

# THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

Volume LXIII

MARCH 2019

No. 3

## General Conferences Passes Traditional Plan

By Josh Kinney in collaboration with United Methodist News (UMN)  
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ST. LOUIS - The Special General Conference of The United Methodist Church gathered in St. Louis, MO on February 24-26, and passed the Traditional Plan for the United Methodist Way Forward in a vote of 438 to 384. This plan affirms the present policies in The Book of Discipline which prohibits same gender weddings and ordination of gays and lesbians. This plan was preferred over the One Church Plan, a plan sent forth by U.S. United Methodist Bishop's, by giving annual conferences, congregations, and clergy greater flexibility to make decisions based on individual and communal convictions as well as the needs of specific ministry contexts regarding the LGBTQ community.

The special legislative session was called by bishops to try to deal with the denomination's long conflict over human sexuality. General Conference is The United Methodist Church's top legislative assembly, comprising delegates from around the world.

The effects of the legislation that passed remain unclear given constitutional questions that will be addressed by the Judicial Council, the denomination's Supreme Court, which meets in April. Parts of the plan have already been declared unconstitutional. The final rulings from the council will likely not be received for several months.

"We continue to teach and believe that all persons are welcomed in the church, all persons are persons of sacred worth and we welcome all to receive the ministry of Jesus. Human sexuality is a topic



Delegate Shayla Jordan (at microphone) speaks in support of the One Church Plan during the 2019 United Methodist General Conference in St. Louis. She is surrounded by other young adult delegates including GNJ's Bethany Amy Sutton and her son Colin. Photo by Mike DuBose, UMNS

on which people of faith have differing views," said Bishop Ken Carter, President of the Council of Bishops, after the conference ended. "Despite our differences, we will continue to work together to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and share God's love with all people."

At the close of the Special Session, United Methodists tried to come to terms with a gathering that was meant to unify

but instead underscored divisions and had all sides acknowledging a high level of pain.

"Personally, I experienced the church more contentious and divided at this General Conference, than any of the previous seven General Conference I have attended," said Bishop John Schol. "GNJ is clearly a model for our church for how to honor difference, and in the midst of difference, to respect one another. We

recognize that we are in ministry with LGBTQ people in different ways. I came away from this General Conference appreciating even more the rich diversity and different expressions of GNJ. We have been a continued example of Christ-like love and grace in the midst of difference which makes me proud to be GNJ's bishop."

In a statement, Bishop Schol ad-  
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## Interfaith Collaboration Makes God Visible in Hightstown



An interfaith day of action on Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day united youth and family from the Hightstown community with a desire to serve. Photo provided

By Josh Kinney  
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HIGHTSTOWN - An interfaith day of action on Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day united youth and family from the Hightstown community with a desire to serve. First United Methodist Church of Hightstown partnered with La Convivencia, an interfaith nonprofit lead by local lay leaders in the Windsor-Hightstown area, for a meal and toiletry packing service project that brought together Christians, Muslims, Jews, Bahai's, and Hindus. Local faith leaders took part in the event by holding a panel discussion on King's life and how it has impacted the way communi-



ties work for social justice.

The family-friendly partnership event was the culmination of a goal inspired by First UMC's work with Team Vital in 2016. The church honed in on what it felt it lacked most - becoming a more missional and visible presence.

The Mission Team, a sub group that formed out of Team Vital, got to work brainstorming ideas. In December 2018, they asked their congregation to bake homemade goods for personal delivery to police, fire, first responders and the local housing authority. The response was huge.

"The whole church wanted to get involved to make this happen," said the  
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## New Leadership at A Future With Hope

By Josh Kinney  
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NEPTUNE - A Future With Hope is welcoming a new executive director and board leadership as it continues forward with its mission to provide renewal for communities across Greater New Jersey. At a February meeting, the Board of

Trustees affirmed the hiring of Richard (Rick) Reinhard as the new Executive Director, elected Rev. Chris Heckert as the new Board chair and Niurca Louis as the Vice Chair.

"I am delighted that Bishop Schol and the Board of Trustees have seen fit to appoint me as Executive Director," said Reinhard.

Most of Reinhard's career has been spent working at public-private partnerships that have been dedicated to improving communities. For the past three

years he has worked in Washington, D.C. as Chief Administrative Officer of the General Board of Church and Society, the social justice arm of The United Methodist Church.

"This position with A Future With Hope gives me the opportunity to marry my career skills with my Christian beliefs, assisting the local churches of GNJ in improving their properties in sensible yet innovative ways," said Reinhard.

Reinhard spent more than three decades improving cities, leading or-

ganizations in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors throughout the U.S., Canada and the U.K. He has managed Business Improvement Districts and similar Downtown organizations in Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Buffalo, Richmond, and Londonderry, Northern Ireland. Reinhard served as Chief of Staff to the mayor of Buffalo and Chief Operating Officer of a Toronto-based real estate development corporation. While working as a consultant to Buffalo's mayor, Rein-

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# A Message from the Bishop



## Thrive

Have you ever noticed that there are some people who thrive in the midst of winter, during life's greatest challenges, while others have a hard time recovering? Why do some people thrive while others get stuck and even regress?

Here are a couple of things I have noticed along the way that make the difference between thriving and being static or even regressing.

1. Do not see yourself as a victim. We have all been victimized in life. There are some who choose to live out of their victimization and others learn from their challenges and find a different path forward. Many people in the city of New Orleans felt victimized this past January when their beloved football team, the Saints, lost the National Football League Championship on a bad call by a referee. It wasn't just a loss, it was a loss that meant they would not be in the Super Bowl, the premier football game of the year. More than ego, the team and city lost millions of dollars that would have resulted from a championship team. The people of New Orleans, the mayor and even the governor protested and said the game should be played over. It was an injustice. Yet there were players who recognized the Saints had other opportunities to score points but didn't and this also contributed to the loss. The big test will come when the Saints take the field next season. They are a great team. Will they play like they were cheated out of a trip to the Super Bowl or will they play like the champions they are? Being a victim is paralyzing. Honest accurate assessments lead to learning and new ways of acting and being.
2. Choose the people you connect with wisely. Associate with encouragers and you will find yourself beginning to thrive. Choose negative people and they will help you look at everything through the eyes of winter. Not only choose encouragers, but be an encourager to those around you. When you thrive, everyone has the opportunity to thrive.
3. Look for opportunity and possibility. People who thrive look at situations and inside themselves to find possibility. Jesus often asked someone before healing them, do you have faith? In other words, in the midst of your illness, your darkest challenges, do you believe that God can work something greater in you? Do you believe in the possibility that your life can be different through God's grace and healing?

Not seeing yourself as a victim, choosing encouragers and looking for opportunity is how Jesus lived his life. He never allowed himself to become a victim but demonstrated wisdom and power in the midst of his persecutors.

Jesus chose people who may not have been the smartest or the most faithful but who believed God was doing a new thing. He surrounded himself with people who believed.

Jesus saw opportunity in tragedy, loss, failure, disease, storms and every other challenge that came along. God was ready to do something new.

We have just come through one of the most challenging General Conferences in our history. People are hurt, on both sides, people are discouraged, on both sides, and people feel beaten back. It is a United Methodist winter. Yet I have heard of courageous stories of Sunday morning worship in which clergy leaders led their congregations through liturgy, message and action to reclaim who God made and

called them to be. I have heard of leaders calling their people to a time of prayer and discernment of what God has next. They did not let themselves become victims, but looked to what God had next.

There were other churches who never mentioned it on Sunday, never asked, "Now what, God?"

God has a great future ahead for leaders, congregations and our denomination if we recognize this is the springtime of renewal and revival. There will be another General Conference in May of 2020 and we will be right back at it, same issues, same arguments, same fear and concern. Some will be hoping for a different result and some praying to hold the line. But God is asking, what are you going to do today because we live in a world that preys on people's winter? How will you be spring? How will you continue our call to transform the world as we make disciples of Christ and grow vital congregations?

I want to thank you for all the words of encouragement you have sent me, all the ways you lift me out of victimization, and all the ways you let me lead us toward God's great opportunities. Together we will serve so that the world sees Christ in and through us, even in the winter.

Keep the faith!

Bishop John Schol  
The United Methodist Church  
of Greater New Jersey

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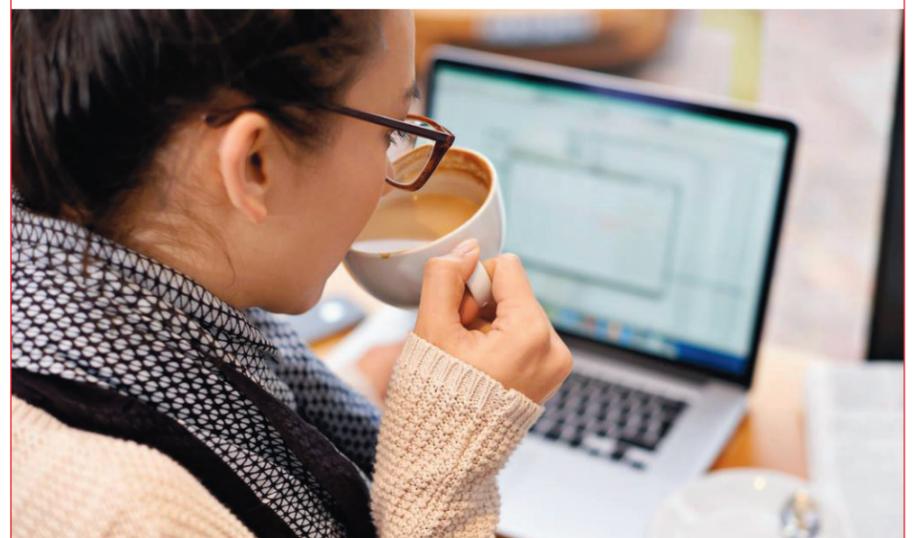
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# THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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# TIME

Do someone else's chores.  
Tell someone why you are grateful for them.  
Volunteer at a food bank or animal shelter.  
Visit a friend in the hospital or care facility.

# TALENT

Make something homemade and share it with a neighbor.  
Use your talent to benefit the ministry of your church.  
Knit prayer shawls.

**Suggestions for growing stewardship during Lent and preparing for Easter!**

# STEWARDSHIP IN THE SEASON OF LENT

The season of Lent is a time to give intentional focus to our relationship with God and others. It is an opportunity to consider what it means to steward the gifts God has given us; our time, talent and the world around us. It is typically a time to consider making a sacrifice or "giving up" something. Rather than solely "giving up" something during Lent, add or "take on" something new. These things can vary from day to day. During Lent and every day we are called to live lives as stewards of God's gifts.



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# TREASURE

Consider tithing to deepen your spiritual life.  
Pay for the person behind you at the drive thru or in line at the store.  
Give up a coffee shop beverage each day during Lent and give the money saved to a ministry.

# ENVIRONMENT

Begin the practice of using reusable shopping bags.  
Be conscientious about recycling.  
Cut down on single use plastics.



UNITED METHODISTS  
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

# Connectional Goals Enrich Church, Community and World

By Josh Kinney  
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Understanding the connectional bonds between faithful service to their church and the global community led the members of the United Methodist Church of Spring Valley to seek a path toward meeting their shared ministry goals in 2018.

"We worked hard to educate our members and ourselves about the missionary nature of our church and how meeting our goals could not only enrich our communities, but would also pay forward bountiful blessings within our church walls by showcasing our strength as a community of believers who share a love of Jesus Christ," said Karla Jones-Penn, Spring Valley UMC Finance Ministry Chair.

The church has met its shared ministry goals two years in a row through educating members in a special time of "Moment for Mission."

"Each Sunday in 2016, I took five to seven minutes in service and highlighted a local, national and or global mission of The United Methodist Church," said Spring Valley Pastor Kay Dubuisson. "In 2017, I used scripture to teach about giving, tithing and offering our best to God."

Dubuisson taught about being good stewards of the gifts given by God. Her teaching led the congregation to apply for

grants to fund the church's breakfast and food pantry ministry as well as consider the missions they should discontinue.

"The teaching doesn't stop," she said. "I continue to teach and hold a stewardship campaign every October. It's a continuous and gentle reminder to always put God first in our lives."

In 2016, Rev. Blair Goold was blessed to be appointed to Island Heights UMC, a church where the previous pastor, together with the wisdom of the finance team and help from GNJ, combined to strategize the turnaround of the church's financial health.

"Times had indeed been tough, and only a few years earlier the church was unable to contribute any amount to shared ministry," stated Goold.

A five year financial recovery plan was in place with the goal that the church would participate 100% in shared ministry by 2019. The goal was reached sooner when the congregation hit 100% of their shared ministry in January 2018, a full year ahead of schedule.

"Members at Island Heights UMC are like many members across our denomination," said Goold. "They are generous. Their generosity is inspired when they are connected to and understand the mission. To be a United Methodist is to be connectional, and our responsibility to shared ministry contributions reflects that connection."

One of Goold's goals was to raise the level of awareness of that responsibility by focusing on it in Finance Committee and Church Council meetings, and moving from a standard offering in worship services to moments of witness and encouragements which led to joyful and generous giving.

"This has moved us to a position of increased giving," he said. "Specifically communicating how shared ministry contributions are used in missional terms is necessary. When givers can relate to the mission and be assured that money given is being used effectively and wisely, generosity follows."

Effectively and consistently communicating missional giving goals at all levels of the church to congregations who are already inclined to generosity has led to Island Heights UMC remarkable financial turnaround.

Historically, St. Matthew's UMC in Delair struggled to reach their shared ministry goal. According to Rev. Shawn Kerry Forman, the congregation lacked education and perception.

"The education portion was informing the church body about what it was and that we had not been doing our fair share as far as the connectional church is concerned," said Forman who explained there was also a perception that the congregation had better things to do with

their offerings.

Forman began to have the Finance Committee speak twice per month during worship about what shared giving does for children, students at historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Africa University in Zimbabwe.

"It's much more than sending money to the conference," said Forman.

Bishop Schol along with Gateway South District Superintendent Myrna Bethke spoke at the church one evening in July, shaking hands and connecting on a personal, heartfelt level.

"That evening went a long way in tearing down walls and changing perceptions," said Forman.

The congregation voted to pay shared giving in full.

"I thank the people of St. Matthew's for their faith in God, the Finance Committee for their leadership, and GNJ for guidance during this time of change," stated Forman.

"The foundation of The United Methodist Church is connectionalism," said Bishop John Schol. "The connections mean we can do more good together than we can do alone. This is what shared ministry and connectional giving is in the United Methodist Church. Our membership is a whole – a whole of many parts that, when connected, makes big impacts."

## Interfaith Collaboration Makes God Visible in Hightstown

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church's pastor, Rev. Sammy Arroyo. "We wanted to start easy but meaningful."

As the Mission Team continued asking how their church could become more missional, they decided to partner with outside organizations in the community already involved with serving and invite them into their church space. This led to a partnership with La Convivencia, which means to coexist, a multicultural and interfaith organization whose mission is to honor and celebrate the differences and shared values of a pluralistic community based on principles of acceptance, trust and mutual respect. By uniting a diverse citizenry through community service, civic engagement, and community dialogues, the organization seeks to create

"That was pretty cool to see; interfaith kids working together, hearts desiring to serve. We were all one people that day."

Bilal Sultan, a high school sophomore and co-founder of La Convivencia, opened the event by celebrating Dr. King's legacy.

"King's life was important in making a step forward towards civil rights for all," stated Sultan. "His work was of tremendous importance and it is crucial to take the same steps he took to get closer to equality for everyone."

Sultan spoke of King's involvement in seeking economic justice for the poor and oppressed and how community service is a shared core value.

"Our purpose today as we continue this struggle with our day of service at



Rev. Sammy Arroyo of First UMC in Hightstown (left) stands with Bilal Sultan (right), a high school sophomore and co-founder of the nonprofit group La Convivencia. Photo provided



An interfaith day of action at First UMC in Hightstown left participants with a determination to serve the less fortunate and follow the example of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. Photo provided

a more inclusive and peaceful society that values the traditions of all faiths, ethnicities and cultures.

With a structure in place for an MLK Day of Service, First UMC served as host and provided volunteers. Participants packed food and toiletry bags, moving from table stations where they sorted donated clothing, drew pictures, wrote notes and made postcards to place in bags.

"The youth led the activities and the adults just followed suit," said Arroyo.

First United Methodist Church in Hightstown is to serve humanity no matter their background."

Sultan encouraged participants to leave with a determination to serve the less fortunate and follow King's role model.

Arroyo was overwhelmed by the amount of food donated to the day's event.

"We didn't expect that much," he said. "But it wasn't just about how much food or how many bags we packed but the

idea of bringing together people of different faiths to pack them. It was a moving experience to see that unfold, especially watching kids of all ages involved."

Arroyo joined the panel alongside an Imam of a mosque in Princeton and a Rabbi from Pennsylvania.

"We wanted people there to understand that it's not always how the media portrays it to be; pitting us against each other," stated Arroyo. "We broke this stereotype by showing what unites us and how we can learn and come together

without compromising our beliefs but working in partnership."

Youth were given an opportunity to share their thoughts with the panel. Arroyo described a particularly moving instance in which a 13-year-old Muslim girl quoted Jesus' call to help one another in Matthew 25.

"We all live together in the same community with diverse thinking and viewpoints," said Arroyo. "Churches should challenge themselves to work with others while at the same time showing they love Christ by caring for those who don't share their faith. We all share the same space and should work together to better our communities. We are a multi-faith, multiethnic nation, and the church has a responsibility to ensure that we live and work together in love and respect."

Arroyo encouraged churches to step outside their walls and their comfort zones and "worship God with our hands and feet" proclaiming the Gospel with "action and mission."

"The new partnership between our church and La Convivencia is opening new doors and making God visible to the community," said Arroyo. "When we love one another and live in harmony, God is truly made visible. And this is how we do it."

For more information about First UMC of Hightstown visit [hightstownmethodist.org](http://hightstownmethodist.org) or email Rev. Sammy Arroyo at [pastorsammy07@gmail.com](mailto:pastorsammy07@gmail.com) if interested in navigating interfaith conversations and partnerships in community.

To learn more about La Convivencia visit [laconvivencia.org](http://laconvivencia.org)

# Soul Café Feeds Bodies and Spirits, Brings People to Christ

By Denise Herschel  
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PINE HILL - One year ago the Soul Cafe Supper and Service was launched on a cold January evening. Spaghetti and meatballs along with bread and salad were served at a supper table in the basement of the Memorial United Methodist Church in Pine Hill. Melodic clinks of silverware and conversation resonated across cozy family-style tables adorned with cloth and candles. Of the 19 who attended, 14 had never been to church. Week after week, through word of mouth, the church café experienced a steady increase of attendees.

Since the birth of the Soul Cafe Supper and Service, the church has blossomed into a place where people can feed their bodies as well as their spirits. According to Rev. Chereese Evans, Pastor of Memorial UMC (Pine Hill) and Magnolia UMC 300 in Magnolia, the ministry's concept is simple - "Come to the table where God and community meet and most importantly, come as you are."

"We begin each evening with a welcome, grace, supper and then a transition song to lead us into worship," said Evans. "We do not leave the table. We have prayer, reading of scripture, singing and Communion like every other church but we keep it simple, involve all

in worship and have witnessed incredible results. Since our launch we have had over 200 people at this location and baptized one child, seven adults and 18 others who have accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior."

According to Evans, Memorial UMC used to be a traditional congregation that had become stagnant over time with people in the pews not reflecting the community in which they were located.

"In an attempt to reach the community, in May 2017 we began a food pantry to help neighbors in need along with a library, with the idea of feeding people, body and mind, which we named Soul Cafe," she said. "It was an outreach ministry, however, we could not get the people we saw Wednesday evening into our church Sunday morning."

In November 2017, the congregation



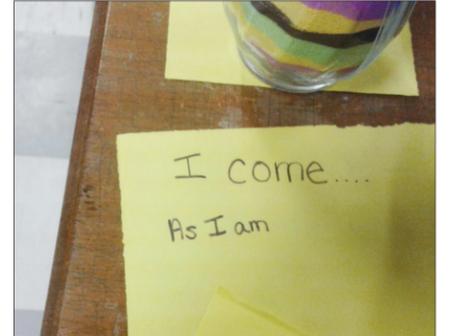
The Soul Café concept is simple - "Come to the table where God and community meet, and most importantly, come as you are." Photo provided

was lamenting a conversation of closure.

"I called District Superintendent Myrna Bethke to discuss how we should proceed," said Evans. "While having this conversation I said almost jokingly, 'if it were up to me we would worship on Wednesday because that's when the community is in the building' and she responded, 'well why don't you?' I had no desire to add a service as I was already pastoring another congregation. But in a Hail Mary effort to save the church, I proposed the idea of Soul Cafe Supper and Service to the council and taking the risk of closing down Sunday morning worship and beginning Wednesday evening worship. In a last ditch effort, they voted yes and we began the transition."

The success of the Soul Cafe Supper and Service can be attributed to Evan's conversations with those at the food pantry.

"I learned many had a yearning to feed their spirit which was why Soul Cafe was born," she continued. "We want all people to feel welcome and know they can come



A note on one of the tables at the Soul Café written by a participant. Photo provided

as they are. We want all people to know they have a place at the table. We want all people to know they are of sacred worth. We purposefully do church around a dinner table because we feel it allows people to interact and connect in a way church pews cannot."

After six months, they decided "to test the waters" and see if the concept or

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Community members at the Soul Cafe Super and Service stand together in prayer, affirming their sacred worth. Photo provided

## New Leadership at A Future With Hope

Continued from page 1

hard developed the successful Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus; the number one economic development initiative in western New York.

As an adjunct faculty member, Reinhard has taught planning and public policy at six major research universities. With Robert Shibley, Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning, he co-founded the Urban Design Land Institute, American Institute of Architects, and International Downtown Association.

The depth of this experience will be a great benefit to A Future With Hope. The organization was founded by United Methodists in Greater New Jersey in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy to assist in relief and long term recovery efforts and serve as the mission arm of the conference for churches and communities. The 2019-2023 GNJ Strategic Plan calls for the development of 30 Hope Centers in the next five years. Hope Centers are church-based community ministry that meets the needs of the community and serves children, youth, families, seniors and vulnerable populations.

Reinhard continued, "I am in awe of the accomplishments of A Future With Hope over the past few years in its tremendous efforts to assist New Jersey's recovery from Superstorm Sandy. I think its motto of 'relief, repair, rebuild, renew' remains true as the organization moves into its future mission."

The Board also elected a new slate of officers including Rev. Chris Heckert of Haddonfield UMC as the new Board Chair, replacing Bruce Hartman who has served as Board Chair for the last

five years.

"It's a great privilege to serve in this role," said Heckert. "I was able to be present at the early stages of A Future With Hope and was a part of imagining this future. Where we're moving today is not a new direction but continuation of our original vision to move beyond storm relief and into the development and strengthening of our communities."

Niurca Louis was elected as Vice Chair. She has been an active Board member for the last three years and has served as the Vice President of Prevention Services at Robin's Nest, Inc. She recently accepted the position of Assistant Commissioner of the Prevention Division of the Department of Children and Families.

"This is great news that we are staying the course and going deeper into our communities to spread hope," said Bishop John Schol. "I am encouraged by the leadership Richard will bring to this mission and for Chris and Niurca's new roles on the Board of Trustees. It's through our work, generosity, and dedication to loving our communities that we will be bearers of hope."

Greater New Jersey's Miracles Everywhere Campaign is raising \$6.2 million with \$1.25 dedicated to A Future With Hope to develop Hope Centers to serve communities with affordable housing, job training and development, and children, youth and social services. To learn how you can be a part of the campaign, visit [gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere](http://gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere) or learn more about A Future With Hope at [afuturewithhope.org](http://afuturewithhope.org)



## GROWING YOUR UNITED METHODIST MEN: A GNJ WORKSHOP

Featuring: Rev. Dr. Richard Vance, Center for Men's Ministry, GCUMM

All members of UMMs, or those who want to start UMMs, will want to attend this one time workshop in NJ to hear Rev. Dr. Richard Vance offer proven suggestions for increasing UMM participation in our churches.

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There are many facets of men's ministry. Caring for men in the church, while reaching out in the community to the younger men who may be "missing in action" can be a challenge. Dr. Rick Vance from the Center for Men's Ministry at GCUMM will offer suggestions to grow and connect men in effective and accountable ministry. He will also offer insight on how to reach into your local community to live out a vision that every man in the church and your community may have an "on-growing" relationship with Jesus Christ.

Due to space limitations, there are only 150 places available.

Register online at:

[www.gnjumc.org/united-methodist-men](http://www.gnjumc.org/united-methodist-men)

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# IGNITE Youth Leader's Day Builds Connections, Stretches Reach

By Josh Kinney  
jkinney@gnjumc.org

EAST BRUNSWICK - Over 100 youth leaders gathered to worship, learn, and replenish at the third annual IGNITE Youth Leaders Day on February 9 at Aldersgate UMC in East Brunswick.

"We are building meaningful connections, relationships and experiences for leaders serving the next generation in our churches," said Eric Drew, Director of Next Generation Ministries.

Proof of the program's success lies in the engagement of those in attendance. In order to go deeper and apply lessons, 20 leaders signed up for four-month cohorts to implement their learnings while others signed up for IGNITE, summer camps and retreats. 110 people received free gifts for registering early for IGNITE 2019 and learned the theme which was revealed exclusively to attendees.

"God is doing new and exciting things!" exclaimed Drew. "I'm so proud and encouraged."

Drew was encouraged by the many new faces and churches that came out to the event and how they were met by a community that had gathered to learn and welcome one another for several years.

"It was an incredible feeling of affirmation that we aren't just hosting events or trainings," said Drew. "Next Gen is cultivating healthy communities of students and leaders."

Aqueelah Ligonde, an ordained PC (USA) clergywoman who currently serves as Staff Consultant and Coach with Ministry Architects and Transitional Pastor at Far Rockaway Presbyterian Church was the event's enthusiastic keynote speaker who spoke to taking care of the soul while serving as volunteers or staff in ministry. As a coach with a passion for today's generation of youth, women, and leaders, Ligonde has worked with organizations such as Princeton Seminary's Institute for Youth Ministry and Youth Specialties and serves on the Executive Board of GenOn Ministries, an organization dedicated to intergenerational relationships. For over a decade she served as the Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Jamaica, Queens, NY and worked for The Presbyterian Mission Agency as Field Staff for Racial Ethnic Young Women and the Young Adult Volunteer New York City Site Coordinator.

"For me, it was powerful that she created a lot of space for discussion," stated Drew. "I was moved by the vulnerability of what people shared and the depth of our reflection."

Workshops balanced practical aspects of student ministry, such as small groups and recruiting volunteers, with deep spiritual work of prayer and shepherding others in times of grief.

Megan Dewald, Assistant Director of the Institute for Youth Ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary led a workshop on "doing ministry when life sucks" addressing the different experiences of grief and how to manage the risky work of youth ministry while grieving. The workshop engaged wise practice, self-care, and theological reflection.

Rev. Catherine Jordan-Latham of Simply Grace UMC in Bloomsbury spoke on how to create safe spaces for young people and Mekan Payne, Youth and Young Adult Pastor at Clinton UMC in Hunterdon County, led a workshop on creating a foundation of small groups in youth ministry.

"It was a good day, well planned, very informative, not just for being a youth leader but applying to life too," said Linda Chapurinov of First UMC of Toms River. "Met so many nice people and all the programs that I was able to attend will surely be put to practice."

Erin Raffety, an author and lecturer in Youth, Church and Culture at Princeton Theological Seminary led participants through a workshop on how to grapple with real, practical, structural and sys-

temic barriers to inclusion for youth with disabilities and move beyond the limits placed on their opportunities to lead, contribute and grow in church.

"The workshop reviewed practical approaches to ministry with youth with disabilities, explored case studies and real life challenges and equipped youth leaders with models and strategies for empowering youth with disabilities to leadership across the body of Christ," Raffety stated.

The youth ministry leadership team from Princeton UMC comprised of Erik "Skitch" Matson, Pearl Quick, and Jacob Davis engaged attendees in a workshop on building a youth volunteer team from applications to theological training.

"Ending our last session in prayer for one another impacted me," said Drew. "I was replenished through worship, community and learning."

Trey Gillette, Director of Children and Youth Ministries at Marlton UMC and Media Technologist at Princeton Theological Seminary addressed youth leaders in exploring prayer through journaling and other creative means to focus on enriching one's prayer life.

"It was a day well spent!" said Shaun Connors of Millville. "Amazing Worship, fantastic workshops, awesome people! Much needed! God speaks through



IGNITE Squad young adult volunteers give a "thumbs up" to the fun, excitement, and powerful ministry of Next Generation Ministries in GNJ. Photo provided

His people; I was listening, message received! Thank you for being a loving Father, willing to pursue me until I understand. Replenish."

Many reported leaving the day with a deep sense of gratitude for their community of youth leaders, having connected with new friends from IGNITE as well as church leaders.

"I continue to be amazed at how God is moving and connecting with leaders and students through IGNITE," said

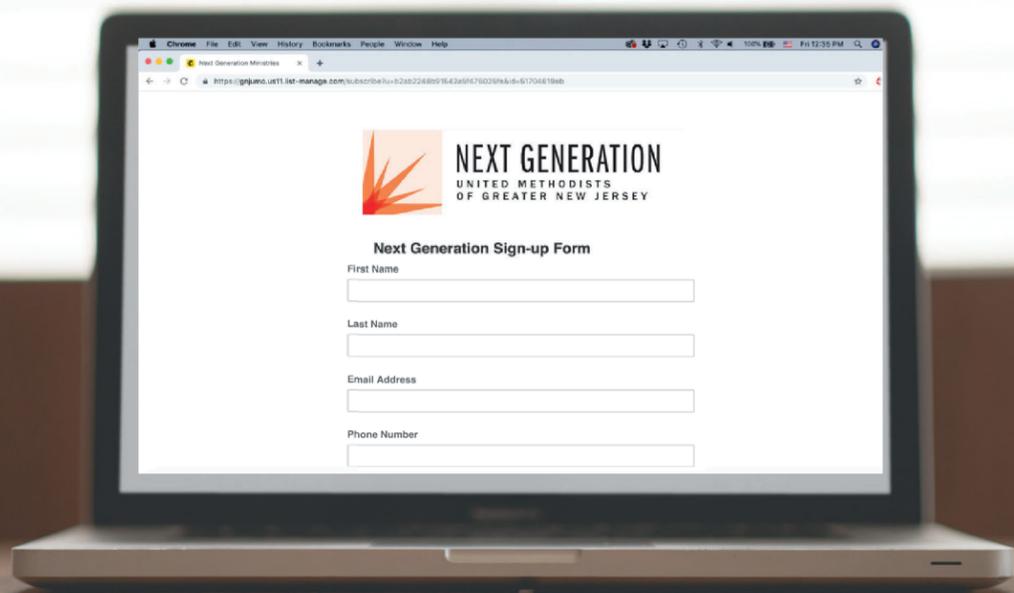
Drew. "Youth Leader's Day has helped us to go deeper, engage more fully and stretch our reach for students who need to encounter the love and grace of Jesus Christ. God has great things to come!"

*If you are interested in group coaching or a learning group and would like to grow deeper in your leadership with the next generation of disciples, please email Eric Drew at edrew@gnjumc.org or sign up for the Next Generation Ministries newsletter at gnjnextgen.org*



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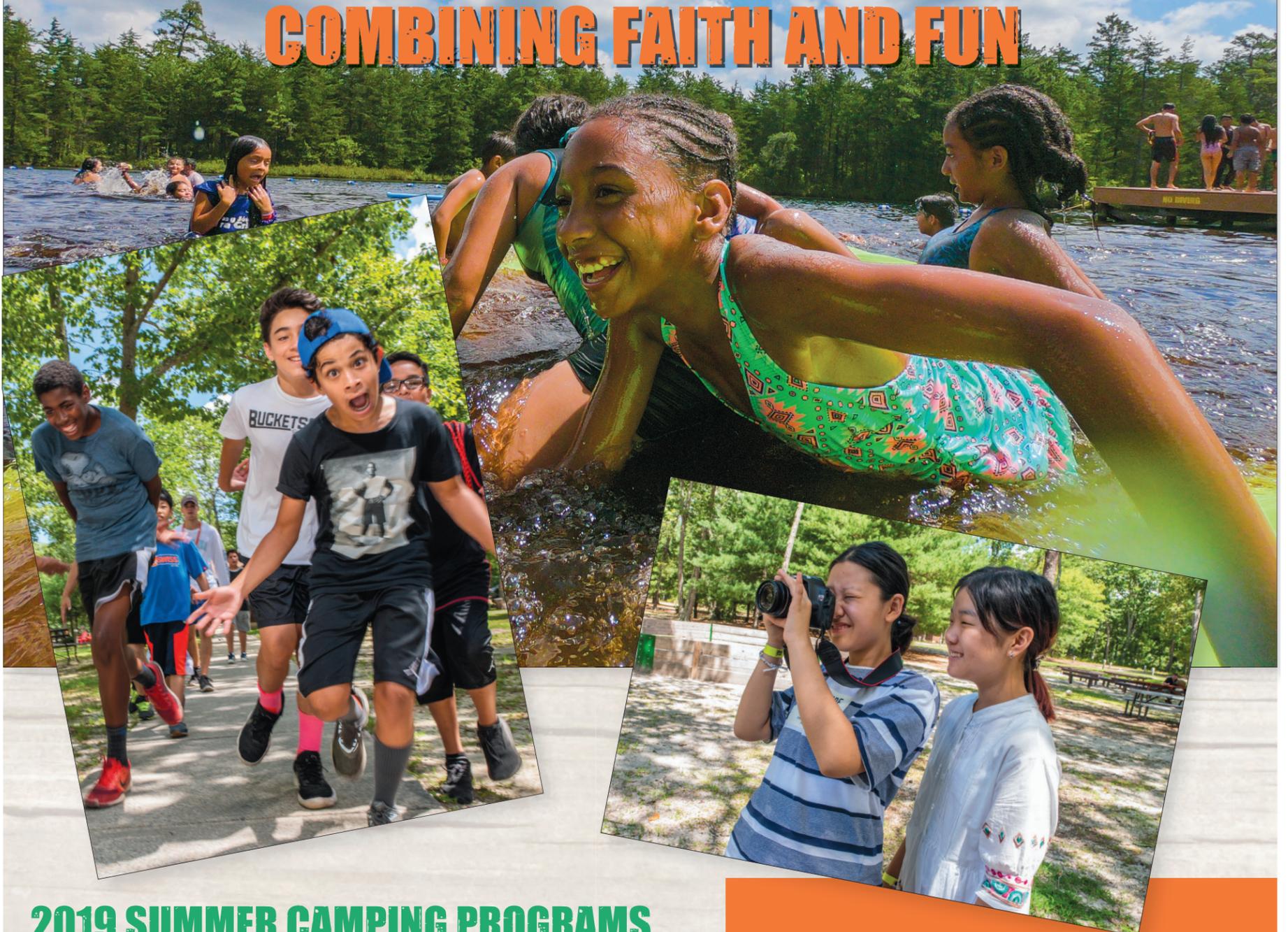
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# “Singin for A Church Van” at Hamilton UMC

By Denise Herschel  
Nj6pack@yahoo.com

NEPTUNE - Hamilton United Methodist Church in Neptune is well-known in the community for its charitable assistance to others including delivering meals to those in need, bringing cookies to shut-in's and visiting the sick. It's also highly regarded for mission work as members have made a priority for almost 20 years to embark annually on the Red Bird Mission to Appalachian Kentucky where they provide aid to a rural, distressed part of the country.

With all the support this church gives to others, they had to ask their local community for a helping hand. In fact, they asked the community to sing for it. The Hamilton UMC recently held a karaoke “Singin’ for a Church Van” fundraiser with all proceeds used to help with the purchase of a new van.

“This was the first time we hosted such an event. We wanted to try a new fundraiser that the community would be interested in and a fun, safe opportunity to gather as a multi-generational community,” said Youth Director Jessica Tilton.

The fundraiser was open to the public with friends and family of the congregation encouraged to join the fun. Karaoke was set up in the church sanctuary and



Students step up to the altar to take part in karaoke at Hamilton UMC in Neptune in a fundraiser for a church van which will be used for mission work. Photo provided

all language-appropriate music was welcome. Participants were asked to contribute \$1.00 for each song. Adult admission was \$10.00 and \$5.00 for children 12 and under.

The Neptune congregation has a goal of raising enough money to purchase a 15-passenger van for mission trips, youth outings, Christmas caroling and other youth group and ministry team events.

“We are hoping to raise as much as possible but at the same time just provide a space for the Neptune community to come and be together,” said Tilton. “Our overall goal is \$25,000 for the van. We will be planning a take-out dinner in the next few months. People can purchase meals in advance off our menu and pick them up in ready-to-go containers at the church to have a home-cooked meal for the night.”

Over 30 came out to the event, raising \$350 towards the van. Tilton continued, “We believe that this karaoke fundraiser was a good fit for our church. We want to be involved with providing space for our community to come together. We want Neptune and our local communities to know our doors are open for them. This is something we never did before and we really hope it will take flight so we can do more events like these in the future.”

# General Conferences Passes Traditional Plan

Continued from page 1

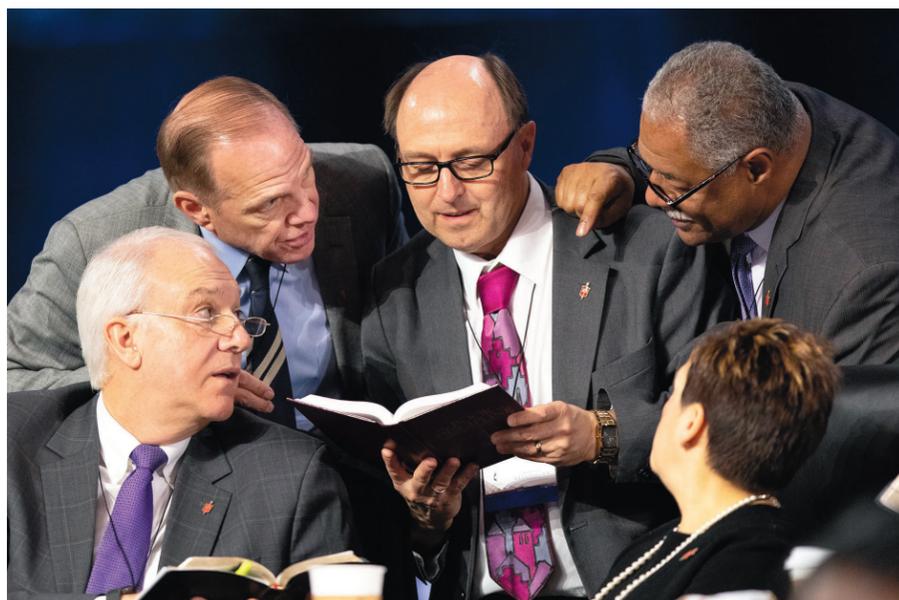
dressed gays and lesbians and their families in GNJ.

“You are welcomed and accepted by me and most of the people of GNJ,” he said. “While our denomination wrestles, we welcome you with the arms of grace found through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You are of sacred worth to God and I, and I pledge to create space for you to worship, serve and engage through The United Methodist Church

of GNJ.”

Schol called upon GNJ clergy and congregations to dedicate themselves to a season of prayer.

“We are a conference in which churches hold different beliefs and understandings and engage in different ministries with gays and lesbians,” he said. “I will lead so that each of our congregations and clergy will have different expressions and ministries and yet serve one God, one Lord Jesus Christ and one mission



Bishops confer over the issue of whether the legislative committee can refer items to the denomination's Judicial Council for review during the 2019 United Methodist General Conference in St. Louis. Clockwise from lower left are Bishops Thomas Bickerton, John Schol, David Bard, Julius C. Trimble and Cynthia Fierro Harvey. Photo by Mike DuBose, UMNS.



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*Celebrating the milestones of our new Lay Servants.*

**LAITY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY: Saturday, September 28, 2019**

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– to transform the world as we make disciples and grow vital congregations. I will be a bishop of the whole church and all of our people.”

Schol acknowledged that challenging days face the church.

“But we are blessed to have creative, resourceful and whole leaders who will guide us through this time,” he said.

Since the legislation is not the official church law until January 1, 2020, for churches in the U.S., the bishops are urging all Methodists to stay focused on the mission that glorifies God and reaches new people with the gospel. The legislation takes effect in churches outside the U.S. after the 2020 General Conference.

**GNJ Special Session on March 16**

On March 16, a Special Session of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference will be held at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft to learn more about the actions of General Conference and how GNJ will move forward together in mission.

Rev. John Edgar, Pastor and Executive Director of The United Methodist Church & Community Development for All People in Columbus, OH, has been asked to address GNJ's Special Session on asset-based community development. Edgar will share how acknowledging God's abundant grace and building relationships can lead to the transformative potential of rejuvenating neighborhoods.

In October 2017, 36 GNJ laity and clergy took a road trip to Columbus to dream, envision, and learn from The United Methodist Church of All People, leaving inspired and equipped to live out what it means to truly be a church of all people.

“We invited Rev. Edgar because it's just as important that we're rooted in and focused on our mission,” said Schol. “And he will speak directly to that.”

All GNJ clergy and laity are asked to attend. Visitors and guests are welcome but must register in advance. For details and to register visit [gnjumc.org](http://gnjumc.org)

## GNJ Special Session to Discuss the Way Forward

A Special Session for all members of GNJ (clergy and laity) will be held **March 16** at Brookdale Community College's Robert J. Collins Arena in Lincroft, NJ, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Visitors and guests are welcome but must register in advance. We will hear reports from GNJ's delegation, Bishop Schol, and discuss how we move forward together. Visit [GNJUMC.ORG](http://GNJUMC.ORG) for details and to register.

## Sherise Alleyne to Lead Camp YDP

By Josh Kinney  
jkinney@gnjumc.org

PATERSON - Camp YDP announces the hiring of Sherise Alleyne to the position of Director, beginning a new chapter of service and growth for the Paterson childcare organization.

"We are thrilled to welcome Sherise Alleyne into the CAMP YDP family!" said Annie Tubbs, Camp YDP Board President. "She comes to us with over ten years' experience working for non-profit organizations, leading staff and facilitating programming in order to serve the needs of children and families in NY and NJ."

Alleyne served as Director of Isaacs Center where she fostered and maintained relationships with community partners and local elected officials for collaboration on local projects. She also served as Assistant Director of Johnson Cornerstone, Director of Operations at Alianza Youth Services Division, and as a supervisor at the New York State Sandy Disaster Case Management Program. She earned a Master's in Public Administration and a BA in Political Science at the University of New York at Buffalo.

Providing after school enrichment, preschool, and summer programs, Camp YDP encourages children to become lifelong learners, critical thinkers and productive members of society. Programs give children a place to work on

homework, enjoy a hot meal, and participate in recreational activities while giving their parents a sense of security. Presently, Camp YDP has 25 preschool students and 55 afterschool students.

A community association with a ministry to people, Camp YDP's mission is to cultivate achievement and map out possibilities for the children and families. The organization works in partnership with parents, administrators and community members to provide a safe haven for children and their families to grow, learn and be empowered academically, socially and emotionally.

Camp YDP is a Hope Center of A Future With Hope, the mission arm of United Methodists of Greater New Jersey. Hope Centers are located within communities and work with local residents to develop long-term sustainable transformation, collaborating with community residents, leaders and organizations to build on community assets to address human, community, education, social and economic challenges.



Sherise Alleyne

## Judicial Council Affirms School Segregation Suit and Cluster Conferences

By Josh Kinney  
jkinney@gnjumc.org

ST. LOUIS – In February, the Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church ruled on two questions of law raised at the 2018 Annual Conference Session held in May. The council, which acts as the denomination's Supreme Court, affirmed Bishop Schol's ruling that a question about group charge conferences was moot and hypothetical, and in another unrelated matter, the council ruled that the Conference Board of Trustees may not file a lawsuit on behalf of the annual conference except in matters related to property.

The first question of law was raised by Creed Pogue who questioned if district superintendents had the authority to set the location of group charge conferences. The Judicial Council affirmed Bishop John Schol's ruling that Pogue's question was moot and hypothetical because it did not pertain to any part of the annual conference session, which is necessary for the bishop to make a ruling.

Bishop Schol also said if the council did not find the matter moot and hypothetical, then superintendents may set the time and location of group charge conferences. The council said this ruling is not in affect because the entire question is moot and hypothetical.

The second question of law was raised by Gyuchang Sim concerning GNJ joining a lawsuit with the NAACP and two statewide Latino organizations against the State of New Jersey to eliminate segregation in the state. More than 300,000 Black and Latino students in New Jersey attend segregated public schools. The

lawsuit was filed by the GNJ Board of Trustees with the support of 12 GNJ agencies on the anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education as a symbol that while the US Supreme Court outlawed school segregation in the 1950s, more than half of New Jersey Black and Latino students attend segregated schools. The Annual Conference Session met two business days after the filing and affirmed the action by the Board of Trustees by voting to be part of the lawsuit. The Judicial Council said that the board of trustees does not have the authority to file a lawsuit on behalf of the annual conference except in matters of church property, but affirmed GNJ's participation in the lawsuit because the Annual Conference voted to affirm the action.

This ruling does not change GNJ's participation in the lawsuit to end school segregation because the Annual Conference voted to be a part of this historic case.

"I am proud of the action of the Board of Trustees and the 12 agencies that supported the Board of Trustees in this action," said Bishop Schol. "The Board of Trustees took a risk and acted because justice for Black and Latino students is paramount. I am also proud of the Annual Conference who stood behind the Board of Trustees and supported their action."

The suit has already caused action on the part of the New Jersey government. Governor Phil Murphy has ordered his attorney general and staff to work with GNJ and the other organizations who brought the lawsuit to try to resolve the suit so that Black and Latino students are not attending segregated schools.

## GNJ Communications Earn Awards, Recognized by Denomination

By Josh Kinney  
jkinney@gnjumc.org

ST. LOUIS – GNJ was honored at the 2019 United Methodist Association of Communicators (UMAC) Conference last month in St. Louis, taking home six awards for work in design, writing, video, and The Miracles Everywhere Campaign. This is the fourth consecutive year that GNJ has been recognized

for leadership in communication in the denomination.

The United Methodist Association of Communicators (UMAC) is a professional association geared to support the work of communicators serving the church through resourcing, engagement, education and networking.

In the area of print, GNJ was recognized for Bishop Schol's Relay column

*Continued on page 11*



## 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.

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# Conference Happenings

## Mandeville Scholarship Applications Now Being Accepted for Full-Time Grad Students

The Epworth Mandeville Scholarship Committee is currently accepting applications, with a submission deadline of **March 31**. Through a generous gift from Doris and Arthur Mandeville, long-time members of Epworth UMC of Palmyra, awards are offered to full-time graduate students who are members of the UMC preparing for ordained ministry or Christian education. Awards are based on financial need, with factors such as academic scholarship, church involvement, and community involvement also considered in the evaluation process. Visit [gnjumc.org](http://gnjumc.org) for more info.



Neil Neal of Hamonton UMC used his artistic craftsmanship to build his church a ten foot telescope which was used as a center piece for a six week worship series called "Searching." It is pictured above in proud display on the church altar with members of the congregation. Photo by Michael Ein.

### Honoring Extension Ministries

Extension ministers reach out to the community in ways our churches can't. To honor that work, all clergy in extension ministry are invited to enjoy fellowship and a meal at the Extension Ministry Dinner at Annual Conference on May 20 at 6:30 p.m. The cost is \$28 per person. You can register for the dinner when you register for Annual Conference. Deadline: **Friday, May 3**.

### Annual Conference Focus Group Reservations

If your group or committee would like to schedule a special gathering at the Wildwoods Convention Center during Annual Conference, please visit [gnjumc.org](http://gnjumc.org) to complete the form. The deadline to reserve a meeting space is **Friday, April 3**.

### 1 Month Left for GNJ Student Scholarships

Student scholarships are available for GNJ undergrads, continuing education students, grad programs, ministry students, pastors children, nursing students and those with academic merit and financial need. Apply by **March 31**. Visit [gnjumc.org](http://gnjumc.org)

### UMCOR Sunday Pastor and Leaders Kit

The 2019 UMCOR Sunday Pastor and Leaders Kit with resources to help you promote UMCOR Sunday on **March 31** are available at [umciving.org](http://umciving.org)

### Scholarships Available for Ecumenical Training

The Council of Bishops is offering up to six partial scholarships for young adults and seminary students participating in the 2019 United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Training in the U.S. The training will be held **April 1-4**, in conjunction with the National Workshop on Christian Unity. To obtain a scholarship application, contact Rev. Jean Hawxhurst at [jhawxhurst@umc-cob.org](mailto:jhawxhurst@umc-cob.org) and visit [nwcu.org](http://nwcu.org) for more info.

# GNJ Communications Earn Awards, Recognized by Denomination

*Continued from page 10*

series on leadership, the IGNITE Youth Conference booklet and a feature article called 'In Mercer County, Hunger Knows No Religion' that highlighted the interfaith partnership of Bordentown's Trinity UMC and the work they have done to serve the struggling in their community.

Other awards included two for video: GNJ's Water & Roots video on baptism and the Next Generation Ministries camping video showcasing last year's renewed summer camp experience at Pinelands Center in Mt. Misery. The Miracles Everywhere resources was

recognized in the categorize as best campaign/strategic plan.

Each year, UMAC recognizes excellence in communication through an extensive awards program which includes awards for print and digital publications, writing, internet communications, publicity and advertising, video production, audio, photography, visual design and media presentations. In addition to recognizing individual works, the UMAC members elected GNJ Director Carolyn Conover to serve on its leadership team. To learn more about the annual UMAC Conference, visit [umcommunicators.org](http://umcommunicators.org)

# Soul Café Feeds Bodies and Spirits, Brings People to Christ

*Continued from page 5*

the day and location was "the draw." In September they launched a Supper and Service at Magnolia UMC 300 on Sunday evenings. The results were encouraging.

"We have a steady increase in attendance each week, new faces and a constant flow. We have reached over 100 people who have come so far," she added.

Evans believes the relaxed, non-judgmental atmosphere and the idea that someone can take a seat at the table and become a part of the community is the draw.

"People yearn for relationship and connection and often do not receive it," she said. "When we survey people as to why they stay we hear things like 'It's welcome; it's like a family and I feel loved.'"

The congregations hopes to launch a third site in 2020 with a belief that there are many who desire a relationship with

others and God but not in the way traditional church can.

"We want to offer something different in as many places as we can. We still have much work to do as we are only one-year-old and are learning as we go. Our biggest challenge is financial stability but thus far God has not disappointed," she said.

The Supper and Service is one small part of Soul Cafe, a United Methodist Faith Community which according to Evans is "doing church differently."

"The idea of Soul Cafe is to feed the mind, body and spirit, providing a holistic ministry approach. All the work it takes to make all this possible happens from within the community and those seated at the table," she said.

*If you would like to donate or volunteer to the Soul Cafe, please contact Rev. Chereese Evans at (856) 739-1052 or [mumcnj@yahoo.com](mailto:mumcnj@yahoo.com)*

# Obituaries

**Rev. Dorothy F. Gilbert**, Retired Local Deacon in Full Connection, died on Feb. 8. A Memorial Service was held Feb. 13 at First UMC in Newton, NJ. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent in Memory of Rev. Dorothy F. Gilbert to United Methodist Communities, 3311 State Route 33, Neptune, NJ 07753. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Rev. Diane R. Gilbert, 12502 Long Beach Blvd., Long Beach Twp., NJ 08008.

## 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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