

THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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Having a Lot on Your Plate in GNJ's New York Churches

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in"

—MATTHEW 25:35

By Heather Mistretta
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Having a lot on your plate is a common phrase in many cultures, whether you say, "have a lot on their plates," "ont beaucoup sur leurs assiettes," "tienen mucho en sus platos," 그들의 접시에 많은 or another way. But the reality today is that many people have a lot on their plates...except for food. Three New York churches albeit demographically very different—UMC of Spring Valley, New City UMC and Pearl River UMC—are doing their part to fill those plates in the most transformative ways they know how.

The Gift of Giving and Receiving in Spring Valley

At the UMC of Spring Valley, connecting with the underserved in the community and nourishing both their bodies and souls



Rev. Kay Dubuisson works with church members at UMC of Spring Valley to offer hundreds of meals each week to their needy community.

has always been the best part of their ministry. Greetings, hugs and words of encouragement are commonplace there, but recently that expression of gratitude and love looks a little different as long lines form on Thursday evenings and Saturdays and talk of lost jobs and interrupted education spreads amid the aroma of home-cooked meals by church members.

The small town of Spring Valley has become a melting pot of giving, as the

people of UMC of Spring Valley cook, package and serve more than 300 meals every Saturday to growing lines of hungry people, many of whom represent the most vulnerable during this time like minorities, immigrants and the homeless.

Rev. Kay Dubuisson, who immigrated from Haiti many years ago before studying and practicing social work, recently

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"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

—ROMANS 8:38-39 (NRSV)

On the Front Lines of Care

By Heather Mistretta
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Clergy and laity working in the Greater New Jersey Conference have always been committed to working on the front lines of helping others, but when the COVID-19 health crisis grabbed hold of our daily lives, the need for more nurses, doctors and other healthcare workers was clear. Less evident—behind the front lines—was the growing need to care for the mental health of these healthcare workers, the patients they treat and those already receiving neurological care.

For Susan Victor, protecting mental health is her priority, but the way she does it has changed for the moment and possibly for the future. Commissioned by Princeton UMC last year to work in Trenton at The Maker's Place, Victor has also served for the past 15 years as the Director of Counseling at Womanspace, a Trenton-area non-profit that works with women, men and families impacted by domestic and sexual violence.

"It has completely shifted. We normally work face to face, but now we have had to rethink what safety looks like," said Victor who added that she now sends encrypted messages to her clients to protect their safety and has brief check-in calls with them to make sure they are doing well. "I have to be aware of who else might be listening in on these calls."

Unlike many stay-at-home workers, Victor is not able to work via Zoom with her clients, only internally with staff. Although Zoom is compliant to all HIPAA rules, it does not comply with the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), a law originally

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Health Disparity Toolkit for Congregations to Address the Crisis

By Heather Mistretta
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The COVID-19 health crisis amplifies the need to address racial disparities throughout our communities.

In response, the GNJ Commission on Religion and Race (CORR) has created a COVID-19 Health Disparity Toolkit for

beyond. Amidst this pandemic on ongoing racial strife, the love we are called to show God and our neighbors is needed more than ever.

"Together with the GNJ CORR team, we are working on a larger implementation plan that addresses both mercy and justice. The tool kit does not address the underlying issue of structural racism, which must be addressed by changes in head and hearts, as well as, changes in policy and practice," said Vanessa Wilson, senior pastor at Magnolia Road UMC & Saint Paul UMC and chairperson, Religion and Race GNJUMC.

She added, "Structural racism excludes African

Americans and other people of color from access and equity in the established determinants of health including education; access to health care; clean water; nutritious food; neighborhood and physical environment; as well as, employment and job security. Thus, creating health equity is a complex and ongoing battle; the tool kit provides information about immediate resources and raises awareness about racial health care disparities."

According to APM Research Lab, data compiled in May revealed deep inequities by race, most dramatically for Black Americans. The study added, "The latest overall COVID-19 mortality rate for Black

Americans is 2.4 times as high as the rate for Whites and 2.2 times as high as the rate for Asians and Latinos." In New Jersey alone, their data through May 27 showed that the death rate per 100,000 by race/ethnicity was 149.6 for Blacks and 87.3 for Whites.

As this disparity continues to widen, CORR is calling for GNJ churches to provide community leadership for justice for all. There is peace for no one as the health crisis drags on.

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Recent data shows the COVID-19 mortality rate for Blacks is 2.4 times higher than it is for Whites.

pastors to use with their congregations and community partners as they work collaboratively in communities that are suffering and hampered by inequities.

"Despite all that is going on, this toolkit helps remind people that we are still in communion with one another," said Lan Wilson, director of worship at GNJ who contributed to the project. "We have many, many resources being made available, but the toolkit offers a focused look at ways to support people in helping to meet both their physical and spiritual needs."

The downloadable toolkit is a go-to resource for church leaders who are committed to embracing and preserving inclusion during this difficult time and

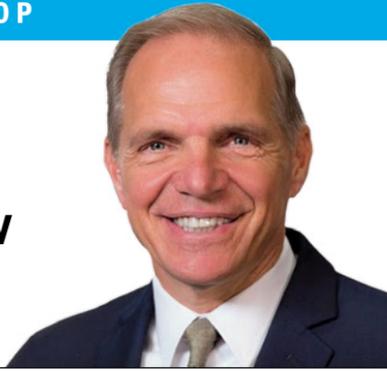


Bishop John Schol, Director of Worship Lan Wilson, Pastor Jackie Burgess and others from GNJ offer messages of hope and calls for action at Asbury Park Justice For George Floyd rally on June 1.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP

A Call to Action Now

Bishop John Schol



In response to the killing of George Floyd and the demonstrations that have ensued, Bishop Schol sent out two letters on May 28 and June 1 (see below) to express his strong condemnation of racism, offer messages of hope through prayer, applaud those who have courageously protested and to call others to action right now. He attended the Asbury Park Justice For George Floyd rally in Asbury Park, NJ, on June 1 when he spoke by megaphone to the thousands of peaceful demonstrators who also attended.

5/28/20

When my brother died at the age of 40, I will never forget my mother's words, "it's not supposed to happen this way, parents are to outlive their children." Every parent who has lost a child understands what this means.

I believe the mothers of Mr. George Floyd and Mr. Ahmaud Arbery are saying, "it just shouldn't happen this way." I agree, it just shouldn't happen this way. Not only did Mr. Floyd and Mr. Arbery die too young, but racism led to the deaths. I believe God, like a mother of us all is saying, "it just shouldn't happen this way. You were created to be one people, one family and racism is a sin against creation and a rejection of me and my creation."

In GNJ we have and continue to be an inclusive church, respecting and honoring differences. We have multi-ethnic multi-racial congregations, more than 100 clergy are serving in cross racial appointments, and we are actively seeking justice in a segregated NJ public school system. In our work to be inclusive, we honor God the creator and creation. But it is not enough. When African Americans are being killed for the color of their skin, when Asians are being blamed for the Coronavirus, when Hispanics are told you do not belong here, the church must not point to its progress as though we have done our part. Prejudice and racism continue when we do not speak out about the injustices and treatment of people because of the color of their skin.

Each of us has a moral obligation to be angered and denounce prejudice, racism and privilege when we encounter it. I call all United Methodists to pray, work for and model acceptance, inclusion and equality in our church, in our homes, in our jobs, in our communities and in our schools. I also call all United Methodists to pray for the Floyd and Arbery families during their grief.

May the peace and justice of Christ Jesus abide in and be exemplified through each of us.

6/1/20

While growing up, we ate a lot of potatoes. Generally, they were either mashed or boiled. My mom tended to a lot of things while boiling the potatoes, homework with four children and preparing other parts of the meal. It wouldn't be long before foaming water would lift the lid and spill out onto the stove. Unattended matters will boil over.

Boiling over is what we are experiencing across the United States. Unattended issues simmer underneath until one incident brings things to a boiling point. The death of George Floyd is not an isolated incident but part of a pattern of deaths of African Americans that have not been fully addressed. The boiling over is part of a system of racism that has not been resolved.

We will not see change until we all work together to understand, change and live differently. It is not enough for you or me to live our lives differently. Each of us, as followers of Jesus Christ, are called to be a catalyst for a larger change.

I am grateful for those who are gathering peacefully to rally for a call to action. Action and change are what is needed. I applaud the group of African Americans who surrounded a white police officer to keep him safe from others' rage. I applaud the white police officers who laid down batons and marched at the front of the lines with the

"I CALL ALL OF US TO FIND WAYS TO BE THE RISEN CHRIST
IN THE MIDST OF HATRED, VIOLENCE AND RACISM."

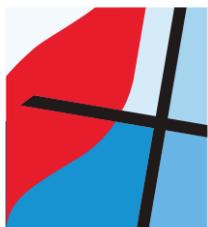
—Bishop John Schol

protesters. I applaud the police officers who knelt in prayer and prayed for forgiveness and change. In all of these acts I have seen the risen Christ. I call all of us to find ways to be the risen Christ in the midst of hatred, violence and racism.

I call each of us to find ways to demonstrate our conviction that God has created us as one people and that racism requires us to work toward long-term change. Each of us needs to speak up and out when people, especially those in leadership, even elected leadership, use their privilege to further divide and even in some cases further incite violence. Hatred and separation of the races is not of God.

The people of GNJ have been working on the issues of racism for a long time. We need to do more. I am calling together a group of leaders from across GNJ to identify what we as disciples of Jesus Christ will do in and through our congregations to help change who we are as a church and how we will engage in our communities for justice and righteousness in a church and a nation divided by race. This type of change will not be easy and will require a long-term commitment. I will report to you in two weeks on our progress and then continue to report out our work.

I ask for your prayers for the families who have lost loved ones, for our police who are called on to protect and preserve life, for our elected officials to lead to bring justice for all and for our church so that we will lead toward change and healing. 🇺🇸



THE RELAY

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OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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HAVE YOU SEEN
THE NEW DIGEST?

The newly-designed GNJ Digest might be your next best stop.

GNJ has streamlined how you get your weekly news by shortening the content and improving the readability while still offering you the valuable resources you need and keeping you informed.

FOR DETAILS, VISIT:

www.gnjumc.org/thegnjdigest

Or email Heather Mistretta at hmistretta@gnjumc.org



CREATIVE SOCIAL INTERACTION

Experience Next Generation Ministries

Check out the online IGNITE Summer at Home programming for middle school and high school students in July or the 2-3 day family camps at the Pinelands Center in August, both in accordance to state guidelines.

Experiment with Virtual Vacation Bible School

Several publishers have tailored VBS to the norms of social distancing. VBS might look different but will still be fun!

Invest in Technology Training

To support your congregation's engagement with the community, explore the marketing tips and grants available through United Methodist Communications (UMCOM.org). Digital presence matters.

Engage with Virtual Small Groups

Lead small groups with laity through Breakthrough Series called Move Mountains. Deepen your connections with God and each other.

Host a Virtual Food Drive

Reach out to a food pantry to determine needs and invite your community to take part. Reflect on how this can be an ongoing part of your ministry.

Enjoy Nature

Take a hike, plant a garden and explore the night sky. Celebrate God's good creation.

Start an Online Picture Campaign

Invite congregants to share weekly pictures that relate to the message and post them on social media. This brings to light the Gospel with daily life.

Embark on a Virtual Vacation

Google Arts and Culture offers virtual tours of museums, movie locations, musical events, children's entertainment and more. Travel the world from your own couch.

FOR IDEAS ON HOW TO CREATIVELY ENGAGE IN MINISTRY AND INVEST IN A BRIGHTER FUTURE:

Check out www.gnjumc.org/covid19 and the GNJ Facebook page!

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Reopening Church Buildings

Our Goal

Spread the Good News of Jesus Christ as together we flatten COVID-19 and ensure zero infections are spread by United Methodist activity.

When Can Churches Open?

Congregations are to follow the governor's directives about when and how to open church buildings. Each congregation is to develop its own policies and guidelines based on your governor's directives as they become available. These policies and guidelines will be modified and adapted over time as the situation changes.

- Follow state governor's directives about when and how to open church buildings
- Develop a plan that includes addressing the eight health and safety issues like gathering size, protection and communication, as well as responding to a series of questions
- This plan must be approved by the church council at which time a reopen date is set.

Developing Your Plan

Each congregation is to have a plan prior to reopening that addresses from car to pew and pew to car. No opening may occur until your governor indicates churches may begin to gather and the church has a plan. Each plan will vary because of the size of the congregation, the building type and ministries carried out. Each plan must be approved by the church council. Areas to address and questions to help congregational leaders develop a plan are shown below. As you have questions about your plan or if you would like it reviewed by GNJ leadership, you may email opening@gnjumc.org.

8 Essential Health and Safety Areas to Address in Your Plan

1. **Gathering Size:** Setting and ensuring capacity limits based on state requirements



Reopening requires the same vigilance, attention and compassion that GNJ has shown over the past three months.

2. **Social Distance:** Maintaining six feet between each person: *See CDC Guidelines*
 3. **Human Contact:** Preventing people from touching objects and people: *See CDC Guidelines*
 4. **Cleaning:** Cleaning surfaces and all common areas: *See CDC Guidelines.*
 5. **Vulnerable People:** Taking extra precautions with older people, people with asthma, liver disease, hypertension, health conditions and disabilities: *See CDC Guidelines*
 6. **Protection:** Using masks, gloves and hand sanitizers: *See CDC Guidelines*
 7. **Signage and Teams:** Greeting and guiding people to ensure safety and social distancing
 8. **Communication:** Communicating and providing continual updates for your plan
- Go to www.gnjumc.org for more information. 📄

Health Disparity Toolkit

Continued from page 1

Lisa A. Cooper, MD, Bloomberg Distinguished Professor and director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity at the Bloomberg School, was recently quoted as saying, "I think the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how interconnected and vulnerable we all are, and how much our well-being is dependent as much on what those around us do as it is on what we do ourselves. When others don't have the opportunity to be healthy by engaging in social distancing, it puts all of us at risk."

A health disparity is defined as a type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic and/or environmental disadvantage. These health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health based on their racial and/or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.

**"TOGETHER WITH THE
GNJ CORR TEAM, WE ARE
WORKING ON A LARGER
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
THAT ADDRESSES BOTH
MERCY AND JUSTICE."**

—Rev. Vanessa Wilson

St. Andrew UMC Embraces the Power of Virtual Connection

By Heather Mistretta
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T O M S R I V E R , N J

About a year ago St. Andrew UMC in Toms River began its foray into online worship. Little did they know how valuable it would one year later.

"We are striving to create worship experiences that enable us all to connect with God and with each other during this atypical time within the Church," said Jan Mercadante, who has been director of worship at the church for the past nine years. "We know the work of Christ continues, and this pandemic is an opportunity to share Christ's compassion, love and light to our community and world."

In addition to a 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. online worship every Sunday that offers viewers a blended style of worship, St. Andrew UMC releases a pre-recorded video on Facebook every Tuesday at 3 p.m. that features a story, show & tell and a song that is chockful of sensory-boosting gestures and accompanied by sign language. Afterward, "Kid's Kits" are delivered to the porch of about 20 children in the community. They are filled with treats, devotionals and a project to work on throughout the week.

Mercadante noted that on April 14 the children's video brought 412 views. Sunday worship has attracted anywhere from 200 to 400 views. She noted that the church is also offering Bible studies through Zoom and a video on Bible journaling in its effort to stay connected with the congregation.



Every Tuesday afternoon St. Andrew UMC features a video for youth on FB Live.

Outside of the online resources, St. Andrew UMC whose congregation averages 250 on any given Sunday, is still running its food pantry at the curbside and through deliveries. On a normal day, the church is also in partnership with Community Services Inc (CSI) of Ocean County that delivers meals to senior citizens. The partnership, which began about 40 years ago and is now a Hope Center, also involves special needs ministry with autistic children through POAC Autism Services. With this partnership, St. Andrew UMC is able to offer enriching resources like yoga online.

In addition to these ministries as well as others, St. Andrew UMC offers a veterans ministry by supporting Operation Jersey Cares (operationjerseycares.org/), the prevention of human trafficking initiatives, interfaith hospitality mission

through the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Ocean County and the "Joy in the Harvest" mission that serves in Tanzania. This ministry includes church planting, running a computer training school, feeding center, a community center that holds 500 people for teaching and community events and the only local Christian radio station.

"Church doesn't stop because we don't meet. We want people to understand that we are united in Christ. We are here to share and support all," said Mercadante.

Sunday's worship can be accessed here: www.youtube.com/channel/UCAkMP3J9oIOOqcBLba-WBww/ featured or by visiting their website at www.standrewtr.org/#. The children's service can be found at www.facebook.com/standrewtr/. 📄

The toolkit addresses food security, protective equipment, CDC guidelines, multicultural resources and hotlines as well as alternative ways to worship and engage with congregations safely and inclusively.

"I hope that this toolkit will equip GNJ churches to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of people from all backgrounds with equity," said Emily Wilton, GNJ's Breakthrough Coordinator who is a seminary student at Princeton Theological Seminary. "By providing for practical needs and worshipping faithfully and creatively, I hope churches using this toolkit will be a force for God's mercy and justice in Greater New Jersey."

Looking forward, Dr. Cooper added, "The pandemic could bring a shift in thinking toward valuing all people regardless of background, economics, or what's on the surface. We know now more than ever that every member of our society is important. It may force us to come up with new ways, including technology, to connect everyone with the things they need, from food, education, and work, to worship, social connection and entertainment. COVID-19 has also pushed us to ensure that more people have their basic needs met, [because] it has now become a matter of life or death."

You can find the Health Disparity Toolkit on GNJ's website under "COVID-19 Resources," or www.gnjumc.org/covid19/covid-19-resources/mission/covid-19-health-disparity-tool-kit/.

More information from the General Commission on Race and Religion can be found at www.gcorr.org.

More details from the APM research can be found at www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race#reporting. 📄

Mad about Mission in Sparta

By Denise Herschel
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SPARTA, NJ

Handwritten letters to soldiers in Iraq, stuffed backpacks with school supplies for children in need and decorated cards for new mothers in the hospital are some of the things created by a mother and daughter group at the Sparta United Methodist Church where ministry by women has become their mission.

"I remember hearing a challenge at UMW Leadership Development Days to be bold and creative in finding ways to involve young women in our UMW groups," said Pat Schutz, founder of MAD (Mothers and Daughters) About Mission.

"Our group was a result of that challenge," said Schutz.

"We, as adults, often go to meetings that take us 'away' from our families. We also take kids to all kinds of activities, leave them, and come pick them up afterwards. There are very few groups where we focus on working 'with' our children in the church and in the community. This was an attempt to fill that void because this is a 'together' group. It creates shared memories between mothers and their children and creates group memories."

For the past several years Schutz has led this group whose purpose is for mothers to "work" with their children doing good works in the community and the world.

Although the health crisis has put a temporary hold on this mission, Schutz said the group did manage to do some wonderful projects in the beginning of the year.

She remarked about the wonderful presentation by Beth and Emma Deery, two young church leaders who participated in last year's Joshua Generation, a year-long program from Next Generation Ministries that involved a pilgrimage to notable Civil Rights sights in the South.



Mothers and daughters at Sparta UMC are maintaining social distance by sending letters to healthcare workers and planning to clean up trails in their community this summer.

"We have made gingerbread houses and took them to homebound folks and sang some songs for them. We also made Valentine Day centerpieces and goodie bags for members of Pathways to Prosperity which meets in our church."

And most recently, she said, children have made cards and sent notes to healthcare workers and people who were already homebound before the pandemic hit.

"I am hoping maybe this summer we can hike again and clean up the trails along the way. We may be able to do this and maintain social distance between families," Schutz added.

She noted that their missions are varied and that they often tap into the United Methodist Men's reading program, which includes education, leadership, nurturing the community, social action and spiritual growth.

"We believe this makes us a well-rounded group," Schutz said.

According to Schutz, MAD (Mothers and Daughters) About Mission is open to anyone who wants to join. Boys are also welcome, but it is primarily girls who attend the meetings. The group is most appropriate for children age six and older, but because the mothers are working with their children, younger children do occasionally partake in the activities.

Thirteen-year-old Kalle Young, one of the group's attendees and a Sparta UMC member, said she enjoys the meetings because she likes "how girls and women from different schools, towns and lifestyles can come together and help others."

Sparta UMC's Jeni Moriarty, who brings her daughters, Cora, Maelee and Brinnley, to the meetings, added, "I love spending time together doing projects that are helpful to our neighbors and doing projects that are fun and creative."

"We have moms, kids, special needs adults and grandmothers who come. I think the most important thing about this group is that because Jesus loves us extravagantly, we need to love others and all of creation extravagantly also. We are never too small in stature or group size to do this," she added.

The group, which meets the first Sunday evening of each month, has not been able to convene due to the global



The group made washcloth and bar of soap bunnies with handwritten notes attached for Puerto Rico in 2018.

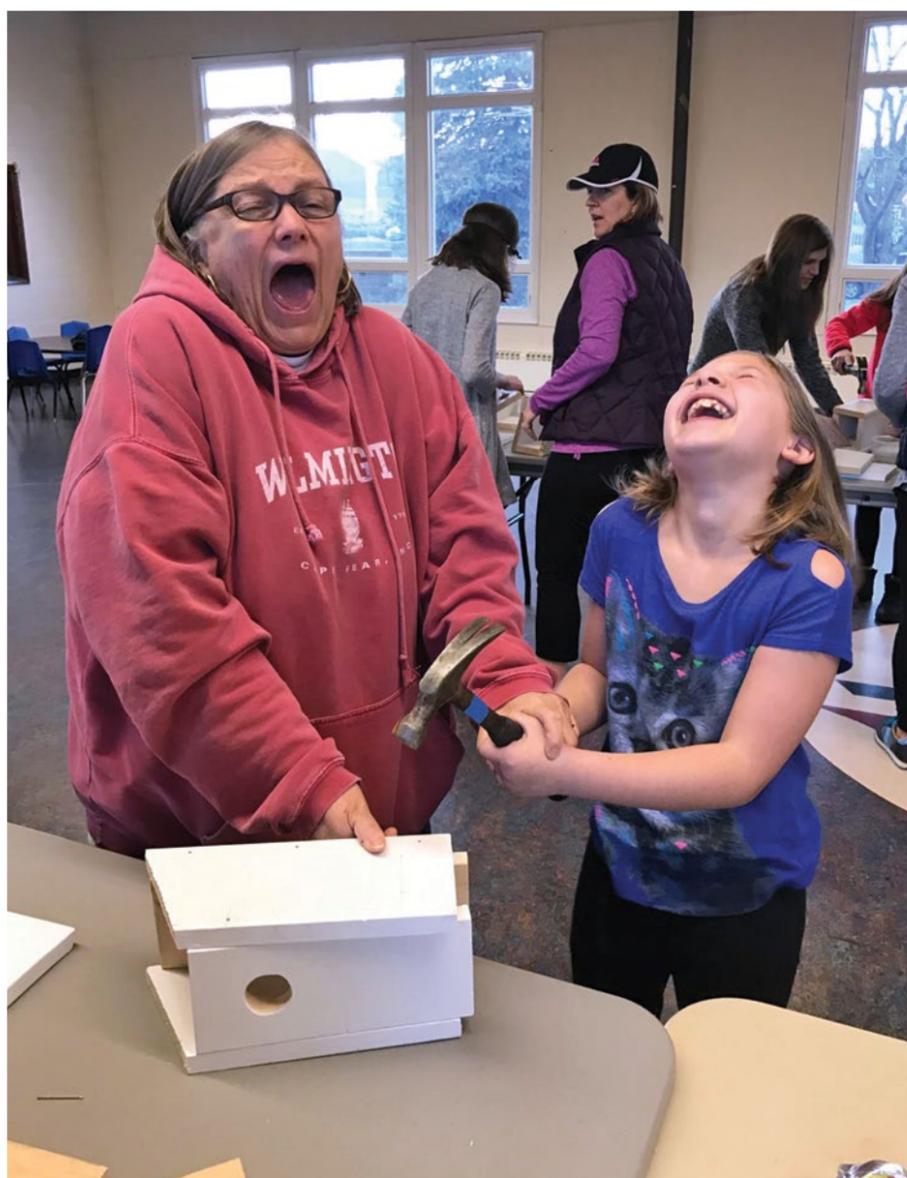
pandemic, but they are still planning to plant some indigenous plants on the church grounds because of the property where Schutz said they can "spread out while doing this."

Since its inception seven years ago, the group has been involved in many charitable activities including Christmas caroling to homebound folks, creating cards for U.S. troops overseas, helping make ribbons for a local high school's suicide awareness campaign and filling Christmas stockings for people with little or no family. They have also participated in creating fun activities for its members such as hiking in the mountains, Easter egg dyeing and decorating cupcakes.

As the founder of MAD (Mothers and Daughters) About Mission, Schutz believes that her group shows how mothers, grandmothers and children can enjoy their time together joyfully and spiritually with purpose in mind.

"I want everyone to know that we can make a difference to each other, to the environment, to animals and to all of God's creatures. All who attend join us for a fun, memorable and worthy time working on outreach projects for the local and global communities."

For more information about MAD About Mission email Pat Schutz at pat.schutz@yahoo.com. Sparta UMC is located at 71 Sparta Avenue in Sparta, NJ. 🇺🇸



MAD About Mission is committed to doing things together like making bird houses in its mission to be good environmental stewards.

Looking for a family vacation idea this summer
to renew, refocus and have a little fun?



IGNITE FAMILY CAMPS

Introducing Next Gen's all-new Family Camps, a safe alternative to traditional camping happening this August!

Share a cabin together as a single household.

Participate in camp activities like hiking, archery, the challenge course, crafting, paintball, hayrides and swimming as permissible by current regulations.

Engage in morning and evening devotionals.



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For more information go to: www.gnjnextgen.org



NEXT GENERATION
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Next Gen: Going the Distance Despite Social Distancing

“And the child grew and became strong in spirit.”

—LUKE 1:80

By Heather Mistretta
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As youth grapple with so many challenges over the next few months, they need a place where they are safely able to express themselves, connect with others and God and just have fun. Next Gen is doing everything they can to make that happen.

The team at Next Gen is staying connected through Zoom, social media and phone calls, and continuing to offer opportunities to youth that enrich while keeping them safe and healthy like a virtual IGNITE Communities, the upcoming Summer at Home camp in July and a family camping adventure in August.

“I’m so proud of what I hear so many of our youth doing in spite of this time of uncertainty,” said Eric Drew, executive director of Next Generation Ministries. “From online confirmation projects and fundraisers to just showing how they are there to support one another, our youth are standing up to say we all matter and that God is still working through them every day.”

College Cultivate

In late April, Next Gen finished up its first year of the College Cultivate internship program, a mutual learning experience

as clergy members share with students on what it means to be a pastor for 20 hours each week. The exchange allows students to glean valuable advice from clergy and allows clergy members to reflect on their own missions and

it is okay not to have the right words, but just by being present means all the world to people.”

Applications for the second year of the program, which begins October 1, are being accepted. More information

family playlists and a hope devotional for parents can be found at <http://gnjnextgen.org/covid-19-ministry-resources/>.

Summer at Home and Family Camps

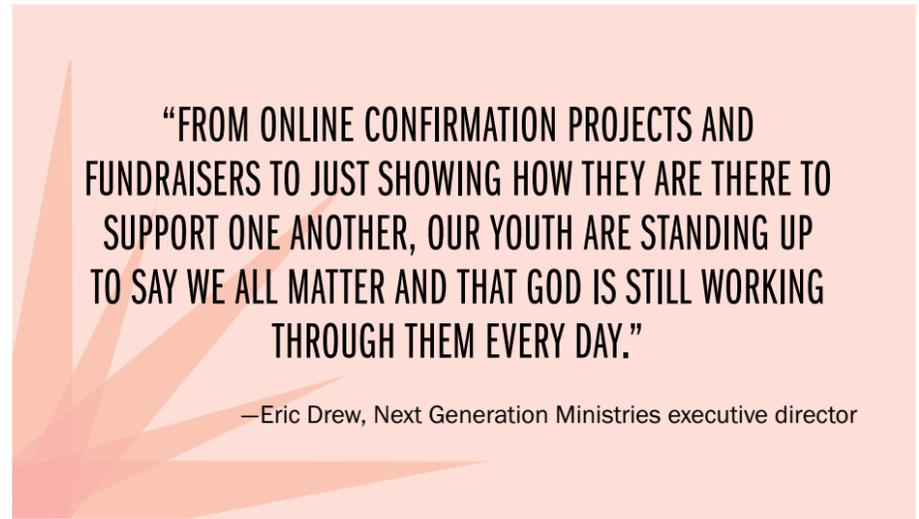
As the summer approaches, there is trepidation and continued uncertainty for youth and youth leaders, but Next Gen is still committed to its mission while keeping youth safe with the unveiling of IGNITE Summer at Home and Family Camping. Each experience promises to restore a little normalcy to their lives and create lasting memories for years to come.

“Now with IGNITE Summer at Home, your online camper will connect with a great community of students, grow in faith, learn new skills and have a lot of fun too,” said Drew who added that the structure will be more relaxed and involve activities both inside and outside.

“Family Camp gives families a chance to get away safely while they carve out a summer vacation doing a lot of the same things they would normally do during August,” said Drew.

Each family who registers will be given the opportunity to sleep in their own cabin while having the chance to participate in normal summer activities like telling stories around a campfire, hiking and archery. State guidelines regarding social distancing will be strictly followed.

For more information, visit <http://gnjnextgen.org>.



—Eric Drew, Next Generation Ministries executive director

see potential growth in their roles. The Cultivate program is a way to impart in these students the importance of planning, organization, collaboration, communication and the execution required to successfully operate church ministries.

After finishing the program one student said, “My faith is growing in ways I could never imagine. I am being pushed to think more theologically not only on issues of faith but as I approach my daily tasks in ministry. I have learned that

can be found at <http://gnjnextgen.org/cultivate-college-experience/>.

Youth Resources

Being present is what Next Gen is continuing to do as they face the challenges associated with COVID-19. Every Monday and Thursday Next Gen leaders host Zoom calls to keep conversations going between youth and youth leaders.

An array of additional resources, from book suggestions and Bible Pictionary to

Engage with Next Gen this Summer!



Next Gen Camping presents IGNITE Summer at Home: the perfect opportunity for your online camper to stay connected with their camp friends this July...both inside and outside!

With IGNITE Summer at Home, your online camper will still grow in faith and learn new skills. Your camper may even make a new friend or two!

Find out more at www.gnjnextgen.org



NEXT GENERATION
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Front Lines of COVID-19

Continued from page 1

enacted in 1994 that changed the landscape of violence against women by improving criminal justice and community-based responses. Following expiration of the 1994 law, VAWA was reauthorized last April to include provisions protecting transgender victims and banning individuals convicted of domestic abuse from purchasing firearms.

But at its core, Victor said, her practice has not changed, and for that among many things she is thankful. "You have to set boundaries. It's all about empowerment counseling. My job is to journey with them, recognizing that they know their lives best. My job is not to carry them."

Victor and her team work in close partnership with another local organization called PEI Kids that works with children who have been sexually abused. Together, they maximize their efforts for the greater good in their community.

Each day the mother of three adult sons continues to impart what she learned while studying at the University of Pennsylvania toward a Master of Social Work, which she thought complemented her theological training at Union Biblical Seminary in India and Princeton Theological Seminary.

"Social work looks at the person in their own environment. I think the link between social work and ministry is wonderful."

Victor, an ordained deacon, also serves on the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and is a candidacy mentor on the district level. She recalled how grateful she was for her mentor, Rev. Steven Fallor, while she was studying in seminary.

"He was my rock. Now I have my foot in both worlds," said Victor who said she loves how her secular and non-secular jobs complement each other. She was proud to note that Womanspace is the only agency of its kind that has a chaplain.

Victor admitted that her journey was a circuitous one, from growing up in India as a self-proclaimed independent "atypical Christian Indian woman" and then traveling to Japan and then the United States. She recalled being part of a youth group in India and how they started "King's Messengers," a group that embraced the gospel through discussion and singing songs. Those bonds she made many years ago are still intact today and have been handed down to the next generation.

But it was nine short months in a tribal village in India while doing her theological training there that shaped Victor into the person she is today.

"I learned what it's like to be completely dependent on God" while traveling to get water from a well, working with only limited electricity and being many miles from any hospital. "This experience shaped the rest of my journey. Because of it, I've had opportunities I never thought I would have."

Keeping his Patients Safe and Healthy

Like Victor, Gary Frieze knows all too well the balance that's needed and the beauty that can be achieved while blending a secular job with a non-secular one. An ordained deacon who serves at Grace UMC in Kearny, Frieze has been a practicing pharmacist for the past four decades. For 18 of those he has been responsible for dosing at a methadone clinic that treats people with opioid addictions called Inter County Council on Drug & Alcohol Abuse (ICDAA) in Kearny.

"Things have definitely changed, but it's all about balancing our safety with the patients' safety," said Frieze who also works part time in a private pharmacy.

One way the clinic accomplished this, following Frieze's recommendation, was by allowing only one pharmacist to work at a time to limit exposure. They also limit the frequency of his patients' visits by dispensing additional bottles to be used at home.

"We also have three people who get dosed in a van," Frieze said.

Concurrently, Frieze is administering pastoral care. He noted that two of his patients have connected to Grace UMC's online worship services.

"They're [his patients] usually not part of a church, but here it's different. There's a connection, a familiar face," said Frieze, who added that two others participated in his Bible studies while some stop by the Kearny interfaith network pantry each Friday.

Frieze was ordained in 2012 following a journey to unexpectedly discover his calling. Ten years earlier he was asked by the current pastor of Grace UMC if he would help at the church by delivering the day's message. One onlooker named John



Rev. Gary Frieze

Watson was so moved by his message that he suggested Frieze go into ministry.

He answered his call, and for 10 years he served as a local pastor at Wesley UMC in Bayonne where his journey took yet another detour. Likely recognizing Frieze's talent in mentoring others, Rev. Joe McCarthy recommended he become a deacon. And so he did and now serves as a candidacy mentor to a deacon named Boram Lim.

"I wanted to give back. No one should have to go through the process without a mentor," said Frieze who added that he also hopes to help people through their grieving by guiding them through memorial services.

Although Frieze seems to take things in stride one optimistic step at a time, he emphasized the importance of bringing the focus back to addictions once this health crisis is abated. His strong commitment to both his faith and the welfare of his patients works symbiotically to create a treatment plan that helps both short term and long term.

And then sometimes standing right by their sides are healthcare workers who share the same commitment...

Dr. Kimberly Heckert, a mother of two married to a clergy member of GNJ, also knows very well about juggling short-term and long-term care. As a psychiatrist, she treats a wide variety of medical conditions affecting the brain, from cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis to strokes and amputees.

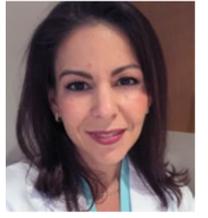
"I'm with some of my patients for the duration. This is a lifetime commitment sometimes," said Heckert who added that her field offers a more holistic approach to conventional neurological medicine.

During a normal week, you might find Heckert either administering injections to a patient at a local hospital or tending to one of her patients at a 147-bed rehab facility nearby. But with the arrival of COVID-19, her practice has changed dramatically.

When the virus swept through her rehab facility starting on March 12, killing several of her patients, a colleague and more, the old way of doing medicine screeched to a halt.

"So many died at first. A lot of them had nowhere else to go so they were stuck. It was horrible. People should not have to die like some of them did," she said. As a result of the widespread outbreak, the facility was converted into one that treated only COVID-19 patients.

Today, all 147 beds are full, and Heckert dons protective gear from head to toe with a gown, N-95 mask, a shield and gloves. When she's done working with her patients there, she must disinfect, shower and then put back on her street clothes before being allowed to leave.



Dr. Kimberly Heckert

"We're in survival mode right now. Then there are days when the sickness, death and sadness are a bit too much to hold."

When asked how she copes with the heavy burden, she said, "I think we're all master compartmentalizers. But you can't let the compartments of the Bento box spill into each other."

"It's then that I make a personal decision to shut it down when I need to."

When she's not working at the rehab facility, she works with a physical therapy grad student named Cody and an iPad to treat those hospital patients she once did at their bedsides.

"It's an emotional conundrum," said Heckert who grapples with depending on Cody to be her connection and worrying about the impact of him being exposed to the virus.

Heckert said she is so grateful for the strength and resilience of Cody who seems to share the same passion and dedication that Heckert takes with her every day, whether she's shrouded in gear or relying on technology to guide her patients to recovery.

Diagnosing Through Glass

Like Heckert, Dr. John O'Grady is also married to a GNJ clergy member. He remembers about 30 years ago as a young doctor of infectious diseases working with AIDS patients and the challenges he faced



Dr. John O'Grady

daily. Then came SARS, Ebola and many others years later. But for this Infectious Diseases Specialist now working at Morristown Medical Center, COVID-19 is like no other.

"It's almost like battlefield medicine. For the first time, this could be one of us. That's the scary thing," said O'Grady who regularly sees patients of all ages in the hospital at varying degrees of severity.

He added, "It's like Groundhog Day every day. There's a whole new group of people each morning when I go into work."

O'Grady said at the height of the crisis, Morristown Medical Center had about 100 people on ventilators. Although that number has dropped to about 50, the same challenges exist like trying to diagnose a patient behind a glass window or comfort them when they become anxious.

He worries about another rash of cases once social distancing becomes more relaxed. Looking toward the future, O'Grady said he also worries about the toll this crisis is having on the mental health field.

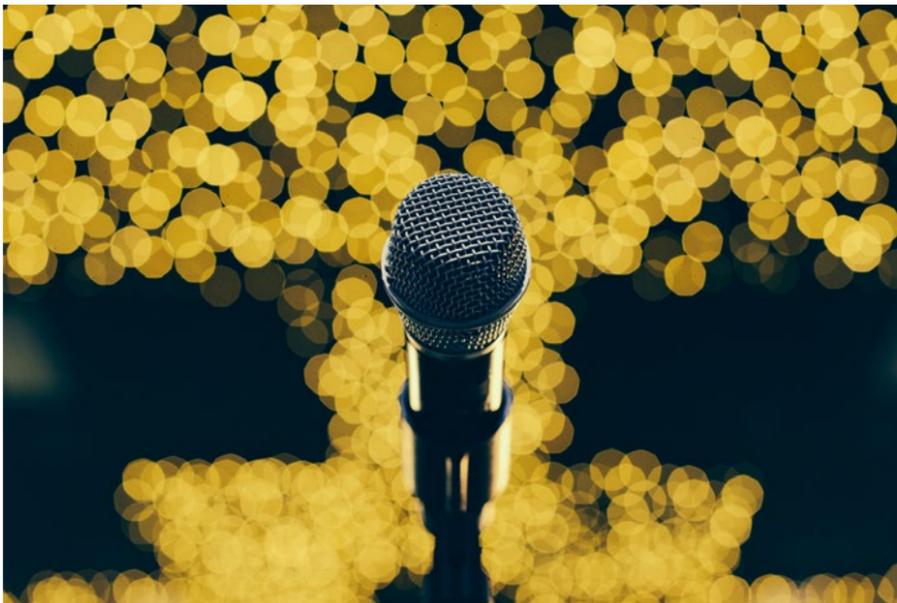
"It's very hard on healthcare workers as they try to communicate with patients and their families, especially for the mentally challenged or the elderly who may not be equipped to operate the new technology."

He foresees a heavy burden on mental health care for many months to come.

Layers of memories of anguish, frustration and fear weigh heavily on our healthcare workers. Despite the seemingly impossible challenges they face while balancing their responsibilities at home, they still find time to help others and be grateful for the roles they have. 🇺🇸

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We celebrate the hard work and resilience of
our clergy by giving them a break.



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Breakthrough series, Move Mountains.

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www.gnjumc.org/movemountains



MISSION CORNER

In this new environment, you might wonder how mission work could possibly adapt to an online format. Well, the organization that exemplifies “Christian Love in Action,” United Methodist Volunteers in Mission, has done it. It is continuing to offer many of the courses from its annual Northeastern Jurisdiction Mission Academy in an online webinar format throughout June. The full calendar of courses can be found at <https://umvimnej.org/training/e-academy.html>. All courses are free, though donations are suggested to UMVIM and its partners who are offering these courses to the public.

UMVIM has connected with Global Ministries, UMCOR, Church & Society and community partners like New York Disaster Interfaith Services (NYDIS) to offer several of the courses. The others are being offered by leaders within the Northeastern Jurisdiction.

Rev. Tom Lank, NEJ Coordinator for United Methodist Volunteers in Mission, said, “We are excited to be able to offer these courses to a wider audience. Sometimes crises help us find new opportunity and push us toward needed change. We hope lots of United Methodists get more involved in God’s mission and the work of the church through the NEJ Mission E-Academy.”

Courses in the E-Academy include:

- Crisis Spiritual Care (NYDIS)
- Systemic Racism and Discrimination During COVID-19 (Church & Society)
- Foundations of Disaster Ministry (UMCOR)
- Yes! We Have Missionaries! (Global Ministries special for the NEJ)
- UMC Social Principles in the Context of Mission (Church & Society special for the NEJ)
- Connecting Neighbors: A Disaster Readiness Curriculum (NEJ trainers)



- Forming Boundary-Crossing Mission Partnerships (Global Ministries special for the NEJ)
 - Volunteers in Mission Team Training (NEJ trainers)
- Questions can be directed to Rev. Tom Lank, UMVIM-NEJ Coordinator, at coordinator@umvimnej.org or 919-428-0461.

Sharing a Meal With Faith in Hazlet

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

HAZLET, NJ

It’s five o’clock in the evening on Thursday, and amid all the plastic bags filled with pasta, sauce, canned vegetables, cereal, produce, eggs, meats, breads and a toiletry or two and the two banners welcoming both guests and donors, a line is forming, some people arriving by bus or car, others on foot. One man who was laid off from his construction job stands with his son. An elderly woman leans against her walker. A girl in flip-flops wearing a backpack looks eager to get to the front of the line.

Instead of arranging flowers as she has done for decades at a florist shop she owns with her husband, Gail Bechtoldt is working together with other members of

“SOME PEOPLE ARE HOMELESS WHO COME TO OUR PANTRY. OTHERS COME TO COLLECT FOOD FOR SOMEONE ELSE. WE SEE ALL WALKS OF LIFE.”

—Gail Bechtoldt, a member of St. John’s since 1961

St. John’s UMC of Hazlet to get ready to hand out pounds of food to the 85-100 families who now visit their food pantry. It’s the only one in town.

“We want them to eat like we do. We want them to know that someone cares,” said Bechtoldt who estimated that they are now feeding about 700 people on average every Thursday at 5:30-7 p.m.

She added that each night she and about eight other church members greet people who are diverse in ethnicity, language, faith and socioeconomic status.



St. John’s UMC in Hazlet is feeding about 700 people every Thursday evening.

“Some people are homeless who come to our pantry. Others come to collect food for someone else. We see all walks of life,” said Bechtoldt who added that printed materials they hand out are in two to three languages so that the language barrier does not impede the mission.

Bechtoldt added that St. John’s efforts has been a work in progress, deciding years ago that more needed to be done to help others.

“We said if we’re going to survive, we have to be a missional church and care for others.” Bechtoldt has been a member since 1961, serving in various capacities like lay leader, certified lay preacher and youth ministry leader.

The people of St. John’s have taken that aspiration and turned it into a reality over the years, forming a separate 501 (c) 3 that

started the Jersey Shore Workcamp to repair homes in the area and a food pantry that three years ago fed about 15-20 families.

The people of St. John’s, led by Pastor Clark Lynn Callender, have also opened a thrift store and a community garden that they hope to build on in the next several months.

“We want to do whatever we can to help them,” Bechtoldt said. With masked faces and gloved hands, she and her daughter, Karrie Johnson who runs the church’s Sunday School, are often seen waving and giving heart signs to the people who come to them for help while her grandson sanitizes the carts.

Johnson has started to involve her students in the ministry by organizing food drives with the children and packing bags.

Now with so many people arriving in

the church parking lot on one night, the need to supplement their supplies is magnified. Donations arrive each week from two local bagel stores, Costco in Marlboro, Target and the Shop Rite in Middletown as well as the Fulfill food bank in Neptune.

But sometimes that’s still not enough, so the volunteers have been seen rushing to local stores to pick up more supplies or accepting generous donations of food like pasta and sauce from local residents.

The pantry is located in the rear of the church at 2000 Florence Avenue. If you would like to donate food, the church accepts donations on weekdays in the rear drop-off, between 6 a.m. and 4 p.m.

For more information, visit www.stjohnsumchazlet.org or the church’s Facebook page.

GNJ's New York Churches

Continued from page 1

recalled a young man who is a frequent visitor to the church. "Towering over many of us and with a frightened appearance, he has become one of our best friends," said Dubuisson.

"Before the pandemic, he would walk in the fellowship hall giving hugs to everyone repeating 'thank you for what you do.' It was our special greeting. Hearing that church doors would close, this young man was heartbroken and he left the church that day hopeless."

Days later the COVID-19 health crisis hit the community of Spring Valley hard. Many of the small business owners have succumbed to the virus, while others have been forced to shut down either temporarily or permanently, forcing families to ask for help.

"One week we had to unpack the bags and repack new ones so everybody waiting in line would be able to eat," Dubuisson said. "I don't see an end to this hunger. It grieves me."

As unemployment and illness continue to take their toll on Spring Valley, the congregation continues to cook and serve the community members who are Spanish, Haitian, African, Jamaican and Jewish, just to name a few.

"People are waiting for us," said Dubuisson. Church leaders roll up their sleeves and put on their aprons every Thursday afternoon to serve dinner with safe distancing and then breakfast on Saturday and a modified food pantry midday.

"My focus is to be with those who are in need one person at a time and then pay it forward and keep it going," said Dubuisson. "If they all have warm food to eat, a place to eat and peace of mind, there will be peace with justice."

Amid the confusion and uncertainty, that young man who Dubuisson spoke of found it hard to return. But through persistence from the congregation, he found his way back and a new way to show his gratitude by pressing his palms and fingers together and pointing them upwards while holding his hands close to his chest and saying "thank you for what you do." Then he



The "Children's Church" youth ministry at Thiells Garnerville UMC in New York, which now meets online every Thursday evening, delivered homemade cookies to the Haverstraw Police Department in February.

would add, "I appreciate and honor you," Dubuisson recalled.

This gesture, the Namaskara Mudra, is a Buddha hand gesture used to greet another being with the utmost respect and honor the Divine in all and is significant during this time of crisis in the community, said Dubuisson.

"Each week, during a 30-second exchange of giving and receiving of a hot meal, we look into each other's eyes. There, we understand, is a profound connection, a reverence and gratitude that even in the midst of all that was going on, we are still there for each other.

"This is the gift of 'giving and receiving,'" Dubuisson continued. "This is the gift of 'honoring God in each other.' We may not get it right all the time, but in the midst of this difficult season, we choose to honor God and each other."

Offering a Helping Hand in New City

New City UMC, only about four miles away, is doing its best to give new opportunities to those who are suffering and anxious about what the future holds.

"We are doing more support work than anything else," said Rev. Barbara Hoffman who has led her small congregation for the past five years but will retire this June before opening the church's

doors to Rev. Amanda Hemenetz.

"One of our members, Jeannine Alexandro, has made masks to donate to Spring Valley to give to the homeless folks who come to their food program."

Other members, Hoffman noted, are donating to the UMC of Spring Valley's food program and to the Martin Luther King Multi-Purpose Center in Spring Valley, which hands out grocery carts of food to the local children each week.

"One of our members, Dr. Winsome Downie Rainford, is on the board of the MLK Center and has opened up doors for our congregation to take part in the ministries that happen there," said Hoffman who added that members have also volunteered to deliver food to shut-ins through the Rockland Good News Association food program.

Hoffman added that her congregation is supporting a local community food pantry called People to People and Helping Hands, an organization that helps the homeless in Rockland County.

While supporting local organizations who are struggling to meeting the rising need, Hoffman said she is continuing to support Rockland Clergy for Social Justice, an organization that is committed to salvaging the fledgling East Ramapo Central School District.

For more information, visit www.newcityumc.org.

Talk, Chalk, Pray and Give at Pearl River UMC

Small churches can also be mighty and Pearl River UMC is no exception. When COVID-19 began to ravage Rockland County, Rev. Gabrielle Martone of the church just north of the New Jersey border, knew that she needed to offer her small congregation hope and empower them to help others who were suffering.

The youth in her congregation recognized this need, so as part of a confirmation project, the Prayer Warrior Virtual Walk was born. Starting on May 1, people were encouraged to walk around their neighborhoods over the next month in a blue t-shirt in support of the COVID-19 efforts.

During their walks, they were also encouraged to take a few moments to pray; pray for those who are struggling; pray for an end to COVID-19; pray for those on the front lines and pray for those who are making decisions. They talked with others and chalked messages of hope along the way.

The goal was to raise \$1,000 and donate canned food throughout the month of May to benefit the local pantries of People to People and St. Stephen's Food Cupboard.

Martone, who noted that the project may continue past the end of the month and surpass its initial goal, added that another confirmand organized the distribution of care packages that were delivered to about 25 shut-ins.

"Our congregation has been amazingly resilient through all of this," said Martone, who added that many church members are working on the front lines. They have about 36 EMTs, nurses, firefighters and police officers as well as Deb Steward who is a chaplain and lay leader.

The city of Spring Valley, with a population of about 32,000 has undergone some significant challenges in recent years, and the arrival of COVID-19 has not only exacerbated those but has drawn attention to the inequities that have made it difficult for many of its residents to thrive. But together, churches in this region are working to alleviate these challenges and along with this new awareness, a brighter future may be building. And together, they are making the Greater New Jersey Conference even greater. 🇺🇸

An Enhanced Healthcare Plan in 2021

Changes are happening in healthcare for GNJ employees who receive benefits from HealthFlex, but rest assured these changes are going to make services even better come January 1 when they begin. The change to a new plan was not made lightly and took into consideration the well-being of all members. The Board of Pension and

Health Benefits was diligent in tapping into valuable resources to make its decision and is offering a plan that has more options in the new year. Please read the letter below from Rev. William B. Wilson, Sr., chair of the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits, for more details, and stay tuned for updates throughout the year.

HealthFlex Participants:

Effective January 1, 2021, Wespeth will transition into HealthFlex Exchange. This new model helps us continue to provide affordable health while offering additional services. The Board of Pension and Health Benefits worked diligently to obtain the most favorable coverage for current and future HealthFlex participants. While the Board understands this is a more complex model and unlike any coverage offered in the past, the Board ultimately decided to move into the HealthFlex Exchange through Wespeth after an extensive search of the most optimal plans for GNJ participants. This was achieved with the guidance of the Willis Towers Watson consultants.

HealthFlex Exchange, also known as a Private Exchange, will continue to offer the benefits you have today, which include the same BlueCross Blue Shield Network, prescription drug coverage and behavioral health benefits. The well-being programs will include WebMD, Virgin Pulse, NutriSavings and more. The Blueprint for Wellness and the HealthQuotient will also remain a part of this network.

During Annual Election (open enroll-

ment) for 2021 (typically the first two weeks in November) participants will have the option of selecting from six unique healthcare plans, three dental plans and three vision plans. It is important to note that the HealthFlex plan we are participating in 2020 will continue to be an option for 2021.

As a result of moving into the HealthFlex Exchange with three dental options, for HealthFlex participants only, who are currently enrolled in the Guardian dental network, will now have the option of selecting from one of the three dental plans within the Exchange. You will no longer have access to the Guardian Dental Network as of January 1, 2021. More information will be provided in future correspondence.

To get participants acclimated to the 2021 changes, we are providing a short YouTube video provided by Wespeth, a brochure and other HealthFlex Exchange materials on the GNJ website. We will continue to add information periodically throughout the next few months. Please visit www.gnjumc.org/health-insurance/. For questions, please contact Alexa Taylor, Insurance and Benefits Services Manager at ataylor@gnjumc.org.



Healthflex Exchange for Greater New Jersey



Introducing:
Healthflex Exchange for 2021

www.gnjumc.org/benefits-overview/health-insurance

CHURCH/HOPE CENTERS GOOD NEWS

The Good News Keeps Flowing

The Good News from our GNJ churches and hope centers continues to spread throughout New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. From virtual fellowship hall at Red Bank UMC to a socially-distanced confirmation at Morrow Church, the hearts and minds of GNJ churches are open. Here is a sampling:

- **The Makers Place's Diaper Depot** in Trenton is continuing to distribute diapers while reaching their goal of raising \$10 thousand so that they can buy additional supplies. They are also launching a partnership with the Trenton Housing Authority to get diapers to families in public housing. The Maker's Place is currently seeking volunteers who can speak Spanish and are comfortable taking phone calls and using a computer for scheduling; and volunteers who speak Spanish that want to help on the street with their Friday distributions. For more information and to volunteer, contact Rev. Michael Reed at hello@makersplace.org or (609) 751-9128.



- **Red Bank UMC** continues to run its Backpack Crew that has been delivering backpacks filled with weekend food to children at their schools for the past several years. When schools were closed this year on March 13, they quickly had to rework their plans to ensure these children could still receive their much-needed food. Instead of sending the backpacks of food home anonymously through the school nurses, they stepped up to drop off food directly on the doorsteps of those most at risk of food insecurity. Donations can be dropped off on the back porch of the church at 247 Broad Street, Red Bank, NJ, and monetary donations can be made at www.backpackcrew.org or they



have a wish list on Amazon for shipped donations!

- Led Rev. Nancy Robinson, **Branchville UMC** is making stones painted with a cardinal and distributing them to local hospitals like Newton Hospital, Morristown Hospital, Chilton Hospital and Hackettstown Medical Center. The stones are given to grieving family members impacted by COVID-19.

- During its livestreamed 10:00 a.m. Sunday worship service, **Browns Mills UMC** included praise and worship, children's messages and weekly virtual hymn singing. More info can be found at <https://spark.adobe.com/page/RdAQxbZjPRL3k/>. The church has also placed candles with the names of more than 104 community members working on the frontlines of the battle against COVID-19 that are lit during each Sunday service to honor their service and pray for their safety.

- **RISE Church**, led by Rev. Veronica Palmer in East Orange, is hosting a virtual small group called "Maintaining Spiritual Well Being in Challenging Times" every Thursday at 7:30-8:30 p.m. through June 25. For details, <http://risechurchnj.org/welcome> and on their Facebook page.

- Pastor Joel Hubbard of **Park UMC** in Bloomfield spoke at a socially-distant celebration of National #Pride Month at Clara Maass Medical Center. Details and photos are on the "Bloomfield Pulse" Facebook page.



- **Pitman UMC** in Gloucester County has a Soaps & Such toiletry pantry, which is fully stocked and open for anyone who needs toiletries. It is located outside the church to the left of the main entrance. For details, visit <http://pitmanumc.org/wp/>.

- **Greenstone UMC** in Washington has been recording selections of pipe organ music, including three selections for Memorial Day. These can be found on their YouTube page: www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHjLc-jquIGXjaDJYTCQuDcKlaNANgdi.

- Revs. Amanda Rohrs-Dodge of **Hurdtown UMC** and Evan Rohrs-Dodge of **Belvidere UMC**, hosted a Facebook Live event on May 24. Amanda cutting her husband's hair on Facebook Live raised \$1,000 for the Miracles Everywhere Campaign's new COVID Relief Fund. See www.facebook.com/amanda.rohrsdodge/videos/10102156379325395/.

- **First Passaic UMC** is partnering with **CUMAC** and the **Passaic County Pandemic Partnership** to provide emergency relief for young families. To safely drop off your donations from your car please go to 145 Paulison Ave, Passaic NJ 07055 on Tuesdays and Thursdays either at 12-1pm or 4-5pm. For questions or bulk donation pick-up please email Pastor Brendan at brendan@passaic.church.

- Sarah Waldron, one of the college students at **Succasunna UMC**, came up with an idea of launching a church podcast as a way to offer a shared time of prayer to unite the church family during the time of social distancing and to bring faith across all platforms. Each podcast episode created by Sarah includes a guided meditation for prayer, reflection for the week, a condensed sermon and an uplifting verse from the Bible. Details are at "SUMCNJ Podcast."

- Pastor Esther Morales has started "Grieving With Hope" (www.facebook.com/grievingatyourpace/), a support group for those who have lost loved ones during this health crisis. The church is continuing to serve the community every Thursday morning by providing diapers, clothes and formula for infants as well as food for families in need. Also, through its "Light" ministry, the congregation is providing services on demand, Sunday worship and Sunday School. More information can be found at www.parkchurchweehawken.com/the-light.html.

Please keep an eye on our website under "COVID-19 Resources" for more Good News and share your own! 📢



Greater New Jersey was recognized for 9 awards for excellence in communication from the United Methodist Association of Communicators for work completed in 2019.

1st Place Newspaper: *The GNJ Relay Newspaper*

1st Place Special Publication: *The Way We Gather Makes a Difference*

2nd Place Video (Category A): *The Maker's Place Introduction Video*

2nd Place Video (Category B): *Pinelands Center at Mt. Misery Camper Experience Video*

2nd Place Promotional Video: *IGNITE Communities Promotion Video*

2nd Place Motion Graphic Video: *Next Generation Ministries Rooted Series*

2nd Place Branding: *Creative and Strategic Guidebook*

2nd Place Campaign Promotion: *2019 IGNITE Youth Conference*

3rd Place: *2019 Ordination Photo Series*

Find out more about the United Methodist Association of Communicators at www.umcommunicators.org



United Methodist Communities



ON YOUR OWN *but never alone*

Whether you live in your own home or seek a senior living community, United Methodist Communities is here to assist you and your loved ones.

Our communities bring you the freedom and flexibility to set your own schedule and pursue activities you love. *This is living.* But you'll also gain daily connections with a built-in network of neighbors and associates who look out for each other.

HomeWorks, our homecare division, offers personal care, case management, live-in, and companion services. Their unique specialized program, *Tapestries at Home*, focuses on older adults with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

We're here to help, however and whenever you need us. To learn more about UMC's care communities and services, visit umcommunities.org, email info@umcommunities.org or check us out on Facebook.

Miracles Everywhere

*“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least, you did for me.”
- Matthew 25:40*

How Your Congregation Can Connect to The GNJ COVID-19 Relief Fund

- Include a monthly 2nd Mile Offering at www.gnjumc.org/onlinegiving or text “Miracles Everywhere” to 77977.
- Use the worship resources, small group curriculum, songs, videos and offertory invitation.
- Plan a full “Miracles and More” campaign when your building reopens to celebrate your congregation’s return to the pews.
- Consider tithing a gift equal to your PPP grant to the fund to assist congregations who were not approved for funding.
- Be on the lookout in the Digest for inspirational mission stories from the Miracles Everywhere campaign to share in your worship, and celebrate your congregation’s contributions to this testimony.
- Share Miracles Everywhere stories and videos from the Digest and the Relay with your congregation.
- Apply for a grant for your food distribution program.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
ABOUT THE MIRACLES
EVERYWHERE CAMPAIGN,
CONTACT:**



Michaela Murray-Nolan | Director of Development
O: 732.359.1045 | E: mmurraynolan@gnjumc.org

Mission and Resource Center Address:
205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753