

THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

MARCH 2021
Vol. LXV/No. 3

gnjumc.org

Women Trailblazing through United Methodist History

“Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women.”

—MAYA ANGELOU

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

John Wesley, who was said to have been modeling the teachings of his mother, was the first within his movement to authorize a woman to preach, granting a license to Sarah Crosby in 1761. Fast forward 200 years, and Marjorie Matthews in 1980 became the first woman bishop, followed four years later by the first African American woman bishop, Leontine T. Kelly. Paving the way for these women were valiant and courageous forerunners like Barbara Heck, Sojourner Truth, Fanny Crosby, Harriett Tubman, Martha Drummer, Mary McLeod Bethune and many more.

March is Women’s History Month, and the United Methodist Church has built a rich tapestry of women’s leadership like Anna Howard who was a leader of the women’s suffrage movement, a physician



GNJ highlights two Methodist women working on the frontlines who have followed the path carved by many courageous women before them.

and one of the first women to be ordained in the Church. This tapestry has also set the stage for new leaders to thrive.

One place that fosters that growth is United Methodist Women (UMW), which

is celebrating its 152nd anniversary this month. Its legacy was born out of a call to action made by Clementina Butler and Lois Parker in Boston on March 23, 1869, which involved informing six women

members of the Methodist Episcopal Church about the desperate healthcare and educational needs of women in India. They raised funds to send Isabella

Continued on page 5

Worshipping and Parenting During a Pandemic

IN THE SKYLANDS

By Denise Herschel
Nj6pack@yahoo.com

SUSSEX COUNTY, NJ

Rev. Amanda Rohrs-Dodge was only on her fourth week of maternity leave when the pandemic shutdown began last March. Her daughter, Beatrice was born one month prior and with five-year-old twin daughters, Auden and Amelia at home, life was proving to be both challenging and unsettling due to the global health crisis at hand. As the provisional elder for two churches in Sussex County, Hurdtown UMC in Lake Hopatcong and the UMC of Lake Hopatcong (Skylands), Rohrs-Dodge said she was serving “three-quarters time at a two-point charge.”

“I was on my fourth week of maternity and went back to work leading my two congregations, through all of the changes that came with the pandemic. When I be-



Rev. Amanda Rohrs-Dodge and her husband, Rev. Dr. Evan Dodge have developed creative ways to juggle children, work and the church mission.

gan live-streaming worship services from the sanctuary instead of home, one of my lay leaders came almost every Sunday to assist in worship and then push Beatrice

in the stroller while I preached and led the service,” she said.

“There were some Sundays when my mother-in-law came to sit with all the

girls in church while I led worship and some Sundays when I have had to lead worship with no adult help at all. Those days were incredibly difficult, and I often wondered how I could possibly parent and pastor during the pandemic.”

But Rohrs-Dodge has relied upon her strong faith and belief in God, which has steered her through those trying days as she said that “being a pastor is never a traditional 9-to-5 job.”

“With God’s help, we have made it this far. My husband, Rev. Dr. Evan Dodge, is an ordained elder here in GNJ. He serves Belvidere UMC (Skylands),” she said.

Continued on page 5

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Clergy Helping Clergy

PAGE 2

Signs of Hope One Year Later

PAGE 4

Legacy of Musical Campers

PAGE 6

Leadership Academy Broadens Outreach

PAGE 8

March Bookshelf for Women

PAGE 9

Basic Blessings at a Tabernacle

PAGE 10

We worship, sing, pray and serve because of what God did for us. Wishing you and your families many blessings and restorative reflections this Easter.



Wintering Through a Stormy Year

“Listen to yourself, and in that quietude, you might hear the voice of God.”

—MAYA ANGELOU

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

Imagine a doctor losing his or her ability to see, or a carpenter losing a hand, or a painter left with no canvases. Now imagine you not being able to attend a funeral or visit a sick patient in the hospital or baptize a new baby. For clergy across the globe, these things they are called to do in ministry are often not possible now. This strong sense of loss that comes with this absence has been weighing on clergy for the past year, manifesting itself in sadness, frustration and self-doubt.

In the Greater New Jersey Conference, Rev. Ginny Samuel Cetuk stepped in to listen and help them start the healing process through a series called “Landscape of Loss.” Held in six different evening online sessions with breakout rooms reserved for district superintendents to host, Cetuk imparted years of research she has done as a former pastor, deacon, elder, hospital chaplain and associate dean.

“Our clergy are hurting. We need to alter the way we relate to ourselves and ministry,” said Cetuk. “It’s time for some self-reflection, and they need to love themselves with the same love they love everyone else.”

A clergy member since the 1970s, Cetuk recalled when she got a wake-up call from God to take better care of

herself. She had just retired from Drew Theological School after more than 30 years of service to the institution, only to find out that she had breast cancer.

“God picked me up and got my attention,” said Cetuk who recalled how her breast cancer made her realize that she couldn’t keep going in the same direction and at the same pace. She realized that in between the layers of hard work, dedication and commitment were also layers of resentment and feelings that like Jesus, only figuratively, she needed to climb the cross.

“But Jesus died to save us,” she said. “As I did for years, clergy often misappropriate that and fail to ask for help when they really need it.”

So instead of diving back into full-time ministry, Cetuk took a part-time pastor role until last June at Princeton UMC. While there, she formed a small group that enhanced the church’s grieving ministry called Love Lives On. Her group helped those whose feelings were still raw with grief. Together they shared stories of loved ones and in the process helped each other process loss, cope with loneliness and embrace the importance of the grief they were feeling.

Now cancer-free, love is still a big part of who Cetuk is. After all, her favorite poet is Rumi. She will always be caring and have the urge to help others, but now she is more transparent about her feelings.

“One of my goals going into this seminar was to be transparent about myself with the hope that my example invites others to do the same.”

“I wanted to help people understand how complex this web they weave is and

to realize that there’s no easy answer.”

Interspersed with sharing statistics she has gleaned over the years on how the stress of ministry takes its toll on the health of clergy, Cetuk listened. She listened to their frustrations associated with not sleeping, and she listened when they gravitated toward suffering from the imposter syndrome when their self-doubt strangled their logical sides, and she listened when racial disparities made those wounds even deeper.

Through that listening, Cetuk realized that clergy shared some of the same emotions of sadness, guilt and isolation. They were worn out, tired of the time spent on technology and plagued by the financial worries bearing down.

“They appreciated hearing about what other clergy are feeling. It validated their own feelings,” said Cetuk, who added that she tried to make clergy realize that they needed to turn those feelings of guilt and sense of failure into sadness so that the healing process could begin.

Referring to a book by Katherine May called *Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times*, Cetuk likened what they were feeling to a wound.

“You need to tend to a wound where the skin is coming off because it’s raw. But if you leave the skin, it will harden. People who allow themselves to ‘winter,’ come out wiser,” said Cetuk who added that clergy become quite adept at absorbing atonement and internalizing the pain.

While validating that pain and tapping into their hopeful sides, Cetuk emphasized to participants that they have the



Rev. Ginny Cetuk is committed to helping clergy through this difficult time.

power to say no as well as the power to say yes. She encouraged them to reach out to fellow clergy and actively care for each other.

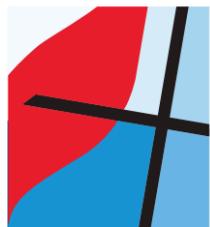
The retired clergy member who now lives in Sarasota, FL, knows that this seminar was probably just the first step toward healing and that additional training in resilience will likely be needed for clergy to recoup a normal life again.

“Scripture says choose life,” said Cetuk.

To that, Rumi would likely have said, “The wound is the place where the Light enters you” and “you have within you more love than you could ever understand” for others and yourself. 🇺🇸

CHECK OUT THIS RESOURCE:

7 Keys to Sustainable Resilience
Psychology Today



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

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

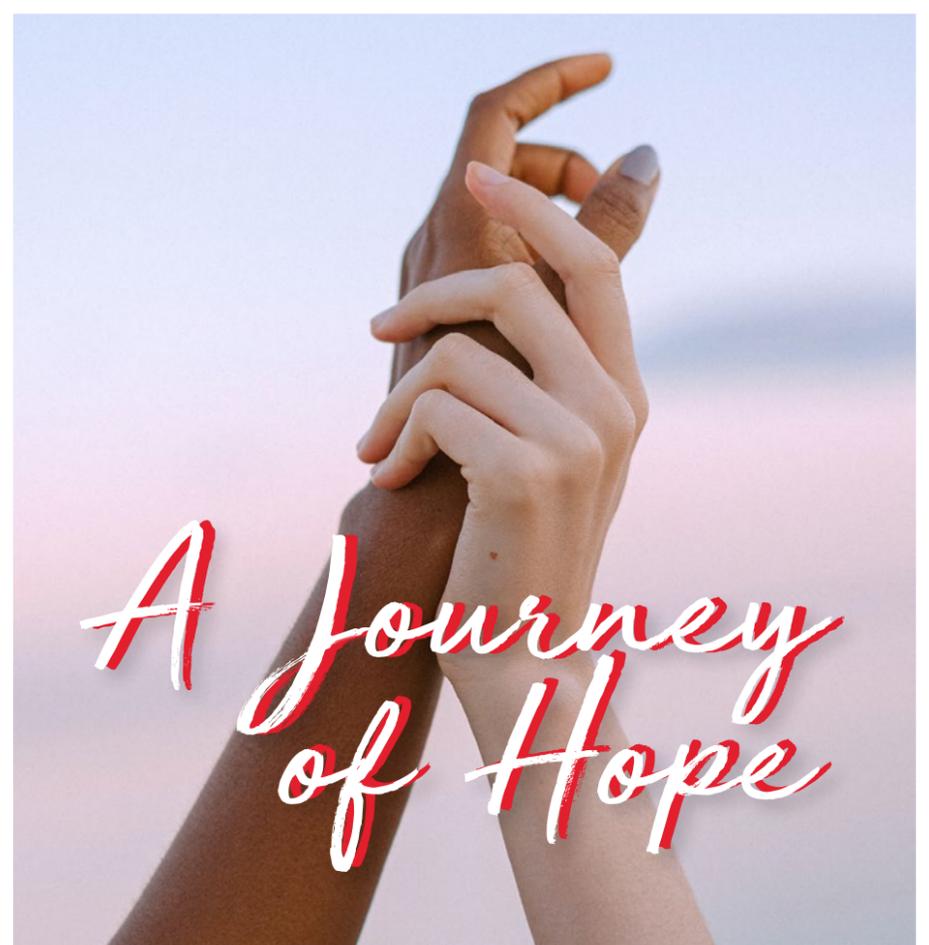
chris@cgcoleman.com

New Subscriptions, renewals, address changes, and corrections should be addressed to Heather Mistretta, hmistretta@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.



**A JOURNEY OF HOPE IS COMMITTED TO WORKING
TOWARD ENDING THE SIN OF RACISM**

This month we honor those courageous and spirit-filled women who valiantly paved the way for others to follow as many people work hard to provide opportunities to People of Color.

FOR MORE DETAILS
www.gnjumc.org/journeyofhope



UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY



GNJ Stewardship Foundation's new access to Stellar Technology Solutions' online accounting and reporting portal goes live in April!
This means expanded services and benefits for you:

- 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

For more details on Donor Advised Funds, Planned Giving Resources & Capital Campaign resources, visit:
www.gnjumc.org/umsf

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:



Jana Purkis-Brash
Executive Director, The United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey
732-359-1057 | JPurkisBrash@gnjumc.org



UNITED METHODIST
STEWARDSHIP FOUNDATION
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Signs of Hope Amid a Pandemic One Year Later

By Heather Mistretta
Hmistretta@gnjumc.org

With words like race and rush used often while discussing the COVID-19 vaccine in the past year and memories for some of the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, it's no wonder why some are fearful or doubtful of the vaccine's efficacy and safety. So GNJ is delving deeper into the vaccine by offering you its journey, impact and testimonials from clergy and laity right here in Greater New Jersey.

"I can understand that people feel hesitant to get the vaccination, given that it was put out quickly," said Cricket Denton-Brennan, associate pastor at Seaville UMC. "I was nervous when it first came out, but I did my research to find out exactly how it worked and what I was going to be putting into my body."

She added, "This new way of producing vaccines (mRNA) is fascinating and a huge leap in science. It's much safer than previous vaccines because it forces your body to make antibodies to the virus without actually injecting the virus into your system. This science isn't something that was just developed this past year. Scientists have been working on it for years, and I'm so appreciative that it can be used to fight our current pandemic."



Associate Pastor Cricket Denton-Brennan spearheaded a campaign to help people get vaccinated in south Jersey.

One of the leading researchers working on the vaccine for the CDC, 34-year-old Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett said, "The vaccine teaches the body how to fend off a virus, because it teaches the body how to look for the virus by basically just showing the body the spike protein of the virus. The body then says 'Oh, we've seen this protein before. Let's go fight against it.' That's how it works."

According to medical experts in an article in *Medical News Today*, researchers were not completely unfamiliar with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. One of many members of the coronavirus family, studies of coronavirus have been underway for over 50 years, meaning that scientists had existing data on the structure, genome and life cycle of this type of virus long before the pandemic bared down on us a year ago.

One misconception is that the vaccine would not be useful if the virus mutates.

While mutations are possible, Dr. Sam Sun, director of inDemic Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides information about COVID-19, and a chief resident at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, TX, said that there is a far less chance of mutation as compared to the influenza virus. "The spike protein is important for the ability of the virus to infect humans' cells. I think it would not mutate enough for the vaccines to be ineffective."

According to *Medical News Today*, the CDC will monitor safety after vaccination for acute care and long-term care facilities through the National Healthcare Safety Network. A smartphone application called V-safe is available for the general population. This tool uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after you receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Through V-safe, you can quickly tell CDC if you have any side effects after getting the vaccine.

In Cape May County, Denton-Brennan is committed to educating and getting those who need it most vaccinated. She noted that Seaville UMC is near one of the state's six mega centers that recently opened in Atlantic City.

"It has become a mission of mine within the church to make sure all of my congregants and members of the community are able to get appointments. Because the system is complicated and completely digital, people can become confused."

She added, "Before the mega center, appointments were few and far between. Now, appointments have become accessible, but you need to know how to navigate the website and when to sign on."

What started as a small group of people of all ages at Seaville UMC is steadily growing in an effort to exponentially make a difference called Operation Vaccination outreach. By signing on the website with many devices when appointments become available, the "Vaccine Angels" are able to send people a simple link so that they can make an appointment when their number is called.

"We've taken a frustrating and complicated system that has been overwhelming for our church folks and made it as simple and successful as possible for them. This way, we are able to help people become vaccinated, because the safety and well-being of our flock is our number one priority. We have the science, we have the technology, we just need to utilize it. The local church now has the opportunity to help people become safer and that much closer to a post-pandemic world."

For Cynthia Mosley of St. John's Fordville in Bridgeton, GNJ's one Native American church, standing in line to get her vaccination recently brought back childhood memories for her.

"I can remember as if it were yesterday, a little five-year-old girl walking with her mother and grandmother to a school in a neighborhood that was typically racially off limits to a diverse population. We were going to get our polio vaccine, which was being administered at this school. Our family decided we were more afraid of polio than we were of racial injustice, at least for that moment in time. Iron lung machines, paralysis, even death were real fears in those days, but my grandmother said we were going on that Sunday after church."

Now decades later, those fears of a pandemic ravaging a community and testing racial justice have resurfaced. The Native American community has been hard hit by this pandemic. Recent statistics in the United States show one in every 475 Native Americans has died from COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic, compared with one in every 825 white Americans and one in every 645 Black Americans.

"Dressed in our Sunday best, wearing those fancy shoes we reserved for church, we set out to get the vaccine. I remember the walk to the school was very somber, but the walk home was much more joyful because we felt new hope. We continued the vaccine series, and none of our immediate family contracted the dreaded disease."

The long walk Mosley recently took from the parking lot to the vaccination

megasite was similar to the walk many years ago, adding, "The walk back to the car had similarities too, because out of the 200 plus people onsite at the time, there were only four people who seemed to resemble us."

Mosley added, "We must improve our efforts to continue to educate and inform a diverse population of the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine. Maybe the moral of the story is to always listen to your grandmom."

Supply and Accessibility are Growing

New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York now have access to three viable vaccines now that the Johnson & Johnson one has been approved by the FDA. The advantage to this vaccine is three-fold: 1) its efficacy against hospitalization/severe symptoms is 93%; 2) it does not require freezing so it is easier to transport and store and 3) it only requires one dose.

NJ Gov. Murphy said that the state will begin to ease eligibility restrictions on March 15 to people like educators but warned that supplies remain scarce so the impact will not be immediate. New Jersey officials are committed to distributing the vaccine in an equitable manner and also partner with churches in educating people about the efficacy and safety of the vaccine.

Below are more testimonials from some clergy in GNJ. If you'd like to share your story, please contact Heather Mistretta at hmistretta@gnjumc.org.

Rev. Merlene Taylor (First UMC Mount Holly & Smithville UMC in Eastampton): "I have received both vaccines, the second on February 3 at the Voorhees site. I had no reactions to either shot. I am a member of the Rancocas Valley Clergy Association in Mt Holly. One of our members who is a chaplain at Virtua sent out an email to us that there was a small window opened for clergy in this area to be vaccinated. We all took advantage of it and shared it with other clergies."

Rev. Chris Heckert (Haddonfield UMC): "I received an email from some clergy friends that the local hospital system, Virtua, was prioritizing clergy for vaccine appointments. I was surprised, because we had not been previously named as frontline workers, but I immediately called the number listed and received an appointment just a couple days later. When I went to get the vaccine, the spirit was warm, hospitable and incredibly hopeful. It felt like a celebration of the best qualities of humanity. Everyone seem to be rooting for everyone else, smiling, following the rules and making sure everyone got where they needed to safely. The shot was over before I even realized it had been administered, I waited for 15 minutes and then got to leave. I had very mild side effects of achiness and fatigue for about a day, but that subsided quickly and now I live in hope that someday soon we can move beyond this pandemic. I would love to keep the spirit of human kindness that I experienced during the vaccination process close at hand on the other side of the situation. I hope we don't forget to have perspective, gratitude and kindness for others."

Rev. Gary Frieze (ordained deacon at Grace UMC in Kearny and pharmacist at Inter County Council on Drug & Alcohol Abuse): "I got my second shot yesterday at 11:11 and as of this time (8:06 a.m. the next day) no effects except soreness in shoulder, which is normal with IM [intramuscular] injections."

Rev. John Doll (Asbury UMC Cinnaminson): "I received my second dose of Pfizer vaccine February 3. After the first dose, I woke up with a swollen arm and the chills. I read the rest of the day and felt fine the next day. When I got the second dose, I felt a little achy for the next couple of days. Getting the vaccine was a no-brainer for me. When I had the reaction to the first dose, my main thought was this is nothing compared to what many have dealt with concerning this disease. Another thought was - this means it is working! The local Catholic priest called me and left a message that clergy were eligible in the first phase. He gave me a number which I immediately called and shared with as many clergy as I could including my DS. It has been a privilege to



Rev. Merlene Taylor is among those who said she had no reaction to the vaccine.

be able to get this vaccine and a miracle of medicine from our Lord."

Rev. Veronica Palmer (RISE Church in East Orange): "I have received my first vaccination already and am expecting the second on March 1. I'm feeling well."

Pastor Jo-Anne Winzer (Delaware Valley UMC and chaplain at Karen Ann Quinlan Hospice, Newton, NJ): "I have received both shots of the Moderna vaccine. With the first shot in January, I had a sore arm and was a little tired. Second shot on February 5, and I reacted with fever, headache, body aches and very tired. It was like having the flu but lasted about 24 hours."

Rev. Dr. David Montanye (First UMC of Avalon): "I have said to my congregation from the beginning of this pandemic that our priority is keeping safe our most vulnerable members, and that is still our highest priority. I still have not received a first shot even though I am eligible as being over 65, having recently had cancer and being chaplain to the Avalon Fire Department. My experience in Cape May County with the megasite in Atlantic City has been frustrating to say the least...I have tried four times to get an appointment. The members of the congregation have had mixed results. Some have received their first shots, some have not been able to. One elderly family I know had to travel two hours to Moorestown where they have been able to get an appointment while several others have received a shot right here in Community Hall in Avalon."

Low Weil (United Methodist Men): "Second dose is a winner, for my arm is swollen. The VA in Brick said most people run a high fever. If it lasts more than two days, call them for advice and take aspirin. I received the second shot today."

Lan Wilson (GNJ's director of resourcing and worship): "A day after Moderna shot #1, my arm is sore, but it's not terrible and I am continuously tired. Nevertheless, thank God for science and coffee! I was feeling some mild flu-like symptoms yesterday, but they have subsided today. Overall, feeling great." 🙏

For additional resources, visit the GNJ website at www.gnjumc.org/covid19/2021-covid-19-vaccine/.

Women's History Month

Continued from page 1

Thoburn, a teacher, and Clara Swain, a doctor, to India. The meeting led to the formation of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, the first of many Methodist women's mission organizations to address the injustices imposed on women and girls in the 19th century. UMW is their successor.

The reverberations of their initial calls to action and the courage that has ensued ever since are seen in churches, hospitals and schools throughout GNJ. Here are two stories of two GNJ women working on the frontlines.

Sue Zahorbenski has always been a champion for social justice, especially for those whom society overlooks: the homeless, the hungry and those who are LGBTQ. Much of what she imparts into what she does comes from lessons learned from her mother, Deaconess Helen McCahill of St. Paul's in Ocean Grove, NJ.

"My mom was in UMW, so I used to go to meetings with her in the evenings for the Schools of Mission (now Mission u)," said Zahorbenski who added that she relished those times so much she continued to attend while in college. Her mom is still involved in homeless ministry to this day.

Now as the new president of the GNJ UMW, Zahorbenski is ready to make a difference in the lives of those who need it most.

"The history of United Methodist women is so inspiring and exciting," said Zahorbenski. "People like Pauli Murray make me proud to be a United Methodist woman," she added, referring to the American civil rights activist for women and people of color who became a lawyer, Episcopal priest and author of books including the anti-segregation Methodist text called *States' Laws on Race and Color*.

Zahorbenski said she is determined to keep UMW in the forefront, adding, "Being a presence at Annual Conference is one way to do that."

She also said she's working on bringing back awareness of inclusive language for local churches.

"We limit God when we don't do this. Awareness and education are so important."



LEFT TO RIGHT: Dr. B. Lee Manns, a chaplain and New GNJ UMW President Sue Zahorbenski

In 2015 she was part of the group who brought reconciling ministries to annual conference. A diaconal minister since 1999, Zahorbenski has been involved in helping children, youth and adults, particularly in education and gardening.

In 2019 a grant from the General Board of Global Ministries to her church, UMC of New Brunswick, allowed her to lead along with retired schoolteacher, Karen Cox a three-year literacy project called "Write, Read, Achieve Power: The Literacy Project." The project helps more than 500 students in New Brunswick.

Although the pandemic put that project on hold last year, she was able to use grant money so that her church could acquire wifi hotspots for a school in New Brunswick last fall.

"We want to be a beacon of light in downtown New Brunswick, a center of literacy, tutoring and other support."

In addition to this role, for the past 15 years she has been an instructional aide at Piscataway Regional Day School, which serves children with special needs, ages 6-21. Appealing to the unique needs of her students, some days she is sharing snow from outside; other days she is teaching them how to garden.

Dr. B. Lee Manns was given a new life on July 14, 2020.

Following years of four-dialysis treatments each day, she is treasuring the



new kidney she received in Camden from a 30-year-old man who had died of an overdose.

"It was a beautiful kidney. But in order for me to live, someone else had to die," said the 74-year-old deaconess at St. Andrew's UMC in Cherry Hill. "That realization took me quite a while to overcome. I was eventually able to write to the family and express my immense gratitude."

Manns, a chaplain at Virtua Hospital in Marlton, NJ, for the past 15 years and a deaconess since 2005, has had a passion for music her entire life. From 1959 to 1973 she traveled throughout the United States and Europe as a musician. In 1970 she won the Philadelphia Orchestra Young Artist Competition. Although her musical career began on the piano as a child, her arrival at the University of Rochester awakened her passion for the harpsichord.

"I have tiny hands that are ideal for this instrument," said Manns who due to a chronic repetitive stress injury in her hands and the birth of her first child had to put a stop to that career in 1973. She later donated her instrument to Rowan University.

"I did a lot of soul searching," said Manns. "It was 1983 when I finally got back to seminary. I went back to where it all started, and that was church."

In 1991 she received a M.Div. from Palmer Theological Seminary. She would later go on to receive a doctorate in

Christian Counseling from Andersonville Theological Seminary in 2013 when she realized how strong her passion was for helping others.

"My biggest passion is to help people find their way through their muddle," said Manns who added that by looking at someone for 50 seconds, she was able to know what to do to help them move forward.

Throughout her time at Virtua and while raising her children, Jennifer and Andrew, with her husband, Ernest, she has found a way to help others. In 2012 she started a mission to Hopkins, Belize for the purpose of raising the educational levels of students there.

"We brought with us seven suitcases full of supplies for a minimum of 25 children in the village. This included writing equipment, paper, scissors, coloring books, colored paper, mini pencils and crayon sharpeners, crayons, books, backpacks and some fun toys," said Manns.

She added, "Sadly this was a drop in the ocean. This delightful village of hardworking people was by our standards lacking in many basic items. We returned home driven to fix the things we could and give direction to the things they wanted."

In 2014 Manns returned with the group of volunteers from St. Andrews of Cherry Hill with the intention of creating a medical clinic as many of their ills had simple solutions.

"In the boxes this time were medical supplies from thermometers to surgical items donated by the local hospitals here," said Manns. "I had walked them through by email what they needed to construct as a building with running water, refrigerator, a sterilization area, electricity and immunization needs. In the boxes were also a treat--dozens of lollipops."

For a list of events and resources to commemorate the important month, visit the Washington.org website at <https://bit.ly/3uGbH2q>.

For more information on Pauli Murray, visit www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/pauli-murray.

For more information on GNJ UMW, including GNJ Conference UMW Spring meeting on April 25, visit www.gnjumc.org/united-methodist-women-2/.

Skylands

Continued from page 1

"When worship went virtual, we led a joint worship service for our three congregations from our home on Facebook Live. The service became known as Church of the Kitchen Table and continued from March until my husband's church began holding outdoor, in-person service in July 2020. We are now back to leading worship separately live streaming from our sanctuaries."

Rohrs-Dodge met her husband at Drew Theological School during orientation in August 2009. He had already begun his M.Div. the previous spring and was returning to campus for the fall semester while she was attending orientation, about to begin her M.Div.

"We were in several first-year classes together and would run into each other at the library, the pub and walking to and from Seminary Hall. We didn't get much studying done, instead talking about our interests. One afternoon he finally asked me to have dinner with him. I agreed but only if he made the dinner himself. He had to cook it at my apartment because the oven at his place was broken! We stayed up till 3 a.m. and have been together ever since," she said.



Amanda and Evan have proven their resilience in many ways over the past few years.

Rohrs-Dodge is originally from Baltimore, MD, having been born and raised there. She began the orientation process in the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference.

"I grew up in a large, multigenerational United Methodist Church called Hiss, located in the suburbs of Baltimore County. My husband is originally from Maine. Many of his relatives were pastors in the Baptist tradition. He discov-

ered the United Methodist Church while in college and became a member of the Jacksonville UMC in East Machias, ME, as an adult," she said.

Although Rohrs-Dodge and Evan are a clergy couple with their twin daughters now six-years-old and their youngest daughter having just turned one-year-old, they have never officially served together at a church. And, according to Rohrs-Dodge, her first appointment at Asbury UMC, was just down the road from one of her husband's churches, Broadway UMC in Raritan Valley.

"The worship times of each congregation allowed me to assist him in worship, often filling in on the organ, during Broadway's worship service, before going to lead worship at my one church," she added.

Rohrs-Dodge said that one of the most challenging times in their family life and ministry was in January 2019 when her husband became very ill with an autoimmune disease called Guillain-Barre Syndrome, which comes on suddenly and is often life-threatening as it can ultimately affect one's breathing.

"Thankfully Evan's case was caught early, and thankfully he made a full recovery and is doing well today. We were surrounded by prayer from our con-

gregations and had the gift of a caring and supportive district superintendent. Family and friends helped to take care of the twins, and church members brought meals," she said. "The other Methodist United Church in town, where the girls attended preschool, let the girls stay longer for daycare so that I had more time to work and to go to and from the hospital/rehab center where he was. In the midst of this frightening time, I was given the gift of experiencing the love, care and support that a community of faith can provide. I will carry that with me always."

When asked what have been some of her greatest joys as a UMC pastor, Rohrs-Dodge replied that she has many meaningful memories from her time in ministry.

"My memories are centered around the sacraments or breaking bread together as a community such as sharing in the sacrament of Holy Communion with residents of a long-term care facility, often with my twins. Building new relationships and community or watching existing communities grow and flourish in their relationship with God and with one another is another source of great joy for me," she said. "It is a humbling reminder of the work we are called to do not only as pastors but as followers of Jesus." 🇺🇸



NEXT GENERATION

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY



Campers Come Full Circle by Passing it On

“It only takes a spark to get a fire going, and soon all those around can warm up in its glowing. That’s how it is with God’s love once you’ve experienced it; you spread his love to everyone; you want to pass it on.”

—LYRICS FROM *PASS IT ON*

By Heather Mistretta
Hmistretta@gnjumc.org

For Mark Miller, Aldersgate Music Camp was not just his home away from home. From 1973-1979, it was his home as the grandson, son, brother, uncle and cousin to United Methodist clergy. And for Rev. Tanya Linn Bennett, the journey that began in 1969 sleeping at Hogan’s on a platform left her with lasting memories, friends and a decades-long friendship. Together, this dynamic duo infused what they learned as campers to direct the camp for 20 years with passion, creativity and compassion.

“The joy was palpable. That joy sustains us still today,” said Miller as he reminisced about his days spent living and working at Aldersgate. Miller

is assistant professor of Church Music at Drew Theological School, a lecturer in the Practice of Sacred Music at Yale University and the minister of music of Christ Church in Summit, NJ.

From leading a rendition of Bohemian Rhapsody to help a homesick camper cope, to orchestrating a musical written by Laurie Zelman each summer, the impression these two made on many youth is also palpable as is the strong friendship and mutual respect these two share. Although

on Zoom in two different locations, the connection these two shared was seamless. It was as if they were sitting next to each other on the same couch reminiscing about their days at camp.

“The environment was very inclusive. There was a love of God, love of all people, a real sense of belonging there. All people were embraced just the way they were,” said Bennett who fondly recalled Rev. Dale Forsman and the song, “Pass it On.” “In a lot of ways, he called me into ministry.”

Bennett, who is a University chaplain, pastor at Covenant UMC in Plainfield, associate dean and associate professor in the Practice of Public Theology and Vocation at the Theological School at Drew University and chair of the Board of Church and Society, also remembered the outdoor chapel where years later a couple camp alumni were married and the benches built into the hill by the duck pond, saying “There was a sense of connection with the outdoors. Being outdoors allowed them to release something and build a deep relationship with God.”

Miller recalled how the final night of camp meant hiking up Sunrise Mountain, which is part of the Appalachian Trail. “Everyone shared what the week meant to them. It was amazing how transforming one week could be.”

When asked what the future looked like following the sale of Aldersgate, Miller said, “I think it can be vital again. As sad as it is to see a piece of my home go away, I still have hope for the future.”

Bennett echoed those sentiments in saying, “Camp has a spirit like no other. They can take it with them wherever they are.” 🌈

**“THE ENVIRONMENT WAS VERY INCLUSIVE.
THERE WAS A LOVE OF GOD, LOVE OF ALL PEOPLE,
A REAL SENSE OF BELONGING THERE.
ALL PEOPLE WERE EMBRACED JUST
THE WAY THEY WERE.”**

—Rev. Tanya Linn Bennett

JOIN US FOR 2021 CAMPING EXPERIENCES AT THE PINELANDS CENTER

FAMILY CAMP

Join us for 3-day sessions with your family at The Pinelands Center! This summer, we are excited to offer four family camping sessions in July!



MISSION RETREATS

The Pinelands Center wants to host YOUR group for a week of mission this summer! We are excited to offer many weeks and weekends of mission in June, July and early August.



Families will...

- Have their own private cabin to stay in as a household
- Participate in camp activities such as hiking, archery, the challenge course, crafting, paintball, hayrides, and swimming as permissible by current regulations
- Be led in morning and evening devotionals
- Retreat, refresh, and renew together

For more information, go to:
www.gnjnextgen.org/camping-ministry



Groups of youth, young adults and/or adults can expect to...

- Engage in group mission while maintaining safety and health guidelines recommended by the CDC and American Camping Association
- Collaborate on projects at The Pinelands Center and in the surrounding community
- Visit a local Hope Center to observe GNJ mission
- Participate in daily worship and small groups
- Enjoy outdoor experiences and activities

For more information, go to:
www.gnjnextgen.org/retreats



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Mekan Payne, Camp Program Director
mpayne@gnjumc.org



NEXT GENERATION
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Imagining Transformative Leadership Under One Umbrella

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

Like raindrops, leaders come in all shapes and sizes, reflect different images with different colors and in different ways. Those drops meet to form a puddle or sometimes reservoir of all those shared ideas and reflections. Now imagine a place where laity and clergy can learn together, helping each other grow and build more confidence.

According to the leadership umbrella principle, the size of our leadership umbrella is not how much we are in charge of; it is how much we can lead and keep dry, and how to lead with compassion means sharing that umbrella. It also says that the storms and trials should push us to grow our leadership umbrella.

The new Leadership Academy will be that umbrella for the future—one that says in spite of the recent obstacles, growth and vitality can still be achieved and if done correctly, to an even greater extent. The most recent program, which began last October, finished up in February with three Wednesday evening virtual sessions of “Missional Engagement that Opens Hearts, Minds and Doors,” where participants learned best practices for engaging in mission that is relational, transformative and uses the gifts and assets of a church and community.

GNJ’s former Director of Mission Ashley Wilson along with Rev. Luana Cook Scott of Morristown UMC and Hope Center Developer Andrea Wren-Hardin facilitated the sessions via Zoom.

“We’re helping them move from a place of charity to mission,” said Wren-



Clergy and laity throughout GNJ opened their hearts, minds and doors to a new program from the Leadership Academy.

Hardin, who hosted the second session.

“We’re all broken. With our different forms of brokenness, we need to learn how we can help each other, how we can share with each other,” she added. One way, Wren Hardin suggested, was through an asset-based approach that can sustain long-term change and helps people identify their own potential beyond contributions of outside experts.

The church has been called by God to engage in mission. It is through mission we grow closer to God, our community and one another as we work to transform the world.

But the three sessions were more than just instructional videos for participants. Those who tuned in identified next steps to share with their mission committee and church leadership, as well as resources for encouraging and engaging in mission.

“We were so glad we joined! Each week was full of energy, and each presentation was laid out perfectly,” said Joanne Santoro, speaking for herself and her husband, Sal, who are laity at Aldersgate UMC and serve as the church’s leaders of the Outreach Team. “We enjoyed each breakout session as well as each presenter. The presenters were able to keep everyone engaged.”

Wilson, who focused on relational mission, including what scripture and our personal relationships reveal to us about mission in the third session, said she created a document that helped people think through a different mission or start something new.

“We explored mission gestures versus mission engagement and how to be more relational and long term in our mission ministries,” said Wilson.

Throughout the three sessions, participants not only connected to the instructors but also to each other, forming relationships that will likely be fostered in the future.

“I learned that people of GNJ are passionate about mission, and they’re looking to engage with each other and their communities. There’s definitely an interest in collaboration and partnership,” said Wilson, who added that she was pleasantly surprised when she learned that some people who took part in the sessions were engaging in mission in more relational ways in spite of the pandemic as they spent more time and effort in building relationships.

Overall, Wilson said the revamped Leadership Academy will help with partnerships between clergy and laity. It will give them shared tools to work with and the resources needed to make their ministries impactful.”

Rev. Juel Nelson, who is GNJ’s director of leadership development, is hopeful that the Leadership Academy will have a broader outreach while remaining com-

“WE’RE ALL BROKEN. WITH OUR DIFFERENT FORMS OF BROKENNESS, WE NEED TO LEARN HOW WE CAN HELP EACH OTHER, HOW WE CAN SHARE WITH EACH OTHER.”

—Andrea Wren-Hardin,
Hope Center Developer

mitted to the mission. She said, “Christ-centered leaders are a vital part of every church in achieving the mission of the church. With these new resources in hand, they will be able to make an even bigger impact.”

Moving forward, Nelson said the Academy will offer more short-term courses and e-learning programs to enrich both laity and clergy and help them strengthen the five markers of vitality.

Stay tuned for more details at www.gnjumc.org/2020-leadership-academy/.

I hear you. I love you. I respect you.

i see you.

Join the Breakthrough team’s newest worship series,
I See You, this April and May as we connect closer
to each other and God.

DOWNLOAD SERMON SERIES
AND RESOURCES:

www.gnjumc.org/breakthrough

BREAKTHROUGH
A GNJ guide to best practices for worship.

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Transformative Mission

“Transformation is the change from a condition of human existence contrary to God’s purposes to one in which people are able to enjoy fullness of life in harmony with God.”

2015 Transform World

MARCH BOOKSHELF: *Honoring Women's History Month*

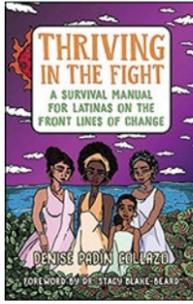
Please enjoy a selection of books, both for adults and youth, to honor the forerunners of women's history who have paved the way for others.

Thriving in the Fight: A Survival Manual for Latinas on the Front Lines of Change

(Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2021) By Denise Collazo

Thriving in the Fight offers three keys to help Hispanic women keep their focus, morale and energy high. Doing the work of social change is hard. Waking up every day to take on the biggest challenges of our time can be overwhelming, and sometimes progress is hard to see. Latina and all women of color activists do their best work when they are thriving, not simply surviving.

Denise Padin Collazo is the first Latina, the first woman of color and the first woman to raise a family and stay in the work of community organizing at Faith in Action. She is the senior advisor for external affairs at Faith in Action, the nation's largest faith-based, progressive organizing network, where she has advanced the cause of social justice over the past 25 years. She is also an official member of the Forbes Nonprofit Council, an invitation-only organization for executives in successful nonprofit organizations.

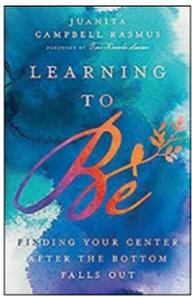


Learning to Be: Finding Your Center After the Bottom Falls Out

(IVP, 2020) By Rev. Juanita Rasmus

In *Learning To Be*, Pastor Juanita writes from her life with kind attention to the life of the reader. She offers both practical and spiritual insights but never pat answers. Each chapter includes life-giving spiritual practices to help you discover your own new ways of being.

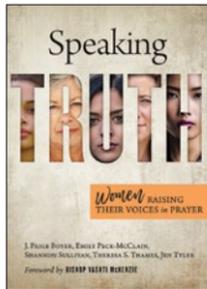
Juanita Rasmus is a pastor, spiritual director and contemplative with a passion for seeing people transform into being their best selves in our world. She co-leads the St. John's Church in Downtown Houston with her husband, Rev. Rudy Rasmus, who is the author of the recent *I'm Black. I'm Christian. I'm Methodist.*



Speaking Truth: Women Raising Their Voices in Prayer

(Abingdon Press, 2020) By Theresa S. Thames, Emily Peck-McClain, Shannon Sullivan, Jen Tyler, J. Paige Boye

Speaking Truth is about women joining together to speak and act in new ways in response to the increasing challenges of our day. This book offers to all women the sustenance needed to face blatant racism, bigotry, sexism, heterosexism, and xenophobia in the world and in the church. The writers of *Speaking Truth* greet these challenges knowing that the Good News of Jesus Christ is bigger than any societal ill and that God has called us to play a part in God's work of transformation.



Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times

(Riverhead Books, 2020) By Katherine May

Wintering explores the ways we can care for and repair ourselves when life knocks us down through personal narrative and the lessons learned along the way. The book's author models an active acceptance of sadness and finds nourishment in deep retreat, joy in the hushed beauty of winter and encouragement in understanding life as cyclical, not linear.

Katherine May is a writer of both fiction and nonfiction. She has had journalism and essays appear in a range of publications including The New York Times, The Times (London), Good Housekeeping and Cosmopolitan. She lives by the sea in Whitstable, England and is an avid lover of the outdoors.

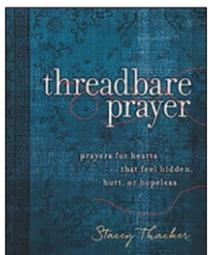


Threadbare Prayer: Prayers for Hearts that Feel Hidden, Hurt, or Hopeless

(Abingdon Press, 2020) By Stacey Thacker

Threadbare Prayer is a collection of 100 simple yet heartfelt devotions to guide readers on the days they don't know what to pray. Each entry contains a Bible verse, a brief thought and a simple, concise prayer to encourage the reader's heart.

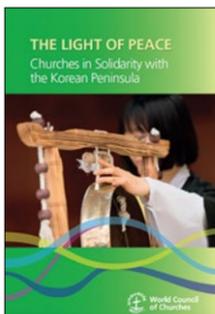
Stacey Thacker is an author, blogger, speaker and believer of connecting with women. Her passion is to encourage women in their walks with God and equip them to study the Bible. She created the blog community, "Mothers of Daughters" and now blogs on her site, StaceyThacker.com. She is the author of six books including *Hope for the Weary Mom: Let God Meet You in the Mess* and has written a series of Bible studies, *The Girlfriends' Guide to the Bible*. She worked with Campus Crusade for Christ for five years before becoming a full-time mom to four daughters.



The Light of Peace: Churches in Solidarity with the Korean Peninsula

(World Council of Churches (WCC), 2020) Edited by Anne Casparsson, Marianne Ejdersten, Rev. Dr. Jin Yang, Kimlvars Kupcis, Peter Prove, Rev. Seung-Min, ShinLyn van Rooyen. Translated by Rev. Dr. Jin Yang Kim

The Light of Peace aims to provide WCC member churches with resources for recognizing 70 years of unresolved conflict on the Korean Peninsula during 2020. The second publication in the series, the content is drawn from a variety of contributors, each with their own experience of, or expertise in, the Korean journey. Emphasizing the importance of the spiritual response, every chapter again starts with a spiritual reflection, followed by a text, and ends with a prayer.



The publication will serve as an educational, spiritual, and formation resource and encourage churches and individuals to pray for peace, reunification, and an end to the war and division on the Korean Peninsula. It could be used in Bible study or for Korea interest- and other groups.

One of the editors and translator, Rev. Dr. Sang Chang, is the WCC Asia president. She is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea. She has been a strong advocate and promoter of women's rights. She served as a national leader in the Korean YWCA, organizing and conducting seminars and workshops on the human rights of the Korean women who were engaged in the sex industry for American military personnel stationed in Korea. She was also responsible in the movement for promoting women's right to work, as well as empowering and educating women.

Parable of the Brown Girl: The Sacred Lives of Girls of Color

(Fortress Press, 2020) by Khristi Lauren Adams

Parable of the Brown Girl introduces readers to the resilience, struggle and hope held within these stories. Instead of relegating these young women of color to the margins, Adams brings their stories front and center where they belong. By sharing encounters she has had with girls of color that revealed profound cultural and theological truths, Adams magnifies the struggles, dreams, wisdom and dignity of these voices. Thought-provoking and inspirational, *Parable of the Brown Girl* is a powerful example of how God uses the narratives we most often ignore to teach us the most important lessons in life. It is time to pay attention.

Khristi Lauren Adams is a speaker, advocate, chaplain, and ordained Baptist minister. She is the founder and director of The Becoming Conference, designed to empower, educate, and inspire teenage girls. She is currently the Firestone Endowment Chaplain, an instructor of religious studies and philosophy and co-director of Diversity at The Hill School in Pottstown, PA.

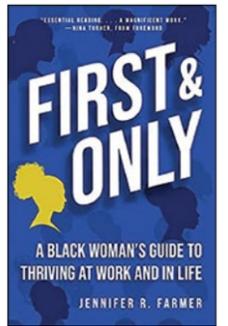
First and Only: A Black Woman's Guide to Thriving at Work and in Life

(Broadleaf Books, 2021) by Jennifer R. Farmer, Forward by Nina Turner

First and Only is a guide for every woman who has found herself closing the cover on other leadership books that omit true experiences and strengths. In these pages, trainer and activist Jennifer R. Farmer helps readers learn what is required for the long haul of liberation by providing a roadmap to on-the-job success, challenging systemic racism and seeking inner healing through the sustaining power of faith. She offers practical strategies for Black women to thrive in workplaces that can be ambivalent about their success, as well as tips and stories from psychologists, activists and organizational experts that equip Black women to lead others and heal past wounds.

Jennifer R. Farmer is a writer, trainer and activist who has worked with entrepreneurs, social justice organizations and advocates and faith-based leaders including Bishop William J. Barber II and Edgar Villanueva. She is the founder of Spotlight PR LLC, which specializes in strategy and training for leaders and groups committed to racial justice, and is the author of *Extraordinary PR, Ordinary Budget*. Her work has appeared in *Sojourners*, *The Root*, *LifeHack.org*, *HuffPost* and the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, among others. She is the mother of two and lives in northern Virginia.

Nina Turner is a motivational speaker, cable news commentator and defining political icon. She is a national co-chair of the Bernie Sanders 2020 presidential campaign, a former state senator from Ohio and former professor of African American history. She is also a founding member of the Bernie Sanders Institute, an entity dedicated to transforming American democracy through research, education and outreach.

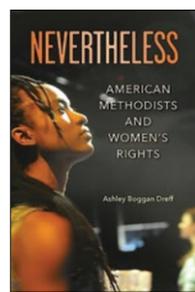


Nevertheless: American Methodists and Women's Rights

(Abingdon Press, 2020) by Ashley Boggan Dreff

Nevertheless tells the story of American Methodist women's efforts to fight for women's rights, beginning with the Women's Christian Temperance Union and ending with the #MeToo movement. Each chapter documents particular Methodist women and provides the reader with a basic historic context of the time or situation at hand as it shows how Methodist women engaged and fought for women's equality or women's rights in American society and American Methodism.

Ashley Boggan Dreff, Ph.D., is Director of Women and Gender Studies, Assistant Professor of Religion, High Point University, High Point North Carolina. She is author of "Entangled: A History of American Methodism, Politics, and Sexuality," winner of the 2019 Saddlebag Award.

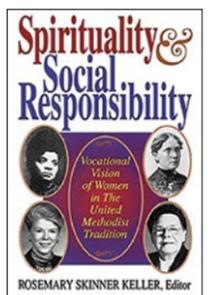


Spirituality and Social Responsibility: Vocational Vision of Women in the United Methodist Tradition

(Abingdon Press, 1993) edited by Rosemary Skinner Keller.

Spirituality and Social Responsibility is a collection of essays and primary source documents that tells the stories of pioneering ministries of United Methodist women—of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds—from the eighteenth century. Each essay traces the individual faith journeys and self-understanding of its subject. The stories also reveal the sexism and racism that confronted each woman overtly or covertly in church and society, as well as their own attitudes toward it.

Rosemary Skinner Keller, a feminist historian, churchwoman and scholar, was Professor Emerita of Church History at Union Theological Seminary in New York City until her death in 2008. She had also served as Academic Dean at Union. 🇺🇸



Meeting Neighbors in a South Jersey Tabernacle

“There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.”

—ACTS 20:35

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

CAPE MAY, NJ

Thousands of years ago, a tabernacle was the portable place of worship God commanded the Israelites to build after they were rescued from slavery in Egypt. According to the Bible, the “tent of the congregation” was where the divine and earthly realms met and where people’s lives were transformed through giving.

Far from the original tabernacle in a small New Jersey town in Cape May County with a population of only about two thousand called Erma, there is another place where lives are transformed for those seeking refuge called Tabernacle Basic Blessings (TBB), a ministry by Tabernacle UMC that provides basic necessities to those who need them most.

“It was designed to reach out to those who are struggling to afford basic necessities to their families,” said Brenda Church who leads the ministry and continues to foster its growth.

“We’re a well-rounded ministry,” she said, adding that in addition to basic needs, they also tap into their clients’ social, spiritual and emotional needs.

“We have developed a community where people help people. We refer to each other as friends,” said Church, who has grown up at the church, first entering the sanctuary of Tabernacle UMC when she was only three.

Tabernacle Basic Blessings began in 2017 after one of the adult Sunday School classes finished a study in the book of Acts. The church’s United Methodist Women’s group wanted to apply the compassionate and caring les-



The small group of longtime Tabernacle Basic Blessings volunteers are (l to r) Steve Bistak, Paula Bistak, Amanda Brojakowski, Lynn Jefferis, Brenda Church, Joe Williams and Wylie Williams.

sons that they learned from the study and put it into action. The result was a modern day “Acts Ministry” to the Lower Township community called Tabernacle Basic Blessings.

Although only one person showed up on that first day in 2017, the ministry has since grown to serve an average of 40-45 families the third Saturday of each month at 10:00 a.m.

As the pandemic bared down on the southern New Jersey community in 2020, Church and other Tabernacle UMC volunteers transitioned from serving from the original store-like environment to creating bags filled with 12 things that are loaded into each car as the clients arrive.

Church noted that the whole congregation participates in TBB, donating their time, money or items to be included in the bags, which are filled with things like diapers, wipes, toothpaste, shampoo, toilet paper, laundry detergent and deodorant.

In addition to these basic necessities, the people of Tabernacle UMC have recently started adding a devotional as well as a prayer list that also gets shared with the Sunday school classes.

Rev. Glenn Scheyhing offers clients healing through prayer, treating everyone as a neighbor.



They have also provided services such as a Thanksgiving Communion as well as healing and prayer services in an outside tent when the weather was warmer.

“Pastor is on call and offers prayer to anyone who makes a request for a prayer,” said Church who added that she is grateful for the opportunity to help others. “I grow from it too. I get a blessing every time.”

Brenda Church has been spreading blessings throughout Tabernacle UMC for over 50 years, serving in the choir, teaching Sunday School and helping out wherever the greatest need was.

“Brenda is one of my heroes at Tabernacle,” said Rev. Glenn Scheyhing who has been serving the church for the past seven years. “I pretty much just show up each month and make a

few deliveries. Brenda is the “worker bee” (and our Queen).”

Scheyhing, with a humble heart, relishes those opportunities when he can support his congregation and just listen to their stories. On Sundays, he can often be found in the sanctuary strumming on a guitar and singing, a talent he shares perhaps from his days many years ago when he was a radio missionary on a tiny island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, in a region known as Micronesia.

Scheyhing, a Moorestown, NJ, native whose circuitous journey found himself as a missionary for 13 years for Trans World Radio before becoming a pastor, recalled one such story of a client who was so grateful for what he was receiving that he gave of all he could, leaving an envelope filled with 56 cents. 🇺🇸

SPECIAL SUNDAY

“I will improve the circumstances of my people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; and they will make gardens and eat their fruit.”

AMOS 9:14, CEB

UMCOR SUNDAY

Through your generous gift today, you share the goodness of life with those who hurt.

UMCOR SPECIALIZES IN SOLUTIONS THAT HELP PEOPLE BECOME SELF-RELIANT.

Please make check payable to your local church or give online at UMC.org/SSGive.

UMCOR’s Response to COVID-19: One Long Emergency

“I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.”

—MATTHEW 25:35-36

Since the start of the pandemic, UMCOR has been working with health boards, medical professionals, disaster management coordinators and faith leaders to prevent the further spread of the disease.

Through the UMCOR COVID-19 Response fund, grants were released to equip partners to assist vulnerable populations around the world impacted by COVID-19, including racial/ethnic and indigenous communities in the United States. Grants from this fund were disbursed to address health concerns, food insecurity, water and hygiene limitations and other pressing needs.

The fact that UMCOR was born in New Jersey leaves it as no surprise that the relief organization has remembered its birth state in times of need. It was in 1940 that the beginning of UMCOR came about through an act of the first General Conference in Atlantic City.

Now a year into the pandemic, and UMCOR is still by its side.

March 14, the fourth Sunday in Lent, is UMCOR Sunday. For more than 50 years, United Methodist congregations have been doing their best to collect a special offering that promotes UMCOR’s ministry of relief and hope, of coming to the rescue of the most vulnerable—from the earthquake in Haiti and Superstorm Sandy to the outbreak of AIDS in Zimbabwe and the most recent winter storms in Texas.

UMCOR’s efforts are wide-reaching. Money raised on UMCOR Sunday go toward immediate relief and long-term recovery from devastating storms, welcome and care for those displaced from home and access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene. 🇺🇸

CONFERENCE NEWS

Northeastern Jurisdiction Native American Ministries Committee Embraces Full Inclusion

At a special meeting held on Zoom, representatives from the United Methodist Church Northeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Native American Ministries (NEJNAMC) voted unanimously for full inclusion in the church.

In a statement, NEJNAMC said, "We affirm full inclusion of LGBTQIA2S+ persons to be an authentic expression of the Gospel perspective that all are created in the image of God. Our perspective relates to the realities of "Two Spirit" persons in First Nations Peoples and communities who may be members of our churches."

Full inclusion means the removal from the *Book of Discipline* all negative or discriminatory language related to LGBTQIA+ people as well as specifically endorsing same gender marriage and the ordination of persons who identify as LGBTQIA+.

Two Spirit, also signified as "2S," is a modern Pan-Indian, umbrella term used by some Indigenous North Americans to describe Native Peoples in their communities who fulfill a traditional third gender ceremonial role. It was claimed in 1990 by the Indigenous Lesbian and Gay International Gathering in Winnipeg to distinguish and distance Native American/First Nations Peoples from non-native Peoples concerning perspectives on sexual and gender diversity.

The full inclusion statement is derived from a larger document resulting from two years of research and conversations. RoBear Wilson Chairperson Western PA CONAM and Dr. Ellesa High, chairperson of the WV CONAM and NEJNAMC secretary, researched, wrote and presented the larger position paper.

Representatives from across the NEJNAMC refined, and unanimously passed the statement.



Blueprint for Wellness and HealthQuotient in 2021

BFW screening and HealthQuotient are now open for HealthFlex participants. Your BFW and HQ are open through Aug. 31.

More information can be found at www.gnjumc.org/benefits-overview/.

Medford UMC Focuses on Health

Medford UMC is focusing on health in small groups by using the book, *The Daniel Plan*. They are focusing on diet and weight control as well as other subjects so that they appeal to a broader segment of the congregation.

An offshoot of this group this year launched a virtual run, sponsored by UMW. The money raised was given to the pastor's discretionary fund.

Medford UMC has also started a pickleball group, which quickly doubled in size and has been playing every Saturday weather permitting in the church parking lot. To learn more about the program and the church, visit medfordumc.org/.

Prayer Warriors Celebrates One Year in Kenilworth

Ignite UMC Kenilworth is celebrating its one-year anniversary of "Prayer Warriors" in partnership with United Methodist Women.

Now offered three times each week, Prayer Warriors gives congregants a safe forum where they can speak and listen to give them strength and resilience. "Prayer is life," said Rev. Nova Villa Vitug-Thomas, emphasizing that people need intentional time to pray. The church in northern New Jersey also operates its Community Care Pantry, opening its doors to the community's needy on Thursdays. For more information about Ignite UMC, visit www.igniteumc.com/.

Nourishing Bodies and Souls in Hopewell

The Hopewell Council of Churches will continue its tradition of hosting Wednesday evening Soup Suppers and Worship during the season of Lent virtually from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Each week the Council's intern will reach out to the various churches to share favorite soup recipes and then attendees will be invited to share their soup together during this time.

To find out more about this as well as Hopewell UMCs Book Talk Discussion Group, visit hopewellumc.org/.

Red Bird is Taking Flight this Summer

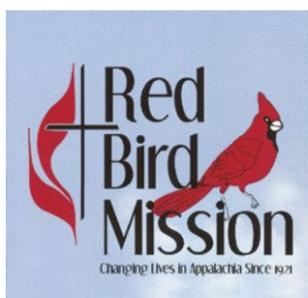
The Red Bird Mission Work Camp is back in business, helping people rebuild their lives while still practicing safe guidelines. Congregants and friends from Butler UMC will once again be packing their bags for a week of intense and intentional Christian Community in Kentucky this July, working alongside homeowners in the Red Bird Valley with open hands and open hearts.

Red Bird Mission, Inc. and Red Bird Clinic, Inc. have been providing ministries in this region of the Appalachian Mountains since 1921.

The "Butler and Friends" group that historically has 90-110 people participate from churches in New Jersey and Pennsylvania will probably be somewhere between 40 and 50 people this summer.

"We have flexed our deadlines, and we will be practicing precautions going forward," said Rev. Michael McKay.

Today the need remains critical in this isolated, rural distressed area. Chronic poverty, lack of jobs, poor housing and rugged mountainous terrain provide obstacles to a fuller life for the residents of this area. Red Bird Mission and Clinic strives to meet these needs through ministry in five areas: Education, Health and Wellness, Community Outreach, Economic Opportunity and Community Housing Improvement. More details about the program can be found at rbmission.org/volunteer/group/.



Bishops Call Special Session of General Conference

In response to the further postponement of the 2020 General Conference, the Council of Bishops (COB) is calling a Special Session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church (UMC) to be convened online on May 8, 2021.

The purpose of the 2021 Special Session of the General Conference will be limited to gaining a quorum in order to suspend the rules for the sole purpose of allowing the use of paper ballots to act upon 12 pieces of legislation that would enable the church to effectively continue its work until the postponed 2020 General Conference is held in 2022.

While other potential amendments were considered, it was agreed that these 12 pieces of legislation would enable the church to continue its administrative functions appropriately. This legislation can be found on the Council of Bishops website.

Caring for the Poor in South Jersey

The Poverty Task Force of Cape Atlantic along with members of the Korean UMC of South Jersey on Jan. 23 provided groceries to 35 families in Egg Harbor City. Community connectors from the Egg Harbor City Puerto Rican Club helped in getting the information out to the community.

On Jan. 30, the task force and First UMC of Hammonton were joined by the Puerto Rican Civic Association (PRCA) of Hammonton to provide 135 meals of hot meal of rice, beans and chicken to those in need. The PRCA volunteered to do all of the cooking and provided resources to get information out to the community.

The task force in the district has been feeding the homeless for years every Saturday through Asbury UMC in Atlantic City.

OBITUARIES

Our prayers go out to the family and friends of the following:

Harry R. Stevenson, retired full elder, died Jan. 13. Memorial donations may be sent to: Asbury University or The Malachi Network.

Constance E. Shivers, spouse of Retired Full Elder, Rev. Dr. M. Russell Shivers, died Feb. 14. Memorial donations may be sent to: Wiley Mission at 99 E. Main St., Marlton, NJ 08053. Send expressions of sympathy to: rocapshannon@aol.com.

Bettie Lea Chaplin, retired local pastor, died Feb. 23. Memorial donations may be sent to: ALS Foundation in Philadelphia, PA, in her memory.

Rev. Junius Dotson, top executive of the United Methodist Church' Discipleship Ministries agency, died Feb. 24. A memorial service was held on March 6 to honor his amazing legacy of inclusion and compassion. "In his leadership as a pastor and a denominational leader, he was a champion for an outward mindset and to see all of the people, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation or status," said Bishop Schol.



United Methodist Communities
HomeWorks



Chart Your Own Future

Are you seeking a rewarding, meaningful career to fit around your lifestyle? One that requires no major commitment and allows you to start and stop? Do you enjoy the company of older adults?

HomeWorks is now hiring in-home care Companions.

- Free aide training for compassionate candidates
- Flexible schedule
- Work as little or as much as you like
- Excellent compensation

Call or Visit Today:
Haddonfield | 856-300-2424 • Freehold | 732-838-1950
Sparta | 973-940-6300 • UMCHomeWorks.org

Haddonfield
217 Kings Hwy E, Haddonfield, NJ 08033
Serving Camden, Gloucester, and Burlington counties

Freehold
76 West Main Street, Suite 102, Freehold, NJ 07728
Serving Monmouth, Ocean, and Middlesex counties

Sparta
270 Sparta Avenue, Suite 107 Sparta, NJ 07871
Serving Sussex, Morris, and Warren counties



Miracles Everywhere



The COVID-19 Relief Fund from the Miracles Everywhere Campaign enabled churches to do what Jesus did by providing comfort, security and hope to those who needed it most.

**Now in its last year, the campaign
is hoping for a strong end.**

Donate Today at: www.gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere