

THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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gnjumc.org

GNJ is United in Mission and Response

Carolyn Conover
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On January 3, a group of 16 denominational leaders announced a new plan to divide the denomination. Within days, United Methodist leaders in Greater New Jersey met to affirm their commitment to each other and the larger mission of the church.

“We have 40,000 people who worship in our congregations each week,” said GNJ Lay Leader Rosa Williams. “Our laity have shared time and again that our diversity is what makes us strong. They want to remain connected to each other, and they want to remain United Methodists.”

Her affirmation came amid a new proposal that will come before general conference in May to negotiate a splinter denomination for the Wesleyan Covenant Association. This protocol came as a surprise and was misreported widely in mainstream news as an agreement. In fact, it is one of several plans that have and will come before general conference for consideration.

“After reading the news, many conservative congregations feel like they



GNJ United Methodists remain focused on mission and will pack 500,000 meals on March 21 for Rise Against Hunger.

are being pushed out,” said District Superintendent Sang Won Doh. “In Greater New Jersey that couldn’t be further from the truth. In our work on the Way Forward last summer, we heard strongly from our lay and

clergy that they wanted to be united. Our diversity is what makes us strong.”

GNJ leaders continue to move forward in ways that focus congregations on

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GNJ Leaders Draft New Discipline to Embrace a New Future

In a letter to GNJ lay and clergy members to annual conference in December, a team of GNJ leaders announced their work on a new *Book of Discipline* that they hope will be workshopped by GNJ and brought to General Conference in May.

The team, led by Dean of the Cabinet, Myrna Bethke, Connectional Table Chair, Kay Dubuisson and leaders of the General Conference Delegation, Bethany Amey Sutton and Drew Dyson explained the need for a new Discipline because United Methodists are “best served by empowering congregations to develop laity who are equipped to cultivate and lead leaders.” A new Discipline “will make it easier for congregations to make disciples...and to help all United Methodists stay on a Wesleyan Path. It will be simpler, clearer and better organized than our current Discipline.”

“I am hopeful for a brighter future for the Church, and we are grateful for the positive feedback we have received since sending the letter in December. Looking forward to getting additional feedback as we move into the new year,” said Gateway South District Superintendent Myrna Bethke.

The draft document is being called *The Connection: The Life and Order of The United Methodist Church* and has been released in sections starting on December 23. Throughout the month of January the team will welcome input from the people in GNJ through a series of workshops held on January 16, 17 and 25 with sessions in the morning, afternoon and evening.

The Connection refocuses on congregations as the primary unit for mission and is drafted to:

- Be simple and clear
- Celebrate our rich Wesleyan theology
- Eliminate and streamline procedure and process that get in the way of ministry
- Grant equal authority in decision making
- Make it easier to serve as a clergy by setting clear expectations and process for personal issues.
- Create a sustainable apportionment system.
- Bases decision-making on our values, theology and mission
- Offers alternatives to conservative and progressive leaning people.

Judy Colorado, a GNJ lay delegate to General Conference, shared her thoughts, “As I continue to meditate and review *The Connection*, the more I am convinced that the UMC needs a full transformation on its governance, polity and the way we do our work to focus on our mission. I feel liberated to dream, and envision a new church, new wave of laity and clergy transformational leaders, that will lead and inspire congregations to vitality and health!”

Find more about The Connection at www.gnjumc.org.

DINNER CHURCH IN GNJ

Gathering Around a Table...or Many Tables

By Heather Mistretta
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MONTC LAIR, N J

“When you invite someone to sit at your table and you want to cook for them, you’re inviting a person into your life.”

—Maya Angelou

For some, the thought of dinner stirs up memories of family eating together around a table surrounded by delicious aroma, chatter, prayer and listening — a time to discuss the day, reconnect and embrace the bounty of food before them. For others, dinner brings back memories of a hectic household, disconnectedness or even food insecurity. Churches throughout GNJ are working to create safe places where all people feel welcome to eat and talk at dinnertime.

Meals nourish, bring people together and invite conversation. Rev. Leslie Houseworth-Fields from St. Mark’s UMC (The Mark) in Montclair knows all too well how providing a comforting environment can spark engagement and help a church to follow the mission of helping others and making disciples.

Rev. Houseworth-Fields said, “People are looking for ways to lead their best



Zach Kerzee, founder of the Simple Church Network, makes pizza with a portable pizza oven.

lives. Dinner churches provide that opportunity.”

In October she and four church members hosted a dinner church at the Montclair Culinary Academy for nine young adults, five of whom were not affiliated with the church.

The gathering, “Healthy Bodies, Healthy Spirit,” invited guests to prepare a meal and then share that meal while

having conversations focused on forgiveness.

Questions on each table provided valuable ice-breakers for people. One question encouraged people to express their thoughts on the trial of the Dallas police officer, Amber Guyger and the public forgiveness by the brother of Botham Jean who she shot and killed.

Continued on page 10

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP

Will We Divide?

Bishop John Schol



When I knelt at the altar at the St. James Methodist Church in Philadelphia at the age of 13, I distinctly remember my pastor, Tommy Moore, laying his hands on my head to confirm my faith and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. I made a commitment to the Methodist Church that day. Three years later, my confirmation would extend to the new church we were becoming, The United Methodist Church.

The United Methodist Church has blessed me. It nurtured me into the faith, affirmed my calling, provided the space and people to nurture my faith, hope and love for people and life. It has given meaning and purpose to my life. At times the church believed in me when it seemed no one else did. I will always be grateful for The United Methodist Church.

The recent announcement of a proposed agreement for separation over the inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in the life of the church shakes me to my United Methodist core. It is hard for me to come to grips with a proposed plan for separation of the church. I have faith, hope and love for all people called United Methodists.

Recently, 16 leaders of progressive, centrist and traditionalist movements within the church along with some bishops signed an agreement that will be proposed to the May 2020 General Conference. The agreement calls for a "separation" in which at least one new denomination will be started. This new denomination is primarily the effort of the Wesleyan Covenant Association who was the sponsor of the Traditional Plan that passed at the February 2019 Special Session of General Conference.

As part of the separation agreement, the new denomination will receive \$25 million and the ability to take all local church property of those congregations that leave to join this new denomination. Those who do not leave will continue with The United Methodist Church.

At the general conference session of 2004, I along with five other delegates from around the world stood and moved a resolution that the church would remain

unified in the midst of conversation to divide the denomination. It became known as the unity resolution. I have always been for the unity of the church.

Here in GNJ, when there was talk of helping congregations to remain as one conference but to be in different expressions, there was a clear word from laity and clergy, "don't divide us." People expressed that in the midst of differences, we want to remain one United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey.

GNJ is a special place. You came together, north and south conferences, to be one conference. You live and thrive with ethnic diversity and theological diversity. Discourse among us about our differences has always been civil, and we learned that we are united by our common love for Jesus Christ, our commitment to Wesleyan values and our mission and that we are stronger and more effective together. The annual conference session in late October 2019 is another illustration of how the overwhelming majority agreed to affirm different ministries by congregations with the LGBTQ+ community. It was a grace-filled acknowledgement that we may not all think alike but we can love alike.

Separation is a terrible witness of Christ's love within us to one another and to the world.

I will continue to work toward Christian unity within GNJ and The United Methodist Church. I will continue to lead toward a common mission and be a bishop of all the people. I pledge to help all our congregations to thrive in mission and ministry together.

"WE ARE UNITED BY OUR
COMMON LOVE FOR JESUS
CHRIST, OUR COMMITMENT
TO WESLEYAN VALUES AND
OUR MISSION."

— Bishop John Schol

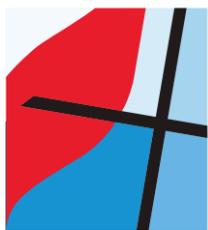
The United Methodist Church in Greater New Jersey is a place where all are welcome. People, with different theological understandings, worship in the same pew together. We speak nine different languages. We work side by side in mission and ministry. We have recognized that in the midst of our differences we are one in Christ. We are and will continue to lift our diversity up as one of our greatest assets.

The great majority of us in Greater New Jersey will continue together to be the hands and feet of Jesus for a world that needs transformation.

For me, I trust I will always be a United Methodist. While the church has blessed me in many ways, there were times in my life that the church was actually harmful to me and to those I love. What I came to realize is that my love for the church was not dependent on whether the church always loved or agreed

with me; that at the core of The United Methodist Church there was something profound and was part of my faith DNA. It is like the sacraments, mystery that can't always be explained, only experienced.

I believe this can be an exciting time for The United Methodist Church. I believe God wants to do a new thing. I believe a renewed and simpler structure of the church that is focused on our doctrine, core teaching, mission, the local church and the Wesleyan Path will propel us for what God has next for us. I see a church that is global, affirms and lives as though all people are of sacred worth and that recommits itself to making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. I invite you to join in the journey. 🌍



THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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YES, WE CAN!

Pack a half million meals in one day? Nothing is impossible with Jesus.

There are more than 7 billion people in this world and more than 800 million of them are hungry. Everyone deserves an education and the opportunity to flourish - but in order to do this they need enough to eat. GNJ has been working hard with Rise Against Hunger to stem this tide, but more needs to be done...

JOIN US SATURDAY, MARCH 21

For GNJ's "Rise Against Hunger, Yes, We Can!" event.

We will host a meal packing event in several different locations across GNJ with the goal of packing 500,000 meals in one day!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:

www.gnjumc.org/congregationalvitality/mission

Register yourself, your Sunday school class and anyone who is willing to make a difference to transform the world!



MAKE A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

Take a next step in developing the leaders you work and serve with all year long!

JANUARY

Dedicate church council leaders during a worship service by giving thanks to God and praying for these servant leaders.

FEBRUARY

Review the church's mission and vision at each gathering so that each ministry team remains focused on their "WHY."

MARCH

Pray. Each week of Lent pray by name for a committee or ministry team.

APRIL

Walk through your church buildings with key leaders to ensure the property provides radical hospitality to all this Easter.

MAY

Offer a leadership retreat that deepens the faith of your leaders and casts vision.

JUNE

Take time for renewal of body, mind and spirit. Identify a continuing education event that will develop your leadership.

JULY

Schedule one-on-ones with key leaders in the church and community to learn how you can best serve alongside them.

AUGUST

Meet with your Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development to identify gifted individuals to serve in church leadership.

SEPTEMBER

Invite leaders to join small groups as a way to grow in relationship with God, others and the community.

OCTOBER

Have FUN. Identify a way for your leadership to engage with your neighborhood in a fun way this fall.

NOVEMBER

Be thankful. Make a habit of thanking your leaders by email, personal note, phone call or a potluck. Gratitude is a gift!

DECEMBER

During Advent, invite your leadership team to engage in hands-on mission at a local organization.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, CONTACT:

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UNITED METHODISTS
 OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

NextGen Ignites Communities: Extending Discipleship through the Year

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

NEPTUNE, NJ

Nearly 400 people from 38 churches took part in the first-ever IGNITE Communities on November 17 that one participant in Haddonfield, NJ, called “a wonderful event!”



Next Generation Ministries’ new program to enhance and provide cohesiveness to the IGNITE program launched six years ago debuted in four different communities throughout New Jersey. With carefully prepared resources from Next Generation Ministries in hand, local leadership teams organized programs that inspired their youth to reflect, discuss and interact with love, no judgment and tolerance. The programs are customized according to their youth and what their needs are.

“For six years IGNITE has been a mountaintop moment for students and leaders in our congregations. We have seen students choose to follow Jesus, recommit their lives or maybe just hear about God’s love for the first time,” said Eric Drew, executive director of Next Generation Ministries.

IGNITE Communities, whose theme is “Faith to Move Mountains,” is a full year of free regional programming for youth groups that is meant to foster more connection to each other and to God and to give youth the tools and confidence to be leaders...with the added benefit of making it more convenient and closer to their homes.



Rev. William D. Carter III having fun with students at IGNITE Communities. Credit: Eric Drew

The result on November 17 was a unique blend of fun, worship, small groups and food, to youth from sixth to 12th grades at four locations — Trinity UMC Hackettstown, Bridgewater UMC, First UMC in Toms River and Haddonfield UMC.

“It was a time for us to come together to have great conversation over a delicious meal, to encourage each other as we played games, to hear great music and a testimony from a young adult and to hear scripture as we discussed how it applies to our lives,” said Bethany Carl, director of youth ministries at Medford UMC who led the session in Haddonfield.

She added, “During this event, youth and adults met new people and formed the start of new relationships. The feeling of the Holy Spirit was among us all during this event, and it was a great start to an idea that, as we continue with future gatherings, will continue to grow our local youth groups into a larger community of faith.”

Daeil Min, senior pastor at Browns Mills UMC, echoed Carl’s sentiment. “I was not so sure how the night would be. But I clearly witnessed that God was actively present and engaged with every youth via worship, fellowship and small group activities. God has moved my mountain at the IGNITE Communities.”

In continuance of this inaugural program, an IGNITE Community Winter Retreat at Pinelands Center and Mt. Misery is taking place on January 10-11,

when students will identify mountains that hinder their growth, find out what the Bible says about their challenges and leave with a better understanding of who they are in Jesus Christ.

Another regional event is planned for March, and two additional IGNITE Community locations are also being planned. The Next Generation Ministries team expects enthusiasm to continue to grow throughout the year as more and more youth and youth leaders get involved.

The catalyst behind IGNITE Communities was born out of GNJ’s 2019-2 Strategic Plan, which calls Next Generation Ministries to cultivate and mobilize a new generation of enthusiastic disciples of Jesus Christ that connect, grow and lead in their congregation and communities to transform the world.

Their vision is to enhance the work that is already going on in GNJ’s local churches by providing a year-long calendar of programming that can connect local youth groups with their peers. Each community is locally run to provide context for the region.

To stay connected and to access the valuable youth leader guide, visit www.ignitenj.org/ignite-communities/.



Each community was able to customize their program to meet the needs of those who attended. Credit: Eric Drew

United in Mission

Continued from page 1
mission and help clarify the greater role of the church.

In March, 3,000 United Methodists in GNJ will come together to help pack 500,000 meals for *Rise Against Hunger* and become the largest single day feeding program in the state.

This fall, GNJ rolled out the second year of *Breakthrough*, a sermon series devel-

“GNJ HASN’T CHANGED.
WE ARE A PLACE THAT
WELCOMES ALL...”

— Bishop John Schol

oped to support clergy. Next week, GNJ clergy will convene at Bishop’s Clergy Convocation to go even deeper in storytelling as one of the foundations of preaching. In February congregations from across the conference will come together for *Team Vital* and *Vitality II* — the next step for congregations moving into their communities to move their ministry forward.

Separately, a group of 17 GNJ leaders have been drafting and releasing a new *Book of Discipline* called *The Connection*

which provides clarity that the mission of the United Methodist Church springs out of the local church and simplifies the bureaucracy of denominational structures to support ministry in the local church more directly (see story on cover).

“GNJ hasn’t changed,” said Bishop John Schol. “We are a place that welcomes all, a conference that has space for different ethnicities and different theologies. All of us working together will help us move forward as one.”

New Jersey has among the most segregated public schools in the entire country. The New Jersey Coalition for Diverse and Inclusive Schools, Inc. (NJCDIS), a non-profit dedicated to redressing the intense racial and economic segregation in New Jersey public schools, recently drafted an “open letter to the people of New Jersey” that was submitted to the Star Ledger on January 5, 2020.

An Open Letter to the People of New Jersey

Our country may be deeply divided, but in New Jersey civic and community leaders, faith leaders and education advocates are working to create opportunities in the public schools for students of all different backgrounds to learn to live and work together in harmony.

The State of New Jersey is trying to stop them.

Over 370,000 Black and Latinx children in New Jersey (63% of the state total) attend public schools that are segregated by race and by poverty. New Jersey’s public schools are among the most racially segregated in the entire country, more so than public schools in states of the former Confederacy, which were integrated following the U.S. Supreme Court’s groundbreaking 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.



Segregation in New Jersey is not by choice. Much of it is due to government-sponsored policies that decades ago subsidized suburban housing for White people while at the same time refusing to insure mortgages in racially mixed neighborhoods. These practices spread throughout the real estate industry and were reinforced by exclusionary zoning policies that limited housing opportunities Black people. This history helps to explain the severe residential segregation that exists in New Jersey today. State law that requires students to attend school based on where they live perpetuates this segregation in the state’s public schools.

This segregation denies students from diverse racial and class backgrounds the chance to learn from each other and to find common ground across their differences.

As the New Jersey Supreme Court has repeatedly held, school segregation also violates the state’s constitution.

On May 17, 2018 — the 64th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* — a coalition of organizations and individuals filed a landmark case, *Latino Action Network et al. v. State of New Jersey*, to demand that the State eliminate this intolerable inequity in our educational system.

The State is asking a court to dismiss the case — or to add 585 public school districts as defendants, which would grind the case to a halt. Either would be disastrous.

Extensive social science evidence over many decades documents the numerous educational benefits for children educated in integrated public schools. Research shows that becoming educated in diverse settings encourages children to think more critically; and it instills social and emotional skills by teaching children to be more empathetic toward people who are different. All children—including White and Asian children—benefit from integration.

Recent research focusing specifically on Black children’s educational outcomes at the height of southern school desegregation during the 1970s and 1980s shows significantly higher college attendance and completion rates, an average 30% increase in annual income, and better health outcomes. Indeed, the educational effects of prolonged exposure to school desegregation from K-12 were large enough to eliminate the Black-White achievement gap, with no adverse effects on the performance of White children. When coupled with equitable school funding and high-quality preschool, integration can dramatically improve educational outcomes that promote lifelong opportunity.

Black and Latinx children in New Jersey deserve these same opportunities so they can go to college, find jobs to support themselves and their families, and pursue their dreams.

Call Governor Murphy at (609) 292-6000 and tell him that the children of New Jersey deserve better. Ask him to give students from diverse backgrounds and neighborhoods the chance to attend school together. The State of New Jersey will be stronger for it.

Renewing a Hopeful Future for the Homeless

By Heather Mistretta
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A FUTURE WITH HOPE
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Every one of the 23 Hope Centers in Greater New Jersey touches directly or indirectly on concerns facing homeless people in our communities. These Hope Centers, as well as many GNJ congregations, offer services to address the needs of homeless people including: feeding programs, job skills, addiction services, hospitality centers and children services. GNJ congregations know that the need is great, what is unknown is the true scope of the problem.

On January 29, A Future With Hope will show their solidarity to a program known as the “point in time count,” an annual statewide effort first mandated by the

that transforms communities. It’s really important for this count to be done each year and for it to be done well,” said A Future With Hope’s Tara Maffei, who will be on hand that day to offer her help. “It takes many hands, and faith-based organizations are a perfect fit for this. But they need to contact their county coordinators,” she added, noting that she has a list of coordinators.

Because so many ministries address these populations, churches make for valuable volunteers in the counting process that looks for homeless in many places including emergency shelters,



Volunteers in Asbury Park help pack donations at the Jersey Shore Rescue Mission in Asbury Park during the 2019 Point in Time Count on Jan. 23, 2019.

“THIS IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY
FOR LOCAL CHURCHES
TO GET INVOLVED IN SOMETHING
THAT TRANSFORMS COMMUNITIES.”

—Tara Maffei, Hope Center Developer

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 2005 to identify homeless people so that assistance programs can be tailored specifically to these people with the intent of helping them.

“This is a great opportunity for local churches to get involved in something

transitional housing programs, safe havens, on the streets and under bridges.

Last year on the night of January 22, a total of 8,864 men, women and children in 6,748 households throughout New Jersey were identified as experiencing homelessness. In Monmouth County

alone, there were 360 people from 254 households counted. Fifty-four of them were living unsheltered.

For reasons ranging from job loss and mental illness to addiction and abuse, homelessness impacts young and old alike.

Each county is responsible for their own count. For those counties not wanting to complete the process on their own, the nonprofit, Monarch Housing Associates (monarchhousing.org/) is there to help.

During these counts, communities are required to identify whether a person is an individual, a member of a family unit or an unaccompanied youth under the age of 18 or age 18 to 24. In addition, communities must identify if a person is chronically homeless, indicating long-time or repeated homelessness and the presence of a disability.

As part of these counts, a formal but simple questionnaire must be filled out for every homeless contact by a local volunteer. A training session is provided for volunteers to streamline the process.

Some organizers use the count as an opportunity to provide resources such as warm clothing, meals, medical screening or other needs that can be delivered to those in need while they wait to meet with the surveyors. Things like warm socks, small bags of hygiene items, clean coats, gloves, scarves, hats and waterproof boots are recommended.

Counties can have “drop in sites” in various places

where those in need are invited in to receive those resources, while other volunteers go out into the community to handle the same jobs, Maffei, a Hope Center Developer, said.

“Each congregation who feels they have a gift to lend should be sure they are coordinating with local county officials,” she added.

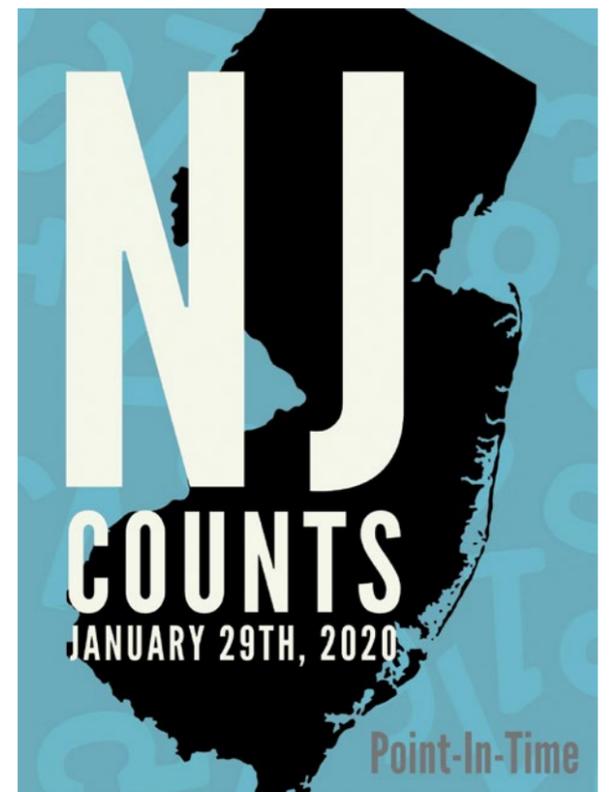
In addition to volunteers and resources, locations are needed, as some counties like to set up fixed sites where those in need can come in, warm up, have a hot meal and meet with volunteers. Warm meals, bag lunches, snack foods like protein bars, juice boxes, hot coffee and bottled water are always useful donations for those in need who come forward to be counted.

“Helping hands are needed for the day — and in some places, for the days lead-

ing up to the count,” Maffei added. “Each county has a slightly different effort, plan and resources.”

Once complete, this data allows policymakers and program administrators to delve into where the need is greatest and work toward ending homelessness. Collecting data on homelessness and tracking progress can inform public opinion, increase public awareness and attract financial resources that will lead to the eradication of the problem.

It is vital to include homeless youth so that they are equally represented as governments, nonprofits and key stakeholders at the federal, state and local level plan to respond to the problem.



1 CHRONICLES 28:20
COURAGE
ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2020

Be strong and courageous and act. Don't be afraid or discouraged. God is with you and will not let you down.

MAY 31 - JUNE 2, 2020

WILDWOODS CONVENTION CENTER | WILDWOOD, NJ

The deadline to submit recommendations to be included in the pre-conference journal is **Saturday, February 15, 2020.**

FIND OUT MORE AT:

www.gnjumc.org/2020annualconference



UNITED METHODISTS
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HUD uses this information along with other data sources in the congressionally-mandated Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress. This report is meant to inform Congress about the number of people experiencing homelessness in the United States and the effectiveness of HUD’s programs and policies in decreasing those numbers.

On January 29 many volunteers will work together to do their part in helping the homeless secure permanent housing that ultimately fosters freedom, independence and a place in their communities they deserve.

For more information, including a list of county coordinators, or if you’d like to plan for the count in January 2021, contact A Future With Hope’s Tara Maffei at tmaffei@gnjumc.org or Andrea Wren-Hardin at awrenhardin@afuturewithhope.org.

Welcoming All to the Table

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ

There is a spot at the table for homeless people on the campus of Rutgers University thanks to “The Welcome Table,” a group of volunteers consisting of clergy, college students and community members who in November hosted a Thanksgiving dinner for the hungry.

“Fellowship over food has always been part of my faith journey. Now I get the opportunity to share a meal with the community. It has been a huge blessing,” said Joe Jueng, who is associate pastor at UMC of New Brunswick and campus minister at Rutgers.

Jueng said the inspiration came from Highland Park Reformed Church, who hosts a community dinner every Sunday. “They are committed to homeless ministry and social justice issues.” They also received support from Christ UMC in Piscataway.

“I WANT STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT A COMMUNITY OUTREACH CENTER LOOKS LIKE. I WANT THEM TO THINK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS IF WE SHARE AN ACTIVITY TOGETHER; HOW WOULD THE SPIRIT MOVE US? THIS WILL ONLY STRENGTHEN OUR CONNECTIONALISM.”

— Joe Jueng, associate pastor at UMC of New Brunswick and campus minister at Rutgers University

“I remember one guest telling me how comfortable he felt at our dinner. ‘Living on the streets you never get a moment’s peace. You always have to be on guard’, he told me,” said Jueng. “Our less institutional environment allowed him to be himself, lower that guard and have a moment of peace.”

Afterward, everyone sat down and shared a meal exchanging stories of life and community. Then students per-



A group of youth musicians performed for the guests following the meal at UMC of New Brunswick. Credit: Davidson Sutherland

formed poetry in the sanctuary of New Brunswick UMC for anyone who wanted to stay and enjoy. A Christian acapella group and an orchestra also performed.

Since March, Jueng and his loyal group of volunteers that continues to grow has been building a ministry that now welcomes 50-60 guests twice a month. Once the food is prepared, volunteers and guests alike sit down together to enjoy the healthy meal and the conversation that goes along with it.

The participation is growing exponentially. One student volunteer even provides free haircuts for the guests.

“I want students to understand what a community outreach center looks like,” said Jueng, who added that at one of the dinners a chaplain led a painting session, further solidifying the sense of community. “I want them to think about what happens if we share an activity together; how would the spirit move us?”

Moving forward Jueng said he hopes to involve more members of the Rutgers community in these dinners in ways like inviting student externs who can expand the programs. “This will only strengthen our connectionalism.”

Cultivating and catalyzing new generations of enthusiastic disciples of Jesus

Christ that connect, grow and lead in their congregations and communities to transform the world is part of the UMC mission. Facilitating this in GNJ is its Next Generation Ministries, which works with six campus

ministries throughout New Jersey to help them broaden their outreach.

For more information on “The Welcome Table,” please contact Joe Jueng at jjjueng@gmail.com or 732-545-8975.

CATCH A RIDE WITH TEAM VITAL!

All programs are located at the Mission & Resource Center in Neptune from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

- Saturday, February 29, 2020
- Saturday, April 25, 2020
- Saturday, September 19, 2020

Vitality 2 offers you tools to dig deeper into ministry- specifically into Stewardship, New Disciples and Community Assets mapping.

Get new people involved, re-engage congregations and get new insight on children’s ministry and worship. Starts February 29!

FIND OUT MORE AT:

www.gnjumc.org/team-vital
Deadline to register is January 25, 2020



College students, clergy and community members sat down together to enjoy a Thanksgiving meal. Credit: Davidson Sutherland



TO FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Gina Yeske, Director of Small Groups
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TEAM VITAL
UNITED METHODISTS OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

“Voice of Conscience Among Methodists” UMCOR Turns 80

By Heather Mistretta
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Eighty years ago, the country was on the precipice of entering the biggest and deadliest war in history. It was crawling out of a debilitating Great Depression, and Roosevelt was re-elected to lead the country. It was also a time of growing entrepreneurship, fireside chats and a developing creative dynamo named Walt Disney. But amid the hope for a brighter future were displaced and vulnerable populations in Europe and China that needed help as the impact of World War II deepened.



80 YEARS

A 78-year-old Methodist bishop named Herbert Welch answered that call by coming out of retirement to boldly propose the creation of The Methodist Committee on Overseas Relief (MOCR) at the first General Conference of the newly-formed Methodist Church in Atlantic City in 1940.

Yes, New Jersey was its birthplace.

Bishop Welch said in his address at the General Conference that year that MOCR would serve as a “voice of conscience among Methodists to act in the relief of human suffering without distinction of race, color or creed.”

suffering worldwide, training one to two thousand people each year to support their efforts. As the humanitarian relief and development arm of The United Methodist Church, UMCOR assists United Methodists and churches to become involved globally in direct ministry to persons in need.

“We are usually the last to leave,” said Cathy Earle who has been UMCOR’s director since 2017. “We do all we can to get under the wings of others and lift them up.”

Earle, a social worker and wife of retired pastor Mark Earle, recalled the

The organization’s name was legally changed to The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and fully integrated into the General Board of Global Ministries at the 1972 General Conference.

Over the past 80 years since the initial founding, the organization has remained steadfast in relieving human



For 80 years the people at UMCOR have been helping the neediest throughout the world.

Credit: UMCOR.org



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days after 9/11 and how a posting from GNJ asking for help prompted her to step forward.

“I always thought I wanted to help, but I didn’t know how.”

Embracing the role offered by GNJ, she worked arduously to help those affected by 9/11, and then in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, Earle was asked to head the FEMA-funded program known as “Katrina Aid Today,” which provided disaster relief to 100,000 families over a two-and-a-half-year period. This led her to joining the staff of UMCOR.

Lifting others has always been UMCOR’s mission. In the early-1940s it broadened its work to include reconstruction, rehabilitation, repatriation of refugees and prisoners of war, restoration of churches and civil operations and reconciliation. In the 1950s it strengthened infrastructures in Pakistan, Israel and Greece and improved lives in Korea.

In the 1970s UMCOR developed the Disaster Response Network to better serve the vulnerable populations by training volunteers and organizing teams to address new projects.

“With the birth of NOVAD (National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, 1972), we were able to target more effort in the coordination of relief,” said Earle.

When Yugoslavia began to fall apart in the early-1990s, UMCOR was there to help by opening its first office in Bosnia. This became a trend throughout the world as UMCOR followed the trail of need. Thousands of miles away another

UMCOR team was setting up a station in Louisiana to help those in the wake of Hurricane Andrew.

Right here in GNJ two disasters that have had a long-lasting effect on New Jersey residents were 9/11 and Superstorm Sandy. In both cases, UMCOR was at the center of providing relief to those in need. GNJ trained more than 300 UMCOR Early Responders as a result of these disasters. After 9/11, UMCOR provided \$4.5 million in funding for the Healing, Encouragement and Advocacy in Response to Tragedy (HEART) unit that lasted from 2002-2006, making it the longest running recovery program for 9/11 in New Jersey. After Superstorm Sandy, UMCOR was a key resource for helping the conference start A Future With Hope to help those whose homes were damaged rebuild and return home.

Today, the humanitarian relief and development arm of The United Methodist Church continues to change lives and “makes God’s love tangible to survivors of all kinds—be it war or conflict, hurricane, famine, earthquake or flood.”

When heavy rains left residents in three southern New Jersey Counties at the mercy of flooding and its effects this past summer, UMCOR was there to help.

In fact, many United Methodists are hands-on participants in UMCOR’s mission. Many have made relief kits in their congregations. Some have taken UMCOR training and rehabilitated or rebuilt neighbors’ homes damaged in severe weather or other events. Countless contributors have given what they could



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: After superstorm Sandy in 2012, UMCOR was a key resource for helping the conference start A Future With Hope to help those whose homes were damaged rebuild and return home.; UMCOR continues to change lives and “makes God’s love tangible to survivors of all kinds — be it war or conflict, hurricane, famine, earthquake or flood.”; UMCOR is known for being the last to leave a disaster site.; In the 1970s UMCOR developed the Disaster Response Network to better serve the vulnerable populations by training volunteers and organizing teams to address new projects.; From hurricanes and floods to war and famines, UMCOR helps people of all ages around the world rebuild their lives.

commissioned 67 new EarthKeepers from 24 United Methodist regional conferences to be better stewards of the environment. The list included GNJ Pastor Yesenia Palomino who is ESL Coordinator for Ignite Community UMC of Kenilworth.

In December UMCOR worked to support those impacted by HIV/AIDS throughout the world including the Philippines and Zimbabwe on World AIDS Day. Also this year, access to renewable energy made a significant impact in two African countries, which equipped 240 women entrepreneurs with the ability to launch solar businesses and supply clean energy in Tanzania and a solar power station installation at Gbarnga School of Theology in Liberia.

“We are UMCOR. When people hurt, United Methodists are there to help,” said Bishop John Schol at UMCOR’s 75th anniversary celebration at Asbury United Methodist Church in Atlantic City.

In fact, in the 80 years that UMCOR has been in existence, it has helped people in nearly 100 countries and places, including South Sudan, Darfur, Burundi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand, China, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Ecuador, Haiti, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Armenia, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Ukraine. But it doesn’t only reconstruct buildings. It reconstructs relationships and lives.

It has been said that UMCOR may not always be first on the scene, but they are always the last to leave. Whether it be famine, hurricane, war, flood, fire or other events, that way of operating doesn’t look like it will change in the next 80 years.

For more information and to volunteer and donate, visit www.umcmmission.org/umcor or www.umcgiving.org/ministry-articles/one-great-hour-of-sharing.

to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering as part of their Lenten discipline.

UMCOR’s support is far-reaching and tireless. Hours after Hurricane Dorian struck the Bahamas, UMCOR was there to help, and they remain there today. Just this past October UMCOR approved a three-year, \$1.8 million pilot project to provide wrap-around services for asylum seekers in three major U.S. cities. Partnering with Church World Service and National Justice For Our Neighbors, this initiative will provide both resettlement support and legal assistance for those claiming asylum in Houston, New York and Miami.

In November EarthKeepers, a training program of Global Ministries and UMCOR,



Dinner Church

Continued from page 1

"People were very engaged. In fact, they were so engaged that we finally had to ask them to leave when the evening went much later than originally planned," said Pastor Houseworth-Fields.

She added, "The best part is that people who might be reluctant to worship will come to dinner, take a cooking lesson and will engage. They're willing to go there because we removed the barrier that was preventing them."

About 20 miles north of Montclair at Spring Valley UMC in New York the fellowship that eating together brings is also vital for both the congregation and the wider community.

"PEOPLE ARE BEING CHALLENGED AT THESE DINNERS, THINKING ABOUT NEW THINGS AND EXPLORING EACH OTHER. IT'S A WONDERFUL THING."

—Rev. Brendan Galvin
of Simple Church NJ

Every Thursday evening from 6:30-8:00 p.m. the church hosts a dinner for the community.

Spring Valley's Rev. Kay Dubuisson has a passion for sharing God's love through meaningful relationships and experiences. Enhancing that passion is her education and experience as a nurse and social worker, which enables her to

walk alongside of and share fellowship with people from all walks of life.

"The sharing of food and drink is a fundamental way in which we develop bonds within our church family and extended family. This act comes so automatically that we don't even stop to think about it. Yet, it is this simple act that allows us an opportunity to share in God's bounty and share in fellowship that brings us closer together."

Fellowship can happen at tables of all sizes and in all places. Trey Wince, Director of New Disciples recalled how times spent around the dinner table were nourishing no matter how far from idyllic they were.

"My mom didn't grow up having dinner around the table," said Trey Wince, Director of New Disciples at GNJ. "At any given time, there were somewhere between five and nine people living in her two-bedroom house, so dinner was more of a get-what-you-can-survival-of-the-fittest-experience than it was the idyllic 1950's-perfectly-dressed-family-gathered-around-a-20-lb-turkey scenario."

"But even as a kid, my mom knew she wanted something special for her dinner table. She wanted the Norman Rockwell painting," he recalled.

"By the time my sister and I were born, the rule was firmly in place: we eat dinner around the table every night. Every now and then we would splurge and get takeout food, which for us usually meant Arby's five roast beef sandwiches for five dollars. Even then, we would take the food home, unwrap it and put our roast beef sandwiches and potato cakes on a plate so that we could still eat around the table."

Mom took the role pretty seriously; and in the process, she started a new tradition that will likely long outlast her life or the



Rev. Brendan Galvin and Palisades District Superintendent Gina Kim take part in Simple Church's dinner at First Passaic UMC.

lives of her children. I have two kids of my own now, and we eat around the table."

As was the case for Wince and his family, eating around a dinner table and sharing meaningful conversation is an important ministry for United Methodist churches. It goes deeper than just what food is being offered. A dinner table creates a welcoming environment for all.

"For many, the idea of walking into a church building simply isn't an option. Past scars, negative connotations or a simple lack of interest will prevent a Sunday morning connection from ever starting," said Wince.

However, that doesn't mean people aren't craving to be known, to talk about faith and spirituality or to be cared for, even pastored. They don't need a fancy place to gather or a gourmet meal. They just need a place where the conversation is honest, and the people are kind. God is pretty good at taking it from there."

Simple Church NJ, led by Rev. Brendan Galvin, is one of those places. Spinning off from the original Simple Church that began in Massachusetts in 2014 by Pastor Zach Kerzee, Simple Church NJ is creating community dinners that are committed to seeing personal and community transformation. In October, Simple Church hosted a big dinner worship service at First Passaic UMC where Galvin was appointed in 2017.

"It's such a potable thing. It's transformative," said Galvin, who started

pursuing his faith in the last year of high school. While studying and reading the New Testament he encountered Luke 14 and the passage, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."

"I asked myself what kind of God invites me to the table. Jesus invited all the people you shouldn't," said Galvin who relishes opportunities to sit around a table to share the teachings of Jesus with people of all faiths.

He added, "People are being challenged at these dinners, thinking about new things and exploring each other. It's a wonderful thing."

Galvin said he and his group will continue to host these dinners every Thursday leading up to a big kick-off in January when they will incorporate Bible Studies and one-on-one meetings.

The idea of dinner churches is obviously nothing new. Over two thousand years ago, Jesus welcomed 12 disciples to eat and drink with him, and throughout his life he ministered to the poor. Now, with formal dinner churches being created, sustained vitality is being infused into United Methodist churches throughout GNJ.

For more information on The Mark: St. Mark's UMC, visit www.themarkmtc.org.

For more information on Spring Valley, visit www.springvalleyumc.org.

For more information on Simple Church NJ, visit www.simplenj.org.

 **BREAKTHROUGH**
A GNJ guide to best practices for worship

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CONFERENCE HAPPENINGS

Legislative Recommendations Ahead of Annual Conference

The 2020 Annual Conference for Greater New Jersey United Methodists will be May 31-June 2, 2020 in Wildwood, NJ.

In preparation and in accordance of the Rules of Order of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference (Rule III, 19 a-b), GNJ is asking for all legislative recommendations. The deadline is Feb. 15.

For additional details on the process and to submit one, please visit GNJ's website under 2020 General Conference.

Statistical Reports Due January 31

The EZRA website is now open for pastors to begin working on their statistical reports that are due at the end of the month.

Simply log into www.ezra.gcf.org and enter your username, which is 3360 PLUS your four-digit church number and then your password: gnjchurch19.



UM Communities in NJ Expands Programming

With a focus on responding to the needs of older adults, United Methodist Communities at Bristol Glen, a Continuing Care Retirement Community in Newton, NJ, recently expanded its Tapestries Memory Care. More than 46 million people worldwide live with dementia, and the number of people affected is set to rise to over 131 million by 2050.

Located in a secure Assisted Living neighborhood within Bristol Glen, the total number of Tapestries apartments now stands at 21. Tapestries delivers care for residents with different brain disorders that affect memory, thinking, behavior, and emotion.

The Tapestries Model of Care is a dynamic and holistic approach for improving residents' lives. In addition to specific training, associates include LETS (Life Enrichment Team Specialist) members. All are well acquainted with each resident's health history, previous diagnoses, preferences, personality and routines. This enables associates to stay engaged with residents, manage unpredictable behaviors, understand body language, interpret nonverbal cues, and break down activities into smaller manageable steps.

Two Seminars Coming Up in March

The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits is presenting Financial and Pre-Retirement Seminars for pastors and their spouses this March. A benefits educator from Wespeth Benefits and Investments will speak on financial security and retirement planning.

The first, "Financial Security Seminar" on March 4, will focus on financial planning and is targeted for those seeking assistance in reaching their financial goals.

The second, "Pre-Retirement Seminar" on March 5, will focus on those planning to retire within the next five years. This session will also include information on social security, Medicare and healthcare in retirement.

Ernst and Young representatives will be presenting at both seminars. Further information pertaining to registration and a schedule of events will be available on GNJ's website or by contacting Alexa Taylor, Insurance and Benefits Manager, at 732-359-1038 or ataylor@gnjumc.org.

Nominate a Special United Methodist Today

Each year, GNJ agencies honor lay and clergy members for their exceptional leadership with several annual conference awards. With deadlines only a couple weeks away, now is the time to submit a nomination.

The categories are the Helenor Alter Davison Award, the Harry Denman Evangelism Award, the Christian Unity and Interfaith Relationships Award, the Harry A. Seese Memorial Scholarship and the three Commission on Archives and History Awards.

Please visit GNJ's website for more details and to submit a nomination.

Do You Know a Lay Member Who Deserves Recognition?

Laities are a vital part of every church, each with their own mission. GNJ's Lay Ministry Recognition Awards recognize the important work they do.

To find out more details and to nominate someone by the Feb. 1 deadline, visit GNJ's website or contact Rosa Williams, chair of the Board of Laity, chair of the Nominations Committee and Conference Lay Leader, at 201-833-0352 or rwilliams@gnjumc.org. The award ceremony will be March 28 at the MRC.

GNJ's Yeske to Participate at General Conference

The meditation from GNJ's Director of Small Groups Rev. Gina Yeske will be included in the 40-Day Guide to Prayer for General Conference 2020.

For a preview of what she can offer, please sign up for her *Continuing 40 Days of Prayer* at www.gnjumc.org/40-days-of-prayer/ or contact Gina directly at 732-359-1042 or gyeske@gnjumc.org.

GBHEM Scholarship Season is Underway

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) is awarding \$6 million in scholarships to 2,800 students in 2019. A list of student recipients who are achieving their dreams for higher education and using their skills to help others is available on GNJ's website.

For 2020, students may apply for a Fall 2020 GBHEM scholarship online between Jan. 3 and March 7. For details and to apply visit the website or contact Iraidia Ruiz De Porras, chair of the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry and senior pastor at Christ UMC in Lakewood at 732-363-8885 or wwjd_iruiz@yahoo.com.



THE GNJ DELEGATION FOR GENERAL CONFERENCE WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Listening sessions are scheduled for:

- February 18 from 7:00-8:30 p.m. | Denville Community UMC
- February 29 from 3:00-4:30 p.m. | First UMC in Glassboro
- March 3 from 7:00-8:30 p.m. | Aldersgate UMC in East Brunswick

More information can be found at www.gnjumc.org



GIVE YOURSELF A PRESENT - WINTER RESPITE

Are you a caregiver seeking a break from responsibilities, desiring a winter vacation, investigating senior living options, or needing other support for your loved one?

United Methodist Communities offers respite, which gives caregivers beneficial opportunities to rest, manage other demands, take a break, and otherwise balance work and family life.

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OBITUARIES

Samuel Preston, spouse of Retired Full Elder Margaret Frances Preston, died December 6. A memorial service was held December 28 at Chatham UMC. Memorial donations (In lieu of flowers) may be sent to: Chatham UMC, 460 Main Street, Chatham NJ 07928. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to: Rev. Margaret Frances Preston, 2401 Pennsylvania Ave., #4B33, Philadelphia, PA 19130.

Miracles Everywhere

Starting Your Stewardship Year Strong!

Last year dozens of churches of all sizes, from Community UMC of Roselle Park to Salem UMC of Pleasantville to Christ UMC of Piscataway, used a Miracles Everywhere campaign to grow mission, improve generosity and reengage their congregation.

Make 2020 your year of Miracles & More!

- 1.** Contact The Stewardship Foundation to receive your *Miracles & More* action plan.
- 2.** Register for the Rise Against Hunger event on March 21 to engage members, family and friends in world-transforming mission.
- 3.** Start planning a family-friendly event for summer now.
- 4.** Ask your congregation how they want to support our youth this year; whether through a camp scholarship, sending a youth group to IGNITE or partnering to volunteer with a campus ministry.
- 5.** Check out your local community's event calendar and choose two occasions when your church can get involved.

**FOR INFORMATION AND
RESOURCES, CONTACT:**



Jana M. Purkis-Brash, Executive Director

O: 732.359.1057 | E: jpurkisbrash@gnjumc.org

For information about Miracles Everywhere:

www.gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere