



UNITED METHODISTS OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

2020 Annual Conference FAQ's as of 9.30.2020

A Journey of Hope

Can BOOM be directed by Conference to ordain elders based on race/ethnicity? How many African-American churches are able to support a full-time ordained elder? How many Hispanic congregations? How many African-American and Hispanic elders currently serve in CC/CR appointments? (Page 11, Measures a) *Creed Pogue, West Side (Millville) UMC*

BOOM does not ordain, only the bishop ordains. BOOM does not determine who full members are, only the clergy executive session does, upon recommendation from BOOM. The clergy executive session acts for the annual conference and only it can approve full members that it believes are "fit and ready" to be full members and ordained by the bishop. This section is actually a call to recruit and support more ethnic clergy in GNJ.

Currently, seven African American elders are serving full-time in nine African American congregations. One African American elder is serving full-time in a multi-ethnic congregation. Currently, seven Hispanic elders are serving in Hispanic congregations with two serving in two point charges. Two African American elders and five Hispanic elders serve in cross racial/cross cultural appointments

How will the Journey of Hope program to increase the number of specific racial congregations unite us rather than perpetuate our divisions? *Robert Scott Milltown UMC*

Ending the sin of racism is a spiritual discipline that is practiced and engaged individually and together. Faith and spirituality grows through strong vital congregations. GNJ has congregations of different ethnicities and multicultural/multiracial congregations. We will continue to grow and start congregations of all ethnicities and multiethnic congregations. There are three reasons why we start congregations of a particular ethnicity.

1. Language – we have a number of people who feel comfortable worshipping in their first language or multiple language and so we start some congregations that are language specific.
2. Location – sometimes we start churches in an area where we do not have a congregation and that community may be all white or another race.
3. While you are correct, in the kingdom of God, we will all be together and we long for that day. When ethnic people are a minority in a congregation, regardless of the race of the majority, the minority loses spiritual practices and styles that are unique and important to them. For instance music, preaching, exuberance, and liturgy varies from culture to culture. We do not want to lose these unique gifts and therefore it is important to have churches of all different races.

What is being defined as an "African-American congregation?" Is that congregations with a majority of African-American members or some other criterion? There appear to be 52 local churches that are majority African-American. But, 22 of them are located in municipalities with a median household income above \$55,000 which is the first criterion for other congregations to utilize forbearance. There are a number of Asian, Hispanic and Anglo congregations located in municipalities with a median household income below \$55,000 but they have to satisfy criteria that few churches across the Conference would be able to meet. Is it fair or reasonable to extend forbearance



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to some churches in less distressed areas while making it less than practicable in more distressed areas? (#5a on p. 12)
Creed Pogue, West Side (Millville) UMC

GNJ defines a congregation's race or ethnicity as 75% of the members are from the same ethnic or racial group. A Journey of Hope includes a plan for all congregations in low income communities to receive a reduced shared ministry and billable rates if the congregation meets the objectives outlined. The forbearance program recognizes and seeks to repair past harm because of how Native Americans and African Americans were treated in Greater New Jersey and by the church since our beginning.

Are the pre-1982 and CRSP plans fully funded with WESPATH? Is it just to completely forgive some debts but not others? *Creed Pogue, West Side (Millville) UMC*

GNJ's pre 82 and CRSP plans are fully funded.

Are there other congregations that may have overextended their building programs while located in less advantaged areas? Should this be a broader analysis? (Section 5b)

We have experienced this with ethnic congregations and we are not aware of any Anglo churches that have had the same experience.

Has any analysis been done of the resulting shortfalls for permanent forbearance of billables and partial forbearance of Shared Ministries? We do not have a report from CF&A as apparently required by Paragraph 615. (section 5a and 5e) *Creed Pogue, West Side (Millville) UMC*

The forbearance program is extended for past billables. The analysis has been done and indicates that with careful stewardship and all churches giving their fair share, we will fully meet our goals for shared ministry and billables.

We do not have a report from the Conference Trustees for either 2019 or 2020 as required by Paragraph 2512.6. Do we have an analysis of properties held for sale by the Trustees or the 13 churches listed for closure at Conference to indicate an estimated value? (Section 5f(i)) *Creed Pogue, West Side (Millville) UMC*

Additional information is included in this year's budget. We will research this request and provide the additional information.

Is the \$1 million envisioned as principal for capital needs or program funds? Might there be a better way to fund certain needs? Other churches with capital/deferred maintenance needs have been told that funds from Conference would not be available. *Creed Pogue, West Side (Millville) UMC*

The \$1 million referred to in A Journey of Hope plan is for Native American Church and burial site preservation.

What is "offered/returned" intended to mean in practice? Would there be an actual sale or simply a direct transfer of property? What are the churches in the "eastern portion of Salem County" or at least which municipalities? (Section 5f(ii)) *Creed Pogue, West Side (Millville) UMC*



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This only refers to property in Cumberland and Salem Counties and would not be sold but transferred. Properties or townships have not been identified.

How many "agency chairperson" positions exist? How many are currently held by "persons of color?" It appears that in 2012, almost 80% of the laity were Anglo and in 2018, it is 78%. (Page 11, Measures e.) Creed Pogue, West Side (Millville) UMC

33% of current elected leaders of annual conference agencies are Persons of Color. If the present slate of nominations are elected it will increase to 55%. A list of chairpersons can be found in the 2019 Journal and the 2020 Nominations report.

The legislation says: At least 50% of GNJ agency chairpersons are People of Color by June 2023. While I think this effort to include People of Color in positions of leadership is very good - I was thinking 50% might be almost disproportionate to the numbers?

Leadership was talked about quite a bit in A Journey of Hope team. There were proposals for 40%, 50% and 60% or better. The thinking was that we are doing a better job in identifying and mentoring white leadership than People of Color leadership, particularly with African American and Latino/Hispanic. While 50% is about 20% higher than the number of congregations and membership of People of Color, the 50% would be a mechanism for developing more People of Color in leadership.

Budget

The 2019 Pre-Conference packet said that \$10,644 was budgeted in 2020 for NJ Council of Churches so I am still a little confused about the 2020 packet. 2020 shouldn't be \$13,000 in any circumstance. But, \$12,000 would definitely be an increase from \$10,644. Also, the 2019 booklet says that we approved \$12,418 for 2019. Can you clarify? Creed Pogue, West Side Millville UMC

The NJ Council of Churches is part of the overall Benevolence Budget which was under budget in 2019 by \$57,116 despite a small over spend in this particular line item. The \$12,000 budget for NJ Council of Churches is less than the actual spend in 2019 and less than the original 2019 budgeted amount. The 2020 pre-conference workbook had an incorrect header date. It stated "2020" and should have listed "2021".

The numbers should be as follows:

2019 Conference Journal for 2019 budget: \$12,418
2019 Conference Journal for 2020 budget: \$10,644
2020 Pre-conference Workbook for 2019 actual: \$13,000
2020 Pre-conference Workbook for 2021 proposed; \$12,000

The format has changed greatly. What does "Healthcare Revenue" represent? What is the "Grant Program?" "Property Expense" is listed twice--what is represented by that? Creed Pogue, West Side (Millville) UMC



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- Healthcare revenue is income from the Board of Pension and Health Benefits which was netted against expenses in the old format.
- The Grant Program are dollars provided by GNJ to individual churches for a variety of needs; these funds come from the Strategic Disciples Making and Harvest Mission Fund. The expense was netted against the income in the old format.
- Property expenses are part of Shared Services which are expenses incurred by GNJ which are charged back to Boards of Trustees and Pensions and our Mission Partners. These were previously netted against the income and split on the “statement of financial position” report to the respective departments being supported. The expense includes the staff along with expenses related to maintaining GNJ properties.

Does the listing of revenue from Harvest Mission, Strategic Disciple, etc. mean that what was originally envisioned as loans are instead contributions to the Budget because of our current situation? Is that envisioned to continue after 2021? *Creed Pogue, West Side (Millville) UMC*

We have historically used funds from the Strategic Disciples Making and Harvest Missions to fund grants to individual churches. This revenue was netted against the expense in the old format as explained above. This we trust was a onetime use of the Harvest Mission Fund to support our congregations and ministries during the pandemic. We believe that this use of funds stabilized ministries and congregations as well as helped with food distribution. We do not envision this occurring in 2021.

What is the purpose of the \$400,000 to Drew? *Creed Pogue, West Side (Millville) UMC*

The general church apportionments have supported our seminaries. The general church has reduced support of Drew School of Theology by more than \$400,000. Drew has been instrumental to our health and sustainability in GNJ with many of their graduates serving and leading in GNJ. Leadership reviewed the matter and decided to direct this support to Drew directly out of our general church apportionments. This support does not change how much we apportion our congregations.

Shared Services has jumped dramatically. What does that represent? *Creed Pogue, West Side (Millville) UMC*

Shared Services are expenses incurred by GNJ which are charged back to the Boards of Trustees and Pensions and our Mission Partners. In the old format, much of these expenses were netting against the income and not showing in the budget presentation.

There has not been a report from NJ Council of Churches for years but the amount is increasing. What is the discernment for that? *Creed Pogue, West Side (Millville) UMC*

The amount actually decreases in the new budget.

Other Legislation

In the past GNJ partially funded retiree health care by taking advantage of funds on deposit with the General Board of Pensions, in accounts in which we had exceeded our funding requirements. They were not on deposit with a designation for retiree health insurance. There has never been a pooling of our health care insurance funds with other



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conference (such as in the Centenary Fund). If the plan that has been explained to our conference for years is still in place, some questions remain:

(1) So, is that plan still in place?

(2) How will our conference's ability to continue to previously established plan be impacted if those funds on deposit with Wespath are "pooled?"

(3) In response to your question about "excess funding" my follow-up question is what level are we funded with Wespath for pension liabilities? *Bob Costello, Wesley - Petersburg UMC*

As indicated in the answers below, GNJ is on track to fund retiree healthcare based on previously completed analyses which included excess pre-82 funds. With that said, our new CFO intends to get fully up to speed on that analysis, meet with key partners and complete his own assessment. GNJ remains committed to funding this important fund. The additional 5% we're including in funding this through closed church proceeds demonstrates the conference's commitment while the situation is assessed.

In light of the previous FAQ (see below) in which we have been reminded that providing funding for retiree health care insurance is not mandated by the Book of Discipline, but also in light of our being told in the FAQ that GNJ's Council on Finance and Administration has an on-going commitment to funding retiree health care supplemental insurance:

(a) Does the plan to fund this objective still include taking advantage of any excess funds on deposit with Wespath for our past obligations?

(b) If GNJ funds on deposit with Wespath for pension liabilities are "pooled" with other conferences (many of which are under funded) what plan does CF&A have in place to sustain our conference plan to provide the insurance? *Bob Costello, Wesley - Petersburg UMC*

We are on track to meet our obligations. Our retiree health funds are not pooled with other annual conferences. CFA, Board of Pensions and the Treasurer understand the importance of this benefit and are committed to its continued funding. It is not clear what "excess funds" are being referred; no excess funds are considered in the analysis. Our funding was noted in the answers below.

Doesn't the petition in the preConference Journal entitled "Nepotism" violate the Constitution of the United Methodist Church, paragraph 4, which forbids discrimination on the basis of marital status? (See Interim Judicial Council Decision 7.) *William Noll, Hamilton UMC*

The proposed legislation on Nepotism calls for the Council of Finance and Administration to review and report on GNJ's nepotism policies. If passed, CF&A will consider [Interim Judicial Council Decision 7](#) in their review.

May we have an explanation as to how retiree supplemental health insurance is funded? *Bob Costello, Wesley - Petersburg UMC*

Retired clergy and lay employees of GNJ receive health care that supplements the difference between Medicare for retirees. This is a voluntary benefit of GNJ unlike pension and health insurance for active clergy which are required by the Book of Discipline.

There are three sources of funding

Mission and Resource Center
205 Jumping Brook Rd., Neptune NJ 07753
732.359.1000 | www.gnjumc.org



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1.
 1. Shared ministry apportionments from our congregations
 2. A grant from the Centenary Fund
 3. Funds that are dedicated to retiree health care

Is the current plan sustainable, in light of updated projections, including updated projections of the conference funding sources? *Bob Costello, Wesley - Petersburg UMC*

Yes, and we continue to set funds aside for retiree health care. You will see in the “Sale of Closed Church” legislation (top of page 33), we added 5% of proceeds going towards this fund.

If the income from conference funding sources is reduced, how will that impact the plan? *Bob Costello, Wesley - Petersburg UMC*

Like any part of the GNJ budget, if funding is reduced, the budget needs to be adjusted. CFA has and continues to commit to ensure there is funding for retiree health care.

Two similar but not identical pieces of legislation have been submitted by two former District Superintendents asking that our health care obligation to annuitants be addressed. If we feel that has merit, then should an effort be made for an omnibus legislation? *Creed Pogue, West Side (Millville) UMC*

There are two pieces of legislation but both are submitted by one former district superintendent, Rev. Robert Costello. It is not the role of the FAQ's to recommend how legislation should be handled.

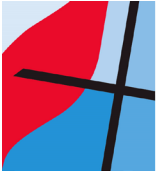
Logistics

Why is the Annual Conference Session being held virtually?

The COVID-19 epidemic has infected more than 184,000 people and resulted in more than 15,000 deaths in New Jersey. United Methodists of Greater New Jersey have a goal of zero transmission of the virus by our activities. As guided by our Rules of Order, in July, Annual Conference members voted by mail-in ballot to add

Rule 26 - REMOTE PARTICIPATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE - In a situation which a state of emergency has been declared by the Governor of New Jersey or other applicable governmental authority, or in extraordinary circumstances as declared by the Bishop, Cabinet, Conference Trustees and CFA, the regular Annual Conference session, or a Special Annual Conference session, or parts of either, can be held by means of remote participation. Notice of such a session and all such means of remote participation shall meet all requirements of the Discipline, applicable state law, and the Rules of Order, including without limitation:

- a. authorization and prior notice of the meeting and means of participation;*
- b. verification of membership and voting credentials;*
- c. reasonable opportunity to concurrently see, read or hear, participate and vote; and*
- d. record and maintain a record of any votes or other actions.*



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How can I find out more about the legislation?

There will be several [pre-conference information sessions](#) held to discuss specific legislation. All are encouraged to attend these sessions so that you can learn more details about the legislation and ask questions in advance. Day and evening sessions are being scheduled for the following:

- Legislative Information Sessions for the budget and A Journey of Hope: September 17 at 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.
- Legislative Information Sessions for Board of Pensions, Equitable Compensation and Camp Aldersgate: September 23 at 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.
- Legislative Information Sessions for all other legislation: September 29 at 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

What if I need help with technology?

All efforts will be made to accommodate those who need support with technology. Please monitor your email and the GNJ Digest for registration information, training announcements and more specific details for those who need assistance with technology.

What if I am unable to attend both sessions?

If for any reason the elected Lay Member cannot participate at the Annual Conference, s/he is responsible for passing on the Pre-Conference Journal and Handbook and any other program materials to the elected Alternate (Reserve) Lay Member. The Alternate (Reserve) Lay Member must get credentials by emailing conferencesecretary@gnjumc.org by September 15, 2020 so that they can receive proper voting credentials.

If I am not a member can I still participate?

Yes! All visitors are invited to join us by watching Annual Conference on YouTube. Information on how to watch will be posted on the website, in the GNJ Digest and on social media.

Will we take an offering?

One offering will be received for Miracles Everywhere and the Covid-19 Relief Fund at 12:15 p.m. on Monday, October 5. Come prepared to witness through your generous giving. [Donations can be made in advance here](#) or by mailing a check to:

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