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THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

gnjumc.org

GNJ Way Forward Team Sets Plans in Action

By Carolyn Conover
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NEPTUNE, NJ

The GNJ Way Forward Team and Connectional Table worked together on June 20-21 to move ahead with a plan that will help congregations thrive through different expressions as a new era of Methodism emerges.

The 35-member team includes laity and clergy representing GNJ's congregational, ethnic and theological diversity. The members were affirmed at the March special session of Greater New Jersey's annual conference in their charge to find a path that recognizes that GNJ has both disciples who embrace the passage of the traditional plan at general conference, and disciples that are hurt and in disagreement with the denomination's plan concerning ministry with the LGBTQ community.

The GNJ Way Forward Team released the following agreements and steps to create what is next for Methodism in Greater New Jersey. They are basing their work grounded in the belief that in GNJ, disciples do not all think and act alike, but that they love and serve God together.

Hopes and Desires

We believe our congregations, leaders, mission partners and the people in our communities have similar hopes: to grow spiritually, to belong and be in



Michael Merchant, Senior Consultant from the Arbinger Institute facilitated the GNJ Way Forward Team meetings in June. The Way Forward Team is using the principles of an Outward Mindset to guide their work.

community and connection with one another, to be mission-minded and purposeful, to contribute their experience and talents, to be free of judgement of and from others, to do well in our congregations and ministry, to live without fear and to have a voice.

Mission

We affirm and will continue to plan a way forward that supports our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ and grow vital congregations to transform the world.

Continued on page 8

GBGM Grant Helps New Brunswick Students to “Write, Read, Achieve Power”

By Barbara Dawson

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ

More than 500 students throughout the New Brunswick school system received a special opportunity to develop and demonstrate their writing and design skills thanks to a grant to promote literacy from the General Board of Global Ministries, or GBGM, to the United Methodist Church at New Brunswick.

“Over a three-year period, the literacy project hopes that the reading skills of students will improve by at least two levels,” says Susan Zahorbenski, a diaconal minister and one of the two coordinators of “Write, Read, Achieve Power: The Literacy Project.”

A total of 470 students from first grade through high school entered the “Voices of New Brunswick” writing contest and 32 were selected as winners. They were honored at an awards ceremony at the church on May 18 attended by parents, siblings, teachers and principals. Nashaly Espinal's winning essay discussed how New Brunswick is a tight-knit community; she especially enjoys activities like Neighborhood Night Out, Rutgers Day and the city's tree-lighting ceremony.

Forty-nine New Brunswick High School students entered an additional contest to design a logo reflecting the literacy project's theme, “Write, Read, Achieve Power.” A winner, runner-up and honorable mention were recognized at the ceremony. The winning logo will be used on stationery, banners, and T-shirts.

The \$9,750 grant from GBGM is also funding other activities in New Brunswick including elementary school tutoring, reading to pre-school toddlers, and workshops for tutors from the local church and from Rutgers. “The literacy



Three of the winners of the “Voices of New Brunswick” writing contest show the theme of the church's literacy grant with project coordinators Karen Cox and Susan Zahorbenski. Photo: Catherine Pherson

grant and the activities it funds are vitally important to New Brunswick since many of its families are poor and do not speak English at home,” explains Karen Cox, a church lay leader and the other project coordinator for “Write, Read, Achieve Power.”

A workshop to help parents improve their children's reading skills is scheduled. As with the awards ceremony, remarks will be presented in both English and Spanish.

To learn more about the Literacy Project, contact umcliteracy@gmail.com.

South Jersey Methodists Aid Neighbors During Flood

By Carolyn Conover
cconover@gnjumc.org

NORTHFIELD, NJ

Greater New Jersey's United Methodists were already on the ground assisting homeowners with relief efforts when Governor Phil Murphy declared a state of emergency in Burlington, Camden and Gloucester counties on June 20, the last day of spring. In some areas, water has risen several feet, forcing emergency services to evacuate residents from their homes.

To help residents with flood relief efforts, a team from Good Shepherd UMC in Northfield in Atlantic County brought 100 cleaning kit buckets to the Burlington County Office of Emergency Management on June 25. The church hosts GNJ's Southern Region UMCOR kit hub, where flood buckets and other relief supplies are collected and assembled. The UMCOR kit hub has supported GNJ's relief efforts in the past, including during the aftermath of Sandy. Nicole Troast, coordinator of the hub, encourages our churches to join flood relief efforts by replenishing the supply of cleaning and hygiene kits, so that United Methodists are once again ready to respond when their neighbors are in need. Information about assembling the kits can be found on the disaster relief pages of GNJ's website at <https://www.gnjumc.org/disasterresponse/cleaning-buckets-health-kits/>.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP

Turning the Church Outward

Bishop John Schol



Recently I met Cristobala Colon, the founder of La Fageda in Spain. La Fageda is a dairy and yogurt company started in 1982 in which 60% of its employees have intellectual disabilities or chronic mental illness. The highly successful company was recently awarded the Outward Mindset award. “Our employees are people,” said Colon “and when you give them an opportunity, meaningful work and engage them in social relationships they excel.” It is a beautiful thing to watch the employees work. They come alive when given the opportunity to experience purpose and meaningful engagement with others. It is miraculous.”

Outward facing people who engage others as human beings, not as society labels them, understand how God sees and engages us.

This is the third and final article in the series, *Turning the Church Outward*. We have been engaged in conversations, legislation and debate as United Methodists about human sexuality. As a church, in our differences we have turned more inward, labeling one another and seeing each other as objects. We see each other as an ally or foe or a vehicle. You are either on our side or against us. You either help accomplish our goal or work against accomplishing our goals. This is an inward mindset in which we see and evaluate people if they will help us.

Here in GNJ, we have gathered 35 people that represent the vast diversity of GNJ to see how we can find a way forward, not by trying convince one another or gain advantage over one another but by seeing each other as colleagues who care about one another and want the best for the church and for all the people of the church. Our aim is to love and bless one another as we seek to help our congregations thrive in their calling and mission.

These two concepts — love one another and help congregations thrive — are based in two key biblical concepts.

The first is found in Genesis 1:27. We are made in the image of God. A person personifies the Creator God. When we deny someone their personhood, their humanness, we diminish the Creator. Each of us have God, the Divine within us. When we turn people into objects, we diminish and objectify God.

The second is found in 1 Corinthians 12:27. You, the church are the body of Christ. Each and every congregation is the body of Christ. The congregation is to be the thinking, feeling and acting of Jesus. The world should be able to look at us and say, “Oh, that is what Jesus would think, that is what Jesus would feel, that is what Jesus would do.” Congregations that thrive excel in being Christ in the world. Like Jesus, thriving congregations are turned outward and are serving in the world by seeing all the people in our communities.

The GNJ Way Forward Team has committed to turning outward by honoring the Creator as we see people as people, not as a label or object and by asking what can we do to help our congregations thrive at this point in our history. The present disagreement about human sexuality has us looking at one another as traditionalist or progressive, discriminatory or disobedient, LGBTQ or heterosexual. When we label people, we really do not know them, see their heart or understand their hopes.

Some people are having such difficulty turning outward that they are calling for disaffiliation and schism. Is this the only witness we have to offer the world? Is there a third way? This is what the Way Forward Team is exploring. Instead of disaffiliation, the Team is asking what binds us together. What can we do together that we cannot do on our own? The Team is also asking, what must we do separately because we recognize that in order to thrive, some congregations need to do a few things differently.

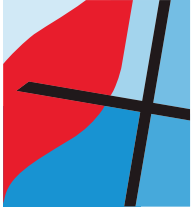
“OUR AIM IS TO LOVE AND BLESS ONE ANOTHER AS WE SEEK TO HELP OUR CONGREGATIONS THRIVE IN THEIR CALLING AND MISSION.”

— Bishop John Schol

In GNJ, can we have shared mission, UMW and UMM, trainings, and administration and also have different practices related to assignment of clergy and gay and lesbian weddings in our churches?

On October 26, 2019 GNJ will have a Special Annual Conference Session to identify how we will move forward, identifying what we can share and what we will do in different expressions or models of Methodism.

At La Fageda not all employees can or do perform the same roles. Yet they are one company, with one mission, to deliver the best milk and yogurt in the world. We have much in common that we can do together and some things we will do in different expressions, but we can love and bless one another and we can help congregations thrive. It may be the most divine thing we can do.



THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
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 - 4. Map out worship and plan a run through.**
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UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Next Generation Ministries Expands with Innovative New Leaders

By Chris Carter
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NEPTUNE, NJ

Two new members of Next Generation Ministries are helping Greater New Jersey to invest in new disciples and train youth and college students to be leaders in their churches and communities. Kerwin Webb and Davidson Sutherland joined the Next Gen team as Youth Program Coordinator, and as Youth and Campus Program Coordinator respectively.

Davidson Sutherland will focus on campus and young adult ministries and will support and resource GNJ's multiple college programs and students as well as Mosaic Ministries.

Sutherland is from Arlington, Texas. "I found the church when I was 16, a football buddy invited me to a Sunday night youth event," Sutherland recounted, "when I walked into the youth building, I was met with genuine excitement... they loved me in a way I had only experienced from my family."

Working at the Institute for Youth Ministry (IYM) at Princeton, he "saw hospitality used as a way to show people that they were loved." The Forum, an annual event put on by the IYM, gathers hundred of youth pastors to learn about, and reaffirm their faith in youth ministry and recommit to doing the work with excellence. "The average youth pastor career is three years," Sutherland reports, "and the Forum is a place of rest for youth pastors."

Eric Drew, Executive Director of Next Generation Ministry is excited about Sutherland's gifts and experiences. "Davidson is enriching Next Generation by fulfilling our mission to engage young adults, youth pastors and students at college."

Kerwin Webb hails from Birmingham, Alabama and has been involved in ministry throughout New Jersey since working with Habitat for Humanity in Sandy relief

starting in 2013. He signed up for storm relief and recovery work through Ameri-corps, "I knew God was calling me to service, to a new challenge, even if I didn't know what it looked like."

After arriving in NJ, Webb began volunteering with Little League and in the youth ministry at Second Baptist Church in Asbury Park, where he now serves as an associate pastor. He also founded the youth development non-profit *Renew My World*, which provides cultural event opportunities like theater and aquarium visits for kids who would normally not be able to experience them.

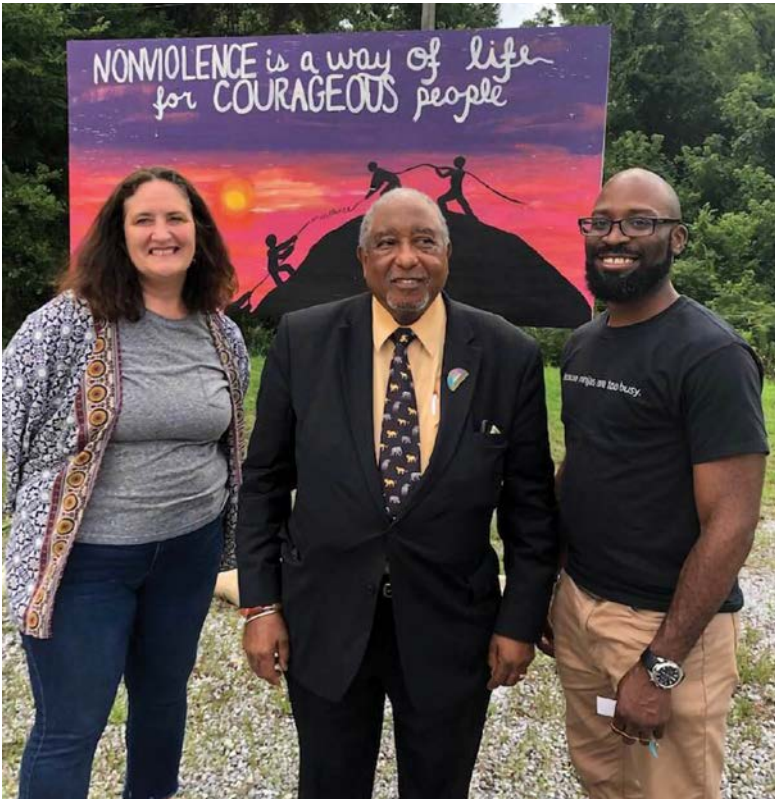
"The most rewarding thing in working with youth is when you can get past trust issues, let them know you care about them and their success, and see them do things their fears would have stopped them from doing," Webb offered.

He pointed out that the main challenge in working with youth is "sometimes young people have negative impressions

from well-meaning adults in the church who maybe aren't gracious in their dealings with them," further confiding, "I grew up in

church, and by the time I was a teenager I was a little sick of it!" Webb recalled Jerome Dimes, his mentor in divinity school, and how "he showed me a different side of what a Christian can be," and provided him the "perfect combination of persistence and space" to let Webb walk further along his faith journey.

A recent graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary's Master of Divinity program, Webb will help GNJ young people see that different side of what a Christian will be as he will plan and coordinate events (including IGNITE) and resources that help youth and youth workers connect to God.



Kerwin Webb, right, led youth on Joshua Generation's civil rights pilgrimage in June.

"We are blessed that Kerwin has decided to join us," said Drew. "His leadership will move us forward in our mission to reach new disciples."

Sutherland and Webb have hit the ground running. Sutherland led the Mosaic Ministry cohort at the Innovation Leadership Institute and Webb is helping lead the Joshua Generation, a civil rights pilgrimage with GNJ youth exploring racial justice.

Next Generation Ministries is cultivating and catalyzing the next generation of enthusiastic disciples of Jesus Christ who connect, grow and lead in their congregations and communities for the transformation of the world. Webb and Sutherland will help them in the journey.



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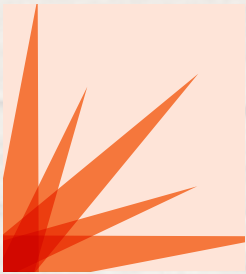


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NEXT GENERATION
SUMMER CAMPS
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY



MEDITATIONS ON MISSION:

Palisades District in Puerto Rico

At the end of May, United Methodist volunteers from the Palisades District of Greater New Jersey travelled to Puerto Rico to help rebuild homes for families affected by the devastating landfall of Hurricane Maria in September of 2017. Some of the team members shared their reflections on the trip, listed below:

Rev. Gina Kim, Palisades District Superintendent

Last week, I returned from Puerto Rico after mission work. It was a humbling yet uplifting experience. I gained a deeper understanding about myself, other team members, sisters and brothers in Puerto Rico and their culture and history. I praise God for blessing the team and the work in a special way whenever we needed extra strength and grace.

Rev. Bridget Galvin, mission team leader, Grace UMC in Wyckoff

From May 25 to June 1, thirteen participants from the Palisades District traveled to Puerto Rico to help with relief work through UMCOR. Prior to leaving, the team worked to learn about one another and responsible mission work principles.

On the trip, the team stayed in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, on the northern coast in a camp complex run by a local church. On Sunday after arrival, the team worshiped with the Methodists of Arecibo in a Spirit-led service and explored their home for the next week, visiting restaurants and shops.

They stopped by the world-famous Arecibo Observatory and visited the beach during free time before work began. The large group was split into three smaller work teams during the week. Each team worked with a foreman and an assistant on projects that ranged from concrete mixing and wall repair to roof construction. The hot Puerto Rican sun gave them a new respect for the workers who have been repairing and rebuilding houses for the past eighteen months.

Group members had the chance to meet the families who owned the houses and learn more about the stories of the construction workers and survivors.

Throughout the week, the team spent time in reflection and spiritual practices led by the group members. These practices helped them stay connected to God throughout the trip. On Wednesday and Thursday nights they had an opportunity to visit the local shelter and bring food from the camp. It was a great opportunity to meet local people.

By Friday evening, everyone was exhausted, but packed up to head to Old San Juan for some exploration anyway! The team learned about the history of the city and enjoyed a celebratory dinner together before heading home on Saturday. Many of the team members had transformative experiences while building relationships with God, Puerto Rican neighbors and each other.

Rev. Kay Dubuisson, Spring Valley UMC in Spring Valley, NY

Wow! The week in Puerto Rico was absolutely amazing. God taught me so much through this mission journey, my team and the people we served to in Puerto Rico. Although one can write an entire book on this assignment, my focus is to share what God showed and spoke to me.

First, the beauty of the island filled me with enchantment. From the sounds of the tropical island at night, the powdery white sand and turquoise waters, the rainbow color of flowers, plants and the endless chorus of the coqui (co-kee) tree frogs, the visits to local places like Old San Juan and the streets of Arecibo were amazing. Puerto is indeed a beautiful Island.

I was struck with a bitter cup of reality. It has been 18 months since the storm made landfall in Puerto Rico. Although there has been a lot of effort to rebuild Puerto Rico, clearly, the island is still confronting questions of status, economics and migration that Hurricane Maria helped expose.

Due to lack of resources, many families still reside in homes destroyed by the storm. Many homes are abandoned by their owners. Some are without electricity. Being that Puerto is a territory of the United States, I found myself questioning why more wasn't being done for the people of Puerto Rico who are still clearly struggling and are extremely impoverished.

Another reality was the arduous work that was set before us. Cleaning up house debris, using forbidden



Rev. Kay Dubuisson offers a blessing during the Palisades Mission Trip to Puerto Rico in May.

tools, busting up concrete, building and putting up a permanent steel roofing foundation and mixing up cement made up our long days. We were stretched beyond our abilities and strength. Somehow, God and Motrin sustained each one of us daily.

Being in Puerto Rico was a time of healing.

Many rich stories were shared between the family and our team: stories of sadness and joy, of humility and pride, of despair and hope, disappointment and satisfaction. Healing came in the form of presence, service, partnership, friendship, belonging, caring, helping, welcoming, embracing and loving. Healing was mutually shared through giving and receiving and as we prayed with and anointed each other.

My heart was filled with gratitude.

Each day started at the camp with a time of meditation and breakfast with morning prayer and discussion following in the evening. We were without hunger. Delicious meals and snacks were served throughout the day. We were blessed with trickling, but hot, water as well as electricity the entire week. We were blessed with wonderful cooks who were gracious to cook extra meals (75 plates) in order to feed many homeless friends on the street of Arecibo. I thank God for the skilled foremen who patiently taught, guided, protected and sent us back home in one piece with our ten fingers and toes intact.

Puerto Rico was a time of connectedness on all levels.

Thirteen individuals of different backgrounds, cultures, physical features and mindsets came together for a common purpose: to help repair homes for the victims

of hurricane Maria. Our wonderful leader and translator helped us to connect with each other beforehand by meeting several weeks before the trip. Our leader helped us to know who we are, our strengths and challenges and how we can support each other through good and tough times. This connection helped us to lean on, cry, laugh and support each other in many ways during the trip. The connection didn't stay among us. We took with us a part of the culture. We made and will maintain long-lasting and enriching relationships with brothers and sisters on the island.

My life will never be the same because of this trip and I want to say thank you for your prayer, encouragement and financial support. Without your partnership my mission trip might not have been possible. Thank you for investing in me for the Kingdom's sake! 🇵🇷

UPCOMING PUERTO RICO MISSION TRIP: Skylands and Capital Districts October 2019

The Skylands and Capital Districts are organizing a joint district mission trip to Puerto Rico for October 2019. All congregations in the district and the Central Region are invited to participate. This is a unique opportunity to amplify GNJ's missional impact and help families on the island rebuild their homes. Contact Norm Cetuk at normanc469@gmail.com for more information.

Vincent and Red Bank UMCs Bring Vitality, Compassion to Tanzania

By Chris Carter
ccarter@gnjumc.org

DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA

In June, the second Local Pastors’ School united Greater New Jersey’s visiting leaders with Tanzanian Methodists in a week of shared learning and worship. The school, funded by the Miracles Everywhere campaign, is a result of a 2018 resolution passed at Annual Conference that declares GNJ’s support for the growing church in Tanzania. GNJ’s recent partnership with the Tanzanian Annual Conference has its roots deep in the local churches in our conference.

Local congregations in New Jersey have been nurturing the growth of Methodism in the east African nation through their own ministries since the first churches were planted.

“It’s so exciting to see how the seeds have taken root and flourished,” reflects David LeDuc, pastor of Vincent UMC in Nutley, “and that the ministry and missionary work in Tanzania is bearing so much fruit, in terms of sharing the message and the love of God.”

LeDuc has long been involved in the United Methodist’s church evangelizing and expanding into what is officially known as the Tanzania Episcopal Area of the North Katanga Conference; the conference is named after a region in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from which the first missionaries were dispatched to Tanzania 25 years ago. Once part of German East Africa, Tanzania became a British possession after World War I. The colonial powers brought their own empire’s preferred beliefs with them, and so the Lutheran and Anglican churches predominate even today. To grow the Methodist connection, missionaries were charged in the neighboring DR Congo to go forth and make disciples in Tanzania.

Among the first six missionaries were a married couple, Rev. Mutwale Ntambo Wa Mushidi and Kabaka Ndala Alphonsine. After crossing Lake Tanganyika, LeDuc told us, Rev. Mutwale’s boat died on the beach and so he sought shelter in an unused and dilapidated building, studying his Bible. Residents watched as a deadly snake slithered out from the shadows to regard the new arrival. Tanzania is home to some the deadliest snakes in the world, and locals had died of snakebites before, but Mutwale was unfazed and ultimately unharmed. Even the skeptic may think twice when a pastor on a providentially one-way trip shows up and scares away serpents- certainly this was a man of God with a mission. Now acting as legal representative in Tanzania for North Katanga’s Bishop Mande Muyombo, Mutwale oversees more than 70 churches throughout the country.

It was through the General Board of Global Ministries that Rev. Mutwale and Kabaka connected with LeDuc and the Vincent congregation. “We were inspired by their story and their sacrifice,” he told us, “and how the Lord has worked in them and how they have followed their call.” After hosting the missionary couple, the congregation began raising awareness and resources to aid their work in Tanzania through mission fairs and by speaking to other local churches, both in GNJ and Eastern Pennsylvania.

These funds went toward buying land for the Tanzania church’s 15-acre annual conference center outside the primary and former capital of Dar Es Salaam. Vincent’s members were also able to help coordinate GBGM and UMCOR to have a well drilled for the site.

The lack of infrastructure, even outside the largest city, makes modern amenities into luxuries and greatly hampers travel. Additionally, the government in in the

of Red Bank UMC. At the Tanzania table at the GNJ Annual Conference in May, surrounded by brightly colored dresses and beautifully beaded bags for sale, Schildge explained how gaining the skills necessary to dye, sew and craft these items gives dignity and a means of self-support to the women of Tanzania, many of whom are war widows with children. “Kabaka is so gentle, so kind and loving,” she observed, “and she knows that education is the key, especially for empowering women.” By the end of conference, the dresses were sold out.

Schildge’s daughter and her family live in Nairobi, and they last visited the Tanzania conference site in January to volunteer and covenant with Mutwale, Alphonsine and their church . “There’s such a joy and passion in the church,” Schildge recalled, “they welcomed us with dancing and clapping; kids kick off their shoes while singing.” She and her husband George also host Mutwale and Alphonsine when they visit the US, and work with



The Hope Center outside Dar es Salaam, like the church in Tanzania, is under construction and full of promise.

Photo by Janie Schildge

process of moving the capital from Dar es Salaam on the Indian Ocean to the more centrally located city of Dodoma, adding to the administrative and bureaucratic red tape. These are only a few of the issues facing people in Tanzania and throughout the region. The genocide in Rwanda and conflict in the Congo has a regional effect resulting in a migrant crisis.

Serving the needs of the many displaced people in the great lakes region has given shape to the Methodist Church in Tanzania today. “They care for the poorest, for those who have very little,” reported Janie Schildge

LeDuc and others in GNJ to continue educating churches in New Jersey about how they can aid the growth of their kin in Tanzania.

As the work of Greater New Jersey continues in Tanzania, so does the work of local churches and individuals within the conference. From a single pastor in a broken-down boat a quarter century ago, to over 70 churches and a burgeoning mission center, the Methodist church in Tanzania has come a long way. Mutwale cited a French saying: “Petit a petit l’oiseau fait son nit,” or “little by little the bird builds its nest.” 🇫🇷

Miracles Everywhere Empowers Churches, Strengthens Mission

by Carolyn Conover
cconover@gnjumc.org

NEPTUNE, NJ

From Trenton to Tanzania, the Pine Barrens to Puerto Rico, local churches in Greater New Jersey are making Miracles Everywhere. The global campaign with local roots supports vital missions like the continuing work of A Future With Hope to renew communities across GNJ, creating new disciples with Next Generation Ministries, and providing hurricane relief alongside UMCOR.

Micháela Murray-Nolan, Director of Development for the United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey has support for churches who want to participate in Miracles Everywhere, but are concerned about other budget needs. She has cultivated the “Miracles and More” concept for churches to include their own current capital, operating, or mission needs in a Miracles Everywhere campaign.

She says, “The result is that congregations are motivated to grow their own church and global missions in one united movement. Committing to a three-year plan will result in larger gifts as people are inspired to give more and work together toward their common goal.”

Murray-Nolan knows this because she has spent a career fundraising as the executive director of Kids Corporation in Newark, an educational and healthcare non-profit serving the city’s neediest children and families.



She has other creative ideas to help churches manage the campaign including:

- special collections that customize the campaign for the community
- testimony about helping bring dignity to marginalized people in our communities, giving opportunities for youth to learn and grow, and sharing God’s abundant gifts with the neediest among us.
- family events that celebrate the launch and milestones of the campaign
- volunteer opportunities for hands-on experience to connect with the ministry.

- thanking members three times (in addition to their quarterly statements)
 - when they pledge
 - when they remit their pledge
 - when their pledge is fulfilled.
 - asking members to continue their giving (at the level of their Miracles Everywhere pledge) to the church stewardship campaign.
- “Congregations can be revitalized by running a mission campaign and Miracles Everywhere has all the elements to support local ministry and mission,” says Murray-Nolan.

Murray-Nolan knows that each congregation is unique. She is available to help congregations make their own plan to run a campaign and enhance their stewardship. 🇺🇸

**Need advice? Need a plan?
Not sure where to start?
Contact us for help:**

Micháela Murray-Nolan
Director of Development,
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mmurraynolan@gnjumc.org

Boonton UMC Teams with Presbyterian Church to Feed Community

By Donald Kirschner

BOONTON, N.J.

Six years ago, Boonton United Methodist Church’s lay leader Annette Thurkauf felt a nudge by the Holy Spirit to start a food pantry to meet a real need in the community: children going to bed hungry. Since then the Loaves and Fishes food pantry has grown, and under a recent expansion the has moved to new housing in a bigger space at the First Presbyterian Church of Boonton. Mayor Matthew DiLauri inaugurated the new site at a ribbon-cutting attended by members of both churches and the community. “Not only is it the food that will make a difference in people’s lives here but your willingness to open your hearts to those people in need,” he said.

When first opened, the food pantry served about a dozen families a week, and at the end of its six-year tenure at Boonton UMC was helping upwards of 26 food insecure families weekly. “Today, our Loaves and Fishes food pantry has joined forces with the First Presbyterian Church and we now help supplement 40 families every week,” reported Thurkauf, preaching at Boonton UMC this past Pentecost Sunday.

Thurkauf’s story of heeding the Holy Spirit’s call was a fitting theme for Pentecost. Hers was the final sermon in a series, the theme: “Just Keep Breathing... in Times of Suffering.” She asked the congregation to consider some of the other ways they can help relieve the suffering, telling them “I truly believe that this is what Jesus was trying to teach



Marilyn Ward, left, and Annette Thurkauf, right, look on as Boonton Mayor Matthew DiLauri opens Fishes & Loaves’ new location at First Presbyterian. Photo: Donald Kirschner

us... to love one another, to relieve the suffering and be brothers and sisters to each other.”

The pantry also provides fresh produce from Donaldson Farms in Hackettstown, as well as canned goods and diapers. Boonton UMC’s garden also contributes to the pantry during the summer. Marilyn Ward, mission elder at First Presbyterian, stated that “Annette was right with us

from the beginning... she has all kinds of experience that she brings here, and I think it’s just been an absolutely ideal partnership between the two churches.”

“We have many people involved in this project,” Thurkauf acknowledged, “And it warms my heart to know that two churches from two different denominations have joined together to help the less fortunate.”

The food pantry is open to all those with food insecurities two days a week, on Wednesday from 4:00-6:00 p.m. and on Saturday from 9:00-11:00 a.m. at the First Presbyterian Church of Boonton, 513 Birch St.

More information, including a list of high-need items and how to support the Loaves and Fishes ministry, can be found at www.boontonfoodpantry.org.



September 28, 2019

LAITY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Tools and skills for lay leaders facing challenges of the 21st century

FACILITATORS INCLUDE:



Rev. Jana Purkis-Brash



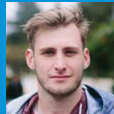
Rev. Gina Yeske



Rev. Erica Munoz



Kerwin Webb



Davidson Sutherland

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TRACKS INCLUDE:

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Storytelling Through Small Groups

More From “A Closer Walk”

Innovation in Youth Ministry

REGISTRATION: Deadline to register is: Sept 7, 2019

FIND OUT MORE BY VISITING:

www.gnjumc.org/events/2019-laity-leadership-academy

Way Forward Team

Continued from page 1

Principles

Committed to being outward, the GNJ Way Forward Team is rooted in two principles:

- Bless and love one another in the things that unite us.
- Grow spiritually as we connect with one another and with the people in our communities.

Goals

Our goals to help organize congregations into new expressions are:

- To work with our congregations to identify objectives, opportunities, challenges and structures that support their efforts to thrive.
- To create new and renew current connections with one another through ministries, mission and administration in the next era of Methodism.

How We Measure Success

- Churches grow in attendance, vitality and impact
- Churches increase their stewardship
- Conflict and anxiety diminish
- Clergy fulfill their calling and serve without fear

Action Steps

To achieve these goals we will:

- Create a statement and framework for pilots/models of new expressions of Methodism
- Outline a communication plan and timeline so that we have feedback from the pilot programs before General Conference 2020

- Schedule and carry out listening sessions and create an assessment tool
- Identify ministries and programs that we currently share to help guide discussions on new and renewed connections
- Launch 75 congregations into one of three pilot programs:

1. Congregations that hold a scriptural view that same gender weddings should not be performed in our churches and that LGBTQ persons should not be ordained.
2. Congregations that hold different scriptural views and can be together recognizing there will be different practices and understandings of the LGBTQ community’s participation in the church.
3. Congregations that hold a scriptural view that Jesus invites everyone to participate fully in the life of the church and that all churches should allow same gender weddings and that all churches should be open to the appointment of an LGBTQ clergy person.

The team will work on these plans throughout the summer and keep the conference informed of their progress. They meet again in September and present a report on the proposed launch of the pilots at the special session of the annual conference scheduled for October 26.



IGNITE Talent Will Help GNJ Youth to Move Mountains

By Chris Carter
ccarter@gnjumc.org

W I L D W O O D , N J

On October 4, youth and leaders in youth ministry will converge on the Wildwoods Convention Center for Greater New Jersey’s fifth annual IGNITE conference. The event is sponsored by GNJ’s Next Generation Ministries and is fittingly dedicated to equipping the next generation of leaders in the church with the skills and resources they need to guide the future of Methodism. This year’s theme ‘Move Mountains’ draws from Matthew 17:20, “if you have faith as a grain of a mustard seed...you can move mountains.” Workshops and programming are only part of the equation; as in past years the IGNITE team has assembled an exciting, excellent line-up of talented artists to inspire and entertain the conference attendees.



has also brought her message to more mainstream audiences, as with 2012’s chart-climbing single *Gold*. The album of the same name was nominated for Best Contemporary Christian Album at the 55th Grammy Awards after re-release by Capital Music Group. Nicole strives to be a role model for young girls everywhere, and to use her platform to share God’s love.

The Australian electronic trio Verses are a husband, wife and brother/

brother-in-law whose songs enthusiastically explore timeless Christian themes through a thoroughly modern musical style. The future members of Verses, Luke, Jess and Joel O’Dea were moved to form their band during a trip to New York City which had them pondering the meaning on lyrics in contemporary Christian music. This informed the goal of their work, to put scripture back into sing without losing any of the quality of the music. “We want our music to be able to stand next to any song on secular radio,” Luke told us. Inspired by Jesus’s unconditional love, the band makes their music exclusively available for free to stream and download.

Nicole Caldwell-Gross is a woman on fire for Christ! She will bring her passionate and insightful perspective on the gospel to Wildwood, just as she has shared it across the world in places like Cuba, Dubai, Kolkata and Johannesburg. Her online space, ‘The F Bomb: A Life Ignited by Faith’ features



Nicole and Jevon Caldwell-Gross will share how faith can move mountains at IGNITE in October. Photo provided

Caldwell-Gross’s meditations on how to hear God in the modern age, how to know when He is dropping a ‘Faith Bomb’ on you. Caldwell-Gross has also served as the Director of Mission and Community Development and as Executive Director of A Future With Hope, launching our first Hope Centers. Her husband Jevon Caldwell-Gross, or Pastor J, is currently Teaching Pastor at St. Luke’s UMC in Indianapolis, one of the largest UMCs in the galactic empire. Pastor J has worked with youth, politicians, educators and other while on the Montclair Board of Education. He combines this broad understanding of our society with an innovative ap-

proach to proclaiming the Word; he and Nicole will bring that message to GNJ’s youth in October.

IGNITE’s theme, ‘Move Mountains’ reminds us that faith brings the impossible into our reach. The shape and course of the church in today’s world is far from certain, but one certainty is that the youth of today will determine that shape and course tomorrow. The talented artists and speakers at INGITE will ensure that these Greater New Jersey young Methodists are enabled, encouraged, and empowered to not only move mountains but even to utterly remake the landscape and transform the world. 🌍

“IF YOU HAVE FAITH AS
A GRAIN OF A MUSTARD SEED...
YOU CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS.”
—Matthew 17:20

Britt Nicole has been spreading a message of love for all people since her highly-acclaimed debut album, *Say It* was released in 2007. She also provided vocals for the Christian hip hop group GRITS before embarking on a solo career. Her music has also been featured on MTV. No stranger to the Billboard Christian Top 40, Nicole

Summit Gathers Leaders to Support Congregations in Property Management

By Carolyn Conover
cconover@gnjumc.org

N E P T U N E , N J

Members of the Greater New Jersey Board of Trustees, Council for Finance and Administration, A Future With Hope Trustees and District Superintendents gathered on June 17 to share information on issues that churches face while managing their properties.

“Helping our churches manage their properties well and so that they can prosper is becoming increasingly important and sometimes urgent,” said Rick Reinhard, Executive Director of A Future With

Hope. “Our congregations can’t be present in the mission field if they are burdened by financial obligations that come with aging properties.”

He explained, “Many congregations exhibit a mismatch between congregation size and building size. The congregation is small but the building is large thereby burdening the church financially.”

Historically, GNJ’s role has been one of intervention only when churches fail, which results in less than optimal decision-making for the church and community. GNJ leadership is developing strategies to work within the guidelines of the *Book of Discipline* to assist churches and communities with real estate issues so that they can thrive.

Greater New Jersey has formed non-profit mission partner organizations—A Future With Hope, Nehemiah Properties, and Resurrection Gardens—to assist churches in their mission and manage real estate challenges.

A Future With Hope is helping churches with planning and programming that includes creating Hope Centers that provide asset-based community development and bring the community and congregation together. Nehemiah Properties will partner with local congregations who are ready to redevelop their property and Resurrection Garden is being set up to manage cemeteries.



A FUTURE WITH HOPE
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Reinhard shared that GNJ owns property in more than 530 locations and based on insurance ratings that property is worth an estimated \$1.4 billion.


“We face both opportunities and problems, big and small, healthy and ailing churches in high-demand and low-demand areas,” explained Reinhard. “Each property is its own individual story.”

Attendees left the meeting, which was hosted by A Future With Hope, the Cabinet and CF&A, agreeing that developing a strategy for properties has long term advantages for our congregations and ministries. 🌍


CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2019 SCHOLARSHIP AWARD RECIPIENTS

The Board of Higher Education & Ministry has announced the 2019 scholarship recipients.


CONFERENCE TRUST FUND SCHOLARSHIP




Brittany A. Boetticher
UMC of Lake Hopatcong
Drew University




Victoria Rose Cattano
Morristown UMC
Centenary University




Bethany Morgan Cousins
UMC in Washington
Houghton College



Meredythe Christine Elliott
Dobbins Memorial UMC
Southeastern University



Charlotte Grace Jansky
Red Bank UMC
Michigan State University




Melissa Rose Johnson
Bishop Janes UMC
Messiah College

ETHEL SNYDER BOOK/INEZ R. IRONS SCHOLARSHIP




Katherine Regina Lattig
First UMC of Newton
Drew University


FRANCES NELSON SCHOLARSHIP




Allison Taylor Dyson
Simply Grace UMC
Bucks County Community College



Maegan Ella Gunner
Marlton UMC
Colorado Christian University




Holly Marie Paul
UMC at New Brunswick
Drew University



Ebenezer Kyuhyun Shim
Wall UMC
Boston College


EMILY GARRISON NURSING SCHOLARSHIP




Alexandra C. Bolden
St. Johns UMC
Rowan at Gloucester County College



Marcus Aaron Harvey
First UMC of Moorestown
Case Western Reserve University

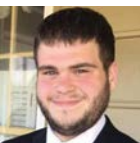


Moselle Grace Jules
Haddonfield UMC
New York University




Kaylan S. Shambry
St. Johns UMC
Camden County College


KAPPLER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



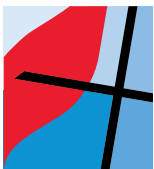
David Geller
St. Andrew UMC
Stockton University



Daniel Park
Teaneck UMC
The Cooper Union



Claire Annastasia Taylor
First UMC of Oakhurst
Hartt School of Music



CONFERENCE HAPPENINGS



Pastor Jean Arlea-Ericksen (second from right) delivers remarks at PRUMC’s re-dedication ceremony.

Pearl River UMC Dedicates New ADA-Compliant Entrance

On June 16 members of Pearl River United Methodist Church celebrated the addition of a new entrance compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as structural repairs to the sanctuary and new bathrooms. The work was made possible in part through a loan from the United Methodist Development Fund. The congregation worshipped in homes when first organized in 1865, and the current church building is just shy of 125 years old. The successful capital campaign ensures the congregation can look forward to the years, and centuries ahead.

Celebrate our New Superintendents This Fall
Skylands Installation Service for Rev. Dr. Eunice Vega-Perez

Saturday, September 14 at 4:00 p.m. Trinity UMC, Hackettstown

Raritan Valley Installation Service for Rev. Sang Won Doh

Sunday, September 15 at 4:00 p.m. Calvary Korean UMC, East Brunswick

Capital Installation Service for Rev. Hector A. Burgos

Sunday, September 15 at 7:00 p.m. Trinity UMC, Ewing

Church Conference Information Emailed July 1!

Information about reports and logins for church conferences this fall was emailed July 1. If you haven’t received this email contact your regional administrator or go to www.gnjumc.org/2019churchconference/ for all the information you need. All paperwork for church conferences will be due by September 23. Mark your calendars now and stay tuned for more information.

Blueprint for Wellness Deadline July 31!

Healthflex participants can save money on deductibles. The deadline to complete Blueprint for Wellness and HealthQuotient is July 31, 2019. Health Flex participants can go to any local Quest Diagnostics testing center to complete it. Blueprint for Wellness can save \$250 to \$500 on deductibles.

Church Mutual Offers Seasonal Safety Advice

Summer means outdoor activities at home and for churches, and insurer Church Mutual is offering safety advice on their website. Learn about bee and wasp safety, campfire regulations and more at www.churchmutual.com.

Camping Scholarships Available

All campers are welcome at summer camp this year, regardless of ability to pay. Scholarships will be extended to 80% of campers, and no camper will be turned away for financial reasons. During each of the four weeks of camp at Pinelands Center, campers will choose their own activities and make new friends with similar interests. Learn more at <https://www.gnjnextgen.org/2019-summer-camping-programs/>.

OBITUARIES

Rev. James H. Biggs, retired elder, died May 30, 2019. A memorial service was held June 3 at Anderson Campbell funeral home in Toms River. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to his spouse Kathy at PO 567 in Island Heights, NJ 08732. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to the Rotary Club of Toms River Charitable Foundation, Inc. at PO 751, Toms River, NJ 08754 in James’s memory.

Mary K. Nolan, spouse of John A. Nolan, retired full elder died June 4, 2019. A graveside service was held on June 7 in Hackettstown. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be sent to the First Presbyterian Church, 50 Main St., Englishtown, NJ 07726 in Mary’s memory. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to John at 7 Evergreen Pl., Howell, NJ 07731.

Rev. Floyd Barrett O’Rear II, retired elder, died June 22, 2019. A memorial service was held on June 25 in Smyrna, Delaware. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to his spouse Virginia at 2479 Sunnyside Rd., Smyrna, DE, 19977.

Kathryn S. Phillips, RN, surviving spouse of Rev. Donald T. Phillips Jr., died June 18, 2019. A memorial service and viewing were held June 27 at St. Andrew’s UMC in Cherry Hill. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to St. Andrew’s at 327 Route 70 West, Cherry Hill, NJ 08002 or to the United Methodist Communities of Collingswood, 460 Haddon Ave., Collingswood, NJ 08108 in Kathryn’s memory. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to her daughter Karen Phillips at 59 Oleander Dr., Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054.

POP QUIZ

The role of the Centenary Fund and Preachers’ Aid Society is to:

- A** Subsidize all retired GNJ pastors’ healthcare costs.
- B** Offer emergency financial assistance to retired pastors and the families of deceased pastors for funeral, medical, or family needs.
- C** Provide a stable source of funding to support GNJ’s annual budget.
- D** All of the above.

If you guessed *All of the above*, congratulations!

You know more about The Centenary Fund and Preachers’ Aid Society than most, and understand what a vital part in our community it plays.



THE CENTENARY FUND AND
PREACHERS’ AID SOCIETY
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Make a gift in honor of a colleague, mentor, or family member!
Go to: www.gnjumc.org/centenaryfund

“We cultivate love when we allow our most vulnerable and powerful selves to be deeply seen and known, and when we honor the spiritual connection that grows from that offering with trust, respect, kindness and affection.” - Brene Brown



You might be a part of a wonderful worshipping community BUT Sunday morning services can not replace the encouragement, growth and support you will find in a small group.

SMALL GROUPS WILL FOSTER CONNECTIONS!

Connect with God | Connect with each other
Connect with your community

For more information on the development or formation of Small Groups this Fall contact:



Gina Yeske, Director of Small Groups
gyeske@gnjumc.org | 732.359.1042



UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY



Miracles and more

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Transform your Miracles Everywhere Campaign into Miracles and More! Use the resources available for Miracles Everywhere and combine it with your congregations own priorities for capital funds, operating expenses and mission initiatives.

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Michaela Murray-Nolan | Director of Development

O: 732.359.1045 | E: mmurraynolan@gnjumc.org

For information about Miracles Everywhere:

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Find out more about Miracles Everywhere at: www.gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere