



2019-23 GNJ Strategic Plan Legislation

Whereas, in 2013, United Methodists of Greater New Jersey (GNJ) embarked on a five-year journey to grow the percentage of vital congregations from 14% to 41%, an ambitious goal that focused on the five markers of vitality: worship, small groups, mission, stewardship and making new disciples; and since, we have increased the percentage of highly vital congregations to 32% and experienced a renewed effort to make disciples and grow vital congregations to transform the world; and we are making strong progress.

- 52 new faith communities have been started
- 67% of our worshipers are now in small groups
- 2,810 young adults are in small groups
- 50% of our worshipers are participating in hands on mission
- 22% of our worshipers are racial ethnic
- 150+ congregations are multicultural/ethnic
- 100 appointments are cross racial
- 17% of the average congregation's budget is spent on mission
- 10% shared ministry reduction that translates to an additional \$1 million dollars available for mission in the local church
- \$5.5 million was raised through our congregations for the Mission Fund Campaign
- \$17 million was raised for A Future With Hope for Sandy recovery
- 256 homes have been rebuilt since Sandy and 13,000 volunteers from across the country joined our efforts

Whereas, God wants to continue working through GNJ passionate disciples, vital congregations and transformational leaders so that miracles of healing and transformation continue to occur across GNJ and around the world; and

Whereas, the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference empowered the GNJ Connectional Table to lead GNJ in a planning process to develop a new strategic plan for 2019-23, that over the last year has engaged a conference-wide process that involved more than 850 people to develop a Strategic Plan, and
Whereas, the proposed 2019-23 Strategic Plan builds on the progress of the current plan and casts a bold vision and set strategic priorities with the conviction that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, miracles can happen everywhere.

Therefore, be it resolved that the 2019-23 Strategic Plan be adopted and carried out as delineated in the Plan, and that each year of the Plan's implementation a report be presented to the Annual Conference session on the progress, challenges and necessary modifications.

Submitted by,
The GNJ Connectional Table

2019-2023 Strategic Plan

Why does GNJ exist?

GNJ exists to recruit and develop transformational leaders so that people and communities experience healing, renewal and wholeness from God. Transformational leaders grow vital congregations who shape passionate disciples of Jesus Christ and share faith, hope and justice in the community.

GNJ Adaptive Challenge

Increase the motivation, urgency and ability of disciples, leaders and congregations to connect and engage with a diverse group of people in the community so that the people in the pews look more like all the people in the community.

Holy and Audacious Goal - Leadership 100

Cultivate and equip 100 clergy and 100 laity leaders who make disciples who make disciples.

Leadership 100 will change GNJ into a disciple-making and disciple-engaging force to transform the world. Leadership 100 will;

- develop more transformational and apostolic leaders for our congregations and the community, and
- grow a pool of talented leaders who can be deployed to increase disciple-making by:
- changing the culture to nurture leaders who multiply passionate disciples
- growing vibrant missional congregations and
- transforming lives and communities

We will know we have achieved this God-sized goal when we have 100 congregations whose worship attendance has moved from one category to the next.

In GNJ we presently have four categories of average worship attendance:

- 299 congregations with average worship attendance of less than 50
- 149 congregations with average worship attendance of 50-99
- 28 congregations with average worship attendance of 100-124
- 76 congregations with average worship attendance of 125 or more, with:
 - 21 congregations with average worship attendance of 125-149
 - 23 congregations with average worship attendance of 150-199
 - 14 congregations with average worship attendance of 200-299
 - 9 congregations with average worship attendance of 300-499
 - 6 congregations with average worship attendance of 500-699
 - 1 congregation with average worship attendance of 700-999
 - 1 congregation with average worship attendance of 1,000-1,499
 - 1 congregation with average worship attendance of 1,500-1,749
 - 0 congregations with average worship attendance of 1,750+

GNJ Cultural Shifts by 2023

GNJ will shift;

1. FROM a church that mostly serves its members and clergy TO a mission that connects with the people in the community through relevant ministries
2. FROM congregations with a single cultural expression and privilege TO congregations with multicultural expression and intercultural competence
3. FROM concentrating ministry and thinking with current church members TO further extend ministry and thinking to make and engage younger and more diverse generations of disciples.
4. FROM sharing information through workshops to train leaders TO using workshops that interact with and experience the content to form leaders
5. FROM maintaining congregations and their buildings TO working with congregations to repurpose buildings for regenerative mission
6. FROM depending exclusively on Shared Ministries (apportionments) for mission and ministry TO cultivating new sources of income to grow mission and ministry

GNJ Strategies for the Next Five Years

- New Faith Communities – new expressions of congregations that gather diverse people in ways that are relevant to them.
- Intercultural Competency - Develop leadership capacity for intercultural competence in GNJ so we can love across boundaries and differences and work towards inclusion of all people.
- NextGen Ministries - Cultivate and mobilize new generations of enthusiastic disciples of Jesus Christ that connect, engage and lead in their congregations and communities to transform the world through:
 - IGNITE - life-changing worship, relevant teachings and authentic community for 6th through 12th grade
 - Youth Groups – local, community focused places for young people to be introduced to Christ and shaped as disciples generally for 3rd through 12th grade
 - Camping – outdoors experiences that connect with God, purpose and promote meaningful relationships for elementary through high school students.
 - Campus Ministries - places for college students to be introduced to Christ, shaped as disciples and developed as transformational leaders
 - Community Development – Leverage existing human, relational and capital resources to create opportunities for healing, renewal and transformation to communities and sustainable financial support streams for congregations
 - Repurpose church property into vibrant worship and mission centers
 - Repurpose church property into affordable housing, senior living, community space and mission centers
 - Create cooperative ministries within the community
- Hope Centers – Develop church-based community ministry that meets the needs of the community and serves children and youth, families, seniors and vulnerable populations

We will develop and resource these strategies partnering with the GNJ family of vital mission partners – A Future With Hope, Next Generation Ministries, Centenary Fund and Preacher’s Aid Society and the United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey.

GNJ 2023 Objectives

1. Develop resources to equip congregations to assess and improve their pathways for disciples to know, grow in, live and share the life of Jesus every day, so that we increase the number of new disciples and vital congregations.
2. Develop laity leadership resources to equip the local church with the knowledge and ability to effectively lead congregations and address challenges in their ministry, so that we grow more vital congregations.
3. Incorporate appropriate training, language and practices into resources, events, agency work, and conference life, so that we grow cultural competency within the life and ministry of GNJ.
4. Create methods to recruit, resource and support congregational youth leaders, so that they are equipped to lead and grow a youth program equal to 20% of their worshipping congregation and we grow youth engagement.
5. Clarify the process, resources and support for Hope Centers, so that we develop 30 Hope Centers focused on community mission with students, the poor and the elderly, and increase missional impact in the community

GNJ Core Resourcing to Carry Out Our Mission and Achieve Our Goal

GNJ will resource congregations and leaders that are ready and desire to become vital and more like Christ primarily through:

- Laity Leadership Academy – coordinated teaching and skill development with application and funding opportunities for laity to grow vital ministries.
- Coaching – a resource to help clergy achieve ministry goals and action plans.
- PaCE - facilitated peer learning groups that help shape pastoral identity, imagination and excellence.
- Mosaic Ministries – a new way of thinking about and doing local church ministry, mission and leadership with promising young clergy and seminarians discerning their vocational calling.
- Clergy Leadership Development Initiative – tools and applications for clergy to lead congregations to sustainable fruitful ministry
- Team Vital – congregational community and ministry assessment and strategic planning process for vital ministry.
- Communities of Hope –strategic planning and implementation for asset-based community development.
- Lay Servant Ministries - Certified Lay Servants, Lay Speakers and Lay Ministers, expand the ministry of the laity for training for pulpit supply as well as caring, leading, and communicating across the connection for transformational growth.

What Will Be Different?

As GNJ shifts the culture, accomplishes its goals and objectives, implements its strategies and resources leaders and congregations, it will see more disciples and congregations with:

- Passionate Faith – Mature and fearless disciples that others want to emulate
- Boundless Hope – Positive vision of current and future ministry
- Courageous Spirit – Risk-taking relevant mercy and justice ministries
- Transformational Leadership – Difference-makers who transform people's lives, the congregation and the community
- Congregational Vitality – Vibrant and life changing congregations
- Regenerative Resources – Extravagant generosity that inspires new giving and resources

GNJ Vision

We see leaders cultivating disciples of Jesus Christ in vital congregations and faith communities with:

- Passionate Faith – Shape mature and fearless disciples that others want to emulate
- Boundless Hope – Inspire a positive vision of current and future ministry
- Courageous Spirit – Connect with the community through risk-taking relevant mercy and justice ministries
- Transformational Leadership – Change people's lives, the congregation and the community
- Congregational Vitality – Worship God, make and grow passionate disciples, serve the community and give generously to mission
- Regenerative Resources – Develop innovative ways of supporting ministry

GNJ Mission

Transform the world by recruiting and developing transformational leaders who make passionate disciples of Jesus Christ and grow vital congregations. (Matthew 28:19)

GNJ Core Values

Our ministry will be shaped and guided by being:

- Christ-Centered – the unbreakable and unifying source of our faith and hope
- Compassionate and Just – a shared expression of our Wesleyan heritage
- Diverse – a true reflection of the all-welcoming nature of the reign of God
- Innovative and Risk-Taking – a bridge to what is next
- Excellent – a gospel imperative for greater impact in the world

A GNJ Disciple

A Holy Spirit-led follower of Christ whose passion every day is to know, grow in, live and share the life of Jesus. - John 15:5

A GNJ Vital Congregation

A Holy Spirit-led community of passionate disciples who are working together to grow new disciples, inspiring worship, active small groups, risk taking community mission, and generous giving to mission. (Acts 2:42-47)

GNJ World Transformation

A community where lives are changed, hope abounds, diversity is embraced, and all have the opportunity, knowledge and skills to live to their full God-given potential. (Micah 6:8, Luke 10:27)

A GNJ Leader

A Holy Spirit-led servant-leader that forges a path forward where others do not see the way. A GNJ leader reaches out beyond the walls of the church into the community to transform lives by spreading God's love, hope and justice and bearing witness to Jesus Christ. (Matthew 23:11, Philippians 4:13)

GNJ leaders are fruitful by growing new disciples, worship, small groups, mission engagement and giving. GNJ will work with and grow leaders to be:

- Fruitful –grow new passionate disciples, inspiring worship, active small groups, risk taking community mission, and generous giving to mission.
- Transformational –lead congregations through missional, cultural and identity change.
- Apostolic –are on a clear mission to create something more than what is. Paul was an apostolic leader who went to places with few or no believers and his leadership transformed the community by generating congregations of passionate disciples.

Because of GNJ leadership, disciples will be even more passionate, congregations will be even more vibrant and fruitful and people and communities will experience healing, renewal and wholeness from God.

How We Will Make Decisions?

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

1. Develop transformational leaders
2. Maximize new disciples, vital congregations and world transformation
3. Reflect our core values
4. Encourage innovative, risk-taking regenerative ministry that effectively connects with and engage people in the community

Theological Grounding for GNJ 2019-23 Strategic Plan – Miracles Everywhere

You are the God who performs miracles; you display your powers among the peoples. - Psalm 77:14

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 (Isaiah 43:19).

The Gospels tell of Jesus' miracle ministry using two Greek words *dunamis* and *simaos*. 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 *simaos*, which means sign – a miracle that points to God's activity in the world. 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.

Miracles happen everywhere. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the congregation, the body of Christ, is the primary actor to release the power of God to transform lives and the community (1 Corinthians 12:27). The congregation is the mission outpost where passionate disciples are formed, shaped and sent to love God and neighbors completely (Mathew 28:16-20).

Transformational leadership within congregations is crucial to fulfilling this mission (Ephesians 4:11-12) to release the Holy Spirit for miracles everywhere. Leaders who move the mission and turnaround forward are grounded theologically and biblically, possess competence and emotional intelligence, engage missionally and passionately, and are led spiritually.

As the church navigates through liminal times (a transitional time on the edge of what God has next for the church), the Spirit is calling GNJ to address our adaptive challenge and engage in new possibilities with courage (II Timothy 1:7). We are called to continue to imagine and discern innovative ways to effectively be in ministry in and with the community (Romans 12:2) so that we cultivate transformational leaders who make disciples and grow vital congregations to transform the world.

God is already working wonders in GNJ and is ready to perform miracles everywhere through passionate disciples, vital congregations and transformational leaders!