

THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

Volume LX

JULY 2016

No. 7

God in Many Faces: Ramadan with Trinity UMC

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

Dr. Nuray Yurt clattered tea cups from the table and excused herself from the dining room. She held the tiny glasses, clear, smooth and familiar, and placed them beside the sink. She adjusted her headscarf and after a few moments of quiet prayer returned to the table where her Muslim family and eight Christians from Hackettstown Trinity UMC were seated with full stomachs.

Late on Friday night, June 24, at a cozy home in Cedar Grove, Yurt's annual Ramadan dinner was joined by new friends, United Methodists of Greater New Jersey. Part of Trinity UMC's small group "God in Many Faces," the eight worshipers from Trinity accepted the generous invitation to experience the Ramadan Iftar dinner after weeks and months of reading, studying, and learning about Islam while building relationships with Yurt and other members of the interfaith bridge-building nonprofit, Peace Islands Institute.

The non-religious, peace-centered group was first introduced to Trinity members at Chatham UMC's Abraham's Table luncheon in January. Addressing a range of topics of interfaith dialogue and global peace outreaches, the gathering brought together Christians and Muslims under the umbrella of exploring issues of concern together. There, a pledge was signed to challenge bigotry in any form and stand up for each other. For the members of Trinity's "God in Many Faces" small group, the luncheon inspired discussions, studies, and relationship building between Muslims and Christians.



Members of Trinity UMC's small group 'God in Many Faces' gather around the Ramadan dinner table of Dr. Nuray and Nasuhi Yurt of Peace Islands Institute. Photo by Meryem Teke.

For 27 years, Chatham UMC Pastor Jeff Markay has worked to build intentional interfaith friendships. After September 11, 2001, Markay said it became "painfully clear" how important bridge building with the Muslim community would be. A few years later, Markay met Dr. Levent Koc Executive Director of Interfaith Dialogue Center, which later became Peace Islands Institute. Abraham interfaith lunches were hosted at Caldwell UMC, where Markay pastored for 12 years.

"I was close friends with a Roman Catholic priest, a conservative rabbi, and Dr. Koc and his colleagues in the Islamic faith," Markay said. "We did a lot of shared ministry projects, meals, and bridge-building events together over the years." Markay served as a speaker and emcee at some of the award dinners and Iftar dinners hosted by Peace Islands Institute and has held Abraham luncheons at Chatham UMC for the past 3 years, hosting over 100 people from various

faith traditions at each event. "It has been an absolute blessing to be friends and colleagues with religious leaders from various faith traditions. The closer I get to Christ, the closer my friendships with people of other faith traditions have become," said Markay. "I suppose the same is true the other way around. The closer I become with friends from other faiths, the closer I feel to Christ, who welcomed and embraced the inher-

Continued on page 10

GNJ Plays Key Role at 2016 General Conference

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

Greater New Jersey was represented well by clergy and lay delegates at the 2016 General Conference of the United Methodist Church held in Portland Oregon in May. During the 10 day conference, representatives from GNJ's elected delegation and representatives from GNJ serving in other capacities led high profile committees, participated in important worship services and shared their voices on the issues facing the denomination.

Bethany Amey Sutton, a lay delegate

from GNJ, was elected Legislative Committee Chair for Church and Society I, a high profile and important responsibility. Sutton also joined the stage as part of a celebration for United Methodist Women.

Greater New Jersey Chancellor Lynn Caterson was elected Vice Chair of the Reference Committee, a group that meets two days prior to General Conference and is responsible for getting petitions to the correct legislative committees.

Caterson developed a plan to change the General Conference rules which concerns an advanced legislative panel

of volunteers to review every petition submitted, documenting each related discipline paragraph including the constitutional paragraph and relevant judicial council decisions. The commission approved Caterson's plan and adopted the new rule.

"This prevents petitions from being adopted that have other parts of The Discipline that need to be changed at the same time," Caterson said. "It also helps the legislative committee with previous explanations that the judicial council has made concerning these paragraphs."

Rev. Tom Lank, chair of the Greater New Jersey Delegation, and Caterson were elected to be on the interjurisdic-

tional episcopacy committee with Cater-

son elected to the committee's executive board. Judy Colorado, Gateway North District Lay Leader and Chair of GNJ's Committee on Ethnic Local Church Concerns, was a lay delegate at General Conference assigned to the Discipleship Legislative Committee. She was elected as a new board member to the General Commission on Finance and Administration (GCFA) as nominated by the Council of Bishops from the Northeastern Jurisdiction for this quadrennium.

"I have been blessed to have participated at 2016 General Conference,"

Continued on page 10



Greater New Jersey representatives gather together at General Conference 2016 in Portland, Ore. Photo by Aaron Wilson

IGNITE
CONFERENCE 2016

IGNITE Artist Interviews
Featuring Bellarive
and Laurie Polich Short

America's
got **Talent**

Grace VanderWaal's
"America's Got Talent" debut

A Message from the Bishop



At last, bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh –Genesis 2:23

This past June, Beverly and I celebrated our 38th wedding anniversary. We met in high school and dated for five years before getting married after college. We have known each other for 43 years. A friend of mine said Beverly is a saint.

When you ask people about marriages that have endured time and what the secret ingredient is, you can get a long list of things. One thing that comes up quite often is commitment. I agree, commitment is important, but a marriage built only on commitment is pretty dull.

Therapist Esther Perel says that long-term marriages cultivate desire and responsibility. Desire is all about transcending time and space. Healthy relationships enter into space where intimacy, pleasure, hope and love all flourish. It is not a moment, but a way of being together.

There is nothing more appealing than to be in a relationship where you feel wanted, that your partner desires you, even after 38 years. Also, there is nothing more appealing than when a spouse makes themselves desirable. Psychologist Tara Brach said, "Longing, felt fully, carries us to belonging".

Desire isn't turned on and off but is cultivated over time. Desire isn't flowers and dinner on your anniversary or chocolates for Valentine's Day. Desire is cultivated in long walks, playful kidding, warm smiles, enjoying one another's interests and attentive listening to hopes and disappointments. Love grows when desire is kindled and rekindled over and over again.

Responsibility is attentiveness to the things we expect from a relationship - security, commitment and shared responsibilities. Some love looks for all desire and little responsibility.

If a marriage is all about responsibility, it is pretty dull. If it is all about desire, it is pretty shallow. Lasting and enjoyable marriages find a blessed balance between the two.

Healthy marriages manage self well. First desire is all about selfishness -- what I desire and what I want. Nobody wants to be in a relationship in which they are not desired. No one wants to be in a relationship in which their partner does not make him or herself desirable. Selfishness is healthy in a marriage. But it must be counterbalanced with selfless responsibility in which each person works to create a secure, safe, prosperous environment where the relationship grows and thrives. It is a delicate balance and during different periods of a marriage one or the other is needed more. That's the art of marriage that leads to joy and blessing.

Jesus talked about this balance as grace and sacrifice and even demonstrated it in his own life.

Genesis put the relationship this way when Adam described Eve as, bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This oneness captures the sense that God invites us into a deep relationship with one another. This intimacy cultivates our desires so that we become one flesh and matures our responsibility so that our bones are knitted together framing and undergirding our relationship.

I once heard a person who had been married for a long time say, "I have only experienced three bad years in my marriage. Thank God they were not all in the same three years." Beverly and I have a marriage like that.

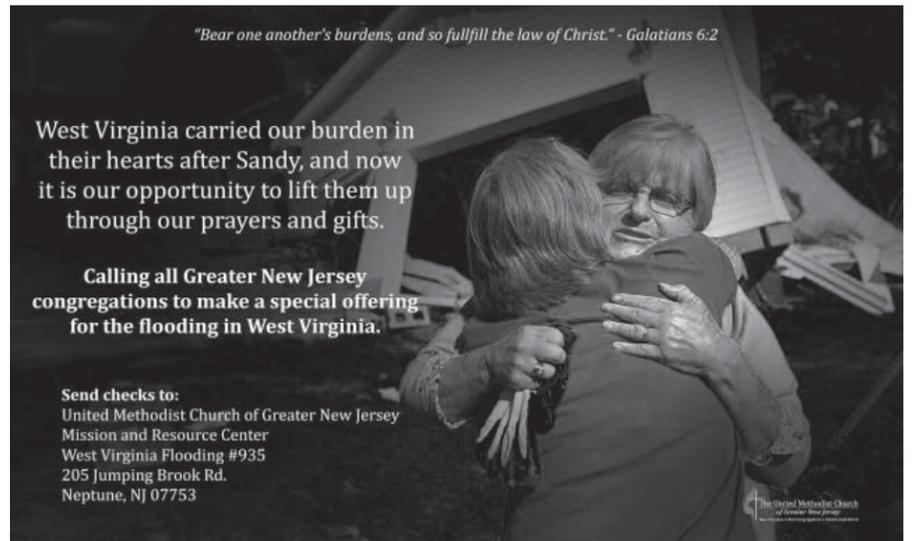
I thank God for my marriage. I believe Beverly and I are a gift from God for one another. It's not perfect but we spend enough time being attentive to responsibility and desire.

Keep the faith!

John Schol, Bishop
The United Methodist Church
Greater New Jersey

REACH OVER 7,000 MONTHLY READERS
ADVERTISE IN THE RELAY!

Contact jkinney@gnjumc.org
or call 732.359.1047 for rates and placement.



"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." - Galatians 6:2

West Virginia carried our burden in their hearts after Sandy, and now it is our opportunity to lift them up through our prayers and gifts.

Calling all Greater New Jersey congregations to make a special offering for the flooding in West Virginia.

Send checks to:
United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey
Mission and Resource Center
West Virginia Flooding #935
205 Jumping Brook Rd.
Neptune, NJ 07753

TEAM VITAL
The United Methodist Church
of Greater New Jersey

It's all about working together.

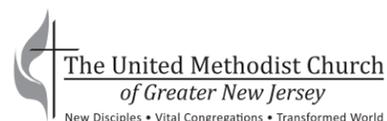
Team Vital helps leaders create a strategic ministry plan using the 5 markers of vitality. Churches learn from each other, collaborate, support and hold each other accountable to pursue their ministry plans.



NEXT SIGN UP: DECEMBER 1, 2016

MORE INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT:

www.gnjumc.org/team-vital



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 | checkert@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

Rev. Jessica Stenstrom, Contributing Writer
609.397.2333 | jessica_stenstrom@yahoo.com

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

Paige Chant, Contributing Writer
pchant@morningchurch.org

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.

The August Issue Deadline is July 15, 2016

WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT?

*Jesus never said attend me. He said follow me.
In other words, you were engaged. - Carey Nieuwhof*

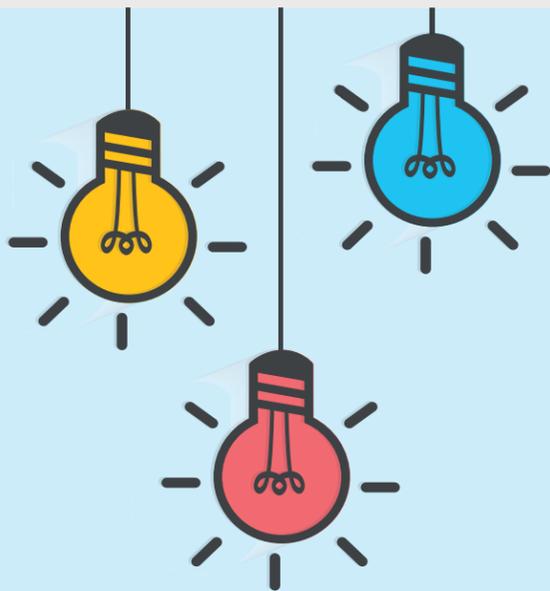
40% of people say they attend church weekly, in reality around 20% of people really attend church weekly. *(Hartford Institute of Religion Research 2013)*

Churches who say holding each other accountable is “an important and regular practice” report 96% engagement among worshipers.
(Large Protestant Church Statistics Results of 2015 Leadership Network Report)

79% of churches say small groups are central to spiritual formation.
(Large Protestant Church Statistics Results of 2015 Leadership Network Report)

82% of unchurched people are at least somewhat likely to attend if they’re invited. *(Thom Ranier and Lifeway Research)*

2% of church members invite an unchurched person to their church each year. *(Thom Ranier and Lifeway Research)*



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO GROW ENGAGEMENT?

- Challenge people to serve.
- Provide a clear path toward involvement.
- Focus all programs around your mission.
- Preach action, not knowledge.
- Use action-oriented language in everything you say and publish.
- Constantly celebrate people becoming engaged.

(Adapted from 6 Ways to Grow Church Attendance By Increasing Engagement, Carey Nieuwhof)

GREATER NEW JERSEY ENGAGEMENT

GNJ churches are getting better at engaging people in discipleship groups and mission work.

We are growing deeper!

49% of our professing members attend worship weekly.

54% of our professing members have engaged in a small group - up 2% since 2015!

25% of our professing members have engaged in mission work - up 15% since 2015!

Over time, this engagement will have a positive impact on worship attendance.



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND SUPPORT:

CONTACT: Eric Drew,
Director of Worship
edrew@gnjumc.org | 732.359.1044

Graduates Move from Poverty to Prosperity



Pathways 2 Prosperity volunteer recognition dinner was held on June 28.

Photo provided

By Jessica Stenstrom

Jessica_stenstrom@yahoo.com

Through the Pathways 2 Prosperity program graduates have created and enacted action plans to lift themselves out of poverty by reducing their debt, saving money, improving their credit score and building entrepreneurship opportunities. This June, 23 graduates joined the ranks as the eighth class of graduating Path Leaders.

Pathways 2 Prosperity (P2), a program of Northwest Jersey Community Action Partners (NORWESCAP) in collaboration with the Center for Prevention and Counseling and the United Way, is an innovative two generation initiative to end poverty. "For every \$1 invested in P2, \$2.40 is returned to the community in new earned income," said Dianna Morrison, program director.

The Sussex County based program is a three phase process that provides an educational curriculum for both adults and children. Weekly meetings at the Sparta UMC provide dinner and the opportunity to create peer support with fellow Path Leaders and networks across economic lines with volunteers.

Beginning with a 20-week motivational career and life planning curriculum, Path Leaders evaluate how poverty impacts their life and the community, assess available resources, and identify reasons for moving out of poverty. Following the development of their action plan, Path Leaders graduate from Phase I. Phase II

begins with Path Leaders being matched with trained mentors who assist them in putting their Prosperity Plan into action. Weekly meetings continue with comprehensive education focusing on the skills and tools needed to make their Prosperity Plan a reality. Phase III begins as Path Leaders accomplish their goals and become mentors, committee members and volunteers, supporting the sustained growth of P2.

According to Morrison, the program is a community engagement model that has had great success. "In 2015, 42% of Path Leaders obtained employment, 82% have retained employment for 90 days or longer, 96% developed an action plan to overcome employment barriers, and 103 barriers were removed to obtaining employment," said Morrison. Together, seven graduating classes have reduced debt by \$97,782, saved \$51,813, increased credit scores up to 100 points, and built entrepreneurship opportunities through small business startup and expansion.

"For the first time in a long time I believe that my future can be different than my past," said one P2 participant. Another added, "Pathways helped me to find myself, and that was the most amazing feeling. Once I found out who I was, I was able to cope. If you don't know who you are, you can't take care of anything in a productive, positive way."

"The mission is to foster the success of participants in school, home, and the community," said Morrison. The curricu-



The Pathways 2 Prosperity program graduation was held on June 23.

Photo provided

lum complements the adult P2 agenda, focusing on social and emotional growth while encouraging appropriate group behavior found in school, community, and home environments. Emphasis is placed on literacy, volunteerism and community responsibility.

P2 collaborates with the Center for Prevention and Counseling to provide a youth entrepreneurship program called From Learning to Earning. Phase I of From Learning to Earning is the implementation of the 22-week Rural Entrepreneurship thru Action Learning (REAL) curriculum which provides a project-based learning environment aligned with national educational standards. REAL covers entrepreneurial skills, business plans, marketing, operational strategies and financial concepts. During Phase I, teens receive \$10 per week, address barriers to inclusion such as gas expenses, and are taught pro-active financial behaviors. Following the completion of REAL, the teens pitch their business plan to a panel of local entrepreneurs who vote for up to five ventures, each receiving up to \$500 to enter Phase 2: the kick start of their business. Fellow participants whose ideas were not funded can assist those that were. Phase 3 begins when REAL graduates return to be mentors to the next class. Teens can refine their plans and pitch them to the panel as

many times as they would like.

Morrison said the outcomes from the first class are exciting. 14 teens graduated with business plans for micro businesses, seven teens received seed capital to launch their business, 100% of teens stayed in school, and 95% of participants' demonstrated increased knowledge of the dynamics of entrepreneurship, marketing, presentation and leadership skills.

"The success of Pathways 2 Prosperity depends on volunteers donating their time and talent as well as community collaborations," said Morrison. "Each volunteer, no matter the extent of their donation, shares in the success of the program, and shares in the success of our participants." Volunteer opportunities include preparing weekly meals, assisting the youth program, mentoring children, tutoring and serving on one of the committees. There are volunteer opportunities for teens to serve as peer mentors and tutors to the Pathways youth. "Whatever time and gifts an individual or family has to share, there is a volunteer role in Pathways 2 Prosperity," said Morrison.

Dianna Morrison encourages people in the Sussex County area interested in volunteering or learning more to contact her at dianna@centerforprevention.org or (973) 383-4787, extension 255.



The Hub in Ocean Grove is featuring

Marcia's Melodies

All of Marcia's Solos, Duets, Ladies Trios, and Men's Quartets will be 20% beginning July 10!

To see all of Marcia's Melodies, visit:

The Hub
27 Pilgrim Pathway
Ocean Grove, NJ 07756
732.774.9262

TO RECEIVE CATALOGS OR TO ORDER MUSIC:

732.988.3191 | marciasmelodies15@gmail.com



GNJ District Superintendent Suspended

(Neptune, NJ) The Rev. Dr. Jisun Kwak, Superintendent of the Delaware Bay District has been suspended according to paragraph 363.1.d of The Book of Discipline after a vote by the Board of Ordained Ministry Executive Committee. The Greater New Jersey Cabinet filed a complaint in June of 2016 against Rev. Kwak relating to issues of a 2010 complaint against Rev. Kwak that resurfaced in early May.

After consulting with other bishops and Greater New Jersey chancellor, Bishop Schol has recused himself from leading the process concerning Rev. Kwak because of their close working relationship. Another bishop has agreed to process the complaint.

During the suspension, Superintendents Myrna Bethke and Brian Roberts will cover the needs of the Delaware Bay District. You may reach them through the Delaware Bay phone number 856-624-4468 or email DelawareBay@gnjumc.org. Emails sent to JKwak@gnjumc.org will be forwarded to Superintendents Bethke and Roberts.

Bishop Schol said, "I am very sad that these measures had to be taken and I call each of us to pray for Rev. Kwak, the Delaware Bay District and all involved. I have complete confidence in the cabinet's work and discernment and in those who will be leading the complaint process."

Entrepreneurship Summit Re-Imagines Mission

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

Rutgers University's Dr. Jeffery Robinson of The Center for Urban Entrepreneurship and Economic Development led a day-long summit at the Mission and Resource Center on Saturday, June 18. Centered on re-imagining mission, community development and the church, the summit was a part of Greater New Jersey's Communities of Hope and brought out 50 people representing 20 congregations and two seminary students.

Dr. Robinson, an Assistant Professor of Management and Entrepreneurship met with Communities of Hope leaders, reminding them that Jesus was an entrepreneur.



"Jesus was a risk-taker, and in His narrative preaching engaged all the major industries of His day including shepherding, fishing, winemaking and even investing," said GNJ Director of Mission and Multicultural Ministries, Nicole Caldwell-Gross.

The event was designed for all churches, pastors, and laity interested in innovative mission and who think outside the box with a desire to learn how to do effective outreach, community development,

Rutgers University's Dr. Jeffery Robinson of The Center for Urban Entrepreneurship and Economic Development.

Photo provided



mission and ministry. Dr. Robinson's research described how business practices and entrepreneurship can be used to impact societal issues, particularly concerning the community and economic development issues in urban metropolitan areas in the U.S. and abroad.

"Social entrepreneurship is the process of pursuing solutions to social problems," said Bishop Schol. "For Christian leaders, this blending of business ideas with Christian mission can be a valuable tool to help sustain communities and an organization while at the same time bearing witness to the reign of God."

With a goal of stirring the imagination and breaking up the limited definition of what "mission" is in order to explore what mission could be, the summit was an inspiring and informational introduction to innovative entrepreneurship through the church.

"For so long the church has not considered entrepreneurship as a strategy for the larger mission of transforming the world," said Caldwell-Gross, explaining that social entrepreneurship does exactly that. "It looks at the greatest challenges in



Dr. Jeffery Robinson speaks to a crowd at the Mission and Resource Center on the importance of social entrepreneurship in the church. *Photo by John Schol*

our society and thinks about how people who want to make a difference can do things differently to respond to those challenges."

Dr. Robinson led the group through countless creative examples of social entrepreneurs whose work has transformed inmate recidivism rates, pollution, hunger, unemployment and homelessness. The training was one of a series for

Communities of Hope congregations to equip themselves to transform their communities with real, tangible strategies.

Capital District Superintendent Rev. Varlyna Wright said the summit left her moved by the possibilities of doing ministry. "This was a great opportunity for churches to see how they can engage in social entrepreneurship to support what they're passionate about."

WHAT FOOTPRINTS DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE?



After a life of service, retirement should be simple, peaceful and fulfilling. For more than 25 years, Clergy Retirement Advisors has worked with ministers to create effective retirement plans. We will review all your retirement options which may include pensions, social security, property and other investments, and create a personalized plan designed to maximize your monthly payments to help provide a secure financial future for you and your family.

For years you have dedicated yourself to the service of others. Now, let Clergy Retirement Advisors help you secure a thorough financial plan, so you can focus on the things you love.

MARK R. REIMET | Financial Planner
801 Asbury Ave, Suite 650 | Ocean City, NJ 08226
Phone: 609-814-1100 | Fax: 609.814.1199
mark@clergyretirement.com | www.oceancityfinancialgroup.com



Securities, investment advisory and financial planning services are offered through qualified registered representatives of MML Investors Services, LLC. Member SIPC. Supervisory Office: 2 Bala Plaza, Suite 901, Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004 Tel: (610) 660- 9922. Clergy Retirement Advisors, LLC is not a subsidiary or affiliate of MML Investors Services, LLC or its affiliated companies. CRN201804-201387

Bellarive IGNITES a Movement

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

When Sean Curran first moved to Orlando, Fla., he didn't realize a bigger story was unfolding. In a sense, the move not only changed the course of his life but ignited a movement.

His band, Bellarive, a pop rock worship group that originated in 2009 through the University of Central Florida's student ministry, will join other nationally acclaimed Christian artists and speakers at this year's IGNITE conference in Wildwood. Curran, a freshman at the time, involved himself in church and became a worship pastor. Soon, others joined him to create the band.



"We met in the midst of God doing something very profound in our community," said Curran. "The breath of God was bringing life and hope into our church family in an unforgettable way. Eyes were being opened and hearts awakened." For Curran, Melissa and Mike Mage, Zach Glotfelty, Josh Luker, and Kenny

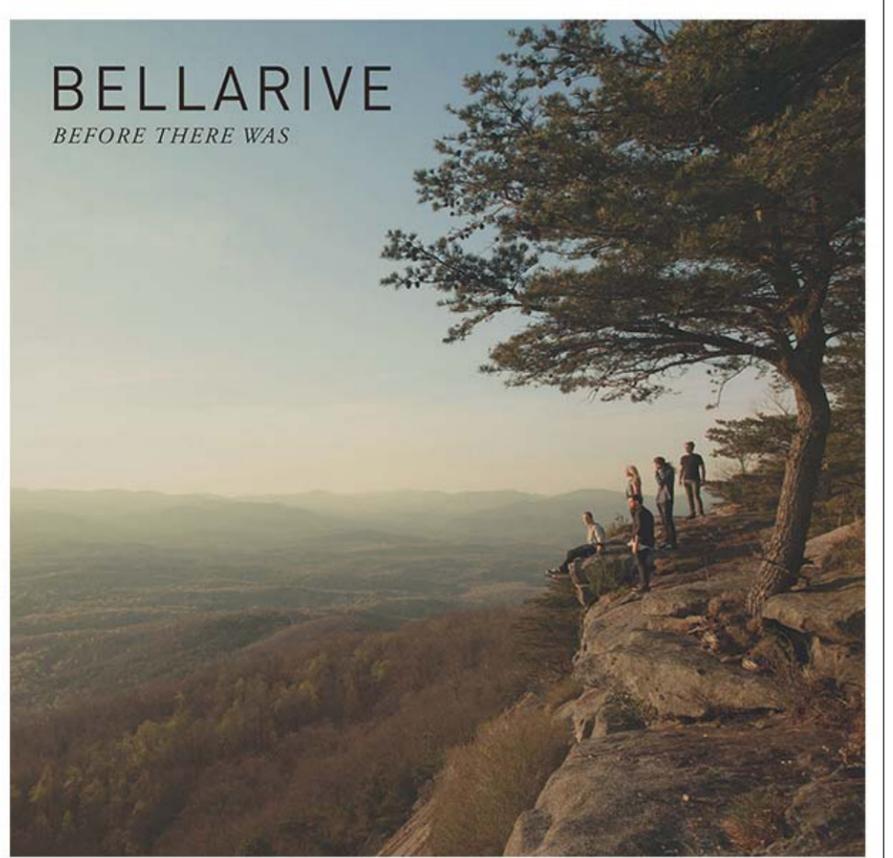
Werner, their response was simple and unplanned; they began to write and sing about what was happening in the life of their church community.

The musicians spent every day at Curran's house, which had become their official gathering place to seek God and make sense of what He was stirring. The days were filled with prayers and songs, and soon they became one in the same.

"The house, the environment, the life: it all became very special to us," said Curran, who described this season in his life as sacred. "It was hard to put into words, but encountering God tends to be that way. Looking back, I think God was beginning to teach us not only who He is, but who we are in Him."

The hallowed place was marked by a bit of an odd name. Curran lived off a street bearing a strong resemblance to the word "Bellarive."

"None of us knew how to say it or what it meant, but we liked it," he said. The name began to take on a meaning of its own, becoming the word for how the artists saw God moving in their lives. To Curran, the word took on the definition of God in motion and the belief that music was by design, a powerful and tangible space to engage with Him.



Christian pop rock worship band Bellarive will be performing at the 2016 IGNITE Conference this fall in Wildwood, NJ.

Photo provided

"Let There Be Light" the theme for IGNITE 2016 was inspired by a song from Bellarive's latest album 'Before There Was.' Photo provided

that are so beautiful."

Curran is excited for his first trip to New Jersey for IGNITE. Eric Drew, GNJ Director of Worship, discovered Bellarive several years ago at the National Worship Leader Conference and describes the band's IGNITE appearance as a "huge personal win."

"God meets us through songs and worship. We believe God is listening," said Curran, who says he'll be coming to IGNITE with an expectant heart and encourages both youth and leaders to do the same. "No matter where you're at in the spectrum, there's room for us to leave never the same," he said.

Bellarive's story was birthed out of student ministry which has been woven into the fabric of who they are and what they understand music and worship to be. They seek to establish trust with their audiences quickly to help shrink the gap between who we think we are and who God calls us to be. "The more trust, the more vulnerability, and it helps tear down walls and remove masks," said Curran. "It's then that the stage diminishes and we're just standing together on solid ground, singing to God."



Currently in a season of songwriting and creating, the band collectively agrees that the creative process will shed light on their next steps with a receptive belief that God is knitting their story along. Curran says God does something powerful when people unite for His namesake and acknowledge through song who He is and what He's done for us. "The more people we can gather to do that, the more profound of an impact it will have on our lives," he said. "If we take away distractions, lean into who He is and the story He's writing, our lives will never be the same, and you can't put a price tag on that." To Curran, event's like IGNITE are a small glimpse of heaven and earth getting a little closer together. "So let's do it," he exclaimed. "Let's see it, let's believe it, and let's be there."

"It's the realization that we're fickle beings prone to wander and wade in the shallows, but God has designed us to swim in the deep," said Curran. "His grace makes it so." Experiencing God and seeing Him move became what Curran says is the "DNA" of the band.

The church's unprecedented response to Bellarive's songs led the band to record their music so people would have an opportunity to worship outside of a church service. After one self-released EP, Bellarive signed to Sparrow Records in May 2012, and released their debut studio album, *The Heartbeat*, in June 2012. The new album peaked on the Billboard Christian Albums chart at No. 21 and the Heatseekers Albums chart at No. 17. IGNITE's theme of "Let There Be Light" was lifted from the first song of Bellarive's second and most recent studio album, *Before There Was*, which was released in July 2014.

"We sing to thank God for His grace and to claim the power of the blood over our lives," Curran explained. "When we do, it refines us, and helps us to remember his plan is for us, not against us."

The band members are still in shock and struggling to process the tragic events that unfolded last month in the group's hometown of Orlando when an act of terrorism took 49 lives at the Pulse nightclub.

"We're distinctly in tune to the details," said Curran, who carries the tragedy close to home. "It's inspiring how the city has responded, though; strong and loving, bringing people together in ways

IGNITE
CONFERENCE 2016

YOU CAN BE A PART OF CHANGING THE LIFE OF A YOUNG PERSON.

Donate to the IGNITE scholarship fund and invest in the spiritual growth and inspiration of youth.

Names of donors will be included in the IGNITE conference booklet.

www.ignitenj.org/donate

Finding Faith in Life's Darkness at IGNITE

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

Laurie Polich Short feels written. During her most painful moments, she continued to trust God when her life seemed shrouded in darkness. Despite agony, heartache, confusion and disappointment, today Short would never consider a redo of her story. To her, life feels literary, as if she's a character in a book. That happens to be the case with her latest book, "Finding Faith in the Dark" which will be among several topics Short will speak on at the IGNITE youth conference in Wildwood this fall.



Short, a youth specialties speaker and author of over 14 books for youth workers and students is a small groups pastor at Ocean Hills Covenant Church in Santa Barbara, CA. Last month, Short took to the Main Stage at the popular Christian music festival Creation, in Mt. Union, Pa. Now her sights are set on IGNITE, where she will share her compelling story and powerful lessons of faith with over 1,000 youth, grades 6-12, from Greater New Jersey and the surrounding region.

Known from her past books and speaking engagements by her maiden name, Polich, Short's relatively recent marriage plays a pivotal and powerful role in her personal testimony.

"Sometimes I think we wait too long to share our testimonies," Short said. "People are never looking at you more than when you're struggling and going through a rough time." Short had always hoped to get married and become a mom, and at age 42, she was engaged. But her plans fell apart when her fiancé and his ex-wife made amends and got back together.

"My world collapsed, and I didn't understand why this was happening to me," she said. "I felt like God didn't care and had abandoned me." Although Short played a positive role in a story of reconciliation and redemption between her former fiancé and his ex-wife, she faced the brunt of colossal heartbreak.

"I used to have it out with God. I felt



From Creation Festival to IGNITE, Laurie Polich Short gears up for an inspirational and life changing conference.

Photo provided

like he was being mean," Short exclaimed. "Yet all along it was as if he was telling me not to worry, to tell my story anyway, reminding me he was in charge of how people responded, and that my story wasn't over yet."

Through loss and disappointment, Short held on to the verses of Isaiah 50:10-11: "Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant? Let the one who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on their God. But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment."

Instead of turning away, Short pressed into God with a morsel of shaken faith. "We don't get to pick our scripts," she said, "but we have the choice of how to

respond." Responding by grappling for faith in the dark, Short grew and matured, feeling called to step out in trust. A few years later, she fell in love with her husband, Jere Short, and his young son, Jordan. She became a wife and mom all at once.

"God is never done," she said. "We put up limits and we shouldn't. Our stories can still be amazing. He can do beautiful things and have wonderful things ahead for us. We need to realize our stories aren't over."

Having learned so much, Short knew pain connected people and was inspired to share her story and the stories of others through writing a book detailing faith when life takes unexpected turns. Largely story-driven, the book includes a theological perspective so readers can not only identify and share their experiences but learn. A video curriculum to accompany the book has been implemented so

readers can meet the book's characters, including Short.

"The book is about what it's like to make choices right where you are," she said, sharing how her brokenness made her eventual celebration far greater than she could've ever imagined.

"Now, I would never redo my story. It's amazing that God had all of this for me," Short said, "and, I still got to be a mom!"

Knowing that the point of a story is a character's transformation, Short felt joy when the conflict was over, but knew it was the conflict that changed the person.

"Sometimes we get to the point of doubt and discouragement and say, well, I've waited long enough. But that's when we have to hang on," she said.

Primarily an active speaker who is learning to write, Short's IGNITE topics will feature finding faith in the darkness of difficulties, as well as love, sex, and dating.

Grace VanderWaal Sings a Story of Talent

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

Grace VanderWaal. Let that name sink in. Write it down. Save this article. The 12-year-old musical prodigy from Archer UMC in Allendale wowed the nation last spring on the debut of NBC's America's Got Talent. Along with her ukulele, VanderWaal confidently and spectacularly performed an original song she wrote titled "I Don't Know My Name." From that moment on, her name went viral, the video clip of her jaw-dropping performance garnering more than 60 million views.

The judges gasped in astonishment as VanderWaal received a standing ovation followed by judge Howie Mandel calling her a "miracle" and hitting his "golden buzzer" sending the newfound artist straight to the live show. Confetti rained down onto the stage as her family swarmed the awestruck young artist. From Reese Witherspoon to Justin Bieber, fans and celebrities took to social media to share their admiration for the young singer-songwriter. Even former American Idol judge Simon Cowell gushed over VanderWaal's performance, calling her "the next Taylor Swift." That from the man who discovered One Direction.

Coming from a family with a deep love and appreciation for music, VanderWaal has been singing since the age of three.

"Instead of telling stories, she would



12-year-old Grace VanderWaal of Archer UMC in Allendale stuns the nation with an incredible performance on America's Got Talent. Photo provided

sing them," said her mother, Tina. "She's very theatrical and has always loved to entertain."

Last year, VanderWaal used her birthday money to buy a ukulele. Two weeks later she learned a song and performed for her parents.

"We were stunned," exclaimed her mother. Since then, the ukulele has helped VanderWaal find a voice, compose music, and put a song to paper. Last summer, VanderWaal's mother brought her daughter to an America's Got Talent audition at Queens College in New York.

"I thought it would be a fun learning experience for Grace," she said. "We weren't necessarily counting on making it through."

Several months later, VanderWaal received news that she had been selected to audition in Los Angeles on national television in front of celebrity judges.

"We went into it so half-heartedly, just for the experience," said Mrs. VanderWaal when speaking about the audition at Queens College. "We were just so amazed when we heard the news!"

Before her television debut, Vander-

Waal frequented the open mic nights at The Bean Runner Café in Peekskill, NY. Her first performance floored the tiny, close-knit community audience and became her support system, encouraging her with each new show at the café. Every month VanderWaal returned to the quaint, small-town coffee shop with two songs. From poetry slams, acting, music, and singing, The Bean Runner crowd exposed VanderWaal to a wide-ranging of diversity and talent while solidifying 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 kept her cool, performing her best in front of strangers as opposed to an audience of friends or family.

As a member of the Archer UMC youth choir, VanderWaal also sings solos during the summer services. Having known Grace 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 such 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 anticipation and excitement as VanderWaal's story continues to be sung.

Mt. Holly Draws Neighbors, Community

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

Imagining new possibilities for their church, Mt. Holly UMC hosted a family, fun, and friends day for their community on June 5 which resulted in more than 85 community members participating and four new families looking to join the church.

A food truck, praise band, face painting, clowns, dancing, singing, games, and a worship service rounded out the day which the church had been prepping for since January.

"We utilized our local clergy association and circuit to spread the word," said Zach Wooten, a student pastor. Facebook, newsletters, posters, newspaper ads, and word of mouth also helped promote the welcoming event.

Hospitality Coordinator Becky Joslin sought to welcome back previous attendees and invite the neighbors surrounding the church. "I believe if we demonstrate that we're a loving, kind and caring congregation, folks will recognize it and want to join us," Joslin said.

The growing congregation, committed to education, advocacy, generosity and outreach, used the community day to feature new ministry initiatives. This year, Burlington County Chapter of Newborns in Need, a nonprofit providing clothes and other support to struggling families with babies, began a partnership with UMC Mt. Holly.

The event kicked off the church's summer of "Through the Bible in 90 Days" challenge with a sermon by Wooten on the book of Genesis, emphasizing creation, community, and calling.

Through a bulletin board, event attendees learned about upcoming church events such as a summer day camp run by a staff of college students as part of

Greater New Jersey's college ministry grant. The church's acting historian set up a display about the church's rich history and the role it's played in the neighborhood. The band, "A Wing and a Prayer" featured the grandfather of the church's latest confirmand, and according to Joslin, "rocked the place."

Shaboo, Shady, and Pearl, the clowns from Laughing Clowns Ministry, performed a "phenomenal, hilarious, and engaging show that put big smiles on the faces of kids and adults," said Mt. Holly's second student pastor Donald Kirschner. "Their mission was to show God's love through laughter and they certainly did that for us." The entertaining performance was accompanied by a powerful and relevant gospel message. "Don't judge a clown before you get to know one, because I think you'll be surprised at what you find," Kirschner added. "They've got hearts as big as their shoes."

"My favorite part was talking with people and seeing one of our youngest worshipers invite one of her friends to church," said Wooten. "The day accomplished many things. It celebrated



Laughing Clowns Ministry provided laughs and smiles for children at Mt. Holly UMC's community day event.

Photo provided



Families and neighbors gathered at Mt. Holly UMC to take part in the special community day event.

Photo provided

Joslin was impressed with Wooten and Kirschner. "Their ambition and creativity are exhilarating," she said. "Even our older folks appreciate the new life that these two breathe into the church. I think the word is getting out that we're a fun place to be."

Joslin beamed, "It was heartwarming because all the folks in church, despite age and physical abilities, were all willing to assist in any way they could. It is so wonderful when everyone works together toward a common goal."

the great ministry that is already happening in the congregation and highlighted the possibilities God may have for our church in the months to come."

United Methodists Look to the Future with Alpine Community Church

By Carolyn Conover
cconover@gnjumc.org

(Neptune, NJ) – Bishop John Schol of The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey met with a small group of worshipers from the Alpine Community Church to explore ways that the church can move forward in the wake of a court ruling over property rights.

The meeting was scheduled with Stephanie Dello Russo, the chair of the board of Alpine Community Church after the Superior Court of New Jersey ruled that the property of the Alpine Community Church is held in trust for The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey. The Alpine Community Church is one of the earliest churches of the Methodist movement and has been operating as a United Methodist Church since 1843.

"The United Methodist Church is committed to welcoming all in the community including those involved in the lawsuit,"

said Bishop Schol. "We want to encourage everyone to participate in the future of Alpine Community Church."

During the meeting, the group shared their history with the church, their experiences in the community and their concerns for the future. Bishop Schol shared in fellowship and joined those in attendance in prayer.

Dello Russo and others on the board did not attend the meeting.

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey is comprised of 560 churches throughout the region, including Alpine Community Church. Together, these churches have a tremendous impact on the region including serving to care for the spiritual health of the community, serving more than 450,000 people in need annually and leading A Future With Hope, a Sandy recovery organization which has rebuilt 237 homes to date in the state.



SUBSCRIBE NOW

The Relay is sent to lay leaders and clergy throughout Greater New Jersey Conference of the United Methodist Church. You can receive a yearly subscription for \$9.50 by sending your request to:

UNITED METHODIST RELAY • 205 Jumping Brook Rd. • Neptune, NJ 07753

In-Home Care for Seniors



United Methodist
Communities

HomeWorks



OPEN HOUSE

Wednesday, July 27, 4 to 7pm

54 Olin Street, Ocean Grove

Refreshments | Music | Giveaways

Ribbon Cutting | Senior Resources

With over 109 years' experience caring for older adults, United Methodist Communities now brings personal care and case management services into homes through HomeWorks. Their expertise lends support and peace-of-mind to seniors and caregivers alike.

United Methodist Communities has established a senior resource hub at this location. Older adults can socialize, take a class, learn to use technology, engage in specialty programs, and have fun in a casual "drop-in" environment. A hub resource professional will be present with information on senior living, entitlements and benefits each week. Just stop by!

Come to the Open House, call 855-355-1000, or visit
UMCommunities.org/HomeWorks.

UMCommunities.org

Affordable Senior Living | Independent Living
Assisted Living | Memory Support | Respite
Rehabilitation | Long Term Care | Hospice





BELLARIVE



BLANCA

The one event your youth will not want to miss.



IGNITE
CONFERENCE 2016

LET THERE BE LIGHT

SEPT. 30 - OCT. 2

WILDWOODS CONVENTION CENTER | WILDWOOD, NJ

REGISTER TODAY AT: WWW.IGNITENJ.ORG

 /IGNITEGNJ

 @IGNITEGNJ

 @IGNITEGNJ



The United Methodist Church
of Greater New Jersey

New Disciples • Vital Congregations • Transformed World



PRESTON CENTUOLO



LAURIE SHORT



WILLIE GREEN

Ramadan with Trinity UMC

Continued from page 1

ent sacred worth of all people.”

For Trinity UMC, the idea of interfaith dialogue took a step forward in the summer of 2015 when Pastor Frank Fowler led a ten week class on Christianity and Islam.

“The class was a helpful next step in Christian and Islamic thinking,” said Fowler. “It challenged us to think in better ways about the Islamic community, to learn about our own faith, and the Islamic faith.” One of the challenged was Tammy Bormann, a professional facilitator on multiculturalism and anti-racism consultant with 27 years’ experience in social justice education. A few years prior, Bormann started the “God in Many Faces” small group at Trinity, emphasizing race, ethnicity in community, church and society. The group studied books, articles, documentaries, and a wide range of sources to guide, inform, and inspire dialogue on how to respond to racism as Christians.

After the Chatham UMC luncheon, Bormann’s small group members began a relationship with Peace Islands Institute in an effort to better understand Islam. Using resources from Fowler’s previous summer study, the group began to dig deep.

Sharon Townsend, a 25-year member

of Trinity UMC and participant in Bormann’s small group “truly believes” God led her church down this path, “to learn and become more loving and tolerant of differences.”

“My husband and I strongly believe that violence and hatred is caused by fear of the unknown and lack of understanding and education,” Townsend said. “My hope is through our friendship with Peace Islands Institute, we will be able to bring about a better understanding of our differences and promote education.”

Dr. Nuray Yurt, Peace Island Institute Director of Interfaith Affairs heads up the New Jersey branch of the organization, and has found United Methodists to be

PEACE ISLANDS INSTITUTE

Unity
Education
Welfare
Progress

very open. After reaching out to Pastor Fowler, Yurt extended a gracious invitation for the small group members to join her and her family at their home for their Ramadan Iftar dinner.

For Muslims, Ramadan is a month of fasting during the daylight hours, identifying with those without food and clean drinking water and engaging in deeper, more thoughtful prayer and meditation. Each night the fast is broken with a special dinner known as the Iftar.

Yurt, who was “delighted” to host her



Christians from Trinity UMC and Muslims from Peace Islands Institute gathered in the Yurt family living room before partaking in Ramadan dinner together.

Photo by Meryem Teke

Christian guests said, “It will be a time for us to get to know each other and become acquainted on a first name basis.” Humbled by the effort of the group to step outside their comfort zones for what she said was “the benefit of humanity” Yurt expressed excitement.

For Bormann, the invitation to participate in something deeply spiritual and meaningful solidified both parties commitment to unity. “It’s like inviting a Muslim to Easter dinner,” she said. “The intentional hospitality is quite extraordinary.”

Months of studying, reading, and discussing led up to the tangible experience. As Muslims, Yurt and her family fulfilled a requirement of their faith by inviting their newfound friends to Ramadan while the Christians from Trinity practiced their faith through a loving, accepting and open-minded willingness to learn from those of different beliefs and cultures. Upon entering the Yurt’s home, the guests removed their shoes and introduced themselves in the living room, sharing laughter and talking about their kids. A brief, educational video captioned in English was shown about Ramadan followed by a call to prayer.

“We were received with great warmth, happiness and hugs, like we were going to a party,” said Maureen Storey, one of the Trinity guests. At nightfall, Nuray’s husband, Dr. Nasuhi Yurt ushered his family and guests into the dining room where they were served an enormous amount of dishes featuring a variety of Turkish foods including lamb, green lentil soup, salads, homemade lemonade, grape leaves, Turkish tea, figs stuffed with walnuts, and baklava.

“Our hosts were cheerful about the meal, encouraging us to try the foods,” said Carol Droppa, another Trinity representative.

For the first time in 25 years, Mr. Yurt’s parents were present for Ramadan, visiting from Turkey. The guests were amazed to discover that the grape leaves had been shipped to the U.S. from the family garden in Turkey.

“Very special things were happening,”

said Bormann, who enjoyed the conversations ranging from the U.K. Brexit vote to the U.S. election, the Orlando shooting massacre, and gun issues. The conversation wove in what Bormann said were “unplanned and interesting ways.”

“Even in the midst of a divisive political climate, God is using this opportunity to bring people together,” said small group member Kathy Grimwood.

Townsend likened the Ramadan fast to the Christian Lent, observing how sacramental the Islamic faith is. After dinner, the Trinity guests asked if they were imposing on the Muslim prayer time, unaware that throughout the meal, family members quietly excused themselves one at a time to pray in a humble effort to maintain both their hospitality and practice.

“Our fundamental teachings about caring for others, being responsible for each other, an alliance and empathy for those who are without and suffering are all alignments in our faiths,” said Storey. “There are deep differences but plenty of unity to build on.”

Throughout the dinner conversation, Mr. Yurt emphasized the importance of people going out of their way to commune. “It all starts with people sitting around tables like these,” he said.

“Each of us personally needs to not just accept what we see and hear on the news,” said Townsend. “We all need a personal explanation as to why things are really happening in this world. I think seeking truth is our responsibility as Christians.”

The collective learning and experiences of the small group will be transmitted and moved into the larger church community on Sept. 25 when Trinity UMC will host an interfaith Friendship Luncheon with Peace Islands Institute.

“We can’t pass up on an opportunity to build these friendships,” said Fowler, who believes it’s time for the church to stop talking about Muslims and start talking with them. “I’m tired of fear,” he added. “Jesus is the prince of peace, and world peace is only going to come from interfaith relationships.”

CROP Hunger Walk A Success



Members of St. Paul’s UMC in Willingboro stand together at the annual Hunger Walk. Photo provided

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

Hunger has a unique way of bringing people together. Sometimes the people that come together are from very different walks of life. On Saturday, June 4, the annual CROP (Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty) Hunger Walk was held at Mill Creek Park, Willingboro, where 125 faith and community leaders walked together to raise funds to help end hunger.

“These volunteers are people who are positive, upbeat and who share in the dedication and commitment to change the world one step at a time,” said Linda Dippold, a CROP Walk Team member from St. Paul UMC in Willingboro.

Volunteers at the event learned about global suffering due to lack of basic food and drinking water, connecting with those who walk globally to survive harsh conditions outside the comforts of western civilization. Together, with different ages, faiths, and backgrounds, volunteers raised money and awareness to help end hunger through the power of inclusion. A variety of ages took part in the walk, from a three-month-old infant supported in his mother’s arms, to a 100-year-old woman, Mrs. Thelma Burnett of Burlington, who chose to celebrate her birthday by participating. St. Paul’s UMC in Willingboro facilitated the event along with the support of generous sponsors such as Wegmans, Mt. Laurel, and Olive Garden, Cherry Hill.

The interdenominational event included faith and community leaders from throughout Burlington County. Among them were churches in Beverly, Willingboro, Burlington, Pemberton and Edgewater Park including the Beverly UMC and St. Paul UMC, Willingboro. Representatives from the Woman’s Club of Edgewater Park and other concerned



Thelma Burnett of Burlington celebrated her 100th birthday at the annual Hunger Walk. Photo provided

individuals also participated in the Hunger Walk.

“This year’s walk was truly inspirational,” said St. Paul UMC Rev. Bill Cook. “Ten local interdenominational churches and their congregations came together to focus on ending hunger and learn about the need for fresh drinking water in so many locations throughout the world. To quote Elizabeth Andrews: Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they have the heart.”

Twenty five percent of the funds raised stayed in the local communities to support food pantries and meal sites.

“When the bell rings for summer break, children in our local communities stand to lose something most of us take for granted: a regular healthy, nutritious breakfast and lunch,” stated Dippold. “For kids who are part of their school’s free and reduced-price meal programs, summer vacation can mean an end to knowing for sure when they will eat again as they heavily rely on school meal programs.”

With families counting on local food

Continued on page 11

GNJ Plays Key Role

Continued from page 1

said Colorado. “It was my first time as a delegate and I have affirmed through my experience that the United Methodist Church is gifted with diversity and this global reality is truly a gift to us from God. It is through our inclusive make-up that our church can be a better witness of God’s love, grace, and justice to the world.”

Cyndi Kent, Chair of the Board of Church and Society, took to the floor at General Conference to speak on Native American issues. She specifically advocated for legislation to prevent UMC boards and agencies from holding meetings in cities with sports mascots that are derogatory to Native American issues.

Others participating included Delaware Bay District Superintendent Rev. Dr. Jisun Kwak being elected as sub chair of Church and Society II and Rev. Eunice Vega-Perez, clergy delegate and Senior Pastor of Vernon UMC taking part



Cyndi Kent, Chair of the Board of Church and Society, spoke to the General Conference about Native American issues. Photo by Aaron Wilson

in worship.

Bishop John Schol had the honor of presiding over the closing session which was livestreamed on www.umc.org.

CONFERENCE HAPPENINGS



UNITED METHODIST HISTORIC SITE

Port Elizabeth United Methodist Church, 142 Port Elizabeth-Cumberland Road, celebrated its 231st anniversary on its annual Old Home Day, Sunday, June 5, 2016. Speaker at the morning service was Rev. Brian Roberts, District Superintendent of the Cape Atlantic District.

A special luncheon was hosted by Elaine Morton-Rankin and her hospitality group. Locals and out of state visitors had a great time socializing.

A plaque was dedicated by Rev. Dr. William B. Wilson Sr., Chair, Commission on Archives and History commemorating the church as United Methodist Historic Site No. 511, as approved by the 2015 Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. There are currently 530 United Methodist Historic Sites in the world of which 19 are non-numbered Heritage Sites.

Pastor Phil Pelphrey of Port Elizabeth United Methodist emceed an invigorating

Plaque dedicated by Rev. Dr. William B. Wilson Sr. commemorating Port Elizabeth UMC as United Methodist Historic Site No. 511. *Photo provided*

afternoon music program, including Carolyn Fitzgerald at the organ, the Port Elizabeth Choir, The Old Home Day Singers, and John Wesley UMC in Port Norris, New Jersey.

“Fun Day” for the unemployed in EHT

The Asbury United Methodist Church in Egg Harbor Township recently hosted a “Fun Day” for unemployed township residents and their families. Fourteen families representing nearly 50 people attended. The goal was to create a “day off” from looking for work and wondering whether there would be enough money to pay the bills and buy food.

Atlantic County’s unemployment rate is still higher than most other areas of the country due to casino layoffs. The county also has the highest rates of “zombie homes,” abandoned by their unemployed owners who have no hope of paying the mortgage. Pastor Peter Jamieson recognized a need, and “Fun Day” was born.

Scullyville Volunteer Fire Department generously donated the use of their hall for the “Fun Day.” The Fire Department also helped purchase grocery store gift cards to be given out to those attending. In total, the church raised nearly \$1,700 in gift cards. Atlantic Christian School donated the use of carnival-type games. Chick-fil-A of Egg Harbor Township and Buffalo Wild Wings in Mays Landing both donated delicious food for lunch. The Asbury Dance Club even had the “Chick-fil-A Cow” dancing the two-step.

“No Baby Wet Behind” in Absecon

After learning that safety net programs such as WIC and SNAP do not cover diapers, The United Methodist Women at Absecon UMC decided to meet the needs of struggling families with babies.

The congregation, with leadership from the UMW, named this outreach “No Baby Wet Behind” and partnered with Family Service Association, a local non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening individuals and families in the South Jersey area.

Diapers were collected at various locations both inside and outside the church and the community. Members collected diapers from neighbors and friends who had no connection to the church, and some members even collected diapers at their workplaces and brought them to the church for distribution by the Family Service Association.

Absecon UMC is proud that if you ask someone in the community about the church they are likely to respond with, “I know that church, it’s the diaper church!”

Anyone wishing to contribute items now, or have their own No Baby Wet Behind drive is welcome to call Lynn Catterson at (609) 272 - 1469.

CROP Hunger Walk

Continued from page 10

pantries and meal sites during what becomes the hungriest time of the year, the challenge intensifies in the summer months as working parents face the added burden of paying for daycare and filling the gap in regular nutritious meals. The walk took place on a hot summer day with a hope to experience the change that Jesus brought forth as He walked from Galilee to Jerusalem transforming the lives of those He encountered.

“We walked knowing we did not walk alone,” said Dippold. “For just as Jesus walked with the poor, the lonely, the sinful and the hurting, Jesus walked with us, and we walked to make a difference in the lives of others who are connected to us by our common heritage as children of God.” For more detailed information on how you can contribute to help end world hunger and support the annual Hunger Walk, contact St. Paul UMC at 609-877-7034.

THE CONNECTION

A blog on the 5 markers of vitality by the Connectional Ministries Team

www.gnjumc.org/connection



OBITUARIES

Mark L. O’Shields, full elder, died on June 19. A viewing and service was celebrated June 26 at Evangelical UMC in Clarksboro. Mark served at Magnolia, Almonesson, Indian Mills, Mauricetown-Haleyville and was the current pastor at Evangelical UMC.

Memorial Donations, in lieu of flowers, may be sent to the Evangelical UMC General or Evangelical UMC Elevator Fund at 14 West Cohawkin Road, Clarksboro, NJ 08020.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Lou Ann O’Shields at 311 Barbara Drive, Clarksboro, NJ 08020.

Elmer Ridley, retired local pastor, died on June 6. A viewing and service took place on June 18 at the First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens in Somerset.

Memorial donations, in lieu of flowers may be sent to Doctors Without Borders.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Florence Ridley at 504 Village Drive, Somerset, NJ 08873.

Betty A. Carter, wife of former retired local pastor Raymond E. Carter, died on May 18.

Memorial donations, in lieu of flowers, may be sent to the Chatsworth UMC at PO Box 475, 3950 Route 563, Chatsworth, NJ 08019.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Kathy Pepper at PO Box 466, Chatsworth, NJ 08019.

Lillian G. Lopez, retired local pastor, died on May 26. A Memorial Service was celebrated on June 2 at Ladentown UMC, Ladentown NY.

Memorial donations, in lieu of flowers, may be sent to the Alzheimer’s Association.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Cathy Cunniff at 281 Berkshire Road, Southbury, CT 06488.

CROSS KEYS UMC IN WILLIAMSTOWN IS SEEKING A PART TIME YOUTH PASTOR

Find out more about Cross Keys UMC at: www.crosskeyschurch.org

Apply to: pastorjeff@crosskeyschurch.org



POSITION AVAILABLE

DIRECTOR OF CHILDRENS MINISTRY

Trinity UMC in Hackettstown

Beginning October 1st, this 30-hour a week position is responsible for overseeing ministry for children age 0 to grade 5.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the church office at: 908.852.3020





ARE YOU IN THE RACE?

A Future With Hope continues to lead the recovery effort to restore homes and lives after Superstorm Sandy. To date we have touched thousands of lives by rebuilding more than 235 homes for people who had nowhere else to turn.

Our work has led us to partner with Race2Rebuild, a national team of volunteer athletes that raise critical private funds and provide hands-on home building to support projects across the country.



Race2Rebuild is sponsoring a triathlon and 5K in Atlantic City on August 13th and 14th. This race gives national attention to our work and provides needed financial resources for A Future With Hope and United Methodists to continue their work in recovery in New Jersey.

**HELP US FINISH THE WORK. JOIN THE RACE.
DONATE TO THE MISSION FUND.**

