beans, canned meat and items high in protein. CUMAC has instructions for 6 Easy Steps to hold a food drive to encourage all to help replenish their stocks and keep people fed.

To learn more about CUMAC and how you can help stop hunger visit [www.cumac.org](http://www.cumac.org).

## JOIN THE GNJAC WATER FILTRATION TRIP JANUARY 7 - 14, 2017



In Haiti, the poorest nation in the western hemisphere, close to 70 percent of the people do not have direct access to potable water. Waterborne illnesses, such as typhoid, cholera, and chronic diarrhea, are the cause of more than half of the deaths in the country every year.



We will be taking at least 100 water filters to Haiti where we will conduct training sessions for families who will receive them.

If possible, team members and a translator will accompany representatives of the families to their homes and ensure the filters are properly positioned and verify that proper maintenance procedures are followed.

## JOIN THE TEAM!



Contact Kathy Ahmad, Conference UMVIM Coordinator at [kahmad@comcast.com](mailto:kahmad@comcast.com)

## The November Issue Deadline is October 23, 2016

## Leaders Equip for Ministry at Laity Leadership Academy

Continued from page 1

Sophia Agtarap, Minister of Online Engagement for Rethink Church in Nashville led a course on social media. The group identified advanced techniques and current trends, best practices using case studies and learned about blogging, editorial calendar making and building a campaign.



On Sept. 13, Lay leaders in GNJ gathered at the Mission and Resource Center for the Laity Leadership Academy. Photo by Josh Kinney

"Everyone was eager to learn and had different ministry contexts, but all had very similar questions about uses of social and digital media in ministry," Agtarap said. "What I loved most was the range of experience and ages in my group. We had millennials all the way through boomers – all finding uses for social media in their churches and ministry areas."

Agtarap's favorite part was teaching how to create high quality and engaging graphics using apps literally available at her fingertips via smartphone. She went through the mechanics of creating posts, photos and ways to reframe a post on social media to create higher engagement. Her group discussed how to talk about social media as a key tool of ministry rather than something to be passed on to the youngest person on a staff or volunteer pool.

"It's so exciting to see lay leadership alive and excited about ministry in GNJ," Agtarap said.

Trey Wince, Director of New Disciples, helped his track understand the difference between a good sermon and a great communicator. The group worked through the stages of sermon preparation from message to manuscript, exploring how grammar, language, word selection and humor impacts delivery.

"So often we think we have to put on our preaching voice," Wince said, "but one of the most impactful ways of preaching is our own stories and God at work in our story."

The laity at his session moved Wince. "I cannot express how meaningful and intense our time was together," he said. "Some of it was silly; some was serious and heavy."

For Rev. Beth Caulfield, Director of Small Groups who has led a strategic planning track for small groups at the academy for the past three years, the positive energy of the lay leaders was inspiring.

"We came up with such innovative ideas," Caulfield said. "All committed to going back to their churches to implement them."

Caulfield's track assessed the needs of each small group community in their own context and focused on putting intentional discipleship back into the small group vision. Participants discovered leadership skills to help their small groups thrive and what it meant to partner with clergy to increase church engagement. At the end of the session, all individual plans were placed on an altar and consecrated as a symbolic and memorable gesture of encouragement.

"I really enjoyed how much these lay leaders appreciated putting the practical nuts and bolts of making a plan with the spiritual aspect of giving that plan to God," said Caulfield.

## Rev. Gina Kim is the New Palisades District Superintendent



Rev. Gina Kim was installed as the new Palisades District Superintendent on Sept. 18 at Grace UMC in Wycoff. Photo by Carolyn Conover

## Solitary Confinement Awareness at Waterloo UMC



Phil and Lorna Wooldridge from Great Meadows experience the prison cell at Waterloo UMC's Solitary Confinement Awareness Conference. Photo provided

By Betty Sayner

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In September, Waterloo UMC in Sussex County continued the United Methodist Church's long tradition of raising concern for social justice by hosting a Solitary Confinement Awareness Conference. Pastor Tim Nicinski, who had previously worked in law enforcement, was inspired to organize the event after attending the Criminal Justice Reform Forum which was hosted by Senator Cory Booker and included the participation of Bishop John Schol last year. At that meeting, he learned about how incarceration and solitary confinement disproportionately impact low income people and people of color. He has continued to learn about the traumatic effects of solitary confinement and mass incarceration, an often ineffective deterrent to crime.

At the historic Waterloo Village state park, where the church is located, visitors were able to step inside and experience a life-size replica of a solitary confinement cell. The cell was complete with a soundtrack of screams, banging, and noise recorded in an actual prison. The contrast between the loud, confining, windowless cell and the wide open space, fresh air, and peace of the canal village was striking.

The conference was co-sponsored by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, American Friends Service Committee, and the Campaign to End the New Jim Crow. These organizations seek to share the many devastating stories, like that of Anthony Graves. Anthony was arrested at 26 years old and spent 18 ½ years in prison, including 16

years in solitary confinement for a crime he did not commit. The United Nations' top experts on the human rights of people in detention define solitary confinement exceeding 15 days as torture. Anthony was pardoned and released in 2010, as the 138th exonerated death row inmate in America.

Participants watched the documentary "Breaking Down the Box" and heard from Susan MacDonnell, a volunteer with the Campaign to End the New Jim Crow. They learned about the mental health effects of isolation as a result of solitary confinement including insomnia, paranoia, uncontrolled feelings of rage and fear, an increased risk of suicide, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Extended isolation and minimal social interaction can actually alter space and depth perception and directional positioning.

In the United States, the criminal justice system is currently based on retribution for crime. The United Methodist Church's Social Principles support restorative justice.

MacDonnell, who has her M.Div. from Drew University, became passionate about prison reform while taking a "Beloved Community" class held at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility. She shared information about the current status of New Jersey legislation and how to contact state representatives in support of system reform and limiting the use of solitary confinement. To learn more, MacDonnell recommends reading 'The New Jim Crow' by Michelle Alexander. You can take action by contacting elected officials and visiting the website for the National Religious Campaign against torture at [www.nrnat.org](http://www.nrnat.org).

### SMALL GROUP SYMPOSIUM

Sponsored by the Northern Region Resource Team of GNJ

October 20, 2016 | 9:30am - 3:00pm  
Drew Theological School | Madison, NJ



Come hear leading voices on small group ministry as we discuss emerging trends, the varied theological and practical approaches and opportunities in small group ministry.

#### INVITED SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Rev. Dr. David Watson,

*United Theological Seminary, author of Covenant Discipleship: Covenant Groups*

Rev. Arisbel Luna Gallardo, *Methodist Church of Cuba*

Rev. Dr. Frank Fowler, *Trinity Hackettstown*

Rev. Dr. Timothy Myung-Hoon Ahn, *Arcola*

Rev. Jenny Smith-Walz, *Trinity Hackettstown*

Rev. Beth Caulfield, *Dir. Small Groups, GNJ*

#### FIND OUT MORE AND REGISTER AT

[WWW.GNJUMC.ORG](http://WWW.GNJUMC.ORG)



The United Methodist Church  
of Greater New Jersey

New Disciples • Vital Congregations • Transformed World

# GNJ To Launch First Ministry Podcast

By Josh Kinney  
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For the first time ever, leaders in Greater New Jersey will be able to tune into a podcast designed specifically for them. With a purpose of empowering ministry, the new venture seeks to answer questions and hear thoughts, experiences and vision from GNJ United Methodists on both the conference and local church levels.

"Podcasting was something we wanted to do for quite some time," said James Lee, Director of Visual Arts and podcast co-host. "As we moved into the Mission and Resource Center, we built into our media and productions studio the capacity to produce a podcast."

Dubbed "The Uncovered Dish" the podcast got its name after a creative brainstorming session by the GNJ communications team which plays off the beloved United Methodist tradition of a covered dish supper. Each episode uncovers a new dish, both literally and figuratively. Guests to the show are asked to bring their own unique plate such as their favorite food, a homemade dessert from a church member, or some kind of snack. Guests also bring their own distinct topics; sharing their wisdom, advice and life-experience with the show. Primarily centered on leadership,



James Lee, Director of Visual Arts and co-host of 'The Uncovered Dish' podcast interviews Trey Wince, Director of New Disciples, for an upcoming episode.

Photo by Josh Kinney

each Uncovered Dish episode will cover a variety of themes. From church vitality, small groups, making new disciples, and worship, to interviews with various GNJ pastors, and local and statewide community leaders outside the church with valuable experience. Additionally, the podcast serves to cover and promote various events within the Greater New Jersey.

"As people who work at the Mission and Resource Center, a question we always have to ask is how we can be a

resource to the GNJ pastors," said Lee, who hopes the new podcast will encourage awareness of available resources. "We want to create a podcast that serves and inspires pastors."

Kaitlynn Deal, Communications Administrative Assistant, joins Lee as the podcast's co-host which makes for a vibrant duo whose gifts and personalities balance each other out. Both Lee and Deal enjoy listening to podcasts that make them feel as if they're hanging out with the hosts themselves.

"A good host is someone who makes the audience feel included in the hangout and facilitates the conversation in a way that produces great content," Lee said.

"If you're a church leader listening to 'The Uncovered Dish' and you have three other people in your car who might not necessarily be involved with church, we want them to be able to follow along with the episode and enjoy it, too," said Deal. "After all, it's about growing new disciples."

Lee concurred. "Yes, we want pastors in GNJ to feel comfortable sharing the podcast with anyone."

Episode one features worship. Director of Worship, Eric Drew discusses worship and songwriting by challenging leaders to feed into the creative space of music. Pastor Catherine Jordan-Latham of Monmouth Grace UMC is the second guest and talks about multicultural worship. The podcast seeks to give a voice to GNJ pastors in the field to share their real-world experience as they live out specific areas of vitality.

"Anything is possible at this point," said Lee, who looks forward to seeing the podcast evolve and take shape over time. "Let's see what kind of dish we uncover next."

Stay tuned for more information about 'The Uncovered Dish' podcast at [GNJUMC.org](http://GNJUMC.org)

## GNJ Teen Brings Faith to 'Survivor'

By Josh Kinney  
jkinney@gnjumc.org

The youngest contestant in the history of the CBS reality TV show 'Survivor' hails from Trinity UMC in Hackettstown. He also aspires to be a pastor. Eighteen year old Will Wahl debuted in the show's new season premiere on Sept. 21, representing Long Valley in Washington Township, Morris County.

The TV competition game tests survival skills and is watched by about 9 million people, one of which was Wahl

who after seeing 'Survivor' season 22 in 2011, became a superfan. He watched all previous seasons while immersing himself in podcasts and message boards about the show.

"'Survivor' is special for me because it's like watching a social experiment," Wahl told CBS News. "I like to see how each contestant reacts, how they thrive or fail."

A graduate of the Morris County School of Technology, Wahl is currently enrolled in his first semester at Ohio State University where he studies psy-



Will Wahl and his friend Hannah LaBar at Trinity UMC in Hackettstown.

Photo provided

chology and political science. He hopes to become a pastor in the United Methodist Church, something he always felt called to but only truly understood after a journey to Haiti.

Last year, Wahl approached his Pastor, Rev. Frank Fowler with a "comprehensive" and "professional" proposal to bring water filtration to Haiti. With the help of church leadership, Wahl raised the necessary funds and along with his family and church members, traveled to Haiti in January.

"Personally, all of this was amazing to watch," said Fowler, who commended Wahl on his thoughtfulness and proactive mission. As a result, the town of Bon Repos, just north of the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince was benefited by water filtration systems installed at the Light and Peace Mission.

Haiti played a monumental role in Wahl's life of faith. It was there he saw people who "had nothing, no home, no food, no worldly possessions."

"But they did have hope," he said. "They had a faith in God that I had never seen before." Wahl described attending a Haitian church service where believers displayed a love toward God and others

to be unlike anything he had ever seen. Faith and courage in God were something Wahl said he had since his youth but was reaffirmed and made stronger by his experiences in Haiti.

"The people of Haiti taught me that worldly possessions do not equate to happiness, but hope and faith can certainly make one happy," Wahl said. That moment solidified his calling to pastoral ministry and taught him that sometimes people who are rich in what matter most dwell in the lowliest places.

"I felt called to spread the word of God so that other people could know God's word and the happiness that only God can give," he said.

Haiti also played a role in Wahl's inspiration and preparation for 'Survivor.' Contestants on the show go without food, clean water, and amenities, but Wahl says that the people he met in Haiti have it much worse.

"Many Haitians do not have the luxuries that I gave up to play 'Survivor.' And by seeing what the people of Haiti are going through every day, it gave me the strength and courage to go on the show," Wahl said. "I knew God was with

Continued on page 7

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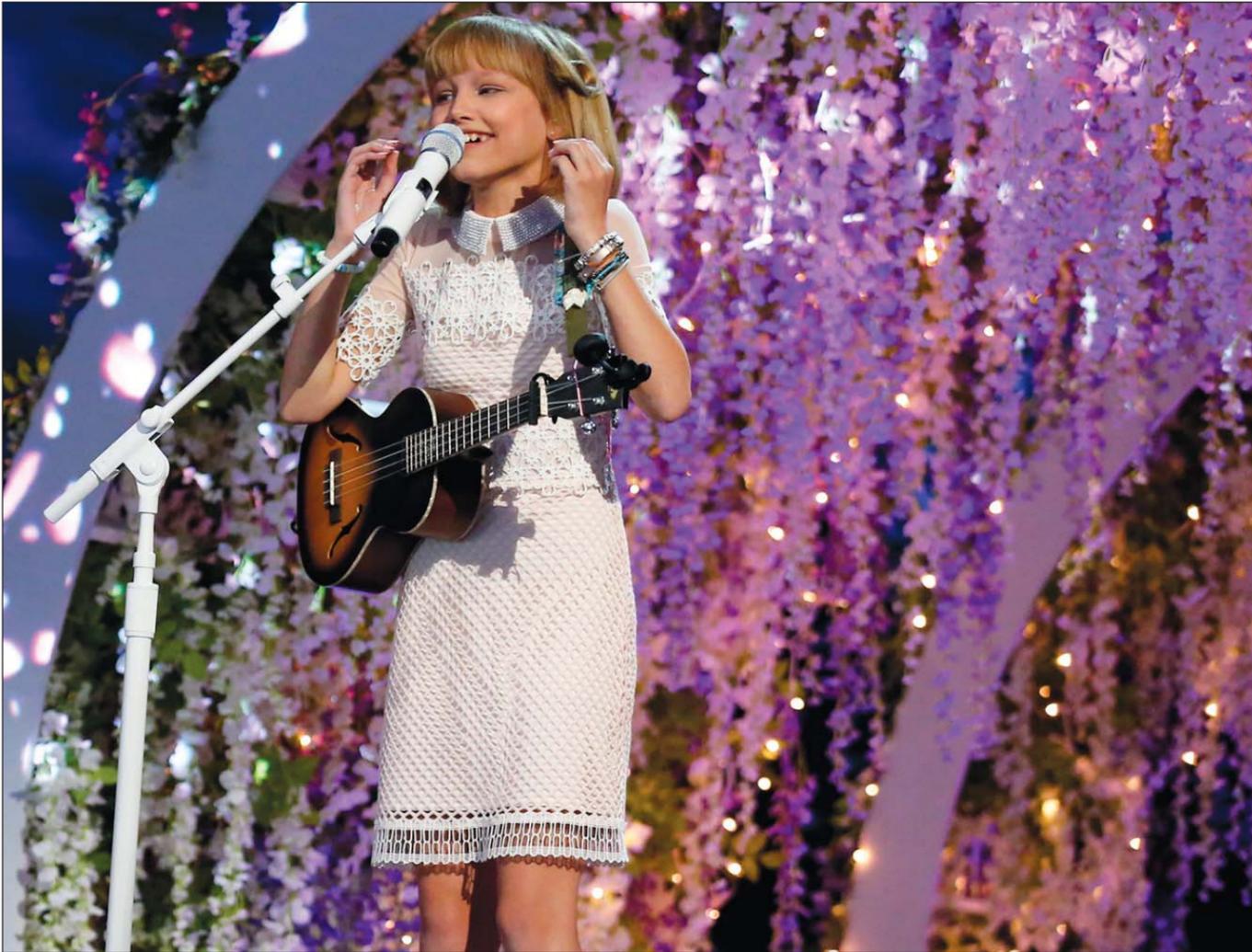
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# Archer UMC Youth VanderWaal Wins it All



The soon to be legendary Grace VanderWaal, a 12-year-old star from Archer UMC was the 2016 winner of 'America's Got Talent.' Photo provided

By Josh Kinney  
jkinney@gnjumc.org

Grace VanderWaal, the 12-year-old musical prodigy from Archer UMC in Allendale was crowned the 2016 winner of NBC's 'America's Got Talent' on Wednesday, September 14.

From the moment she confidently performed an original song she wrote titled "I Don't Know My Name" back in May, her name went viral. The video of her jaw-dropping debut garnered more than 60 million views, setting VanderWaal up to be the show's early front-runner.

Sobbing as her name was announced, show judge Howie Mandel, who granted VanderWaal entrance into the completion via the golden buzzer, rushed the stage to give her a big hug. NBC stated that the season's finale earned the most votes from the audience in the show's

history. Taking home a \$1 million grand prize, VanderWaal is set to headline inside the PH Showroom at Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino in Las Vegas on October 27-29.

"You are on your way," Mandel told her. "I love you, you are so special." Dubbed by show judge Simon Cowell, "the next Taylor Swift" VanderWaal began writing songs at 3 and used her 11th birthday money to purchase a ukulele which has become the New Jersey star's signature.

Before her television debut, VanderWaal frequented open mic nights at a local café. Her first performance floored the tiny, close-knit community audience and became her support system, encouraging her with each new show and helping to solidify her confidence.

"The open mic nights prepared Grace

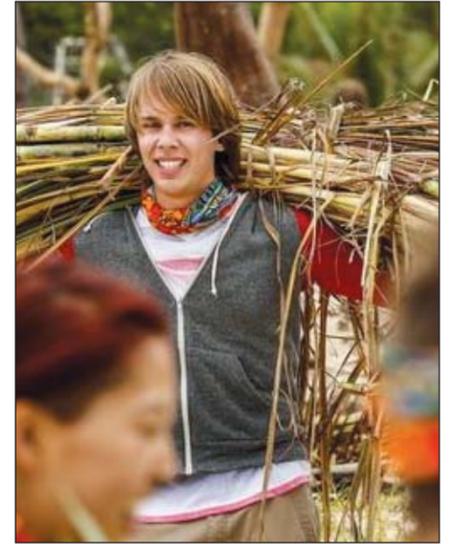
for what she was able to do on television," her mother said. From a tiny café to a sold-out theater audience with cameras broadcasting to millions across the world, VanderWaal performs best in front of strangers.

As a member of the Archer UMC youth choir, VanderWaal also sings solos during the summer services. Having known the young musician her whole life, the congregation wasn't surprised that her musical talent was met with such warm reception on the national stage.

"Our church is just an amazing spot," said Mrs. VanderWaal. "They have been so supportive of her, and it's really an inspiring community to be a part of."

From her family to the congregation at Archer UMC, Greater New Jersey and the nation watch with excitement as VanderWaal lives into her musical calling.

# GNJ Teen Brings Faith to 'Survivor'



Will Wahl, an 18-year-old from Trinity UMC in Hackettstown becomes the youngest contestant on the CBS reality TV show 'Survivor.' Photo provided

Continued from page 6

me just as He is with the people of Haiti, and that if I keep my faith, everything will be alright."

Having attended Trinity UMC since 2000 with his family, Wahl credits his middle school Sunday School teachers with inspiring him to become more involved in his faith.

"Instead of just teaching us the Bible, these teachers had discussions with us to help us learn," Wahl said. "They made learning the Bible relatable and fun. Wahl became a Sunday school teacher and joined a small group. He works as a youth assistant and mentor to Hannah LaBar, a young girl in the church with special needs.

"The excitement for our congregation is that Will is using this national platform to bear witness to his faith," Fowler said. "The joy of this is his willingness to be a public Christian, publicly acknowledging his vocation choice."

From watching his favorite show from the comfort of his couch to actually playing the game in the wild, holding the title of youngest 'Survivor' contestant has been a unique experience for Wahl.

"It made me want to live up to all of the players who came before me," he said. Wahl's official bio statement on the 'Survivor' website lists Jesus Christ as his inspiration. He also listed the Bible, a tent, and noise-canceling headphones as items he would choose to bring with him onto the show.

Wahl couldn't share how he fared on 'Survivor,' which was filmed over the summer, but believes Haiti better prepared him for the hardships of being a contestant. The youngest one at that.

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# Hearts Ablaze at Largest IGNITE to Date

Continued from page 1

like Christian pop rock worship band Bellarive, multiple-award winning, critically acclaimed powerhouse vocalist, Blanca, and Christian hip-hop artist Derek Minor, the variety was unmistakable.

"This was the first time we had four different speakers," said Drew. "We wanted to try it as opposed to having just one main speaker." He added, "It was my hope that through IGNITE we could all find a life-giving word and message in what we heard from the variety of speakers and artists' perspectives."

Drew attended Bellarive's meet and greet workshop where for over an hour the band members took questions from youth ranging from hair care to first dates to encountering Jesus for the first time.

"They were so real and able to share real struggles," Drew said, "and they were just such strong examples of Christian faith. They weren't there just to perform; they were there to serve."

According to an analysis of IGNITE's growing social media, having Bellarive as the event's worship band proved to be a favorite for youth.

Preston Centuolo, a New Jersey native, storyteller, and pastor emceed the event and kicked off Friday night



The IGNITE Squad of volunteers gave students a royal welcome to the Wildwoods Convention Center to kick-off the youth conference. Photo by Josh Kinney



Bellarive's high-energy worship music inspired hundreds of young people at IGNITE. Photo by Bishop John Schol

"Receiving communion with such a gigantic group of young people was exhilarating," said Drew. He described the experience as especially unifying. "I was encouraged by how engaged the students were. It was a very meaningful moment."

"This was our first time at IGNITE and it was amazing," said Pastor Zach Wooten from First UMC of Mount Holly. "The IGNITE leadership team brought energy, hospitality, and excitement to such a wonderful weekend. It was clear from their preparation and passion that this event mattered to leadership in our conference. My District Superintendent and our Bishop were both in attendance and having a blast. As a person passionate about youth ministry, their presence was extremely meaningful to me." Wooten enjoyed watching students from his church connecting with and forming relationships with other youth in GNJ.

Gina Yeske of Simply Grace UMC in Bloomsbury said, "The IGNITE conference was not just another outing. Instead, it was an opportunity to foster relationships between students. It was an experience we can all hold on to through good times and bad. We came home with new social media friends, Bellarive on our phones and a plan to read Preston

Continued on page 9

by introducing speaker Seth Franco. A former Harlem Globetrotter, Franco's personal testimony wove through a powerful message that encouraged youth never to give up.

"The light of the mountaintop wouldn't be the same if we didn't first go through the dark valley to get there," Franco said.

Highlights of the weekend included pick up basketball games with Bishop Schol, workshops and breakout sessions for both youth and leaders, stellar performances from Blanca and Derek Minor, and a letter writing mission activity with The ONE Campaign. At the popular open mic coffee house on Saturday afternoon, several youth performed and sang cover songs from Grace VanderWaal, the 12-year-old winner of NBC's "America's Got Talent" and member of Archer UMC in Allendale.

On World Communion Sunday, Bishop Schol led a communion service along with 13-year-old Justin Teixeira, an IGNITE attendee from Titusville UMC. The two stood on stage before a crowd of over 1,200 and gave thanks as Schol presented a lively and animated liturgy. Teixeira, who is hearing impaired, participated in the liturgy with the assistance of Natalie Callis, a sign language interpreter from Waretown UMC.



IGNITE proved to be a monumental experience in the lives of hundreds of youth who made first time and renewed commitments to follow Christ. Photo by Josh Kinney

# IGNITE 2016

*Continued from page 8*

Centuolo's book together. We plan on keeping IGNITE alive in our hearts." Yeske enjoyed watching her youth group of 20 students dance, sing and make new friends. "They interacted with the DJ, speakers and even the band," Yeske said. "Each experience illuminated the message of God's wonderful love."

The power of story lit the conference as speakers, artists, leaders and youth shared personal experiences. On Saturday morning, Laurie Polich Short said, "When we give up on our story before God has finished writing it we miss out on what our story has to give us. Sadder

still, we miss out on what our story can become."

The student response to IGNITE was overwhelming.

"I was moved by praying with several of the youth on Saturday evening after many committed their lives to following Jesus," said Wooten. "The emotion was palpable, and I was happy to know that IGNITE isn't just an event. It's a movement."

15-year-old Steven Maffetone said, "Everything was amazing. There was so much joy and worship, every speaker and band really inspired me. I am definitely coming back next year."



Critically acclaimed powerhouse vocalist, Blanca, rocked IGNITE with her inspiring and uplifting voice and lyrics. *Photo by Edison Lee*



Kids smile front and center, up against the stage to see Blanca's performance. *Photo by Bishop John Schol*



William Green, former NFL star, shared a powerful testimony and helped lead youth to make commitments to follow Jesus. *Photo by Edison Lee*



Over 1,200 students, grades 6-12, gathered together for fun, fellowship, and to go deeper in their walks of faith. *Photo by Josh Kinney*



Former Harlem Globetrotter, Seth Franco, encouraged youth to never give up, reminding them that God can turn around unfortunate circumstances. *Photo by Bishop John Schol*



"Let There Be Light" was the theme of this year's IGNITE youth conference that has grown by 50% from last year. *Photo by Edison Lee*

***"I am definitely coming back next year."***

# GNJ Deacons Sign Sacramental Covenant

By Josh Kinney  
jkinney@gnjumc.org

Ten GNJ deacons took the next step in their life of faith on September 29 when they gathered at the Mission and Resource Center to have conversation with Bishop Schol and Superintendent Steve Bechtold and to sign a covenant for presiding at the celebration of the sacraments.

In May 2016, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church passed new legislation giving broader authority for deacons to administer the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion in their ministry setting. The legislation states, "For the sake of extending the mission and ministry of the Church and offering the means of grace to the world, the resident bishop of the annual conference in which the deacon is appointed may authorize the deacon to preside at the celebration of the sacraments. Presiding at the celebration of the sacraments involves taking responsibility to lead the gathered community in celebrating baptism and Holy Communion."

Bishop Schol invited the ten deacons to a gathering where they discussed the sacraments and what it meant to administer them. The deacons developed a covenant which states: "In order to further the mission of the United Methodist Church in Greater New Jersey, the Bishop and Order of Deacons covenant together so that the deacons who sign this covenant may also preside over the celebration of the sacraments in their places of ministry and/or their contexts." The statement went on to say: "Recognizing the importance of uniting the full life of the church – including the sacraments – with the world, the Bishop authorizes deacons to preside at the celebration of the sacraments in the deacons' context for the duration of their appointments."

"It's truly a privilege to be bringing this



GNJ deacons gather to sign a covenant of Sacramental Authority at the Mission and Resource Center on Sept. 29. Photo by Josh Kinney

gift," said Skylands District Superintendent Rev. Steven Bechtold. "The body of Christ extends to all. Christ didn't come just for Christians, he came for all people. My hope is that we start seeing the sacraments connect church community with the world."

Regarding Holy Communion liturgy, Bishop Schol said, "It's about drawing the congregation into something we speak together. It's about drawing deeper into God's grace and our relationship with God." Schol reminded the deacons that we come to the Communion table humbled but with a lively and illustrative liturgy.

"We don't take communion, we receive it," Schol said. "It's a gift from God."

The covenant states that deacons will hold each other accountable to their ministry and the covenant they were making - the faithful administration of the sacraments, report annually to the gathering of deacons and the charge conferences to which they relate about their ministry of extending the mission and ministry of the church, including presiding over the

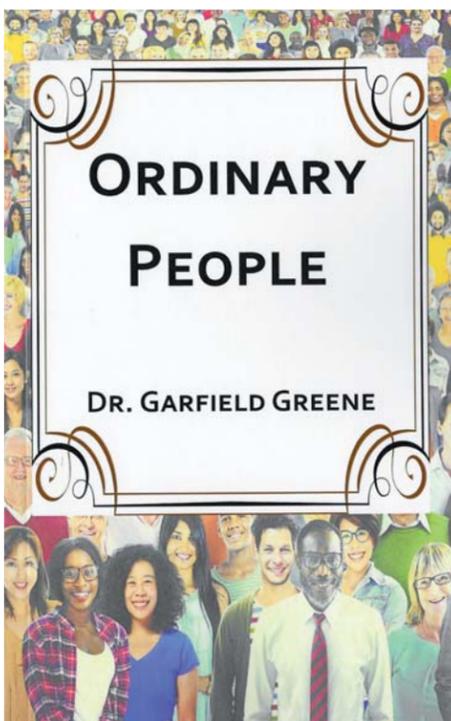
celebration of sacraments. It also states that deacons are to work in cooperation and collaboration with any elders appointed to the same ministry context as the deacon in assisting the administration of the sacraments.

"Most people, United Methodists included, were not aware that ordained deacons could not preside over the sacraments, except in rare cases," said Tom Lank, Northeastern Jurisdiction Volunteers Coordinator. "As of January 1 this will change as bishops are allowed to grant deacons the privilege of proclaiming God's grace through the sacraments wherever they serve in ministry. I give thanks for Bishop Schol who is setting the pace for our denomination as we live into the possibilities afforded by this change."

For the deacons gathered to sign the covenant, the moment was powerful and moving. Schol stated that the sacraments were a mystery we can't fully explain. "We need to leave room for that mystery," he said.



GNJ deacons took the next step in their life of faith and signed a covenant for presiding at the celebration of sacraments. Photo by Josh Kinney



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### About Dr. Garfield Greene



Dr. Garfield Greene, honorably discharged in 1961, served as an American Airman in the U.S. Airforce. He has a BA in French from Morgan State College, an MSW from the University of Maryland at Baltimore, an M. Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary, and Doctor of Ministry from Wesley Seminary in Washington, D.C. He served as a United Methodist Pastor in both New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.



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## OBITUARIES

**Rev. Clyde Bradway**, Retired Elder, died on Sept. 6. A celebration of life took place on Sept. 13 at Pagett Funeral Home in Cedarville, NJ.

Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to: Cedarville UMC, 206 Main Street, Cedarville, NJ 08311 or Fairton UMC, 20 Main Street, Bridgeton, NJ 08302

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Mrs. Cynthia Bradway, 6 Truman Place, Millville, NJ 08332

**Rev. Dr. Alan D. Yeo**, Retired Elder, died on Sept. 4. A celebration of life took place on Oct. 8 at Linden-Linthicum UMC in Clarksville, MD.

Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to The Centenary Fund and Preacher's Aid Society, c/o UMC of GNJ, Mission and Resource Center, 205 Jumping Brook Rd, Neptune, NJ, 07753

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Anne Marie Yeo, 9121 Gracious End Ct. Apt. 102, Columbia, MD 21046-2210

**Elizabeth "Betty" Jewett**, Spouse of Retired Elder Rev. Paul Jewett, died on Sept. 24. A private family graveside service was held on Oct. 15 at Charles Evans Cemetery in Reading, PA. A memorial service will be held at a later date in Gainesville, FL.

Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to the Children's Music Program, First UMC, 419 N.E. First St, Gainesville, FL 32601

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Barbara Paulson, 924 Suwannee Rd, Knoxville, TN 37923

## Transitions Comes to Three United Methodist Communities

NEPTUNE, N.J. — Were you recently discharged and faced a dilemma because you didn't feel quite ready to return home or did so and found you needed additional support? United Methodist Communities now offers Transitions, a customized solution for these patients.

Available at three campuses, United Methodist Communities at Pitman, Collingswood and The Shores (Ocean City), Transitions stays may last between one and six weeks. Similar to traditional rehabilitation settings, Transitions focuses on people requiring recovery, reconditioning and clinical monitoring.

Typical residents need observation for new clinical situations such as medications, therapies and devices; rehabilitation to regain skills to manage living at home; extra support to gain confidence before returning home; time to allow the implementation of support structures at home; and further stabilization.

Robbie Voloshin, corporate director of marketing, reports, "This short term program works toward getting people back home safely."

Guests receive services in Transitions' neighborhoods of private, fully-furnished, home-like apartments. While the environment is less restrictive, it continues to support overall recovery and wellness. The care and services include rehabilitation, social engagement, wellness programming, home environment assessments, and transitional care to home follow-up.

Meals, laundry and housekeeping, transportation, community life programming; social work, clinical and aide services; and SeniorFITness are included in the daily rate. Call United Methodist Communities at 732-922-9800 for more information regarding Transitions or other services.

## Community Life Center Groundbreaking in Winslow Township



On September 11, ground was broken for a new Community Life Center at Sicklerville UMC in Winslow Township. The new 10,000 square foot center is expected to be completed in 2017 and includes a full size recreation court, commercial kitchen, meeting rooms and bathrooms.

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