



*Be strong and courageous and do the work,  
Do not be afraid or discouraged for the Lord, my God is with you.*

1 Chronicles 28:20

Friends in Christ,

United Methodists in Greater New Jersey are a courageous people.

We started the third congregation in U.S. Methodism, were first in ordaining a woman in 1956, integrated African American and primarily Anglo conferences in 1966 two years prior to the abolishment of the Central Jurisdiction in 1966, and were or among the first to start Arabic, Korean, Hispanic, Filipino, and deaf congregations within The United Methodist Church.

This courage continues. In the past decade we:

- Have adapted our ministry and mission to meet the needs of our congregations and communities in the time of COVID-19 through online worship, expanded food ministries and a four-month shared ministry holiday.
- Launched the COVID-19 Relief Fund as a part of Miracles Everywhere to address emerging needs in our congregations and communities.
- Joined a historic lawsuit to desegregate New Jersey public schools.
- Organized a historic relief and recovery effort after Superstorm Sandy.
- Launched IGNITE, a dynamic youth event serving 1500 students.
- Developed mission partnerships with Puerto Rico and Tanzania.
- Proclaimed in a time of challenge that we would help every congregation to thrive in their context recognizing different convictions and encourage congregations to develop covenants as part of our way forward.
- Built the Mission and Resource Center.

On October 5 and 6, we will hold the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference Session of Greater New Jersey virtually to affirm the courageous next steps for GNJ.

Our agenda for our Annual Conference will honor courageous ministry. We will discuss important business including a bold new initiative to atone for and end the sin of racism in our congregations.

Our annual conference may look and feel different this year as we adjust to a virtual environment, but I know the Holy Spirit will be among us, both near and far away.

We will join together in worship that will renew and prayer that will deepen our faith. We will honor those that have been called home and those who are embarking on their ministry paths through ordination and commissioning.

To prepare for our conferencing together I invite you to:

1. Start with prayer. Pray that God will bless our time together. Pray for renewal of the Wesleyan Path and pray for our ministry together.
2. Share with your congregation. Use the reports in this workbook to share about our ministries, to celebrate the lay and clergy members who are honored and engage your church in the legislation that will be before us.
3. Renew your congregation's commitment to the Miracles Everywhere Campaign. Take a collection within your congregation and submit by September 20 so we can celebrate our offering together. Donate online at [www.gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere](http://www.gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere) or send it to:

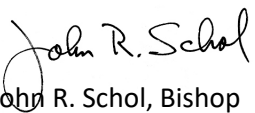
Miracles Everywhere for Annual Conference  
United Methodists of Greater New Jersey  
205 Jumping Brook Rd.  
Neptune, NJ 07753

The people of Greater New Jersey have raised \$4,475,443 toward our goal of \$6.2 million, which will bolster programming for our youth, rebuild communities impacted by disasters, train pastors in Tanzania, reach our goal of 100 Hope Centers and provide support for communities and congregations impacted by COVID-19.

The way is not always easy, but United Methodists in Greater New Jersey do not falter in the midst of difficulty. I am glad that we are on this journey together, bolstering each other along the way and trusting that the Lord, our God is with us.

Be strong and courageous. God is with us!

Keep the faith!



John R. Schol, Bishop

United Methodists of Greater New Jersey