



## Opening and Purpose

Clergy Gathering, January 11, 2017

God's Spirit is here as we gather this morning, Christ promised, as two or three, are gathered in my name so there I am in your midst also. "Amen?" AMEN!

We gather today as pastors of the United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey: active, retired, ordained, licensed and consecrated. All ready for appointment. Those who responded to God's call have been set apart, not above, but set apart in a role of shared ministry with laity for Word, Sacrament, Order and Service.

I heard someone say a few weeks ago, "2016... was an interesting year!" Interesting year? That is a great understatement. 2016 was full with a contentious political campaign, a polarization of people, a dividing of the nation in many ways, refugees and war. The reality is we are in a time full of change and challenges.

Here are a few words from the introduction to the book – *Leading from the Emerging Future* by author and MIT professor Otto Scharmer.

He contends our models around the world, economic, educational, political and religious are all under strain....formed in and for a different era...sputtering and faltering.

*Financial turbulence, food, fuel, water shortages, resource scarcity, climate chaos, mass migration, terrorism, financial oligarchies .... We have entered, are in the midst of Age of Disruption. YET the possibility of profound personal, societal and global renewal has never been more real. NOW IS OUR TIME!*

Now is our time....This is the time in which we are called as God's people to minister, lead and serve in Greater New Jersey and world!

Albert Einstein put it simply and eloquently, "We cannot solve problems with the same kind of thinking that created them."

Together, we, you and I, are responding and ministering in the midst of these times with creativity, boldness, innovation.

The GNJ leadership team and staff are responding proactively with resources seeking to support, and come along side pastors and congregations: Coaching, PaCE Groups, and Team Vital. Our mission arm, A Future with Hope, has completed rebuilding over 250 homes, utilizing nearly 11,500 volunteers and created a wide network of partners and people who care. We are working with you to grow vital congregations and transform the world and it is making a difference.

Nearly one third of our congregations are growing and the goal is 51%. I think we can, with God's help and Good News Wesleyan way...do better



New worship services are being planned and established. In Cape May, in Bridgeton and all over Greater New Jersey. These new worship communities create bright spots of hope, love and justice.

Now is our time. We are God's people!

Together we're creating new ways to worship: drive in prayer booths, community gardens, ministry that provides meals with and not just meals to, Family Promise ministries and design teams that weave together a worship service like a film maker.

We are blessed and challenged to live and be called to ministry together in these interesting times to grow disciples, through vital congregations for transformation of the world.

A few of the challenges of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service in these "interesting times" are what brings us here today. The purpose of this gathering is to share important information about the complaint process and changes in the appointment process. We seek to honor our covenant by being transparent and dealing with these issues openly.

My colleagues on the Cabinet, along with Bishop John Schol, will share with you regarding the process for complaints and the appointment process-moving this forward.