

THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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GNJ Special Session Paves Way Forward

By Josh Kinney
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LINCROFT – Nearly 1,000 Greater New Jersey lay and clergy faithfully joined together on March 16, 2019 to discuss how to move forward after decisions made at General Conference 2019. People gathered in small groups and shared their stories and hopes with the full conference. There was a mix of feelings afterward. Some were grateful for the opportunity to learn and know that more work will be done on how GNJ will continue to be in ministry with the LGBTQ community while others were frustrated, believing General Conference resolved the matter. Others were concerned there was not more time for conversation.

The Special Session of the GNJ Annual Conference was announced in November of 2018, well in advance of the General Conference Special Session because Greater New Jersey leadership foresaw the need to come together to discern possible changes to the denomination's policies concerning ministry to and with the LGBTQ community. In February, General Conference passed a Traditional Plan that would strengthen penalties for clergy, congregations and bishops who ordained people who identify as lesbian



Members of the Greater New Jersey Conference meet in small groups during a special session of their annual conference at Brookdale Community College. Photo by Josh Kinney

Share Your Hopes with Way Forward Team

The GNJ Way Forward Team will be identifying and proposing a plan to the Annual Conference Session by or before the May 2020 Annual Conference Session in Wildwood, NJ. Visit gnjumc.org to learn more about the team and share your hopes.

\$40K in Grants Awarded to GNJ and Next Generation

By Josh Kinney
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NEPTUNE – GNJ's forward thinking mission and ministry is making waves across the nation, catching the attention of individuals and organizations that not only believe in what they're seeing, but are also graciously providing funds.

Michaela Murray-Nolan, Director of Development for the United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey and leader of the Miracles Everywhere campaign submitted one of two grant proposals to The United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina on behalf of Next Generation Ministries. The award for \$15,000 was granted to help support and expand Next Generation Ministries for 2019.

"This grant affirms the direction of Next Generation Ministries in relaunching our Summer Camps program," said Eric Drew, Executive Director of Next Generation Ministries. "We have added an additional week of Fine Arts Camp, which is already seeing many parents and students register. With these funds we'll expand our summer paid and volunteer positions and create an environment of faith, fun and safety for all our students.

We are so thankful for Michela's work on our behalf, the Reynold's Ministry Fund and everyone who is participating in the Miracles Everywhere Campaign."

The second grant, for \$25,000 was awarded for GNJ to experiment and expand Fresh Expressions and Dinner Church. Trey Wince drove the grant process and was thrilled that people are recognizing the necessary risks associated with innovative ministry.

"We're in the early stages of working with more than 15 churches who are in the process of launching a dinner church," said Wince. "This grant will give us the margin to experiment with different ways we might get communities around the table."

Murray-Nolan said that the awards speak highly of the Connectional Ministries and Next Gen team that their work is attracting this kind of attention and funding from national philanthropists.

"We plan to continue expanding the grant development program at GNJ to provide support to more and more mission and ministries that benefit our congregants and communities," she said.

The Western North Carolina Foundation's Reynolds Ministry Fund, es-

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or gay or married same sex couples. The plan had been ruled unconstitutional by the UMC Judicial Council. The Judicial Council is now reviewing the legislation and is expected to release decisions about its passage in April.

Bishop John Schol addressed the tensions, reminding GNJ that United Methodists have had disagreements since the denomination's founding, but also called for a focus on mission, including fighting discrimination in all forms.

"God has made a way for us to be a powerful force for mission and ministry," said Schol. "We grew to be the second

largest denomination in the U.S. and have a world-wide reach building churches, schools, hospitals, and clinics. How did we become such a force for good, for God? By trusting the leading and teaching of Jesus Christ."

Schol, in addressing the crowd, acknowledged division over church policies that exclude gays and lesbians from clergy leadership and weddings in the church, but emphasized that United Methodists have endured major conflicts before over slavery, segregation, tobacco, alcohol and women's ordination.

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Latino Task Force Launches SSL Classes, Children Reading Program

By Josh Kinney
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BERNARDSVILLE – Between a new reading program for children, a food pantry and Spanish as a Second Language (SSL) classes, ministry is coming full circle in the Bernardsville area.

Twenty people attended the first SSL class, a part of a six week program on March 5 at Bishop Janes UMC in Basking Ridge.

The classes are in collaboration with Bernardsville UMC and the neighboring First Presbyterian Church. The classes feature a program called "Who is My Neighbor SSL," available at Cokesbury



Rev. Eunice Vega-Perez reads to a child at a summer reading program spearheaded by the Bernardsville area Latino Task Force. Photo provided

and written by scholars in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference where Bernardsville UMC pastor Rev. Kara Berg formerly served as part of the Latino Ministry District Task Force.

"It's not a traditional SSL program," said Berg. "It's a Bible study and program of language as church hospitality. A full communion service in Spanish is offered as the last week's study."

Berg joined the area's Latino Task Force two years ago out of passion. The township has been identified as an area where the Latino population is on the rise. With Bernardsville UMC holding the potential to be a place of worship for the

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"I am so excited about what God is doing through this task force and heartened by the collaborative and Spirit-breathed nature of their work"

– Rev. Drew Dyson

A Message from the Bishop



A New Connectionalism

You know how well people are connected with each other by how they engage during challenging issues.

Do the people try to convince each other of their point of view?

Do they move to problem solving?

Do they immediately go to the "rules" that govern the relationship?

Each of these tactics weaken the connection people have with each other. These tactics lower trust, reinforce barriers and narrow the opportunities for a transformative engagement where

everyone grows and develops together and individually.

Jesus most often used a different engagement. He became curious. He asked questions. He took a genuine interest in the individual's well-being. Jesus had an *outward* mindset.

Organizations, particularly large and diverse organizations, often try to address challenges through new policies, or task forces to solve problems, or members of the organization campaign to convince others they are "right." These tactics were evident in The United Methodist Church at our General Conference in March.

Today I begin a three-part series about turning the church outward to engage our deepest challenge. We will look at:

1. Outward vision
2. Outward conversations
3. Outward engagement

Outward Vision

The church is outwardly nice, but we don't necessarily have an outward vision. We care about people in ways that make us comfortable. Outwardly nice is not the Gospel. In fact, it is sinful. We are nice as long as it fits into our needs rather than engaged in what the world needs. Outwardly nice does things to make ourselves feel good.

Having an outward vision means we do things to praise God and see and serve others from the needs they identify. We serve the poor or youth or other groups with what we think they need rather than asking them what they need. I may be committing heresy, but I believe that it might be better said, "do unto others as *they* want done," rather than "do unto others as *you* would have them do unto you."

Let's unpack this for a moment through the lens of our current context.

The most recent General Conference session was called to find a way forward on our controversy concerning the church's policies about engaging with and using the gifts of the LGBTQ community. Many of those involved at General Conference focused inward. The conversations, concerns and the results were inward. People took stands on one side or the other, they campaigned and they proposed new rules. The result was a policy change to address an inward vision. The policy change maintained the current exclusion of lesbian and gay people from ordination and marriage in our churches and added clear, direct and harsher punishment for those who do not follow our Book of Discipline. This led to a church that is now more polarized and inwardly focused than prior to the General Conference.

The mandate for this particular General Conference was to find a way forward that would recognize contextual differences and unify us for the mission. Instead, the action of General Conference adhered to the policies already in place and disregarded context and diversity of thought.

Another and even more damaging failure was our witness to the world. The world did not hear or witness what it means to be the body of Christ. At General Conference, people did not follow the rules, voted illegally, and knowingly approved unconstitutional legislation. Protesters proclaimed they would not follow our policies. The world is confused by The United Methodist Church. The world perceives that we are fractured around our love for God and one another, inwardly focused, discriminatory, unable to live in unity.

Taking on an outward vision will be the first step to healing. Rather than continuing to try to change each other and policy, we need to refocus ourselves on God and those in our communities. I am convinced the way forward will require an outward vision and a focus on those in our communities and in the world around us.

There is a difference between being outwardly nice and outward vision. Outwardly nice is being nice to others but still focusing on our needs. For example, outwardly nice is buying a cake for a coworker's birthday for an office celebration, but making sure it's a chocolate cake because that's your personal favorite. While you are doing something nice for another person, you are more concerned about your enjoyment than the enjoyment of the one being celebrated.

Many advocates of the Traditional Plan and the One Church Plan are so deep inside their position that they can barely see each other except in the harshest and most divisive ways. They make statements that they love the other side, but these statements are like birthday cakes that are the flavor we desire. Both groups claim Jesus, but I am not sure Jesus is claiming us right now.

Most of those with Christ-like hearts who advocate for the Traditional Plan are not saying they hate or despise the LGBTQ community. Instead they are telling us to be faithful to God. They hold and live by a traditional view of the Bible. They believe if the denomination does not follow the Bible on this matter, they will bring the judgement and condemnation of God upon The United Methodist Church and weaken our mission to serve God by making disciples and transforming the world.

Most of those with Christ-like hearts who advocate for the One Church Plan are not saying they hate traditionalists or despise traditionalists. They are saying that for us to be faithful to scripture, we need to allow room for difference on this matter. They feel by not welcoming all we weaken our mission to serve God by making disciples and transforming the world.

An outward vision is essential to be more like Jesus, to be more effective in sharing the Gospel in the world. I believe our vision in the midst of our current difference is to *renew the church so that it has an outward vision like Jesus demonstrated*. I believe this calls for us to *renew everything*.

- **Renew our mind and heart** from an inward to an outward mindset that has the mind of Christ so that we are completely focused on God and the people in our communities.
- **Renew our mission** from being outwardly nice to knowing the mind of Christ for our church and knowing the mind of those in the community. What are their hopes for the ministry and mission of the church in the community? How can we serve to praise God by being in authentic connection and engagement with the people in our community?
- **Renew our polity** from being focused on the institution and the preservation of the denomination, to reorienting every aspect of our Book of Discipline to focus on how to turn the church, its bishops, superintendents, clergy, lay leadership, lay servants, general church agencies, conference agencies and congregations toward the community and mission.

This is not to say that we are not focused outwardly, it is to say that we are more often outwardly nice rather than outwardly Christ. If we became outwardly Christ, the world would fall more in love with Jesus.

Think about what would happen if we became a denomination that the people of the world said, "This is a church turned outward. This is a church that has the world's best interest at heart."

Next time, we will look at the *outward conversations* that move us to being the church in which the people outside the church see Jesus.

Keep the faith!

Bishop John Schol
United Methodists of Greater New Jersey

THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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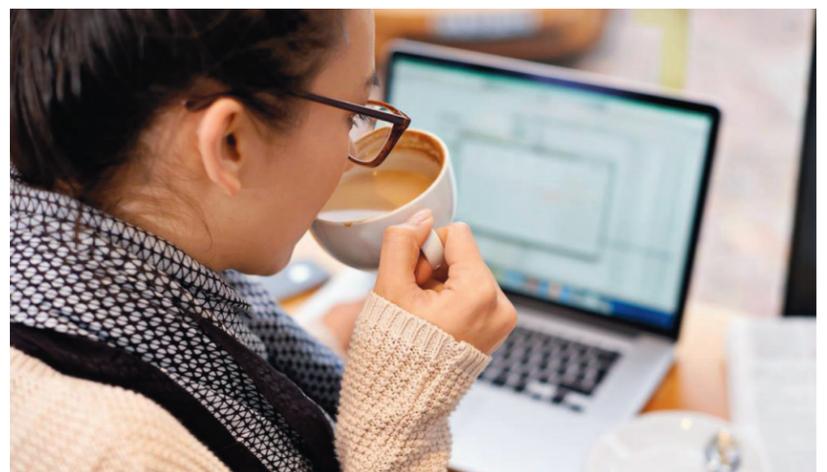
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The May 2019 issue deadline is April 16, 2019

ABUNDANCE MINDSET

The church is called to be God's presence in the world, and God calls the church to have a mindset of abundance. The Maker's Place in Trenton intentionally leads with a mindset of abundance, rather than a mindset of scarcity. Explore how The Maker's Place defines the two mindsets and how you can embody a mindset of abundance within your ministry.

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- What we have is enough, and it's already present; relationships, not money, are life's key resource.
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- We assume that human beings are made to be consumers of the world around them; people are best served by becoming clients or dependents of service providers.
- Clients and consumers accept the reality of scarcity and use all their energy to either gain or bypass the system.
- Especially in low-income areas, individuals and service providers must compete to be the neediest, which perpetuates the perception of and self-identification with scarcity.
- Competing services tend to proliferate and fragment rather than working together holistically to solve problems.
- Outsiders are labeled as experts; dependence is created and deepened.

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- Expect people to have gifts and assets. What can you learn from them?
- Analyze and work through spiritual, emotional and physical barriers to building relationships.
- Assess whether barriers to access are absolutely necessary or are coming from a mindset of scarcity and fear.
- Know the assets of your community and act as a community connector.



HOPE CENTER
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OF GREATER NEW JERSEY



TO LEARN MORE FROM CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES:

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GNJ Special Session Paves Way Forward

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“What we have found is that votes may retain or change policies, but votes do not change hearts. Our concern and conversation about the LGBTQ community should not lessen our commitment to change hearts and minds so that we end prejudice, oppression, sexism, racism and privilege,” he said.

The GNJ Special Session approved creating a diverse, 16-person “Way Forward Team,” to help guide the conference. They represent GNJ leaders of the Board of Laity, Board of Global Ministries, Board of Trustees, Board of Ordained Ministries, Connectional Table, Council for Finance and Administration, Local Ethnic Concerns Committee, Reconciling Ministries, United Methodist Men (UMM), United Methodist Women (UMW), The Wesleyan Covenant Association, and Youth Council. The team is to report back by Greater New Jersey’s 2020 annual conference.

“In GNJ we will welcome people as they are, including the LGBTQ community,” said Schol. He went on to acknowledge that GNJ has LGBTQ people serving as chairpersons of Church Councils, Boards of Trustees, SPRC’s and serving on staff.

“They are gifted and called and will serve in GNJ,” he stated. “I want you to go home to your congregations and share with LGBTQ people and say, our bishop says you are wonderfully made and are created by God and gifted to serve the church and that I thank God for them.”

Schol shared how he is called to serve the whole church and to make room for all to feel valued and for open conversation ensuring all voices are



Rev. Sang Won Doh, incoming Raritan Valley District Superintendent and current pastor of Calvary Korean UMC in East Brunswick anoints a conference member at GNJ’s Special Session of Annual Conference on March 16. Photo by Josh Kinney

heard and honored; providing space for differences while remaining faithful to Biblical scholarship and reason, tradition and experience.

“I will make appointments that respect and honor theological differences,” he said. “I will ensure that resources are shaped to support all our congregations and that I, the cabinet and staff will

resource and support all our congregations.”

Schol reminded the body that they are part of a “big tent” denomination that includes Hillary Clinton and George Bush, who are active members. “Our broad spectrum and inclusiveness invites differences, big differences,” he said. Schol praised GNJ’s tremendous progress, citing that the conference is in the top five most diverse in all United Methodism with nine languages spoken on Sunday mornings, more than 150 multicultural congregations and 100 cross-racial appointments.

“You are a gift to the church,” he said. “Let us continue to move forward in our giftedness to be light and hope for others.” He added, “In the midst of present disagreement, I am proud and glad to serve in a theologically and ethnically diverse conference. Our efforts like our 10-year plan for cultural competence and the lawsuit to end school segregation are steps in the right direction. But there are still miles for us to travel. As we gather today, let us be mindful that a vote is not the destination. Transformation of hearts, minds and systems is the long-term goal.”

Attendees were invited to the microphones to share their personal stories, feelings and hopes that informed their experience or understanding of the

church’s current LGBTQ differences, what for them had changed since General Conference, and to speak about what congregations need to faithfully carry out the mission to transform the world while making disciples and growing vital congregations. Schol urged all viewpoints to come forward and share. A particularly moving testimony came from Rev. Drew Dyson, Raritan Valley District Superintendent, who vulnerably shared about his LGBTQ children and the effect of the Traditional Plan’s passage on his family.

“I am disheartened by the punitive nature of the Traditional Plan and its attempt to push dissenting viewpoints out of The United Methodist Church,” stated Dyson. “The restrictive rules and mandatory minimum punishment under this plan mean that I would not be able to officiate the weddings of my own children without facing the certain possibility of the loss of my clergy orders. Even more stinging, the passage of the Traditional Plan left my children feeling exiled from their spiritual home. My prayer is that we find a way to move forward that is more loving, more inclusive, and more just for all of God’s children.”

Schol addressed concerns about leaving the church or not paying shared ministries.

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Attendees took to the microphones to share their personal stories, feelings and hopes that informed their experience or understanding of the church’s current LGBTQ differences, what for them had changed since General Conference and to speak about what congregations need to faithfully carry out mission. Photo by Josh Kinney

CF&A Reduces Shared Ministry Formula and Passes Amended Budget

Carolyn Conover
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In other business at the Special Session of Annual Conference for Greater New Jersey, the GNJ Council for Finance and Administration recommended three pieces of legislation that affected GNJ’s Shared Ministry formula (apportionment) the 2019 amended budget and policy changes that were prompted by recent matters involving clergy and the conference.

CF&A Chair Bob Dietz and committee members Judy Colorado and Jack Scharf presented the two pieces of legislation affecting the budget.

“Today, we recommend a modified 2019 budget to reduce shared ministry expenses to the local churches,” said Dietz.

The 2019 budget was originally based on an apportionment formula for local churches of 16.1%. The legislation presented and passed at the special session reduces the shared ministry formula to 15.6%.

Shared Ministry 2019 Reductions for Churches and 2020 Preliminary Calculations

CF&A has reduced ministry apportionment to 15.6% for 2019 and is proposing to reduce shared ministry to 15.2% for 2020. View your 2020 calculation at gnjumc.org

Judy Colorado shared that the finances of GNJ continue to be strong, including growing the giving rate from 78% to 88% over the last six years. She thanked congregations for their shared ministry giving and explained that the “budget reduction is based on the staff and agencies being good stewards so that instead of savings going to the reserves, it will stay with you and your congregation.”

Colorado presented legislation that would amend the 2019 budget even further to include a one year line item of \$110,000. The one time reduction would

be used to fulfill a just resolution to a 2010 complaint against a clergy person. The just resolution involved gifts including cash and a car paid by a parishioner to a clergy person.

“While the trial has concluded, GNJ has an obligation to honor the resolutions of the complaint. This required CF&A to reassess the 2019 budget to make adjustments,” said Colorado. “We thought and felt called that this was the right thing to do.”

The amended budget which included the \$110,000 line item passed.

In a third piece of legislation brought

forth by CF&A, Jack Scharf presented recommendations for nine new policy changes, proposed by CF&A and the Cabinet. These policies were developed based on recommendations from the Committee on Investigations after review of the financial management issues in the recent 2019 clergy trial.

“CF&A has reviewed, discussed and unanimously agreed to these nine proposed policies,” said Scharf. “These policies represent best practices for both church and nonprofit and even business organizations. The legislation will provide clarity for our congregations.”

Dietz explained the rationale for the recommendations, “This is a proactive policy change. It is not a statement that CF&A has any opinion in regard to the trial.”

After a period of questions and answers, the conference referred the matter to the regular Annual Conference Session in May. CF&A plans to bring the policies to the May session after addressing some of the questions and input from conference members.

GNJ Special Session Paves Way Forward

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“This is not a time to disengage,” he said. “This is a time to engage. We need to invest in relationships with people who think differently and have different experiences than ourselves. We need to invest in theological education in parts of our global connection particularly where there are fewer opportunities for theological education and where leaders all think alike on issues like scriptural interpretation, ethics and homosexuality. When everyone thinks alike, that is not a strength but a weakness.”

Heather Flzur of Haddon Heights who attended as a non-voting visitor said she “really appreciated the love that was demonstrated through Bishop’s words regarding all participants.”

Rev. Dave Delaney said he was praying that “God’s message of love brings all together so that we can focus on making disciples for Jesus Christ and being in mission, caring for those who are hurting while standing up for justice so that the world can again see that Christians are known by our love.” He added that the Special Session was “a blessed celebration of our diversity, knowing all are loved equally by God. I felt the love from all in the gathering.”

In closing, Schol urged GNJ to keep



Bishop John Schol reminded attendees that God continues to do new things even in the midst of tension and dissention. He encouraged prayer, mission and unity and called the church to love like Christ. Photo by Josh Kinney



Rev. Catherine Jordan-Latham of Simply Grace UMC in Bloomsbury smiles holding her baby son, Nathan during a time of worship at GNJ’s Special Session. Photo by Josh Kinney

an outward mindset that seeks to understand, connect and build relationships with those who think differently, and love like Jesus. He asked the conference to focus on the mission which includes growing 100 church leaders to grow leaders, the Miracles Everywhere Campaign which has surpassed \$4 million in its \$6 million goal, partnerships with Puerto Rico and Tanzania, calling and equip-

ping apostolic leaders, Next Generation Ministries, A Future With Hope, and The United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey.

“God continues to do a new thing even in the midst of tension and dissention,” said Schol. “The Hightstown Church just voted to go from part-time to full-time pastoral ministry. The New Brunswick Church just committed \$48,000 and the

Piscataway Church committed \$75,000 to the Miracles Everywhere Campaign. These are just three examples of the many churches who are focused on the mission, released for service in the community and around the world, and have an outward mindset. Thank you for your

continued commitment and ministry.” Youth lay representative Sara Smialkowski shared that one of her favorite parts of being involved with church is “Having an amazing Bishop” and being a part of the GNJ family, to which Schol responded, “I am the fortunate one.”



Sara Smialkowski, GNJ Youth Lay Representative, reflects the emotions of many at GNJ’s Special Session of Annual Conference. Photo by Corbin Payne



SUMMER CAMPS

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Partners in Recovery: UMCOR Celebrates the Work of A Future With Hope

By Carolyn Conover
cconover@gnjumc.org



A FUTURE WITH HOPE
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NEPTUNE - After more than six years of active partnership with A Future With Hope (AFWH), the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) has recognized the meaningful work accomplished by United Methodists in Greater New Jersey by approving and commending the final grant report and agreement.



UMCOR provided A Future with Hope a grant of \$3,107,632, which helped establish the organization and Greater New Jersey as a leader in Sandy recovery in the state.

In a closing report dated March 3, 2019, Scott Tibbets, U.S. Disaster Response Program Manager for UMCOR said, "This extensive project successfully met the established goals through case management, direct assistance, volunteer management and home repairs."

The grant which was a significant portion of the total \$17,000,000 raised for AFWH, allowed United Methodists to fund construction and case management staff, building materials and equipment and emergency relief support for basic human needs.

Tibbets shared his appreciation, "We wish to express our sincerest gratitude for your continued partnership and we are proud to be of support to the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church in times of disaster and look forward to continuing our relationship."

When the final grant reports were filed

in 2018, Bobbie Ridgely, who served as the Director of A Future With Hope for five years during Sandy recovery reported, "On behalf of A Future With Hope, Greater New Jersey and Sandy survivors across the state, thank you for your generous support. Your support has provided longevity to our program that only a few organizations have been able to maintain. Thank you for understanding that long-term recovery is indeed a marathon and not a sprint."

A Future With Hope is a vital mission partner of GNJ and serves as the mission arm of the organization. Formed in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy in 2012, AFWH has the following vision: Hope emerges where residents, business, organizations, government and institutions work together to heal communities.

During the relief phase in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, AFWH:

- Provided more than 50,000 meals
- Provided day and night shelter for more than 5,000 people
- Distributed more than 11,000 cleaning buckets, more than 3,000 health kits, tons of clothing and other material supplies such as non-perishable food, heaters, blankets, etc.
- Assessed community needs and "mucked" out nearly 2,000 homes

During the recovery phase of Superstorm Sandy, AFWH:

- Rebuilt or repaired 273 homes
- Provided case management for 461 families
- Hosted 12,173 volunteers from 46 states and two countries for a labor value of \$8,095,413
- Received more than \$17 million in funding

"Our work in Sandy recovery could not have been completed without the vital partnership with UMCOR. Our success in rebuilding and renewing hope is truly a reflection of the connection of United Methodists," said Rick Reinhard, the newly appointed Executive Director

of A Future With Hope. He continued, "Today, we are focused on community renewal with an asset-based community development ministry. We look forward to establishing partnership with funders, like UMCOR, who have a shared vision."

AFWH has three main areas of focus moving forward: engaging and training congregations, developing Hope Centers and leading community economic development.

"The timing of UMCOR's grant closing memo could not be more appropriate," said Andrea Wren Hardin, a Hope Cen-

ter Developer. "Sunday, March 31 was UMCOR Sunday and United Methodists across Greater New Jersey had the opportunity to be thankful and generous. UMCOR's support of A Future With Hope means that we are UMCOR."

UMCOR is the international relief organization of United Methodists and assists in direct ministry to persons in need through programs of relief, rehabilitation, and service, including issues of displaced persons, hunger and poverty, disaster response, and disaster risk reduction.

\$40K in Grants Awarded to GNJ and Next Generation

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established by Royce and Jane Reynolds of Greensboro, NC. seeks to support innovative, engaging, ambitious initiatives that will invite new believers into a relationship with Christ. Grant recipients have the vision of helping the church to reach out in new ways and engage new people with the message of the Gospel.

Bishop John Schol extended thanks to the teams of The United Methodist

Stewardship Foundation of GNJ, Next Generation Ministries and Connectional Ministries.

"I want to thank the team for all their doing on behalf of securing these investments in our mission," he said. "Their work with the Miracles Everywhere campaign has been outstanding and grant requests are bearing fruit. Our team is made better by everything each of our staff teams do every day."

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Diaper Party Draws Community, Spotlights The Maker's Place



A volunteer holds one of the guests of honor at the Maker's Place Diaper Party on March 2. Photo provided

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

TRENTON – Trenton's children, parents and caregivers were celebrated at the first ever Diaper Party on March 3 hosted by The Maker's Place, a GNJ Hope Center.

Nearly 200 people gathered at the city's Turning Point UMC to receive free diapers, share in delicious food, upbeat music and fellowship.

Last Christmas, The Maker's Place spearheaded a diaper drive which collected over 90,000 diapers from United Methodist Churches throughout GNJ to be shared with the city's low-income families with babies.

The Diaper Party featured face painting, activities for kids, a mini resource fair for parents, and more information about The Maker's Place.

"We celebrated," said Rev. Michael Reed who heads up The Maker's Place. "We talked about how every child in Trenton can have a first birthday to celebrate at upcoming diaper events."

Reed said that The Maker's Place is dedicated to building relationships with the people in the community.

"The word is getting out," he stated. "People are starting to tell their friends."

Trenton, which has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the U.S., is on a path toward changing that statistic, in



The Maker's Place Mural, where participants were asked to trace out their hopes and dreams for themselves, their children, and the city of Trenton. Photo provided

part through the transformative asset-based community development of The Maker's Place.

"We followed our assets, and the aspirations of people living in poverty, to determine our first step into ministry," said Reed.

"We're still in our infant stages," said Reed. "Metaphorically and also quite literally. The Maker's Place is in diapers!"

The Maker's Place mission is based on the principle of mutuality; pointing to the respect and reciprocity existing in all healthy communities. The Maker's Place affirms that everyone is made in the image of God and to be a maker means better lives and communities.

"We wouldn't be staying true to what we believe if we set up a system where some only give, and others only receive," he said. "So at the diaper party, we didn't ask about people's level of income, or require any form of documentation to

attend. We just don't think people should have to trade their dignity to receive our charity. That's not a party."

Volunteers worked the room, introducing themselves and building relationships. A "Maker's Place Mural" was set up on black canvas paper with the words "Share Your Dreams" written above. Guests, volunteers, pastors, social workers and attendees were invited to take a crayon, trace their hands on the mural and write their hopes and dreams for themselves, their children, and their neighbors.

"It's a powerful way to visualize mutuality and community," said Reed.

When asked what The Maker's Place was all about, the mural showcased the answer.

"We're a new group in Trenton, and



Nearly 200 people came to the Diaper Party at Turning Point United Methodist Church. Photo provided

we're here to do that," said Reed, pointing to the mural.

People were told that The Maker's Place was committed to more than just giving away diapers but also to add the communities' gifts and aspirations so every child in Trenton can grow up in a thriving community and so people can experience a life that is "good, abundant, and touched by the love of God," said Reed.

With The Maker's Place still in its infancy, Reed hopes that it too will grow into the very mission it seeks to accomplish.

"It could be that someday, we grow out of diapers," said Reed. "It also could be that diapers become our thing, and that as we grow, we'll add on other forms of ministry for people at other stages of life. Whatever we do, we'll always be asset-based, starting with what we have and working together to make it grow. And no matter what, we'll aim for mutuality and dignity, inviting people we meet to join with us and with God, working hand in hand as co-creators of a better life together."

The Maker's Place is looking for early adapters to dream and become active in their mission by incorporating their passions, gifts, ideas and interests. They also seek prayer going forward. If you want to volunteer, give, collaborate, or find out more information, visit www.makersplace.org or email Rev. Michael Reed at michaelreed@makersplace.org



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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Breaking Through with Lan Wilson

By Melissa Hinnen

Melissa.hinnen@nyac-umc.com

NEPTUNE – A true southern gentleman from Kentucky, Landon (Lan) Wilson believes it is time for revival in GNJ. As the new Director of Worship, he is just the person to take the lead.

Wilson, who has been in ministry since he was 10-years-old, leading worship in a diversity of denominations, most recently served as the worship pastor at Cross Point UMC in Harrisburg, PA; a multi-cultural, multi-site, multi-generational congregation.

He felt called to share his ministry gifts with United Methodists in GNJ after months of discernment and prayer for clarity in his ministry. Wilson felt restless and decided to pray boldly and expectantly; coming before God with confidence.

“After almost 25 years in ministry, I realized that I am called to also coach and mentor in the areas that God has gifted me. I am called to pour into people and help local churches,” said Wilson. “God opened that door and the next circle I drew was GNJ.”

Licensed in the Baptist and Pentecostal denominations, Wilson brings a variety of experience and perspectives with him to his new role. At GNJ Wilson looks forward to enriching worship in local churches by utilizing and introducing the *Breakthrough* worship resources.

Breakthrough is a resource designed by GNJ leaders to provide easy-to-use best practices so that 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. *Breakthrough* includes five worship series which include everything from sermon notes, graphics and videos, small group curriculum, song selections and more. Resources for *Breakthrough* can be found on GNJ’s website.

Wilson thinks *Breakthrough* has



Lan Wilson, GNJ’s new Director of Worship is pictured above singing and playing the keyboard at GNJ’s Special Session of Annual Conference on March 16. Wilson, who has been in ministry since his youth, says he felt called to share his gifts with United Methodists of Greater New Jersey and is excited and hopeful about GNJ’s future. Photo by Josh Kinney

something for everyone. He shares, “So often churches become limited by their traditions in a way that rituals become idols.” He wants to help churches answer the question, “How do we make worship, hospitality, and small groups more impactful to reach the world for Christ?”

Wilson encourages churches to consider what methods leaders are using to communicate and deliver the word of God. “Are we reaching the lost? Do we have an outward mindset that grows the body that is already there?” He continues, “When our rituals and traditions weigh us down, we don’t leave room to

think about and reach out to those who are not here.”

He suggests that developing strategies for growth and movement will unlock church doors. With open doors and outward reach, churches make room for the Spirit to move and do something new. Following a worship series like the examples in *Breakthrough*, he says, builds expectation and consistency for parishioners. All church sizes and styles can adapt it to their context and develop more meaningful worship, strengthen a spirit of radical hospitality, and empha-

size giving as an act of worship.

During his first three months, Wilson is visiting local churches and meeting with pastors. He wants to experience and participate in the diversity of worship. He will be joining the Southern Region leadership team.

“It’s time for revival, a rekindling of the fire in GNJ,” Wilson says. “It’s time for tapping back into the move of God through worship with an expectation that God will do what only God can do.”

Resources are available online at gnjumc.org/breakthrough

Find out more at: www.ignitenj.org

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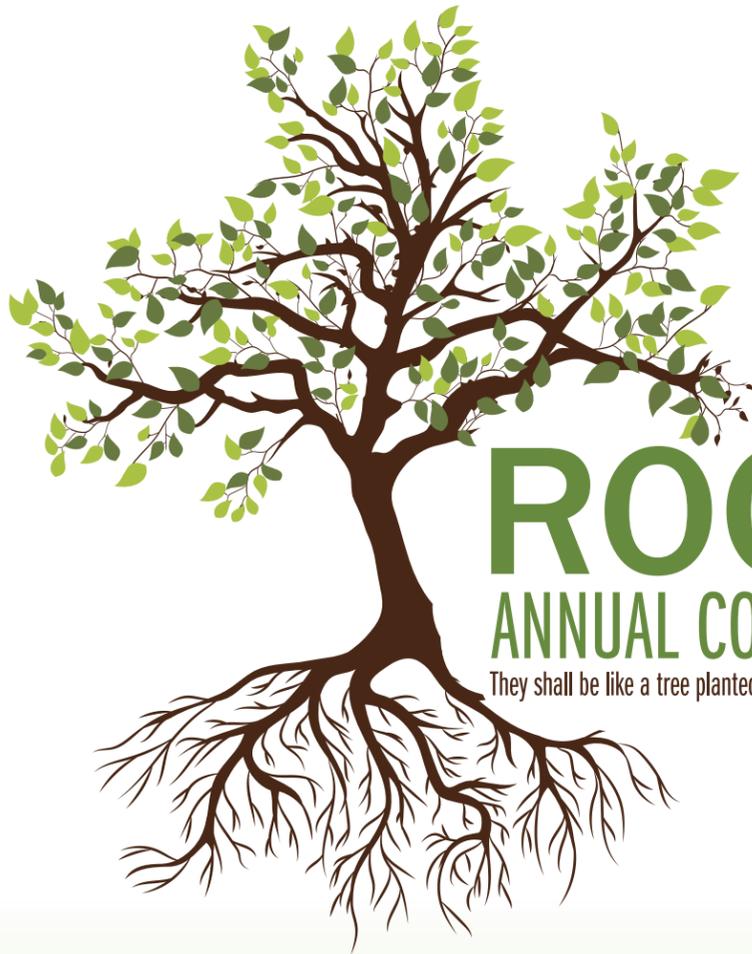
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ROOTED

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2019

They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream.
Jeremiah 17:8

ANNUAL CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

Monday, May 20, 2019



DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAYS | *Trey Wince, GNJ Director of New Disciples*

We know discipleship is important, but have we taken time to define exactly what it means? Do the opportunities we offer throughout the year correspond to what we believe about discipleship? Can we explain the way our church practices discipleship in an easy and accessible way that a first-timer could quickly understand? Using GNJ's A Discipleship Pathway workbook, we will sort out how to sort it all out.



FINANCIAL SECURITY | *Robert Christophel Manager of Benefits Education at Wespath*

Resources are available for clergy and spouses when it comes to thinking and planning for a healthy financial future. Learn about benefits and how they can be supportive in retirement, free and optional services offered through Wespath Benefits and Investments, how to gain access to your online account, helpful tools that are available and individual retirement benefits projections.



SAFE SANCTUARIES | *Rev. Erica Munoz, Senior Pastor of the Aldersgate UMC in East Brunswick, NJ*

God calls for churches to be safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from abuse. We'll review and learn requirements for Safe Sanctuaries Procedures, obtain a firm grasp of importance and the biblical mandate for having a Safe Sanctuaries policy in the local church and create a Safe Sanctuaries policy for local church ministries. All participants receive a certificate of completion. Churches that have a Safe Sanctuaries policy that need to be certified are invited to bring policies to the training.



YOU CAN'T GROW INSIDE THE BOX! | *Lan Wilson, GNJ Director of Worship*

Breakthrough, a worship series resource, serves as the guide for best practices in worship for congregations and clergy to use to make worship planning easier so that they can focus on what really matters — preaching the gospel to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world. Learn how to use these resources and go deeper in discussion around worship planning for relevance and growth.



INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE: A LEADERSHIP SKILL FOR VITAL MINISTRY | *Kristina Gonzalez, Director of Innovation for an Inclusive Church*

Intercultural Competence is a leadership skill. It is arguably the leadership skill for this moment in the life of the church (though the Apostle Paul argued its importance in ancient times as well). Explore how to develop increasingly nuanced understandings of cultural differences and commonalities, and how intercultural competence as a practice may lead to freedom and joy in building an inclusive body of Christ.



RISE AGAINST HUNGER MISSION PROJECT

Rise Against Hunger is an international hunger relief organization that distributes food and aid to the world's most vulnerable, mobilizing the necessary resources to end hunger by 2030. To date, Rise Against Hunger has distributed food to 74 countries and has packaged over 455,000,000 meals. Make a difference by participating in an exciting, high-energy, inter-generational mission to pack 30,024 meals.

FIND OUT MORE & REGISTER
www.gnjumc.org



UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Latino Task Force Launches SSL Classes, Children Reading Program

Continued from page 1

Latino community, the congregation's goal is to become a place receptive to how God's spirit is moving them to be in ministry with their neighbors, regardless of language or culture.

Sam Perez from Bishop Janes UMC has taught SSL for several years and led the first class. A modified Spanish lesson was open for children through song and play led by Berg's daughter, Evie, who has been in a bi-lingual Spanish classroom since first grade.

"Even though she is only 13, she has been instrumental in helping provide the care and instruction for the kids," said Berg of her daughter. She continued, "For a church with an average of 25 in worship, having 20 people from three churches sign up for one of our small group offerings is pretty exciting."

Many of the Latino families in the tutoring program also participate in the local food assistance program from God's CoOp Food Bank, where both churches serve.

"Those who work with this ministry recognized the need for better language understanding in order to further the relationships we build through mission with our neighbors," said Berg.

Both Bishop Janes and Bernardsville UMCs sent participants to Costa Rica for a 'Rice and Beans Mission Trip' in January; a trip Bishop Janes UMC has supported for the past five years.

"My hope is more people will go on the trip this year with some of the new Spanish skills they are learning from this class," said Berg.

Eunice Vega-Perez, pastor of Bishop

Janes and newly appointed Skylands District Superintendent and Berg have joined forces to seed bed Latino ministry and interest in Latino ministry within their respective churches.

"We are in a primarily white area," said Berg, "But there are actually two Latino grocery stores here, which is always an identifier for a growing ethnic community."

After discovering that English language tutoring for Latino children at the local YMCA ended in the summer, Berg and Perez partnered to bring the children to a free, weekly summer lunch and play day.

"We sought to give the kid's time to practice their reading and conversations weekly," stated Perez, who helped contact each family who attended the Y program and invited them personally to the church program.

"It was a chance for us as a church to really trust the Holy Spirit," said Berg, who shared that their program budget was no more than \$300. Each week, Perez dedicated herself to prayer for the programs children and volunteers.

"Honestly, I really went into this project being willing to fail," admitted Berg. "Because Latino ministry can be very challenging, especially if you don't speak the language yourself. I couldn't have done this without Eunice, a native speaker, at my side. By the last week, we had nine kids and ten volunteers. We were able to provide each child with a dedicated reading partner, free books, school supplies, pizza and ice cream to celebrate the beginning of school. What's amazing is that this can be done anywhere where there's a big enough indoor or outdoor



Children were given the opportunity to practice their reading and conversations weekly through a special summer reading program spearheaded by the Bernardsville area Latino Task Force, Bishop Janes UMC and Bernardsville UMC. Photo provided

facility where kids can play."

The goal is to offer the summer reading program again in 2019 as well as more SSL classes. The churches continue to offer hands-on mission that explores their relationship with Latino neighbors, locally and globally. Both churches remain committed to inclusive ministry in many forms, recognizing that language can both sharply divide as well as strongly connect.

"We recognize the plight of the sojourner and immigrant and are committed

to giving voice to the voiceless," said Berg. "We have the vision to rise above what divides us by teaching and learning a new language in love and service."

These ministries all grow out of the Latino Task Force established in 2017 to facilitate Latino/a ministry across the Raritan Valley District. Rev. Vega-Perez, the chair of the Task Force, was appointed a special circuit elder by Rev. Drew Dyson, former Raritan Valley District Superintendent, and asked to spearhead this ministry.

United Methodist Communities Named on U.S. News Best Nursing Homes

Ratings assure public of quality, staffing and compliance

By Jan Carrato

JCarrato@Umcommunities.org



NEPTUNE - Nursing homes helps thousands of people recover after strokes, heart attacks, joint replacement, serious infections, accidents, as well as offer long-term care. U.S. News rated over 15,000 nursing homes nationally to help people find appropriate, reliable providers with the highest standards of care. Its 2018-19 nursing home ratings, including the new short-stay rehabilitation rating, are now available.

U.S. News and World Report named all four of United Methodist Communities full-service campuses (New Jersey) on their Best Nursing Homes and Short-Stay Rehabilitation list. These include United Methodist Communities at Bristol Glen (Newton), Collingswood, Pitman, and The Shores (Ocean City).

Regarding the Short-Stay Rehabilitation Ratings process, U.S. News defines each eligible nursing home as high performing, average, or below average in the care for people in need of skilled nursing or rehabilitation services following hospitalization for surgery, heart attack, stroke, injury or other conditions.

The U.S. News Overall Ratings assign

each eligible nursing home a rating from high performing to poor. All four UMC campuses garnered a high performing rating, which evaluates the care of a wide range of resident conditions at the nursing home, including both long-term chronic care and shorter-term rehabilitation. The data used to evaluate these homes come from the federal Nursing Home Compare program, and incorporates the nurse staffing, health inspection, and quality measures star ratings.

Reassuring consumers, in addition to these measures, nursing homes were assessed based on the appropriateness of the therapy minutes provided to their residents as well as the consistency of their reported nurse staffing across self-reported and payroll-based reporting systems, overall health inspection ratings, and medical care quality measures.

All facilities with an overall star rating in the July 2018 Nursing Home Compare data set and staffing ratings in either the April 2018 or July 2018 Nursing Home Compare data sets received a U.S. News Overall Rating.

Vice President of Operations, Dr. Carol McKinley, proudly remarked, "The collective effort of these four communities is reflected in this excellent outcome. I am grateful to them for this high standard of achievement."

Visit UMCommunities.org or call 732-922-9800 for additional information

Rising Against Hunger Becomes GNJ Tradition

By Josh Kinney

jkinney@gnjumc.org

WILDWOOD – With music pulsating throughout the East Hall of the Wildwoods Convention Center, more than 200 volunteers working in unison systematically and excitedly helped package 30,000 meals in just under an hour and a half at last year's Annual Conference session of GNJ.

In what will be the sixth year in a row, the 2019 conference will carry on the tradition of partnering with Rise Against Hunger's effort to feed people around the world in a bold mission to end world hunger in the next decade. Last year, volunteers nearly doubled as churches, groups and individuals from Wildwood and the Cape May County community were invited to join participants. Since 2013, GNJ has packaged over 150,000 meals, providing an opportunity for the annual conference to engage a lively mission to support the world's most vulnerable.

"The volunteers at this event are charged up and ready to work," said GNJ Lay Leader Rosa Williams. "Besides learning what is going on in the conference, this is an event that keeps people coming back year after year, to be a part of something that's bigger than any one person, and takes many hands to make."

The organization, founded by a United Methodist minister in 1998, focuses on mobilizing a global network of hunger champions that package nutritious meals to distribute to partners in countries

around the world who are best able to address the causes and effects of hunger based on their local presence and expertise.

Rise Against Hunger's monitoring and evaluation process ensures the meals distributed by partnering countries are used as a tool to change lives by promoting education, improving students' health and nutrition, addressing gender inequalities, stimulating economic growth and fighting child labor.

On February 9, Caldwell UMC held a Rise Against Hunger event, packing 20,000 meals with the help of 200 hundred volunteers. \$4,257 was raised to cover the meal costs. Community members, scouts, Kiwanis, and local businesses all participated in the morning and afternoon packing sessions.

"Rise Against Hunger not only allows our clergy and lay leaders an opportunity for hands-on service but also educates participants around the root causes of hunger," said Rev. Hector Burgos, Director of Connectional Ministries and forthcoming Capital District Superintendent. "It helps them imagine new ways to be in mission in their local communities and the world." Burgos applauded the organization for recognizing that ending hunger is more than just feeding people but also expanding hunger-fighting programs through regenerative mission.

This year's meals will be shipped from Rise Against Hunger's Philadelphia warehouse to impact thousands across the world.

Conference Happenings

Spring 2019 Appraisal

GNJ is committed to grow in our work. We work with every pastor and every church that is willing and ready to grow and develop. We want to know what you think about the progress we are or are not making. Visit gnjumc.org to access and take part in the appraisal.

Honoring Drew Dyson

Raritan Valley District Superintendent Rev. Drew Dyson is transitioning to his new position as the Executive Director of Princeton Senior Resource Center. A service honoring his ministry with GNJ will be held on April 14 at 4:00 p.m. at Bridgewater

UMC. No clergy procession, reception to follow. All are invited.

Breakthrough Series Planning Event for Pastors

Join fellow pastors prepare *Road Trip*, a series component of the GNJ Breakthrough resource, on May 2 at the Mission and Resource Center in Neptune. The workshop serves as introduction to sermon series planning for pastors as they develop skills in implementing a worship series, leading small groups, identifying new small group leaders, creating altar design and planning fellowship opportunities. Visit gnjumc.org events to register and download resources.

Continued on page 11

Conference Happenings

Sign Up for 40 Days of Prayer

Sign up to receive 40 days of prayer in the 40 days leading up to GNJ's Annual Conference at gnjumc.org. Hear personal stories and pray in unison as May approaches.

Honoring Extension Ministers

All clergy in extension ministry are invited to the Extension Ministry Dinner at Annual Conference on **May 20**. The cost is \$28 per person. You can register for the dinner upon registering for the conference at gnjumc.org

Blueprint for Wellness at Annual Conference

Take your Blueprint for Wellness at Annual Conference. Visit gnjumc.org for more info, a wellness flyer, toolkit, and to register.

The Way We Gather

The Way We Gather is an organizational tool for churches to engage in growth. It's a key part of Leadership 100 in our 2023 Strategic Plan. Visit gnjumc.org for more info and to download the book.

Be More Welcoming

We are continuing to add resources to our Way Forward pages including resources for congregations who want to take steps to be more welcoming to the LGBTQ community. Visit gnjumc.org to access.

Renters Insurance for Pastors

Church insurance only protects the parsonage and its church-owned contents. A pastor residing in a church owned parsonage must purchase renters insurance to cover their personal liability and property/contents. Visit gnjumc.org to learn more.

Native American Sunday

Plan ahead for Native American Ministries Sunday, **May 5**, even as you prepare for UMCOM Sunday this week. Access toolkit at umcsgiving.org

Celebrate Camping Sunday, April 28

Next Gen Ministries has developed worship resources for churches to use at this special Sunday service dedicated to promoting and supporting, through prayer and finances, the Next Generation Summer Camps. Visit gnjumc.org to access resources and start preparing now.

Open Summer Camp Volunteer Positions

Next Generation Ministries is seeking to fill the below volunteer positions for 2019 summer camping programs at Pinelands Center in Mt. Misery. Visit gnjumc.org for details and to apply. Stay tuned for paid positions, coming soon.

- Assistant Camp Director
- Cabin Leader
- Music Director
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Change a Life, Support the IGNITE Scholarship Fund

You, your church or organization have the unique opportunity to invest in the life of a young person for Christ by supporting the 2019 IGNITE Scholarship Fund. Find out more at gnjumc.org

Princeton Forum on Youth Ministry

Youth leaders are invited to the forum, **April 23-26**, where thought leaders, pastors, and scholars will gather on the campus of Princeton Theological Seminary to provide lectures, seminars, and worship. Visit iymforum.ptsem.edu to learn more.

Job Opportunities

GNJ is seeking a Database Manager and Next Generation Ministries is seeking a Youth Program Coordinator and Youth and Campus Program Coordinator. Visit gnjumc.org for position descriptions and to apply.

Obituaries

Rev. Beverly A. Errickson, Retired Elder, died on March 9. A Memorial Service was held on March 14 at Saint Mark UMC in Hamilton, NJ. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent in memory of Rev. Beverly A. Errickson to United Methodist Communities, The Shores – 2201 Bay Ave., Ocean City, NJ 08226. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Jennifer Bonelli, 160 Jeremiah Ave., Hamilton, NJ 08610

Margaret Michael, surviving spouse of Rev. Rollo A. Michael, died on March 11. A Memorial Service was held on March 15 at New Hope UMC in Brookhaven, MS. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to Tabernacle UMC, Pennington UMC, UMC of Red Bank, Kemble Memorial UMC or the UMC at Absecon in memory of Margaret Michael. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Peggy Michael Rush, PO Box 754, Gibbon, NE 68840.

Margaret D. Murray, surviving spouse of Rev. Alfred Murray, died on March 25. A Memorial Service was held on April 5 at St. Paul UMC in Willingboro, NJ. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to The Murray Family at 7 Harris Lane, Willingboro, NJ 08046.

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For more information, please call 732-922-9800 and ask for the Foundation, or visit foundation.umcommunities.org.



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Michaela Murray-Nolan | Director of Development
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