

THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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CUMAC: Feeding the Community with “Infectious Hope” for 35 Years

“Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.”

— Finley Peter Dunne,
an American journalist and
contemporary of Joseph Pulitzer

By Heather Mistretta
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Tomatoes are being picked, boxes are being packed and a steady flow of deliveries are coming and going. At a time when celebrations may have been planned and good cheer about its anniversary would have been felt throughout the food pantry, thrift shop and other facilities, CUMAC, a Hope Center and United Methodist affiliated non-profit organization in its 35th year of nourishing the lives of people in Paterson, NJ, and the wider community, is hopeful and determined while they focus on their main priority of addressing hunger.

“There hasn’t been any time to mourn the losses in the past 18 weeks,” said CUMAC Executive Director Mark Dinglasan who first joined CUMAC three years ago. “Although there has been no time to celebrate, we need to keep moving forward. Our team and our followers deserve it. There



About 8,000 pounds of food are being “rescued” from local grocery stores, and crops are reaped from CUMAC’s on-site garden.

will be resilience, hope and inspiration.” During a recent virtual tour of the facility, it became quickly evident that all three of those were present in spite of the daily struggles.

Rose Bates, director of community engagement at CUMAC, said, “We’re trying to keep up with the rising demand. For the first time ever, we are buying food.”

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MEET ROBERT ZUCKERMAN: Led to a New Path

By Heather Mistretta
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For 14 years GNJ’s Treasurer John Cardillo led with unwavering dedication, insight and compassion. Leaders in GNJ respected him for his “steady hand, humble spirit, consistent attention to detail, reliability and commitment to the people.”

So, when it came time for his retirement this past June, the task to refill his position was a tall one. But for Robert Zuckerman, that was exactly what he was looking for when he decided to take a leap of faith away from corporate and into the sphere of nonprofits.

“I thought there had to be something out there with a greater purpose,” said Zuckerman who started his new job as CFO and treasurer for GNJ on June 22 after leaving his job as CFO of the Kipling Brand, a brand of the VF Corporation and a position he had held since 2011. “I wanted to make a meaningful impact on the lives of others.”

What the loyal Villanova grad didn’t know was that God would be guiding him along the way.

“I truly believe I was led here. In my entire career, nothing has moved this fast when it went from learning about an opportunity to making a life-changing decision, which I know I was led to,” said the New Jersey native.



Robert Zuckerman

Zuckerman is chair of the administrative council and member of the finance committee at First UMC of Freehold where he and his wife, Susan, have been members since they married there 28 years ago. She is the church administrator. The couple has two daughters, one of whom is due to marry in a few months. After the receiving the offer from GNJ over the weekend, what was a “normal” Sunday sermon for most, by Rev. Wil Wilson, was the answers to all of Zuckerman’s questions he prayed on; “the message solidified my faith that this is where God wants me to be.”

“What’s more rewarding than getting to follow God’s calling?” he said. “I want to be a partner with not only the conference but also with the 500 plus churches we serve. I want to improve the vitality of the church, continue to grow disciples and spread God’s message.”

I’ve gone from selling stuff to selling hope, to coin a phrase I recently learned from a new colleague.”

A Wildcat through and through, Zuckerman will likely lead using the old Villanova motto, Veritas, Unitas, Caritas (“Truth, Unity, Love”).

Bishop John Schol agrees: “We are fortunate to have Rob join our team. His experience and abilities will help GNJ

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CAPITAL DISTRICT RALLY CALLS FOR END TO RACISM

By Jessica Stenstrom, Florence UMC
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“Black Lives Matter. Silence is not an Option” was the rally cry heard on the afternoon of Sunday, June 7, as clergy and laity throughout the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference gathered both in person at St. Paul UMC in Willingboro and online, to lift their voices to denounce the evil of racism, listen to the stories and pain of Black people and recommit to the critical work of being agents of change and co-creators of the beloved community of God through song, prayer and reflection.

With a majority of GNJ churches buildings remaining closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many safety precautions were taken during the outdoor event. Rev. Hector A. Burgos, district superintendent of the Capital District, and

organizer of the event, clarified that the rally could not wait until later, because justice cannot wait.

“There’s another destructive virus that requires our immediate attention. That disease is called racism. Silence is not an option. Racism is sin, period,” said Burgos. “Let’s not stop working for justice until Blacks, Brown and other people of color are equally valued and fully embraced as beautifully made in the image of our Creator.”

Bishop John Schol quoted Isaiah 58:12 when addressing the crowd, which reads, “Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.” He said that George Floyd was a repairer of the breach and said more people who are white need to lay down their privilege to repair the breach. “Our systems are unjust,” said Schol who led a chant of Black Lives Matter.

“This will not be a change that comes person by person, but by changing the systems and our laws.”

Charlene Walker, executive director of Faith in NJ, spoke of one of these systems. She shared a story of her 17-year-old nephew who was recently skateboarding when the police not only stopped him, but also searched him. “Policing was founded off slave patrols,” said Walker. “It’s a system that was founded on racism. Justice is what faith looks like in public. We need to declare in our homes, government and churches that enough is enough; that until black lives matter, we will not be silent.”

Rev. Gil Caldwell, retired UMC pastor and a civil rights activist who once worked alongside Martin Luther King Jr, said that church has been

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Rev. Gil Caldwell, retired UMC pastor and a civil rights activist who once walked alongside Martin Luther King Jr, said that church has been silent for too long. Credit: Aaron Wilson Watson, a New York metro area-based photographer and film creator.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP



The New Normal

Bishop John Schol

Is this the new normal? Many are asking this question right now. At this moment we are experiencing multiple crises — physical health, racism, deep political division, unemployment and mental health. In the last two decades, GNJ has faced significant crises that has impacted our mission, relationships, sustainability and has even shaped how we do and be the church in the world.

- 2001 – 9/11, security crisis
- 2008 – mortgage and economic crisis
- 2012 – Superstorm Sandy housing and environmental crisis
- 2018 – denominational theological crisis
- 2020 – COVID-19 pandemic, continued racism and economic crises

Maybe the new normal for our congregations is a faith and church that is agile and adaptable, two key aspects of resiliency.

The Apostle Paul, from prison wrote, “I am able to do all things through the one who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13) In the midst of any circumstance, Paul could endure, even thrive because Christ Jesus endured, and the presence of Christ was in him.

Paul from prison was resilient, he was both agile and adaptive in his faith and outlook in life.

When I think of this type of faith and how a congregation lives out this type of faith, I think a tree:

1. *The roots* – A good root system clings to and feeds from the good earth allowing everything above the earth to adapt, change and withstand strong winds, disease and environmental changes. The church of today needs a strong root system from which it is fed and is anchored — a deep and abiding faith in God.
2. *The trunk* – A tree’s trunk sturdies the tree and is a connector, connecting the root system to the branches and leaves. The healthy church of today connects the roots of faith with the reality of the times. How is faith connecting to the realities of COVID-19 and our failure to end racism? How is faith shaping the emerging church that is called to minister in new ways, not just for a season, but as a new way of being the church in the future? People are looking for a church to be there for them when they need the church, not just at the 11 o’clock hour on Sunday morning. People are looking for a portable church that goes with them

and connects them with a faith that they can do all things in the face of challenge and adversity.

3. *The branches* – Trees stretch out through its branches. They cover more territory than just the trunk. They influence the ground around them. The branches give shape, define who the tree is and influence nature itself. The branches of the church are its ministries. People today are looking for ministries that give shape, definition and meaning to the times, conditions, and circumstances of life. They are not looking for ministries that fit the church’s needs but fit the community’s condition and the deep struggles and joys of life. Such ministries, like branches need to be agile, stretching and reaching to be in ministry with people where they are serving with them to meet the challenges of work, family, school and community.
4. *The leaves* – Leaves add beauty and fulness to the tree. They also change with the seasons and die and are reborn every year. The leaves may be the most adaptable part of the tree. In the church, we need to be like leaves. The new normal means adapting to the changing conditions, reflecting the radiance of God, enduring wind and rain, dying and being reborn.

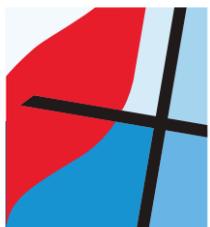
“CONGREGATIONS THAT RETURN TO BUSINESS AS USUAL WILL QUICKLY OR OVER TIME BE TREES THAT CAN NO LONGER STAND UNDER THEIR OWN WEIGHT.”

—Bishop John Schol

There are institutions, including congregations that are not and will not survive the present challenges. It probably won’t be because of their root system, their deep faith in Christ Jesus. They will be challenged because of an unwillingness to rely on that root system to adapt mission, buildings and ministries to a new normal. Being an agile church means serving from one challenge to the next, one crisis to the next. This agility can shift ministries and change locations to be with and where people find themselves.

In a matter of weeks, we have seen most of our congregations demonstrate this adaptivity and agility. The larger question is, *Was this a momentary adjustment or a move to an entirely different way of being the church?* While most congregations could adapt during the crisis, most will return to business as usual after the pandemic. Congregations that return to business as usual will quickly or over time be trees that can no longer stand under their own weight.

GNJ is ready to help every congregation that wants to explore what the post COVID-19 congregation looks like and how it is adaptive and agile in the new reality. Contact your district superintendent if you would like to explore what God has next for your congregation. 🇺🇸



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GNJ IS COMMITTED TO PROTECTING RACIAL JUSTICE AND FIGHTING RACISM

One of the best ways to do this is through conversation



Check out these Zoom events by GCORR and the Board of Church & Society:

July 17 at 7:00 p.m. | How to be an Ally: Anti-Racist Action and Reaction

Moderators:

Lan Wilson, *Director of Worship*

Rev. Vanessa M. Wilson, *JD, MBA, STM, Chairperson, GNJ CORR*

Confirmed Panelists:

Rev. Sammy Arroyo, *Pastor, First UMC in Hightstown*

Rev. Rebeah Forni, *Pastor, Middlefield Federated*

July 25 at 12:00 p.m. | Understanding What We Don't Understand: Health Care Disparities

Moderator:

Rev. Vanessa M. Wilson, *JD, MBA, STM, Chairperson, GNJ CORR*

Panelists:

Rev. Sheena Marie Cameron, *MDiv, MA, Dr.*

Janie Canty-Mitchell, Rev. Dr. Kenneth Ngwa and Rev. Dr. Arthur L. Pressley

August 15 at 12:00 p.m. | Engaging the Community in Racial Justice

Facilitator:

Rev. Dr. Latasha Milton, *Asbury UMC in Atlantic City and Guests*

September 12 at 12:00 p.m. | Hope For A New Generation

Facilitator:

Eric Drew, *Executive Director of Next Generation Ministries*

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For additional worship resources, including the all-new *Jesus in the City* Breakthrough sermon series for this summer, go to:

www.gnjumc.org/worship



UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Two Black Church Boys Start Conversations Online

"Education is emancipation."

—FREDERICK DOUGLASS

By Heather Mistretta
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C A M D E N , N J

Bringing awareness to the larger community has never been more important. But finding a vehicle in which to do that effectively presents challenges. When Calvin Bell III and William Lee from Parkside UMC in Camden started talking about recent events including COVID-19 and racial justice, they knew they needed to find that vehicle. On May 7 "Two Black Church Boys" podcast was launched.

"We wanted to foster conversations that encouraged solutions," said 18-year-old Bell. "I've seen a shift in my generation. I want them to hear my voice and the voices of others."

Every Thursday evening at 7:30 for about a half hour the two hosts welcome guests to their podcast via Zoom and Facebook Live to discuss relevant issues and delve into what it means to be young, Black, socially conscious and Christian with the intention of making a difference in their community and beyond. Each week the podcast hosts said they aim to be a blend of catharsis, education and advocacy.

Lee, the public theology chair at Parkside UMC where he has been a member for the past 25 years, echoed this mission when he said, "We'll never eradicate this without Whites giving a voice to Blacks. We need to allow Blacks to tell their stories. This is a place where activism can evolve."

Parkside UMC is a place filled with stories. In response to the community's demand in 1914, it started in a rented room of the Community Athletic Association. By March 1915, the church had outgrown its location and moved to a local movie house. A few months later Parkside moved to its



Parkside UMC members Calvin Bell III and William Lee, committed to engaging in conversation about racial justice, meet online every Thursday as "The Two Black Church Boys."

present location, 1420 Kaighns Avenue where a church was built. Throughout the 1960s, the church became extremely involved with community, national and international issues, with a focus on housing, anti-racism and peace at home in a time when the nation was at war. In 1968 the Conference appointed Parkside's first Black pastor, Rev. Calvin R. Woods, who led the church until his retirement in 2011.

With this rich history in hand, Bell and Lee welcomed educators Nadiera Young and Joseph Carter III on June 19 to discuss the role of education in dismantling white supremacy and how the COVID-19 health crisis has amplified the inequities that exist in education.

Speaking about the need for "radical education" and the need for a broader perspective, Young said, "It's our job as teachers to teach this toward dismantling the hardships or inequities, whether it's in our classrooms or outside them."

She recalled a recent event where she witnessed a Black high school senior sitting outside his school with a laptop so

that he could connect to the Wi-Fi inside the building because his home did not have it. Shortly after his arrival, both the school's principal and the police were called, only to determine that he was just trying to finish his homework.

"COVID-19 has exposed even more the inequities we see in education," said Young.

Carter emphasized this need for an equitable education for all: "Truly holding the key to emancipation for our kids is through education. It's three generational," said Carter, adding that the value of an education is both felt by the student's parents and descendants. "By educating our children, we're giving them the chance to be truly liberated and make an impact on their community."

Actively listening to this rich conversation is Bell, a perfect example of this, having just finished four years of education at Moorestown Friends School, a private high school in Burlington County where 46% of the student body are students of color.

He said for years he grappled with the impression his surname had on others because it was connected to his father who is incarcerated. It wasn't until he read *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates that he started to reject the mold of what he thought he was supposed to be and instead embraced his genuine identity. It was only then when he was really able to grow and call himself Calvin Bell, the third. This fall Bell will attend Emory University where he will study Philosophy, Politics and Law with a double major in Computer Science and a minor in Community Building and Social Change.

Lee, 12 years older than Bell, said his journey has also been one of continued faith and learning, calling himself "a community organizer turned corporate litigation attorney/aspiring preacher." His enthusiasm to help others is reflected online as he relishes the opportunity to give his podcast guests a voice.

In another episode of "Two Black Church Boys," they welcomed fellow Parkside UMC member Bernice Ferguson. She was mourning the recent death of her 39-year-old son who had been living at a South Jersey halfway house before his expected release in May. She retold how despite trying to communicate with her son regularly, she was not told about her son's condition and subsequent death due to COVID-19 until after the fact.

Lee and Bell both emphasized the need for the marginalized to have the space for conversation. "We're sick and tired of being sick and tired," said Bell.

Lee recalled how when he was 19-years old while driving down a highway, he was stopped by a police officer who searched his car and issued him with a "noise violation." The erroneous charge was later dismissed in court.

"It's just a way of life for most of us," Lee said. "I'm hoping to see the change we want to see. By making our churches better, we can make our society better." 🇺🇸

Keeping their Communities Safe on All Fronts

By Heather Mistretta
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People throughout Greater New Jersey continue to lead through this difficult time by tapping into their own inner strengths and relying on others from all faiths to make them even stronger.

For Deb Stewart from Pearl River UMC, protecting the community is in her blood. Raised among a family of firefighters, Stewart took the natural step toward becoming an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) over 30 years ago. The dedication to helping others has clearly not skipped a beat with the arrival of COVID-19.

In addition to being an EMT, Stewart is also a chaplain. She recognized about five years ago when she witnessed a fire chaplain comfort a grieving family member that her job was more than just physical medical care.

"Sometimes my job just means comforting someone. It's called psychological first aid, and it's my favorite thing to do. That little kid we encounter is going to remember how friendly we are, and that's just as important," Stewart said.



EMT Deb Stewart says this prayer prior to every call she makes.

Every day the New York native brings her whole self to her job.

Stewart digs deep to find the courage and strength to treat her clients. "I rely on my faith to do my job. I say a prayer before

I go on every call," said Stewart who wears angel wings on the corner of her jacket. "We all need to have a heightened sense of awareness no matter what the case is."

With COVID-19, Stewart said her job is busier and more complicated. She rushes

to those ailing from the virus, but some of the calls are met by death because the client has already succumbed to the virus.

She said she has received a lot of support from her pastor, Rev. Gabrielle Martone who is also a former chaplain, as well as other EMTs in the field.

"We also have to deal with our normal workload outside of COVID. People tend to forget all the other cases," said Stewart who added that the transition back home to ensure that her family is safe is also difficult. The commitment to helping others runs deep in her family though as her husband is also an EMT, and their 19-year-old son works for the fire department.

Keeping the Streets Safe in Hamilton

Lt. Christopher Prychka of Hamilton Township Police Department in Atlantic County has been working with First UMC in Mays Landing since April as part of the Township of Hamilton Cares Initiative.

He called that cohesive partnership within the community a wonderful experience and lauded the volunteers as "heroes."

"This is very challenging. A lot of the resources we used before we can't use anymore. We have to rely on different methods to move forward," said Prychka who has been with the same police department for the past 23 years. Prior to

this, he served three years in the Army and five years in the National Guard.

In April he was one of four members of the police department promoted during its first meeting streamed online under the state's COVID-19 restrictions. This follows an Exceptional Service Award he received in 2018 and a Certificate of Appreciation in 2012.

"Like most of us, I became a cop because I wanted

to aid others, and that hasn't changed," said Prychka who has a bachelor's degree from Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU) and recently finished up a Master of Science in Homeland Security, also at FDU.

In addition to his role as lieutenant and working with community members to feed the hungry, Prychka said he is working on getting everyone in the police department tested for COVID.

"It has been wonderful working with the volunteers. It has been a great partnership." 🇺🇸



Lt. Christopher Prychka



FIRST UMC OF MAYS LANDING:

Feeding the Hungry in Southern NJ

“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another.”

—EPHESIANS 4:16 NLT

By Heather Mistretta
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HAMILTON TOWNSHIP, NJ

For the past two months Rev. Linda Ross and First UMC of Mays Landing have been embracing their mission “to bring all to Christ by feeding his sheep” with humility, grace and the help of many friends throughout Hamilton Township in Atlantic County.

“We have always done a lot of feeding of the mind, body and spirit, but now we have been able to really make a difference in the community by feeding the sheep,” said Rev. Ross, who just started her 11th year at the church.

“It has been wonderful connecting the church and the community and bringing the ministry outside the church,” she added.

Through the Township of Hamilton Cares Initiative, developed in April to address the growing need in the community, about 30 volunteers including those at First UMC have been feeding about 500 people each week in part from its Main Street Food Pantry, which opened its doors about 12 years ago.

First UMC is a vital part of this partnership between the Hamilton Township School District, The Rotary, The Mays Landing Merchants, the St. Vincent Food Pantry, The Senior Advisory Committee, The Hamilton Township Police Department, Sugar Hill Inn, Earth Angels for Dementia and other local residents and community organizations.

While continuing its mission of providing packaged meals for the needy, First UMC realized that some food needed to be delivered to those who are unable to get to the pantry, including children and senior citizens. The school district stepped in to take on that role. School leaders had already instituted a plan where children from the district were being fed, but the new initiative expanded that to include all families with children and seniors.

Amy Reina Hassa, a school board member and mother of two, said, “It



Cheryl Caliri, co-founder of Earth Angels for Dementia, secured the donation of more than 900 boxes of snacks from Frito-Lay.

just started with a question, but having everyone together who needed to be involved allowed us to formulate the answers. This allows for systemic change and allows each person to do what they do well. It’s when you put them together that the real magic happens.”

Hassa added that Ross was an integral part of making this all happen.

“You need a courageous church leader who’s willing to say let’s connect, and Pastor Linda was that leader. If we didn’t have her, none of this would have happened. There was never a moment of hesitation on her part, and the focus was on the entire community, not just her own church.”

Ross said she is overwhelmed by the outpouring of support the pantry has received that has allowed them to further their efforts — from the school district’s institution of a hotline for the needy to the donation of prepared meals from the Sugar Hill Inn.

One of those people is Lt. Christopher Prychka who has been on the Hamilton police force for 23 years. Together with the police force he has helped facilitate the delivery of food by offering rides to volunteers, ensuring proper signage is in place and supporting the emergency management part of the effort.

“Every week something wonderful happens,” said Ross. Here are several highlights:

- An anonymous donor brought a bag of food and 10 envelopes, each containing a smiley face on the outside and a 20-dollar bill to give to 10 clients on the inside.



Members of First UMC of Mays Landing serve more than 500 people each week.

- The Sugar Hill Inn placed a box in their restaurant so people picking up take-out orders can place non-perishable donations.
- Earth Angels for Dementia donated Easter Baskets and Mother’s Day chocolates for clients.
- An anonymous donor left a Wawa bag containing eight gift cards valued at \$50 each. These are used when certain families need things like diapers and baby food.
- A local business donated \$500 to buy grocery cards for clients.
- A former client donated \$50 to say thank you for helping her when she needed it.
- An 11-year-old from another local church hosted a food drive, plus a \$400 donation.
- A donation of \$3,100 in one day.
- More than 900 boxes of snacks were delivered by Frito-Lay in May. The effort was dubbed “Chip Chip Hooray.”

As a Salvation Army unit, First UMC is able to purchase food from the South Jersey Food Bank in Egg Harbor Township, which also donated 80 emergency starter kits. But a recent grant from the NJ Pandemic Relief Fund allows them to also purchase paper supplies and other items they might otherwise not be able to afford. Now in addition to food, the church is able to distribute these items to those in need.

But Ross added, “The need is starting to grow with unemployment rising and businesses closing.”

She is showing no sign of slowing down the effort. As long as there is a need, she and her church will continue to be there in a big way. 🇺🇸



The community of Hamilton Township is working together in a vital partnership called “The Township of Hamilton Cares Initiative.”

Zuckerman

Continued from page 1

navigate the challenges the church faces today and into the future. His active leadership involvement in one of our local churches helps him better understand the challenges and needs of our congregations.”

GNJ Council for Finance & Administration Chair Robert Dietz echoed those sentiments. “With the smooth change in leadership, we are confident we will continue to build on the work and many con-

tributions of John Cardillo over the past 14 years. With Rob’s expertise and leadership qualities, we are well positioned to pursue the many opportunities GNJ has in the coming years, as we continue to serve Christ in our local communities and greater New Jersey.”

Zuckerman said, “I am incredibly humbled, nervous and excited about this opportunity!” When asked to name one of his favorite movies, Zuckerman said “Forrest Gump.” While eating a cheesesteak followed by a cup of chocolate ice cream makes it even better. 🇺🇸

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

New Summer Youth Leader Cohorts help you plan your campus ministry together via Zoom!

TOPICS INCLUDE:

What Teenagers Are Teaching the Church about Joy

Tuesdays at 10 a.m. | Starting July 7

What Will Youth Group Be Next?

Thursdays at 12:30 p.m. | Starting July 9

How to Start a Youth Group

Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. | Starting July 8



NEXT GENERATION
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NEXT GENERATION
UNITED METHODISTS
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“Infectious Hope”

Continued from page 1

Right now, we're okay, but we definitely have food supply concerns.”

The courage and determination that led to the creation of CUMAC 35 years ago has been tested over the past four months as the COVID-19 pandemic chokes the economy and amplifies the underlying crisis of food insecurity for an already vulnerable population.

“CUMAC believes that ending hunger has nothing to do with giving people food,” said Dinglasan. “Feeding people is about giving people food, but ending hunger is about wrapping services around individuals and families so that we are giving them the power to secure equitable opportunities and resources.”

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the poverty rate in Passaic County was estimated to be about 14-18 percent, or more than 85 thousand people. Other studies using a higher, more realistic income expectation for a metropolitan area, reveal a figure closer to 30 or 40 percent. In Paterson alone, it is estimated that over 29 percent of the population lives in poverty,

two volunteer coordinators at CUMAC. She first came to CUMAC eight years ago when she was a client and then landed a job as a marketplace assistant following AmeriCorps training and participation in the Pathways to Work program.

“We make sure everybody has everything they need and that they have a choice,” she said, referring to the food distribution system CUMAC started last September where instead of handing out prepacked bags of food, they started allowing clients to pick their own items in a room set up like a miniature grocery store where a personal assistant helps them. In mid-June with the new executive order from Governor Murphy, CUMAC started to bring back this program slowly by allowing two people to enter the pantry at a time to collect groceries.

Mastrangelo said she likes to tell visitors that “this is your church,” that it’s a place where they should feel safe. “It certainly was that place for me years ago” (see sidebar).

CUMAC depends on three two-hour shifts of four volunteers each day. During this time of social distancing, CUMAC is committed to keeping everyone safe.

work and receive clients; have a healthy food pantry and have an effective job readiness program.

This in part includes providing staff with competitive wages, full benefits and wrap-around services like food assistance, financial literacy, emergency assistance and professional development. Staff are continuously trained in areas such as leadership, management, relationship building and trauma-informed community building to ensure they have the knowledge and resources necessary to provide high-quality programming and care to CUMAC clients.

As part of this program, CUMAC launched the S.E.L.F Study to gain a better understanding of its clients so that they can help them work on health issues like diabetes and ultimately thrive in the long term. S.E.L.F stands for “self-efficacy, education, long-term relationships and food.”

For those clients who find it difficult to get to the pantry, CUMAC has created The Marketplace at Freedom Village, a joint effort between the Paterson Housing Authority, Pennrose and Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Passaic County. The Marketplace was launched last October to serve 155 seniors living at

“THIS PANDEMIC DOES NOT EXCUSE US FROM OUR VISION OR OUR WORK. IN FACT, I THINK IT AMPLIFIES THE NEED TO DO THE WORK THIS WAY.”

—Mark Dinglasan

In short, CUMAC works on building “a staff that is able to reach back and lift up their community.” Dinglasan’s dream is to be able to offer every employee a living wage with full benefits one day.

The same care and respect are given to the community. Within the Marketplace at CUMAC, where shoppers are given a choice, there is a case management room and nutrition education area where vetted partners can offer clients additional services like health screenings, legal advice, healthy cooking tips and financial literacy.

CUMAC is also working on implementing tracking outcomes. Working with healthcare experts, CUMAC will administer a survey in the first quarter of every calendar year and then once again at the end of the third quarter of the calendar year. This measurement tool will be used to record basic family demographics, SNAP and other benefits clients receive and how clients access food and fulfill other basic needs throughout the community. The tool will also ask clients for feedback regarding CUMAC’s programs and how the organization can improve its services while seeking to determine how CUMAC’s healthy pantry initiatives affect clients’ choices and behaviors.

Freedom Village, a state-of-the-art senior living community in Paterson that was built two years ago by Pennrose and the Paterson Housing Authority.

Dinglasan added, “In many ways, Beyond Hunger prepared CUMAC to respond effectively to this pandemic and its continued fallout. This pandemic does not excuse us from our vision or our work. In fact, I think it amplifies the need to do the work this way.”

Hugh Dunlop, a Paterson schoolteacher who grew up in Paterson during the Great Depression, would be proud of the project he and his wife started in a church closet over 35 years ago when he supposedly tripped over a wooden spoon that said ‘Feed My Sheep’ on his way to church. When CUMAC was incorporated on January 17, 1985, it was named the Center of United Methodist Aid to the Community Ecumenically Concerned Helping Others (CUMAC/ECHO) — a name meant to show that while it is an urban mission of the United Methodist Church, it serves all people in need without discrimination. Hugh would probably also be proud to know that the mission hasn’t changed in 35 years.

“Hope is infectious,” said Dinglasan.

For more information, visit www.cumac.org.



NJ First Lady Tammy Murphy spent the morning of May 14 with volunteers and staff at CUMAC in Paterson to pack boxes for WIC recipients.

41 percent of whom are children. These well-above average numbers are naturally growing even higher with the arrival of COVID-19 and the disparate mortality rate it brings along with it.

The picture looks grim, but now with an emergency grant from the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund, this new reality has hope. CUMAC was one of several groups in Greater New Jersey to receive this valuable funding.

“We’ve totally changed the way we operate. We have suspended all other operations,” said Bates, who noted that the thrift shop needed to close and services are also on hold so that all attention could be placed on food distribution.

Bates added that CUMAC is now feeding about 150-200 people each day. About 8,000 pounds of food are being “rescued” from local grocery stores, which is down from the normal 17,000 pounds, and crops are reaped from their on-site garden.

Bates was also quick to note how grateful the people of CUMAC are for the several churches who have been helping including Leonia UMC, Franklin Lakes UMC, Grace UMC, UMC of Summit, Succasunna UMC and Chatham UMC, among others.

“They have really shown up in a big way. They’ve been especially gracious and deserve a big shout out.”

Volunteers are a big part of what make CUMAC tick. On June 18 members of Passaic County Community College were there again hosting a food drive to help provide food to the nine local agencies like Jersey Cares that CUMAC also supports.

“All this couldn’t be done without our volunteers,” said Jeni Mastrangelo, who was promoted in January to be one of the

For those people on federal assistance who cannot travel to the pantry, boxes with at least two weeks-worth of food and other supplies like diapers are delivered to their homes.

Despite the changes in the way they operate in recent months, CUMAC still uses food as an entry point to engage with those in need because they recognize that where there is hunger, there are deficits in other areas like learning and medical concerns.

Dinglasan recalled a “Jesus moment” he had one day standing outside a consulting firm in Chicago in 2009. The economy had crashed, he had lost his job and he was struck by an overriding idea that wherever he ended up, he would take care of his employees. He has vowed to keep that promise ever since that day.

A Look Forward

Once the environment gets back to a little more normal, CUMAC is looking forward to resuming the comprehensive new strategy called Beyond Hunger Initiative the team rolled out in January 2019 to transform CUMAC into a one-stop access point for supportive services that is trauma-informed, embedded in the community and not siloed.

“We spent 2017 stabilizing and 2018 listening to, learning from and hearing from our clients and the communities we serve,” said Dinglasan. “In 2019 we coupled everything we learned with our belief on how to do this work and used that all to launch the Beyond Hunger Initiative.”

At that time CUMAC made it its mission to do this by concentrating on three goals: be a safe and empowering place to

Jeni’s Story

When 33-year-old Jeni Mastrangelo first walked through the doors of the CUMAC pantry on Ellison Street in downtown Paterson, she had four small children, no high school diploma and no bank account. Following years of being “bounced around,” she had just moved into a tiny apartment following a stint at a women’s shelter with her children.

“I’ve been on my own my whole life, but now I’m a full-time volunteer coordinator here,” said Mastrangelo. “I have a G.E.D. and a bank account with commas.”

She recalled how her 16-year-old son, Randy recently posted something in social media about CUMAC that said how proud he was of his mom who worked there. “My kids are pretty great.”

Randy isn’t the only one proud of Jeni and amazed by her resilience. Executive Director Mark Dinglasan said, “One of our goals is to give our staff the power so their voices are heard. That [Jeni’s story] is what power looks like. I’m not sure I could overcome what some of our staff has.”

Eight years ago, Mastrangelo came to CUMAC as a client in need of assistance. After finishing up AmeriCorps training, she started working as a pantry assistant. She worked through the Pathways to Work Program, a skills training program operated by CUMAC that exposes participants to a high-functioning, supportive and professional work environment that provides opportunities for job skills training, network building and professional growth.

In January the single mother of four was rewarded for her hard work, persistence and dedication with a promotion to volunteer coordinator. She is one of two coordinators who, Mastrangelo said, “work like machines.”

But the good news was followed by bad news this past February when she and her family were displaced from a home in New Milford after a fire destroyed the house. She lost everything but kept moving forward.

Just a month later when the coronavirus struck, she quickly organized an effort to get much needed masks to CUMAC. She continued to help others and motivated the volunteers who helped out at CUMAC.

Now, Mastrangelo and her four children—Randy, Luciano, Michael and Giana—live in a nearby town that offers her children a good education with the services they need.

“I love coming to work. Life is good,” said Mastrangelo.



Churches Stay on Track with Innovative VBS

“We love because he first loved us.”

—1 JOHN 4:19

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

With memories of splashing water, singing and holding hands dancing in their heads this summer, some churches have re-envisioned what Vacation Bible School (VBS) and other children’s ministries look like this year. Valuing the connection with all ages, Pitman UMC, First UMC of Williamstown and Thiells-Garnerville UMC have devised new ways to engage young people with their congregations and communities this summer.

“We are taught to connect, grow and lead through love and action,” said Katelyn Dilks-Bird who is the youth director at Pitman UMC. “We have a commitment to grow and lead for our communities who are facing homelessness.”

Throughout the first couple months of this year, members of Pitman UMC led their children in helping the less fortunate by providing bagged lunches and care packages that included things like index cards with Bible verses to the homeless in the Kensington section of Philadelphia.

Youth members also collected monetary donations and socks in an effort to meet the needs of those who are most vulnerable. They also participated in the national “Sleep Out” sponsored by the Covenant House that supported some of the estimated 4.2 million kids who are homeless in the United States and made lunches for the needy to serve at St. Joseph’s Cathedral in Camden.

“We made a difference by intentionally meeting the needs of an incredibly vulnerable population as only Jesus calls us to,” said Dilks-Bird.

Now with social distancing, they are re-envisioning how those connections are still made. In the last week in June, the youth ministry at Pitman UMC, which is co-led by Christian Ed Chair Stefanie Kier, hosted a virtual VBS that included songs, Bible lessons and “stay-on-track packs,” which were filled with a whistle, healthy snacks and a wooden tokens for a free ice cream cone at a local business among other treats.

This year’s VBS is based on the same “Rocky Railway” theme as they’ve used in previous years where kids discover that trusting Jesus pulls them through life’s ups and downs. The only difference is that this time it is live-streamed.

“We’re super excited to see how this new way works and how the spirit will move us,” said Kier.



The “Children’s Church” at Thiells Garnerville UMC allows children to stay connected and express themselves. Credit: Thiells Garnerville UMC

Children’s Church Re-Imagined

Thiells Garnerville UMC in New York, led by Rev. Jaeyoun Kim, quickly adapted to the new social distance environment a few months ago.

The “Children’s Church,” led by Connie Cataldi who has been the children’s ministry coordinator for the past two years, was originally designed to give children the experience that their parents have every Sunday but downstairs where they can be comfortable and free to express themselves. The group participates in other activities like “Family Fun Fridays,” when children enjoy pizza and an activity, as well as mission work like a recent trip to the local police department to deliver homemade sugar cookies to say thanks for all that they do.

“We didn’t want the momentum we felt then to wane. Our youth ministry has changed a lot,” said Cataldi. “We now do Zoom meetings on Thursdays. We do crafts, songs, a video prayer, and we talk about our lives.”

Cataldi also noted that on Sunday mornings, parents receive an email with a virtual lesson, which includes commentary, a scripture reading, video links to YouTube clips and prayers.



Pitman UMC didn’t miss a beat with its youth ministry by moving forward with a virtual VBS in June. Shown here are Katie and Kelsey. Credit: Pitman UMC

“After our Children’s Moment during the online service, some children pull up these lessons to complete while parents are listening to our regular worship service,” she added.

“It’s a way to see all their friends and connect regularly,” said Cataldi who added that participants range in age from about five to 12.

Children’s Church has continued to evolve. On June 18 the group gathered together to wish member, Dante a happy birthday in a socially distant way with balloons and a gift. Each day the church tries to find new ways to stay connected.

VBS in a Small Town

First UMC of Williamstown embraces their youth ministry every year, but this July that engagement is planning to look a little different.

“We’re still planning to offer VBS this year because our community really looks forward to it each summer,” said VBS Co-Coordinator Heather Fullerton, who added that about 25-50 children are expected to participate in the program from July 13-17, which is down from the usual 100.

Using Zoom Breakout rooms and adhering to all Safe Sanctuary guidelines, this year’s VBS program will be divided into households instead of age groups, so the curriculum will be overarching instead of targeted. Supplies will also be provided to registrants during designated pick-up nights at the church prior to the start of the VBS.

“We’re trying to mimic our program as much as we can, but some changes are needed to accommodate the different format,” said Fullerton who added that the day’s program will be about half as long at 90 minutes.

Children ages pre-K through just completed 6th grade will participate in the program using the Main Street Kids curriculum. Each morning via Zoom youth leaders and children will join together for Opening Ceremonies and a Bible Story and then divide into breakout rooms for educational programs in crafts, music and games like an online gym class and Bible lessons through music.

Fullerton said, “We’re still ironing out the technology, but we felt called to try something. We are hopeful that all will go smoothly.” 🎉

MORRISTOWN UMC

is seeking a full time **Administrative & Financial Assistant**

Position Description: To provide administrative and financial support to MUMC’s ministry (both staff and volunteers).

Reports to: Senior Pastor

Please submit resume and cover letter to:
jobsearchmumc2020@gmail.com

For additional details:

www.gnjumc.org/news/category/job-opportunities



MISSION CORNER

Organize a Virtual Mission Journey this Summer

Did you have to cancel your congregation’s mission trip because of COVID-19? Never organized a mission journey before? You are not alone. Organizations that rely on summer mission teams - like Appalachia Service Project (asphome.org) or Bahamas Methodist Habitat (methodisthabitat.org) - are suffering financially right now. And that means that they may not be able to continue vital ministry with marginalized populations.

Here’s what you can do: organize a virtual mission.

Step 1: Contact the organization you want to be in partnership. Schedule dates and times when representatives of the ministry can join you online. A structure of three 90-minute sessions is a good rule of thumb.

Step 2: Recruit team members from your congregation and community. These can be people who might never consider joining a mission team due to age, health conditions or mobility concerns. Assign them roles like devotion leader, researcher, fundraising coordinator, social media guru, video producer, language teacher, etc. Commission the virtual mission team as part of your Sunday worship.

Step 3: Prepare your team with a couple of orientation meetings. Think about assigning readings on the culture and the context of your ministry partner. Set a fundraising goal to support your ministry partner. Be creative. Share recipes

so that team members can prepare their own culturally authentic meals during the mission. Create DIY construction projects or VBS lessons to help your team experience the work they might have done in person.

Step 4: When your mission week arrives, let your hosts orient you to their community and the ministry they do. Learn about the local conditions that your ministry partner is addressing. Get a virtual tour. If possible, interview staff and clients. Offer devotions each day. Discuss the homework reading. Ask questions. Do fundraising updates.

Step 5: Celebrate what you have learned and the relationships you have begun or deepened. Discuss how your team and congregation can maintain the relationship. Are the same ministry needs present in your community? Connect to local efforts. Tell the story of the mission widely. You can even invite your partners to join and help lead your Sunday worship service.

Step 6: Send your mission partner the money that you raised from the virtual mission to support their ministry and the local economy.

If you need guidance, visit United Methodist Volunteers in Mission at umvim.org and contact your regional representative, Rev. Tom Lank at nej@umvim.org.

ON THE BOOKSHELF FOR JULY

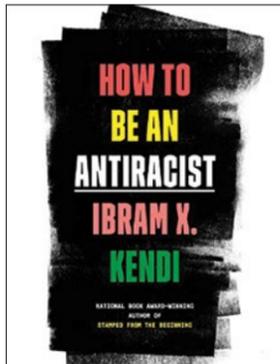
Readings that educate, catalyze and foster conversation surrounding racial justice.

How to be an Anti-Racist

(2019, One World) by Ibram X. Kendi

How to Be an Anti-Racist explores the problem of race in the Western mind. It has been a valuable tool since it was published last year, but today it is an essential resource and instructional manual for all. It accomplishes this by blending personal experiences with history, science and ethics to describe different forms of racism. It opens the door to rich conversation as it explores the idea that being non-racist is not enough.

Ibram X. Kendi, a New York Times bestselling author and the founding director of the Antiracist Research and Policy Center at American University, is also a frequent public speaker and columnist. On July 1, he became Professor of History and the Founding Director of the Boston University Center for Antiracist Research as well as the 2020-2021 Frances B. Cashin Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for the Advanced Study at Harvard University. Kendi is the author of *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, which won the National Book Award for Nonfiction, and *The Black Campus Movement*, which won the W.E.B. Du Bois Book prize.

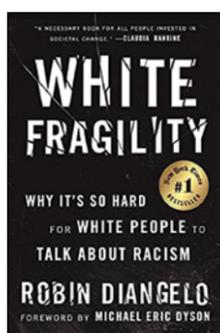
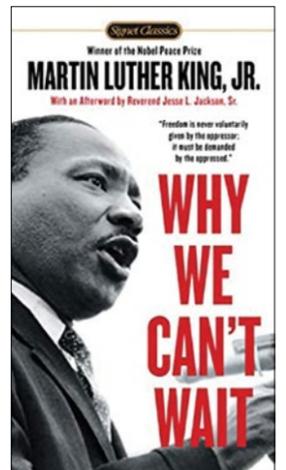


Why We Can't Wait

(originally published in 1964) by Martin Luther King Jr

Why We Can't Wait recounts the story of Birmingham in vivid detail, tracing the history of the struggle for civil rights back to its beginnings three centuries ago and looking to the future, assessing the work to be done beyond Birmingham to bring about full equality for African Americans. From lunch counter sit-ins and prayer marches to the forefront of American consciousness, Dr. King analyzes the events that propelled the Civil Rights movement.

Martin Luther King Jr was president of the southern Christian Leadership conference and co-pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, GA. He led the “walk for freedom” in Montgomery, which resulted in bus desegregation, and for a decade he led the African American struggle for civil rights. He was Time magazine’s Man of the Year in 1963 and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Dr. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968. Among his other works are *The Measure of a Man*, *Strength to Love* and *Stride toward Freedom*.



White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism

(2018, Beacon Press) by Robin DiAngelo

White Fragility delves into the phenomenon of white fragility and how it can prevent meaningful cross-racial dialogue. It offers a methodical and clear exposure of racism in thought and action as well as offers the actions that are needed to engage more constructively and work through common emotions like anger, fear and guilt.

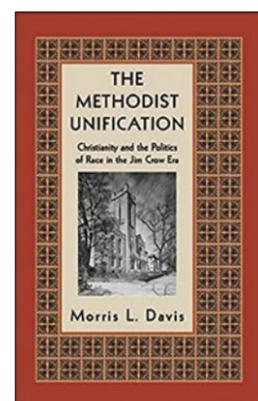
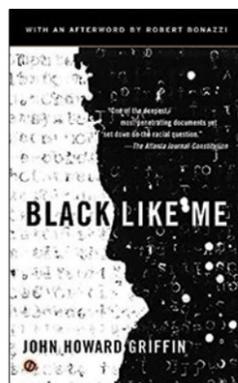
Robin DiAngelo is an academic, lecturer and author and has been a consultant and trainer on issues of racial and social justice for more than 20 years. She formerly served as a tenured professor of multicultural education at Westfield State University.

Black Like Me

(2010, Berkeley) by John Howard Griffin

Written by a White man who lived in Texas during the 1950s-60s when the Civil Rights Movement was in effect, *Black Like Me* is the story of a man who decides to make the color of his skin black in an effort to understand what it feels like to be a Black man. This decision impacts not only his own life, but his family’s life as well.

John Howard Griffin (1920-1980) was a prolific author on racism as well as three collections of photography, a volume of journals, two historical works on Texas, a musicological study and The John Howard Reader. Born in Dallas and educated in France, he served in the U.S. Air Force in the South Pacific, where an injury he received during a Japanese bombardment eventually resulted in the complete loss of his sight. In the 1950s he converted to Catholicism, married and raised a family. In 1957, (after 10 years of blindness) he miraculously regained his sight.



The Methodist Unification

(2008, NYU Press) by Morris L. Davis

The Methodist Unification focuses on the efforts among the Southern and Northern Methodist churches to create a unified national Methodist church during the Jim Crow Era in the early part of the 20th century, and how their plan for unification came to institutionalize racism and segregation in unprecedented ways.

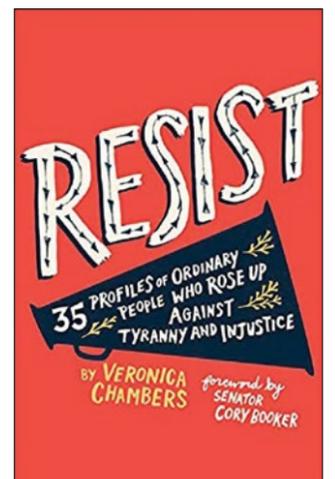
Morris “Morrey” L. Davis is assistant professor, History of Christianity and Wesleyan/Methodist Studies, Drew Theological School. A graduate of the Drew University’s Ph.D. program in 2003, Davis joined the faculty of the Theological School that same year.

Resist: 35 Profiles of Ordinary People Who Rose Up Against Tyranny and Injustice

(2018, HarperCollins) by Veronica Chambers

Recommended for ages 8-12, *Resist* is a perfect tool for young readers as they grow into the leaders of tomorrow. *Resist* profiles men and women who resisted tyranny, fought the odds and stood up to bullies that threatened to harm their communities. From Frederick Douglass to Malala Yousafzai, Joan of Arc to John Lewis, Susan B. Anthony to Janet Mock—these remarkable figures show us what it means to take a stand and say no to injustice, even when it would be far easier to stay quiet.

Veronica Chambers is best known for her critically acclaimed memoir, *Mama’s Girl*. Most recently, she was the editor of *The Meaning of Michelle: 16 Writers on the Iconic First Lady and How Her Journey Inspires Our Own*, which Time magazine named one of the Top Ten Nonfiction Books of 2017. She has written more than a dozen books for young readers and cowritten New York Times bestselling memoirs with Robin Roberts, Eric Ripert, Senator Cory Booker and many others. Visit her online at www.veronicachambers.com.



Africa University Sends Gratitude and Good News

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

Africa University (AU), a private United Methodist-related institution in Zimbabwe offering bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. degrees to more than 1,200 students from 36 African countries, recently sent thank you banners to the Greater New Jersey Conference in appreciation of the unwavering support it received from those GNJ churches who participated at 100% of shared ministry.

"The foundational support [100% investment] of GNJ United Methodists is deeply valued by our students, faculty, staff and alumni, and we can't say thank you enough," said Andra M. Stevens, who is the director of communications at the Africa University Development Office.

The university, founded in 1992, also shared some good news with GNJ:

- Students and faculty completed the semester's academic activities by quickly transitioning from in-person to online learning and working together to manage internet access and equipment challenges in some home/country settings.
- AU wrapped up its first-ever online only examinations period on June 5 and is preparing for the start of the new academic year in August.
- The university's contributions to the fight against the spread of COVID-19 include the manufacture of hand sanitizer and PPEs. Africa U has developed its own disposable mask prototype for



Greater New Jersey Annual Conference

2019 APPORTIONMENT AT 100%

commercial production and the students are making reusable cloth masks.

- Students are also doing their part to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable families—launching successful appeals and giving up meals in order to buy food, medicine and other basics for their neighbors.
- Emmanuel Gasaba, one of two student beneficiaries of GNJ Endowed Scholarships at AU, was due to

graduate June 12. Although the ceremony was postponed, Emmanuel is enthusiastically ready to improve community health.

"All of this is possible because the Greater New Jersey Conference continues to lift Africa University in prayer and invest in its ministry. You model meaningful discipleship and inspire young people to claim and work towards God's promise of abundant life," Stevens added.

One of seven apportioned giving opportunities of The United Methodist Church, the Africa University Fund transforms Africa by educating and empowering students from across the continent through Africa University. The Fund supports the general operating expenses of Africa University including faculty and staff salaries and vital infrastructure.

For more information, visit <http://africau.edu>.

End to Racism

Continued from page 1

silent for too long as blacks have been enslaved, segregated and lynched. He called upon white people with privilege

to have a conscience. "To be anti-racist is to speak out and no longer be quiet," said Caldwell. "We must turn the nation upside down so it will be right side up."

"Our eyes and ears were glued to the 86-year-old warrior for justice as he

took his hands off his walker and held on the podium while speaking with such great strength and emotion," said GNJ Director of Worship Lan Wilson.

Many people of color shared their own personal experiences with racism. Rev. Rupert Hall, pastor of Turning Point UMC in Trenton, shared the first time a white classmate called him the n-word once the white teacher had left the classroom, not realizing the meaning or impact of his words. Rev. Gerald Aldajuste, pastor of St. Paul UMC and part of the organizing team for the event, shared her experiences of discrimination of a Haitian woman urging that "anger become acts of love" and for those gathered to breathe for those who couldn't breathe on their own.

Rev. Vanessa Wilson, now pastor at Church of the Good Shepherd in Willingboro and chair of the GNJ Commission on Religion and Race, spoke of witnessing the police shoot two Black people during the Newark Civil Disturbance in 1967. "It is time for the nation to move forward and continue until we bring justice and equity to all people."

Rev. Laura Steele spoke of how she and other white siblings of faith had turned their backs on their black and brown siblings. "On behalf of white people everywhere, I am embarrassed. I am sorry. We have failed you," she said. Steele reflected on how Martin Luther King, Jr. said that it is the silence of friends that is most remembered.

"White silence is a form of violence. It's our turn to start calling each other out. It's not enough to just not be racist, we need to be anti-racist."

Rev. Tanya Lynn Bennett, chair of GNJ Board of Church and Society, confessed that while the rally invitation encouraged a peaceful response, her soul was not at peace due to the recent acts of violence against Black people. "I have

no peace; I am angry and determined to walk alongside my black siblings until they experience peace with justice." The GNJ Board of Church and Society is currently facilitating a pilot justice cohort in the Capital District to address and mobilize people for action on issues of racial healing, desegregation of schools in New Jersey, and equitable access to health services for vulnerable peoples.

"IT IS TIME FOR THE NATION TO MOVE FORWARD AND CONTINUE UNTIL WE BRING JUSTICE AND EQUITY TO ALL PEOPLE."

—Rev. Vanessa Wilson,
pastor of Church of the Good Shepherd in Willingboro

Dr. Tiffani A. Worthy, mayor of Willingboro, said it was time to speak up even if that meant risking popularity. "Wherever you find yourself, it is a requirement to speak up and to get uncomfortable for those who don't have a seat at the table."

The rally concluded with Rev. Sammy Arroyo, pastor of First UMC in Hightstown, and part of the planning team, calling those gathered to action. "This is a systematic problem that needs a systematic approach," said Arroyo. "We all need to come together. We need to get to work. It is our responsibility. It is our call. It is our mission if we follow Jesus. The world is watching, and they want to know, 'where is the church?'"

To view, visit www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=285544665908577.



Rev. Vanessa Wilson calls for justice and equity for all on Peace with Justice Sunday.

Credit: Aaron Wilson Watson, a New York metro area-based photographer and film creator.

CONFERENCE NEWS

JUNETEENTH

RECOGNITION AND PANEL DISCUSSION

Door is Open to Conversations on Juneteenth

The GNJ Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) and the Board of Church and Society hosted “The Conversation About Race” on June 19, which marked the 155th anniversary of Juneteenth, to encourage intergenerational conversation surrounding the day and racial justice.

The online conversation was moderated by GNJ Director of Worship Lan Wilson and Rev. Vanessa Wilson, a chairperson for GCORR and pastor at Church of the Good Shepherd in Willingboro.

Joining the panel that night were Rev. Gerald Aldajuste of St. Paul UMC in Willingboro, Rev. Terry Calhoun of Lemuel Haynes Congregational Church, Pastor Sheena Cameron of Mt. Pleasant UMC in Ohio and Rev. Kermit Moss of Christ Church in Paterson.

Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day, is a U.S. holiday commemorating the emancipation of slaves in the U.S. On June 19, 1865, the Emancipation Proclamation was read in Texas to African American slaves. Texas was the last state to read the Emancipation Proclamation, which had been signed by Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863.

Making More Miracles

The Miracles Everywhere Campaign’s COVID-19 Relief Fund was more than \$610,000 in June, and more than \$183,000 had been distributed to those most severely impacted by the pandemic. The funds covered the costs associated with lost jobs, for groceries and utilities and to support local churches and Hope Centers in helping others.

Some churches like Trinity Hackettstown and Hope UMC (Voorhees) have recently bolstered the fund to help to those churches who did not receive PPE funding with generous pledges of \$13,700 and \$16,000, respectively.

For more details on this fund and about how you can contribute, visit www.gnjumc.org/covid19.

Free Virtual Courses from Mission u in July

Mission u may have been cancelled, but the organizers still have something special instore for this summer with a virtual series, “Finding Peace in An Anxious World” on July 11 and 18 when they will focus on different aspects of the Serenity Prayer – serenity, acceptance, courage and wisdom.

Rev. Elizabeth Vaneekhoven and James McKeever, Ph.D. will lead discussions on this book by Erin James-Brown.

For details and to register, visit the GNJ events calendar www.gnjumc.org/events for July 11 and 18.



UM Communities Delves into TeleHealth

The face of how United Methodist Communities helps its patients is about to change in a transformative way. With hopes of starting in mid-July, UM Communities will be implementing a new telehealth strategy to fight COVID-19.

Thanks to a \$909,560 grant as part of the CARES Act, UM Communities will team up with tech providers VirtuSense and Netsmart to offer a remote patient-monitoring platform and telehealth software licenses for primarily its skilled nursing units and some of its memory care units. The program will include resident-based internet-connect remote patient monitoring, video consults and remote treatment.

“Our strategies are both cutting edge and bleeding edge,” said Larry Carlson, president and CEO of United Methodist Communities. “This gives us better insights into our residents’ needs and allows us to monitor those situations through more continuous monitoring as opposed to intermittent monitoring.”

“We can be better caregivers as a result. We will know as soon as one of our residents falls,” said Carlson who added that this new program will keep UM Communities’ approximately 1,500 residents safer and happier and staff more productive while still respecting their privacies. “It’s more like a radar than a camera.”

For more details, visit UM Communities’ website at <https://umcommunities.org>.

OBITUARIES

Rev. Richard Dudinak, retired elder, died June 8. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Camellia Dudinak (spouse) at P.O. Box 313, Clifton Park, NY 12065.

Gertrude Griffith, surviving spouse of Rev. John P. Griffith, died May 31. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Scott Griffith (FL) at 56 S. Paramus Road, Paramus, NJ 07652.

NEW FOR 2021

New Health Insurance for Active HealthFlex Participants.

Same affordable coverage... *but better!*

More options, tools and resources including:

- 6 medical plans,
- 3 dental plans and
- 3 vision plans



TO LEARN MORE. VISIT

www.gnjumc.org/healthflexexchange

United Methodist Communities



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.

HomeWorks
Haddonfield, NJ | 856-300-2424
Ocean Grove, NJ | 732-838-1950
Newton, NJ | 973-940-6300
UMHomeWorks.org
Home Office | 3311 State Route 33, Neptune, NJ 07753 | 732-922-9800





Nothing Can Stop a Miracle!

IGNITE Summer@Home will deepen faith for students this July with daily devotionals, prayer walks and conversation on faith and racism.

A Future With Hope increases capacity for feeding families in need across our region.

Volunteer groups eagerly await the next opportunity to return to Puerto Rico to bring supplies and people power to keep rebuilding churches, homes and schools!

Planning continues for the 2021 clergy training mission trip to Tanzania.

God is working miracles through the people of GNJ!
Join the campaign today!

**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