

# THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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No. 1

## Convocation Offers Powerful Application, Meaningful Fellowship

By Josh Kinney  
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LONG BRANCH – In what was considered by several participants to be “the best Bishop’s Clergy Convocation yet” GNJ clergy went deep in engaging peacemaking with Jim Ferrell, an author and leader at the Arbinger Institute, at the 2018 event held on Nov. 12-14, 2018 at the Ocean Place Resort in Long Branch.

“In addition to the great opportunity to come together, the material was incredibly helpful for my ministry,” said Rev. Laura Steele of Hopewell UMC.

The Arbinger Institute provides training, consulting, coaching and implementation tools that move individuals, teams and organizations from the default self-focus of an inward mindset to a results-focus of an outward mindset. GNJ clergy were encouraged to read Ferrell’s book ‘The Anatomy of Peace’, which diagrams a way of being that starts with a heart of peace and is necessary to address conflict and change.



Bishop John Schol stands with Jim Ferrell of The Arbinger Institute during the 2018 Bishop’s Clergy Convocation at the Ocean Place Resort & Spa Ballroom in Long Branch, NJ on November 13, 2018. Photo by Josh Kinney

*“The workshops really helped us to see how the concepts applied to us directly. We had an excellent group that really gelled in that short time. Our group leader was a great facilitator. The accommodations were lovely and it was a really relaxed atmosphere. I was able to enjoy time with friends and catch up with many that I don’t get to see. I love convocation because it’s more relaxed and really allows us to learn and have fellowship in a great setting”*

– Rev. Debra A. De Vos, Associate Pastor of Trinity UMC in Hackettstown

“It is based on the idea that people put themselves in boxes that become barriers to affecting change and that the most important part of helping things go right is getting out of the box,” said Ferrell.

The book, widely read in UMC circles, was read three times by Bishop John Schol who described it as “powerful” for him, as a leader.

“With an outward mindset, organizations and individuals focus on collective results. They can have difficult conversations about resource allocation, roles, and responsibilities without feeling the need to protect their silos, defend their decisions or appear in certain ways,” explained Ferrell “They might frame the problem differently, allowing them to see new possibilities for solutions and new directions for problem-solving.”

In his role as Arbinger’s managing partner, Ferrell directs the development of the institute’s training and consulting programs and the development and customization of its intellectual property. He has provided training and consulting internationally to leaders and organizations across a broad range of industries.

For the past three decades, Arbinger has been a leader in public and private sector organizational and cultural transformation, leadership training and consulting, and conflict resolution and transformation. Arbinger has helped thousands of organizations to institutionalize the change from an inward to an outward mindset while developing leaders, staff, teams, and organizations that maximize responsibility and become more effective in daily operations.

Steele reported applying tools and resources learned at convocation and through Ferrell’s book to her context and inspiration to teach her congregational leaders the importance of “turning their chairs around.”

“One of the main things I appreciated about the book, the plenaries, and our breakout sessions was the way each reduced complicated, conflict-prone relationship dynamics,” stated Pastor Benjamin Lee of Flemington UMC. “The ‘he or she does/I see/I do/he or she sees’ of the conflict collusion diagram was helpful to use in misunderstandings to help people take on the perspective of others.”

Lee added that the pyramid approach to resolving conflict wherein the answer is almost never to correct but rather to

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## Stigma Free Church Series Tackles Tough Topics, Welcomes Community

By Josh Kinney  
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MONTVILLE/BOONTON – Tackling subjects of addiction, suicide, self-harm, mental health and human trafficking are not the easiest topics to divulge at church, but for Montville and Boonton UMC’s, it was time to talk openly and love on the hurting in their community.

Pastor Donald Kirschner began the “Stigma Free Church” sermon series after an opioid summit in August “lit a fire” in his bones.



“It was very informative to me,” said Kirschner. “I was mindful of how widely spread and awful some of these realities were such as deaths from overdosing, suicide or people trapped by human trafficking. It seemed a response just couldn’t wait.”

Morris County started an initiative to be stigma free in 2016 and many towns across the nation followed suit over the last two years. Although Montville devel-

oped a stigma free task force in 2017, Kirschner believed the presence of faith communities as lacking in the movement and that there was a real opportunity for the church to have a voice at the table.

“This, it was with even further excitement that the ‘stigma free church’ sermon series and all that we did was launched,” he said.

From October 7 to November 4, 2018, the two churches embraced the ‘stigma free church’ series and tackled the tough topics. As a conclusion to the series special Q and A panel with three professional panelists answered questions posed by congregants and community visitors during the service. Mindful of it being All Saints Sunday, the session was followed by not only a time of remembrance for saints and passed loved ones but also for the lives of those lost to overdose, suicide, addiction and human trafficking.

Each week, a five to seven minute testimony was given in which someone who had been affected by and or worked alongside someone affected by each particular issue from both in and outside the congregation, shared their story and offered hope in the midst of difficult realities. The first week featured the Morris County Sheriff Department’s Hope One Team which offered free NARCAN trainings to congregation members after each service, teaching people what to do if they encounter someone who over-

*Continued on page 4*

## Cokesbury UMC Converts Shoes to Meals and Mission with “Soles4Souls”

By Paul Klitsch  
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COKESBURY - What started as a simple idea to collect a few pairs of unused and unwanted shoes has rapidly grown into an amazing ministry in Cokesbury, NJ. Soles4Souls, a non-profit social enterprise that creates sustainable jobs and provides relief through the distribution of shoes and clothing around the world, has distributed more than 30 million pairs of new and gently-worn shoes in 127 countries.

A challenge was issued to the small congregation at Cokesbury UMC: each member was asked to donate one pair of their own shoes and one pair of shoes from someone living in a different household.

“There was no defined goal in this collection,” said CUMC member Paul Klitsch, issuer of the challenge. “I thought I’d just put it out there and see what happened. I figured that most people here had shoes in the backs of their closets they forgot about, no longer fit, or just didn’t need anymore; why not put them to good use? My thinking was that if we could collect fifty pairs of shoes, it would be a huge success.”

The challenge was issued in late March, 2018 and shoes started to come in immediately. About a month later, through word of mouth, a connection was made with a local thrift store. Shoes



Walt Janicek is pictured banding shoes at Cokesbury UMC in what has become a powerful ministry. Photo provided

that were donated to the thrift store and were not sold were set aside for the UMC collection.

On Sunday, June 10 at Cokesbury UMC, all 740 pairs that had been collected were placed on the altar in boxes, bags and piles for a special “Blessing of the Shoes” by Pastor Lynn Mears.

“The mountain of shoes on the altar

*Continued on page 5*

# A Message from the Bishop



**“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” -1 Thessalonians 5:18**

Recently, one of my colleagues shared some postings from his gratitude journal. I was profoundly touched. In the midst of grieving the death of his wife and facing his own aging process, he found so many opportunities to give thanks to God. What a blessing.

As I think back on 2018, I see within our nation, culture and even the church, greater divisions than I have ever experienced in my life. I have

also never been faced with the challenges I am facing as a leader. Resources and congregations are declining. We are faced with a major decision about the future of the church related to passages in our Book of Discipline about homosexuality. Some clergy are facing into the question of their calling and some congregations have lost their missional identity and their purpose.

Yet, I have had one of the best years of my life, particularly as a leader in the church.

Personally, Beverly and I celebrated the birth of our third grandchild, Jakob. Our children are engaged deeply in meaningful and purposeful careers that are transforming lives. We celebrated 40 years of marriage. We met in high school and have continued a commitment and love to one another. This is not to say for us or our family that life is easy, or that we do not face challenges on a daily basis, but it is to say that God has blessed us, and that we are grateful.

I am also deeply proud of all that you are doing for God and what God is accomplishing through GNJ. Here are a few things that I saw Christ Jesus at work through you during 2018.

- We launched the Miracles Everywhere Campaign in September which already has raised in gifts and pledges \$3.5 million toward a \$6.2 million dollar goal. That's a miracle!
- After resting our camping ministry, we restarted it in 2018 with three successful weeks of camping in the summer.
- We have continued to diversify GNJ, and today there are nine languages spoken on a Sunday morning, more than 100 cross-racial appointments and 150 multicultural congregations.
- We started 13 new faith communities, and over the last five years, we started 86 which is the third highest by a conference in our denomination.
- We now have 15 Hope Centers toward our 100 Hope Center goal. Our newest Hope Center, The Makers Place in Trenton, collected 87,000 diapers to give as birthday gifts to children who reach their first birthday. Trenton has one of the highest infant mortalities in our nation.
- In January, we reached a new high of shared ministry participation (for 2017) at 88% -- the highest since GNJ's existence, 88% giving rate. We anticipate surpassing that for 2018.
- We are attracting more and younger clergy through our recruitment efforts and Mosaic ministry.
- We started two new campus ministries on the Rutgers and Drew campuses.
- We received an UMCOR grant and organized volunteers to help senior citizens in Brick rebuild after flooding.
- We established new partnerships with Puerto Rico and Tanzania and held a

pastor's school in Tanzania.

- We sent dozens of mission teams from our congregations to help with disaster recovery in Puerto Rico, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, and the U.S. states that suffered hurricane damage.

In 2019, there is also much to look forward to:

- We will expand camping to four weeks in 2019 with a new fine arts camp.
- We will hold a second GNJ Pastor School with United Methodists in Tanzania.
- We plan to add to our campus ministry by adding two new college ministries.
- We will feed tens of thousands of people through programs led by our congregations.
- We will care for thousands of children in preschools, aftercare and other programs in our congregations.
- We will make more than 975 new disciples through our congregations, and
- We will grow in worship attendance with as many as 200 of our congregations growing.

In the midst of the challenges, I give thanks for all God is doing in and through you. We have great days ahead as we give thanks, trust God, connect with the people in our communities and work to God.

Thank you for your commitment and dedication to God and The United Methodist Church.

Keep the faith!

Bishop John Schol  
The United Methodist Church  
of Greater New Jersey



## YEAR END STATISTICAL REPORTS DUE JAN. 31

All pastors of local churches will need to submit a year-end statistical report each year.

### 2018 STATISTICAL REPORTS LOG-IN INFORMATION

Go to: [www.ezra.gcfa.org](http://www.ezra.gcfa.org)

Username: 3360 PLUS your 4-Digit Church Number  
Your 8 digit username should read: 3360 \_ \_ \_ \_

### FIND YOUR CHURCH'S 4-DIGIT NUMBER

Go to: [gnjumc.org/year-end-statistical-reports](http://gnjumc.org/year-end-statistical-reports)  
Password: [gnjchurch18](http://gnjchurch18)

*\* You will be asked to change your password when you log in for the first time. Please keep the username and password available for all users.*

*If you have questions or need help, please contact your Regional Administrative Assistant.*



**The February 2019 issue deadline is January 16, 2019**

# THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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WE'RE ON

# You Tube

Check out a video resource archive of GNJ produced videos!

[YOUTUBE.COM/GNJUMC](http://YOUTUBE.COM/GNJUMC)



Connecting in Worship

**WAYS PEOPLE CONNECT DEEPLY IN WORSHIP**

**FEELERS CONNECT ON AN EMOTIONAL LEVEL**

They may love the experience of singing together or a heartfelt story in the sermon. During lent, many feelers will connect with the sacrifice of Jesus, the emotional journey of worship toward the cross and the excitement of the resurrection.



**THINKERS CONNECT ON AN INTELLECTUAL LEVEL**

They are brought to life when the sermon contains deep knowledge and the words spoken or sung have rich theological meaning. During lent, thinkers want to be intellectually stimulated through sermon and devotional practice.

**DOERS CONNECT WHEN THEY ARE INVOLVED**

They love to move around and use their sense of touch in worship, through Communion, taking sea glass from or placing a picture on the altar. During lent, doers are inspired by taking and placing ashes, passing the peace of Christ, or participating in the Lord's Supper.



***Application***

What is your primary and secondary way to connect deeply in worship?

Can you think of one person in your congregation that connects in each of these ways?

During the Lenten season (and always!) plan worship with these three types of people in mind. You don't have to have an element of each every single week, but you should each month.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WORSHIP DURING LENT, CONTACT ERIC DREW:  
edrew@gnjumc.org | 732.359.1044



**UNITED METHODISTS**  
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

# Blanket Prayer Ministry Covers Community and World

By Denise Herschel  
Nj6pack@yahoo.com

NEWFIELD - There is an interfaith, nondenominational Outreach Ministry with lovingly handcrafted blankets sent not only across the U.S. but to Africa as well. They call themselves the Newfield Blanket Ministry Ladies, of Newfield United Methodist Church, having blossomed into a group of 10 dedicated women whose main purpose is to have their treasured blankets be a gift of love and prayers to others.

Charlene Myers, Newfield UMC choir and church member, began the prayer blanket ministry with three other women who all loved the concept.

"It all started because my sister had this ministry in her church. I had her come to our senior luncheon and show us how it was done and why they make the blankets," she said. "I then did some research as well and found it is an interfaith global outreach ministry as well as a non-denominational organization. The blankets are made and offered in many different churches. We have been doing ours since 2014."

To date, the Newfield ladies have created 296 blankets, giving out all but six. Myers called the blankets "a statement of faith in God and His power to heal, comfort and strengthen each person in need, no matter what the need may be."

The group meets every Thursday morning for almost two hours, trying to make three to four blankets each week. All blankets are done by hand as the rules state that one cannot use a sewing machine.

"It must be done by hand, with love," said Myers, who does all the measuring and cutting which consists of two 60 x 45 pieces of material.

"One must be a pattern and the other a solid," she stated. "In the middle we put the batting. I then give the material to Opal so she can press it, then Diane, Ruth, Joan and I put them together.

We then pin them all the way around the outside. The final touches to make the blanket complete are pieces of yarn spaced appropriately throughout."

According to Myers, the blanket is now ready to be passed to all attending church. They tie a knot in the yarn while praying for the specific recipient. There are knots left untied for the recipient's family, doctor, nurse or others to also tie and pray.

"The blankets are requested by people in our church and even people we meet when we are delivering them to the person in need. We don't turn anyone down who is in need of our blankets," Myers added.

Materials are purchased through donations from members and friends of the church and are solely funded by generous congregants, people who have received blankets and their families.

"We are humbled by the letters and the cards we received as to what these blankets mean to people. It fills my heart with such joy every time I read them. It is such a rewarding experience," Myers said.

The group also makes smaller blankets for the residents of United Methodist Communities at Pitman as well as 12 x 12 blankets that they donate to the Gloucester County Animal Shelter to line the bottom of the animals' cages.

Myers added that the Newfield Blanket Ministry Ladies are always looking for new members who have a passion for helping others.

"It is by far the most rewarding thing I have ever done," she said. "We are truly humbled by what these blankets represent to people. Some get well while others go home to God in Heaven wrapped in the prayer blankets from our church."

For more information about the Newfield United Methodist Church's blanket ministry contact Charlene Myers at 856-457-7720 or email her at charlajeen@yahoo.com.



The Newfield Blanket Ministry Ladies of Newfield UMC pose with one of their handcrafted and prayed over blankets. Photo provided



## Stigma Free Church Series Tackles Tough Topics, Welcomes Community

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'The Stigma Free Church' sermon series not only challenged congregants of Boonton and Montville UMC's, but provided a way to involve the community to rally around helping the hurting. Photo provided

dosed, and provided a NARCAN kit to the more than 30 trainees. The last week featured several organizations on the frontlines of the various issues presenting tables filled with helpful resource materials for congregants and the community.

"While the sermon series was taking place, a five week small group opportunity called 'Rethink Addiction' was happening on Wednesday nights in the conference room of a local youth center in Montville," explained Kirschner. "We delved into the often unrecognized and underestimated power of habits underlying all addiction, modern neuroscience, addiction and theology and rethinking church."

As a follow-up to the series, the church's offered a stigma free essay contest for any Jr. High and High School students with a \$250 award, part of the funds going toward a project the students initiated to help lessen the negative impacts of stigma surrounding any issue addressed in their essay.

A Twitter account called 'The Stigma Free Church' was created with a unique, unused hashtag - #thestigmfreechurch.

"The spirit just got a hold of my heart and opened my eyes in a big way to some key issues of our day that I couldn't turn a blind eye toward," said Kirschner. "I felt compelled to respond in whatever way I could."

Kirschner will be leading a workshop for the Skyland's District Foundation Learning Day on January 19 at the First UMC in Newton to talk about the stigma free church and how those interested can adopt and engage. To find out more, visit boontonumc.com or montvilleumc.org/the-stigma-free-church



The Morris County Sheriff Department's Hope One Team truck awaits congregants after church services. Photo provided

## PaCE REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

Join one of three regional groups or create your own.

Spring 2019 PaCE groups include:

**Re-imagining Community: Launching New Expressions of Worship around the Table**  
**Conversations on Missional Theology**  
**The Radical Wesley: Patterns and Practices of a Movement Maker**

Find out more at: [www.gnjumc.org/pace](http://www.gnjumc.org/pace)

Register by January 15, 2019



## ADVERTISE IN THE RELAY

REACH MORE THAN 7,000 MONTHLY READERS



Published 12x a year, over 90,000 issues printed annually. The Relay is mailed free of charge every month to all clergy, lay leaders, and committee leaders in over 550 United Methodist congregations throughout the Greater New Jersey region.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO: [gnjumc.org/the-relay](http://gnjumc.org/the-relay)  
Or contact: Josh Kinney at 732.359.1047 | [jkinney@gnjumc.org](mailto:jkinney@gnjumc.org)

# Cokesbury UMC Converts Shoes to Meals and Mission with “Soles4Souls”

Continued from page 1

was amazing!” said Mears. “I had to navigate around the heaps just so I could see the congregation. I loved it!”

Then on June 12, the first delivery to the S4S drop off point in Franklin, Sussex County was made. Donations of shoes kept coming in from the congregation and their friends, relatives, co-workers, the community and the thrift store. Less than two months after the June 12 delivery, on August 14, another 840 pairs of shoes made the trip to the collection center in Franklin.

Presently the collection shows no signs of slowing down. An October 24 delivery of 420 pairs of shoes brought the total delivered to 3,635 pairs.

Before delivery, the shoes are matched and rubber-banded. Shoes with

laces can be tied together, and placed in large plastic trash bags, as preferred by Soles4Souls workers at the warehouse in Franklin. There, the shoes are graded, sorted and packaged for shipping to Haiti, Honduras, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and many other places around the world where S4S supports micro-enterprise operations. Utilizing the Souls4Souls ‘impact formula’ for shoe donations, the 3,635 pairs donated so far converts into 18,175 meals, or 145 years of shelter for a family, or 121 semesters of education.

In addition, Cokesbury UMC is now listed on the S4S website as a small donation (12 pairs or less) collection site.

To learn more about S4S visit [soles4souls.org](http://soles4souls.org)



Paul Klitsch sits on the steps outside of Cokesbury UMC surrounded by 610 pairs of shoes in bags. Photo provided



## SUMMER INTERNSHIPS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND CHURCHES!

Churches who apply and are chosen to participate in the *Cultivate: Summer of Exploration* will be responsible for recruiting and choosing their own student intern.

Funds for Cultivate have been made possible by a grant from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) to cultivate young people for ministry. The grant supports initiatives committed to encourage, recruit and train Christian leaders from ages 16-30.

Next Generation Ministry encourages students to try on ministry leadership so that they can continue their path of discipleship and explore a call to ministry. You can support our young people on their journey through the Miracles Everywhere Campaign.

**STUDENTS WILL:**

- Work with their church for 20-25 hours per week for 8 weeks and earn a \$2,000 stipend
- Participate and lead in worship, children's church, small groups and bible study
- Learn church administration and attend committee meetings
- Join congregational care/pastoral visitations
- Explore conflict resolution
- Assist the pastor with funeral and wedding services when possible

**CHURCHES WILL:**

- Identify a student interested in ministry
- Create a welcoming environment for learning and development
- Designate a supervisor who is a church leader or pastor
- Plan 20-25 hours per week of ministry engagement
- Commit \$500 towards the student's \$2,000 stipend

The Miracles Everywhere Campaign will raise \$3.2 million for Next Generation Ministries to strengthen youth programs in 250 congregations in Greater New Jersey.



FIND OUT MORE AT: [www.gnjnextgen.org](http://www.gnjnextgen.org)



*Our prayers are an act of love; they allow us to connect beyond our personal understandings and perspectives. May our prayers offer us a place of peace while we wait.*

Join us in preparing for  
The General Conference Session of  
The United Methodist Church by signing  
up for 40 Days of Prayer.

We will be praying for the Conference  
Delegates, their Annual Conference's  
and the people they are representing.

**SIGN UP ONLINE AT**  
[gnjumc.org](http://gnjumc.org)



## GENERAL & JURISDICTIONAL CONFERENCE DELEGATE NOMINATIONS

GNJ is electing delegates for the 2020 General and Jurisdictional Conferences of the United Methodist Church during the Annual Conference in Wildwood on May 19-21, 2019.

General Conference is the top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church which meets once every four years.

The conference can revise church law, as well as adopt resolutions on current moral, social, public policy and economic issues. It also approves plans and budgets for church-wide programs.

The 2020 General Conference will be held in Minneapolis, MN., May 5-15, 2020. Four clergy and four laity from Greater New Jersey will be elected to serve as delegates to General Conference. They will also serve the Jurisdictional Conference, which also meets every four years to elect new bishops and select members of general boards and agencies.

The Jurisdictional Conference will be held July 13-17, 2020 in Hunt Valley, MD. Four additional clergy and four additional laity will be elected to serve as delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference. The first two lay and clergy delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference will also serve as reserve delegates to the General Conference. Three lay and three clergy reserve delegates will be elected for the Jurisdictional Conference.

It is an honor and responsibility to serve as a delegate. It provides the opportunity to be involved in the denomination and work with United Methodists throughout the nation and world, praying, worshipping together and deciding legislation.

The nomination process will be open from Dec. 15 through Feb. 15.

To find out more about the role of delegates, nomination process, and to access laity and clergy nomination forms, visit [www.gnjumc.org](http://www.gnjumc.org).



# IGNITE YOUTH LEADERS DAY

## REPLENISH YOUR YOUTH MINISTRY!

**FEBRUARY 9, 2019**

Aldersgate United Methodist Church

Join church staff and volunteers from around Greater New Jersey to pray, learn and recharge for the next season of ministry.

Featuring Aqueelah Ligonde from GenOn Ministries, Princeton Seminary Professor Dr. Erin Raffety and GNJ clergy engaged in vital youth programs.

**\$20 per person | \$60 for groups with 3 or more**  
3-23 people

**At the Door: \$25 per person**  
Group discount does not apply



### SPEAKERS INCLUDE:



**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**  
**AQUEELAH LIGONDE**  
*GenOn Ministries*



**DR. ERIN RAFFETY**  
*Princeton Seminary*



**MEGAN DEWALD**  
*Institute for Youth Ministry*



**CATHERINE JORDAN-LATHAM**  
*Simply Grace UMC*



**MECAN PAYNE**  
*Clinton UMC*



**WES ELLIS**  
*First UMC in Toms River*



**SKITCH MATSON**  
*Princeton UMC*

### ALSO FEATURING:

**TREY GILLETTE**  
*Marlton UMC*

**PEARL QUICK & JACOB DAVIS**  
*Princeton United Methodist Church*

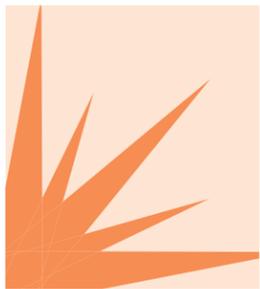
**FIND OUT MORE AT: WWW.IGNITENJ.ORG**



# GEARING UP FOR SUMMER CAMPS!



Sign up for the Next Gen monthly newsletter at: [www.gnjnextgen.org](http://www.gnjnextgen.org)



## NEXT GENERATION

UNITED METHODISTS OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

### FOUR WEEKS OF SUMMER CAMP COMING TO PINELANDS IN 2019

- Fine Arts Camp | July 22-27 | Grades 5-10
- High School Camp | July 29 - Aug. 3 | Grades 9-12
- Junior High Camp | Aug. 5-10 | Grades 6-8
- Niños y Jovenes Para Cristo | Aug. 12-16 | Ages 6-18

Stay tuned to [www.gnjnextgen.org](http://www.gnjnextgen.org) for more info about:  
Six week summer internships at Pinelands Center

# Convocation Offers Powerful Application, Meaningful Fellowship

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move deeper into the relationship to get to the heart of the conflict was a great reminder in pastoral ministry.

"I always appreciate the chance to connect with people whom I don't see regularly," said Lee. "Each mealtime was a chance to have good conversations with people I love but seldom see."

For Rev. John Randall of First UMC in Bridgeton, Convocation provided opportunities to nourish, renew and reconnect with developments of GNJ's fruitfulness with God, church and community.

"It was a fruitful learning experience," he said, emphasizing how the small group activities provided opportunities for informal conversations regarding vital leadership practices.

"Our small group leader was an inspirational source of supplying the group with fresh pathways to consider leadership opportunities in the local church," said Randall. "She enabled the group to role play sequences of possible events affecting and effecting leadership. There was time for conversations regarding a set of circumstances that develops in local church leadership. Also, we were challenged to make the Convocation

experience significant in setting a goal with a leader of our local church before leaving."

Small group reflections offered a time of revelation for some including Rev. Heather Valosin of Denville Community UMC.

"I realized through the small groups that I give others too much power when I react to their feedback with feigned nonchalance, defensiveness, anger and fear," she said. "I had developed a habit of allowing unsolicited comments to negatively affect my mood and increase my stress level. I was giving people too much power over me. Moving from an inward mindset has the potential for more effective ministry while alleviating my mood and relieving stress."

Valosin said she felt confident knowing that instead of defending herself, she could be curious about staff and congregants' needs while creatively trying to adjust her efforts to be helpful.

Rev. Todd Lattig of First UMC in Newton thought Ferrell's book, plenary sessions and the Convocation workshops offered helpful and valuable discussions.

"Conflict is a reality in all churches and having the resources and training to approach conflict resolution in a graceful, Christian manner is vital ministry," he said.

Lattig described his experience of viewing 'the other' as a human being who has needs and growing points rather than as an object one needs to change was precisely at the heart of the Gospel.

"The call for self-reflection as a means of gauging how one is relating to any other person is a huge part of the



Convocation provided a time for questions, discussion and fellowship, as participants interacted with keynote speaker Jim Ferrell and spent time sharing with one another about their church contexts. Photo by Josh Kinney

process and that part is often lacking or non-existent in some ways," he said. "I found that the Convocation theme was not only important but timely for so many of us in the midst of our ministries."

However, Lattig described the part that gave him most joy was fellowship and getting to reconnect with people he knows and loves but doesn't get to see as often as he would like.

"That is always a joy," he said. "Also meeting new people and getting the blessing of hearing their story or journey. In fact, those sorts of relational engagements are what inspire me most in ministry as a whole."

Randall and Steele concurred with Lattig's sentiment.

Steele was thrilled at the opportunity to bring her daughter whom she said: "had the time of her life and is still talking about it." She added, "Finding opportunities like this for clergy and families to

come together is so important to me as I want my children to meet and network with other pastor's kids in GNJ."

The fellowship at Convocation also provided opportunities to develop new collegial friendships with clergy in GNJ.

"The fellowship among those attended was great," said Randall. "It has always been a time to gather with colleagues and share local church activities, personal endeavors, and acquire support to continue to move in the direction of building God's Kingdom."

"I thought the Ocean Place Resort was an environment conducive to making learning engaging, meaningful and encouraged participants to enjoy an atmosphere in a quality setting. This year's Convocation made available worship experiences where faith, tears, laughter and praising God set the tone for leadership learning activities each day."

*"The Bishop's Clergy Convocation is for me a time for rest, renewal, and recharging. Spending time with colleagues and friends at this yearly getaway enlivens me and helps me return to the work of ministry with new hope and the reassurance that what we do matters. Convocation is about making new friends, reconnecting with old ones, enjoying hearty laughter over good meals, joyfully worshipping, singing through tears, hearing inspired preaching, sharing deep hurts, holding hands and each other's hearts; absorbing all, becoming better clergy, becoming better human beings" - Rev. Blair Goold, Island Heights UMC*

## NAVIGATING SPECIAL SESSIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

In February, at a Special Session of the General Conference, United Methodists throughout the world will come together to discern how our denomination will move forward concerning issues of human sexuality in the church.

### GNJ HAS DEVELOPED:

- Resources for congregations
- A Prayer Ministry
- FAQs
- Delegate Messages
- News Articles

### DISCUSSION AND LISTENING SESSIONS OPEN TO ALL

January 3, 13, and 30, 2019 | [Register online at gnjumc.org](http://Register online at gnjumc.org)

### SPECIAL CLERGY SESSION OF GNJ

January 24, 2019 at 9:00 a.m.

Calvary Korean UMC | 572 Ryders Lane, East Brunswick, NJ

For clergy to receive an update and info on The Way Forward and Special General Conference. | [Register online at gnjumc.org](http://Register online at gnjumc.org)

### SPECIAL SESSION OF GNJ CLERGY AND LAITY

March 16, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. | [An official letter will be sent in January](http://An official letter will be sent in January)

For clergy and laity to hear reports from the GNJ Delegation and Bishop Schol to discern how GNJ will move forward together.



To access, visit: [gnjumc.org/the-way-forward](http://gnjumc.org/the-way-forward)



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# We are God's Miracle

## A Series on Miracles in our Midst



When Donna Netram, a certified lay speaker who worships at Roselle UMC, picked up her daughter and her friend from the airport after a vacation, she began feeling sick. Netram was developing a fever and her daughter ended up having to drive her to the emergency room.

The ER sent her home with a prescription, but it didn't seem to work. She returned a second time, was treated and released, but still she felt unwell. For the next week she continued to feel worse and by the following Sunday her daughter drove her back to the hospital where she was admitted for further tests.

It was August 23, 2015, the day before Netram's 55th birthday. After the testing, she was brought back to her room where the doctor introduced himself and said that she would have to go into surgery immediately because her system was compromised.

In the past, Netram had suffered with diverticulitis, a condition in the digestive

system. She had been hospitalized before for this condition and the doctors had treated her successfully. This time was different. After surgery, she awoke with tubes everywhere. They had to remove a large portion of her colon and she had reconstructive surgery.

Throughout this experience she never asked 'why me?' Without the surgery she would have died on her birthday.

At age 55 she was given what she considered a new lease on life. She viewed the situation as a turn around and she thanked God for sparing her life.

"It wasn't easy," she said, "but I was thankful to God that my situation was not permanent."

Netram underwent a second procedure to complete the treatment. Throughout the process she was thankful to her family who supported and cared for her.

"I am a miracle walking today," she said. "I could have died, but now I live and tell of God's goodness, love and mercy. I am a walking miracle and God is still in the business of healing and creating miracles, everywhere."

*Do you have a miracle story you would like to share? Email Josh Kinney, Editorial Manager at [jkinney@gnjumc.org](mailto:jkinney@gnjumc.org)*

The February 2019 issue deadline is January 16, 2019

## 2019 GNJ Award Nominations

Each year, individuals and congregations in GNJ are recognized for their discipleship and achievements. Recipients are announced in the 2019 pre-conference journal. Nominations for these awards are being accepted through Feb. 8, 2019. For more info, visit [gnjumc.org](http://gnjumc.org)



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# BREAKTHROUGH

A GNJ guide to best practices for worship

A resource designed to provide easy to use best practices and worship series so that GNJ congregations can re-tune their worship, spend less time preparing the details and focus on what really matters – preaching the gospel to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world.

Check out these worship series available now!

## WORSHIP SERIES TITLES:

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Creative Graphics + Resources  
Song & Hymn Suggestions  
Videos

Find out more and download today:

[www.gnjumc.org/breakthrough](http://www.gnjumc.org/breakthrough)

# Conference Happenings

## Nominate a Leader in Your Congregation for Laity Recognition

Each year, the Laity Board recognizes creativity and innovation in ministries led by GNJ laity. To nominate someone in your congregation or to find out more, visit [gnjumc.org/lay-ministry-recognition](http://gnjumc.org/lay-ministry-recognition). Deadline for submission is Feb. 15.

## First UMC Sows a Good Seed

The congregation and UMW of First UMC of Bridgeton partnered with the Community Food Bank of NJ and community volunteers to help feed over 90 families and provide bag lunch for school children. Rev. Dr. John Randall and congregant Eva Love led the effort to distribute fresh produce from the parsonage. Randall indicated "the church is always doing something in the life of the community."



## General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegate Nominations

GNJ is electing delegates for the 2020 General and Jurisdictional Conferences of the United Methodist Church during the Annual Conference in Wildwood on May 19-21. Nominations are being accepted through Feb. 15.

## Annual Conference Legislation and Reports

All committees and agencies of GNJ are called to submit reports to be included in the pre-conference journal. To submit reports and or legislation visit: [gnjumc.org/2019-annual-conference](http://gnjumc.org/2019-annual-conference)

## 2018 Workers' Compensation Payroll Audit Forms – Jan. 15

Look for the customized 2018 Workers' Compensation Payroll Audit Forms which were mailed to every church on Dec. 1 by Church Mutual. The audit covers 2018 payroll for both church and church-controlled nursery school workers. Completed audits are due Jan.15. Visit [gnjumc.org/insurance](http://gnjumc.org/insurance) for details.

## Shared Ministry and Billing - Jan. 16

Shared ministry is at the foundation of United Methodism. The deadline for churches to submit shared ministry and conference billing for 2018 by Jan. 16, 2019. Visit [gnjumc.org/finance-administration/shared-ministry](http://gnjumc.org/finance-administration/shared-ministry) for details.

# Regional Training Opportunities

GNJ is holding leadership training based on region and or district, for both new and returning leaders serving in Staff Parish Relations, Trustees, Finance/Treasurer, Ad Board/Church Council, and Lay Leader/Lay Member to Annual Conference.

- Skylands District: Jan. 19 at First UMC in Newton, NJ.
- Central Region: Jan. 26 at Medford UMC in Medford, NJ.
- Gateway North District: Jan. 26 at Morrow UMC in Maplewood, NJ.
- Southern Region: Jan. 27 at Pittman UMC in Pittman, NJ.
- Palisades District: Feb. 2 at Bethany Wayne UMC in Wayne, NJ.

For detailed info and to register, visit [gnjumc.org/events](http://gnjumc.org/events)

# Job Opportunities

- Director of Worship – GNJ
- Worship and Ministry Coordinator – GNJ
- Executive Director - A Future With Hope
- Director of Preschool and After School Programming at Camp YDP - A Future With Hope

To view all job descriptions and apply, visit [gnjumc.org/job-opportunities](http://gnjumc.org/job-opportunities)



# Abundant Choices For Seniors

United Methodist Communities brings compassionate care to New Jersey's seniors with our full suite of living and care options. This includes affordable senior housing; home care with HomeWorks; and assisted living, memory care, long-term care, rehabilitation, and hospice and palliative care in our full service communities. We offer independent living for active seniors in our continuing care retirement community.

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Call 732-922-9800 for additional information or visit our website, [UMCommunities.org](http://UMCommunities.org).



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# Obituaries

**Rev. Nyada G. Clarke**, Retired Associate Member, died on Dec. 2, 2018. A memorial service was held on Dec. 8, 2018 at Mt. Hope UMC in Salem, NJ. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent in memory of Nyada G. Clarke to Mt. Hope UMC, 364 E. Broadway, Salem, NJ 08079. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Roxanne Bunting, 423 E. Broadway, Salem, NJ 08079.

**Rev. Dr. June D. Hewitt**, Retired Elder died on Dec. 12, 2018. A memorial service was held on Dec. 22, 2018 at Resurrection UMC in Durham, NC. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent in memory of Rev. Dr. June D. Hewitt to Resurrection UMC, 4705 Old Chapel Hill Road, Durham, NC 27707. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Donna Davis, 3411 Angus Road, Durham, NC 27705.





# Miracles Everywhere

## Thank you for support of the Miracles Everywhere Campaign!

The generosity of Greater New Jersey congregations is a miracle.

In 6 short months since the campaign was launched, we have seen 9 churches run campaigns with their congregations. We have commitments from 63 more who will be running campaigns in the first quarter of 2019.

*Will your congregation join them?*

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### The Miracles Everywhere Campaign will raise \$5.2 million which will help:

*young mothers in Trenton nurture and clothe their babies  
with the support of a new Hope Center*

*teenagers on a road to discipleship through Next Generation Ministries*

*tools and resources for clergy in Tanzania at the GNJ Pastor School*

*the people of Puerto Rico rebuild after Hurricane Maria.*

**Join the campaign.**

Access resources at:  
[gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere](http://gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere)



For more information and to confirm  
your congregation will be a part of  
miracles in Greater New Jersey:

Contact Michaela Murray-Nolan  
Director of Development

732.359.1045

[mmurraynolan@gnjumc.org](mailto:mmurraynolan@gnjumc.org)