

THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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*“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is:
‘What are you doing for others?’”*

—REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Politics of Jesus: Unified Under a Greater Purpose

By Heather Mistretta
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OCEAN CITY, NJ

The recent political climate has been heavy no matter the perspective. Polarized points of view, hateful rhetoric and acts of violence and oppression have muddied missions and weighed on the minds of clergy and lay people alike. At St. Peter’s UMC in Ocean City, NJ, the worship team led by Rev. Erik Hall is doing its best to strike a balance for its congregation in a five-part worship series that began in January.

“With tempers flaring, social media arguments flying, it hurt my heart to see brothers and sisters so susceptible to such hateful rhetoric,” said Hall. “We needed to pull back from current politics.”

Known as “The Politics of Jesus,” the program takes the bold step of redirecting the focus back to God with love and compassion.

“There’s a more important perspective—relationships with one another but also our calling in the world to love one another and to do works of justice and mercy,” said Hall as he embraced



St. Peter’s UMC works toward the greater purpose in new worship series.

the words of first Corinthians that said, “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

In a move to shift the focus away from the political polarization that has been growing in our culture and is now engulfing

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*“Darkness cannot drive out
darkness: only light can do
that. Hate cannot drive out
hate: only love can do that.”*

—REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Embracing Black Methodist Heritage

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

Black History Month is a time to celebrate the historical contributions of African Americans, but it is also an opportunity to explore the continuing issues of poverty, discrimination and inequality, issues that have only been amplified in the face of a pandemic bearing down on our communities. Historian Carter G. Woodson chose February as the month to honor black history because Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass were born in February. The month was first celebrated in 1970 and then recognized by President Gerald Ford in 1976. Methodists have played a major role in shaping that history.



Black Methodists have made their mark on history—from Harry Hosier, the African American preacher who traveled with Francis Asbury in the late 18th century and Brown v. the Board of Education lawyer, Charles S. Scott, who was a Methodist layman in 1954 and the first African American bishop elected in 1968 to the strides made by Civil Rights Leader Joseph Lowry who worked alongside Martin Luther King Jr and the first African American woman elected bishop in 1984, Leontine T. C. Kelly. Self-educated preacher, Charles Tindley is widely believed to be the writer of the hymn “We Shall Overcome,” which became the mantra of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, for which lifelong Methodist pastors, Gil Caldwell and James M. Lawson

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Richwood UMC’s Carol Brozosky reaches out her hand to those in need in Camden where nearly a thousand lives have been lost to COVID-19.

A Poet Among the Homeless

I N C A M D E N

*“Hope and fear cannot occupy the same
space. Invite one to stay.”*

—MAYA ANGELOU

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

The following excerpt was written by Carol Brozosky who is the missions committee chair at Richwood UMC in the Delaware Bay District. Through her tireless efforts, unwavering compassion and naturally keen curiosity, she connected in September 2020 with another woman named Allison who for nearly four years has been providing support for the growing number of homeless in Camden.

“I feel compelled to work towards changing the perception of our homeless brothers and sisters in Christ and the stigma attached to the addict,” said Brozosky. The following chronicles one day spent at a tent city under a bridge in Camden.

• • •

Excerpt by Carol Brozosky

Occasionally, if we are lucky, we meet someone who changes your life. He brightens your day. You can’t stop thinking of the encounter. A God moment happens. And it is not a coincidence that it happened to me on my December birthday in 2020 in Camden, helping the homeless. There among the tent cities under a bridge, I found a brother in Christ. I met Uriah.

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP

Faith in Uncertain Times

Bishop John Schol



One of the great challenges is leading and living during uncertain times. When we are uncertain about life, as we are now because of the pandemic that puts our health and relationships at risk, and as a vulnerable economy that puts our jobs and retirement savings at risk, human nature tends to counterbalance our uncertainty with certainty. The church when most vulnerable is the same. As the church shares in the secular world's experiences, and its own uncertainty about the future of the denomination because differences about ministry with and by LGBTQ persons, we become even more certain about our own beliefs, convictions and faith.

Certainty is actually the enemy of faith. When you are certain, you do not need faith. Faith depends on learning, curiosity, wonder and hope. It is hard to be curious and wonder or learn or have hope when you are certain.

Faith requires some uncertainty. Faith is the bridge between the gap of what we know and have experienced, and what we do not know or have not yet experienced. Think of a chasm; the shorter the distance the more we are willing to leap across the chasm. The further the distance, the more comfortable and certain we are with staying right where we are. We cut ourselves off from wonder, possibility, curiosity and developing our faith muscles to take the leap.

It is challenging to live in such uncertain times. Everything we once knew about health, politics, the church and faith is now being reexamined. And yet, as some things are becoming more uncertain, more and more people are gravitating to certainty. In a

"I BELIEVE JESUS USED QUESTIONS NOT TO SET PEOPLE UP, BUT JESUS WAS INTERESTED IN KNOWING THE PERSON, WHAT THE OTHER PERSON THOUGHT AND BELIEVED. ONCE JESUS UNDERSTOOD THE PERSON, HE TOLD A STORY OR DID SOME TEACHING TO CREATE CLARITY."

—Bishop John Schol

culture of certainty, there is more polarization. Look at the polarization in politics and the church that we experience today.

Bishop Bill McAlilly, a colleague and friend recently sent me a YouTube video of Bob Johansen, a futurist who said, "The future will punish certainty." He indicates that clarity is what people want and need from leaders in uncertain times. Clarity, not certainty. Certainty makes pronouncements, while leaders who lead seeking clarity ask questions and tell stories rather than offer certitudes.

Sounds like Jesus' style of leadership. Jesus in his encounters with people often began with a question. I believe Jesus used questions not to set people up, but Jesus was interested in knowing the person, what the other person thought and believed. Once Jesus understood the person, he told a story or did some teaching to create clarity.

People and leaders who are certain, do not need faith. You can spot a leader who is certain because they use words like should, must, shall, have to and ought. People and leaders who need faith because they are uncertain tend to be more graceful, forgiving and understanding. They use questions and phrases like, I wonder, what if, I believe, how might we better understand. People who are certain seem to have an inward mindset, "what makes me comfortable and reassures my convictions." Outward mindset people seek clarity and are more interested in learning from others and helping others have clarity and a deeper faith and trust in God and others.

Clarity is not fuzziness or being "wishy washy," but instead clarity is transparency, illuminating, accuracy, and it simplifies and makes things plain without cutting off possibility.

In an uncertain world, people want answers when clarity will be more beneficial.

For example, what people want is to know when the pandemic will be over, certainty,

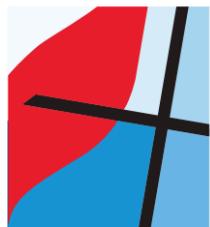
while clarity about the steps we all can take to bring an end to the pandemic and how to keep healthy during the pandemic. In the church, people with certainty are looking for a church with people who think like them and while a faithful response are churches that support people living with difference and uncertainty. This requires a mindset change.

I invite each of us into a faith that offers clarity with enough room for questions and leadership that leads with story and questions to clarify the way forward. A church sees a chasm as an opportunity to strengthen faith muscles so people can take a God size leap toward God's future possibilities.

We will move through the pandemic as we trust God and science, and we will move forward as we trust God and wonder what God is calling us to next. Working together we will overcome the pandemic, and we will move through the differences within our beloved United Methodist Church. 🇺🇸

"CLARITY IS NOT FUZZINESS OR BEING "WISHY WASHY," BUT INSTEAD CLARITY IS TRANSPARENCY, ILLUMINATING, ACCURACY, AND IT SIMPLIFIES AND MAKES THINGS PLAIN WITHOUT CUTTING OFF POSSIBILITY."

—Bishop John Schol



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SMALL GROUPS

The front doors to the church.



- Early Methodist gatherings were first called “societies.” John Wesley encouraged different kinds of small groups to develop, so that both leaders and members of the societies could receive support and challenge in their faith.

Hundreds of years later, the supportive small group is still seen as one of the most powerful ways for people to feel that they belong and to learn and grow. ●

- Today, amid a pandemic and an organized, passionate call for racial justice, conversations are going deeper about the things that really matter.

Today, we urge you to delve into these conversations as we remember and honor those important people who contributed to Black History Month. ●

- This Lent, GCORR is offering *Roll Down, Justice!* Written by Faye Wilson and featuring the music and reflections of Mark A. Miller, this six week video-based study can be used by small groups to discuss God’s justice.

Consider this topic: Read Langston Hughes’ poem called “*I Dream a World*” or Howard Thurman’s “*Lord, Lord, Open Unto Me.*” Discuss and write your own poem. Then read aloud. ●

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FOR MORE SMALL GROUP RESOURCES:

www.gnjumc.org/smallgroups

Special Annual Conference Session: Moving Forward with God

Solomon taught his son, “In everything acknowledge God, who makes straight our paths” (Proverbs 3:6). Much like Solomon’s teaching, the members of GNJ allowed God’s grace to work through them, guiding them through a special annual conference session as they voted to move forward a new consolidated budget to fund the GNJ mission as well as the clergy and laity benefit programs and the congregational insurance program.

To address the recently discovered \$6 million budget shortfall, legislation was passed in a vote of 324-166 to adopt a

“IN EVERYTHING
ACKNOWLEDGE GOD,
WHO MAKES STRAIGHT
OUR PATHS”

— Proverbs 3:6

revised budget of \$24,880,133 in income and \$24,849,672 in expenses, with the addition of amendments that were accepted during the session.

“God is moving us forward,” said Bishop John Schol as he talked about the parable of building your house on rock in the Gospel of Matthew at the end of the *Sermon on the Mount*. He shared that it illustrates the importance of building one’s life on the teachings and example of Jesus.



People throughout GNJ shared their enthusiasm “Brady Bunch style” in moving forward with their missions.

Credit: Screenshot from video by Brent Donaway

“Building things on rock makes for a strong future ministry. If you build your life on the teachings of Jesus, you are building your house on rock.

Citing successes over the years in overcoming challenges that GNJ has faced like 9/11, the financial crisis, Superstorm Sandy, racism and COVID-19, Schol said much like we moved forward together with God through these crises, GNJ will make “a collective effort” to move forward again.

Schol also added that the teachings of Jesus and good organizational practice require building on good “systems, policies, processes and people.”

He recognized shared feelings of anger, frustration and uncertainty among those in GNJ and indicated we

tion rate for shared ministry and a 93% collection rate for billables to fund the mission and ministry of GNJ.

The Connectional Table, CFA, Board of Pensions, Board of Trustees and Cabinet will move forward with reviewing the following schedules and making the

“THE PASSAGE OF THE NEW
CONSOLIDATED BUDGET ALLOWS
THE CONFERENCE TO REFOCUS
AND ORGANIZE FOR GNJ’S FUTURE
MISSION AND SUPPORT ITS
CONGREGATIONS AND CLERGY.”

—Bishop John Schol

need to let the independent team do their work to determine what happened that allowed for such an extent of underbilling and spending reserves and how it occurred.

Schol and Director of Human Resources and Superintending Support Team Jay Kim paid tribute to those employees who were laid off as part of the revised budget, emphasizing that the layoffs were not based on performance. They were Carolyn Conover (Director of Communication), Lida DeNardo (Property Administrative Assistant), Michaela Murray (Director of Development of UM Stewardship Foundation), Cristel Ramirez (Connectional Ministries Administrative Assistant) and Nicole Troast (AFWH Regional Coordinator).

The passage of the new consolidated budget allows the Conference to refocus and organize for GNJ’s future mission and support its congregations and clergy. With the revised budget, GNJ will move forward with rebuilding its depleted reserves and assisting congregations financially to meet the full billings over five years. GNJ projects an 88% collec-

necessary reductions to achieve the approved consolidated budget line items:

- Mission, Justice and Agency Schedule (*A Journey of Hope* will not be reduced)
- Communications and Fundraising Schedule
- Administration Schedule
- Property Schedule
- Billings Schedules

Further, as stated in the financial report, an independent team that includes a lawyer and auditor will review the use of reserves and other financial matters to identify what occurred and how it occurred and report directly to the May 2021 Annual Conference Session on May 24-25 with recommended actions to be taken.

For additional details, including the approved legislation that includes the amendments and revisions and an extensive list of FAQs, which will continue to be updated, please visit the GNJ website. More information leading up to the May 2021 Annual Conference Session is forthcoming. 🇺🇸



ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2021

FORWARD

In everything, acknowledge God, who makes straight our paths. - Proverbs 3:6

The 2021 May Annual Conference is
coming to a Zoom screen near you.

New legislation, plus discussion of the independent team’s final budget report. Move forward with GNJ...and God on May 24-25!

For details go to:

www.gnjumc.org/2021-annual-conference





Running 13 Miles

in an Unlucky Year to Make Miracles

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

Rev. Donald Kirschner of Boonton and Montville UMCs hit the road decked out in different costumes to raise money for the Miracles Everywhere Campaign.

He would have called himself the Running Reverend, but alas, that name was already taken. So, Rev. Donald Kirschner decided on "Cross Country Clergy Initiative," got on his running shoes, a Santa hat and an ugly Christmas sweater and hit the road.

And then he almost sprained his ankle.

But the 28-year-old who had never run more than 60 miles in one week got back up and started to run, this time with one of his congregants by his side.

"After 13 unlucky days of 13 mile runs in 13 different towns and 13 different types of pasta, this cross-country clergy ran a total of 175.31 miles with a collective time of 33 hours and 33 minutes (or, fittingly, 2013 total minutes). And all to raise money for Greater New Jersey's Miracles Everywhere Campaign!" said Kirschner who has been the pastor at Boonton and Montville UMCs since 2018.

"But even in the midst of an unlucky year, and at the start of

a new one, we believe miracles are everywhere," said Kirschner.

He ran through towns mostly throughout the Skylands District from Morristown and Randolph to Butler and Rockaway, never mapping out his route before leaving. Each day he ate a different type of pasta to commemorate the day of running.

"Kind of like COVID, running is symbolic. We don't know where we're heading," said Kirschner. Joining him on the 10th day was Rev. Willard Joseph II from Knowlton UMC in Columbia, but all other times he ran solo.

"I love running as an exploration," said Kirschner who often donned a costume while running. He was Buddy the Elf on the days he ran in the towns of the churches he serves. On day eight, he carried a container of mustard seeds. Serving as a sign of God being able to move mountains and do the miraculous with even a small amount of faith, Kirschner scattered seeds at every mile marker along the way.

Each day he also shared a story on social media that highlighted some aspect of the work and impact of the Miracles Everywhere Campaign, "whether it be through hurricane relief, pandemic relief, creating hope centers, investing in the next generation of disciples, or developing pastoral leaders in Tanzania."

The obvious question is why running. For Kirschner, that's an easy answer. Running and writing are two of his biggest passions. While running a trail marathon last September, this idea hit him.

"I always have something to work toward," said Kirschner who recalled needing to get on a strict regimen in the summer of 2019 when he was in a bad mental state.



"AFTER 13 UNLUCKY DAYS OF 13 MILE RUNS IN 13 DIFFERENT TOWNS AND 13 DIFFERENT TYPES OF PASTA, THIS CROSS-COUNTRY CLERGY RAN A TOTAL OF 175.31 MILES WITH A COLLECTIVE TIME OF 33 HOURS AND 33 MINUTES..."

—Rev. Donald Kirschner



"I needed both spiritual and physical at that point," said Kirschner who grew up attending a Baptist church in southern California. His wife, Nina, is a pastor at a Presbyterian church. In October he started training for ultramarathons.

In the coming months, the pastor who dubs himself as "the idea guy" is planning to pick a different organization to help. In February, proceeds from his running will likely support opioid awareness, and in May, Relay for Life.

This September he and his congregations are also hoping to launch a new ministry/outreach called "Hungry to Whole," which is inspired by John Wesley's Holy Clubs and *The Daniel Plan* they discussed last year. This book explores an approach to achieving a healthy lifestyle by optimizing the five key essentials of faith, food, fitness, focus, and friends. The "Wholly Club" gathering will be grounded in Psalm 107:9: "God satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things."

Kirschner added, "This is an outreach that will not only seek to fill people spiritually but integrate their whole selves in a way that honors God and helps others. For our goal is to nurture body, mind and spirit wellness within the context of a faith community that extends that message of healthy and wholistic living beyond the walls of the church."

Kirschner said he hopes his running and healthy living will make an impact on others and inspire some to do the same.

"There's still plenty of work to be done." 🇺🇸



Rev. Canfield of New Canaan UMC in Kearny imparts his father's wisdom and compassion into his ministry and family.

Obrigado, Pai: The Canfield Family from Brazil to Kearny

By Denise Herschel
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KEARNY, NJ

As the senior pastor at New Canaan UMC in Kearny, NJ, Rev. Ricardo Oliveira Canfield has witnessed the goodness of God firsthand as a fourth-generation Methodist pastor. His father, Estevao dos Santos Canfield, was a third-generation pastor who was endlessly passionate about God and his church, teaching his son at an early age “how to love the Lord and His Word.” And, as the founder of the New Canaan UMC, Estevao was his son’s personal hero. But sadly, he passed away in 2009 due to pancreatic cancer.

“My father taught me basically everything. He taught me the life of sacrifice to God and how to care for people beyond the Sunday service and the meaning of discipleship and preaching. I learned everything that I know from him,” Canfield said.

And with all the life lessons that his father passed along to him throughout his life, Canfield continues today to carry on his father’s legacy, serving the New Canaan UMC for the past three years, which in the past year has included guiding his congregation through the COVID-19 crisis.

“The year 2020 was very challenging for me. I had to learn to use a medium that I was so not used to using—the internet. We as a church had to adapt to a difficult reality. I saw some people leaving the church because they did not accept

this new reality,” he said. “Financially the church took a hit as well. We had to adapt in that area as well. But I saw a group of people seeking more of God, getting more involved in prayer. That is bringing me much joy as a pastor.”

Canfield’s road to becoming a pastor has been a well-travelled one. Born in Brazil, he emigrated to the United States in 1997 with his family to start the Brazilian ministry with the United Methodist Church. He later lived in Portugal for 10 years, serving as a missionary, helping to implement the discipleship program in various churches. Then he moved back to the United States to become the pastor of New Canaan UMC.



Rev. Canfield, a Brazilian native, relishes the opportunities to love God and God’s Word.

“This is my third year serving this church. In 2017 when I came to serve this church, we had only 28 people left. My estimate now is that we had around 100 people pre-COVID,” he added.

Like his father, Canfield believes he was called to serve God as a pastor and wanted to follow in his father’s footsteps.

“My father, who was a pastor in Brazil, felt called to come to the United States to be a pastor,” recalled Canfield who added that prior to emigrating, his father was a pastor for 16 years and founded a couple of churches in Brazil. In his 10 years as a pastor at a church in Mandaguari, his Brazilian congregation grew from 100 people to over 500.

“My father always saw the kingdom of God in expansion and worked for that,” he said.

Estevao came to the United States when an opportunity came about be-

cause the Methodist Global Ministries decided to initiate a ministry with the Brazilian population in the New York-New Jersey area.

“Once here, my father came to know a couple of Methodist Brazilian families and started to meet at their home for prayer worship,” said Canfield. “A few months later the group grew and started meeting, and the rest is history.”

Today, New Canaan UMC serves those from not only Kearny, Elizabeth and Newark but from other areas of New Jersey as well. Ninety percent of the congregation speaks Portuguese,

Canfield has been married to his wife, Cynthia for the past 15 years and the couple has two children, Matheus, age 10, and Beatriz, age 5. His wife serves as one of the church’s worship leaders and is one of the coordinators for the children’s ministries, Sunday school and other activities. His brother, Andre Canfield is also involved with the church as youth pastor and worship leader.

Canfield said that what brings him the greatest joy as a pastor is seeing lives being transformed to the likeness of Christ.

“God’s display of love to me and through me to others is amazing. His

“GOD IS ONE CONSTANT IN LIFE AND IS EVER PRESENT IN TIME OF NEED.”

—Rev. Ricardo Oliveira Canfield, senior pastor at New Canaan UMC in Kearny, NJ

and the remaining are English- and Spanish-speaking.

“Our services are mainly in Portuguese, but we do have simultaneous translation for our English-speaking members and visitors. Wherever we see people in need, and we can help, we go. We serve the Brazilian community mainly for now, but my desire is to serve everyone who needs us,” he said. “It is my desire and I think it is God’s as well, to reach every nation and every tongue.”

Canfield added that although his congregation is small, the church does have a host of programs including Friday night youth services, Sunday morning services, Sunday morning Bible studies, weekly prayer meetings and Monday night information sessions on topics such as marriage, finances and raising children.

goodness surpasses all my reasoning. Emotions were all over the place this past year, and we more than ever as a people needed to learn how to keep our heart in the right place in God. He is good all the time, even in tough circumstances. God is one constant in life and is ever present in time of need,” he said.

And, as Canfield continues to follow the path of his own life’s journey, he reflected once again upon his father’s wish for the church that he founded.

“My dad had many dreams for the church that sadly he did not get to see,” he said. “It is my desire to therefore not only follow in his footsteps but to accomplish his dream that I believe came from God.”

New Canaan UMC is located at 601 Kearny Avenue, Kearny. For more information, call the church at 201-955-0078 or go to www.newcanaanumc.com.



Richwood UMC's Carol Brozosky was moved by one resident during a recent visit to deliver food and clothes to a tent city.

Camden

Continued from page 1

That is his pen name—his real name doesn't matter right now. He shared with me his story.... one of heartache -losing his nine-year old son years ago. Then later, another tragedy 26 years ago—a car accident that left his friend dead and Uriah in a coma. How he ended up homeless I don't know, and that also doesn't matter right now. What does matter is his poetry. His simple prose centered on God.

He promised God during his three-week coma, that he would come back sober and re-awake people. He calls it his Jesus "Repairing Mission." He said, "you know... like John the Baptist."

Here is one of several of Uriah's writings. I focus on this one to shed light on his character. This poem speaks of the trials of

an addict. Maybe it isn't noteworthy of a prize, but it comes from the heart.

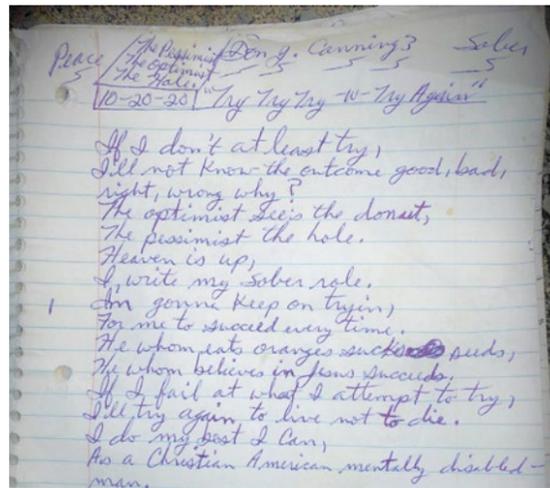
I want to understand the struggle of addiction and heartache that leads humans to homelessness. I want to befriend someone in need, but right now my job is to get his God sanctioned message out.

I believe we need Uriah. And his optimism. And his Jesus "Repairing Mission." Amen.

• • •

In partnership with Allison Mason, Brozosky and her team serve breakfast, deliver clothes and blankets and offer varied support for substance addicts, often connecting them with rehab programs if possible. The mission project is called Alliance with Allison.

"Our mission service has blossomed from bringing a few things like cereal



This poem was written by a homeless man strangled by addiction but hopeful and determined to create a brighter future.

and snacks, to weekly loads of warm clothes and blankets, hot meals and a listening ear," said Brozosky who recently reported that the church will soon erect a shed at the tent city where supplies can be housed.

teams from around the country in the first eight weeks after the storm hit New Jersey. In 2013, she accepted recognition from Bishop Schol with the receipt of a banner from the Conference for service as a Lay Leader. 🇺🇸

IDENTIFYING THE HOMELESSNESS

A program known as the "point in time count," an annual statewide effort first mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2005 to identify homeless people so that assistance programs can be tailored specifically to these people with the intent of helping them. On the night of January 28, 2020, a total of 9,663 men women and children in 7,365 households were identified as having experienced homelessness in the state of New Jersey. This was an overall increase of 799 persons (9%) from the number identified in 2019 For persons identifying as Black or African American, while 13% of the state population, they represent 50% of the population experiencing homelessness. Similarly, persons identifying as American Indian or Alaskan Native represent 0.1% of the population and make up 0.7% of the state population experiencing homelessness.

It will be a few months before this year's homeless count is released and New Jersey will get a clearer look at the impact COVID-19 has had on its communities as shelters have been forced to cut their numbers of beds.

Methodist Heritage

Continued from page 1

made a difference by providing nonviolent training programs, rallying peacefully and supporting voter drives.

Now more than 50 years after the Civil Rights Acts were signed into law, the history of African Americans in the United Methodist Church continues to be nurtured, while hate is driven out and room is made for new highlights and transformation in the years to come. But there is more work to be done.

A *Journey of Hope* is an organized plan to work toward ending the sin of racism through education, new programs and supporting the underserved populations whose voices have not been heard for hundreds of years.

Lifelong United Methodist and Pastor Gil Caldwell, who died on Sept. 4, said, "Each of us in The United Methodist Church will dare to speak and share our truth."

One of the foot soldiers who walked alongside Martin Luther King Jr., Caldwell supported voter drives in Mississippi, marched on Washington, was a champion for LGBTQ rights and came to the march from Selma to Montgomery at the request of King.

His legacy opens the door for others to follow in his footsteps. GNJ's Lan Wilson has been working with the Commission on Race and Religion to create a service called, "Not Soon Forgotten." The service of legacy, love and leadership honors Black History Month, Valentine's Day and President's Day. It is designed for Feb. 14 but will function as a usable service throughout the year. It includes a worship resource (service outline with sermon outline included) and sermon video and graphics.

Throughout GNJ, local churches have been hosting webinars and podcasts that introduce difficult but necessary conver-

sations on racism and inclusion. Other churches host book discussions and small groups with youth to address racism and to learn how to be a non-racist. Still others work hard at feeding the hungry in underserved communities where racial disparities in healthcare have widened with the onslaught of the pandemic.

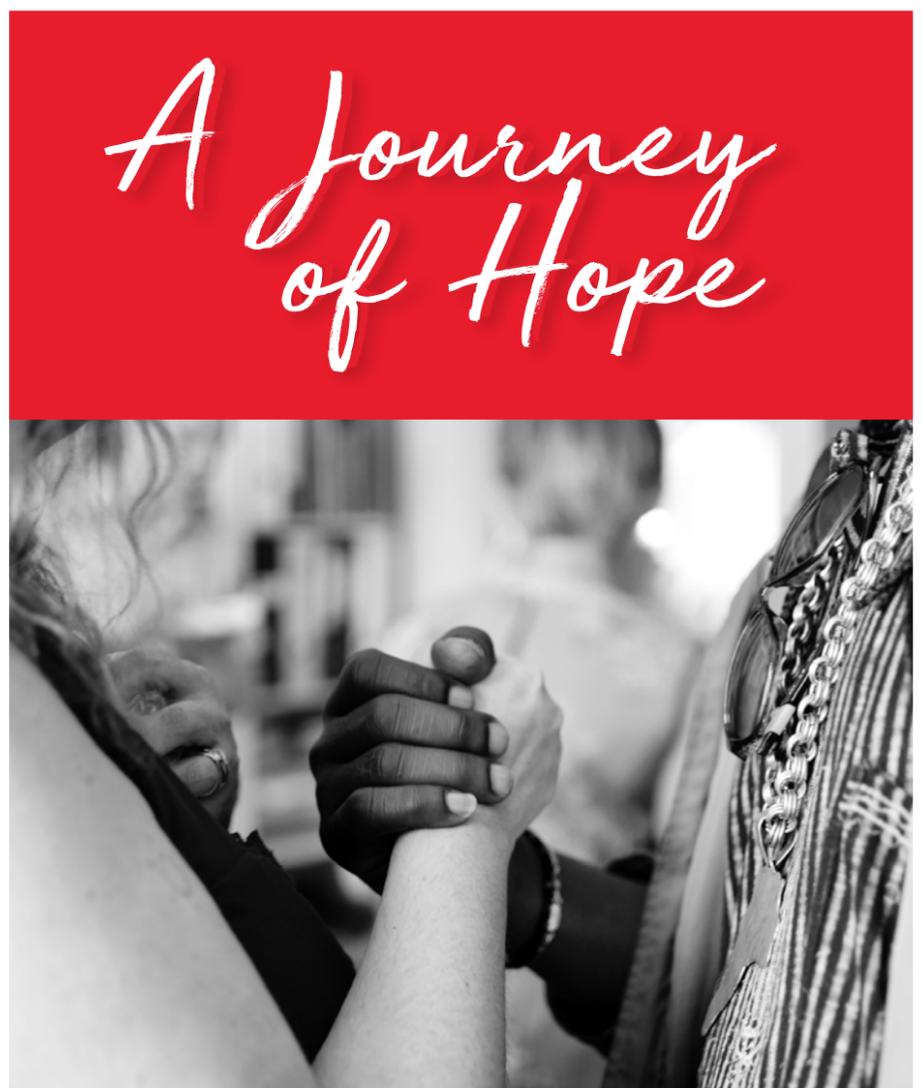
Despite medical issues later in life, Caldwell never gave up hope that racial justice was possible and was so encouraged by recent developments. He said, "I have long believed that Black United Methodists have a calling to be 'Wounded Healers' of the UMC and the USA. Our hymnals include, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," that has these words, 'We have come over a way that tears have been watered traveling our path through the blood of the slaughtered.'"

If you would like to share your Black History Month story, please email Heather Mistretta. 🇺🇸

I Dream a World

*I dream a world where man
No other man will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.
A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all mankind-
Of such I dream, my world!*

—Langston Hughes



Let's roll up our sleeves and work together toward ending the sin of racism.

FOR MORE DETAILS
www.gnjumc.org/journeyofhope





In conjunction with Timothy Schmalz' bronze sculpture, a Homeless Jesus Fund has been created to help the needy in the community. Credit: Canadian sculptor Timothy Schmalz

Homeless Jesus Finds a New Home in Wildwood

"It is in the shelter of each other that the people live."

—IRISH PROVERB

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

As the pandemic bears down on communities and threatens the security of a meal or a place to sleep for many, we are reminded of Jesus and his commitment to help the underserved as he faced his own hardships. Jesus, whose life began as a homeless baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, repeatedly showed his concern for homeless people by listening to their voices, healing their wounds and providing solace. Throughout the years his teachings of love and compassion have been represented in many ways.

Greeting people flocking to the boardwalk in Wildwood, NJ, this summer will be a seven-foot bronze sculpture depicting a homeless man sleeping on a park bench. Like many homeless, his face and hands are obscured, his head and much of his body shrouded under a blanket. However, deep gashes on his feet reveal his identity, and a small spot at one end of the bench invites others to sit next to Jesus.

"We want to share the Gospel in a different way and do so outside the building," said Kate Aaronson, who has been the pastor at North Wildwood UMC for the past year.

The church commissioned Canadian sculptor Timothy Schmalz to create a replica of his sculpture named "Homeless Jesus." The sculpture, which is now located in about 100 places throughout the world including in the Vatican, has been called a visual translation of Matthew 25, which says, "For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you took Me in."

Aaronson first discovered the sculpture while traveling with her father in Madrid. There in the courtyard of the Almudena Cathedral was Homeless Jesus.

"I thought it was real. It was profoundly moving, and it provides a space to sit at the feet of Jesus," said Aaronson who added that she hopes the provocative visual will challenge people to remember and care for the marginalized and even be tempted to sit next to Jesus to find solace.

"The face of the statue is deliberately concealed, so that everyone can connect and identify with the Jesus it portrays," she added.

Helping to create a beautiful space around the sculpture will be a local architect who has agreed to donate a landscaping design around it.

In addition to the new piece of art, Aaronson said North Wildwood UMC will continue its mission to help the community by creating a Homeless Jesus Fund, whose proceeds will directly benefit the food banks and other agencies who are doing the work to benefit the community.

"Through partnerships with organizations in our community like Lazarus Food Pantry and Family Promise, we provide for those who lack basic necessities," said Aaronson. "As a visual means to increase awareness and to evoke compassion and kindness in others, we need your help to find Homeless Jesus a home with us." To contribute to the fund, a GoFundMe page can be found at [charity.gofundme.com/north-wildwood-methodist-church](https://www.gofundme.com/north-wildwood-methodist-church).

In addition to the throngs of people who will pass by the sculpture this summer, Aaronson said she is also hoping to invite youth groups and/or other congregations to take trips to visit the sculpture, talk about their faith and call to love their neighbors and enjoy the beach.

For Aaronson, she was called to ministry only a few years ago while still practicing law in Delaware. Following a 21-year career, the native of Mantua, NJ was moved to help the needy in a different way. Now she's getting her chance at North Wildwood UMC. 🇺🇸

Politics of Jesus

Continued from page 1

our collective experience, Hall is relishing the opportunity to proclaim Jesus is Lord in this new series. They are hoping to imitate Jesus by doing what he did and embracing what he valued.

"We are saying we follow Jesus above all and before all. This matters for our daily actions and choices in the home, neighborhood, workplace, marketplace,

"WE ARE SAYING WE FOLLOW JESUS ABOVE ALL AND BEFORE ALL. THIS MATTERS FOR OUR DAILY ACTIONS AND CHOICES IN THE HOME, NEIGHBORHOOD, WORKPLACE, MARKETPLACE, SOCIETY AND THE POLITICAL ARENA."

—Rev. Erik Hall of St. Peter's UMC in Ocean City, NJ



Rev. Erik Hall is hoping to redirect his congregation away from the hateful rhetoric and toward Jesus and his teachings.

embrace the United Methodist mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Hall touches on a different theme each week to his large congregation that now averages about 400-600, some online from Marco, FL. Interspersed on weekdays are messages that touch on themes like servanthood, freedom and humility.

To an audience with a wide range of opinions, Hall opened the series on Jan. 17, when he preached "I Pledge

Allegiance." In this sermon, he called for Christians to claim their primary citizenship in the Kingdom of God.

On Jan. 24 his sermon, "The Kingdom of God Has Come Near," showed how the kingdom of God is expressed in many ways like healing, faith, hope and victory over evil.

"The world is governed by human kingdoms and show themselves in nasty human ways: oppression, injustice, and abuse," said Hall.

On Jan. 31 he preached the sermon, "The Greatest Shall Serve," in which he explored how Jesus saw the "greatest" not as the rich and powerful, but rather those who become servants to others and allow others to be heard.

Growing up in northern New Jersey, Hall said he was always searching to understand the nature of truth. This led him to study philosophy during which time a professor introduced him to theology and the idea that God was intelligent.

"This was satisfying but also answered my deepest questions of what was right and wrong," said Hall who later went on to study at Princeton Theological Seminary where he earned his M.Div.

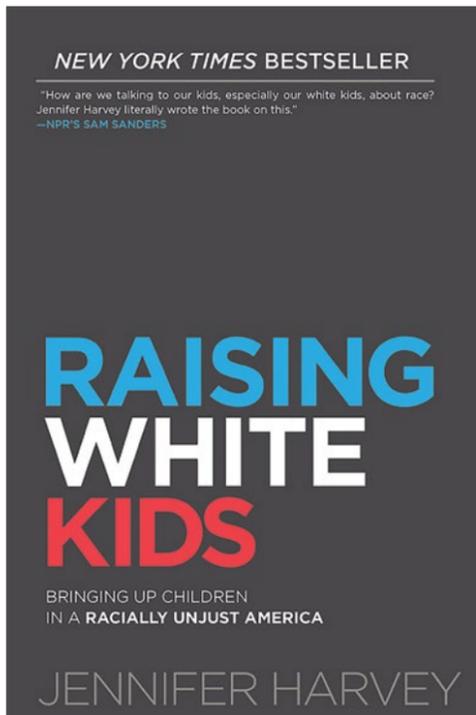
In the end, Hall is looking to strike a balance. "We want to embrace this new opportunity to rise to the occasion to set an example of faith, love and hope. We want to be the church where different people who share a faith in Christ can do great things together when given a chance."

In late January, great things came in the form of food ministry when a big donation from the local Boyar's Market allowed St. Peter's to bring food to the Ocean City Food Cupboard and Atlantic City Rescue Mission. The food ministry also spread to its luncheon, God's Kitchen where 55 hungry people were fed homemade lasagna and banana whipped cream pie. They also delivered 28 meals to many shut-ins in Upper Township and Ocean City as well as brought food to the senior center, The Branches in Rio Grande. 🇺🇸

society and the political arena," said Hall who was appointed to the church on the ocean last July.

By recalibrating the Christian perspective so that it surrounds the Kingdom of God instead of the politics of the day, Hall said he hopes to help people heal and

FEBRUARY'S BOOK SHELF: *Sending Love to Black History Month*



Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America

(Abingdon Press, 2018)

By Jennifer Harvey

Raising White Kids is a guide for families, educators, and communities to raise their children to be able and active anti-racist allies. With a foreword by Tim Wise, *Raising White Kids* is for families, churches, educators, and communities who want to equip their children to be active and able participants in a society that is becoming one of the most racially diverse in the world while remaining full of racial tensions. For white people who are committed to equity and justice, living in a nation that remains racially unjust and deeply segregated creates unique conundrums.

Rev. Dr. Jennifer Harvey is a New York Times bestselling and award-winning author, educator and public

speaker. Her work focuses on ethics and race, gender, sexuality, activism, spirituality and politics—with particular attention to how religion shows up in these dimensions of our shared social life. Her greatest passion and longtime work, however, persistently and pointedly return to racial justice and white anti-racism. Jen speaks and publishes with numerous academic and public outlets. Her essay *Are We Raising Racists?* spent nearly a week on the New York Times “ten most read pieces” list. She has written for and appeared on Good Morning America, CNN, NPR, Sojourners on-line, The Conversation and other national media outlets. Visit the author online at www.jenniferharvey.org.

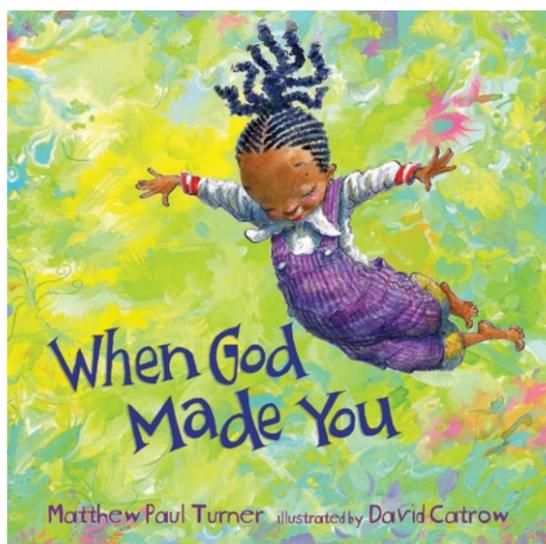
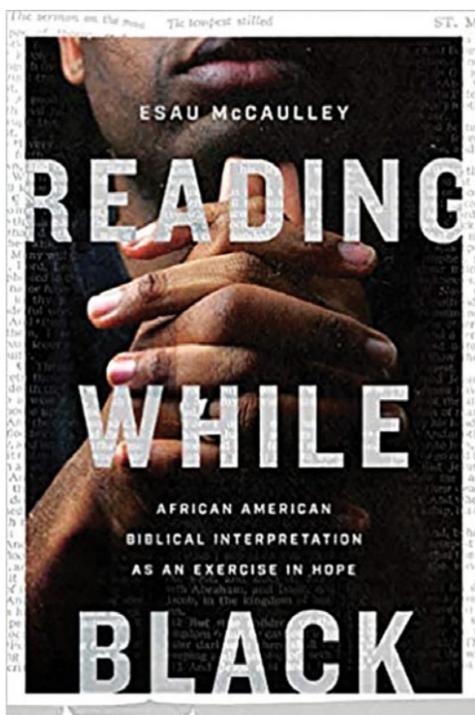
Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope

(IVP, 2020)

By Esau McCaulley

Reading While Black is a personal and scholarly testament to the power and hope of Black biblical interpretation as a way to connect with a rich faith history and address the urgent issues of our times. He advocates for a model of interpretation that involves an ongoing conversation between the collective Black experience and the Bible, in which the particular questions coming out of Black communities are given pride of place and the Bible is given space to respond by affirming, challenging, and, at times, reshaping Black concerns. *Reading While Black* moves the conversation forward.

Esau McCaulley is assistant professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, a priest in the Anglican Church in North America, and a contributing opinion writer for The New York Times. His publications include *Sharing in the Son's Inheritance* and numerous articles.



When God Made You

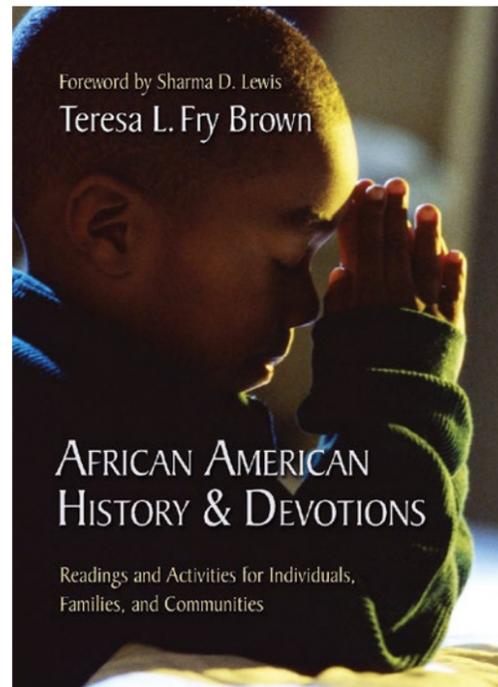
(Convergent Books, 2017)

By Matthew Paul Turner and David Catrow

From early on, children are looking to discover their place in the world and longing to understand how their personalities, traits, and talents fit in. The assurance that they are deeply loved and a unique creation in our big universe is certain to help them spread their wings and fly. Through playful, charming rhyme and vivid, fantastical illustrations, *When God Made You* inspires young readers to learn about their own special

gifts and how they fit into God's divine plan as they grow, explore, and begin to create for themselves.

Matthew Paul Turner is a photographer, speaker and author of numerous books, including the bestselling *When I Pray for You*. David Catrow is an editorial cartoonist whose vibrant illustrations have appeared in more than seventy children's books, including several New York Times bestsellers, such as *I Ain't Gonna Paint No More!* and *I Like Myself!*. He lives in Ohio with his wife, Deborah.



African American History & Devotions: Readings and Activities for Individuals, Families, and Communities

(Abingdon Press, 2018)

By Teresa L. Fry Brown

Twenty-eight devotions for individuals, families, or small groups, including a scripture verse, a reflection on the scripture, related activities for each day, and a prayer. This intergenerational devotional is great for use during Black History Month, but can be used at any time.

Teresa L. Fry Brown is the Bandy Professor of Preaching at Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, where she became the first African American woman to attain the rank of full professor. She holds a PhD from Iliff School of Theology in Denver and is

ordained in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches

(Harper One, 2003)

By Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Edited by James M. Washington

The words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr are commemorated here in the only major one-volume collection of this seminal twentieth-century American prophet's writings, speeches, interviews, and autobiographical reflections. *A Testament of Hope* contains Martin Luther King, Jr.'s essential thoughts on nonviolence, social policy, integration, black nationalism, the ethics of love and hope, and more.

James Melvin Washington was professor of church history at Union Theological Seminary, New York. He died in 1997.

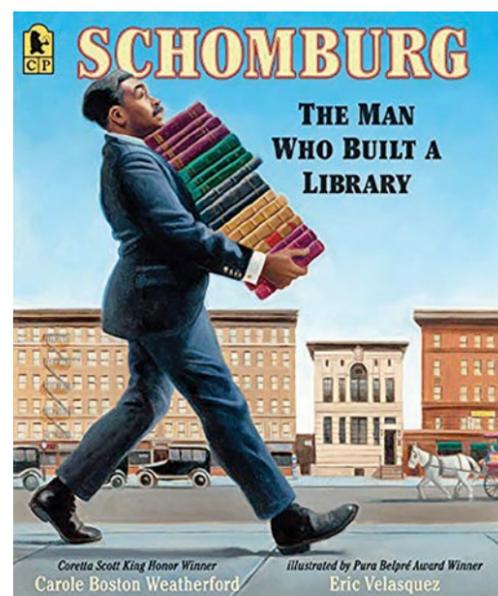
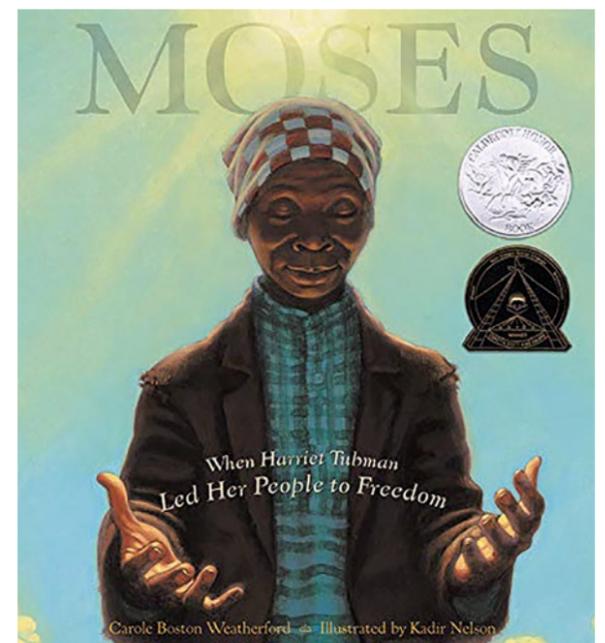
Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom

(Hyperion Book, 2006)

By Carole Boston Weatherford

For ages 4-8.

Moses, which won the coveted Caldecott Award and the Coretta Scott King Award, offers a resounding, reverent tribute to Harriet Tubman, the woman who earned the name Moses for her heroic role in the Underground Railroad. This lyrical text describes Tubman's spiritual journey as she hears the voice of God guiding her north to freedom on that very first trip to escape the brutal practice of forced servitude.



Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library

(Hyperion, 2020)

By Carole Boston Weatherford

For ages 8-12.

This book chronicles the story of an Afro-Puerto Rican named Arturo Schomburg. This law clerk's passion was to collect books, letters, music and art from Africa and the African diaspora and bring to light the achievements of people of African descent through the ages. A century later, his groundbreaking collection, known as the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, has become a beacon to scholars all over the world. In luminous paintings and arresting poems, two of children's literature's top African-American

scholars track Arturo Schomburg's quest to correct history.

Carole Boston Weatherford, the author of both *Moses* and *Schomburg*, is a New York Times best-selling author and poet. Her numerous books for children include the Coretta Scott King Author Award Honor Book *Becoming Billie Holiday*, illustrated by Floyd Cooper, and *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer, Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement*, illustrated by Ekua Holmes. She lives in Highpoint, NC. 📖



As Told by a Pinelands Camper

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

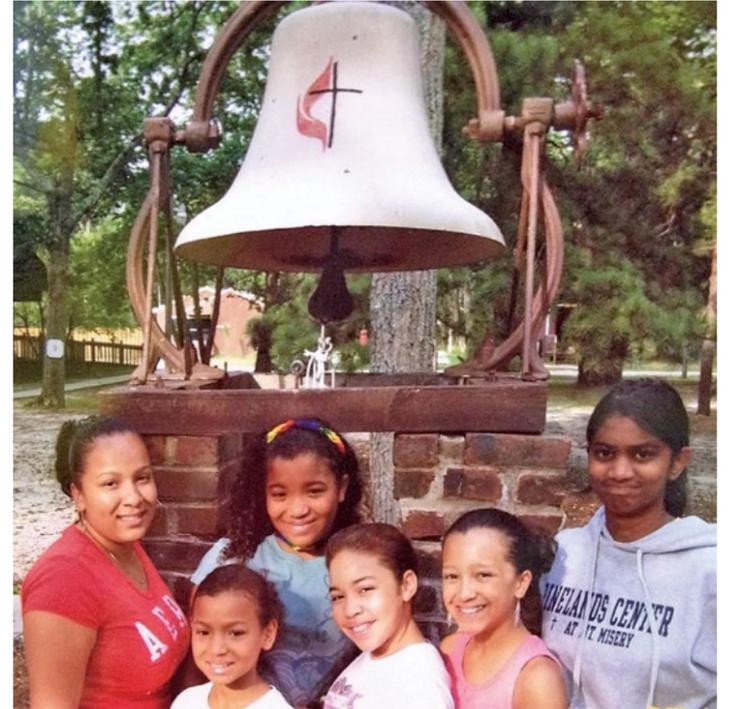
Lizaura is in the process of finishing a bachelor's degree in Child and Family Studies with the goal of becoming an ESL teacher. Once done with her studies, she is contemplating going abroad as a missionary with Global Ministries. Currently, she is a full-time assistant teacher at a preschool.

By Lizaura Baez, daughter of Waleska Trinidad of Dobbins Memorial UMC

My name is Lizaura Baez, I am 23 years old, and have been a Methodist my whole life. When I look



Lizaura moved to New Jersey from Puerto Rico with her mom 18 years ago. The photo to the right shows her enjoying summer camp in 2009.



back on my journey of faith some of the most transformational moments in my life happened at camp.

As a child I got the opportunity to go to camp multiple times. Being a camper at Pinelands is an amazing and memorable experience, everything from the

counselors, cabin mates, late night bonfires, mud hikes, team building activities, games, swimming at the lake, and worshipping in the green cathedral.

While forming friendships, making memories, and having experiences of a lifetime are all important, the deepest change that my time at Pinelands made was my faith.

As a child I was very confused as to what it meant to have faith and how I was supposed to live it. In the comfortable and open environment that Pinelands created I was able to ask questions and express my fears to my mentors and fellow peers.



“AS A CHILD I WAS VERY CONFUSED AS TO WHAT IT MEANT TO HAVE FAITH AND HOW I WAS SUPPOSED TO LIVE IT. IN THE COMFORTABLE AND OPEN ENVIRONMENT THAT PINELANDS CREATED I WAS ABLE TO ASK QUESTIONS AND EXPRESS MY FEARS TO MY MENTORS AND FELLOW PEERS.”

—Lizaura Baez, daughter of Waleska Trinidad of Dobbins Memorial UMC

The ability to share this time with campers my age enabled me to notice that I wasn't alone in my struggles. I not only got answers but also gained knowledge that greatly impacted my spiritual growth and understanding of who God really is.

I realized that when it comes to faith there is no specific course of action, it is an individualistic path for everyone while being part of a community of faith.

Pinelands was like my second church full of friends that I looked forward to going back to each year. I give thanks for all the friendships made and for the ones that I still have.

Each time I attended Pinelands I would come home a changed and more confident disciple ready for any challenges, because I knew that God was on my side. The time I spent at Pinelands helped me in my journey of faith so much that I decided to be a camp counselor and mentor with the hope that other campers can experience God's grace the way I did. 🇺🇸

JOIN US AT CAMP THIS SUMMER FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO RECONNECT!

**Reconnect...
...with God
...with Nature
...with Each Other**

We're preparing safe, fun Summer Camping Programs at the Pinelands Center, including Family Camps, Young Adult Programs, Missions Retreats and more.

CHECK OUT THE DETAILS
www.gnjnextgen.org



CONFERENCE NEWS

Now Open! The Harry S. Denman Evangelism Award for Clergy, Laity, and Youth

The Board of Discipleship is now accepting nominations for the prestigious award. The deadline is Feb. 28.

The Harry S. Denman Evangelism Awards honor United Methodists whose exceptional ministry of evangelism brings people into a life transforming relationship with Jesus Christ every year.

More information about the award can be found at <https://foundationforevangelism.org/>.

PPP Funding is Available Now

GNJ is strongly encouraging churches to act quickly and apply for the new round of the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funding. It is recommended that churches reach out to their local bank.

Applications will be accepted through March 31, 2021, or until funds are depleted. If you have questions after contacting your bank, contact caresact@gnjumc.org.

On Jan. 19, the SBA released a simplified version of the PPP loan forgiveness application for loans of \$150,000 or less. It requires less documentation and makes the process quite a bit easier. The loan may be fully forgiven if the funds are used for payroll costs, interest on mortgages, rent and utilities during the covered period following the funding of the loan.

The Mark Offers Profound MLK Service

Pastor Leslie Houseworth-Fields at The Mark Montclair UMC preached on Jan. 17, offering her congregation a special Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. online worship experience.



The service included prayer, fellowship and music from the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference Choir, Lan Wilson and from Felicia Moss Eaton and dance by its Flames of Unity.

Houseworth-Fields, a native of Atlanta, GA, spoke from Matthew 2:16 on recent events in the context of the scripture text and Dr. King's vision.

The service can be viewed on the church's Facebook page or here: <https://www.facebook.com/TheMarkMtc/videos/448728809629625>

Safe Alternatives this Ash Wednesday

Lent is Feb. 17! As we continue to accommodate our practices due to the COVID-19 pandemic to protect the health and safety of those we serve, it is recommended that churches do not impose ashes in any way that would require people who do not live in the same household to be within six feet of one another or touching one another. Alternative ideas include:

- Creating Lent kits/packages that include ashes (or, e.g., a piece of burlap with ashes on it) and sending/delivering to households
- Asking worshipers to use dirt from outside in place of ashes and to have some on hand before the service
- Pastor may speak the words for imposing ashes during an online service while worshipers self-impose ashes or members of a household impose ashes on one another. If worshiping in person, individual containers of ashes should be made available for worshipers to self-impose or impose on members of their household.
- Pastor may choose to include instructions, words of imposition, and a prayer in a kit for home so that individuals/households may observe Ash Wednesday without a church service
- For individuals living alone, the pastor might recommend imposing ashes in front of a mirror, which can symbolize the self-reflection that Lent calls for.

Hope and Hospitality Continues in Island Heights on Valentine's Day

Island Heights UMC, using all required social distancing requirements, will host Love Your Neighbor Sunday, A Community Celebration of Love on Feb. 14 at 2:00 p.m.



In addition to special music, community singing and inspirational words from scripture, poetry, Black, Indigenous and people of color leaders and community officials, the event will raise money raised for Centurion Ministries and the local food pantry.

Centurion Ministries is a Princeton-based organization with a mission to exonerate the wrongly convicted.

The church is also continuing its study to educate themselves and others about systemic racism, what their role is and how they can be effective in combatting it. The latest book is *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Iluo.

Camden Nonprofit Looking for New Director

Respond Inc., an organization in Camden that promotes the economic independence and general welfare of its residents, is looking for a dynamic new executive director.



Over 50 years ago Respond, Inc. was created through a joint venture of residents of the North Camden community and the United Methodist Church in Haddonfield.

The church assigned its Minister of Mission to meet with neighborhood residents in North Camden. A survey of needs was undertaken and childcare for parents who were in school or training for employment became the highest priority.

From culinary training to childcare, Respond has been the fixture in its community that helps people help themselves live brighter lives.

Job search ends Feb. 19. For more details, please visit www.gnjumc.org/news/respond-inc-executive-director/.

Embury UMC Shares the Gospel with Strings

On Jan. 24 Embury UMC's Jerry Dadap Jr. performed a guitar arrangement of "Dear Lord and Father of all Mankind" prior to the start of the worship service.

Based on John Whittier's 1872 poem, this hymn was set to the "Repton" tune composed by Hubert Parry in 1888. The video can be seen on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwAR3uDQkzJYqors37_O3Yr0XIkEeBr2gWAmDo9PNEOHV3lvrGJmKSB7DK5s&v=0txK8Jw_-mo&feature=youtu.be.

OBITUARIES

Irene Green, lay member at John Wesley UMC in Port Norris and mother of 10 and eight great-great grandchildren, passed away on Dec. 28. Written condolences can be sent to the family through the funeral home website at www.padgettfuneralhomes.com.

Rev. William L. Rhines, Jr. passed away on January 17. A memorial service will be held at a later date. Expressions of sympathy can be sent to Marie Rhines at 130 Dyer Ave, New Castle, DE 19720-2004.

Rev. Orient Price Taylor, retired elder, passed away on Jan. 22. Memorial donations may be sent to West End UMC at 2200 West End Ave, Nashville, TN 37203, in memory of Rev. Orient Price Taylor. Expressions of sympathy can be sent to Rev. Jacqueline Sojourner (spouse) at 211 Meadowlark Ct, Dickson, TN 37055.

Trenton Church Feeds and Clothes the Needy

Iglesia Metodista Unida (IMU) Wesley in Trenton provides food, new and used clothing and household goods to its community every Saturday.



It had originally been scheduled from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., but because of COVID-19 they now start giving the food around 9:45 a.m. and close as soon as the last food distribution is given out.

Among those donating are WAWA, Panera and the congregation. Eggs, milk and juice are also provided and are getting bought from Halo Farm market, supporting local farms.

More details on their ministries and missions can be found on its Facebook page.



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





Hoping for Miracles Everywhere this summer at The Pinelands Center!

Because of the generosity of local churches through the Miracles Everywhere Campaign in 2020, **THREE** different camping experiences with a fresh new look and experience will be offered!



Try out the all-new 2021 Family Camps, a three-day getaway for family members of any age!

GNJ is in the final year of this three-year campaign to transform lives. Help our youth find and connect to God this summer!



NEXT GENERATION
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Embrace the miracles and give today!

www.gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere