GREATER NEW JERSEY
STRATEGIC PLAN 2013-2018
VISION

We see a church like Jesus Christ: radical spirit and humble, teaching and healing, soul saving and soul tending, leader and servant, unbound and outbound for mercy and justice.

We also see a Wesleyan Church: personal holiness and social holiness, connectional and risk taking, thoughtful and inspirational, small groups and large vision, welcoming all and respectful of all.

MISSION

Recruit and develop transformational leaders to make disciples of Jesus Christ and grow vital congregations to transform the world.
GNJ RESOURCES

GNJ resources congregations and transformational leaders that are ready and desire to become vital and more like Christ. Our primary resources are coaching, PaCE and Laity Pursuing Excellence groups, Team Vital and Communities of Hope. These resources come alongside and center leaders and congregations in their calling, help them assess their present gifts and challenges to set a vision, create a ministry action plan and provide support and technical assistance to achieve a God-sized vision. Fruitfulness, faithfulness and effectiveness will be evaluated each year.
RESOURCES

GNJ provides resources to develop transformational leaders, make disciples, grow vital congregations and transform the world.
THE PATH TO VITALITY

The ministry of GNJ is to fulfill a spiritual mission that requires a journey toward health and vitality. As the staff and GNJ leadership prayerfully and faithfully travel the path to vitality, we see more transformational leaders, disciples of Jesus Christ and vital congregations transforming the world.
GNJ TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS:
Character, Culture, Competency

We believe the church and the world needs transformational leaders. Leaders who form and inspire passionate disciples, grow vital congregations and transform the world. GNJ transformational leaders are lay and clergy believers who are Christ-centered and Holy Spirit led. They embody the character, possess the competency and fit culturally for the GNJ mission.

CHARACTER:
We recruit and equip Holy Spirit led Christ-centered believers with these characteristics:

- **Passionate**: leaders with a contagious love for God and others who are excited about the mission and move people and ideas to action.
- **Open**: grace-filled leaders who are grounded and yet embrace new ideas and learnings. Leaders who are open to and embrace people who think, look, act and live differently.
- **Relational**: leaders who are genuine in their relationship with God and others, seek a team experience and connect with others through their interests and ideas.
- **Learning**: life-long learners who are teachable and dedicate their life to learning and applying new ideas.
- **Creative**: leaders who don’t let adaptive challenges stop the mission but are curious and inquisitive, take risks and apply innovative ideas even when there are limited resources to overcome challenges.
CULTURE:
We recruit and equip Holy Spirit led and Christ-centered believers who fit our team culture.

- **Trust**: leaders who trust and grow trust with others.
- **Disagreement**: leaders with the ability to disagree in order to create better outcomes.
- **Commitment**: leaders who are willing to commit to and follow through with action plans.
- **Accountability**: leaders who take responsibility and are accountable for their work.
- **Results**: leaders who are results oriented and are focused on the goal.

COMPETENCY:
We recruit and equip competent Holy Spirit led, Christ-centered believers.

- **Transformational**: Spirit-led pioneers who initiate a vision of what could be, develop strategies and inspire people to work together to achieve a life and world changing mission.
- **Analytical**: leaders who make excellent decisions and resolve challenges using prayer, scripture, knowledge, input from others, data and experience.
- **Managers of Multiple Projects**: leaders who are flexible and adapt to added work or challenges while maintaining excellence and a Christ-centered and warm spirit.
- **Organized**: leaders who plan, formulate steps, prioritize and carry out work on time and with excellence to accomplish stated goals.
- **Communicators**: leaders who listen for understanding, articulate with clarity and express directly and clearly through verbal and written communication.
GNJ EXPECTATIONS
To achieve our vision and mission, GNJ is compelled to shift how it thinks and carries out its ministry. These shifts include:

1. From managing clergy and congregations to being in relationship with clergy and congregations.
2. From Conference programming to Conference resourcing leaders and local congregations.
3. From telling clergy and congregations what to do to supporting clergy and congregations to innovate and create how they will make disciples, grow vitality and transform the world in their context.

LEADERSHIP EXPECTATIONS
Include (but are not limited to):

1. Connecting and relating well with church leadership and membership and community residents,
2. Developing leaders within the congregation,
3. Leading the congregation to deeper faith and service in the world,
4. Increasing vitality through inspiring worship and messages, attracting and making new disciples, and engaging disciples in small groups, community hands-on mission and generous giving,
5. Raising sufficient funds for community and world mission, ongoing congregational ministry, shared ministries and salary and benefits.

CONGREGATIONAL EXPECTATIONS
Include (but are not limited to):

1. Connecting with and welcoming all people in the community,
2. Engaging passionately and growing in the five markers of a vital congregations,
3. Creating an environment for risk-taking and innovation,
4. Supporting the growth and development of transformational leaders and radical disciples, and
5. Share generously including 100% of shared ministry and billables.
GNJ THREE TYPES OF EVALUATIONS:

1. GNJ progress toward our vision, mission and developing vital congregations as well as its commitment to and quality of its resourcing leaders and congregations. This evaluation will be done in February and September and results will be reported to the annual conference session.

2. Congregational progress in the five areas of expectations and vitality will be evaluated every September and a report given and discussed at the charge conference.

3. Clergy leadership in the five areas of expectations will be evaluated in April. April is chosen so that it is not connected with salaries or appointments. The evaluation is a tool to help assess a pastor’s progress and develop a plan for continued development.

GNJ DECISION MAKING GUIDELINES

We will only invest our financial and human resources in decisions that:

1. Encourage innovative (creative & risk taking) ministry that connects with people in community.

2. Develop lay and clergy leadership for making disciples and transforming the world.

3. Maximize vital congregations.
EXTENDED CABINET SUMMIT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In what ways is the work of your annual conference in alignment with the Four Foci and the priority of vital congregations?

ENGAGING IN MINISTRY WITH THE POOR

- **A Future With Hope**, GNJ’s mission arm which was founded as a separate nonprofit to rebuild homes and renew lives after Superstorm Sandy has rebuilt 247 homes and deployed more.
- than 11,000 volunteers. The mission has grown to encompass:
  - **Communities of Hope**: a resourcing strategy to equip congregations on community development for marginalized areas.
  - **Hope Centers**: individual community support networks/organizations to provide services such as youth education, housing, food distribution, and social services.
- **UMVIM**, provides local congregations with mission engagement opportunities within the US and internationally. Current focus is on Haiti.
- Each District has a **Poverty Task Force** to discern needs.
- **Maintenance to Mission**, a conference realignment that allows District Superintendents to focus on deploying resources and developing partnerships for their context.
- Conference wide advertising campaign aimed at public transportation (bus and train) and billboards to reach people where they are.
NEW PLACES FOR NEW PEOPLE – NEW FAITH COMMUNITIES

• Our dedicated staff member for making disciples is focused on three types of new faith communities:
  - **Multi-site**: forming new campuses for fruitful ministry.
  - **Apprenticeship**: using an “apprentice pastor” in a church with the expectation that the pastor launches a new faith community.
  - **Flagships**: helping our healthiest churches move to the next level.

• A focus on youth ministry created **IGNITE**. Started as a youth conference, its success (more than 1,000 in attendance) has launched multiple youth events throughout the year and will broaden to encompass youth ministries for higher education, ministry exploration and camping.

• We are establishing 100 new **Hope Centers** for people to experience the power of God’s love through their community.

• Churches can apply for **Congregational Development Grants** to develop new faith communities especially in the areas of nontraditional, multicultural, bilingual and young adult worship.

• As a result of participating in **Team Vital**, a resource for church leaders to create a strategic plan for vitality, congregations are producing new worship services and ministries to impact the mission field and demographics of community.

• We provide **regional training** for how to launch new worship services, evangelism and cultural competency.

• Korean and Latino congregations are starting new **English language ministry** worship services and congregational extensions.

• New Property Manager position provides centralized **property services** to conference properties, closed churches, and local churches when called upon to provide resources for funding new faith communities and missional activities.
• Key resources and messages are **translated into Spanish and Korean** including applications, videos, Bishop messages, workbooks and brochures.
• **Marketing is targeted** to specific audiences for Hope Centers, IGNITE and new ministries with different entry points, intentional writing styles, specialize placement and social media.
• Communications keep eye on trends to capitalize on “**going viral**” – i.e. Pokemon Go.

**IMPROVING GLOBAL HEALTH**
• We are raising $1.8 million for Imagine No Malaria through our Mission Fund Campaign.
• UMVM has an emphasis in Haiti and provides two opportunities each year to address issues of poverty and health.
• We encourage mission trips to areas impacted by natural disasters.
• In times of crisis in the nation and around the world, we use email campaigns to call for support of UMCOR for the churches and congregations.
• Led by laity, our annual conference session features clergy and lay packing food for Stop Hunger Now.
• Imagine No Malaria and the Mission Fund have dedicated space in monthly newspaper and weekly email to keep consciousness raised. Resources are available on website for download.

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**Video: 4 Ways Your Church Can Take Advantage of Pokemon GO**

vimeo.com/174573160
DEVELOPING PRINCIPLE CHRISTIAN LEADERS

• **Coaching** is offered to all clergy. The Cabinet, Connectional Ministries Teams and Circuit Elders have been provided more than 60 hours of training and each coach more than a dozen clergy a month.

• Peer learning groups called **PaCE** have been created for clergy to have a place to explore common areas, expand creativity in ministry and support and learn from each other.

• **Team Vital** guides leaders through a strategic plan process and equips them to expand their ministry.

• Leaders are equipped to transform their communities through **Communities of Hope** through a strategic planning process. Hope Teams are subsequently incubators for new leaders.

• A primary resource for laity growth is the **Laity Leadership Academy**, which equips laity in the 5 markers of vitality and other areas relevant to their leadership in the local church and community.

• **Mosaic Ministries** pairs young leaders in ministry with small churches to experiment, innovate and nurture ministry while building a strong pool of young-but-experienced pastors.

• Twenty seven **Circuit Elders** have been deployed as resources for clergy and churches on each district

• **Annual Conference, Clergy and Congregation Evaluations** have been created to identify areas for growth.

• All clergy and key leaders attend a **Transition Workshop** during appointment changes.

• **Regional resourcing** such as a worship conference, small groups symposium and others provide additional learning opportunities.

• We offer courses for basic and certified **Lay Servants** by district.

• Using scripture as its foundation, **Laity Pursuing Excellence** fully integrates biblical principles, Wesleyan tradition, leadership skills and concepts into the educational experience.
• In an effort to recruit transformational spiritual leaders we are focusing on seminaries to excite and engage new leaders with Greater New Jersey. In partnership with Drew Theological School we will hold seminary classes at our new Mission and Resource Center which will bring emerging leaders to our facilities for spiritual learning and growth.

• We migrated individual church conferences to group cluster conferences so congregations learn from their peers and superintendents resources are focused more broadly to mission.

• Lay missionaries have been trained using National Hispanic Plan resources and SELAH, GNJ School of Contextual Theological Education for Hispanic/Latinos/as

• We have made a commitment to cultural competency and are initiating a 10 year plan for cultural competency.

• The Bishop’s Clergy Convocation has been refocused to be a time of learning tools and themes for leadership.

• Appointments are made based upon strategic plan goals, missional needs and gifts alignment for the pastor.

• New channels and technologies are employed to reach a broader audience: leader podcast and connectional ministries blog.

• Resources and events have visual impact with logos, branding, designated websites or pages, videos, social media, etc.

VITAL CONGREGATIONS

• We have realigned our Connectional Ministries Team to have staff dedicated to the five markers of vitality: worship, new disciples, small groups, missions, stewardship. CMT is deployed regionally to work alongside superintendents to focus on one or two of the markers per region per year.
• Our nine districts have been clustered into three regions so that support can be centralized and resources can be broadened.
• By participating in Team Vital, congregations create a strategic plan to identify what’s is needed on their path to vitality. Team Vital is structured around the five markers of vitality and congregations that complete a strategic plan for future ministry receive support to put their plans into action.
• Clergy have the opportunity to seize opportunities and address leadership and ministry challenges through coaching.
• Clergy go deeper in learning and leadership through PaCE peer learning groups.
• Communities of Hope equips congregations to transform their communities through impactful community development that engages the poor and marginalized.
• Strategic district, regional and conference leadership development events are based on five markers of vitality.
• Congregational development grants are focused on supporting churches committed to innovate, connect with people in the community, develop leadership, and maximize vital congregations. They also are required to measure their results.
• Appointments are made based upon strategic plan goals, missional needs and gifts alignment for the pastor.
• Annual church evaluation has been developed for all administrative boards and councils to assist them better assess their ministry and work towards increased vitality.
• We focus resources on congregations who are ready and willing to work towards vitality.
• The United Methodist Foundation of Greater New Jersey has been restructured to partner with Wespath and provide investment, campaign and stewardship resources for congregations. This realignment allows for a dedicated development team who will support our congregations and Hope Centers through grants, major donors and stewardship.
• Monthly newspaper and weekly enewsletter have been aligned to drive content that aligns with strategic plan.
What outcomes has your conference set for this work?

**BY 2018, GNJ WILL GROW FROM 14% TO 41% VITAL CONGREGATIONS AS IT:**

- Increases the percentage of churches growing in worship attendance from 33% to 51%
- Starts 90 new faith communities
- Decreases the number of worshipers it takes to make a new profession of faith from 17 to 15
- Increases the percentage of worshipers in small groups from 43% to 75%
- Increases the number of young adults in small groups from 2820 to 3200
- Increases our racial ethnic worshipers from 20% to 25%
- Increases the percentage of worshipers engaged in mission from 8% to 40%
- Increases local church dollars spent on mission 15% to 17%
- Raises $12 million through a mission campaign.

**BY 2018, GNJ WILL RESOURCE:**

- 200 congregations in Team Vital
- 25 congregations in Communities of Hope
- 300 clergy participating in coaching
- 300 clergy participating in PaCE
- 10 Hope Centers
- 5,000 youth involved in IGNITE

**WHERE HAVE YOU MADE PROGRESS?**

- 30% of our churches are growing (59% of goal).
- 24 new faith communities (26% of goal).
- 18 worshipers to make one profession of faith (20% away from goal).
- More than 75% of worshipers are in small groups (100% of goal).
- 2,888 young adults in small groups (90% of goal).
- 21% racial ethnic members (20% of goal).
- More than 50% of worshipers engaged in mission. (100% of goal)
- More than 17% of local church budget spent on mission (100% of goal).
- $5.5 million raised for a mission fund (46% of goal).
- 78 congregations have participated in Team Vital (39% of goal).
- 25 congregations have gone through Communities of Hope training (100% of goal).
- 179 clergy are participating in Coaching (60% of goal).
- 223 clergy have participated in a PaCE peer learning group (74% of goal).
- 1 Hope Center has been established and 8 additional ones have been identified (10% of goal).
• 1,200 young people attend IGNITE (24% of goal).
• 15 young clergy serve 13 congregations through Mosaic.
• Over 100 lay leaders participate in the Laity Leadership Academy.
• Fair Share apportionment giving is up as an average for the entire conference which is increasing GNJ capacity for mission and resourcing congregations for vital ministry.
• On 2016, 148 clergy and 346 lay completed the first conference leadership evaluation to provide us measures of what we are doing well and areas in need of improvement. We have broken into staff teams to address evaluation results by area.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?
• Alignment to, agreement with and message reinforcement of strategic plan goals is necessary.
• Focus on those who are willing and ready produces fruit.
• Risk failing! Encourage innovation and creativity, help it to happen.
• Retool systematically-- ready, fire, aim.
• Resourcing with excellence is key.
• Lasting and deep cultural change takes time.
• Consistency and perseverance is key when resourcing for change.
• New ministries grow faster than longstanding, traditional ones.
• Cross functional teams are very important, intense and challenging.
• Achieving more with less allows us to leverage resources available.
• Pastors and churches are hungry to grow, to become more relevant.
• Front end work with congregations and pastors (ongoing relationship with, transition out meetings with SPRC, One on Ones with Pastors and the Church and Pastor cards/data...) are invaluable in laying foundation for good appointments.
• Trust and transparency is the foundation for our work.
• New models of “being the church” emerge as we work to be more efficient in all areas of ministry.
• Sharing lists of names for participants in resources motivates those on the edges to join.
• Communications needs to be courageous and look through the lens of the receiver to make content accessible, consistent and understandable.
• Our 3 key decision making guidelines keep us aligned.
• Shared services through Maintenance to Mission works to focus superintendents on the mission field.
• Affiliated non profit organizations and Hope Centers are eager for shared services model to free onsite resources for implementing the mission.
• Excellence matters. Together, through retreats, conclaves and two years of training and hard work together we have grown to be a highly effective team (Cabinet, Extended Cabinet, Staff)
GNJ EXTENDED LEADERSHIP TEAM

Steven Bechtold | sbechtold@gnjumc.org
Skylands District Superintendent

Myrna Bethke | mbethke@gnjumc.org
Gateway South District Superintendent

Hector Burgos | hburgos@gnjumc.org
Director of Connectional Ministries

Nicole Caldwell-Gross | ncaldwellgross@gnjumc.org
Director of Mission

John Cardillo | jcardillo@gnjumc.org
Conference Treasurer and Director of Administrative Services

Beth Caulfield | bcaulfield@gnjumc.org
Director of Small Groups Ministry

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

Cari Cruz | ccruz@gnjumc.org
Regional Manager

Eric Drew | edrew@gnjumc.org
Director of Worship

Drew Dyson | ddyson@gnjumc.org
Raritan Valley District Superintendent

Gina Hendrickson | ghendrickson@gnjumc.org
Dean of the Cabinet, Northern Shore District Superintendent

Ginny Kaiser | gkaiser@gnjumc.org
Connectional Ministries Administrative Services Manager
Gina Kim | gkim@gnjumc.org
Palisades District Superintendent

Jay Kim | jkim@gnjumc.org
Business Services Manager

Alex Mayer | amayer@gnjumc.org
Property Manager

Nicola Mulligan | nmulligan@gnjumc.org
Executive Assistant to the Bishop

Brittney Reilly | breilly@gnjumc.org
Online and Digital Communications Manager

Bobbie Ridgely | bridgely@afuturewithhope.org
Executive Director, A Future With Hope

Brian Roberts | broberts@gnjumc.org
Cape Atlantic District Superintendent

Manuel Sardinas | msardinas@gnjumc.org
Gateway North District Superintendent

John Schol | bishopjohnschol@gnjumc.org
Bishop

Alexa Taylor | ataylor@gnjumc.org
Benefits Services Manager

Rosa Williams | rosamw@optonline.net
Conference Lay Leader

Trey Wince | twince@gnjumc.org
Director of New Disciples

Varlyna Wright | vwright@gnjumc.org
Capital District Superintendent
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