

THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

DECEMBER 2020
Vol. LXIV/No. 12

gnjumc.org

May the birth and wonder of Jesus inspire new life for you this Christmas. Wishing you a blessed and peaceful holiday from GNJ.

Sharing Ministry Brings Vitality to Our Churches

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

Infusing vitality into our congregations looks a little different these days, but when done with love and compassion it can inspire others to grow and make disciples.

Rev. Han Seung Koh and the Korean Community Church of New Jersey is a living example of connectionalism that makes United Methodist ministry stronger. The church recently tithed a portion of PPP funding they received to the COVID-19 Relief Fund because they recognized the value of the ministry of churches in other communities who were denied this funding.

“We are very happy to be a church where we can share God’s love in this area when it is difficult due to the pandemic,” he said. “I have always been asking why the church exists. Of course, it is because of preaching the gospel to the world. That is why I think the church should participate in missions to the world. However, the world does not necessarily mean only overseas, but also our community.”

Since September 24 Korean Community along with Cornerstone UMC has been helping Galilee UMC, who

Continued on page 8



Three churches in Bergen County, NJ, have embraced the power of collaboration as they work together to feed the hungry in their community at Galilee UMC. Photo: Rev. Elouise Hill-Challenger

Two Churches Address Special Needs

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on the entire population, but for those more vulnerable, the impact has been isolating, debilitating and life-changing. For many intellectually or developmentally disabled, which according to the CDC make up about 24 percent of New Jersey’s population, the transition toward working from home may not be a simple path or impossible. As a result, many have been faced with the decision to either stay at their in-person jobs or forfeit their jobs in exchange for the safety of their homes.

Resources for individuals with disabilities can be found at www.drnj-covid.org/. If you have a similar ministry, we want to hear from you.

Mays Landing Food Ministry Stretches its Outreach

As relationships deepened through the First UMC of Mays Landing’s food ministry partnership with the Hamilton Township Cares initiative this summer, it was discovered that a local hotel, the Plaza Hotel, was home to homeless and disabled families.

“As our volunteers were delivering food to needy children from the school district, one family’s address was the hotel,” said Rev. Linda Ross. “After delivering the food, the volunteer contacted Amy Hassa (a school board member and licensed social worker), and Amy went over to find 20-30 people living there in terrible conditions.”

As the path toward helping others forged a new trail, Hassa contacted the mayor, police department and the department of health, prompting a deep clean of the facility.

The hotel’s residents were also added to the list of people on the Main Street Pantry client list, so they now receive food from Hamilton Township Cares monthly and from the school district weekly.

“Also, since Amy is a social worker, she has helped some residents find permanent housing,” Ross added.

The people living in the hotel come from all walks of life, most of whom released from Ancora Psychiatric Hospital with no place to go—disabled residents with special needs. Most people with intellectual and developmental disabilities require in-person care or critical therapeutic support in their living environments. Access to those services has been temporarily lost by many during the pandemic. According to a recent report from the New Jersey Disabilities COVID-19 Action Committee, adults with a disability experience food insecurity at twice the rate of those who do not have a disability. As this vulnerable population slips through the cracks of assistance and faces insurmountable financial challenges, churches in GNJ are digging deeper to help.

On Nov. 22 the team served a Thanksgiving Dinner to the residents living at the hotel.

Continued on page 6

Finding a Safe and Just Place to Call Home

New Local JFON Offers Hope to Immigrants

When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God

—LEVITICUS 19:33-34

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

For some immigrants, hard work, support from family and opportunities along the way allow them to achieve excellence; they have a voice to shape their own lives, a place to belong and room to thrive, but for the millions of undocumented immigrants, that trajectory has been broken or stymied by bureaucracy, language barriers and restrictions imposed amid the pandemic.



United Methodists recognize, embrace, and affirm all persons, regardless of country of origin, as members of the family of God. GNJ Hope Centers Justice for our Neighbors and First Friends of NY and NJ live out these social principles.

Recent immigration policies have jeopardized the lives of immigrants, the majority of whom are Latino and Black and are already living with the height-

ened terror of being torn from their families and homes. For many asylum seekers today, that path, often a solitary

Continued on page 7

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP

Happiness Isn't What It's Cracked Up to Be

Bishop John Schol



Our United States Constitution says that we have the unalienable right to the pursuit of happiness. In my life, I have pursued a number of things to experience happiness. I have pursued hobbies, friendships, vacations and even rooting for the Philadelphia Eagles, which doesn't bring much happiness these days.

In my pursuits, I came to learn that happiness is something external that changes my mood. Like the weather, if it is a sunny warm day, it brightens my spirit and gives a lift to my day. The weather affects my attitude. That is the problem with pursuing happiness; it depends on an external motivator to influence our feelings. One of the things I have learned along the way is to choose joy because happiness isn't enough.

The angel appeared to the shepherds announcing the birth of Jesus and said, "Do not be afraid, I bring you good news that will bring great joy to everyone."
—Luke 2:10

Here is the difference, we pursue things and people to be happy, but the Christmas story is that God pursued us so that we could enjoy and have life, abundant life.
—John 10:10

Happiness is external; joy rises up from within us.

Happiness is for a moment; joy is for a lifetime.

Happiness is pursued; joy rises up from within.

Happiness is pursuing something we do not have; joy is enjoying what we have.

Joy is God's life and salvation through Jesus Christ regardless of our condition, situation or surroundings. Joy is a gift; happiness is work. So, choose joy.

As I write this, it is at the anniversary of my mother's death, a sad time. Yet, my mother is in me and around me.

When I think of my mom, I smile and even laugh.

When I think of my mom, I see the love of Jesus.

When I think of my mom, I thank God.

Is it just an attitude, an experience, or something more. I think it is what the shepherds experienced out on the hillside — a sense of fear and yet a sense of joy that they were a part of God's unfolding story. Shepherds were the lowest class of people in that day. Their joy wasn't because of their social condition. It was a workday for the shepherds. Their joy wasn't because of what they were doing. No, their joy was a gift from God that wells up from the inside.

"HAPPINESS IS EXTERNAL;
JOY RISES UP FROM WITHIN US.

HAPPINESS IS FOR A MOMENT;
JOY IS FOR A LIFETIME.

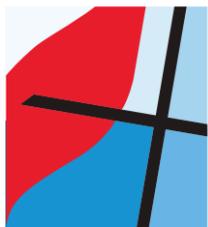
HAPPINESS IS PURSUED;
JOY RISES UP FROM WITHIN.

HAPPINESS IS PURSUING SOMETHING WE DO NOT HAVE;
JOY IS ENJOYING WHAT WE HAVE.

JOY IS GOD'S LIFE AND SALVATION THROUGH
JESUS CHRIST REGARDLESS OF OUR CONDITION,
SITUATION OR SURROUNDINGS. JOY IS A GIFT;
HAPPINESS IS WORK. SO, CHOOSE JOY."

—Bishop John Schol

There are many things this year that seek to steal our joy. In fact, there are more things trying to steal our joy than the amount of happiness that can be pursued. We each have a choice, to be overwhelmed by all the things that have occurred this year, or to receive God's gift of joy through Christ. I choose joy because happiness is not enough. 🇺🇸



THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

John R. Schol, Bishop

United Methodists of Greater New Jersey
205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune, NJ 07753

Heather Mistretta, Editorial Manager

732.359.1047 | hmistretta@gnjumc.org

Carolyn Conover, Director of Communications

732.359.1016 | cconover@gnjumc.org

Laura Canzonier, Communications Administrative Assistant

732.359.1063 | lcanzonier@gnjumc.org

Brittney Reilly, Online and Digital Communications Manager

732.359.1040 | breilly@gnjumc.org

Christopher G. Coleman, The Relay Designer

chris@cgcoleman.com

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

FOR ADVERTISING RATES, INFORMATION & PLACEMENT

Contact: communications@gnjumc.org

The United Methodist Relay (USPS 343-360) is published monthly by the United Methodists of Greater New Jersey. Office of Publication: Office of the Bishop, 205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753. Periodical Postage Paid at Red Bank, NJ and additional entry offices. Mailed free to selected lay leaders and clergy of each church. Others may subscribe at the rate of \$9.50 per year. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE RELAY, 205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753.



Clergy Renewal Services

We celebrate your resilience and hard work during this difficult time.

Recorded worship services will be available so clergy can take a break after Christmas.

Stay tuned to the GNJ Digest for more information.



UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY



Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others. - Cicero

1 United Methodists who make disciples of Jesus Christ by shining their light for others and letting them know they matter and are not alone.

2 The laity who have courageously stepped out to feed, comfort and bless others with their physically - but not spiritually - distant ministries.

3 The clergy who said here I am and opened up their hearts and minds to new things so that they give their best every day to God, the people of our congregations and the people throughout the world.

4 The more than 71,000 meals each month that have been distributed through food pantries, and the 40+ clergy who joined together to create the Breakthrough 2021 Series.

5 Hope Centers who have adapted to the new environment so that they continue to provide food, counseling, education and 80,000 diapers!

6 Next Gen Ministries who have created a whole new virtual world to young people so that they can continue to connect to God and support one another.

7 The United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey who has remained vigilant in protecting the assets of our congregations and offering tools to help them during this difficult time.

8 The Miracles Everywhere campaign that has bolstered its outreach this year to provide nearly \$1 million in grants for congregations' ministries through the COVID-19 Relief Fund.

9 Committee and agency leadership who have guided GNJ through uncharted territory, helping them make difficult decisions and continue to engage with each other.

10 Our commitment to work together toward ending the sin of racism through A Journey of Hope.

Church Steps Outside Comfort Zone to Help Others

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

BLAIRSTOWN, NJ

The spirit of unity is alive in the small town of Blairstown, NJ, where the First UMC Blairstown in partnership with other churches, local schools, Scouts and other organizations are feeding the hungry with conviction, compassion and strict safety measures.

Tapping into the strength and resilience of the community, each church is responsible for their own food pantry, which allows each church to have ownership of its food ministry. First UMC coordinates with five other food pantries: the Evangelical Free Church of Blairstown (second Saturday), the First Presbyterian Church in Blairstown (third Saturday), St. Jude's Catholic Church (fourth Saturday), the Knowlton UMC (last Saturday) and St. John's UMC in Hope (first three Mondays of each month).

Each pantry is independently operated, housed and supplied. There is also a food collection shed at the Blairstown Municipal Hall, marking the first time these groups have all worked together to collect and distribute food. It was loaned to the cause by Pastor Steve Stoltzfus from the Marksboro Community Church, who happens to also own a shed company called Stoltzfus Structures and Furniture.

At the small but mighty church of First UMC Blairstown, Rev. David Tillisch said, "We're the catalyst that keeps the ministry going. It's truly an ecumenical effort!" In one weekend in November they served a record 45 families through the food pantry, which was nearly 50% higher than what they normally see this time of year.

To keep everyone safe, they have modified the way they distribute food. Their pre-COVID free breakfast and pantry shopping model has evolved into an order form that clients are able to fill out, expressing exactly what they need, thereby reducing waste and setting up a new opportunity to engage with them on a personal level when they come to pick up their food.

"We've built relationships we never expected," said Tillisch. "I think they appreciate the personal connection from our volunteers."

Leading that personal connection is 83-year-old Claire Smith, the pantry coordinator who works three to four times every week with about 10 other volunteers. Grateful for her leadership and dedication, Tillisch said, "She's a blessing. She keeps the church plugging along."

The feeding program is a community effort every week, Tillisch emphasized. The local Office of Emergency Management stocks the pantries, and the schools, Scouts, Rotary Club and Lions Club host food drives to bolster supplies.

But the outreach stretches outside the boundaries of the church property. "Our ministry is not only touching the lives of the people who come to our food pantry, but the connections are also supporting those who generously support us."

He noted a woman from the community with no affiliation to the church who has been generous with the food pantry.

"Last month our pantry volunteers invited our clients to sign a thank you card for her," Tillisch recalled. "When she received it, she was so overwhelmed by this act of gratitude, that she wanted to save the card and put it in her family's yearbook as one of the meaningful things that happened to her this year. She later sent a thank you card to us!"

Tillisch recalled another woman who regularly visits the pantry for supplies.

"She said that this was the only food pantry she comes to in our area, because she feels so warmly greeted and cared about. Our volunteers are truly making a difference in the lives of our neighbors! Truly a great ministry!"

In addition to the food distribution, First UMC recently reopened its Clothing Collection Shed to provide much needed clothing for the people in the community as temperatures drop. They also provide

transportation and shopping services, primarily for older adults, and in October participated in a clean-up in the community that raised \$500 for ministry.

"This is small town America with a great deal of both poverty and affluence," said Tillisch. "Love your neighbor and unity



First UMC Blairstown has tapped into its community to feed the hungry and build relationships.

are our two main themes. What unites us is seeing humanity on both sides of the aisle."

On the weekend before Thanksgiving, the area pantries worked in unison to prepare 98 Thanksgiving baskets for area families. The baskets included turkey, all the trimmings, fresh cider and pies. 🍗

Marching Forward in a Brigade of Giving

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

DUMONT, NJ

For the past two months Calvary UMC has been a prolific bearer of good news in the form of food and clothing as the pandemic weighs down on the people living in its local communities including Dumont, NJ.

Rev. Elaine Wing, along with her congregation of Calvary UMC has been modeling the teachings of Jesus to love our neighbors by opening up the building and parking lot to those in need in New Jersey and to their neighbors across the border in New York; and making disciples by opening their hearts and minds to work with local organizations to bolster the ecumenical effort.

"Jesus taught us to be his hands, voice, feet and heart...I'm so grateful for recent forms of ministry at and through Calvary UMC!" said Wing who has partnered with the nonprofit, The Food Brigade, an organization that is leading the way toward helping others lead vital lives.

At Calvary UMC, which serves as home base for The Food Brigade, food ministry is growing in tandem with the rising demand. Just before Thanksgiving the team provided more than 200 families (771 kids) with food boxes after a two-week closure at the public schools resulted in a shuttering of the free lunch program. Also, a local Boy Scout troop distributed over 500 letters to homeowners around the church to invite their involvement as recipients of free food/milk and to volunteer.

"Both of our tenant churches have decided to participate in this ministry as well; they distribute to families from the weekly allotment given to Calvary," said Wing.

On Nov. 18 a total of 49,950 pounds of food (24.975 tons), plus 1,404 gallons of milk, was distributed to persons living in five New Jersey counties. Eighty-five of



Members of Calvary UMC in Dumont are unloading food for The Food Brigade.

those boxes were distributed by members and friends of Calvary and Church of the Good Shepherd to family, neighbors and co-workers.

Each week the formidable group seems to eclipse their previous record. On Nov. 11 The Food Brigade had conducted its largest operation to date, distributing 27,000 pounds of food (13.5 tons) — plus 864 gallons of milk. Each week the group seems to eclipse the previous week's record.

The partnership with The Food Brigade started back in April when food boxes were supplied by a contact who represented the North American Turkish Muslim Association. Those boxes of food were brought into Calvary where people selected what they wanted, filling bags with fresh produce. Not long after, Wing said, the principals at The Food Brigade connected with larger food assistance networks and applied for grants, which allowed them to have a broader outreach.

And that outreach has grown tentacles. "Growing numbers of our church members are requesting boxes to distribute to neighbors, co-workers, extended family," said Wing who regularly encourages her members who are unable to give finan-

cially to find new families in need.

"This past Wednesday we had 20 extra boxes. The administrative assistant at Leonia UMC took five boxes to homeless and displaced families in Palisades Park. He was over the moon with gratitude. I know he will be back for a higher number of boxes."

Throughout this time, the group has also shared with

the food insecure neighbors to the north including Spring Valley UMC in Rockland County, NY, as well as the Nueva Vida ministry of Ridgefield Park UMC where the ministry primarily reaches day laborers.

And the outreach stretches beyond the boundaries of United Methodists too.

"We've made inroads with our Jewish brothers and sisters. They helped with the second free clothing event," said Wing. "The stories go on and on. Partnership is the way of ministry for the future! We are doing great things for God by working together!"

But the ministry doesn't stop at food. In addition to food distribution, Calvary UMC is also distributing clothing. A recent clothing giveaway provided 40 families with clothing to keep them warm this winter.

"I love the fact that we have a mountain of clothing bags in our sanctuary," said Wing. "I'm smiling, and I think Jesus would be smiling as well!" She added that recovery groups have also continued in their church building with the enforcement of strict social distance guidelines.

Earlier this year church leaders put a bin by the double white doors behind its church to collect new clothing, diapers,

formula (Similac Advance and/or Pro Advance) gift cards and more.

"I am so grateful for the many ways our congregations at Calvary and Good Shepherd have embraced a partnership with The Food Brigade. We continue to explore new partnerships and draw on old relationships."

In December Calvary UMC will open the doors to its fellowship hall for the annual Dumont Holiday Toy Giveaway for local families unable to purchase holiday presents for their children. Each of these activities are done with utmost care and concern for safety against COVID-19.

Each initiative is a team effort, and Wing makes sure to show her appreciation.

"I give thanks for those who keep the wheels of the church turning smoothly behind the scenes—Vivian Bosetti, Lynn Dyer, John Bruton, Jimmy Hayer, Nancy Hutchinson, Joan Davis, Karen Ravensbergen, Tanya Zimmerman and Pat Bruger. I'm grateful for Dale Hutchinson who has cared for the church property, mowing the grass and raking leaves since last spring. And I'm thankful for Tony Lee who tended the church garden, harvesting crops for hungry families.

The families who sacrificed their talent and money to build our church would be amazed at how lives continue to be transformed by God's healing love experienced at and through 185 W. Madison Ave."

Wing is a constant presence in her community, serving along with the her fellow Food Brigade board member, Karen DeMarco, at the town's "Stigma-Free Committee," which raises awareness of mental illness and creates a culture where residents who have the disease feel supported by their community and feel free to seek treatment for the disease without fear of stigma or feelings of isolation and shame.

To find out more about what Calvary UMC and the Church of Good Shepherd are doing, visit www.calvarydumont.com and www.cgs-umc.org. 🍗

Leading by Example to Create Pathways for Growth

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

The all-new GNJ Leadership Academy is connecting clergy and laity alike, resulting in stronger relationships, renewed confidence and the implementation of new techniques that are making worship and ministry richer and more fulfilling.

“Our goal is to have the best clergy and congregational leaders for the world who are leading the church forward and into the community with excellence,” said Rev. Juel Nelson, who is GNJ’s director of leadership development. “Christ-centered leaders are a catalyst to achieving the mission of the church through our congregation’s vision and goals.”

The academy will be expanding to provide year-round learning for clergy and laity. The goal is to create a pathway for learning where courses build upon one another and have clear outcomes that develop Christian leaders and church vitality.

“The vision is achievable,” said Nelson. “In 2021 GNJ will build on our current leadership development work and introduce the new expanded GNJ Leadership Academy with the goal of supporting laity and clergy, as they seek to develop their gifts and graces as transformational leaders, and guide their congregations to greater health and fruitfulness.”

The new program kicked off this October with Director of Worship Lan Wilson leading “Navigating Worship in the New Day.” For months Wilson has been building on his already extensive foundation to create new avenues for clergy and laity who are searching for new songs, unique worship ideas and technology that adapts to the virtual environment.

“Lan is an engaging instructor who facilitated and encouraged interaction via multiple means to support participation and encourage critical thinking about what we were looking to obtain from the course,” said Rev. Dr. Mark Tarmann of First UMC of Hammonton.

“Many of the perils I face are also being experienced by many others and in acknowledgement of that, we were able to brainstorm and incorporate Lan’s and other participants recommendations,” said Tarmann who said he has since shifted from PowerPoint to Worship Extreme.

Tarmann said that he learned new ways of uniting virtual and in-person worship. “Through his personal experience, Lan gave relatable non-virtually related advice, such as getting rid of the clutter and making the opening and closing of worship messages “mind blowing” for which I have put into practice with positive feedback from our members.”

In November, Chuck DeCamp, of Haddonfield UMC, chair of GNJ’s Commission on Communications and IGNITE stage producer, led the program, “Making Worship Work Behind the Scenes” in which he explored a toolbox of worship and technology. He helped participants create a customized worship plan to embrace something new, learn best practices and incorporate worship technology as part of an overall experience to grow leadership skills in an effort to take a team to the next level through communication, recruitment and organization.

With this new-found enthusiasm in hand, the GNJ Leadership Academy will resume its programming in 2021, ringing in the new year with a program about small groups in January.

“These Small Groups Make a Difference” will be hosted in January with



The GNJ Leadership Academy, which began with Lan Wilson’s “Navigating the Worship in the New Day,” will continue in January with a program centered around small groups. This training will be accessible via computer, smartphone or non-Wifi compatible phone.

Music – So what do we do?

- Use pre-recording where possible
- Have a single song leader/soloist
- If using ensembles, no more than 3 to 4 people (masked is strongly recommended) standing 12 feet from audience and 6 feet from each other.
- No mic sharing. Wipe and sanitize between uses
- Do not encourage congregational singing. But not necessary to police it. Just give notice that it is not recommended.

Rev. Gina Yeske, director of small groups, Daniel Jimenez and Vivian Naa-Awa Nelson-Appiah, small group developers.

Exploring the dynamics of sharing, learning, prayer and action, this program scheduled for three Thursday evenings will focus on unique styles of gathering that have moved small groups from an activity to a lifestyle: Supper Groups, Covenant Groups and Children’s Groups.

This training can be accessed via computer, smartphone or non-Wifi compatible phone. It will equip participants with the tools needed to develop, promote and lead transformational small groups in their local church setting and virtually. It is recommended for those who engage in the ministry of small groups, currently lead or are interested in leading a small group in their congregation.

In February GNJ’s Director of Mission Ashley Wilson along with Rev. Luana Cook Scott of Morristown UMC and Hope Center Developer Andrea Wren-Hardin will lead three Wednesday evening sessions of “Missional Engagement that Opens Hearts, Minds and Doors,” where participants will learn best practices for engaging in mission that is relational, transformative and uses the gifts and assets of a church and community.

This course is recommended for mission and outreach committees, clergy and those interested in developing hands-on mission in their communities.

The enthusiasm to grow together has been contagious since the GNJ Leadership Academy’s onset, and the prospect for more growth looks likely.

“The potential that is before us is truly energizing,” said Nelson who noted that 90,000 disciples in GNJ are invited on this journey.

“GNJ wants to come alongside you on your journey. The Leadership Academy courses will require your commitment, but in exchange you will grow in a deeper understanding, receive honest constructive feedback, develop new

skills and form new relationships, that will help strengthen your leadership and impact in ministry.”

For more details, including a record-

ing of the first program, and to register (deadline is one week prior to the start of each session), visit www.gnjumc.org/2020-leadership-academy/.



THE ALL NEW GNJ LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Partnering laity and clergy to engage in new ministries for a changing church.

These Small Groups Make a Difference
Coming this January!

From Sunday School and Covenant Groups to Supper Groups and Book Studies, embrace your small group with others.

Jan. 7, 14 & 21 | Thursdays, 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

with Rev. Gina Yeske, Director of Small Groups and Daniel Jimenez and Vivian Naa-Awa Nelson-Appiah, Small Group Developers

FOR DETAILS AND REGISTRATION:
www.gnjumc.org/2020-leadership-academy

Special Needs

Continued from page 1

"Two of our members cooked the Thanksgiving meal in our church kitchen. They packed up individual meals for our shut-in seniors. Then they went, along with Amy Hassa, Mickey Riffin and other volunteers, to serve the meal in the hotel parking lot," said Ross.

"I'm sure I saw big smiles behind those masks!"

Ross added that discussions are underway to start a small group ministry at the hotel.

This story is a follow up to "First UMC of Mays Landing: Feeding the Hungry in Southern NJ" in the July Relay.

Hope and Possibility Still Alive at Roseland UMC

It was a little over a year ago when the Community of Hope Center at Roseland UMC in Fairfield, NJ, opened A-cad-e-ME for the elderly, youth and those with special needs throughout the community to make it stronger and more sustainable and to serve as a good model for others to replicate.

Two years earlier Roseland UMC, led by Rev. Michael Kim, and Fairfield UMC had merged under the guidance of former Gateway North District Superintendent Manuel Sardiñas so that resources could be combined to renovate the buildings that needed extensive repairs and protect the future of the church.

Today, with the philosophy that all things are possible for people who are



First UMC Mays Landing has extended its food ministry to include the homeless.

intellectually or developmentally disabled, the Hope Center continues to offer programs, employment services and job placement services virtually during a time when their clients need them most.

The organization has over 65 individuals working in the community using these services.

"The center itself has been profitable and has been completely self-sustaining," said Ted Mayer, a lay leader of Roseland UMC who was one of the

catalysts behind the new Hope Center, bringing with him extensive experience in serving the special needs population. He added that it is generating more than \$3,500 per month in rental income for these services.

"That money flows back to Roseland and has kept both the administrative staff's and the pastors' salaries there current without taking a penny of PPE money," said Mayer.

He estimated that if the educational classes led by Fairfield-based A-cad-e-ME were live, the rental income would likely be double that. Mayer's son, Clarke leads classes in photography, computer design, CPR, food prep, music, gardening, job

coaching, English-as-a-Second-Language, Spanish, Chinese and filmmaking. There's even a greenhouse being planned in the yard to serve as another learning center for students.

A-cad-e-ME is for students who are eager to learn skills tailored specifically to their interests. The group's mission is to prepare people to work with time, education and the needed skills. Their courses offer opportunities to master practical skills for career advancement

training or personal enrichment. Prior to the pandemic, this all happened in an engaging modern classroom environment at Roseland UMC.

"The center itself is doing well along with outreach to two other churches that have nowhere else to go, providing us with additional sources of revenue," said Mayer. "All in all, given both the challenges many churches and their congregations are facing, we truly have been blessed."

As noted by Mayer, the proceeds of this program are in part returned to the church, so that as the program grows, it becomes a sustainable solution to financial shortfalls that many churches face.

A year ago, Mayer said, "This model gives hope to churches who may be struggling with their identity and their future, creating new vitality." Those words have only become amplified in the last several months as quarantining has kept many of their clients sequestered to their homes, and churches struggle with creating enough sustainable revenue.

Gateway North District Superintendent William M. Williams III recently met with Mayer who again expressed a strong interest in developing more hope centers like this one.

"We talked about a sustainable niche being created as a result of the pandemic for this type of ministry. We're both willing to invest conversation and knowledge into churches that want to build a similar model of hope in their communities. I'm excited about the possibilities." 🇺🇸

Answering the Call for Help at Asbury UMC

*"Here is what we seek:
a compassion that can stand
in awe at what the poor have
to carry rather than stand in
judgment at how they carry it."*

—FATHER GREG BOYLE

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

After being kicked out of the 24/7 post office where she had been living, May migrated to the Walmart parking lot where she collected carts to serve as her shelter. When once again she was told to leave, May called for help, and the people of Asbury UMC in Cinnaminson were there to respond.

May wound up remaining in the care of Asbury UMC for the next six months, having been transferred to a more permanent home. After she died in November 2019, the church hosted a funeral in her memory. The same care and absence of judgment shown to May continued for other homeless people into 2020, with the effort ramping up in March when the pandemic set in.

"We start with the letter 'a' and we're on Route 130. We simply answer our phone," said Rev. John Doll who added that in addition to being in a convenient location, Asbury UMC since the pandemic began has provided 500 nights of housing to the homeless in its community by setting them up in local motels.

The demand has escalated in recent months as COVID-19 restrictions shut down public restrooms, limit store hours and strangle finances. This past April alone the people of Asbury UMC helped 13 people with 89 nights of housing. In October they provided 46 nights to about 10 people. In addition to providing a place to stay, they are also meeting many requests for emergency food assistance.



Asbury UMC members Jeff Gural and Vandella Poe shared their journeys of faith to help the homeless live with dignity.

Doll, who refers to them as "homeless guests," recalled a family of five who were living out of their car in the hospital parking lot.

"This was before we officially started The Good Neighbor Outreach. This family—Dad was working—no substance abuse issues—mother taking care of three young children while he worked. They had moved out of their home and their new place did not yet have a certificate of occupancy. What this family went through and what our church did to help them was very profound. The family worshipped with us at church for a while—however their new place took them 45 minutes away."

There are many more stories, each with their own details and circuitous routes. There was a single mother who was employed but was not able to cover all her expenses; then there was another person who needed a temporary place to stay before drug rehab; and there have been several elderly disabled people who had nowhere else to go.

"Without the Good Neighbor Outreach program (which originally began in May 2019), people would be living in their cars, on the street, at bus depots or in

the woods," said Doll. "The needs of the homeless are really profound right now, but we are not in this alone."

According to Feeding America, job loss and other economic crises associated with the pandemic could push the rate of food insecurity in Burlington County from 7.5 percent to 12.3 percent by the end of the year.

The passion to help others will not wane. Doll emphasized that in addition to several people in his church who are dedicated to this cause, people throughout the Cinnaminson area have stepped in to help, like the Catholic Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a local Pentecostal church, the Triboro Clergy Association's emergency fund and Epworth UMC in Palmyra.

Also helping to fund the ministry was a \$5,000 grant from GNJ's COVID-19 Relief Fund.

Two people instrumental in making a profound impact on the homeless at Asbury UMC have been Jeff Gural and Vandella Poe who shared their walks of faith as part of a Sunday sermon in November called "Filling Our Lamps."

Gural, a 20-year church member and a retired police captain who also complet-

ed tours in both Afghanistan and Iraq before retiring from the military, said, "No one has ever accused me of being a bleeding heart. But I went into this with an open heart. I used to believe that the homeless had made bad decisions and that's why they are there...but they don't want to be where they're at. It is so important to help these people."

Poe referred to their plight as being an "ambassador to Christ." She added, "Homelessness is non-discriminating," adding that in spite of their differences, "the one thing that remains the same is the look of hope on their faces."

The people of Asbury UMC plan to continue to offer hope and an open door, carrying the burdens of these homeless people in their community on their shoulders for as long as they need to with compassion and without any judgment as to what path they took to be in this predicament. 🇺🇸

For more information on the ministries at Asbury UMC, visit www.facebook.com/groups/133375580054705. To view the "Filling Our Lamps" service, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4IHZaf1q6A&feature=youtu.be>.

Immigrants

Continued from page 1

one, is riddled with pitfalls that have only become exacerbated by COVID-19 and the economic and healthcare challenges the pandemic brings.

Throughout GNJ's history, churches have been committed to the United Methodist philosophy of engaging in ministries of mercy and justice that support the immigrant community. A special task force of people throughout GNJ sustains that commitment by providing leadership and resources on this issue through the GNJ Board of Church and Society. Rev. Tanya Bennett, who chairs the committee, has pivoted the group's focus toward anti-racism.

Also helping to ensure the safety and wellbeing of immigrants are the GNJ Hope Centers, First Friends of NJ & NY and the newly formed Justice For Our Neighbors (JFON) of Delaware Valley.

"We want to be where they are," said Salvacion who added that by eliminating the distance undocumented immigrants have to travel and ensuring that they don't miss vital court dates, they are making the justice they deserve more accessible to them. "We will never turn away an immigrant in need based on an inability to pay legal fees."

The regional team is prepared to help their clients with preparing immigration forms, visa applications and citizenship documents; preparing applications for political asylum, temporary protected status and US-visas; counseling immigrant clients about their rights and about U.S. immigration and nationalization laws; and litigating immigration cases before the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. District and Appellate courts.

Salvacion noted that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has become so connected to some local police departments.

UMC, 235 N. 4th Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19106. Electronic donations may be made via the Historic St. George's UMC website, www.historicstgeorges.org, by clicking on the "Donate to JFON Now" button.

Friends For Life

On February 19, 1999, with a tourist visa in hand, 15-year-old Rosa Santana emigrated by herself to the United States from Honduras to meet her mother. In 2010, following the detainment of her uncle, she started volunteering at First Friends of New Jersey and New York, another one of A Future With Hope's Hope Centers.

She worked hard to get him released. That turned into a part-time job a year later and then into the role as a full-time program director for the organization that for 23 years has provided compassion and hope for immigrants through volunteer visitation, resettlement assistance, advocacy and compassion.

Santana said, "Our goal is to make sure their dignity is respected, and their rights are not being violated. We need to hold community officials accountable."

Among other services like resettlement and advocacy, First Friends provides money to detainees so that they can make phone calls to family; operates a letter writing service in the detainee's native language so they can stay connected to the outside world; and they recently set up a video conferencing system so families can visit safely.

She added, there are about 700 adults detained in the four facilities in Bergen, Hudson and Essex Counties and at the Elizabeth Detention Center. This is down from the 2,200 being detained prior to the pandemic. Nationwide as of August 8 there were more than 21,000 immigrants being detained with more than 4,500 cases of COVID-19.

"People have been here for many years, and many are essential workers. Many of them pay taxes, but they can't get the money they need for vital things like healthcare," Santana said.

Now with a \$25,000 grant from the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund and in partnership with Church World Service, First Friends will be able to provide those detainees with vital supplies once they are released.

"The community is very vulnerable. They need an immense amount of help," said Santana who recalled an immigrant from El Salvador released a year ago after spending two years in detention. He recently lost his job because of the pandemic so remaining outside of detention will be difficult for him.

Santana has recently left First Friends to work at the New York Immigrant Freedom Fund/Brooklyn Community Bail Fund where she will continue to help those in detention while also serving as the Detainee Advocate at the Hudson County Jail and a member of the Essex County Civilian Task Force.

Advocates for this underserved population abound in GNJ, some of whom can empathize in part with their plight as it reflects their own experiences.

At 16, Rev. Kay Dubuisson emigrated to the United States from Haiti along with her mother and three siblings. Although her mother never learned to read and write, Dubuisson embraced any opportunity that came her way, including an education. Now the pastor at Spring Valley UMC, she is reminded how difficult life can be for an immigrant as her church continues to serve the diverse community with food and love.

"Many of our people are immigrants, undocumented ones. They are fearful, but as United Methodists we are called to love our neighbors and that is what we are doing.

"I've been there. I know what they are going through. They need to know they matter," Dubuisson said. "We welcome them in our midst. We will not inflict any harm on them. We love them no matter what their past holds. And it's more than just food. It's the camaraderie, trust, conversation, prayer, a hug. We just open our arms and accept them the way they are." 🇺🇸

"FOR ME IMMIGRATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN PART OF THE STORY. IN ONE SENSE I'M TRYING TO PAY IT BACK."

—Rev. Mark Salvacion, executive director of JFON of Delaware Valley

"For me immigration has always been part of the story. In one sense I'm trying to pay it back," said Rev. Mark Salvacion, executive director of JFON of Delaware Valley (25 percent of his appointment), a pastor at St. Georges UMC in Philadelphia and a lawyer for the past 20+ years.

But at the core of his wealth of experience is the fact that he is a first generation American of Filipino parents who emigrated here in the 1950s. He recalled how when his father who was a well-respected medical doctor faced an order of deportation in 1962, his patients and members of his community took action by starting a letter writing campaign. This grassroots effort led to Congressman Peter Frelinghuysen introducing a private bill that made it possible for his father to remain in the United States. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 furthered this effort by putting an end to long-standing national-origin quotas that favored those from northern and western Europe and led to a significant immigration demographic shift in America.

Fast forward 55 years and JFON is striving to make a difference in the lives of all immigrants no matter their country of origin. According to Salvacion, who left a long career as a corporate lawyer to use his legal skills for something good, they are 85-90 percent more likely to be deported without a lawyer.

The organization is a ministry of hospitality that welcomes immigrants by providing affordable, high-quality immigration legal services to low-income immigrants, engaging in advocacy for immigrants' rights and offering education to communities of faith and the public.

From the Roma "gypsies" of Romania to Mexican day laborers to Dominicans, Hondurans and other people escaping persecution and violence, the new JFON team is already providing legal services on a pro-bono basis and protecting immigrants from the many who prey on their vulnerability and lack of resources.

Now with a more regional focus, JFON of Delaware Valley will focus its efforts on underserved rural farming communities within the Delaware Valley, including Kennett Square, PA, Hammonton, NJ, and Georgetown DE, by setting up regional legal clinics on a regular basis and providing P.O. boxes at local churches where important mail, often containing court order appearance dates, can be received. A mailbox has already been set up in Millville.

"A simple traffic stop can result in a detention," he said, adding that in as little as 36 hours the immigrant may be back in detention.

In an effort to avoid this exchange by bringing the legal counsel they need to where they live and work, two regional clinics are planned for February 20 and March 20 at First UMC in Bridgeton, NJ. Due to COVID restrictions and cleaning protocols, JFON-Delaware Valley will be setting appointments for 12 clients each day. The group has been partnering with the Migrant Farm Worker Legal Clinic at Villanova University for advice and resources.

"As time goes on, we will offer childcare at the clinics and expect to see dozens of clients at each clinic," said Rev. Tom Lank, Northeastern Jurisdiction Volunteers in Mission Coordinator who is facilitating this new GNJ Hope Center along with Cricket Denton Brennan, a lay leader from Seaville UMC who is also studying at Drew Theological School for a M.Div.

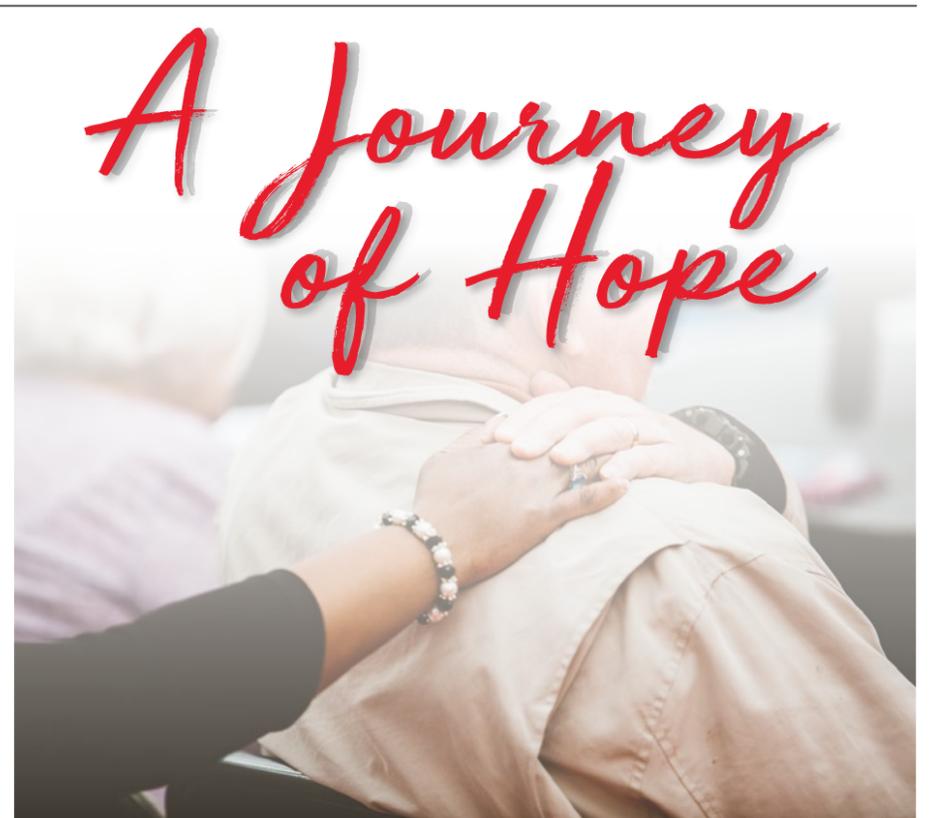
JFON-Delaware Valley needs more funding for services like translations and to counteract things like the budget cuts to departments like U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services under Homeland Security, a new \$50 fee for asylum filing, delays in the issuance of employment authorization documents and other inflating fees.

"The Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment is being violated," said Lank who said the process of getting green cards is harder and more expensive because of it.

The group has qualified for a matching grant offered by the national JFON organization that will match up to \$40,000 raised on a dollar-for-dollar basis. If the matching grant fundraising meets this goal, JFON will have raised its first \$80,000 in operating funds. This will also allow them to become the 20th affiliate of the national JFON, which can provide them with valuable resources and close the gap of services that now exists between New York and Baltimore.

Lank noted that the local organization has also received a GNJ Peace With Justice Grant, a generous donation from Haddonfield UMC as well as other diverse funding sources including individuals, granting organizations, churches and immigration-related nonprofits. They have also applied for a Community Outreach Grant.

Prospective donors may support Delaware Valley JFON by writing a check payable to "Delaware Valley JFON" and sending the check to Historic St. George's



GNJ is committed to working together to end the sin of racism.

A PLAN TO END THE SIN OF RACISM

For details: www.gnjumc.org/journeyofhope

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

An Extended Family of Visionaries Who Count Their Blessings One Day at a Time

“The loud, boisterous noises of the world make us deaf to the soft, gentle, and loving voice of God. A Christian leader is called to help people hear that voice and so be comforted and consoled.”

—HENRI J. M. NOUWEN,
IN THE NAME OF JESUS:
REFLECTIONS ON CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

It is in those moments spent away from the “boisterous noises of the world” that Rev. Eusun Kim finds peace and helps others to work through their struggles by listening to the “loving voice of God,” whether it is in the sanctuary, over the phone, at the dinner table with his family or during a motorcycle ride.

“We need to turn our attentions to God, rather than our own fear. Faith is fear management. This time gives us the opportunity to lean into God more,” said Eusun who for the past eight years has been the pastor at St. Andrew’s UMC in Spring Lake. In his spare time, he serves as chaplain for the charitable organization known as Blue Knights Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club, Monmouth County, Chapter 15.

Eusun is one of the 12 pastors in his family as well as the husband of GNJ’s Director of Human Resources and Superintending Support Team Jay Kim, who emigrated to the United States along with her family in 1972.

The strong sense of faith and an authenticity that draws people to them began seven decades ago when his grandmother, Woo Jin Kang, who had been widowed much like many Korean women during that time, was so moved by a visit from Methodist missionaries and their generous spirit during the Korean War in the early-1950s that she and her children converted from Buddhism to Christianity.

“That sense of faith filtered down into the rest of our family, including my father,” said Eusun, referring to Bishop Hae Jong Kim, who while working for a U.S. Marine Corps Chaplain as an interpreter, translating sermons before Korean audiences, decided to enter into ministry.

Hae was the first in his family to emigrate to the United States in 1961 at the age of only 17 after studying at a seminary in Seoul. He later facilitated his family’s entry into the country. After earning a Master of Divinity from the Methodist Theological School in Ohio in 1964, he began his pastoral ministry serving various types of churches in the Northern New Jersey Annual Conference.

Letting God guide him down a gentle but deliberate path, Hae founded the Korean Community Church, among the first Korean churches in New Jersey, serving the rapidly growing immigrant population. As a bridge person who facilitated the immigrants’ transition, he worked for the Northern NJ Annual Conference and other agencies developing Korean ministry strategies. He was

the opportunity to share her culture with others.

Wha-Sei died September 10 of this year, followed shortly thereafter by Hae’s death on November 3. Their unwavering commitment to each other enhanced and strengthened their ministry, and, as Jay said with affection, it was likely Wha-Sei who called for her husband to meet her in heaven.

not lost on their children, but as Eusun said, “That calling is always looming in your head as a PK (pastor’s kid). But I needed to detox as a PK to make sure my calling was authentic.”

Eusun said learning that his brother, Eugene had received his calling was a relief to him, allowing him to experience life before worrying about what the next step would be. After studying at Rutgers University, where he first met his wife who also studied there, Eusun started an entry-level job in the secular world working with children. It was here that his calling snuck up on him...it was also after he had proposed to Jay.

Jay, a first generation American, never experienced formal ministry from her parents like Eusun did while growing up in New Jersey, but she did learn what it meant to have a strong faith and be kind and genuine to others. Her father, Kakkoo Kang, and her mother, Yang Soon Kim (a surname she corrected after she proudly told me that Korean women traditionally keep their maiden names) were founding members of the Calvary Korean Church In East Brunswick. Becoming lay elders, they were instrumental in growing the church into what it has become today.

“I always thought my mom could have gone into ministry. She prayed every morning and was always feeding others in the community,” said Jay who added that her mom’s wish that her daughter marry a pastor came true much to her delight.

A path toward ministry was not what Jay had planned, but she said, “The first time I saw Eusun preach, I saw his true heart.” She added that it is this generous heart that has encouraged their teenage daughters, Sofia and Gabrielle to embrace their faith and lead their lives with kindness. Sofia is currently volunteering for a Washington, DC-based organization that provides outreach for Asian-American survivors of domestic violence, and Gabrielle is still a high school student whose passion is art.

Jay said that teaching Sunday school over the years has filled her desire to be a teacher, adding, “Faith is the cornerstone of how we live. We try to instill that in our girls every day.”

Whether he is counseling church members or his fellow members of Blue Knights who sometimes have had their faiths challenged, Eusun sees each experience as a blessing no matter how different their backgrounds may be from his own. As he continues to lead what happens to be his ninth church, Eusun seems proud to carry on the legacy and the lessons learned that started so many years ago with an absence of judgment and a large amount of compassion and humor. He is grateful for that opportunity. 🇺🇸



TOP: Jay and Rev. Eusun Kim;
CENTER: Kakkoo Kang, Wha-Sei Park Kim, Bishop Hae Jong Kim and Yang Soon Kim;
BOTTOM: Eusun and Jay’s daughters Sofia and Gabrielle.

an advocate for ethnic minority causes as well as having strong links to the Methodist Church in South Korea.

Always by his side for 57 years was his high school sweetheart and Eusun’s mother, Wha-Sei Park Kim, also a caring advocate for many Korean immigrants, including Korean orphans, helping them navigate a new country. Wha-Sei’s smile reflected the abundance of joy she found in life as a servant to God. It gave her great pleasure to serve others, especially her family and faith community, and she relished

In addition to developing 15 Korean churches, Hae became the first immigrant, Korean American bishop in 1995, serving until 2005. He was also the first Korean American district superintendent. He earned a Doctor of Ministry and an honorary Ph.D. from Drew Theological Seminary.

He was an inspiring preacher, storyteller, writer and often expressed himself through painting, poetry, photography and hymn writing. He enjoyed reading, movies, music and traveled the world.

This large dose of spirituality, inspiration and wisdom from his parents was

Sharing Ministry

Continued from page 1

has been hosting its “Grab and Go Free Community Dinner,” now feeding more than 100 people a week.

“We are grateful that we are serving a great need and addressing the food insecurities that are existing in the community,” said Galilee UMC’s Rev. Elouise Hill-Challenger. “These two churches have come alongside Galilee in providing the meal and allowing our vision to come to fruition. We are very grateful to them for their generosity,” said Hill-Challenger, who added that they provide meals for two weeks out of every month.

“Because of them we are able to distribute meals weekly as opposed to once or twice per month.”

Rev. Han Seung Koh is also grateful for the opportunity to help and enhance their strong outreach across the world.

“Our church has supported financially several missionaries overseas. Not only that, we have been running a congregation and an English school for Spanish-speaking people in this community for over 10 years.”

But when he heard about what Galilee UMC was doing, he presented the idea to his missions committee who readily accepted it.

“Now our church provides 130 hot meals on Thursday evening once every three weeks. The mission committee, the UMM and UMW are taking turns taking part.”

As the pandemic takes its toll on this northern New Jersey community, these churches are collaborating and sharing their strengths. Together they are stron-

ger, feeding the hungry and doing their part to help those families who have faced job loss, health issues and a widening gap between wages and the cost of basics. With more people expected to slip below the poverty line in the next few months, this food ministry is vital to their futures. 🇺🇸

PLEASE NOTE: Shared ministries and all billable payments are due on Dec. 30 to meet all GNJ obligations. Recognizing that congregations finishing the end of the year and receiving offerings right up to Dec. 31 makes it hard for some congregations to send final shared ministry and billable payments, there is a grace period until Jan. 12, 2021 for those who need additional time to process end-of-the-year gifts. The latest to submit payments is Jan. 12, 2021.

We've Come This Far by Faith for Such a Time as This

God is Sovereign, He's on the throne and lord over all. He has a plan and is at work on behalf of His people!... "For such a time as this."

—ESTHER 4:14

By Virgil Williams
St. John's United Methodist Church

BERLIN, NJ

St. John's United Methodist Church of West Berlin, NJ, led by Pastor Teaira Parker, hosted a weekend event that included a Drive-thru Dinner on October 24 and a walk for Breast Cancer Awareness on October 25.

During these unprecedented times, it was a joyful weekend event to share with congregants, families and friends. Many of St. John's parishioners donated traditional African cuisine for the meals that afternoon. It was a festive occasion, a beautiful day, and close to 100 meals were joyfully shared as the folks drove through.

The Breast Cancer Walk was held at the West Berlin County Park. The



St. John's UMC in West Berlin hosted a local Breast Cancer Awareness Walk in part to honor the memory of the 12 parishioners who have been stricken with the disease in the past 20 years.

overcast skies seem to predict rain, and walk coordinator Mamie Brown said, "I prayed that the rain would hold back until the walk was over." Reflecting the theme of the day, "Faith Over Fear," God provided a beautiful day.

There have been 12 St. John's parishioners stricken with breast cancer during the past two decades. Of that number, three went home to glory.

"We've Come This Far by Faith" is a song popular with the St. John's congregation and is an inspiration as they lead

ministry through the pandemic. They hold prayer and song services in their parking lot and gather monthly, socially distanced, for worship. They lift their hearts, minds and voices in one accord as God works through all people for such a time as this. 🇺🇸

St. Paul's UMC Lifts Up a Neighbor in Need

By Denise Herschel
Nj6pack@yahoo.com

BRICK, NJ

Serving in mission is a part of the DNA in the congregation at St. Paul's UMC in Brick, so when COVID-19 travel restrictions cancelled their mission trips, the congregation moved to local needs and partners to keep on serving.

Partnering with Cypress Missions, teams from St. Paul's renovated the Bethel AME Church Ford Center's food pantry and clothing closet in Asbury Park so that the church can serve the people in need.

The group worked tirelessly on many projects including painting the exterior of the building, general construction and electrical, organizing and installing new shelves for inventory and installing a new sign.

Douglas Buechler, chair of the Missions Ministry at St. Paul's UMC, said

at the beginning of the pandemic they slowed their gatherings "to help flatten the curve," but that when July came around, they started to work wearing masks and working in separate areas.

"COVID didn't stop us from wanting to help people. Every Wednesday, this food pantry has lines of people waiting past Springwood Avenue two hours before it opens. When we learned that this historic building could use some updating to serve the community better, now and for years to come, we mobilized," said Freddie Fiorentino of Cypress Missions who after inspecting the building noticed several repair issues that needed to be addressed.

"The work at the church began last November. The work at the Ford Center's food pantry, a few blocks from the church, began on July 9, 2020. Both projects are essentially complete...one or two workdays for finishing touches. When the churches are allowed full services again, we look forward to a day of worship and fellowship with our friends at Bethel AME," he said.

Renovations and improvements at the church involved sealing windows, replacing doors, insulating and sheet rocking a small room, painting and minor electrical repairs. The site of the Ford Center's food pantry holds a place in history for music lovers. In December 1928, Fats Waller and Andy Razaf wrote the Grammy Hall of Fame song, "Honeysuckle Rose," which has been recorded by nearly 500 artists. Cypress Missions' volunteers installed a brass plaque to commemorate the dedication of the property by the Asbury Park Historical Society and Asbury Park Museum.

"Our team painted the interior and the exterior, made repairs, updated the air conditioning, installed shelving and gave the kitchen facilities a light makeover there. St. Paul's food pantry staff helped organize and streamline distribution. Like most mission outreach proj-



The people of St. Paul's worked shoulder to shoulder with Cypress Missions to rebuild a food pantry and clothing closet in Asbury Park.

ects, the funding comes from the heart of the people. I never worry about the money, it always comes. That is the faith part...how wonderful is that!" he said.

Buechler added that as the missions chair, he is the point of contact for serving opportunities at St Paul's UMC.

"The missions team at St. Paul's is always ready to serve. I simply make the call, and it's all hands on deck," said Buechler who added that on any given day there would be between six and 15 people show up to help.

"St. Paul's has a very vibrant mission history. We have sent teams to Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Maine, South Dakota, Mexico, Haiti and Puerto Rico. We also have youth mission trips centered around community service," he said.

"Our team consists of about 20 folks who participate when they are avail-

able. We have several husband and wife teams. We have families with teen children and many other individuals who step up to the mission ministry at St. Paul's. As on any mission trip there is work and ministry at many levels — very little expertise, a lot of good know-how and faith that you are doing work that is pleasing to God," he said.

"There is always a good feeling when helping others. As in any mission trip, hopefully you grow as a Christian."

Fiorentino noted, "We started our work 25 years ago helping our Jersey Shore community and it's great to have the opportunity to refocus in our own backyard. It has been nothing but pure joy for us to give back."

For more information about St. Paul's, visit <http://stpaulsbrick.com/>.



From upgrading electrical to painting the outside of the building, St. Paul's turned their mission to a local one at the onset of the pandemic.



THE CENTENARY FUND AND PREACHERS' AID SOCIETY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Trying to find the perfect Christmas gift for the pastor or clergy mentor in your life?

Consider making a gift in their honor to
The Centenary Fund and Preacher's Aid Society.

The role of the Centenary Fund and Preachers' Aid Society is to:

- Subsidize all retired GNJ pastors' healthcare costs
- Offer emergency financial assistance to retired pastors and the families of deceased pastors for funeral, medical, or family needs
- Provide a stable source of funding to support GNJ's annual budget

To contribute to this excellent cause,
go to gnjumc.org/CentenaryFund today!



UNITEDforSAFETY™ Assures Your Safety



United Methodist
Communities

Abundant Life for Seniors

United Methodist Communities' comprehensive response to COVID-19 includes **UNITEDforSAFETY™**. It's our industry-leading standard of infection control and cleanliness, reflecting our commitment to keep the health, well-being, and safety of our residents, associates, and volunteers at the forefront.

To discover the benefits of **UNITEDforSAFETY**, visit umcommunities.org/unitedforsafety or email questions to info@umcommunities.org.

Home Office
3311 State Route 33
Neptune, NJ 07753
umcommunities.org



GNJ Receives \$1 Million Grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

GNJ has received a \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., to make disciples, grow congregational vitality, develop intercultural competency and create deeper connections between congregations and their communities.

**"WITH THIS MONEY
WE APPLIED FOR AT THE
ONSET OF THE PANDEMIC,
WE WILL NOW BE ABLE
TO MAKE A BOLDER,
MORE VITAL IMPACT."**

—Bishop John Schol

"Our churches are already doing important and amazing ministry in the face of a pandemic economic downturn and racism," said GNJ Bishop John Schol. "With this money we applied for at the onset of the pandemic, we will now be able to make a bolder, more vital impact."

The grant and its work will be integrated with GNJ's A Journey of Hope initiative that seeks to develop transformational leaders, grow more vital congregations and end the sin of racism in GNJ.

The four-year grant is part of Lilly Endowment's Thriving Congregations Initiative, a national effort aimed at strengthening Christian congregations so

they can help people deepen their relationships with God, build strong relationships with each other and contribute to the vitality of local communities and the world.

Lilly Endowment is making nearly \$93 million in grants through the initiative. The grants will support organizations as they work directly with congregations and help them gain clarity about their values and missions, explore and understand better the communities in which they serve, and draw upon their theological traditions as they adapt ministries to meet changing needs.

GNJ is one of 92 organizations taking part in the initiative. They represent and serve churches in a broad spectrum of Christian traditions, including Anabaptist, Baptist, Episcopal, evangelical, Lutheran, Methodist, Mennonite, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Reformed, Restoration, Roman Catholic and Orthodox, as well as congregations that describe themselves as nondenominational. Several organizations serve congregations in Black, Hispanic and Asian-American traditions.

"In the midst of a rapidly changing world, Christian congregations are grappling with how they can best carry forward their ministries," said Christopher Coble, Lilly Endowment's vice president for religion. "These grants will help congregations assess their ministries and draw on practices in their theological traditions to address new challenges and better nurture the spiritual vitality of the people they serve."

Lilly Endowment launched the Thriving Congregations Initiative in 2019 as part of its commitment to support efforts that enhance the vitality of Christian congregations.

To learn more about Lilly Endowment, visit <https://lillyendowment.org/thrivingcongregations/>.



UNITED METHODIST
STEWARDSHIP FOUNDATION
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Stewardship Foundation Offers More Options to Better Access Your Account

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

The Stewardship Foundation of GNJ is rolling out a new accounting system that will foster more transparency and make it easier for congregations to access their accounts.

"We are excited to share that we are partnering with Stellar Technology Solutions for our accounting and reporting needs," said Executive Director Jana Purkis-Brash. "This means expanded services and benefits for you, our account holders."

The following will be available at the start of 2021:

- Fully web-based, 24/7 access for foundation fundholders via their respective portals
- Ability to initiate deposits and withdrawal requests online with ACH capabilities
- Multi-level, flexible statements at client foundation level

- Real-time transactions/audit trail
- Instantaneous data and tracking
- SSAE-18 audit/control compliance for both Stellar & colocation data centers

In preparation for the transfer of accounting, there are two important items for account holders to be aware of:

- All deposits and withdrawals to be made in 2020 must be completed by Dec. 12
- Any gifts of stocks to accounts need to be completed by Dec. 12

The Stewardship Foundation team will be transferring the system starting in the second half of December, and accounting will go live January 1, 2021. You will be able to resume activity through the Stewardship Foundation staff on Jan. 4, and self-access to accounts online should be available in March. Training will also be scheduled for account holders. Stay tuned for more details in the Digest and on the website. 📺

CONFERENCE NEWS



Pandemic Doesn't Quell the Enthusiasm of Giving at Vincent UMC

The Vincent UMC's Church Care Pantry has distributed personal care items to those in need in the community for over 25 years.

Since the 1990s the church has collected items at the church, placed them in bags for each family, and distributed on the first Monday of the month from 4:00-6:00 p.m.

During the pandemic, the need has grown by 50% to over 70 families each month.

Also in support of feeding the hungry, Vincent UMC participated in the virtual Nutley CROP Hunger Walk in October.

St. John's Continues to Share Bountifully in Bridgeton

For several months, the people of St. John's Fordville have continued to meet the rising demand for food as the pandemic weighs heavily on their community.

Leading up to Thanksgiving was no exception as they gave away 20 pallets of 30-pound boxes of food for the community on Nov. 24 and 426 Thanksgiving baskets on Nov. 20.

"We did this all with the help of fantastic volunteers. We are few in number, but we are workers for Him," said Lay Leader Cynthia Mosely.

She added that in the Native American heritage, Thanksgiving is celebrated a little differently.

"We have many thanks giving ceremonies in Native American culture. They were long a part of Native American culture before we were introduced to the colonizers and Jesus Christ. We teach thanks giving to our children in VBS and Sunday School," said Mosely who added that gathering is a big part of their culture.

Pemberton UMC Addresses the Needs of its Community

The people of Pemberton UMC are doing their best to meet the needs of their congregation and their broader community for young and old alike.



In addition to its food pantry and God's Closet, Pemberton UMC is hosting a book study every Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. called "How To Be An Antiracist."

To meet the needs of its community's youth, the Arcade Room was opened in late October using money they received via the COVID-19 Relief Fund, which is providing youth throughout the community with a safe, socially distant place to meet and grow. Church leaders are also hosting a virtual Social Distant Youth Group every Wednesday evening.

To learn more, visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/PembertonUMC. While

you're there, check out the video introducing their new youth program.

Never Missing a Beat in Port Jervis

Drew UMC in Port Jervis, NY, has not slowed down during the pandemic. The church's "True Believers in Christ Singers" performed yard to yard around town singing in Christian Outreach during the spring and summer.

The plan is to continue singing during the holidays, said Linda Rutledge, the church secretary.

The church's Hope Center Food Pantry has not missed a beat either, opening every Saturday morning serving folks in the community all year round.

"Our small group of volunteers pack and distribute bags of food and seasonal produce as available to approximately 150 families a month!" said Rutledge.

Visit their Facebook page for more information and photos.



Spreading Good Cheer for Children

Every year churches throughout GNJ participate in the Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child fundraiser, preparing and collecting shoeboxes filled with toys, school supplies, personal items and other small gifts.



A booklet of bible stories is often distributed alongside the shoebox gifts, which are given to children based on need alone, regardless of their faith. These boxes are then distributed overseas by volunteers.

Since its inception in 1990, more than 100 million shoeboxes have been collected.

Among those participating this year were Dobbins Church in Burlington County (shown in photo) and First UMC in Delran who collected 74 shoeboxes.

Delaware Bay District Church Gives Thanks with Meals

Members of Bethel UMC in Hurffville, NJ, distributed all the ingredients for a complete Thanksgiving dinner, plus other food items and necessities to 443 people the weekend before Thanksgiving.

The church's Peter's Pantry usually serves 150-200 people a month in 60 households, but that number has been climbing over the past few months.



OBITUARIES

Rev. Eileen Murphy, retired elder, died on November 19. Memorial donations may be sent to St. Andrew UMC, 1528 Church Rd, Toms River, NJ 08755. Funds will be allocated to music, children's ministry and missions in memory of Rev. Eileen Murphy.

Bishop Hae-Jong Kim died on November 3. Memorial donations may be sent to Korean Community Church of NJ "Missions" at 147 Tenafly Rd, Englewood, NJ 07631 in memory of Bishop Hae-Jong Kim. Send expressions of sympathy to Eusun Kim (son), 405 W Lake Dr, Spring Lake, NJ 07762.

Rev. Barbara Rambach, retired elder, died on October 30. Memorial donations may be sent to: UMCOR or Southern Poverty Law Center in memory of Rev. Barbara Rambach. Send expressions of sympathy to Gilbert Rambach (spouse), 204 Birch Run Rd, Chestertown, MD 21620.

GOOD NEWS



Simply Grace UMC in Bloomsbury has a goal to collect 1000 Christmas cards for seniors and shut-ins. They will be collecting through Dec 15.

IGNITE COMMUNITIES

WATCH PARTIES

God created each child uniquely and with a special purpose. Remind them with IGNITE Communities Watch Parties!

Next one is Jan. 10 at 7 p.m.

To register, get a resource bundle and more details: gnjnextgen.org/ignite-communities



May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. - Romans 15:13 NRSV

As we enter the final year of the Miracles Everywhere campaign, pledge today to join Greater New Jersey's united mission to transform the world.

Commit to a Miracles Everywhere Sunday Offering
Establish a Miracles and More Campaign to support your local church
Make a dedicated donation to the COVID-19 Relief Fund

Join the campaign to be Christ's hands and feet in the world today.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
AND RESOURCES,
CONTACT:**



Michaela Murray | Director of Development
O: 732.359.1045 | E: mmurray@gnjumc.org

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