

# THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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## Next Gen Camp Partner at Pinelands Center, Mt. Misery

By Josh Kinney  
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BROWNS MILLS – A Christ-centered, multicultural summer camp experience is coming to Pinelands Center in 2018. Next Generation Ministries, GNJ's strategic partnership of youth, camping and campus ministries will partner with Barefoot Republic Camp in a new and exciting experience focused on building unity within the Body of Christ for rising 6-8th graders.

The Barefoot Republic camping model was started by Tommy Rhodes in the Nashville region during the early 1990s. The camp's focus is to create an experience that reflects the reality of the Kingdom of God.

"Too often camps are largely homogeneous; the kids who attend usually come from the same socio-economic background and experience more of the same," said Rhodes. "Barefoot Republic creates a camp experience where kids come from different economic backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and nationalities, and grow up in urban, suburban, and rural contexts."

The partnership between Next Generation Ministries and Barefoot Republic will provide GNJ the opportunity to hold camp in Pinelands Center at Mt. Misery for middle schoolers for the first time in three years. While the staff at Pine-

lands Center has been busy hosting retreats and school programs, Barefoot Republic's program allows Pinelands to reinstate weeklong overnight camping for 2018.

"I am excited for this upcoming middle school camp because of the creative partnership between Next Generation Ministries and Barefoot Republic," said Ryan Clements, Next Generation Coordinator. While the leadership team will be from Barefoot Republic, staff and counselors will be from GNJ, making the camp a ministry of GNJ's Next Generation initiative. "I'm excited for the relationships that will form at this camp between campers from different churches and between campers and counselors from different churches. Campers and counselors will then have the opportunity to reconnect at IGNITE a few months later!"

"This camp is an important step in making us a more connectional church where our youth ministries do not stop at the doors of our churches, and where our next generation of leaders and disciplinarians feel like they belong to a ministry that is larger than themselves or their towns," said Clements.

Barefoot Republic uses a model focused on passionate worship including large group worship jam sessions and small group "story-ing" time: an opportunity for students to learn scripture through storytelling.



Pinelands Center will partner with Barefoot Republic for a multicultural camp experience focused on building unity within GNJ Middle Schoolers. Photo provided by Barefoot Republic

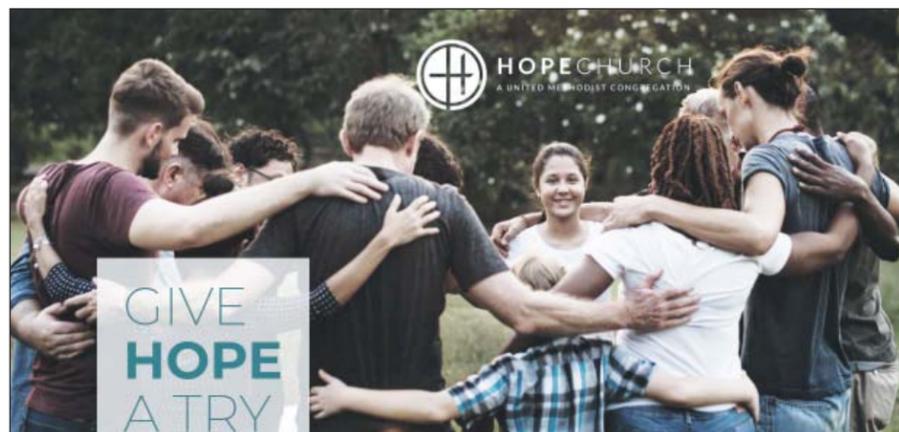
"Each day, a passage of scripture is introduced to the kids in the form of an oral story," said Rhodes. "During story-ing time, kids hear the scripture story three times and are encouraged to repeat the story back to the counselors. Throughout the day, there are other opportunities for students to tell the scripture story to counselors with the result being that at the week's end, each kid has several passages ingrained on their hearts."

Rev. Brandon Cho of Morristown

UMC, President of the Board of Directors of Next Gen Ministries expressed thrill at the vitalization of this forward-thinking initiative.

"I am particularly excited about our partnership with Barefoot Republic for the summer of 2018," he said. "It offers a unique and innovative multicultural camping experience for our young people. I envision that our youth will come to appreciate and celebrate unity in diversity

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Hope UMC in Voorhees has launched a second location in Mt. Laurel at Signal Hill Elementary School. Photo provided by Hope Church

## Hope Church Launches Second Location

By Denise Herschel  
Nj6pack@yahoo.com

VOORHEES - Twenty seven years ago HOPE United Methodist Church's lead pastor Jeff Bills held the Voorhees church's first service at the town's Signal Hill Elementary School. Almost three decades later, he will welcome a second church campus which will offer a unique Sunday worship experience in a local Mount Laurel Middle School. Since the launch of the first location in Voorhees, the church has grown to be among the largest United Methodist congregations in the Northeast with an active core group of more than 800 people who are from the greater Voorhees area.

"HOPE has always sought to communicate the Gospel in relevant ways to speak to those with no church background as well as those already-committed Christians," Bills said. "We come from all different walks of life and experience."

The Thomas E. Harrington Middle School, located at 514 Mount Laurel Road, will serve as a new church campus beginning Sunday, January 21 at 10:30

a.m. The second campus, 15 miles from the Voorhees location, will be led by the same staff and lay leadership as Voorhees with a focus of outreach, hospitality, worship and children's ministries, according to Bills, who added that "so far we have a Mount Laurel launch team made up of 75 HOPE members."

Bills has been an essential member of the Voorhees community for the past 27 years. It was in the fall of 1988 that he was on a hospital visit when he wandered onto the Main Street construction site. As he noticed there were no plans for a church in the development, he had a strong sense he would lead the effort to institute a new church in Voorhees. On Sunday, November 18, 1990, HOPE church held its first service in the cafeteria of Signal Hill Elementary School.

HOPE has grown steadily into one of the largest churches in GNJ with more than 1,500 calling it their faith home.

"HOPE in 2017 looks very different from how it looked in 2000 and how it looked in 2000 is very different from 1990. All along, I have taught and

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## IGNITE Leaders Day to Engage 21st Century Leadership

Josh Kinney  
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EATONTOWN – Youth leaders, young adults, youth groups and those invested in the Next Generation of GNJ are invited to learn how to create space in churches and gatherings for students to lead. On Feb. 10, Monmouth Grace UMC will host *Unleash*, the 2nd annual IGNITE Leaders Day.

Exploring what 21st century leadership looks like, the day-long event will feature a wide-range of presenters, speakers, and workshops.

Eric Drew, Director of Worship and IGNITE Team Leader will be leading a workshop called "Worship with Next Gen Disciples."

"Research has shown that half of young people have written and recorded their own song," said Drew. "Next generations of disciples are incredibly creative. However, engaging them in

worship services and worship planning in our churches has been a challenge."

The workshop will explore how to engage next generation disciples to add energy and freshness to worship.

Erik "Skitch" Matson, Discipleship Pastor at Princeton UMC and Wesley Foundation Director at Princeton University will lead a youth track session on God's calling.

"If you are a young person in our society, there's a lot of people calling you to be a lot of different things; telling you what you should do," said Matson. "Parents, teachers, coaches, friends, and pastors want you to be someone. But who is God calling you to be?"

The two-part track seminar will explore that question by searching scriptures and asking questions about how to view societal expectations.

Matson continued, "We'll learn to discuss God's calling in our lives and

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On Dec. 27, 2017, a team from GNJ embarked on a trip to Puerto Rico to assist with the organizing of recovery efforts after the recent hurricanes. Bishop Hector Ortiz invited Bishop John Schol and a small team to meet with his staff and leaders about the long-term recovery of the island based on A Future With Hope's Sandy recovery ministry and talent. In 2017, GNJ raised more than \$400,000 for hurricane relief. Photo provided

# A Message from the Bishop



## *The church and its identity*

"You're not going to wear your nose piercing for the wedding?" asked the future mother-in-law of a young woman. She was referring to a small diamond chip in the cruck of the young woman's nose.

"Oh no, I am going to wear it," emphatically replied the young woman. The conversation went back and forth and finally the future mother-in-law said, "It will be my gift to myself to make sure you do not wear the nose piercing."

When families are extended, families and values get even more complicated.

Today I continue a three-part series on the identity of The United Methodist Church. Last month, I reflected on how The United Methodist Church is organized as a government, not a church. Today I want to talk with you about whether we are a nuclear family or an extended family and how our identity furthers our mission or inhibits our mission.

Nuclear families, parents and their children, have the ability to develop, shape and align values, traditions, and practices while it is harder for extended families, aunts, uncles, grandparents, in laws, and cousins, to shape and align values, traditions and practices. It is not unusual for people in the same extended family to have different values about what is right and wrong, how to raise children, political views and the value of faith and money.

Within The United Methodist Church, on at least one level we understand this. As a denomination, we all share the Book of Discipline but did you know that in conferences outside the United States, the Book of Discipline may be modified by the people in that region to reflect the practices, values and understandings in different regions in the world? Yes they can modify the Book of Discipline without having to get the approval of the General Conference.

Even in the New Testament church, they wrestled with being a nuclear or extended family. In Acts 15 the church is confronted with extending the faith to the Gentiles. Leaders of the church argued that the uncircumcised Gentiles would have to honor the Abrahamic Covenant which required circumcision to be fully part of the emerging Christian church. Paul and Barnabas argued that one did not need to be circumcised to be a Christian. It created a conflict within the church family as the leaders of the church wrestled with becoming an extended family.

The notion of extending the church family to the Gentiles and not requiring circumcision prevailed but Christians with Jewish roots continued to value circumcision and circumcised their children to honor the requirement to share in the Abrahamic Covenant.

Within the church today, there is variety between Christian denominations and even within denominations. For instance, Seventh Day Adventists interpret the Bible literally and follow the command that you shall rest on the seventh day and keep the Sabbath holy. The seventh day and the Sabbath according to the Bible is Saturday. Seventh Day Adventists worship on Saturday and rest on the literal Sabbath.

While smaller congregations have a greater opportunity to reflect a nuclear family, larger congregations do not. In a larger congregation there is more variety between small groups, worship services and mission engagement. Some larger churches have three or more different worship services and each one differs from the other.

Within GNJ, there are differences in what churches do, not only by the size of the congregation but also by ethnicity, language, theology, culture, geographic location, and age of their disciples.

Does this help or hurt the mission?

All healthy mission is contextual. Understanding and connecting with the culture, values, practices and traditions of a particular community context is essential for healthy mission. Paul demonstrated this in understanding of circumcision, eating meat and other religious and cultural expressions.

Today, rural communities tend to value tradition more. It is appropriate for smaller rural churches to have practices that feel more traditional. Larger metropolitan areas are sometimes quicker to embrace change and difference and therefore are not as traditional in their practices. Many larger churches in both rural and metropolitan areas honor the tradition and embrace change.

There is a lot of change occurring in our world and it's happening fast. That is neither good nor bad, it is just a fact. The church will need to continue to evaluate what change to embrace and move forward and what change to let evolve more slowly. Nuclear families can adapt and change more slowly but extended families tend to adapt and change more quickly or they will be embroiled in conflict and resentment. So the mother-in-law that I talked about earlier better learn to accept her new daughter-in-law as she is or there is going to be an unhappy relationship that will affect the extended family.

Here are a couple of things I have found along the way that have helped me in adjusting between nuclear family and an extended family experience in my family, the church and society.

1. John Wesley, the founder and architect of the Methodist movement's advice and approach was, in essentials, unity, in non-essentials, liberty, and in all things charity.
  2. Stephen Covey's axiom, seek to understand before you try to be understood.
  3. 1 Corinthians 13, I may have the faith to move mountains, but if I do not love, I am nothing.
  4. Jesus spoke from the throne, 'Behold I make all things new' Revelation 21:5
- Only our smallest churches, those worshipping under 50 can be a nuclear congregation, but congregations interested in growing must embrace an extended family approach which means variety and embracing difference.

Our denomination's challenge is the struggle for identity and part of it is a struggle that we all think and act alike. Our challenge to embrace difference in thinking, theology, experiences and understanding continues to challenge our mission and that we are stronger together as an extended family. One way through our challenges is to ask what does in all things charity, look like within the church today.

Keep the faith!

John Schol  
Bishop  
The United Methodist Church  
Greater New Jersey



## TEAM VITAL PARA CONGREGACIONES EN ESPAÑOL

Todas las congregaciones hispanas/latinas en GNJ que hablan español son invitadas a participar en el Team Vital, que se llevará a cabo por primera vez en español en la primavera de 2018. Este recurso crucial estará disponible enteramente en español sin necesidad de traducción.

## TEAM VITAL FOR SPANISH SPEAKING CONGREGATIONS

All Hispanic / Latino congregations in GNJ are invited to participate in Team Vital, which will take place for the first time in Spanish in the Spring of 2018. This crucial resource will be made available entirely in Spanish with no need for translation.

APPLICATIONS DUE: FEB. 1, 2018

Go to: [gnjumc.org/team-vital](http://gnjumc.org/team-vital)



# THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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**The February 2018 Issue Deadline  
is January 26, 2018**



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Seed grants have funded youth sports initiatives, immigration resource centers and cooperative homeless housing.

**Applications due March 1, 2018. For more info visit [www.gnjumc.org/communities-of-hope](http://www.gnjumc.org/communities-of-hope) or contact Director of Mission, Nicole Caldwell-Gross at [ncaldwellgross@gnjumc.org](mailto:ncaldwellgross@gnjumc.org)**

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# Scholarships Awarded to 39 Students in GNJ

The Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry is committed to providing quality educational opportunities for higher learning. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry recently released its list of 2017 scholarship winners. Below showcases the 39 students from GNJ who were awarded scholarships, the churches and colleges they attend and the type of scholarship received.



Adeoluwa Adesanya, Union UMC, Seton Hall University, Ethnic Scholarship

Anuroop Alberts, Christ UMC Jersey City, Lehigh University, HANA Scholarship

Samuel Arroyo, Kingston UMC, Inter-American University of Puerto Rico-Metro, HANA Scholarship

Paul Barnett, Medford UMC, Princeton Theological Seminary, United Methodist General Scholarship

Christian Boynton, Hope UMC, Merimack College, Rev. Dr. Karen Layman GIFT OF HOPE Scholarship

Fabian Burgos, Asbury UMC, The College of New Jersey, Ethnic Scholarship

Natalie Burr, Waretown UMC, Lebanon Valley College, Marriam Hoffman Scholarship, UM Allocation Award

Rachel Callender, St. John's UMC, Princeton Theological Seminary, John Q. Schisler Scholarship

Sheena Cameron, Magnolia Road UMC, The College of New Jersey, Hattie Hardiman Scholarship

Darin Clark, Asbury UMC, The College of New Jersey, Ethnic Scholarship

Kaitlyn DeGroot, Frankford Plains UMC, Harvard University, Rev. Dr. Karen Layman GIFT OF HOPE Scholarship

Ehabe Ebage, Asbury UMC, Rutgers University-Camden, Ethnic Scholarship

Patrick Gorman, Bridgewater UMC, Eastern University, Rev. Dr. Karen Layman GIFT OF HOPE Scholarship

Kia Hill, Browns Mills UMC, Drew University, Ethnic Scholarship, UM Allocation Award

Savannah Hill, Browns Mills UMC, Drew University, Ethnic Scholarship, UM Allocation Award

Lawrence Hillis, Hopewell UMC, Drew Theological Seminary, Excellence in Clergy Leadership Scholarship

Manuel Islas Maldonado, First Hispanic UMC Dover, Claremont School of Theology, HANA Scholarship

Minhwee Kang, First UMC Ridgefield Park, Drew Theological Seminary, United Methodist General Scholarship

Sunghyuk Kim, Acrola Korean UMC, Drew University, SEA Allocation

Jung Ae Kim, Disciple Korean UMC, Drew Theological Seminary, Baxter Roelfson Sands Scholarship

Hyun Woo Kim, Grace Korean UMC, Emory University, HANA Scholarship, UM Allocation Award

Kevin Leach, Whitehouse UMC, American University, Rev. Dr. Karen Layman GIFT OF HOPE Scholarship, UM Allocation Award

Heejo Lee, Livingston Korean UMC, Drew Theological Seminary, HANA Scholarship

Yunsun Lee, First Korean UMC, Drew Theological Seminary, Excellence in Clergy Leadership Scholarship

Hannah Mannella, Pitman UMC, University of Delaware, Rev. Dr. Karen Layman GIFT OF HOPE Scholarship

Yo Sep Nam, Monmouth Grace UMC, Drew Theological Seminary, HANA Scholarship

Donna Netram, Roselle UMC, Drew Theological Seminary, E. Craig Brandenburg Scholarship

Lydie Ngoie, UMC in Madison, Drew University, SEA Allocation

Savannah Pearson, Church Master (United Methodist), Harrisburg University of Science and Technology, Ethnic Scholarship

Aaliyah Phillips, Tenafly UMC, Rutgers University-New Brunswick, Ethnic Scholarship

Deanna Reimertz, Red Bank UMC, American University, Baxter Roelfson Sands Scholarship, UM Allocation

Rosemary Rentas, Asbury UMC, Drew Theological Seminary, HANA Scholarship

Claudia Santa Cruz, New Canaan UMC, Drew Theological Seminary, HANA Scholarship

Olivia Schiffert, Bloomfield Park UMC, Cabrini College, Ethnic Scholarship

Yonghwan Shin, Omega Mission Korean UMC, Drew University, Drew Theological Seminary, SEA Allocation, HANA Scholarship

Brian Tipton, Summit UMC, Drew Theological Seminary, United Methodist General Scholarship

David Tokpah, New Covenant UMC, American University, Edith Allen Scholarship

Kassidy Wagner, Frankford Plains UMC, Sussex County Community College, Rev. Dr. Karen Layman GIFT OF HOPE Scholarship

Alfred Williams, Bloomsbury UMC, Drew University, Greater New Jersey Annual Conference Merit Award, UM Allocation

## IGNITE Leaders Day to Engage 21st Century Leadership

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begin looking for ways to live out that calling at home, our churches, and our communities."

As an advocate for people with disabilities, Erin Raffety will lead a session entitled: From Inclusion to Discipleship. Raffety, a lecturer in Youth, Church, and Culture at the Department of Practical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, serves as the Associate Pastor for Outreach and Education at Grace Presbyterian Church in Kendall Park.



Erin Raffety

"So often approaches to ministry for people and youth with disabilities focus on the importance of inclusion without recognizing the many gifts for ministry and promise of discipleship they already bring to those around them," said Raffety. "How do we grapple with the very real, practical, structural and systemic barriers to inclusion for youth with disabilities? How do we move beyond the limits that approaches like inclusion place on youth with disabilities' opportunities to lead, contribute, and grow in the church?"

Raffety seeks to review practical approaches to ministry for youth with disabilities, explore case studies and real life challenges, and equip participants with pursuing models and strategies for empowering youth with disabilities toward leadership and discipleship.

In addition to Raffety, Justin Forbes will debut as the event's keynote. Having spent 12 years working for the Young Life organization, and serving locally in his church, Forbes brings a broad base of experience across different types of youth ministry to include urban, multicultural, suburban, special needs, and college ministries. He serves as the director of the youth ministry program

at Flagler College and is a University of Aberdeen PhD candidate. A graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary and Fuller Theological Seminary, Forbes co-founded Kindred Youth Ministry, a youth ministry resource organization.



Justin Forbes

Kermit Moss, Senior Pastor of Manhattan Bible Church will be leading a session on Christ Formation and City Youth. Moss, Interim Director for the Center for Black Church Studies at Princeton Theological Seminary, has included Hip Hop, theology, and urban youth in his research.

"Youth living in urban centers encounter a variety of experiences, both positive and negative, which shape how they make meaning of their reality, view themselves and conceive God," said Moss. His seminar examines the continued process by which being conformed to the image of Jesus, transformed by the Holy Spirit, and bearing witness to God's grace by living out the gospel in the world. Attention will be paid to theological, spiritual, moral, and identity formation as related to urban youth.

A veteran youth worker and Associate Pastor of First UMC of Toms River, Wesley Ellis joins the event to share his experience and wisdom. Having written and presented on topics of adolescence, joy, friendship, and thinking theologically about youth ministry, Ellis writes for the Institute for Youth Ministry and Princeton Theological Seminary and for Kindred Youth Ministry.

The event will be held Feb. 10 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Monmouth Grace UMC in Eatontown for a cost of \$5 for students and \$15 for adults. Visit [www.ignitenj.org](http://www.ignitenj.org) to register before Feb 1. An entry fee of \$30 will be offered the day of.



## LOCAL CHURCH HISTORY CONTEST

### SUBMIT A CHURCH HISTORY TODAY!

Histories submitted benefit the local church by stimulating the ministry of memory, becoming part of the archival repository of The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey.

### CATEGORIES FOR LOCAL CHURCH HISTORIES INCLUDE:

- Robert B. Steelman Methodist Church History
- John C. Goodwin Multimedia Church History
- Morris L. Smith Ethnic Church History

### THE FINE PRINT:

Histories must be submitted in accordance with the guidelines which are located at [gnjumc.org](http://gnjumc.org).

Email your submissions to Mark Shenise, [mshenise@gcah.org](mailto:mshenise@gcah.org). Or send to Mark Shenise, 36 Madison Ave., P.O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940.



### SUBMISSION DEADLINE

January 18, 2018. Entries received after the deadline will be entered in the following year's contest. Any questions or comments? Contact Don DeGroat at 570.646.9298 or [dfdegroat4@aol.com](mailto:dfdegroat4@aol.com).

## Water & Roots Sermon Series Begins, Facebook Group Formed

By Josh Kinney  
jkinney@gnjumc.org

NEPTUNE - With 185 churches signed on to the Water & Roots Rediscovering Baptism Initiative, Director of Small Groups Gina Yeske believes God is up to something exciting.

"God is doing an exciting, new thing in our congregations by remembering and reaffirming out baptismal vows," she said. "We are praying with pastors in GNJ and for them as they prepare."

As United Methodists, we believe that baptism is God's gift to us as we are claimed as God's beloved. As Greater New Jersey United Methodists look to make vital congregations and move out into the communities to make disciples, the Connectional Ministries Team zeroed in on the importance of baptism as a keystone habit and created Water & Roots to help leaders integrate baptism into the life of their congregations.

"A 'keystone habit' activates a domino effect of positive outcomes and creates an inordinate impact on an entire organization. Our intention is help congregations recognize that the sacrament of baptism has the potential to be a 'keystone habit,' which can have a positive ripple effect throughout the congregation and community," said Juel Nelson, Director of Leadership Development.

A Facebook group opened as a way to connect pastors and worship leaders across GNJ participating in Water & Roots. Currently at 42 members, the group continues to grow as more pastors join the Rediscovering Baptism movement.

"There have been some great conversations around baptism traditions as well as inspiring stories of baptism shared in the group," said Yeske. "We look forward to reading more stories and invite all pastors in GNJ to take part."

The Water & Roots initiative was started in 2017 for churches in GNJ to rediscover the power of baptism. Pastors are invited to sign up at [waterandroots.org](http://waterandroots.org) for free sermon series resources, graphics, promotional materials, small group curriculum, materials for ministry with teens and children, group lessons, news articles, blogs, and ways to celebrate baptism.

"We hope you have taken time to unpack all that Water & Roots has to offer," said Eric Drew, Director of Worship. "We are so glad to be on this journey together and we wish our pastors in GNJ many blessings as they continue to prepare and see what God is doing as we rediscover the power of God's Spirit through baptism."

For more information about Water & Roots and to sign up for resources, visit [www.waterandroots.org](http://www.waterandroots.org)

If you're interested in joining the Water & Roots Facebook Group, visit [www.Facebook.com/groups/WaterandRoots](http://www.Facebook.com/groups/WaterandRoots)

Has your church scheduled a baptism? Send stories, photos, and or video footage to Relay Editorial Manager Josh Kinney at [jkinney@gnjumc.org](mailto:jkinney@gnjumc.org)

Rediscover the power of Baptism! Videos, graphics, liturgies, sermon series and resources are now available.



## WATER & ROOTS

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# CAMP YDP Fundraiser Maps Future Possibilities

By Josh Kinney  
jkinney@gnjumc.org

PATERSON – With a mission to cultivate achievement and map out possibilities for the children and families of Paterson, CAMP YDP is pressing on with momentum, partnerships, and support. Extending reach and deepening roots in the city, the organization hosted a fundraising banquet at their headquarters on Dec. 9 with nearly 70 attendees, raising more than \$7,000.

Working in partnerships with parents, administrators, and community members, the refreshed organization provides a safe-haven for children and their families to grow, learn, and become empowered academically, socially, and emotionally.

At the event, the board honored two long serving volunteers who passed away, and their families accepted awards on their behalf.

“The families were very moved by the gesture and spoke about how much Camp YDP had meant to the volunteers,” said Andrea Wren-Hardin, Hope Center Manager for A Future With Hope.

“Through our full-day preschool, afterschool enrichment and summer programs, we encourage children to become lifelong learners, critical thinkers, and productive members of society,” said Bria Pierre, Director, who gave tours of the facility and spoke about various programs. Two council persons were in attendance as well as two persons interested in joining the board.

“Many provided feedback that they really liked that the event took place at Camp rather than another venue,” said Wren-Hardin, who joined Pierre on the facility tour.

Affording children the opportunity to explore through play and gain knowledge about themselves and the world, Camp YDP’s vibrant teachers look for new ways to engage students in authentic hands-on experience.

“The idea is the spark interest and allow for further exploration” said Pierre.

In a city plagued by drugs and violence, the block of time immediately following school before parents are finished with their work days presents opportunity for mischief or unsupervised kids. Camp’s after school enrichment program gives children a place to work on homework, enjoy a hot meal, and participate in recreational activities while giving their parents a sense of security.

“One of the great things about Camp is when school is out, Camp is in!” exclaimed Pierre. “This not only goes for the



**Kids at Camp YDP smile through the windows of a cardboard school bus inside the Paterson facility on Dec. 9.** Photo provided



**Camp YDP’s December fundraising banquet brought together nearly 70 attendees and raised upwards of \$7,000.** Photo provided

school year but also during the summer. It’s a time where we focus on providing children access to new experiences and learning opportunities.”

During the summer months, Camp receives a wide-range of children from various parts of Paterson. With the city’s survival and future dependent on its next generation of leaders, Camp believes those leaders are in their building. According to Pierre, the staff and volunteers work with passion to help the students who come through their doors reach their fullest potential.

“Paterson is a great city with even greater potential,” she said. “We’re always looking for people, organizations,

groups, churches, businesses and corporations to partner with to help push our mission forward and provide a collective impact on the community.”

Along with financial support, Camp YDP seeks dedicated volunteers to teach enrichment classes, help with homework, and share knowledge by investing time and talents in the city’s youth.

“We’re really looking for people passionate about shaping the lives of children to join our board and become advocates and stewards of our noble mission,” said Pierre.

“We need more to do more,” she continued. “Today we invite you to come and be that more to us.”

# Learning to Serve at a Young Age in Montville

By Denise Herschel  
nj6pack@yahoo.com

MONTVILLE - They may be only three to eleven-years-old but at such a young age they are already learning valuable life lessons at the Montville United Methodist Church’s Sunday School program. In addition to listening during story time, sharing books and interacting with puppets, these youngsters are witnessing how to “love our neighbors” with acts of service.

“The United Methodist Church believes in serving others as it’s written in the Book of James in the Bible. So we teach this to the children from a very young age,” added Renee Gilbert, Children’s Christian Education Coordinator.

Gilbert, along with fellow Children’s Christian Education Coordinator Kristin Zerden, have incorporated mission projects into Sunday School lessons and special events. Some of their most recent service events have included making pine cone turkey centerpieces for Saint Albert Residential Health Care Facility in Montville and a ‘Santa and Me’ breakfast with an entrance fee of a toy for ‘Toys for Tots.’

“Young kids are like sponges soaking up knowledge and imitating the people around them,” said Rev. Heather Valosin of Montville UMC. “This is a perfect time to teach them to love our neighbors with acts of service as Galatians 5:13 says, ‘through love serve one another.’ We hope to instill in them a lifelong willingness to serve the needs that they see around them.”

According to Valosin, the initiative for this type of learning at the Sunday School “came out of our strategic planning through Team Vital the summer of 2015.”

“This congregation has been faithfully serving the community for decades by feeding the hungry, building friendships with residents of an assisted living facility, and creating a thrift store,” she said. “Team Vital helped us imagine the

possibilities of involving children in mission work. It is a delight to see the kids learning to embody the Christian faith. The kids simply enjoy being together and knowing that they are helping others as they follow Jesus’ teachings about the greatest commandments.”

Hundreds of churches across GNJ have participated in Team Vital, an initiative that helps leaders create a strategic ministry plan using the five markers of vitality. Each church receives individual technical support, monthly consulting and other resourcing opportunities. Churches learn from each other, collaborate, support and hold each other accountable to pursue their ministry plans. The next Team Vital session is scheduled for Fall 2018 and congregations should start the application process now. The deadline for Fall applications is July 1.

Gilbert said that the Sunday School students range in age from three to eleven-years-old. She teaches the three to eight-year-olds while Zerden instructs the nine to eleven-year-olds. The classes meet every week during church after the children’s sermon and lessons are incorporated as appropriate.

“We only have about 40 minutes of class time. We have story time using flannel boards, books and puppets. We have a game to emphasize the story such as a teaching working together with others to accomplish a task. We then make something that is given to others. We always do a prayer at the end to pray for others; we call this the 3 P’s - Preaching (teaching), Practice (Kids-in-Mission service) and Praying,” she said.

Valosin reiterated her hope from the Sunday School teachings to the young children is that as adults “we are trying



**Kids in mission at Montville UMC.** Photo provided by Heather Valosin

to live faithfully as Christians and raise younger generations to do so as well.”

“When Paul says we are all part of the Body of Christ, kids are part of the Body too with their own valuable gifts. It’s a learning experience for both kids and adults as we work together to put our faith into action,” she added.

Some examples of the children’s faith put into action include a Halloween Harvest party last year in which the kids collected CD’s for children in various hospitals and valentines made for residents at the Saint Albert Residential Health Care Facility. Gilbert added that they are thinking about a trip to the Montville Food Pantry in which the children will deliver food donations they have collected.

“We are hoping to start growth in a generation that truly believes in JOY - Jesus first, Others Next and then Yourself. The adults are learning from the children as they are observing their projects and

much of the time they participate in the Kids-in-Mission projects with the children,” Gilbert said.

She explained how essential it is to teach young children the importance of serving others with leading by example.

“Teaching Jesus’ love involves teaching love and caring to everyone and part of that caring involves sharing and serving others without expecting any reward,” Gilbert said. “Teaching empathy right away as soon as possible is vital so it becomes a natural response to others’ needs as they grow.”

Montville UMC is located at 29 Whitehall Road in Towaco, NJ. For more information about the church’s Sunday School program, call 973-334-1603 or visit [www.montvilleumc.org](http://www.montvilleumc.org). For more information about Team Vital and how it helps congregations on the path to vitality, go to [www.gnjumc.org/teamvital](http://www.gnjumc.org/teamvital).

# Good Shepherd UMC is 'Mission Central' in Times of Need

By Suzanne Marino

marino@catamaranmedia.com

NORTHFIELD — Getting help to families in trouble is an ongoing project at Good Shepherd United Methodist Church.

The church is considered a regional hub for collecting supplies, organizing and working with Mission Central to connect God's resources with human need, according to lay leader and volunteer coordinator Nicole Troast.

Mission Central works with the United Methodist Committee on Relief, which helps unite congregations working on projects nationally and internationally. Troast said when hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Jose and Maria hit in August and September, the volunteers at Good Shepherd gathered 240 flood buckets, 1,036 hygiene kits, 92 school kits, 54 birthing kits plus additional supplies and health items.

Troast said the items in the buckets are donations. People donate specific items for the buckets, or they donate the funds to purchase the items to fill a bucket. The members of the Mainland



Volunteers from Good Shepherd UMC in Northfield lend a hand to provide supplies to those affected by hurricanes.

Photo provided



Greg Troast of Northfield puts some muscle behind the effort to load relief buckets on the UMCOR truck that will help families affected by 2017's hurricanes. Photo provided

Regional High School Key Club are frequent volunteers, Troast said.

"The help of many hands really makes the work load lighter, and we appreciate every person who comes through the door to help in whatever way they can," she said.

Linwood Boy Scout Troop 39 recently offered flood-relief buckets for sale at the Linwood Farmers Market. Donors paid \$40 to cover the cost of one bucket. The Scouts assembled the buckets on the spot. Those buckets were among the many loaded on the Mission Central truck and headed to Houston, which was struck by Hurricane Harvey. Troast said buckets also were donated by other churches and local organizations, civic groups and local employers who have volunteer teams.

As Troast explained, since the church

has been designated as a hub, putting relief efforts together is not done in crisis mode but as part of its ongoing mission to help others wherever that help is needed, as quickly as possible.

Volunteers work year-round to prepare for whatever emergency might arise, so that when they are called upon to assist, the framework is in place. Troast said supplies are being shipped to the affected area because it is now safe to do so.

"After a natural disaster like the hurricanes, first comes rescue and recovery, then the relief follows," she said. "Although people want to go immediately and try to help, those first days after a crisis it is important to let the emergency people helping those in harm's way get them to safety. Then comes recovery, and as soon as it is safe to be there, the

relief effort begins."

The Mission Central hub was started at Good Shepherd on March 27, 2010, by Howard and Rose Minnichbach, according to Good Shepherd pastor the Rev.

Tom Starks. Howard Minnichbach has since died, but his wife, Rose, and her daughter, Shelley Hodac, of Egg Harbor Township, oversee the effort.

"We do this mission year-round, and supplies are always needed. It's amazing to see the outpouring of support when a disaster actually hits, but being prepared is key," said Troast. "Our mission team meets every third Thursday at the church from 6-7 p.m. We alternate activities with making PB&J sandwiches for Sister Jean's Kitchen and/or assembling kits/buckets. Last month, because of the recent disasters, we did both. This month we will meet at 6 p.m. Oct. 19 for kit/bucket assembly only."

Good Shepherd is one of only two hubs in the state. (The other is Andover UMC in Sussex County). Volunteers and donations are welcome. Anyone, regardless of religious affiliation, is encouraged to lend their time and talent the third Thursday of the month. Donations are also welcome, and the items will be purchased for the buckets.

Donations may be mailed to Good Shepherd UMC, P.O. Box 762, 207 Northfield Ave., Northfield NJ 08225. To volunteer, just show up the third Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. (Enter through the front door, and the room to the right is where the group assembles.) For more information, email nroast@goodshepherdumc.com.

To learn more about Mission Central, visit goodshepherdumc.com or follow them on Facebook at Good Shepherd UMC, or call the church at 609-641-3219.

## Hope Church Launches Second Location

Continued from page 1

modeled that growth requires change, change often creates conflict, and conflict handled in God-honoring ways makes things better," he said.

Bills continued that HOPE has a strong emphasis on kids and families with Sunday mornings offering fun and creative programs geared to children of all ages - from nursery to youth. There is cutting edge music, inspiring videos, along with a practical and relevant weekly message that allows HOPE's contemporary worship service to be a little different than what many expect of a typical church. HOPE prides itself on being intentional about welcoming all people on the spiritual spectrum with particular attention to those who "don't do church."

"We are committed to engaging people in a clear and understandable way," Bills said. "Our approach is to start where people are and then help them lead to the place Jesus calls us to be. We have always sought to be clear about the differ-

ence between the timeless truths of the Gospel and the temporary styles of communication. Styles are ever-changing and the church needs to adapt to stay relevant. The Gospel is the unchanging foundation that keeps us anchored."

On a Sunday morning, people visiting HOPE can expect "to find us excited about being together and excited about welcoming others and making them feel comfortable. They are going to hear laughter, great music, and the sound of happy kids," he continued.

Bills emphasized that HOPE church, now in two locations, remains committed to being a "light on the hill."

"We are a faith community that desires to be a blessing to the people of Voorhees, Mount Laurel and the surrounding communities," he said.

For more information visit the church's website at [meethope.org](http://meethope.org) or call the Voorhees church office at 856-751-4673.

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# 2019-2023 Strategic Planning Feedback

By Josh Kinney  
jkinney@gnjumc.org

NEPTUNE – The GNJ Strategic Planning team has assessed progress from 2013, researched current trends, listened to clergy and congregations express dreams for the future and reviewed hundreds of surveys. In all, more than 500 people have participated in the process to date.

As a result of this work, the planning team has created a first draft of a 2019-23 Strategic Plan which ultimately will be presented as legislation for the 2018 Annual Conference Session. Before

this plan is finalized, feedback is being sought from those in Greater New Jersey, with several ways to participate.

- 1.) The plan can be reviewed online at GNJ's website: [gnjumc.org/strategicplan2019-2023](http://gnjumc.org/strategicplan2019-2023). Pastors are encouraged to share and discuss the plan with leaders in their congregations.
- 2.) Leaders are encouraged to participate in the Strategic Plan Feedback sessions in January:

**Northern Region**

Tuesday, January 16  
7:00 p.m.  
Chatham UMC

**Central Region**

Thursday, January 18  
7:00 p.m.  
Mission and Resource Center

**Southern Region**

Sunday, January 21  
2:30 p.m.  
Pitman UMC

- 3.) All United Methodists in GNJ are invited to participate in an online survey which can also be found on the website at: [gnjumc.org/strategicplan2019-2023](http://gnjumc.org/strategicplan2019-2023). The link can also be found in the GNJ Digest weekly e-newsletter and will remain open until January 25.

The final draft of the 2019-23 Strategic Plan will be included as legislation at the 2018 Annual Conference Session in May in Wildwood.

"All clergy and laity are encouraged to participate in the feedback sessions and survey," said Rev. Hector Burgos, Director of Connectional Ministries. "Please share this information with others in your congregation. Thank you for sharing your thoughts. We are in this journey together!"

## Next Gen Camp Partner Advances Mission

*Continued from page 1*

in Jesus Christ through this camp."

In light of GNJ's current cultural landscape, Cho sees the need to develop Christ-centered inclusive young leaders among the next generation who can build bridges among various cultures and classes.

"I believe transformational experience for our young people through camp is a powerful way to achieve that vision," he said.

At the beginning of camp, campers will choose a specialty which may include sports, arts, or music. The specialty will be worked on throughout the week as campers discover that they share a passion with other campers who do not look like them or come from the same background. These specialties allow kids who may have thought they had nothing in common to connect and develop counter-intuitive friendships.

"This initiative will bring new life and meaning to camping ministry in GNJ," said Pastor Waleska Trinidad of Primera Iglesia Metodista de Wesley in Trenton. "By participating in this multicultural camp, children will have the opportunity to grow spiritually, develop their social skills, find a sense of independence, and an opportunity to learn from their peers. They'll have a chance to explore, express themselves, and make connections with others through music, art, and sports. They will experience God's love through the diversity of the body of Christ and it's our hope that they will be able to make lasting memories that will impact their lives and they'll share at home, church, and in their communities."

Clements concurred. "Barefoot Republic will truly give campers a sense of the Kingdom of God that will continue after the closing session through other initiatives of Next Generation Ministries."

Additionally, a senior high leadership camp will be held in July to grow leadership skills through active spiritual formation, hands-on mission training and opportunities, and leading for change. Students will leave equipped to start projects and initiatives at their churches. In August, Ninos Para Cristo & Jovenes Para Cristo camp will be held for all ages in an inclusive program for campers of all backgrounds to come experience God's presence through the celebration of Latino heritage and culture.



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**SENIOR HIGH LEADERSHIP CAMP**  
Mon. July 23 - Sat. July 28, 2018  
High school students will grow leadership skills through active spiritual formation, hands-on mission training and opportunities, and leading for change. Leave ready to start projects and initiatives in your church!

**BAREFOOT REPUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH CAMP**  
Mon. July 30 - Sat. August 4  
Each cabin is its own republic, but together they're united as one family. Get ready for games, worship, dramas, sports, music, devotionals, and speakers!

**NIÑOS PARA CRISTO & JOVENES PARA CRISTO**  
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A camp for all ages, from niños to jovenes, this inclusive program invites campers of all backgrounds to come experience God's presence through the celebration of Latino heritage and culture.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT 2018 SUMMER CAMPS OR REGISTRATION**  
 Email Ryan Clements, NextGen Coordinator at [rclements@gnjumc.org](mailto:rclements@gnjumc.org).  
[www.gnjnextgen.org](http://www.gnjnextgen.org)

# Church at the Center of Harry Potter's 'Diagon Alley'

By Josh Kinney  
jkinney@gnjumc.org

NEWTON – A group of merchants embarked on a quest to bring a little magic back to their town's original shopping district. The once bustling Spring Street in Newton had suffering economic decline with vacant storefronts and closing businesses unable to compete with mega department stores and food chains. But on November 25, 2017, the downtown transformed into 'Diagon Alley,' the magical market from the famous Harry Potter series.

Organized by the group of merchants, the event featured 25 shops up and down the town's main business district taking on a Harry Potter theme. At its center, First UMC of Newton transformed into Hogwarts School Choir of Singing Frogs.

"The organizers were truly excited to have our church join in and invited us to stand on the street throughout the event and sing," said Rev. Todd Lattig, Senior Pastor of First UMC of Newton. "Thus some members of our choir, our worship band, youth and others from our church transformed themselves into the Hogwarts School Choir of Singing Frogs."

Lattig made a poster and published the event on the church's Facebook page as well as the Spring Street Merchant Circle's page which the group also extended to the church to use for posting any church events.

Prior to the event, NJ.com published a story promoting the Diagon Alley day which was shared over 75,000 times on Facebook. Word of the event spread to Z100's Elvis Duran's morning show, CBS, News 12, The New York Times, and many other major outlets.

"Our church's website visits shot up dramatically," said Lattig. "People were coming to our Facebook page and sharing our announcement with others."

Shopping wasn't the only attraction as aspiring Hogwarts students were placed in one of the fictional school's four houses by "the sorting hat" a "Quidditch" lesson was offered and a "Horcrux" hunt was held. The town's Barrel House restaurant became "The Leaky Caludron" serving butterbeer and other treats. Between The Bread, another local eatery, was trans-



Choir members at the First UMC of Newton became "singing frogs" for the town's Harry Potter themed 'Diagon Alley' day. Photo provided

formed into "The Great Hall" and another store sold wands to young magicians.

On the day of the event, a woman stopped and asked Lattig where the best place on the street would be to start the walk down Diagon Alley.

"She then asked where 'that church' will be singing," said Lattig. I told her where we would be located and introduced myself to her as the pastor. It was just a divinely perfect way to start the event off."

The little town of Newton became overwhelmed with throngs of people and two hour lines to get into shops and

restaurants.

"This event has sparked hope in our community and we're already looking to plan it even better the next time around," said Lattig.

As for his "singing frogs," they spent the day out in the community singing Christmas themed praises, traditional Christmas hymns, and sharing the love of Christ with countless witches, wizards, and muggles alike.

"It was absolutely amazing to be a part of and I'm so proud of our church for stepping up and taking the risk of doing something a little bit different," Lattig

exclaimed. "Who knows what might come from it, but it was simply awesome."

Lattig seeks to challenge his congregation to become more present in the community, not just in fun ways, but to meet needs.

"This was certainly a fun event, but it also promotes the community and our involvement shows that First UMC of Newton cares about Newton, its merchants, residents, children, teens, young adults, and for the visitors who come here," he said. "We had a blast doing it and we're blown away by what a little faith can turn into."

## Wesleyan Covenant Association Holds Meetings in GNJ

By Josh Kinney  
jkinney@gnjumc.org

NEPTUNE - The Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA) will be holding several gatherings in GNJ January 19-20. Keith Boyette, President of the WCA, and Walter Fenton, Vice President of Strategic Development will be meeting with a group of Korean pastors and a group of pastors of large churches selected by the GNJ Evangelical Network for Renewal and Growth, in addition to two open meetings.

The WCA was started out of concern for The United Methodist Church and the disagreement about homosexuality. They have formed a not for profit organization, that includes both church and individual membership. In addition to officers, the WCA has regional delegates who vote on matters of the WCA. The WCA describes itself as committed to a plan that can be implemented either within a United Methodists structure or outside it in anticipated schism in the United Methodist Church.

Bishop John Schol said, "We welcome the WCA to GNJ. "I believe it is important for people to be informed about The United Methodist Church and the various organizations associated with United Methodists. I encourage people to learn about different views on the church and ministry with gays and lesbians including the WCA and Reconciling Ministries, as both groups offer two different viewpoints. I will continue to be a bishop of the whole church and I will continue to lead

the church toward diversity and unity."

Open meetings will be held Friday, January 19 at 6:00 p.m. at the Ocean Grove Youth Temple in Ocean Grove and Saturday, January 20 at 8:30 a.m. at the Brooklawn American Legion Post #72 in Brooklawn.

The Council of Bishops proposed The Commission on the Way Forward, which was approved by the 2016 General Conference to do a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph of the Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality and explore options that help to maintain and strengthen the unity of the church. A special General Conference Session has been called for 2019 to address the results of the work of the commission. The special meeting of The United Methodist Church's top lawmaking assembly will be limited to acting on a report by Council of Bishops, based on the proposals from the Commission on the Way Forward. The 32-member commission, appointed by the bishops, has the charge of finding ways for the denomination to stay together despite deep differences around homosexuality.

More information at the WCA can be found at [www.wesleyan covenant.org](http://www.wesleyan covenant.org)

More information about Reconciling Ministries can be found at [www.rmnetwork.org](http://www.rmnetwork.org)

More information about the Commission on the Way Forward: [www. umc.org](http://www. umc.org)

## Allegations in Port Republic

PORT REPUBLIC – A volunteer worship and choir director of St. Paul's UMC (Port Church) in Port Republic, Brian McSee, is in custody for an alleged inappropriate sexual relationship with a minor. GNJ is in full cooperation with the police regarding this matter.

"I believe it is important for you to hear from me about such matters," Bishop John Schol stated in an email to all clergy in GNJ. "Allegations of this nature are serious. As United Methodists, we believe in strict enforcement of laws prohibiting sexual exploitation of children. We encourage efforts to call for the perpetrators to be legally and financially responsible

and we call for services to guide, counsel and protect the children involved."

The family involved is being offered a full range of pastoral care. The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey encourages any person who might have been subjected to or who may be aware of misconduct by United Methodist staff, clergy or volunteers in come forward and share that information with their pastor or district superintendent.

"The situation is difficult for everyone," said Schol. "As we move forward, I ask that you keep in prayer everyone who is involved and affected."

## Court Sides Affirms GNJ Property Rights

ALPINE – The Appellate Division of the New Jersey Superior Court affirmed the June 2016 ruling of the lower Superior Court that local church property is subject to governance by the United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey and the trust clauses of The Book of Discipline.

The case is the latest in a series of actions stemming back to 2015 when some members of the Board of Trustees of the Alpine Community Church disputed the property rights of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference.

The Alpine Community United Methodist Church is one of the earliest

churches of the Methodist movement and has been operating as a Methodist Church since 1843. In recent years, the congregation has sought to remove itself from the denomination while seeking to maintain property rights to the buildings.

The Appellate Division decision affirmed the summary judgment order of Judge Wilson of the Superior Court which declared the Alpine Community Church to be a member of and subject to the governance of GNJUMC and The Book of Discipline, and consequently the church's real and personal property was held in trust for the benefit of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference.

# An Unlikely Path to the Pulpit for Rev. Jeff Bills

By Francesca Collins

VOORHEES - "I thought senior pastor sounded too old," joked Jeff Bills, the lead pastor at Hope Church in Voorhees. It's for that reason he decided to call himself lead pastor and not senior pastor when the church launched.

Bills and his wife started the church with a group of people from the Had-donfield United Methodist Church in 1990. According to Bills, within the first four weeks of the church being opened, the group made about 20,000 calls to residents asking if they'd be interested in learning more about the church.

Bills did not grow up seeing himself as a pastor. His path to becoming a pastor was part of God's plan and Bills was reluctant to follow. He was raised in Monmouth County and faith was a part of his family system.

"More in the early days, it was about going to church than really a faith ... my older brother, in the '60s, got involved in the drug culture. He was a hippie and it was really devastating to our family ... He ended up coming to a life-changing faith in Jesus, it was such a clear change for who he was and where his life was going," Bills said.



Rev. Jeff Bills of Hope UMC. Photo provided.

His brother changing faith in Jesus changed the way his family looked at faith.

Bills attended Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Okla. For him, it was a culture shock.

"It was an expression of the Christian faith that was foreign to me," he said. "It was a fascinating journey ... I had a wide range of experience."

"I did not want to be a pastor," Bills added. "My education was in counseling." When he finished college, he no lon-

ger wanted to be a counselor, so he decided to pursue business at some level.

"I had no business background, had no degree, so finding a job in that area was not going very well," he said. "I had a clear sense that God was calling me into ministry, so I was a reluctant pastor. I began to feel a tug into ministry at least a year before I agreed to go into ministry."

"I was wrestling with God, I was praying and seeking God... that pull got stronger and stronger and my resistance was pretty resolute."

Bills finally decided to go on a camping trip by himself, and the entire weekend he "wrestled with God."

"My call was be yourself but I want you to go into pastoral ministry," he said.

The weekend after his camping trip, Bills met his wife Marilyn who was a teacher in Gloucester Township. They got married in 1983 and had two sons,

Josh and Matthew. Josh is 25 years old. Matthew, who has Down syndrome, is 23 years old.

"We live in a 75-mile-per-hour culture, and Matthew operates at 25 miles per hour. When you're traveling 25 miles per hour, you get to see a lot that you would have missed at 75. [Matthew] has in many ways enriched our lives," Bills said.

"The heart of HOPE Church is that we're interested in welcoming people in who have either no faith background or struggle in faith and to accept them where they are and love them where they are and encourage them where they are," Bills said. "While fewer people are going to church, it's not because they are not interested in knowing God. The church often becomes a roadblock. We try to move the roadblocks away."

HOPE Church is located at 700 Cooper Road in Voorhees.

## OBITUARIES

**Robert E. Grant**, Retired Elder, died on Dec. 10, 2017. A Celebration of Life took place on Dec. 16 at Christ UMC in Northampton, MA. A second service will take place on July 29, 2018 at Milton Mills Road in Acton, ME.

Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to a charity of your choice in memory of Robert E. Grant

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Nancy Grant, 19 High Street, Haydenville, MA 01039

**Wayne Ackerman**, Elder in Full Connection, died on Dec. 18, 2017. A Celebration of Life took place on Jan. 6, 2018 at St. John's UMC in Hazlet, NJ.

Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to Pinelands Center at Mt. Misery, 801 Mt. Misery Rd., Browns Mills, NJ 08015

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Judy Ackerman, 50 Ivy Creek Dr., Little Egg Harbor, NJ 08087-4057

## CONFERENCE HAPPENINGS



### 2018 Annual Conference Legislation Open

Submit reports and recommendations (legislation) online for the 2018 GNJ Annual Conference at [gnjumc.org/2018-annual-conference](http://gnjumc.org/2018-annual-conference) by Feb. 14, 2018. Reports and recommendations received thereafter will not be published in the pre-conference journal, nor will they be addressed at the 2018 Annual Conference without special permission from the Bishop.

### New Posting: Communications Assistant, Executive Assistant and Other Job Opportunities

Are you a communications guru looking for the next step? Do you want to wet your appetite and hone your skills with a wide variety of communications experience? Then the Communications Assistant position is for you. Visit [gnjumc.org/job-opportunities](http://gnjumc.org/job-opportunities) for a full job description and to explore other job opportunities at GNJ.

### Give to the Camping Scholarship Fund in 2018

The cost of a week of camp is simply out of reach for many families. This New Year, give to the GNJ Camp Scholarship Fund. Next Gen board members have enthusiastically agreed to give a "first fruits" gift of their own to get the fund started. If you would like to join them, visit [gnjnextgen.org](http://gnjnextgen.org)

### Early Response Team Training Sessions in 2018

Several Early Response Team (ERT) Training sessions for disaster response will be held in January, March, and April of 2018. Visit [gnjumc.org/disasterresponse/umcor-early-response-team-training](http://gnjumc.org/disasterresponse/umcor-early-response-team-training) for event details, dates, and further info and to learn more about GNJ's disaster relief efforts.

### Registration Open for Local Pastors Licensing School

2018 Local Pastors Licensing school dates are Feb. 16-17, April 6-7, May 11-12, June 22-23. All meetings will be held at The Mission and Resource Center. Visit [gnjumc.org/ordained-ministry-2/local-pastor-licensing-school/](http://gnjumc.org/ordained-ministry-2/local-pastor-licensing-school/) for details and to register.

### CF&A Purchasing

GNJ's Council of Finance and Administration has vetted a number of national and local products and services that it recommends to local churches for their possible contract/purchasing. Visit [gnjumc.org/finance-and-administration/subcommittee-on-purchasing/](http://gnjumc.org/finance-and-administration/subcommittee-on-purchasing/) to read more.

### Lay Ministry Recognition 2018

To nominate a person or group in your church for Lay Ministry Recognition to honor their creativity and innovation in transforming lives and making disciples of Jesus Christ, visit [gnjumc.org/lay-ministry-recognition-2018-nomination-form/](http://gnjumc.org/lay-ministry-recognition-2018-nomination-form/) to submit before March 4. Laity will be recognized on April 28 at the Mission and Resource Center in Neptune, NJ.

### BMCR Sunday, Feb. 4

Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) Sunday is Feb. 4. Local congregations and individuals are invited to support raising up prophetic and spiritual leaders who will be advocates for the unique needs of Black members of the UMC. Find out more about how you can take part in this special Sunday's offering by visiting [bmcrumc.org](http://bmcrumc.org)

### Higher Education and Ministry United Methodist Scholarship Applications Open

The United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry has opened scholarship applications for college, university and seminary studies in Fall 2018. You need only to submit one application per year. That application will be screened for all possible eligible programs. The applications are due by March 7. Visit [gbhem.org/loans-and-scholarships/scholarships](http://gbhem.org/loans-and-scholarships/scholarships) to learn more.

## GIVE YOURSELF A PRESENT - WINTER RESPITE

Are you a caregiver seeking a break from responsibilities, desiring a winter vacation, investigating senior living options, or needing other support for your loved one?

United Methodist Communities offers respite, which gives caregivers beneficial opportunities to rest, manage other demands, take a break, and otherwise balance work and family life.

Visit us on the web or call to discover the innovative ways we can support your loved one.

### Bristol Glen

[UMCommunities.org/BristolGlen](http://UMCommunities.org/BristolGlen)  
Newton | 973-300-5788

### Collingswood

[UMCommunities.org/Collingswood](http://UMCommunities.org/Collingswood)  
Collingswood | 856-854-4331

### Pitman

[UMCommunities.org/Pitman](http://UMCommunities.org/Pitman)  
Pitman | 856-589-7800

### The Shores

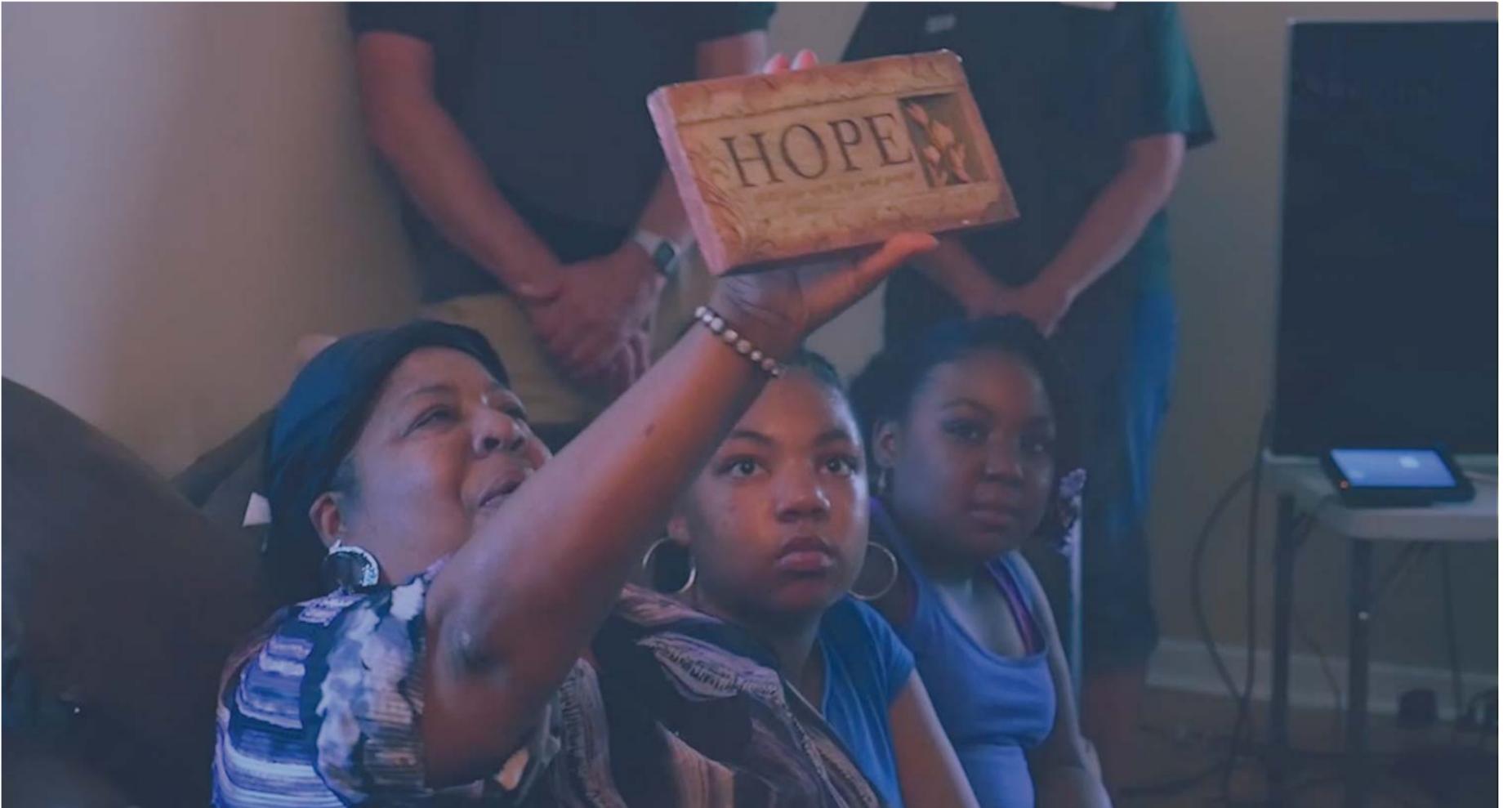
[UMCommunities.org/TheShores](http://UMCommunities.org/TheShores)  
Ocean City | 609-399-8505



Home Office  
3311 State Route 33 | Neptune, NJ 07753  
732-922-9800 | [UMCommunities.org](http://UMCommunities.org)

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A FUTURE WITH  
**HOPE**  
The People of the United Methodist Church

## A LITTLE MORE HOPE TO GIVE

As we look forward in the new year, A Future With Hope is committed to the rebuilding effort through June of 2018.

Our work has not only brought hope to 256 homeowners and their families, it has also touched the lives of every volunteer and donor who were blessed by their gifts.

Do you have a little more hope to give? Sign up to volunteer again or donate now to help us finish this work well.

**YOU ARE A BLESSING!**

**Volunteer. Pray. Donate.**

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