

THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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New Partnership with Puerto Rico and Tanzania Fosters Cultural Opportunities

By Josh Kinney
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WILDWOOD – The generous and mission-minded partnership of GNJ churches and leaders with Methodist communities of an African nation and a hurricane ravaged island will forge new disciples of Christ in new and meaningful ways. At the 2018 Annual Conference session of Greater New Jersey, a historic partnership was publicly forged through the signing of a covenant between GNJ and the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico (MPCR) and Tanzania Annual Conference.

These missional partnerships will be funded by the Miracles Everywhere Campaign, which seeks to assist Puerto Rico in hurricane relief and train new pastors, build new congregations, and construct a Hope Center for mission engagement in Tanzania. Bishop Hector Ortiz of the MPCR and Bishop Mande Muyombo of Tanzania's North Katanga Episcopal Region (NKUMC) addressed the GNJ Annual Conference, both celebrating the partnership and commitment to their regions.

Ortiz stated how blessed he felt by GNJ's "radical hospitality" thanking the conference for extravagant generosity, prayers and journeying alongside him and the church in Puerto Rico following the destruction caused by Hurricane's Irma and Maria.

"My beloved island was devastated but the spirit of the people was not de-



Bishop Hector Ortiz of the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico, GNJ Bishop John Schol and Bishop Mande Muyombo of the North Katanga Episcopal Region of the Tanzania Annual Conference celebrate a partnership commitment and covenant relationship at the 2018 GNJ Annual Conference session in Wildwood, NJ, May 20-22. Photo by Shari DeAngelo

stroyed," Ortiz said. "We are a people who fight against adversity and are led by the Holy Spirit."

A moving UMCOR video shared images of United Methodists coming to the aide and assistance of their sisters and brothers in Puerto Rico, bringing many, including Muyombo, to tears.

Additionally, three clergy from Puerto Rico whose congregations had been lost or disbanded after the storms will be coming to New Jersey to be a part of and

or serve GNJ congregations.

"We will be known as those who repair the breach in this two way partnership," said Schol.

Muyombo was moved by GNJ's commitment to both Puerto Rico and Tanzania.

"Bishop Schol and Bishop Ortiz, I love you so much," Muyombo said when he took the podium. He spoke about how showing God's kindness in mission is about building relationships. Leaders

of Greater New Jersey have already started building this relationship with a seven member team who left for Tanzania this month to lead the first of a series of pastor schools. The team comprises of Ashley Wilson, Executive Assistant to the Director of Connectional Ministries, Hector Burgos, Director of Connectional Ministries, Lakesha Groover of Covenant UMC in Plainfield, Skylands District Superintendent Steve Bechtold, Sung Hoon

Continued on page 6

GNJ Takes Historic Step in Desegregating New Jersey Schools

By Josh Kinney
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WILDWOOD – In a historic move, United Methodists in Greater New Jersey are seeking justice for children in segregated schools in New Jersey by joining the Latino Action Network, the NAACP NJ State Conference and other social justice groups to compel the state to provide remedies for

the 270,000 Black and Latino students who attend segregated New Jersey schools.

According to the U.S. Census, New Jersey is ranked as the 4th most diverse state in the U.S. and yet a report from the UCLA Civil Rights Project in 2017 ranked it with the 6th highest rate of segregation of Black students and the 7th highest for Latino students in the country.



GNJ joined the NAACP, the Latino Action Network and others in a lawsuit which asks that the state of New Jersey take action to desegregate New Jersey public schools. Rosa Williams, Sang Won Doh, Rupert Hall, Mike Harriott, Isabel Quezada, Michael Reed, Cliff Still, Waleska Trinidad, Trey Wince, Nicola Mulligan and Hector Burgos joined Bishop John Schol at a press conference in Trenton on May 17. Coverage of this event has been published in the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Atlantic City Press, ABC News in Philadelphia and others. Photo by Josh Kinney

"The public school system in New Jersey is one of the most segregated in our nation, more segregated than any state public school system in the South," Bishop Schol said in an address to GNJ leaders. "Let me say that again – more segregated than any state public school system in the South."

The State of New Jersey has created and followed laws, policies, and practices that require, with very limited exceptions, students to attend public schools in the municipalities where they live. This and other longstanding state practices have fostered and enabled residential segregation.

In presenting the legislation that was passed at the 2018 Annual Conference Session, Rev. Sang Won Doh, Chair of the GNJ Connectional Table, gave thanks

Continued on page 8

Ground Breaking and Historic Annual Conference

By Josh Kinney
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WILDWOOD – Living up to its theme of "Miracles Everywhere" Greater New Jersey's 2018 Annual Conference session left room for the Spirit to go off script and have its way in the hearts and minds of attendees. It was the largest attendance in GNJ history with 1,400 people converging on The Wildwoods Convention Center on May 20-22, speaking and singing in six different languages. Groundbreaking legislation was approved to take action to desegregate public schools for 271,000 Black and Latino students by joining a lawsuit against the state of New Jersey. A budget was approved reducing shared ministry amounts apportioned to congregations and a growth of worship attendance in 2017 was celebrated.

Several miraculous testimonies of God's wonder-working power through United Methodists of Greater New Jersey were shared, collected, and rejoiced over. Two partnerships with Tanzania and Puerto Rico Annual Conferences were approved and Leadership 100 was enacted as a part of a new strategic plan equipping and cultivating 100 clergy and 100 laity who make disciples who make disciples. The plan continues GNJ on a path to develop transformational leaders through 2023 and commits to the Miracles Everywhere Campaign to raise \$5.2 million for Next Generation, a student ministry seeking to make 2,000 youth and young adult disciples, A Future With Hope to develop 30 Hope Centers in five years, hurricane recovery, and missional partners in Puerto Rico and Tanzania.

"Thankful for the Spirit-filled hope that always rises up when we come to-

gether as United Methodists!" said Northern Shore District Superintendent Gina Hendrickson. "I am blessed to serve GNJ because together we are a Holy Spirit force that transforms people's lives, communities and the world! Miracles abound!"

GNJ, along with Annual Conference voters from around the globe, re-voted

Continued on page 7



The 2018 Annual Conference session held a few surprises, including therapy dogs who are trained to comfort children and adults after tragedies such as school shootings in a powerful ministry of their own. Photo by Shari DeAngelo

2018 Episcopal Address

Bishop John Schol

Miracles Everywhere

You are the God who performs miracles, everywhere. -Psalm 77:14

God is in the miracle business, everywhere. Twelve years ago, the United Methodist Church in Union was on the verge of closing their doors. They calculated they had six months before they would run out of money. After failing to find another church to merge with them, they turned their focus to the community and found new life. Today, the UMC in Union has blossomed into a multi-cultural congregation fully connected with the community and they are thriving. They have a renewed mission and enthusiasm. Miracles Everywhere!

Two years ago, it looked as if we would need to close Camp YDP in Paterson but God stepped in and today there are 85 children being served every day. Miracles Everywhere!

For the last three years, GNJ has had to pause its camping ministry for youth. This summer, we have three camps scheduled for young people at Pinelands Center with more than 100 youth from around Greater New Jersey and a vital new NextGen Ministry launched. Miracles Everywhere!

Last night we heard testimony from Heather Valosin who shared her miracle story. Ten years ago, she was told by her doctors that she had a choice. She could have high risk surgery during which she would likely die. OR she could choose an alternative treatment in which she might die in 48 hours. But God had something different in mind. God broke in with an AND. God broke in with a miracle. Heather had the survey AND thrived. God ordained Heather last year. Miracles are Everywhere!

We serve a God who performs miracles everywhere and wants to do even more miracles through the United Methodists of Greater New Jersey.

Thanksgiving

I thank God for all the Holy Spirit is doing throughout GNJ. I also thank all our clergy, laity and congregations for your deep desire to allow God to work through you, as together we call and equip transformational leaders to make disciples and grow vital congregations to transform the world. I know God has a great future for us because I see and experience God's love and power through our leaders and congregations.

Celebration

Today, we celebrate the Holy Spirit who breathes power, wonder working power, sending GNJ leaders and disciples into the community to stir up faith, hope and justice. We are seeing more and more of these leaders and disciples in our most vital congregations where worship is passionate, small groups are deepening faith and commitment, new disciples are being made, generous giving abounds and community hands-on mission is the norm. GNJ is a leader in growing vital congregations and it shows through the miracles performed everyday by our clergy and laity who lead their congregations to serve Jesus Christ.

Celebrate Giving

Again, for the eleventh year in a row, God enabled us to pay 100% of our General Church apportionments. Our giving is the seeds of miracles in new congregations that are making new disciples in Tanzania, the Ukraine, the Philippines and right here in

GNJ. This past year we started a new Hispanic faith community in Morristown, Nuevo Esperanza. It is already thriving – welcoming new disciples of Christ who are looking for miracles in their midst.

We completed a scholarship endowment at Africa University that will ensure future generations of scholar leaders are raised up in Africa for many years to come.

Our giving also builds clinics, works to bring an end to deaths from malaria and educates new leaders in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines.

Through our 13 United Methodist seminaries here in the U.S. we are equipping outstanding leaders, including our own Drew Theological Seminary. I invite everyone who has a degree or is working on a degree from Drew University to stand.

I continue to remind the Drew University Board of Trustees that we are the number one employer of Drew University graduates. I want you to continue to stand. I also want everyone to stand who has a degree from one of our other United Methodist related colleges, universities and seminaries. I also want all our graduates of Black related colleges to stand.

The degrees these friends and colleagues have earned are because of the Wesleyan movement and United Methodist connectional giving which ensures a quality education is available to all people, regardless of race and wealth. It is our 100% apportionment giving to the General Church that makes a difference.

Bishop Mande Muyombo, elected a bishop in 2017, is the first graduate of Africa University to be elected bishop. Africa University, built by The United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, is training leaders in business, agriculture, theology, education, human services and now, bishops. Let us greet Bishop Muyombo.

GNJ has also been generous and adventurous in raising \$17.7 million over the past five years for our Superstorm Sandy recovery and relief efforts. The largest fundraising for a cause in the history of the United Methodists of Greater New Jersey. These funds came from our congregations and UMCOR and they also came from foundations, individuals, corporations, and Major League Baseball. Sometimes we have a hard time believing in The Phillies, Mets and Yankees, but Major League Baseball believes in us. All our funders believed we would make a difference in the lives of people displaced by Superstorm Sandy. And we did.

We have learned a great deal from our Superstorm Sandy ministry and we are passing our knowledge on to others. We have sent people to West Virginia, Florida, Houston and most recently Puerto Rico. A team of five people from GNJ went to Puerto Rico to share about case management, volunteer recruitment and management, construction management and budgeting. We have raised \$426,000 so far for hurricane relief, half of which is for Puerto Rico. I am proud to say, that under the leadership of Bishop Hector Ortiz and a talented team, Puerto Rico is further along than we were eight months after the storm. Bishop Ortiz we are grateful for your leadership and the emerging partnership we are developing. Join me in greeting Bishop Ortiz.

All of this is possible because of the leadership of our pastors and the generous giving of our congregations. In the last five years, our giving rate has gone from 78% to 88%. More churches are giving 100% and more churches are getting closer to 100%. Miracles everywhere! Thank you for your generosity.

Celebrate Worship Attendance Growth

Today, we celebrate that GNJ increased worship attendance in 2017. This is a significant accomplishment and a sign that God has a future for us. This growth has occurred because more of our congregations are connecting with the people in the community, using technology to engage people in worship, and creating worship that is inspiring and relevant. In addition, we are starting new faith communities. The Hope congregation in Voorhees recently launched a second site in Mt. Laurel that now has 55 people worshiping. Trinity UMC in Rahway holds a Solid Rock Café with 30 people drinking coffee and praising God on Friday nights. The Tenafly congregation has trained Sunday school teachers to work with autistic children which is reaching more people in the community.

Our future is in our people and that is why growing the number of worshipers is not only important but essential to the mission. Without people, the mission of transforming lives, communities and the world will not be possible.

Celebrate Community Mission

If congregations are growing, but not serving the community, not serving the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, then we are not the church of Jesus Christ.

We have been a force in community change and world transformation in which God has worked through us to create miracles everywhere. We have no further to look than our own A Future With Hope ministry that will complete 271 homes by the end of June and is now launching Hope Centers. So far, we are working with seven Hope Centers with eight more in development. We are on our way to reaching our goal of launching 100 across GNJ. A Future With Hope along with Nehemiah Properties are also assisting seven congregations to repurpose and renew their property into housing and ministry space for the community. Our A Future With Hope organization is working wonders extending our mission so that we are relevant, transformational and impactful.

Celebrate Leadership

We are making significant progress because of lay and clergy leadership. Laity are deepening their skills. We are seeing increased interest in and participation at all our lay leadership trainings.

We are also seeing our clergy engaged in PaCE groups, coaching and the Clergy Leadership Development Initiative. Clergy are taking greater risks, knowing that some things will fail, but others will bear fruit. Clergy are willing to talk about the things that are not going well so that we can learn together and share the bright spots in ministry so that we can model each other.

Our leadership programs are beginning to bear fruit. Mosaic Ministries has had 21 young people explore ministry opportunities with 10 now serving full time in GNJ. Two Mosaic graduates, Lakesha Groover and Michael Reed were commissioned last night. Mosaic is also introducing new young leaders to GNJ. Nine Mosaic participants came from other conferences and they decided to stay and serve in GNJ. In the first six months of her appointment to Covenant UMC in Plainfield, Lakesha Groover helped the congregation go from paying 0% to 45% of their billables. In the first 11 months, Covenant UMC has started to increase their worship attendance. Mosaic Miracles!

Clergy recruitment is also bearing fruit. This appointment season we recruited seven clergy, all of whom will be helping us in strategic appointments. Two of them were recruited by their GNJ clergy friends. Miracles through friends!

We also are raising up gifted and promising clergy through our congregations – leaders who have been called from our pews. We appointed Tim Conaway, son of Superintendent Glenn Conaway, as a local pastor this year. We welcome him and the dozens of local pastors that serve faithfully. Generational Miracles!

God is doing wonders in GNJ evidenced in our mission, leadership, worship and generosity. And God wants to do even more.

Our Path Forward

Our path forward this annual conference could not be clearer. There are five items that the GNJ leadership are inviting you to support and pursue.

Continued on page 3

THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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FOR ADVERTISING RATES, INFORMATION and PLACEMENT

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2018 Episcopal Address

Continued from page 2

- Our first path forward is to approve and carryout our strategic plan. This plan builds on what we have accomplished in the last five years in which we:
 - Grew vital congregations
 - Grew small groups
 - Grew mission
 - Increased giving to mission
 - Grew worship attendance in 2017
 - Launched the Laity Leadership Academy, coaching, PaCE Groups, Team Vital, and Communities of Hope

Amazing accomplishments when some thought it would be just another plan that would sit on the shelf.

The new plan calls us to:

- Develop leaders who make disciples who make disciples
- Work with our congregations to develop disciple making ministries and processes that transform and change people's lives
- Assist 100 of our congregations to grow from one church size to the next

- Our second path forward is to continue to grow our intercultural competence. We are in the first year of a 10-year plan to increase the intercultural competence of GNJ. Today we have 150 cross racial appointments and 100 multi-cultural congregations. But we do not have to be sick to get better. We can do better at working to end racism and grow a more interculturally competent church. We have started with our Board of Ordained Ministry and Cabinet and plan to move out to the rest of the leadership, clergy and congregations.

- Our third path forward is to develop the next generation of disciples and we are already seeing progress. This summer we will have three camps at Pinelands Center, grow IGNITE to 2,000 students and launch two new campus ministries, one at Drew University and the other at Rutgers. We are on the way to a younger and more diverse group of disciples.

- Path four is to approve the 2019 budget that reduces the percentage we apportion churches so that more resources are available to the local church. These reductions depend on more congregations paying 100% of shared ministry so that the giving rate rises to 91.5%.

- Path five is to approve the Miracles Everywhere Campaign that will raise \$5.2 million to build Hope Centers, make new disciples with students, fund new congregations and clergy in Tanzania, and assist with hurricane recovery.

We can do this and more. God wants to do miracles everywhere in GNJ and you are a part of God's plan. Trusting God and working together we will continue to experience the renewal and turnaround we have been praying for and working toward. I am grateful for your leadership, determination, and hard work.

Current Denominational Challenges

While we know our path forward in GNJ, we face challenges within The United Methodist Church.

While The United Methodist Church approved women's ordination in 1956, we still have congregations that oppose women clergy and can't pass constitutional amendments that recognize equality between male and female. While we voted to end segregation of The United Methodist Church in 1968, today, many of our congregations are segregated and we have some congregations opposed to cross- racial appointments. When you talk with these congregations, they point to the Bible and cite passages that seem to allow discrimination against women and people of other races. They cite cultural values over God's truth.

One of the things I am proud of in GNJ is our diversity of race, ethnicity, language, commitments to social issues, and theology. We have 100 multicultural congregations and 150 cross-racial appointments. We have conservatives, liberals and moderates. We have learned that while we do not all think alike, we love alike, we honor one another and we serve together. For this reason, God has called GNJ to be a leader for our denomination to demonstrate how the church can serve together in the midst of our differences.

The United Methodist Church and its predecessor denominations have faced numerous challenges, crises and disagreements over the years. In our current 50-year disagreement about the place and role of gays and lesbians in the life of the church, we are failing to engage in the deeper challenge facing the church -- how we read and interpret the scriptures. These issues have led people on both sides of the controversy to misinterpret and misunderstand the deeper challenges in our church.

Understanding and interpreting scripture is not a new challenge. In fact, the Bible as we know it today was not determined to be the Word of God until 405 A.D. It wasn't until more than 300 years after the deaths of Jesus, Peter and Paul that the church finally agreed which books would make up the New Testament. In other words, the church, during those 300 years, were still discerning what books to include and which books not to include. Interpretation and understanding wasn't as clear then either.

Difference in understanding has always been a part of the church and will always be a part of the church.

For this reason, I will do a series of articles this fall on Scripture, Myth and Revelation to help clarify these three important Judeo-Christian understandings and how the differences of thought and tradition strengthen us as a church.

The Commission on the Way Forward empowered by the 2016 General Conference discerned three models about the role and participation of gays and lesbians in the church. They are the Traditionalists Plan that seeks to add harsher penalties for gays and lesbians and their heterosexual supporters, The Connectional Conference Plan which seeks to divide the church into three branches: liberal, centrist and conservative, and the One Church Plan that offers local and contextual decision making about how we include gays and lesbians. The One Church Plan is the closest to how we currently live in GNJ.

It may take a miracle to hold our denomination together and so I call each of you to prayerful waiting and Christ-like engagement. The 2019 Special Session of General Conference will discern whether there will be change or no change in our understanding of how we include or exclude gays and lesbians. If there is change, General Conference will discern what is best for the mission and our life together. While I am sure we will not all agree with the 2019 Special General Conference decision, I am convinced that GNJ has the character and commitment to rise above our differences to respect one another, to honor each other's understandings and to work together.

In our disagreement about the place and role of gays and lesbians in the church, I call all of us to be of one heart in our desire to discern the mind and will of Jesus Christ for the mission and ministry of the church. I call the church to pray for one another and to receive each other as brothers and sisters.

Let us lead the way forward!

Facing into Challenges Within the Culture

If the most pressing challenges we face only turn us inward, then we are lost. The world longs for a moral voice, a compass to navigate the problems of our society.

The challenges of today's culture can be witnessed in a list of Twitter hashtags:

- #MeToo
- #BlackLivesMatter
- #MakeAmericaGreat
- #DACA
- #BringBackOurGirls
- #LGBT
- #Parkland
- #IWillMarch
- #OpioidAddiction
- #YesAllWomen
- #Gaza
- #TakeAKnee
- #DesegregateSchools

I hope all our pastors are giving prophetic voice to these challenges in their preaching and teaching. I expect that small groups and Bible studies are using thoughtful materials to understand the systematic oppression that people face within our society and are leaning on Biblical principles to engage our culture's challenges. Jesus echoed the words of the prophet Isaiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." -Luke 4:18-19

The challenges of our time call for a courageous church to be the body of Christ for the world; to recognize the Spirit of the Lord is upon us to make a difference, to be a future with hope, to expect miracles.

Today I believe the Spirit of the Lord is upon us to take up the challenge of our segregated public school system in New Jersey. Our public school system is one of the most segregated in our nation, more segregated than any state public school system in the South. Let me say that again – more segregated than any state public school system in the South.

How can this be? New Jersey has one of the best school systems in the nation and New Jersey is the fourth most diverse state in the nation.

It is the unique nature of how New Jersey is organized into 565 municipalities creating even more school districts coupled with unfair housing patterns. Black and Latino students primarily live in our cities – Atlantic City, Camden, Trenton, Newark, Asbury Park, Paterson and our northern cities along the Hudson River. These urban clusters create a pattern of segregated schools for more than 270,000 Black and Latino students.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon us to change these patterns. We know that Black and Latino students who attend integrated schools have higher graduation rates and higher rates of entrance into college. We know that White and Asian students learn better when they are in culturally enriched environments.

Today you will have the opportunity to take a stand to create more integrated school experiences for the Black and Latino students who find themselves in the most segregated schools in New Jersey. You have the opportunity to affirm GNJ's participation in a lawsuit that can change the future for all students of all backgrounds.

This complaint calls for a change in how we educate students for a more diverse world. We will seek a remedy that continues community-based schools. Families and students who want a more diverse experience may choose magnet schools or voluntary transportation to another school that allows for greater diversity. We are not looking to create forced busing but school choice that allows students and families to choose a more diverse and well-rounded education. A diverse and well-rounded education is in keeping with our Wesleyan principles of education. John Wesley and the Wesleyan movement created more than 100 schools of higher education and secondary schools in the U.S.

For all students, action as a result of this lawsuit will begin to bring an end to segregation and will be an opportunity to receive a better education, a more diverse education and a well-rounded education.

But let's talk about an important concern. Most of us here today believe that Black and Latino students should have the right to choose to go to an integrated school. Most of us here today would agree that a voluntary system of choosing to go to magnet schools that offer specialties in the arts, sciences, math, etc. is a good thing. But you are wondering, "Can GNJ take on one more controversial issue?" After all, we are determining the future of the church and its way forward.

Here is what I have always found, there is no convenient time for justice. There is no right time for the church to be engaged in mission, justice and mercy. This is God's time for us to act. God is not waiting for us to get our polity in order. God is calling us to be the church of Jesus Christ today not for when it is convenient for us. Students need us today, not after our special session of the 2019 General Conference. You may say, we might not have a United Methodist Church next year. I tell you we do not have a United Methodist Church today unless we engage in the hard challenges of our time. This is God's time and this is our time to act. Let GNJ lead the way.

Lead on for justice. Lead on to start new faith communities. Lead on to make the next generation of disciples. Lead on to grow vital congregations. Lead on to be one church. Lead on to grow our diversity and to be culturally competent. Lead on to proclaim that God wants women to lead men. Lead on to end segregation in our schools. Lead on! Hope on! God is ready to do miracles everywhere! Lead on!

Thank you and may God bless our future.



COMMUNITY: 3 STEPS TO AN AMAZING FALL KICK-OFF!

Step 1: Promotion

(People don't come to what they don't know about)



Ask congregants
to invite 2 people.
(Give them cardstock invites!)

Hang door hangers
in your community.

Put a sign up in
front of the church.

Pick a night, buy pizza and
have your leadership team call
everyone in the database.

Step 2: Make it a big event

(Everybody likes a party)

Beef up your hospitality.

Spring for some good food.

Introduce a new
message series.

Play special music.



Step 3: Share ways to engage

(People want to know what they're getting into)



Don't list every program
your church offers
(It's overwhelming)

Challenge people to take a next step.
(If you're new here, we would love to see you
do two things: worship and a small group)

Share clear next steps
already on the calendar
(Pizza with the pastor)

Invite people to come back.
(Seriously, we forget to say this
in church all the time)

NEED SOME GUIDANCE?

Email **Trey Wince**, Director of New Disciples at twince@gnjumc.org
or **Eric Drew**, Director of Worship at edrew@gnjumc.org

Miracles Everywhere Campaign Launches with \$2.9 Million in Pledges

By Josh Kinney
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WILDWOOD – United Methodists in Greater New Jersey committed to making miracles as they passed legislation at Annual Conference to support a new campaign to raise \$5.2 million to transform the world by making new disciples, building hope centers and supporting disaster relief.

The Miracles Everywhere Campaign will deepen the lives and faith of GNJ's Next Generation, partner with Puerto Rico in hurricane relief, launch Hope Centers across GNJ and partner with the Tanzania Annual Conference to train new pastors, build new congregations, and construct a Hope Center for mission engagement.

Because of leaderships gifts that include a \$42,500 pledge from Bishop and Beverly Schol, more than \$30,000 from the offering at Annual Conference and nearly \$300,000 from staff and agency leaders, the campaign has already received nearly \$3 million in pledges towards the \$5.2 million goal.

"God works miracles through the ministry of United Methodists of Greater New Jersey," said Brian Mickle, Director of Develop at The United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey.

"Jesus told his followers to be his witnesses in Jerusalem (their own com-



munity), in Judea and Samaria (their region), and to the ends of the earth (globally)," said Mickle. "He recognized that people needed God everywhere. God is calling all GNJ disciples to be witnesses in our neighborhoods, communities and throughout our region and around the world."

And that is exactly how the campaign is organized.

Local Miracles

The campaign has a goal of \$3,197,000 to fund Next Generation Ministries to start or grow 250 congregations' youth ministries for an additional 2,000 youth, start 10 college campus ministries that will grow the faith of 1,000 college students, grow IGNITE to more than 5,000 students and restart GNJ camping ministries with an IGNITE type experience serving 1,000 students.

An additional \$1,000,000 of the campaign will go to broaden the scope of A Future With Hope. Having become a leading nonprofit in New Jersey through rebuilding after Sandy, A Future With

Hope will pivot to focus on community development through Hope Centers. Working with and through congregations, Hope Centers will move disciples from the pews to the pavement to create community opportunities for youth and seniors, provide recovery for the addicted, and offer solutions for homelessness and food insecurities.

Regional Miracles

In 2017, hurricanes devastated communities in Texas, Florida, Cuba, the Caribbean and Puerto Rico.

"After Superstorm Sandy, the people of Greater New Jersey were in need of a miracle," said Bishop Schol, "God called us to action then, just as God is calling us to action now.

Working through UMCOR, GNJ will raise funds for and send mission teams to these disaster stricken communities. Because of GNJ's significant ties to Puerto Rico and the extreme devastation after Hurricane Maria, 50% of funds raised will go toward the island's recovery. In a separate but related action, GNJ signed a new missional partnership with Bishop Hector Ortiz in Puerto Rico that will further this effort.

Global Miracles

A missional partnership with Tanzania, a part of the North Katanga Conference will provide the opportunity for United Methodists in Greater New Jersey to fund pastor training and missional experi-

ences. The \$500,000 goal will help GNJ work with GBGM to build a Hope Center in Tanzania that will house a health clinic to provide life-saving and preventative care to the community, start primary and secondary schools for orphans, raise up and deploy young adult missionaries from GNJ for transformational and immersive mission experiences in Tanzania and host mission teams from around the world.

Resources will be available this summer for leaders and congregations to learn and share for the goals of this campaign

Bishop John Schol gave a moving account of his and his wife, Beverly's own personal commitment to the campaign. He spoke of their first-hand experiences in Africa and Puerto Rico and the stirring of their spirits. He shared about their family and two grandchildren, staking claim in investing in future generations of disciples. The two decided to donate \$42,500 to the campaign.

"We believe in what God can do through you," said Schol. "We make this commitment knowing God will pour out a great blessing."

"We can do this," Schol declared. "God is doing miracles in GNJ. God won't just help us raise these funds but God will surpass it through us."

To learn more about The Miracles Everywhere Campaign visit gnjumc.org/umsf/miracles-everywhere-campaign/

Miracles Everywhere Sermon Series Launched

By Josh Kinney
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NEPTUNE – This year's Annual Conference theme of 'Miracles Everywhere' has been packaged into a sermon series for GNJ pastors. The series, compiled by GNJ staff is available on the gnjumc.org website for download.

The four week series includes scripture and worship materials that feature a description, outline, opening prayer and music suggestions.

"The Gospels tell us of Jesus' miracle ministry using two Greek words – dunamis and simaois," said Eric Drew, Director of Worship. "In the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, the Greek word dunamis is used which means power – God's power to transform life."

Drew explained how the Gospel of John primarily uses the word simaois, which means sign – a miracle that points to God's activity in the world.

"Where is God still at work and how are we called to be courageous participants?" he asked. "As we open our eyes and fill our prayers with expectation, we'll find miracles everywhere."

Each week's sermon has a different one word title: Shift, Unbelievable, Courage, and Tangible.

"Throughout scripture and in our own lives, God is always at work," said Brian Mickle, Director of Development for The United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey. "A miracle doesn't have to be a huge moment; we can shift our perspective to see that miracles are happening all around us."

The sermon series strives to open minds and hearts; shifting perspectives to see miracles both big and small.

"God has the power to show up in big ways," said Bishop John Schol. "In scripture we read about blind eyes given sight, faith moving mountains and even raising the dead. Miracles evoke wonder by demonstrating God's power and pointing to God's work in the world. In every age, God has been at work in the world healing and transforming lives."

"When we are courageous God will do great things through us," said Schol. "God is creating signs and wonders in GNJ and there is even more God wants to do. God wants to continue working through the United Methodists of Greater New Jersey so that miracles of healing and transformation occur across GNJ and around the world."

To review and download the Miracles Everywhere sermon series, visit gnjumc.org/2018-annual-conference and click on "Miracles Everywhere Sermon Series."

MIRACLES EVERYWHERE

A sermon series

Sermon Series Overview:

The Gospels tell of Jesus' miracle ministry using two Greek words dunamis and simaois. In the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, the Greek word dunamis is used which means power - God's power to transform life.

The Gospel of John primarily uses the word simaois, which means sign – a miracle that points to God's activity in the world. Where is God still at work? How are we called to be courageous participants?

As we open our eyes and fill our prayers with expectation, we'll find miracles everywhere.

Included in this Four Week Sermon Series:

Worship materials and descriptions by week, scripture, graphics, liturgy and music suggestions.

Week 1: Miracles Everywhere: Shift

Week 2: Miracles Everywhere: Unbelievable

Week 3: Miracles Everywhere: Courage

Week 4: Miracles Everywhere: Tangible

Available for Download at:

[www.gnjumc.org/2018-annual-conference](http://gnjumc.org/2018-annual-conference)

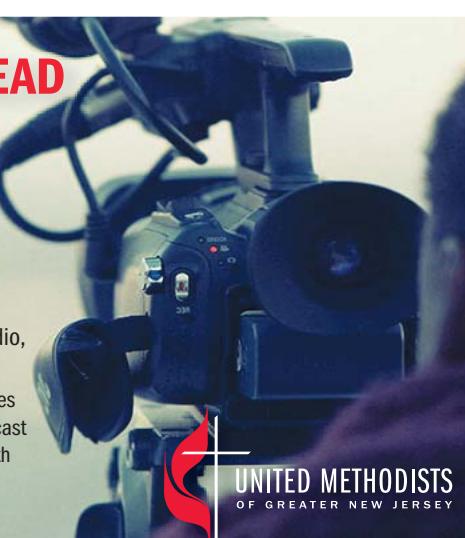


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GNJ Called to Make Disciples and Eliminate Poverty, Topics at Annual Conference

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

WILDWOOD – Hundreds gathered at the Annual Conference stage with arms outstretched. They were publicly committing before their peers to go forth and passionately make disciples. Junius B. Dotson, General Secretary of Discipleship Ministries, an international agency of The United Methodist Church, called them to take the lead in an address to the conference on what it means to be a disciple.

He shared about the agency's "See All the People" campaign, which attempts to ignite and inspire the spirit and movement of disciple-making across The United Methodist Church.

"In order to make disciples you have to first be one," Dotson exclaimed. He described discipleship as 'a lifelong journey discovering who you are and whose you are.'

"It's an ongoing process," he said.

Dotson described a disciple as a Holy Spirit led follower of Christ whose



Rev. Richard M. Romero and Bishop John Schol. Photo by Shari DeAngelo



GNJ Lay Leader Rosa Williams looks on during the ordination service. Photo by Shari DeAngelo

passion every day is to know, grow in, live and share the life of Jesus. He challenged attendees to equip people so they can spend the rest of their lives daily pursuing their relationship with Christ, serving God and finding leadership within themselves.

"How you lead yourself shapes how you lead others," he said. "Your commitment as a leader to growing and maturing as a disciple is vital to any discipleship in your local church."

Dotson called United Methodists to quit worrying about fixing churches and the denomination and instead get super serious about making disciples of Jesus Christ.

"This is something you have to live into," Dotson said. "Every congregation has to stay relentlessly focused on making disciples."

Churches large and small, rural, urban and suburban, traditionalist and progressive, can find common ground in that, Dotson argues.

He praised GNJ for its definition of



Junius B. Dotson, General Secretary of Discipleship Ministries, called on the Annual Conference to take the lead in an address on what it means to be a disciple. Photo by Shari DeAngelo

disparage throughout America, dehumanization of workers, and how the poor are often punished and stigmatized.

She quoted John Wesley who said, "One great reason why the rich, in general, have so little sympathy for the poor, is, because they so seldom visit them. Hence it is, that, according to the common observation, one part of the world does not know what the other suffers."

Lamenting the negative effects of globalization, conference attendees were challenged to imagine an economy that works for and honors the dignity

and worth of all people and shift from a perspective of scarcity to an embrace of abundance.

"The Gospel of Jesus is that God has given us all that we need," said Henry-Crowe. "We must rejoice and share in our abundance and not fret to death over the scarcity narrative that we set up. We must imagine another way and see people in poverty not as a problem to be solved but as Christ Himself, calling us to respond in love."

"We must reject the premise of an economy in which people, community and creation are disposable," she said.



New Ordinands anoint newly commissioned during the Service of Passage. Photo by Shari DeAngelo

how society has increasingly become disconnected despite living in a world more connected than ever.

"When did we start valuing convenience over faithfulness?" she asked. "When did we start caring about ourselves more than we care about those who serve and work for us?"

She shared troubling statistics of 27 million worldwide slaves, economic

"In the church, it's about ministry with those in poverty, living on the margins, wounded by the church and living in deep relationship with one another. Let's roll up our sleeves and do the hard work of living into that vision."

Henry-Crowe provided two websites for more information and to find ways to take action: Slaveryfootprint.org and UMCjustice.org.

New Partnership with Puerto Rico and Tanzania Fosters Cultural Opportunities

Continued from page 1

Ahn of Ridgewood UMC, Shelley Smith of Ferry Ave UMC in Camden, and Bishop John Schol.

The vote to partner was unanimous, and together, both Muyombo and Ortiz joined Schol in a signing of a partnership covenant before the entire body.

Missional Partnership with Puerto Rico

Many people in GNJ congregations claim Puerto Rico as their homeland. This partnership will engage cross cultural immersion experiences, fostering youth, young adults, laity and clergy leadership exchanges to develop a better understanding of each other's uniqueness, culture, history, spiritually and ministry. Lay and clergy will explore best practices for growing and strengthening passionate disciples and vital congregations in a multicultural ministry field. MCPR and

GNJ local churches will establish church to church companionship relationships to cultivate joint mission opportunities.

People will be deployed to mission experiences in both Puerto Rico and GNJ so that both areas experience healing and wholeness from God. The partnership also raises funds through the Miracles Everywhere Campaign to support the recovery, rebuilding and renewal of communities impacted by hurricanes.

Missional Partnership with Tanzania

The North Katanga Episcopal area of the United Methodist Church is comprised of three Annual Conferences: North Katanga, Tanganyika and Tanzania Conferences. The United Methodist mission in Tanzania began 25 years ago with the deployment of six United Methodist missionaries. Through their service and the support of local congregations in

GNJ and elsewhere, there are now 68 emerging United Methodist congregations in Tanzania that are growing, both in numbers and impact, in the community.

GNJ and the Tanzania Annual Conference will grow their partnership to include a pastors' school in Tanzania to grow the skills of pastors, support pastors' salaries, start new congregations and support a Hope Center in the country's capital of Dar es Salaam. The Hope Center will start a health clinic to

provide life-saving and preventive care to the community, a primary and secondary school for orphans and host mission teams from around the world.

GNJ, Tanzania and Puerto Rico celebrate unique histories and ministries, common Wesleyan heritage and calling to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The missional impact of the new partnerships go beyond distance, language and culture.

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Ground Breaking and Historic Annual Conference

Continued from page 1

on one of two constitutional amendments dealing with women's equality. The revote was announced to the denomination after an error was reported in the wording of the amendments previously voted on at the 2016 General Conference. In a humbling and powerful declaration, Bishop Mande Muyombo of the Tanzania Annual Conference's North Katanga Episcopal Region addressed GNJ's annual conference session and publicly apologized for misinterpreting the amendment.

"This is a bigger issue that needs to be addressed at all levels of society," he said. "Please, don't be shy, come and challenge us [Tanzanians], we have to be transformed."

Schol affirmed Muyombo's commitments and leadership, reminding GNJ that U.S. Annual Conferences also failed to pass the amendments.

"We too, here in America, need to be transformed as well," said Schol.

"Lead on for justice," Schol declared in his Episcopal Address. "Lead on to start new faith communities. Lead on to make the next generation of disciples. Lead on to grow vital congregations. Lead on to be one church. Lead on to grow our diversity and to be culturally competent. Lead on to proclaim that God wants women to lead men. Lead on to end segregation in our schools. Lead on! Hope on! God is ready to do miracles everywhere! Lead on!"

Rev. Hector A. Burgos, Director of Connectional Ministries, led a leadership address that included remarks from Rev. Sang Won Doh, Chair of the Connectional Table, Rosa Williams, GNJ Lay Leader, and Rev. Iraida Ruiz De Porras, Chair of the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries. These leaders shared their visions for a new strategic plan, the progress made in fulfilling mission and the next steps the Spirit is leading GNJ to take in the years to come. They celebrated new faith communities, the success of Team Vital, Coaching, PaCE, Mosaic Ministries, IGNITE, intercultural competence and the work of an Immigration Task Force. They outlined how GNJ will assist 100 congregations to grow from one church size to the next, grow intercultural competency, develop the Next Generation of disciples through summer camps, IGNITE, and campus ministries, and strengthen the resourcing of the laity.

GNJ welcomed eight newly commissioned Provisional Elders, five newly Ordained Elders, one Deacon, one Associate Member, eight transfers from other conferences and or denominations and 19 new local pastors. Powerful and miraculous testimonies were shared of God's healing and the power of prayer. Particularly moving was the story of Rev. Heather Valosin who against all odds successfully underwent a risky and



Rev. Charles Perez speaks to the Annual Conference session about Nueva Esperanza, a new bilingual Hispanic ministry of Morristown UMC and the sports program he initiated for the youth. Photo by Shari DeAngelo



Trey Wince, Director of New Disciples, enthusiastically launched A Future With Hope shirts into the crowd with a T-Shirt cannon. His excitement could not be missed. Photo by Shari DeAngelo

potentially life-threatening emergency surgery.

"Heather Valosin, you blessed my soul with the reminder that God is present in our highest joys and deepest pains," said Nicole Caldwell-Gross, Director of Mission. "Thank you for being living evidence of God's miraculous power: everywhere!"

Twenty-four retiring clergy were recognized for their 550 years of service. Rev. Ron Watts delivered a powerful sermon during the Service of Remembrance that honored the 27 clergy, clergy

spouses and lay members who have passed on during the last year.

The conference was led in joyful worship with praise songs sung in six languages, a 50 plus member choir and a special guest performance by Mark Miller during the Service of Remembrance.

"These people...they were my people for the past four days. Some of whom I literally just met, others that are pastors, mentors and friends that I'm lucky enough to be in community with on a regular basis," said Kate MacLennan of

Haddon Heights, expressing thanks for the opportunity to "make some crazy fun music." "My voice is tired, but my heart is so full," she said.

The prayer team, led by Rev. Gina Yeske, GNJ's Director of Small Groups, coordinated 40 days of prayer before Annual Conference and set up prayer stations throughout the convention center. The prayer team prayed for every delegate by name and prayed over every seat in the convention center before the Ordination Service on Sunday night.

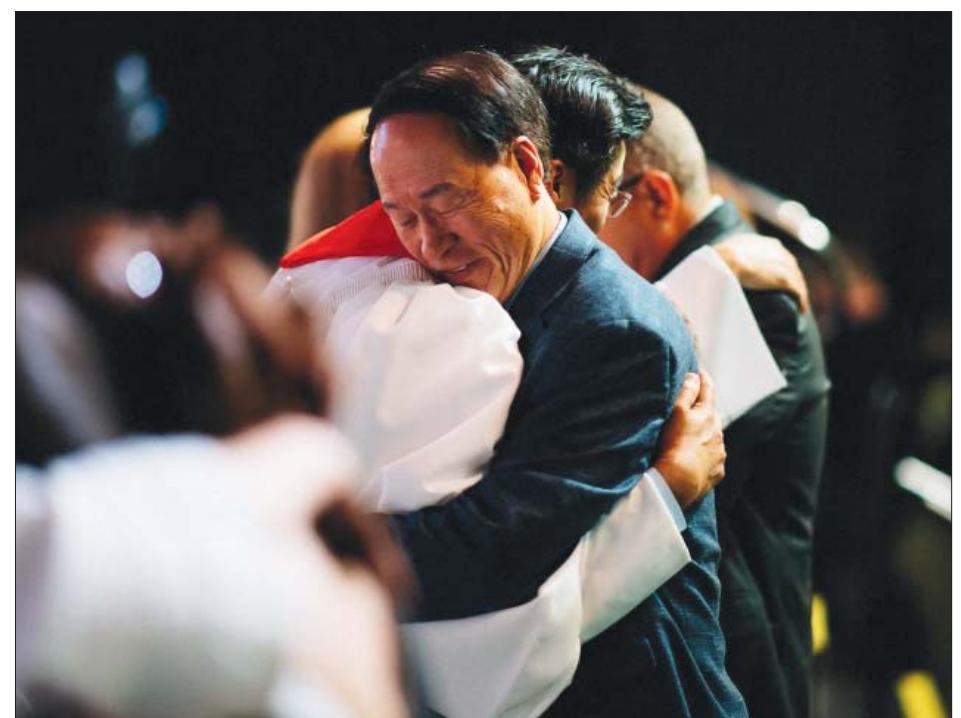
Conference attendees worked in unison, systematically helping pack 30,000 meals to support the Rise Against Hunger organization's effort to feed people around the world with a bold mission to end world hunger by 2030.

"What a wonderful day at Annual Conference!" exclaimed Juel Nelson, Director of Leadership Development. "The ordination and commissioning service was just beautiful! What a gift these clergy are to our conference. The testimonies were blessed, music was moving and the Spirit was powerful! Miracles everywhere!"

Bishop Schol closed the session with



Rev. William D. Carter, III of Pemberton UMC sings his heart out during worship at the 2018 Annual Conference. Photo by Shari DeAngelo



Annual Conference attendees left inspired, recognizing the miracles in their midst and realizing that they too are part of making those miracles happen. Photo by Shari DeAngelo

Kingwood UMC Hopes Gift Will IGNITE a Spark

By Rev. Peter Mantell
FirstPedro29@hotmail.com

STOCKTON - On Sunday May 13, Kingwood United Methodist Church in Stockton donated \$10,000 to the IGNITE ministry. Eric Drew, GNJ Director of Worship was on hand to receive the gift and speak to the congregation about the great work IGNITE is doing to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the next generation.

Rev. Peter Mantell, Pastor at Kingwood guided the congregation through a year-long discernment process to choose several United Methodist organizations to benefit from a substantial gift left to the church in 2017. Mantell said, "One of the first things I said to the congregation after receiving word of this bequest was that we cannot stop being the church simply because our bank account is suddenly enriched. In fact, we now have a greater obligation to use our resources to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Drew shared with the congregation

many stories of lives being transformed by the work of IGNITE. IGNITE is GNJ's youth conference where 1500 students join together in Wildwood for a weekend of music, Christian fellowship and life transformation. This year's conference is scheduled for September 28-30, 2018.

"Youth come to IGNITE weekend and then return to their home churches to lead the way," he said.

The gift from Kingwood will be used to fund scholarships for students, extending the potential to reach students who otherwise would not have the opportunity to experience the transformative power of the youth conference.

Kingwood UMC, founded in 1816, is the oldest Methodist Church in Hunterdon County. In April, 1776, Bishop Francis Asbury preached in a field a quarter mile from where the church now stands. The spot where Asbury preached, now known as "Pulpit Rock" is still lovingly cared for and maintained by the church. From past the present, the church still seeks to make disciples for the transformation of the world.



Director of Worship Eric Drew receives a \$10,000 gift to IGNITE from Rev. Peter Mantell of Kingwood UMC after a bequest left to the church was decided upon by the congregation to support GNJ's Next Generation. Photo provided

GNJ Takes Historic Step in Desegregating New Jersey Schools

Continued from page 1

to God for GNJ's leadership and witness "as we work together for a more just education system that provides equitable opportunities to all students."

The legislation presented by twelve GNJ boards, committees and agencies and affirmed by the Annual Conference, commits GNJ to continuing a lawsuit seeking remedies from the State of New Jersey to end school segregation. The twelve presenting groups included: the Connectional Table, Cabinet, Board of Trustees, Finance and Administration, Church and Society, Higher Education, Race and Religion, Episcopacy, Hispanic/Latino Committee, Korean Caucus, United Methodist Women Executive Committee and Black Methodists for Church Renewal.

"GNJ, as a body of Christian believers, is charged with being a moral compass in the advancement of civil and human rights for all people," said Rev. Vanessa Wilson, Senior Pastor of Magnolia Road UMC in Pemberton and Chairperson of GNJ's Commission on Religion and Race. "Looking back to the landmark case of Brown v. the Board of Education, we know that separate is not equal. By signing on to this legislation we affirm that every child has the right to an excellent educational experience regardless of race or socioeconomic status. Moreover, it is well established that racially and socioeconomically integrated schools benefit all students. It provides a richer learning experience and increases the cultural awareness of students and staff. A solid, well-resourced education is the greatest gift we can give to any child, as well as to our state and our nation. New Jersey is a very diverse state; additionally, all are impacted and influenced by globalization. In order to prepare our children to be contributors and leaders in their communities, the nation and the world, now more than ever, New Jersey classrooms must be a reflection of New Jersey's rich diversity."

The lawsuit itself was filed on May 17 at the New Jersey State House in Trenton to coincide with the 64th anniversary of the United States Supreme Court's decision in Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas which held that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" in that they "deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities."

This action reflects United Methodist Social Principles and the 2016 Book of Resolutions which states that United Methodists "must address with prayerful determination the issues of race and class that threaten both public education



Retired Justice Gary Stein and Bishop John Schol shake hands at the 2018 Annual Conference session in Wildwood after GNJ voted unanimously to help desegregate New Jersey schools. Photo by Shari DeAngelo

and democracy in America."

"This important issue is aligned with our denomination's social principles," said Bishop John Schol. "As United Methodists we have always been out in front of social issues and this is exactly what we should be doing right now."

GNJ is undertaking this initiative at a particularly political time in the life of denomination building up to the Special Session of the General Conference that has been called for in 2019. In addressing that concern to GNJ leaders, Schol answered: "There is no convenient time for justice. There is no right time for the church to be engaged in mission, justice and mercy. This is God's time for us to act. God is not waiting for us to get our polity in order. God is calling us to be the church of Jesus Christ today not for when it is convenient for us. Students need us today, not after our special session of the 2019 General Conference. You may say, we might not have a United Methodist Church next year. I tell you we do not have a United Methodist Church today unless we engage in the hard challenges of our time. This is God's time and this is our time to act. Let GNJ lead the way."

Nearly half (48.7%) of all Black students attend schools that are 90% non-White. For Latino students the numbers are more disparate with 58% attending schools that are 75% non-White.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon us to change these patterns," said Schol. "We

know that Black and Latino students who attend integrated schools have higher graduation rates and higher entrance rates into college. We know that White and Asian students learn better when they are in culturally enriched environments. Today you will have the opportunity to take a stand and to create more integrated school experiences for the Black and Latino students who find themselves in the most segregated schools in New Jersey."

The complaint seeks a remedy to New Jersey's longstanding and intensive segregation of Black and Latino students by voiding laws requiring school children to attend public schools in the municipality they reside. The goal is to replace the current laws with an assignment method that will address and remediate segregation in the state's public and charter schools.

Former NJ Supreme Court Justice Gary Stein, who leads the New Jersey Coalition of Diverse and Inclusive Schools, says the remedy is three-fold:

- 1) Inter-district desegregation transfer plans
- 2) Inter-district enrollment in themed magnet schools
- 3) Regional controlled choice

It is hoped the lawsuit will foster magnet schools giving both urban and suburban students the opportunity to choose schools not based on municipality lines but by interest. Which means some

suburban students will want to go to an urban magnet school and some urban students will choose to go to a suburban magnet school.

The denomination's social principles state, "We believe that every person has the right to education. We also believe the responsibility for education of the young rests with the family, faith communities, and the government. In society, this function can best be fulfilled through public policies that ensure access for all persons to free public elementary and secondary schools and to post-secondary schools of their choice."

During the legislation regarding the desegregation lawsuit, one Annual Conference member took to the microphone to remind the body that segregation in America was not that long ago.

"I'm in favor of anything that starts to move the ball forward," he said. "So let's go ahead and stir things up."

Schol concurred. "This is more than just our name on a lawsuit," said Schol. "It involves us, it makes us advocates and engages us to be called to be at work in our communities on this issue."

Greater New Jersey passed the legislation unanimous. "This was a proud moment," said Rev. Dave Delaney of St. Paul's UMC in Thorofare.

For more information on the legislation and issues of segregation go to: www.gnjumc.org/2018-annual-conference/desegregation-in-new-jersey-schools

Laity Recognized for Stepping out in Faith, Transforming Communities

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

NEPTUNE – It was an afternoon spent sharing what's being done in GNJ's local churches to reach out to their communities. Two hundred and sixty people, both clergy and lay, gathered to celebrate their ministries on April 28 at the Mission and Resource Center where they were recognized and honored for faithfully living out their calls.

"Many stepped out in faith to meet identified needs in sharing God's love," said GNJ Lay Leader Rosa Williams. "It was absolutely wonderful!"

Among the honored was 11-year-old Maddie, a recently confirmed member serving at Christ UMC in Lakewood. At a young age she has served as a member of the children's choir, liturgist, acolyte, volunteer in Red Bird Mission in Appalachia, volunteer for Interfaith Hospitality and for Lakewood Code Blue, providing warming shelters for the homeless.

"Maddie has demonstrated dedication and passion towards that which she believes in and finds ways to accomplish goals and dreams," said Rev. Iraida Ruiz de Porras, Senior Pastor of Christ UMC in Lakewood. "She strives to be her best and actively seeks the best in others."

"Maddie is not the future of our church," said Ruiz de Porras. "She is very well the present of our church; a gift to the community and an agent of hope and change for the transformation of the world."

Maddie wasn't the only youth highlighted at the recognition ceremony. The children's ministry at St. John UMC, nominated by Cynthia Wilks-Mosley, was also honored. The reemergence of the church's VBS joined congregants, the local Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Native American tribal family, the surrounding community and neighboring churches in a partnership to tell the stories of the local Native American culture, sharing the links to God. The backbone of the VBS team was the elder volunteers assigned

as teacher aides.

"Our elders brought the tribal wisdom and knowledge into the mix," said Wilks-Mosley. "In fact, one of the highlights of the VBS was an elder honor ceremony where the children prepared a program, including honor gifts for the elders. Those members who were not able to volunteer in the program became our prayer warriors and it can honestly be said that 100% of our membership participated in the program."

With the church's self-designed Native American immersion curriculum, children learned ways both to live a Christian life and follow the tribal ways of their ancestors.

"We praised God with drumming and dancing," said Wilks-Mosley. "The children acknowledged the Creator's bounty as they experienced blackberry picking like the children of generations before them."

The church took a bold step to move this curriculum into the Fairfield Township Afterschool program. According to the 2010 census, the township lists the highest Native American population in New Jersey.

"The program actually started at the church, but our attendance maxed out at ten children and transportation was always an issue," stated Wilks-Mosley. "The school district was approached to include the Native American immersion curriculum as an extra component for the afterschool program."

The first year averaged 85 children two days per week with this year averaging 115 for three days each week. The school district sees the church as a community partner. St. John's UMC provides eight Thanksgiving baskets, two Christmas baskets, 120 children's Easter baskets, two eighth grade scholarships, and snacks for children. In April, the church assisted the school district in the implementation of a supper feeding program for every child at no cost to the program or the church.

Rev. Timothy Nicinski of Waterloo



Bishop Schol honored GNJ laity at a recognition ceremony on April 28 at the Mission and Resource Center for faithfully living out their calls. Photo by James Lee

UMC nominated Betty Sayner for the church's electronic media ministry.

"For a little church built in 1859 and basically hidden away within a state park, we have had to be creative with our electronic media and we view it as a ministry," said Sayner. "I think people are longing for connection and meaning today, as they always have, but church can be a bit intimidating if you aren't a regular, you don't know what to expect."

The church started live-streaming their Sunday worship services to give people on the outside a look in. It also sought to maintain connections with people who care about the church but couldn't be there.

"We have had college students' move out of state to study, but they tune in to connect with us on Sunday morning," exclaimed Sayner. "We have people who work on Sundays and can view the service when it's convenient for them."

The services are streamed on Facebook Live and posted to the church's Facebook page for viewing afterwards.

"I think Thomas Merton's idea that

love is our true destiny and that we don't find the meaning of life by ourselves alone but rather with another has inspired me to reach out and try to connect with the busy people all around us who may not even know we are there, or whose schedule doesn't permit them to join us on Sunday mornings."

Sayner creates creative and inspiring posts that are personalized to Waterloo with photos of the church's beautiful setting while also reminding people of God's love.

Laity Recognition Awards are given by the Laity Board each year in honor of the ministry of GNJ laity. Nominations are accepted each winter. To nominate a lay person for 2018, look for announcements in the Digest.

"I was inspired and humbled by the stories of GNJ laity rising to the occasion to serve their communities," said Bishop John Schol, who awarded each laity with a certificate. "God is using the fruits of their ministries to transform the world."



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Mission U Offers Educational Opportunity For All

Mission U, formerly known as Cooperative School of Christian Mission, is an annual educational opportunity offering studies for effective mission ministry in local churches and the United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey. Women, men, youth and children, pastors and friends are invited to attend. This can be a family retreat for learning, inspiring worship and fellowship where participants can choose a three day or a one day school. Studies this year include four courses for adults taught in English, Spanish and Korean and there are also studies for youth and children

This year's theme is "Where is Your Treasure?" based on Matthew 6:20-21 which says, "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (NRSV)

Lay servant recertification and clergy CEUs are also available.

2018 MISSION CLASS DATES

Friday, July 13-15
Georgian Court University, Lakewood, NJ

Saturday, July 14,
Georgian Court University, Lakewood, NJ
Online registration only

Saturday, July 21
Calvary Korean UMC, East Brunswick, NJ
Online registration only

COURSES

Spiritual Study - Embracing Wholeness: An Earth Perspective for Covenantal Living
Geographic Study - Missionary Conferences in the United States
Issue Study - What About our Money? A Faith Response
Conference Study: When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor & Yourself
Children's Study - What About Our Money? (Lakewood Only)
Youth Study - Is it Just Money? (Lakewood Only)

Informational brochures and registration forms can be found at gnjumc.org/mission-u-2018. To learn more contact Millie Grey, Mission U Dean at millieg178@aol.com or Grace Rapp, Mission U Secretary at grace_rapp@comcast.net

Church Blesses Teachers, Community in Wake of Parkland Shooting

By Denise Herschel
Nj6pack@yahoo.com

SOUTH RIVER - After the recent high school shooting in Parkland, Florida as well as the countless other school shootings that have taken place, Conklin UMC members in South River were reminded of the firefighters, law enforcement, emergency medical technicians, teachers and school staff who put their lives on the line each day to keep children and their communities safe. In particular, Conklin UMC lay members Linda Razzano, a retired teacher, and Jennifer Herrick, a teacher, noticed heightened emotions and fear in local schools and community after the Parkland shooting. They wanted to know how the church could offer hope. The two women brainstormed and soon decided to spearhead a "Blessing of the Badges" event as a way to help and to heal their church members and community members.

"This is the first time we have had such an event," said Rev. James Lee, Lead Pastor of Conklin UMC and GNJ

Manager of Visual Arts. "The blessing of the badges took place at our 10 a.m. Sunday service on March 11 with about 50 people in attendance. Our mayor, John Krenzel, was there along with South River police officers, firefighters, school employees and teachers. Krenzel began with an opening remark to celebrate the hard work and dedication of the police officers, firefighters, law enforcement, emergency medical technicians and school employees of South River."

Lee continued that during the service he preached on the passage from Mark 14 "where a woman poured ointment of nard on Jesus' head and how the oil is to remind us today that we are set apart for greatness."

"I blessed every officer, firefighter, and school employee in attendance at the service with the same ointment of nard," Lee said. "This blessing was inspired by Dobbins UMC in Delanco's 'Blessing of the Badges' event held in 2017. Our blessing was a way for Conklin UMC to express gratitude for the endless dedication of these people. Fire trucks were



In the wake of the Parkland school shooting in Florida, Pastor James Lee of Conklin UMC in South River blesses the badges of law enforcement, EMTs, and local teachers. Photo provided

parked outside of the church to announce to the town that something special was happening at our church. After the service, all were invited to a light reception with coffee and bagels."

Lee said that the importance of the "Blessing of the Badges" event was im-

measurable as one of his church members later stated, "I was reminded that the church isn't isolated from the town, but a pivotal part of the community."

Conklin UMC is located at 82 Main Street in South River, NJ. For more information visit www.conklinchurch.org

Historians Meet at Annual Jurisdiction Meeting

By Don DeGroat
Ddegroat4@aol.com

LANCASTER, PA - The Annual Meeting of the Northeast Jurisdiction Commission of Archives and History met May 8 to 10 at Lancaster to share and learn from each other as well as the history of the hosting Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, Pennsylvania.

Attending were Reverend John Callanan, chair of GNJ Commission on Archives and History, Reverend William Wilson, chair of the GNJ Historical Society, and Reverend Donald DeGroat, vice-chair of the GNJ Commission on Archives and History.

Presentations were made by Dr. Dale Patterson on Digital Archiving, Dr. Mark Draper, "Awakenings: The Revolutionary First Great Awakening," and Dr. Charles Yrigoyen, "Methodism's Second Great Awakening". Also included was a presentation on Henry and Ella Appenzeller, first Methodist missionaries to Korea. Bishop Peggy Johnson preached



Rev. Henry Boehm meets Rev. Don DeGroat, Rev. Bill Wilson, and Rev. John Callanan at Boehm's Chapel, Willow Street, Pennsylvania, as part of the Northeast Jurisdiction meeting of Commissions of Archives and History. Photo provided

a great concluding sermon, "Waking Up in the Sunset."

A one-day field trip to local historical sites visited many sites in the Lancaster area. Among them were Martin Boehm's Chapel, the Ephrata Cloister, and Albright's Chapel. An exceptional, immersive presentation on slavery and the road to freedom by the Bethel AME Cultural Center highlighted the day's travel.

Meeting a portrayer of the "Reverend Henry Boehm" at Martin Boehm's Chapel brought New Jersey history closer to home. Rev. Henry Boehm rode with Bishop Francis Asbury from 1805 to 1813. He was ordained by the East Pennsylvania Methodist Episcopal Conference. He became a member of the New Jersey Conference when it was spun-off from Eastern Pennsylvania Conference and concluded his ministry in the Newark Annual Conference. He lived to reach a hundred and died December 28, 1875, on Staten Island, after 75 years of ministry.

Volunteering with the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico: How to Get Your Church Involved

By Tom Lank NEJ Volunteers in Mission Coordinator and Brittany Rusk GNJ UMVIM Coordinator

In the weeks and months after Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico, the news reports showed extensive damage. The number of people without power remained stubbornly high. United Methodists in GNJ prayed and donated funds. They assembled UMCOR cleaning buckets and organized supplies through the GNJ effort "Esperanza for Puerto Rico." Having lived through Superstorm Sandy, Greater New Jersey knew the importance of having companions in the journey toward recovery and wanted to help.

Feeling the Christian impulse to be incarnational, people asked, "How can we go to be alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ in Puerto Rico?" The answer to that question has not been simple. With the desire to follow the second of John Wesley's 'Three Simple Rules' - "Do Good" - GNJ has to also take care to follow the first - "Do No Harm."

"We needed to make sure that our partners, the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico, remained in charge of their own recovery," said Brittany Rusk, GNJ's UMVIM Coordinator. "While UMCOR was consulting from the beginning and while Bishop Schol and others went to the island in December to offer lessons learned from Hurricane Sandy, it was up to Bishop Hector Ortiz and his team to develop their own strategy for organizing the recovery effort."

"We needed to be sure that we would



not become the disaster after the disaster," said Tom Lank, Northeastern Jurisdiction Volunteers in Mission Coordinator. "Disaster-affected communities only have so much capacity to receive, house, feed, transport and supervise volunteers. The last thing we want to do is place more of a burden on the community. We needed to be sure that there was a reliable supply chain for the resources that volunteers would need in the reconstruction effort. Due to logistical concerns that was difficult for several months. Thankfully, those problems seem to have been resolved."

In January, the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico released its guidelines for receiving volunteers. Some of the highlights are:

- Teams be no more than 14 people
- Team members needed to be at least 18 years old
- All team members needed to have Safe Sanctuaries certification
- Duration of the trip should be 7-8 days with no Sunday travel
- Due to lack of access to electricity, the climate, and terrain, team members should all be in good physical condition and not reliant on refrigerated medicines or electrical devices like CPAP machines
- Housing would be bunkhouse-style through Methodist camp and retreat facilities throughout the island
- Translators and meals will be pro-

vided by the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico

- The full guidelines can be downloaded from gnjumc.org/disaster-response

Initially, trained Early Response Teams were invited (February-April), with the expectation that regular rebuilding teams would be scheduled later.

The Methodist Church of Puerto Rico has now opened up scheduling to all teams, regardless of ERT training. They have capacity to host five to six teams at any one time and are currently scheduling teams from Fall 2018 forward.

"Remember, a storm of this magnitude will require volunteers for up to ten years," said Rusk. "As United Methodists, we need to be committed for the long-haul."

The Process

If you or your church are interested in serving in Puerto Rico, the first step is to contact Brittany Rusk, GNJ UMVIM Coordinator at umvim@gnjumc.org. If you are an individual or do not have enough people to make a full team, she can connect you with other like-minded people in GNJ to combine forces.

Rusk will provide a link to fill out an "Intent to Serve" form that will help our partners in Puerto Rico assess where and when to deploy you. You will be contacted by the U.S.-based scheduler, Jason Frazer. Once he is certain that you are able to meet the criteria set by the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico, he will work with the scheduler on the island to firm up your dates and venue for service. From

that point on, your team will be handled by Bishop Ortiz's team in Puerto Rico.

Church-to-Church partnerships

Some GNJ churches, pastors, and laypeople have pre-existing relationships with churches in Puerto Rico. If you plan to arrange your own visit directly with a local church, please make sure you still connect through the system and notify Rusk of what you are doing. Circumventing the system that the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico has put in place can strain already scarce resources and create unnecessary competition within their conference.

FAQ's

Do I need a passport?

No. Puerto Rico is a U.S. Territory and its citizens are U.S. citizens. You do not need a passport to visit, and Puerto Ricans do not need a passport to come to the mainland.

How much will it cost?

It depends on the size of your team, but a ballpark figure would be \$1,000-\$1,250 per person, assuming \$500 roundtrip airfare.

Can I bring my youth mission team?

Not yet. The current guidelines only allow for team members 18 years and older. As the recovery progresses, this guideline may change.

Do I need specific skills?

All team members are welcome as long as they meet the criteria of the MCPR. However, certain skills are highly valued such as masonry, roofing, electrical, and particularly the ability to work with metal roof trusses.

CONFERENCE HAPPENINGS

GNJ Receives Recognition from GBGM at 2018 Annual Conference

At the 2018 Annual Conference session in Wildwood, GNJ received recognition by The General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) for being among the top 10 conferences to give for international disaster relief efforts in 2017.



Order 2018 Annual Conference Journals

2018 Annual Conference Journals will be available for download on the website in the Fall. All retired clergy may receive a hard copy of the 2018 Annual Conference Journal for free upon request. Hard copies are available for a fee of \$20 for all others who would like to purchase one. Visit gnjumc.org/2018-annual-conference to buy.

OBITUARIES

Frederick Richardett, Jr., Retired Elder, died on May 3. A Memorial Service was held on May 9 at First UMC in Toms River. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent in Memory of Frederick Richardett to First UMC, 129 Chestnut St., Toms River, NJ 08757 or the Lions Club in c/o Mel Bray, 33 Woodview Dr., Whiting, NJ 08759. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Ruth Ann Richardett at 31 Roman St., Toms River, NJ 08757.

Edward L. Abbott, former Lay Member, died on April 23. A Memorial Service was held on May 11 at Christy Funeral Home in Millville, NJ. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) and expressions of sympathy may be sent at christyfuneralservice.com/obituaries/Edward-Abbott

Shirley A. Kearney, former Lay Member died on May 11. A Memorial Service was held on May 15 at Drakestown UMC in Hackettstown, NJ. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to Drakestown UMC, 6 Church Rd., Hackettstown, NJ 07840. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Walt and Lois Ahlers, 107 Stephens State Park Rd., Hackettstown, NJ 07840.

Glenn R. Carlson, former Lay Member, died on April 26. A Memorial Services was held on May 1. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to Atco UMC, 2128 Atco Ave., Atco, NJ 08004-1924. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Mrs. Ellen Carlson, 620 Jackson Rd., Atco, NJ 08004.

Rev. Benny Pillot Leoteau, Pastor of Trinity UMC in Bridgeton, died on May 14. Viewing and Memorial Services were held on May 18 at Asbury UMC in Camden, NJ and May 19 at the Rodriguez Funeral Home in Philadelphia, PA. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to the GNJ Mission and Resource Center, attn.: Esperanza for Puerto Rico, 205 Jumping Brook Rd., Neptune, NJ 07753. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Milagros Soto Pillot, 605 Pleasant Ave., Pennsauken, NJ 08110.

Rev. Dr. Robert W. Crowther, Jr. Retired Elder, died on May 24. A Viewing and Memorial Service was held on June 1 at St. Andrew's UMC in Spring Lake, NJ. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent in memory of Rev. Dr. Robert W. Crowther, Jr to St. Andrew's UMC, 907 4th Ave., Spring Lake, NJ 07762. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Deborah Crowther Pritchard, 8012 Mill Chase, Lewisville, NC 27023.



Join a civil rights pilgrimage with a select group of high school students who will journey together through the story of struggle and progress of racial justice.

In small group study in person, online and on the road, 15 high school students will meet the people that made equality happen, visit the country's most significant civil rights places and continue the work of some of the most challenging issues.

FIND OUT MORE AND APPLY NOW.

Applications are being accepted until July and final selections will be announced by August 13 for a curriculum that begins in September.

www.gnjnextgen.org



Many of Marcia's Melodies will be for sale again at The Hub in Ocean Grove this summer.

Several new devotional songs and choruses have been added to the collection. You can see the new anthems, *"Keep Your Ear Tuned for the Trumpet"* with the fabulous trumpet obligato. Also, the hymn *"When We All Get to Heaven"* has been developed into a fun, easy and familiar anthem with a surprising Ocean Grove ending.

Purchase music from the Hub in Ocean Grove

Three notebooks filled with anthems, solos, duets, ladies trios, men's quartets, choruses, hymns, devotional songs and service music have been prepared for you!

Special order forms for larger orders are available. Free catalogs give you needed information about each song. Choose the catalogs which interest you.

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The Hub

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Marcia's Melodies

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Miracles Everywhere

A campaign to raise \$5.2 million for the next generations of disciples, Hope Centers, hurricane recovery, missional partnerships with Puerto Rico and Tanzania. God has miracles in store for United Methodists in Greater New Jersey.

Miracles in Action

This summer GNJ will welcome more than 100 young people to our camps for the first time in 3 years.

July 23 - 28

High School Leadership Boot Camp

July 30 - August 4

Junior High Camp with Barefoot Republic

August 6 - August 10

Niños Para Cristo & Jovenes Para Cristo

Are the young people in your life ready for a miracle?

Find out more about camps and sign up now.

www.gnjnextgen.org



Find out more about the Miracles Everywhere Campaign.

www.gnjumc.org/umsf



**Miracles
Everywhere**