

THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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Rising Against Hunger As One

"Into the daybreak that's wondrously clear, I rise."

—MAYA ANGELOU, "STILL I RISE"

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

More than 800 million, or about one in 10 of the world's seven billion people are hungry. More than three million children die every year because of undernutrition and the disease that ensues, and many others fail to thrive in school because they're hungry. Every child deserves an education and the opportunity to achieve their dreams — but in order to do this they need enough to eat.

Grappling with these startling statistics may seem daunting, but on March 21 the people of GNJ are going to be part of the change as they work together to pack a half million meals to feed the hungry.

Ashley Wilson, Director of Mission, said, "There is so much energy and compassion around this community-wide effort. I'm confident that together we will meet our goals, promote our mission and make a difference in thousands of lives."

"The mission project is great for persons of all ages, from five years old to 105 years old," she added.



GNJ volunteers will work in six different locations to pack a half million meals on March 21.

Working at six different locations in New Jersey concurrently, about three thousand volunteers are needed to pack these meals. Sponsorships are also needed.

Wilson added that each of the six sites across GNJ will have three meal packing timeslots throughout the day.

One volunteer who is planning to be there on March 21 is Arthur Schalick, a member of Rosenhayn UMC who also

volunteers for a soup kitchen run by Spirit and Truth Ministries at First UMC in Vineland that serves more than 100 people each weekday.

"In a country of plenty, there are many faceless people that are hungry," said Schalick. "Anything that we can do to fill their bellies and souls is the least we can do."

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William Williams III to Lead Gateway North's 62 Churches

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

Bishop John Schol and the Greater New Jersey Cabinet announced in January that Rev. William Williams, III has been appointed to serve as District Superintendent of Gateway North beginning July 1, 2020.

Earlier in January Rev. Manuel Sardiñas announced his retirement after 20 years in ministry in Greater New Jersey. Sardiñas will spend his retirement supporting the ministry of his wife Rev. Elizabeth Gonzales at the UMC in Union City.

Bishop Schol announced the new appointment with highlighting Williams's service, "He received the Atlantic City NAACP person of the year. He is committed to congregational vitality, evangelism and community transformation. He has served faithfully on leadership teams within GNJ and within the Northeastern Jurisdiction."

Williams currently serves Westfield UMC where he has led the congregation in developing vibrant children's and youth programs like Junior Youth Fellowship and Serving As Light Together (SALT) as well as other ministries like Little Free Libraries, FUMC Gardens and its new Soul Food Dinner Church. Through these programs and his guidance, Williams has inspired his congregation toward more vitality, to make disciples of Jesus Christ and help others.



William Williams III

But whether he's on the ballfield acting as a YMCA tee-ball coach, leading a neighborhood watch or speaking at the March for Love and Against Hate or Black Lives Matter events, Williams devotes all his energy to doing his very best.

While at Asbury UMC in Atlantic City, he embarked on innovative ways to enact social reform within Atlantic City. Under his leadership, the church became a Cisco Networking Academy, a work-study site for Stockton University, a partner site for the University's Office of Community Engagement and a site where the hungry and homeless are fed weekly through partnerships with several organizations in the region, including other United Methodist congregations.

Williams has been instrumental in instituting transformation. When he and his congregation recognized a need to address domestic and sexual violence, they hosted a panel with Atlantic City's chief of police. This resulted in the City

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Fueling the Fight for Good

Belvidere Partners with Salvation Army to Build Community

By Denise Herschel
Nj6pack@yahoo.com

BELVIDERE, N.J.

Belvidere United Methodist's partnership with the Salvation Army has a long history and an exciting future.

For 42 years the church and the Salvation Army have partnered together to form ministries that help those in need in rural

Warren County. Their service together has expanded to initiate a much-needed local feeding ministry that serves the homeless population in their community.

The Salvation Army is a 165-year-old organization that traces its roots to a British Methodist preacher named William Booth who found his calling serving the poor and tapping into the teachings of John Wesley for inspiration.

From the beginning, the organization that now operates in 128 countries

served the poor and undesirables often overlooked by society by providing them with a hot meal, possibly a job and a place to worship.

"Everything has evolved and our food ministry helping those in need in Warren County has progressed nicely. The feedback we have received has been very positive," said Carolann Ficarra, Belvidere UMC administrator and Salvation Army human services secretary. "Although we are still in the initial stages of our ministry, we have really been able to get it off the ground and running effectively."

The ministry, which also partners with Buttzville UMC, is much needed in Warren County where resources are lacking, said Belvidere UMC's Rev. Evan Rohrs-Dodge.

According to Ficarra, the Salvation Army has provided food safety training to those who are assisting with the mission as the group learned how to properly handle food and keep proper hygiene standards.

"They have trained about 15 people who go out and feed the homeless with a hot meal as well as give them personal care items and a sleeping mat made of recycled bags made by one of our church members," said Ficarra, who added that typically about 10 people will go after Sunday service once a month to this homeless community who migrates back and forth between New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Ficarra added that Belvidere UMC was able to locate this homeless community

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Church members Kathy Luton and Maritza Baakman display some of the homeless mats made from recycled bags.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP

Seventh Grade Lessons

Bishop John Schol



At the age of 12, I was still learning about faith, science, math, history, language arts and football. My life revolved around church and confirmation class, school and homework, football practice and football games. There was not a lot of change in my world at the age of 12, and the change I experienced seemed pretty natural and anticipated. When seven new students began attending the Finletter Elementary School with me, they became quick friends.

Back in the “olden days,” in my urban neighborhood, students walked home for lunch and returned to school for the afternoon session. I remember returning early to the afternoon session one day, and my seven new friends were already in the school yard and they were sitting on the ground still eating lunch. I was surprised and learned that they did not live in our neighborhood and took public transportation to Finletter. They also told me that the luncheonettes in the neighborhood wouldn’t allow them to eat in their stores. I shared this with my mom that night and said I didn’t think it was right of the store owners not to allow them to eat their sandwich at the luncheonette because they were buying their drink and “Tasty Cake” at the store. My mom said to me, “John, it is because they are Black; that is why they are not allowed to eat at the luncheonettes.” I had no idea, and so at the age of 12, I began to learn about sociology.

My mom said, “You bring your friends home with you for lunch.” And so, for the rest of seventh and eighth grades, I had lunch with my friends at my house.

“THERE IS MUCH TO CELEBRATE THIS MONTH. AFRICAN AMERICANS HAVE MADE NUMEROUS AND SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ADVANCEMENT, HISTORY, ECONOMY AND CULTURE OF THE UNITED STATES. AND THERE IS WORK TO BE DONE EVERY DAY TO END DISCRIMINATION, RACISM AND PRIVILEGE.”

— Bishop John Schol

February is Black History Month, when we remember the contributions of African Americans to our history, science and culture. The truth is, we who live in the United States, would not be experiencing the advances and wealth in the United States if it were not for African Americans. Google African American inventors or advancements and read about great people who were difference makers.

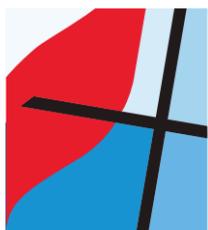
We also advanced as a nation through the sin of slavery. The truth is, much of our nation’s capital was built by slaves and our economy advanced through slavery. While slavery has ended, racism, segregation and privilege have continued. New Jersey public schools are more segregated than any states in the south. GNJ has joined with others to file a lawsuit to desegregate our public schools, but there is great resistance to integrating schools. Integration has not occurred as in other states because we have segregated neighborhoods.

For our congregations whose pastors are Caucasian, how often have you seen a person of a different race preaching in your church. Has an African American preached in your congregation in the last six months? In your workplace, how often do you have lunch with a person of another ethnicity? Do you have a doctor, accountant, neighbor of another race? Have you helped to create a path for opportunity for a person of another race?

There is much to celebrate this month. African Americans have made numerous and significant contributions to the advancement, history, economy and culture of the United States. And there is work to be done every day to end discrimination, racism and privilege.

The night before my new friends came for lunch the first time, my mother said she was going to speak with a neighbor. I watched from our row home living room window as my mother went from porch to porch speaking with neighbors. It still pains me today that my mother had to go to our neighbors to explain that I would be bringing home seven new friends for lunch and that it would be all right. When I graduated

from elementary school, my mom advocated for a school lunch program so that other students would have a place to eat. My mother paved a way, not for my seven friends but for me to be more like the person God wanted me to be. What path are you creating for a better church, better schools, better communities and better workplaces? 🇺🇸



THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY**John R. Schol, Bishop**United Methodists of Greater New Jersey
205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune, NJ 07753**Heather Mistretta, Editorial Manager**

732.359.1047 | hmistretta@gnjumc.org

Carolyn Conover, Director of Communications

732.359.1016 | cconover@gnjumc.org

Laura Canzonier, Communications Administrative Assistant

732.359.1063 | lcanzonier@gnjumc.org

Brittney Reilly, Online and Digital Communications Manager

732.359.1040 | breilly@gnjumc.org

Christopher G. Coleman, The Relay Designer

chris@cgcoleman.com

New Subscriptions, renewals, address changes, and corrections should be addressed to Beverly Karlovich, bkarlovich@gnjumc.org or by mail to: United Methodist Relay | 205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753

FOR ADVERTISING RATES, INFORMATION & PLACEMENT

Contact: communications@gnjumc.org

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1 CHRONICLES 28:20

COURAGE

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WAYS TO SUPPORT YES, WE CAN!

March 21, 2020

SMALL GROUPS

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Pray for the hungry.
Share stories of transformation.

MISSION

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Fundraise to maximize support.
Recruit congregants to attend.
Invite neighboring churches to join.

GENEROSITY

Budget sponsorship.
Invite congregants to share gifts.
Ask local businesses to sponsor.

NEW DISCIPLES

Write letters/emails.
Encourage participation
in creative ways.
Share feeding goals
and ideas on social media.

“Into the daybreak that’s wondrously clear, I rise.”

- Maya Angelou, “Still I Rise”

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:

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



UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Crafting Stories and Listening to History at Convocation

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables.

MATTHEW 13: 1-3

Bishop's Clergy Convocation held on January 13-15 was chockful of inspiration, compassion and fun. Learning from professional storytellers and "difference makers," a civil rights activist and a Methodist historian, the nearly 200 clergy in attendance explored new skills, renewed friendships and connected with God.

Kicking off the three-day event was General Secretary for Archives and History Rev. Fred Day, who Bishop John Schol introduced as a "difference-maker." During his keynote, Day encouraged those in the audience to embrace "the power of *through it all*."

"*Through it all* means that God is with us. We need patience and tolerance with one another until we catch up with Jesus who is way ahead of us," said Day who encouraged the audience to be outwardly focused.

As he shared stories about his twin girls, Carly and Claire as well as the many notable Methodists throughout history like Civil Rights leader James Lawson and Alma Matthews who helped find homes for immigrant women, Day urged moving forward to "a future worthy of its past."

He added, "Why does history repeat itself? Because we weren't listening."

His stories set the stage for the second day that brought an immersion in storytelling, led by the Peabody Award-winning organization, The Moth, renowned for the



Clergy members shared through storytelling, worship, communion and prayer.

Photo credit: Corbin Payne



General Secretary for Archives and History Rev. Fred Day shares stories of Methodist history.

great range of human experience and storytellers who explore themes in often unexpected ways.

Bishop Schol opened the day saying, "We all have our stories. Stories are different, but stories are powerful. Good stories are those that connect others and help them see themselves."

Bonnie Levison, a lead storytelling instructor with MothWorks, introduced the



Ophira Eisenberg, who also hosts NPR's "Ask Me Another," led one of The Moth workshops.

storytelling session, saying, "Technology connects us but doesn't connect us at the soul. A great story requires emotion." She went on to emphasize the importance of listening.

Levison along with the other Moth facilitators, Ophira Eisenberg, Tim Lopez, Dawn J. Fraser and Larry Rosen, then led small groups guiding clergy members to shape their personal stories and then share with others. Clergy learned the arc of telling a good story and the small groups provided supportive, immediate feedback to develop the stories. The result was a tapestry of stories that healed the tellers and moved the listeners.

"The tools they [The Moth] provide are so basic. They're easily applied immediately. This has been very valuable," said Pastor Blair Gould of Island Heights UMC.

Rounding out the event on Wednesday, the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr, was Ambassador Suzan (Sujay) Johnson Cook, a U.S. presidential advisor, pastor, theologian, author, activist and academic who served as the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom from April 2011 to October 2013. She was the first woman senior pastor in the American Baptist Church and a close friend of Coretta Scott King.

As she unraveled her stories of Coretta's sweet potato pie and meeting Civil Rights activists Dorothy Height, Carol Mosely Brown and Dr. King, she told the audience to "use your brilliance to be resilient" and that "forward is the only way to go."

"Ministry is getting people to the other side, the other side of their pain, their homelessness, that nasty divorce," said Cook who added that "there are no shortcuts in ministry."

At the conclusion of her sermon, everyone in a circle, joining hands in song and prayer. "Unity is all about being the one to do something for one another... You've got a story, and there's a world out there wanting to hear your story," said Bishop Schol.

"This was my first convocation but will definitely not be my last! I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to learn from The Moth, to sit with other clergy and have deep and meaningful conversations," said Jesse Ruch, pastor of Broadway and Port Colden UMCs in Warren County. "The ability, especially in the beginning of the year, to rest and relax for a few days as well as to learn and find ways to grow my own storytelling was my favorite part of convocation."

Williams

Continued from page 1

Council passing Resolution 217, which designated April as Child Abuse Prevention Month in Atlantic City and made noteworthy steps to ensure educational, religious, and government institutions were equipped to help stop this type of violence in the community.

Williams earned a BA in Economics from Swarthmore College, a Post-Baccalaureate Certification in Pre-Medicine from the Drexel College of Medicine and a Master of Divinity from Drew University. He is a former commissioner of the Casino Redevelopment Authority's Tourism Advisory

Commission in Atlantic City and the chair of the Education and Workforce Development Subcommittee, a board member of the African American Heritage Museum of Southern New Jersey and a participant in the Christian religious fellowship group, Fellowship of Churches and the ecumenical religious group Bridges of Faith.

Williams is a recipient of the Harry A. Seese Memorial Scholarship and is one of 12 United Methodists in the U.S. named a fellow in the Lewis Community Leaders Fellows Program of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership.

Williams and his wife, Joyce are the parents of eight-year-old Julia and five-year-old twins William, IV and James.



CALLED TO MORE

A Lenten Series on Wrestling with Sin

This Lenten season we will wrestle with sin together and discover that we were created for more with the Breakthrough team's latest worship series, *Called to More*.

From Ash Wednesday to Easter, the series will help us answer the question, *Is this really it?* by calling us to a more abundant life.

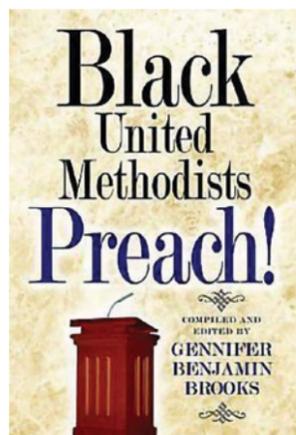
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Introducing GNJ's

ON THE BOOKSHELF FOR FEBRUARY



Black United Methodists Preach!
(Abingdon Press, 2012) by Gennifer Benjamin Brooks

Black United Methodists Preach! explores the dynamic tradition of Black preaching within the United Methodist Church and where the spiritual power and vitality lie as told by 15 preachers. Gennifer Benjamin Brooks not only edits this collection, she also shares one of her own sermons along with the sermons of 14 other preachers like Safiya Fosua and Vance P. Ross.

Gennifer Benjamin Brooks is the Ernest and Berneice Styberg Professor of Preaching and director of the Styberg Preaching Institute at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, and Dean of the Association of Chicago Theological School (ACTS) Doctor of Ministry

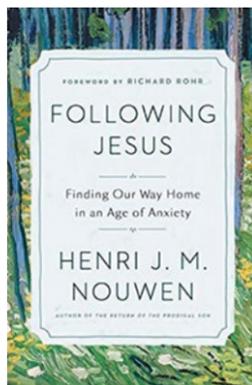
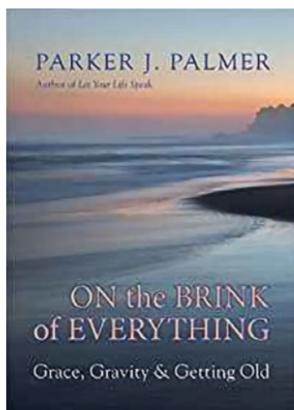
in Preaching program. She is an elder in the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church. She is the author of *Good News Preaching: Offering the Gospel in Every Sermon*; *Unexpected Grace: Preaching Good News from Difficult Texts* and *Bible Sisters: A Year of Devotions with the Women of the Bible*.

On the Brink of Everything

(Berret-Koehler, 2018) by Parker J. Palmer

On the Brink of Everything is a collection of reflections on eight decades of life and work that may appeal to young and old alike. Palmer writes, "Old is just another word for nothing left to lose, a time to take bigger risks on behalf of the common good." He talks about the importance of developing a robust inner and outer life, a sense of meaning and purpose amid pain as well as joy and the intergenerational relations that enhance life.

Parker J. Palmer is a writer, speaker and activist who focuses on issues in education, community, leadership, spirituality and social change. He is founder and senior partner of the Center for Courage & Renewal, which offers long-term retreat programs for people in the serving professions. He is the author of several award-winning books, some of which have been translated into many different languages. Palmer holds a Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley, and his work has been recognized with 13 honorary doctorates as well as six national awards. In 2010, he was given the William Rainey Harper Award whose previous recipients include Margaret Mead, Elie Wiesel, Marshall McLuhan and Paolo Freire.



Following Jesus: Finding Our Way Home in an Age of Anxiety

(Convergent Books, 2019) by Henri J. M. Nouwen and Richard Rohr

Following Jesus stresses the importance of following Jesus all the time, especially in times of anxiety. Drawing on times in his life that were the most difficult, Henri Nouwen writes about calling and purpose, fear and hope. And he explains why with so many choices available in this modern era, the greatest reward for those looking for spiritual direction is rediscovering Jesus's teaching on love. This is a good learning tool for navigating the narrow, sometimes arduous, but ultimately fulfilling road of conviction and faith.

Henri Nouwen was a Dutch-born Catholic priest, professor and pastor, who gained international renown as the author of over 30 books on the spiritual life, including such classics as *The Wounded Healer*, *The Inner Voice of Love* and *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. Nouwen's books have been translated into more than 30 languages, resonating with people across the religious, spiritual, cultural and political spectrum. He died in 1996.

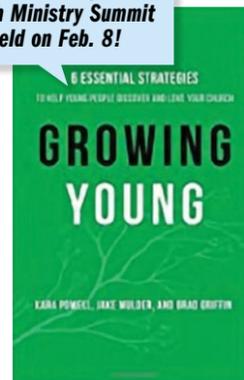
Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church

(Baker Books, 2016) by Kara Powell, Jake Mulder & Brad M. Griffin

Based on groundbreaking research with over 250 of the nation's leading congregations, *Growing Young* provides a strategy any church can use to involve and retain teenagers and young adults. It profiles innovative churches that are engaging 15- to 29-year-olds and as a result are growing--spiritually, emotionally, missionally and numerically. Packed with both research and practical ideas, *Growing Young* shows pastors and ministry leaders how to position their churches to engage younger generations in a way that breathes vitality, life and energy into the whole church.

Kara Powell, Ph.D., is the executive director of the Fuller Youth Institute and a faculty member at Fuller Theological Seminary. Named by *Christianity Today* as one of "50 Women to Watch," Kara serves as a Youth and Family Strategist for Orange and also speaks regularly at parenting and leadership conferences. Jake Mulder, M.Div., is the director of strategic initiatives at the Fuller Youth Institute, where he oversees the business administration, coordinates new research, develops resources, and helps the team think strategically. He has a M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary, a bachelor's in business from Western Michigan University and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Fuller. Brad M. Griffin serves as director of the Fuller Youth Institute where he coordinates FYI's team, writes, blogs, speaks and consults with youth workers. After more than 20 years in youth ministry, he currently serves as a volunteer youth pastor at Mountainside Communion and teaches undergraduate youth ministry as an adjunct instructor at Azusa Pacific University.

Perfect follow-up to the Youth Ministry Summit held on Feb. 8!



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YOUR FUTURE AWAITS YOU!

Hope & Hospitality For Those Seeking Refuge

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

ISLAND HEIGHTS, NJ

Asylum seekers include some of the most vulnerable members of society—children, single mothers, victims of domestic violence or torture and other individuals who have suffered persecution, trauma and the effects of a corrupt government. Following the laborious, time-consuming process to gain asylum, the next layer of difficulty arises.

From finding a safe place to live and a school where their children can learn and more quickly assimilate to finding

Shore church has started a new ministry to support this vulnerable population.

“We wanted to recognize that we need to be outside our church and do for others,” said Cindy Roche of Island Heights UMC who was one of those instrumental in developing this new ministry.

Last spring the “Hope & Hospitality” ministry was created by the church’s women’s group.

“The best part for me as a pastor is to see how little direction they needed. They were driven and prepared. All they needed was a green light. I’m so proud and happy where they have already taken this,” said Pastor Blair Goold.

Following a book reading club meeting, the group was so moved that they knew

“THE BEST PART FOR ME AS A PASTOR IS TO SEE HOW LITTLE DIRECTION THEY NEEDED. THEY WERE DRIVEN AND PREPARED. ALL THEY NEEDED WAS A GREEN LIGHT. I’M SO PROUD AND HAPPY WHERE THEY HAVE ALREADY TAKEN THIS.”

—Pastor Blair Goold

transportation that enables them to work, the millions of marginalized people are faced with challenges that seem insurmountable every day.

The United Methodist Church recognizes all people, regardless of country of origin, as members of the family of God and opposes policies that separate family members from each other. One Northern

they needed to take action in their own community and the larger community.

“We all felt guilty about what was going on at the border, so we knew we needed to step up and help. It’s our responsibility,” said Roche, who has been a member of the church for the past four years. She added that the group decided to get involved with The Holding Insti-



The women’s group continues to brainstorm on new ways to help the asylum seekers in their community. Photo credit: Cindy Roche

tute, a community center in Laredo, TX, that is affiliated with the United Methodist Church.

“They needed hygiene products, so we worked together to collect them,” said Roche, who added that the church sent six cartons of supplies to Texas.

The Holding Institute is a non-profit community center in downtown Laredo, which is on the border of Mexico. In collaboration with the United Methodist Women and other community partners, the people of The Holding Institute respond to the needs of women, children, youth and families to encourage health and wellness, to empower education, to improve community and to invite discipleship.

With this experience in mind, the congregation at Island Heights UMC realized they could do more right in their own community.

When it was discovered that a mother and son had settled in Lakewood after being separated at the border, the Island Heights Hope & Hospitality group rallied their congregation to collect winter clothing and other basic necessities for the family.

The group of about nine to 12 members meets at various times throughout the year to brainstorm new ways they can assist and gain insight into people newly arrived in the United States. They hosted a viewing of “Jasmine’s Story,” a 12-minute video from United Methodist Communications that features a true story about Jasmine, a Michigan teen who found solace in The United Methodist Church when the complications of immigration left her alone to fend for herself. The video and other resources can be found at www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/immigration/films.

Hope & Hospitality’s next step is to meet with the First United Methodist Church in Dover to explore other avenues like tutoring and homeless assistance that will enable them to help more people in a more transformative way.

United Methodists Are Committed to Supporting Refugees

According to the United National Refugee Agency, by the end of 2018, 70.8 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations. That was an increase of 2.3 million people over the previous

year, and the world’s forcibly displaced population remained at a record high. In the United States alone, more than 22 thousand people resettled in 2018.

Refugees’ journeys are difficult, full of fears of deportation, coping with the trauma of their separation and resultant PTSD and difficulty finding support as it takes some time for them to receive working papers.

In an effort to allay fears and facilitate the transition, United Methodists have initiated a three-year, \$2 million pilot project to support asylum seekers in the U.S. and engage local church members



By the end of 2018, 70.8 million people were forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations.

as they embrace the biblical mandate of welcoming the stranger in their own communities.

Three partners — the United Methodist Committee on Relief, Church World Service (CWS) and National Justice For Our Neighbors (NJFON) — will work together to provide resettlement support and legal assistance for those claiming asylum in New York, Houston and Miami.

The project was introduced during the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries meeting last October. UMCOR is a part of the denomination’s mission agency and the UMCOR directors approved the grants to CWS and NJFON.

Closer to home, First Friends of NJ and NY, a Hope Center with A Future With Hope, upholds the inherent dignity and humanity of detained immigrants and asylum seekers by providing volunteer visitation, resettlement assistance and advocacy. For more information, visit firstfriendsnjny.org.

For additional information from GNJ’s Immigration and Refugees Ministry Resources task force, visit www.gnjumc.org/church-and-society.



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PURSUEING CLERGY EXCELLENCE
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

“Stand Up, Take Action” Energized Palisades District

Article written by members of the District Anti-Poverty Task Force

Together, we do more. With 322 “Care Kits for the Homeless” assembled in under two hours, the Palisades District Churches came together on November 2 with one focus in mind: Mission.

The 100 plus volunteers at the “Stand Up, Take Action” event, sponsored by the Palisades District Anti-Poverty Task Force, quickly learned that “mission” meant more than sorting and bagging a “mountain” of donations. It meant expanding one’s understanding of poverty and homelessness by hearing riveting stories and asking questions of speakers who had been homeless or worked with the homeless.

Representatives of Family Promise in Bergen County and CUMAC in Passaic County shared the work of their agencies in attacking the root causes of poverty and homelessness. Participants were challenged to let November 2 be an entry point leading to ongoing action in the fight against poverty. One of the “takeaway points” mentioned by numerous attendees was that “homelessness can affect anyone, anywhere, anytime.”

The assembled care kits were distributed to UMC ministry sites in Dumont, Bergenfield, Ridgefield Park, Paterson and Spring Valley (New York). The congregation at Spring Valley UMC was especially happy to receive the kits because they were given to some of more than 500 homeless individuals in Spring Valley at the church’s annual Christmas Community Luncheon.

The care kits and other donations that CUMAC received were used to serve clients that came to The Marketplace at CUMAC. Additionally, CUMAC’s case



Church members assembled more than 300 “Care Kits for the Homeless.”

manager, Isaiah Jenkins, used some of the donated items and kits for his work in assisting those in need on the streets of Paterson.

In addition to making new friends during this exciting missional event, participants were energized by great music provided by praise bands from Calvary Dumont UMC and Good Shepherd UMC in Bergenfield. The Palisades District Anti-Poverty Task Force thanks everyone who donated items and participated. They look for-

ward to sponsoring another event bringing together God’s people for MISSION! Individuals or church leaders who would like to suggest ideas, offer resources, or learn more about the Task Force, are asked to contact Palisades District Superintendent Rev. Gina Kim or Rev. Elaine Wing at 201-317-5718.

For more information on CUMAC’s work visit bit.ly/risetothetervid. To learn more about The Marketplace at CUMAC, visit bit.ly/CUMACMktlaunch.



The Praise Band from Good Shepherd UMC enhances the environment.



The Palisades District Anti-Poverty Task Force rallied more than 100 volunteers to help the homeless.

MARCH 5, 2020

Located at the Mission and Resource Center
205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753 | 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.



GNJ FINANCIAL PRE-RETIREMENT SEMINAR

Join us for a day of learning for those planning to retire within the next 5 years. Get valuable information on retirement plans, health insurance benefits and social security and hear from representatives from Wespeth Benefits & Investments and Ernst and Young.

For more details:

www.gnjumc.org/events/board-of-pension-health-benefits-pre-retirement-seminar

MARCH 4, 2020

Located at the Mission and Resource Center
205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753 | 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.



GNJ FINANCIAL SECURITY SEMINAR

Planning for your future? Learn how to achieve your financial goals. Get valuable information on how to manage your health and wealth, estate planning and pensions and hear from representatives from Wespeth Benefits & Investments and Ernst and Young.

For more details:

www.gnjumc.org/events/board-of-pension-health-benefits-financial-security-seminar

Honoring MLK and Embracing Cultural Competence

"Courage is an inner resolution to go forward despite obstacles"

—DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Clergy at the 2020 Bishop Convocation in January celebrated the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. with Rev. Dr. Suzan Johnson Cook, the former U.S. Ambassador for International Religious Freedom who shared a message of courage and hope in the midst of crisis.

"I think that's what courage is. Knowing that you are able to stand in the midst of crisis, in the midst of controversy, knowing that God's got you," said Cook, an international and community leader and educator who is a U.S. presidential

advisor, pastor, theologian, author, activist and academic.

Cook's message to clergy was well-timed as GNJ continues its commitment to a 10-year cultural competency plan passed in 2017. The plan is to develop the leadership capacity to create a systemic shift in GNJ from diversity to intercultural competence. GNJ is one of the most diverse conferences in the United States, and their commitments to intercultural competence makes them a leader in the denomination.

"Historically, GNJ has been in the forefront of change within the United Methodist Church. We are leading today, just like we have led in the past," said Bishop John Schol.

Some of those highlights include:

- The 2019-2023 Strategic Plan calls for a cultural shift FROM congregations with a single cultural expression and privilege TO congregations with multicultural expression and intercultural competence. It also calls us to love across boundaries and differences to work towards inclusion of all people.
- GNJ joined the Coalition for Diverse and Inclusive Schools in a lawsuit to compel the State of New Jersey to desegregate their school system. New Jersey has one of the most segregated school systems in the country, leading to inequities in education and opportunity.
- Each year, more than 100 clergy and their congregational leaders participate

in GNJ's cross cultural cross racial appointment workshops.

- Bishop Schol joined U.S. Senator Cory Booker and other faith leaders in leading a Criminal Justice Reform Forum for equal justice under the law and racial justice. More than 60% of incarcerated people in New Jersey are people of color.
- The Joshua Generation, a program sponsored by Next Generation Ministries and funded by the General Commission on Race and Religion, led a modern-day pilgrimage to pivotal spots highlighting Black history in the South to learn, grow and worship together. 🇺🇸



Ambassador Cook embraces Dr. King's teachings by sharing a message of courage and hope. Photo Credit: Brent Donoway

February is Black History Month

Black History Month is a time to celebrate the historical contributions of African Americans, but it is also an opportunity to explore the continuing issues of poverty, discrimination and inequality. Historian Carter G. Woodson chose February as the month to honor black history because Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass were born in February. The month was first celebrated in 1970 and then recognized by President Gerald Ford in 1976. Methodists have played a major role in shaping that history.

Discipleship ministry has resources to learn and celebrate Black History for you and your congregation. Go to www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/celebrating-black-history-month.

Cultivating a Brighter Future through Internships

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

Cultivating relationships is how United Methodists become connective and Next Generation's internship program known as *Cultivate* engages high school and college students in connection and exposes them to a different side of ministry.

Cultivate is a mutual learning experience. Clergy members share with students what it means to be a pastor and students bring new and fresh ideas to the church. The exchange allows students to glean valuable advice from clergy and allows clergy members to reflect on their own ministry and see potential growth in their roles.

The internship program imparts in these students the importance of planning, organizing, collaborating, communicating and implementing church ministries. Next Generation Ministries offers a program for high schoolers and one for college students.

The high school program, which runs for eight weeks from June 22-August 9, allows the teen to explore the local church, learning everything from leading worship and pastoral visitations to conflict resolution and church administration.

Created in 2019, the program received a great reception last summer. Rev. James Lee from Wesley United Methodist Church in South Plainfield said, "Seeing young folks in the pulpit and at the lectern has been a blessing to the church. Having to explain why I



The Cultivate Internship program allows clergy and teens to learn from each other. Photo credit: Kerwin Webb

do what I do was helpful for me as a leader because I had to really examine why I was doing what I was doing. The Cultivate Internship was a big win and should keep going."

Echoing that sentiment was intern, Emma Voorhees from the UMC in Madison, who said that engaging with people who run the church makes for intergenerational ministry. She added,

"People can grow from the internships. I would encourage as many students to take part in the internship as possible."

For details, visit gnjnextgen.org/cultivate/. The application deadline is March 15.

The college experience, which lasts all school year, from October 1 to May 1, touches on similar topics as the high school internship but takes a deeper

diver. The last deadline to apply is September 15.

For details, visit gnjnextgen.org/cultivate-college-experience/.

Making these possible is a grant from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) to cultivate young people for ministry. The grant supports initiatives committed to encourage, recruit and train Christian leaders from ages 16-30. 🇺🇸

Belvidere Partners

Continued from page 1



Volunteer helps distribute supplies to homeless people in New Jersey.

due to a reference from St. Philip and St. James Catholic Church in Phillipsburg, NJ.

“This is the first time we are doing such a monthly feeding ministry. We are a very active church, and we want to go out and help those who need it. Our group who goes out to feed is one that is multi-generational; we have young and old and men and women. They all find it to be rewarding and know that they are serving God and those in need,” she said.

Belvidere UMC also houses a large food pantry with 376 clients currently. The Salvation Army partnership includes assisting in the food pantry and has helped the church develop an identity as a congregation making significant missional impact in the community.

“Our work with them is a nice fit with the food pantry since we have developed a relationship with those struggling in our area from their use of the food pantry,” said Ficarra.

She added that Rohrs-Dodge is working with a local Salvation Army representative on a potential food truck campaign with the ministry down the road.

“The Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign is also especially beneficial as all the money we raise comes back to us and it provides the necessary funding to help more people than we would have been able to on our own,” she said.

Rohrs-Dodge said the church works with the Salvation Army to provide financial support to people in the Belvidere area through rent and utility support, toys and clothing through the food pantry and an annual backpack and shoes program for children going back to school.

“We will continue our back-to-school supplies, backpacks and shoes program this summer. Our partnership is a good one because we are stronger and more effective when we partner in ministry with others and share resources and information,” said Rohrs-Dodge.

Ficarra echoed the moving forward philosophy when she said, “Our partnership is an effort to help as many struggling people as we can in our community. Belvidere UMC is a mission-oriented church. Our congregation is a generous one who really enjoys giving back to the community near and far.”

Find out more about Belvidere United Methodist Church at www.belvidereumc.com.

MARCH 28, 2020
 Located at the Mission and Resource Center
 205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753 | 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Join us for a
**TEAM VITAL
 CELEBRATION**

Look for more information in the Digest.



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!

Locations:	Regions:	Districts:
St Mark UMC, Hamilton	Central	Capital
Trinity UMC, Mullica Hill	Southern	Delaware Bay
Korean Community, Englewood	Northern	Palisades
Sparta UMC	Northern	Skylands
New Dover UMC	Central	Raritan Valley
Asbury UMC will be hosting at: Sculville Volunteer Fire Company Hall 1708 Somers Point Road, Egg Harbor Township	Southern	Cape Atlantic

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:
www.gnjumc.org/events/yeswecan

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



Rising Against Hunger As One

Continued from page 1



GNJ has worked with Rise Against Hunger before, packing 1.2 million meals that fed people in 13 countries.



ABOVE-RIGHT: Rise Against Hunger volunteers; RIGHT: Indian schoolgirls enjoying lunch.



GNJ congregations work hard to feed the hungry, in part with Rise Against Hunger, a nonprofit organization that has envisioned a world without hunger since 1998. Volunteers at 71 church sponsored events in GNJ have packed 1.2 million meals for people in 13 countries.

Rise Against Hunger, founded in 1998 by Ray Buchanan, a United Methodist minister and Vietnam veteran, is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Goal #2 of Zero Hunger. From the implementation of sustainable community development projects and improving health to addressing gender equalities and facilitating this meal packaging program around the world, the nonprofit is committed to ending hunger by 2030.

On March 21, thousands of people throughout GNJ will embrace the words of Margaret Meade when she said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

For additional details, including locations, and to register or sponsor, please visit www.gnjumc.org/events/yeswecan/. Or contact Ashley Wilson at 732-359-1043 or awilson@gnjumc.org.

Haitian children eating rice — an economical staple.



All the resources you need are on our website at gnjumc.org!

- ✓ media kit
- ✓ videos
- ✓ sponsor form
- ✓ social media & more!

Who to Invite?

Use Rise Against Hunger to enhance your community outreach. Invite community members to join you. Here are some ideas!

- Boy Scouts
- Girl Scouts
- Senior clubs
- Lions clubs
- Rotary
- High school groups
- Neighboring churches
- Recovery groups
- Local businesses

Questions and Answers

How big can the group be?
Any size! However, there is a 200-person capacity per shift.

When should we register?
To ensure you are able to pack meals at your desired location and time slot, we suggest registering as soon as possible.

How old do participants have to be?
5 years old and up. Old enough to not throw meal contents around.

And where does the food go?
Rise Against Hunger informs us where the food we packed was sent after the meal packing event. However, the food is sent to places within the US during relief efforts and to countries around the world. In the past, meals GNJ churches have packed have been sent to the following countries: Burkina Faso, El Salvador, eSwatini, Haiti, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Peru, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, & Zambia.

Rise Against Hunger Donations and Sponsorships

To feed half a million people requires volunteers and support. All participants are encouraged to bring a free will offering to their event or make it online.

Donations help to cover the cost of the meals and to offset the costs of the event itself.

- \$20 feeds a child for three months
- \$75 feeds a child for one year
- \$150 feeds two children for one year
- \$300 feeds four children for one year
- \$500 feeds a family of 6 for one year
- \$3,750 feeds a village of 50 children for one year
- \$7,500 feeds a village of 100 children for one year

Your church is also invited to join as a sponsor at the following levels:

Silver Sponsor—Feed a family of 6 for one year: \$500
Silver Sponsors are listed on the website and will be recognized on GNJ’s social media.

Gold Sponsor—Feed 14 children for one year: \$1000
Gold Sponsors are listed on the website, will be recognized on GNJ’s social media and be printed in the Relay.

Platinum Sponsor—Feed a village of 33 children for one year: \$2500
Platinum Sponsors are listed on the website, will be recognized on GNJ’s social media and be printed in the Relay. Platinum sponsors will also receive a video thanking the congregation for their participation.

CONFERENCE HAPPENINGS

Agency Reports and Legislative Recommendations Due Feb. 15

All reports and legislation for Annual Conference must be submitted by Feb. 15. Submission forms are located at www.gnjumc.org/2020annualconference.

Focus Group Registration Open for Annual Conference

If your group or committee would like to schedule a special gathering at GNJ's Annual Conference May 28 through June 2. Please visit www.gnjumc.org/2020annualconference/ to request a space.

Workers' Compensation Payroll Audit Forms Due Feb. 15

Completed workers' compensation payroll audits should be sent directly to Church Mutual, not to GNJ. For additional questions, contact Becky Meyer in the Church Mutual Premium Audit Unit at 800-554-2642, press Option 4, Extension 4697.

For more details, visit www.gnjumc.org/insurance/workers-compensation-insurance/.

2020 Property Insurance Renewal Packets

The Property and Casualty Insurance Program for United Methodist churches in Greater NJ was designed by the GNJ Board of Trustees, Sovereign Insurance Group, and Church Mutual Insurance. Please look out for the 2020 Property Insurance Renewal Packets that were mailed to local churches in mid-December.

The packet is addressed to the Trustee President and will include the Master Certificate of Insurance, Summary of Coverage and FAQs. For more details, visit www.gnjumc.org/insurance/propertyliability/.

Blueprint for Wellness (BFW) & HealthQuotient in 2020

BFW screening and HealthQuotient (HQ) for HealthFlex participants are through July 31. Participants can earn points and rewards are offered for participating. For details, visit www.gnjumc.org/benefits-overview/.

Pinelands Family Night is Feb. 16

Join Next Generation Ministries for an evening of dinner, live music, a campfire with s'mores and a night-time hayride at Pinelands Center.

Tickets are \$25 per person paid at the door. Children 12 and under are free. All proceeds from the event will benefit IGNITE Summer Camps scholarships. For more information, please contact Ryan Clements at 732-859-0033 or visit gnjnextgen.org/special-event.



2020 IGNITE SUMMER CAMPS

Check out our website this fall for more information about summer camping at Pinelands Center at Mt. Misery.

July 20 - 25, 2020
CAMP INSPIRE | GRADES 6 - 12

July 27 - Aug. 1, 2020
CAMP TRANSFORM | GRADES 6 - 12

Aug. 3 - 8, 2020
CAMP SPROUT | GRADES 1-5

Aug. 10 - 15, 2020
NIÑOS Y JOVENES | GRADES 1 - 12

Find out more at: www.gnjnextgen.org

IGNITE Summer Camp Looking for New Volunteers and Staff

Opportunities abound this summer at Pinelands at Mt. Misery to get involved in helping at IGNITE 2020 Summer Camps in July and August.

From photographer to counselor, both staff and volunteer opportunities are available. For details visit gnjnextgen.org.

Retirement and Pre-Retirement Seminars Coming Up in March

The GNJ Board of Pension and Health Benefits is presenting Financial and Pre-Retirement Seminars for pastors and their spouses this March. A benefits educator from Wespath 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.

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 Irida 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.

Grammy Nod in Sparta

The Sparta United Methodist Church's choir director and organist, Ian Good, attended the Grammys this year after being nominated for the prestigious award.

Good was nominated for Best Engineering in the Classical category along with fellow engineers Bob Hanlon and Lawrence Rock for "Wolfe: Fire in My Mouth." It was conducted by Jaap Van Zweden and performed by the New York Philharmonic. "The Crossing" was conducted by Donald Nally and the Young People's Chorus of NYC conducted by Francisco Nunez.

The 2020 Best Engineering Classical Award was given to engineer Leslie Ann Jones and master engineer Robert C. Ludwig for Riley: Sun Rings, performed by the Kronos Quartet.

Their work stemmed from Julia Wolfe's "Fire in My Mouth," which was co-commissioned and premiered by the New York Philharmonic. The work commemorates the lives of 146 immigrant workers who died in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911. The work's title comes from the writings of Clara Lemlich who sparked a labor movement before perishing in the fire. Wolfe's "Fire in My Mouth" was also nominated for Best Classical Composition. The recording can be purchased and streamed on all major music services on the Decca Gold label.



NY Philharmonic Audio Director Lawrence Rock and Ian Good at the Grammy's.

OBITUARIES

Barbara Koch, spouse of Retired Elder John Koch, died January 25, 2020. A viewing and memorial service were held January 31 at St. John's UMC in Turnersville. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to Parkinson's Foundation, 200 Southeast First Street, Suite 800, Miami, FL 33131 in memory of Barbara Koch. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to: Rev. John Koch at 211 Gardenview Road, Egg Harbor Township, NJ 08234

your LIFE YOUR terms

You've always been independent and want to stay that way.

Our communities give you the freedom to live life on your own terms, pursuing activities you've always enjoyed—and finding new interests you might never have imagined. You'll be independent but you won't be alone. You'll be at home, in your own home, but free of the challenges of maintaining a house and asking your family for help.

Reach out to us for all of your senior living or care needs.

Call 732-922-9800 for additional information or visit our website, UMCommunities.org.

United Methodist Communities

Great Place To Work
Certified
MAY 2019 - MAY 2020
USA

3311 State Route 33, Neptune, NJ 07753
732-922-9800 | www.UMCommunities.org



Miracles will be everywhere this summer at Pinelands Center!

Because of the generosity of local churches through the Miracles Everywhere Campaign in 2019, campers will get an even better experience this July and August with new programs and updated facilities!



From the art-filled *Camp Inspire* to the life-changing and faith-rich *Camp Transform*, Next Gen offers 5 options to choose from.

***Register by March 2 to take advantage
of the early bird price of \$425!***

 **IGNITE 2020**
SUMMER CAMPS



NEXT GENERATION
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

**Embrace the miracles by registering now at:
www.gnjnextgen.org/summer-camping-sessions**