

THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

APRIL 2021
Vol. LXV/No. 4

gnjumc.org



Conference Lay Leader Judy Colorado, with the help of her 15-year-old daughter, Jaiden, called for the end to racist acts against Asians on March 28.

Praying as One to Be God's Vessels of Peace and Hope

"Help us to pray and pray and pray and then get up and act, act and act, and not stop taking action until we aren't a community of tolerance, and instead are a community that fights against racism with every breath. Amen."

—EXCERPT FROM "PRAYER OF A MOTHER" BY STACEY MURPHY (READ AT THE SKYLANDS DISTRICT VIGIL BY REV. HEATHER VALOSIN)

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

When eight human beings, six of whom were Asian women, were struck down by bullets on the night of March 16, feelings of

anger, sadness and frustration weighed heavily on the minds of many. For Asians and Asian Americans, this news not only felt extremely heavy. It was also a reminder of the lost lives before them and the hateful acts that have been amplified during this pandemic.

In response, the people of GNJ, including the GNJ Korean American Clergy Caucus, used their voices and compassion to turn that sorrow into deliberate action, as each district worked together to plan several prayer vigils over the span of a week to

Continued on page 7

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor."

1 CORINTHIANS 3:6-8

When a Client Becomes the Host

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

For the past 20 years, St. Patrick's Day has brought back some fond memories for Rev. Ricardo Ramos, and not just because it's his birthday.

"They played "Danny Boy" for me and clapped and then said, 'you're one of us,'" said Ramos as he recalled his three years spent at Kearny UMC where in 2000, he became the church's first non-English speaking, first non-Anglo pastor. "There were so many differences between us, but I said, let's find a way to communicate, and we did!"



Rev. Onay Lopez of St. Paul's of Paulsboro working with clients at JFON-Delaware Valley clinic.

Throughout his 60 years of life, Ramos has been doing his best to communicate with others by building bridges of trust and digging deep into his creative toolbox to find ways to reach his neighbors or make strangers his friends...even if it means acting like you're Irish for a day.

Now in 2021 as the pastor for both Trinity and First UMCs (FUMC) in Bridgeton where more than half of the population is Latino, the Puerto Rican native who started the first bilingual services in the Cumberland County church, said, "I find myself on a new journey, learning about new journeys, cultures and families."

Continued on page 4

Unconditional Love Equals Transformation AT SOUL CAFÉ

"When peace like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to know. It is well, it is well, with my soul."

—"IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL"
BY HORATIO GATES SPAFFORD (1873)

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

MAGNOLIA, NJ

On any given day in a small town in Camden County, you can find people doing ministry, feeding the hungry, handing out a book, or maybe even building a ramp or singing a song like "It is Well with My Soul."

Now a GNJ Hope Center, Soul Café in Magnolia opens its hearts, minds, souls...and ears to the people of its community whenever there is a need.

"We're all about feeding the mind, body and spirit," said Rev. Chereese Evans, pastor of Magnolia UMC, chair of Gateway South District Poverty Task Force and director of Soul Cafe.



The team at Soul Café never forgets the opportunity to share kindness and love, especially on Valentine's Day.

Most recently the Hope Center was able to receive a new freezer through A Future With Hope/NJ Pandemic Relief Fund grant. This will help them store the food they need to supply the food pantry and prepare dinners for its Pine Hill community.

"It's an acknowledgement of all the hard work our team has done, especially during a pandemic and harsh weather."

Continued on page 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

The Pillot Family

PAGE 5

Denman Award Winners

PAGE 6

Combatting the Sin of Racism

PAGE 8

April Bookshelf

PAGE 9

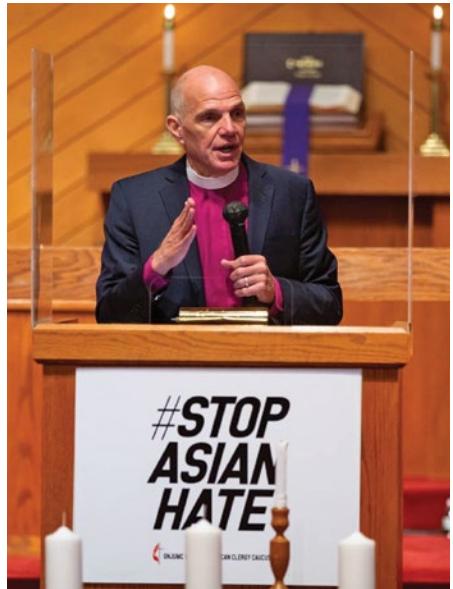
Conference Responds to Recent Acts of Racism Against Asians

When I first heard a year ago elected leaders use the phrase, "China virus," I knew this would be a license for some to engage in hate crimes against Asians. A year later, hate crimes against Asians are up 150% in the United States.

In January, a 91-year-old Asian man was shoved to the ground for no apparent reason. Just this week, six Asian women were killed in Georgia.

It is wrong, not of God and something all United Methodists should speak out against.

In GNJ we have committed to work toward ending the sin of racism. Ending the sin of racism begins by doing the following:



Bishop Schol speaking at the "Stop Anti-Asian American Hate" candlelight prayer vigil last month.

- Look at our own biases and make changes in our own beliefs and practices.
 - Speak out when others say or do something that degrades and harms others because of the color of their skin.
 - Work to change practices and systems that are used to oppress and hurt others because of the color of their skin.
 - I invite all of our churches to pray to end hate crimes toward Asians and all people of color and to use the prayer below in worship and/or to email it to church members and friends.
 - I call all pastors to denounce the rise in hate crimes and to claim we are all God's children regardless of race, culture and nation and that as followers of Jesus and as United Methodists we value every person regardless of race, culture or nationality.
- Let us continue to work and pray together to make a better church and world.

Sustainer God and protector of all, sustain and strengthen us for the journey ahead. Help us to be bearers of hospitality and grace through our church, our homes and our nation. Holy Spirit, pour out your courage and zeal on each of us to be bearers of the truth of Christ-like love and to work to end the sin of racism.

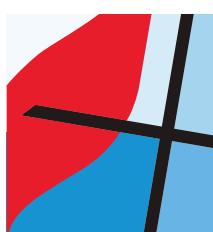
Amen.



Prayer for United Methodists—Bishop John Schol

Creator God, before human life began, you reached around the globe to gather rich red clay, fertile black soil, white sand, tan and brown earth and created humanity; people of every hue, every culture and of every nation and called them good. We praise you because you embrace diversity. Through all of us, you ran red blood in our veins and breathed into us the same breath. We praise you because while creating us uniquely, you have drawn us together to be one family.

Redeemer God, forgive us when we allow color, culture and boundary to become the enemy of hospitality and dignity. In the midst of life's complexities, let us never give up or give in to quick fixes but to be the innovators, creators following your example of loving diversity and embracing one another.



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.

"WE, GNJ KOREAN-AMERICAN CLERGY CAUCUS, URGE OUR BELOVED ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND ALL CHRISTIANS TO SPEAK UP FOR JUSTICE AT THIS URGENT MOMENT."

—GNJ Korean-American Clergy Caucus

Voice of GNJ Korean-American Clergy Caucus

The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference is one of the most diverse conferences in terms of race and culture. We proudly and thankfully celebrate our cultural and racial diversity whenever we gather. Thanks to the diversity of GNJAC, there are many Korean-American clergies who answered God's calling. As followers of Jesus Christ, we'd like to share our concern today.

It is not a secret that Asian-Americans have been targets of violence more and more. According to STOP AAPI HATE, violence against Asian-Americans has been reported at least 500 times already in the last two months, and nearly 3,800 anti-Asian racist incidents, mostly against women, have occurred in the last 12 months. Recently, an 83-year-old Korean-American woman was spat on and punched in the face in an unprovoked attack in New York City. In addition, on Tuesday evening, a man opened fire at three spas in Atlanta, GA, leaving eight people dead. The brazen shootings, which took the lives of six people of Asian descent, stirred considerable outrage and fear in the Asian-American community. While the authorities are still investigating, we, the GNJ Korean-American Clergy Caucus, are deeply concerned about the surge of hate crimes against Asian-Americans that are motivated by the misleading information that Asians brought the pandemic to the U.S.

We believe that failing to address the issue of racism from the pulpit or among the community of faith is not only being silent but being complicit and contributing to the problem of racism. The church is to be the moral and spiritual compass pointing the way out of the sin of racism no matter what the cost. For Christ Jesus, our Lord, taught us to stand with those who are weak and marginalized. Following this solemn commandment of our Lord, we, GNJAC, proudly have been standing with those who are marginalized. When our government unfairly treated immigrants, GNJAC clergy and laity gathered at the immigration detention center and raised our voice of justice. In solidarity of the ongoing racial justice effort, we added our voice to the Black Lives Matter movement. We believe it is time for GNJAC clergy and laity to raise their voices of justice for Asians and Asian-Americans who face a threat and fear. We, GNJ Korean-American Clergy Caucus, urge our beloved Annual Conference and all Christians to speak up for justice at this urgent moment.

Our Lord Jesus set a good example how to care for the marginalized, the outcast and the last throughout his ministry. His ministry always reminds us that until the last one of us finds safety, none of us can be safe. We are hearing the voice of Jesus, saying that none of us in America can be safe until those Asian-Americans feel safe. Please stand up with Asian-Americans in the name of Jesus.

Grace and Peace!

GNJ Korean-American Clergy Caucus

TIME TO CELEBRATE OUR CHURCHES IN MISSION!



Come hear the *Good News* and the ways churches are spreading the love of Christ in the midst of transition!

Read the Good News and submit yours at: www.gnjumc.org/goodnews

Soul Café

Continued from page 1

They have worked tirelessly," said Evans who seems to have a limitless amount of energy and enthusiasm toward the plight of helping others and making ministry available to all no matter when or where.

"We have spent the past three years transitioning from a church of old to a faith community of new. We have loved on the people in the community, and we strive to listen, learn and meet the needs of those around us."



Rev. Cherese Evans never misses an opportunity to share a blessing with her clients and volunteers alike.

On the day of this interview, volunteers were building a ramp for a neighbor known as "Doc," who had recently become an amputee. The members of the Soul Café team grabbed the tools and supplies necessary to get the job done and make life easier for this disabled veteran whose only association with the church was the fact that he lived next door.

"It's all about holistic ministry for us. We want people to be whole again wherever that brings us," said Evans.

But the pandemic has taken its toll over the past year on the ministry that started in 2018.

"The pandemic for us has been a life-changing event, but we held onto the core mission to build relationships in spite of all the tragedy," said Evans who added that from the beginning Soul Café has been reaching a body of people who live on the fringes.

"When we stepped out three years ago on faith to do church differently, we had no idea what it meant or how it would look."

The pandemic has shattered the original concept of sharing the love and grace in person and gathered around a table. But consistent with the past three years, the team rallied to get the food pantry reopened only three days after it had to be closed by changing the hours to noon on Sundays and adopting new social distancing guidelines that kept people safe but still gave them a choice.

"We wanted it to be dignified still," said Evans who added that the team created a grocery list for each client to fill out. The requested items were then delivered to the client in the parking lot.

Two cooks at Soul Café are also preparing about 100-150 prepackaged hot dinners each week for the people

in their community who come from all walks of life—some just come for conversation while others are homeless. No matter the background, they all leave with a sense of hope.

Each client is greeted in the parking lot by Evans' husband who puts their minds at ease by saying, "Welcome, we're so glad you're here."

Although they can't sit around the same tables and enjoy a meal and ministry together as they did pre-COVID, clients of

Soul Café are now enjoying worship outside. There are even radio transmitters for those who prefer to stay in their cars during the service.

Adaptability is one of the strongest qualities of the Soul Café. Despite the restrictions, the Soul Café fed more than two thousand people in 2020, and so far in 2021 it's evident that pace is not slowing down.

That adaptability is what led to the start of the Soul Café ministry in 2017. Memorial UMC in Pine Hill, which was its original home site, used to be a traditional church congregation that worshiped each Sunday, but it wasn't thriving. In an attempt to reach the community, Evans and her congregation in May 2017 began a food pantry to help neighbors in need along with a library to feed their minds too.

But as the dynamic of the congregation changed, it became evident that Sunday might not be the best day for worship, so they started hosting a worship service on Wednesday nights.

Soul Café Supper & Service was birthed on January 3, 2018. Because of a similar situation at Magnolia UMC, the approach to worship was started there in September 2018. Since then, the Soul Café has not only fed the hungry. They have also gifted hundreds of books, baptized children and adults and have been Methodists committed to discipleship. Many have accepted or reaffirmed Christ as their Lord and Savior at the Soul Café.

"We have always been a faith community, not a church. We are a body of people and community together," said Evans. "We remove that stigma that some people hold about church."

That "stigma" is something with which Evans is very familiar.



The ministry at the Soul Café shares food, books and worship to the Pine Hill community.

"I didn't grow up in church, but I learned pretty early on that God had a sense of humor," said Evans who was raised in Gibbstown, NJ. She recalled how at 13 she was brought to church by an uncle who was affectionately known as "a crazy Jesus person."

"It was really eye-opening for me. I remember thinking if Jesus could love me, I knew I had to follow. I soaked up God like a sponge." Although her journey wound up taking a few detours, she graduated with her ministry degree in 2012.

Now nearly a decade later, Evans and her Soul Café team are hosting their Semi-Annual Chicken BBQ on Saturday, May 1, starting at noon. As always, she is optimistically aiming to have 300 people in attendance.

"We've always been a center of hope. People leave feeling hopeful. A smile, a prayer and sometimes a Christmas stocking," said Evans who added that there's an overall goal of validating the feelings of each client and embracing the value each one brings to the Soul Café.

Looking toward the future, Evans said she has her sights on housing.

"We want to be the center of hope in our community," said Evans.

For more details, check out the Soul Café Facebook page.

JFON

Continued from page 1

In February Ramos hosted the first clinic for the newly-formed Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON) of Delaware Valley, a ministry of hospitality that welcomes immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers as neighbors by providing affordable, high-quality immigration legal services, engaging in advocacy for immigrants' rights and offering education to communities of faith and the public.

Sitting at the table that day at FUMC, he realized that without legal help, most of the people on the other side of the table would likely face ICE detention and then be deported one unexpected day, whether it was after spending a long day working in the blueberry fields or while making a long drive to a court appearance.

JFON's main goal is to go where the immigrants work and live to eliminate the risk associated with travel. Even though New Jersey is a sanctuary state, detainees are often held for longer than the legal limit of 36 hours.

"I have a heart for the mission with immigrant communities," said Ramos.

That day in Bridgeton was rewarding and impactful as JFON clients were counseled on how to navigate the legal system, but it also brought back memories from about 15 years ago when he was on the other side of the table at an immigration clinic hosted by the New York JFON.

The Delaware Valley chapter hadn't been formed yet. In fact, it wasn't even in the



Rev. Ricardo Ramos (left) comes full circle with JFON, speaking with a client at a recent JFON-Delaware Valley clinic.

planning stage, but he needed help for his Bolivian wife and daughter. So they trekked into New York City seeking counsel.

"I remember it well. I was welcomed there not only because I was UMC clergy, but because I needed help for my family," said Ramos who added that less than a year later both his wife and daughter were U.S. citizens.

Ramos's original journey began in the same city about 40 years after his grandparents and parents had emigrated to the United States in the 1920s.

"I was born in New York City in a Jewish hospital on St. Patrick's Day," Ramos said with a laugh. Shortly thereafter, his parents returned to Puerto Rico where Ramos was raised.

In the late 1980s, Ramos traveled to La Paz, Bolivia, where he spent 12 years as a missionary. It was here where he met Rina who would become his wife. They adopted their daughter, Alejandra and then later Gina.

"I was a stranger in Bolivia, but the country embraced me. I'll never forget how good that felt," said Ramos (who later made a second trip to the South American country in 2015 as a General Board of Global Ministries missionary, working and leading in a local orphanage).

In the 1990s, he returned to Puerto Rico for several years before leaving again for the United States to study ministry at Drew Theological School.

With his calling and education in hand, he served as a local church pastor in Kearny, Elizabeth, Perth Amboy and Linden, where he continued to witness immigration issues that he struggled to fix.

"I was frustrated that I couldn't provide them support," said Ramos. "Now I see again how God works miracles. I'm finally really able to help them."

Tom Lank, Northeastern Jurisdiction Volunteers in Mission Coordinator, is grateful for Ramos' dedication and insight. For Ramos, he is relishing the opportunity to pay it forward. At First UMC, he has been building a tight-knit community that celebrates birthdays together and lends a helping hand wherever one is needed. Now they have yet another reason to reach out a hand.

"The clinic went very well," said Lank. "We were able to serve 12 families and had 15 volunteers engaged throughout the day working on hospitality, intake, translation, document scanning and as attorneys (via Zoom)."

With plans to host a clinic each month, JFON Delaware Valley currently serves southern New Jersey, but they will expand to include the underserved rural immigrant communities in southeastern Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore in the next several months.

When asked what a perfect world in God's eyes looks like, Ramos said, "It's a world where every person can be welcomed and embraced as children of God, where everyone receives the same grace and has a seat at God's table."

The Pillot Family: Leading with Grace and Community

By Denise Herschel

CAMDEN COUNTY, NJ

In these trying COVID-19 times, Rev. Jacqueline "Jacki" Pillot of Trinity UMC in Merchantville considers herself to be truly blessed as part of a strong church community. Pastoring during a global pandemic has proved to be no easy feat, yet Pillot has managed with both God's grace and her supportive husband, Rev. Pedro Pillot of Fieldsboro UMC in Fieldsboro and Asbury UMC in Camden. And, throughout this past year of fear and uncertainty, this clergy couple of two young children have relied upon each other and upon Christ's love to see them through any shadow of doubt they may have had.

"Being a pastor and a parent as well as a clergy spouse is difficult in the greatest of times so when the pandemic hit, it became even more challenging," she said. "But once we got into the rhythm of who did this service live and who pre-recorded and when our support system could come and watch our little ones, it made it so much easier."

Pillot, who recently gave birth to daughter, Lydia, also has a two-year-old daughter, Elba. And as the mother of two small children has learned, having a support system in place as well as understanding congregants has allowed her to parent and to pastor successfully these past 12 months.

"It helps that we have an amazing support system that has been so willing to step in and help out whenever we need. So not easy but like anything else having a routine has helped! It also helps to have congregants who were understanding of the fact that we are both pastors and parents and so in the midst of doing worship from home it can get stressful. We are so grateful to have churches who understood our need to be not only pastors in this time but also to parents. Having congregants who are willing to support our ministry not only to the church but to our family has been a huge asset and joy," she said.

"WE ARE SO GRATEFUL TO HAVE CHURCHES WHO UNDERSTOOD OUR NEED TO BE NOT ONLY PASTORS IN THIS TIME BUT ALSO TO PARENTS. HAVING CONGREGANTS WHO ARE WILLING TO SUPPORT OUR MINISTRY NOT ONLY TO THE CHURCH BUT TO OUR FAMILY HAS BEEN A HUGE ASSET AND JOY."

Pillot was born and raised in Chautauqua County, NY. She attended West Virginia Wesleyan College where she graduated in 2014 with a B.A. in Religious Studies and Gender Studies. She then went right to seminary at Drew University Theological School where she graduated with a M.Div. in 2017. She met her husband Pedro, while they were in seminary.

"We had the same friends' group and had class together. We were both commuting from home to Drew and would make sure that the other got home safely from our late-night class. Our relationship evolved from there," she said. "It is the



The Pillot Family recently welcomed daughter, Lydia, who joins her big sister, Elba.

greatest blessing that God has given either of us. We have not served at church together but in this line of work, it is hard for one of us to be appointed without the other church benefitting from the strengths we both bring. While we have not been appointed to the same church, we have talked about how interesting it would be to serve together because our strengths work well together. It would be an adventure for sure."

Pillot is now in her second year under appointment at Trinity UMC. She is in her fourth year of appointed ministry.

"Before I came to Trinity, I was appointed to Wenonah and New Sharon UMC for two years. I have worked in GNJ for six years, and I was a student pastor for two years with the Northern Shore Mosaic Ministries before I was appointed," she added.

Pillot became the pastor of Trinity UMC in July 2019. She said that the average at-

we have engaged in the community more. We joined the townwide yard sale, we handed out hot chocolate during the Christmas Parade and we have a thriving food pantry that gives out food once a month. We are trying to be more involved in the community at large and we are doing really well with finding the events that we could plug right into, but with the pandemic it has not been easy."

The life of ministry is indeed a family affair for Pillot. Her husband, Pedro leads

worship in both Spanish and English at his two churches. Her father-in-law, Benny Pillot, who passed away two and a half years ago, was also a pastor for most of his adult life. He started his ministry in Puerto Rico where he had a church in Patillas, PR called el Santuario. And her mother, Carolyn Stow, is an elder in the Upper New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church where she has served rural and urban churches.

When asked what has been her greatest joy as a pastor, Pillot said that baptizing babies and watching little ones grow in their love of neighbor and love of God.

"I also enjoy being able to get to know people from all walks of life who are trying to grow in a relationship with God and with each other. Pedro and I have pastored successfully over the past year by the grace of God and the support of our families and our churches. Pedro would tell you that he has tried to teach his congregants the art of being together even if we can't BE together. He says he has worked to impress upon them with the aid of Paul who says, 'I wish that I could be with you in person but I am there with you in spirit,'" she said.

And with all the trials and tribulations that this past year has brought, Pillot firmly believes that God has blessed her to be "a pastor mama" and wouldn't trade her callings "for anything in life."

"I love being a mom and a pastor," she said. "I can't imagine doing anything other than what I am doing. I am so grateful that God has called me into both of these roles in life."

Trinity UMC is located at 36 W. Maple Avenue, Merchantville 08109. Phone number is 856-665-1806 or visit gotrinity.org.

This Mother's Day, give a gift to struggling mothers

in honor of mom

Donate to the Maker's Place, a United Methodist diaper bank in Trenton, in honor of a mom in your life, and she'll make a difference in their lives too.

VISIT WWW.MAKERSPLACE.ORG/GIVE
OR WRITE TO P.O. BOX 54, TRENTON NJ 08601

Donate before Mother's Day (May 9th) and we'll send a letter in recognition of your donation to you or to your loved one.



"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 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 invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'" —MATTHEW 25:34-36

Evangelism is Alive in GNJ

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

Much like John Wesley didn't wait until people came through the church doors before he nurtured disciples, neither did Harry Denman or this year's recipients of the GNJ Board of Discipleship's Harry S. Denman Evangelism Award.

This year's recipients, Rev. Joshua Mularski and Holly Robinson, represent the stellar contributions that fostering discipleship in GNJ bring.

Each year the Board of Discipleship recognizes clergy, congregations and youth for excellence with the Harry Denman Evangelism Award through the Foundation for Evangelism. For over



Rev. Joshua Mularski

"Rev. Joshua Mularski has been an out of the box innovative leader that has transformed First Church Williamstown. During his time there the church has become increasingly focused on God's mission for their future," his nomination form stated.

40 years this award has honored United Methodists for their exceptional ministry of evangelism that brings people into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ.

Receiving the lay member award was Holly Robinson, whose "innovative evangelism ministry spans almost every realm of her church outreach," wrote Rev. Fredrick Marz of Dennisville UMC, Tuckahoe UMC and South Dennis Trinity UMC. He added, "she is changing lives."

Both recipients consistently introduce those they serve to the Good News of Jesus Christ, and they are opening up the hearts and minds of those they touch with innovative new ministries and missions and an unwavering commitment to God.

Mularski started a contemporary service and added a new small group that asks the question, "how is it with your soul," while Robinson ramped up her efforts to support the local school system



Holly Robinson

when the need grew as well as continued to help to keep her church operating during the pandemic.

"Josh has a compassion and evangelist spirit that is seeking

to help this church reengage with the "why" we are a United Methodist Church," the submission noted. "He is helping the congregation to understand it is everyone's responsibility to know and share the gospel story of their life in true Wesleyan spirit that also entails the social aspect of where we are to live the gospel out in loving and serving all in the community."

Similarly in Robinson's nomination, Marz wrote, "Holly understands how essential the presence of the Gospel, (lived-out), is to witness the message of Jesus...Because of Holly and with the example and direction of other key leaders

LAY MINISTRY RECOGNITION AWARDS

Lay Ministry Recognition Awards honor creativity and innovation in transforming lives and making disciples of Jesus Christ. We celebrate the following ministries.

Trudy Jenkins and Judy Brown
Outreach Ministry, Zion UMC in Clarksboro

Betsy Marshall
Bridge Meal & Food Pantry Ministry,
Wesley UMC in Belleville

Chris Andrews
Pat's Café Ministry, Calvary UMC in Kearny

Kelly DeLeon
Food Pantry Ministry, Christ UMC in Lakewood

Christ UMC Lakewood
Missions and Ministry, Christ UMC in Lakewood

Cathy Montgomery
Hospitality and Outreach Ministry, Christ UMC in Lakewood

Kevin D. Newland
Food Pantry Ministry, Christ UMC in Lakewood

Michael Emenonye
Food Distribution Ministry, Christ Church UMC in Jersey City

Fresh Produce Outreach Ministry
Fresh Produce Outreach Ministry, Christ Church UMC in Paterson

Lori Pantaleo
The Maker's Place, The Maker's Place / Princeton UMC

Pearson Memorial Food Pantry
Food Pantry Ministry, Pearson Memorial UMC

Mike Polhemus
Medford UMC Video Ministry, Medford UMC

Sharon Leon
Neighborhood Pantry Ministry, Waterloo UMC

Scott Singerline
Technical Communications Ministry, Boonton UMC

Kathie Luton
People Helping People Ministry, Belvidere UMC

Bracknell Family
The Light/Online Ministry, Park UMC of Weehawken

Hopewell UMW
The Hopewell Community Closet Ministry, Hopewell UMC

Roeline Ramirez
Christian Education Ministry, Trinity UMC in Jersey City

Audrey Audain
Feeding the Community Ministry, UMC in Orange

Kimberly Heckert
Mom's Group Ministry, Haddonfield UMC

Simply Grace UMC
Senior Connections Ministry, Simply Grace UMC

Matthew Milam
Spirit and Truth Ministry, First UMC in Vineland

Debby Smeilus
Loaves & Fishes Ministry, Butler UMC

Lucy DeBarge
Food Pantry and Mission Ministries, St. Andrew UMC in Toms River

Normajean McMichael
PTO Preschool Ministry, Kemble UMC

Hillary Gooding
Dinner/Devotional Ministry, UMC at New Brunswick

"DENMAN WAS A NOTED LAY EVANGELIST AND LEADER IN THE METHODIST CHURCH IN THE 1950S, BELIEVING THAT EACH PERSON MUST LIVE THEIR CALL TO MAKE DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST THROUGH RELATIONSHIP, MISSION AND PREACHING."

in the church, the church family is also keenly aware of, noticing, and responding to anyone hungry, thirsty, without a coat, sick or lonely."

Named for a man who for many years was a friend to taxi drivers, missionaries, housewives, students, pastors, world leaders and the United Methodist Church, this award represents evangelism in the truest sense. Denman was a noted lay evangelist and leader in the Methodist Church in the 1950s, believing that each person must live their call to make disciples of Jesus Christ through relationship, mission and preaching. Since the award's inception, more than 2,500 individuals have been honored.

Information about the Board of Discipleship and the Harry S. Denman Evangelism Award can be found at www.gnjumc.org/board-of-discipleship/ and at the Foundation for Evangelism at www.foundationforevangelism.org/.



The stand against Asian hate and the call for action continued on March 28 at the GNJ Korean American Clergy Caucus' prayer vigil at Arcola Korean UMC and online.



Prayer Vigils

Continued from page 1

honor the lives lost, condemn racism and stand in solidarity with our Asian and Asian American sisters and brothers.

"They took ownership and did an amazing job," said Rev. Dr. Eunice Vega-Perez, who is the district superintendent for the Skylands District where more than 130 people gathered on Zoom to pray, sing and act.

"Kintsugi, the ancient Japanese art form of taking broken pottery and repairing it with a gold dusted lacquer, was used as a visual reminder that yes, we are broken," wrote Rev. Jessica Campbell of Hamilton UMC.

"We are broken by systemic racism, greed, violence and hatred. As broken people, we named the victims, confessed our sins and lamented together. Claiming our brokenness, we turn to God to seek healing and wholeness. Relying on God's grace to be the gold lacquer that can restore and renew us, we called upon the Potter's hand to be the source of strength, hope, transformation, healing, salvation and love," Campbell added.

Rev. Nova Villa Vitug-Thomas, of Ignite UMC, who read Galatians 3:28 in Tagalog as part of the Gateway North District vigil, reaffirmed that sense of brokenness as a native of the Philippines when she said, "I felt how to be discriminated against and so at that communal prayer, I felt all the burden and cries of my siblings who were and are being abused and oppressed because of the color of our skin, the shape of our eyes and nose and the accent we have. I felt so helpless and wanted God Almighty to come and rescue us and help us and strengthen us. After the prayer I felt the love of God through the community that gathered and prayed. I had peace. indescribable peace."

Simultaneously in the Southern Region, candles were lit, and prayers were shared as people made a collective commitment to peace and action.

"The prayer vigil was very touching and emotional, seeing all the clergy get together from all walks of life to show solidarity and support. It was beautiful with different people praying and reading scripture. I feel we need more of these events just to show that we are one, and we will work together to do whatever it takes to bring peace to our part of the country," said Rev. George Lagos of Plainville UMC.

Similarly in the Central Region, about 130 people gathered in worship and 10 people participated in a FB live session.

"I feel affirmed and valued. I am so proud to be a member of GNJAC, who always stands up for justice

against the sin of racism," said Raritan Valley District Superintendent/Dean of Cabinet Rev. Sang Won Doh.

In the Gateway North District, more than 70 people gathered in solidarity to condemn racism and commit to taking action against it.

Rev. Leslie Houseworth-Fields of St. Mark's UMC in Montclair, who read a prayer during this vigil, said, "In a time of such pain, it was important to be together even in a virtual space. I want to stand in solidarity with the Asian, Asian American and Pacific Islander community, and it was powerful to see others in that space as well. The prayers and testimonies reminded me that what affects one of us affects all of us."

Rev. James Ryoo of the UMC in Union closed the Gateway North service with a prayer in Korean.

For Palisades District Superintendent Rev. Gina Kim, feelings of heartache and anger consumed her when she heard the news, but reminders that we are not alone empowered her as her district hosted another vigil on Monday.

"Deep in my heart, I have faith in God who loves all children of God and promises to be with us. My experiences through the pandemic have given me the glimpse of God's faithfulness and grace and built stronger faith in God."

Throughout Greater New Jersey Conference, people were brothers and sisters proclaiming, "Here I am Lord. I, the Lord of sea and sky. I have heard my people cry. All who dwell in dark and sin. My hand will save" (여기 저는 주님입니다. 나, 바다와 하늘의 주님. 나는 내 백성들이 울고 있는 것을 들었다. 어둡고 죄에 사는 모든 사람들. 내 손이 저장됩니다).

GNJ Korean American Clergy Caucus Speaks Out and Prays for Healing and Action

The stand against racism, Asian hate and false perceptions of Asian immigrants continued on March 28 as the Korean American Clergy Caucus of GNJ hosted its own vigil both in person at Arcola Korean UMC and online.

Rev. Hakbum Chang of Grace-Bethel KUMC opened the "Candlelight Prayer Vigil: Stand Against Anti-Asian American Racism" with a call to "pray for the healing of the lonely hearts."



More than 140 people joined the Central Region's prayer vigil on March 21 to join hearts in prayer and solidarity.

"There is a vaccine for racism," said Bishop Schol. "That vaccine is with Jesus who encouraged us to love our neighbors as ourselves."

"Loving your neighbor is like loving God," added Schol who called for a strong call against the insidious hate.

Rev. Sang Won Doh echoed this sentiment when he called us to be "agents of peace to this broken world," encouraging us to "let our love overflow."

The victims in Atlanta--Soon Chung Park (74), Hyun Jung Grant (51), Suncha Kim (69), Yong Yue (63), Delaina Ashley Yaun (33), Paul Andre Michels (54), Xiaojie Tan (49) and Daoyou Feng (44)—were among the only four percent of the Asians in Atlanta. More information about these people can be found at www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/victims-atlanta-area-spa-shootings-include-recently-married-mother-army-n1261430.

Their deaths represent a stark example of a wave of hate crimes that began before the pandemic and then have intensified since its onset.

Jane Ahn of Morganville UMC implored those listening to remember these victims and their stories instead of focusing on the murderer.

"Hate crimes make people feel really isolated...We need more than just an aesthetically-pleasing social media post," said Ahn who added that the silence and complacency need to end.

Between March 2020 and February 2021, there were nearly 3,800 incidents of hate crimes, said Conference Lay Leader Judy Colorado, as her 15-year-old daughter, Jaiden, held up a sign she made saying, "Stop Asian hate. Protect Asian lives."

"Every person is of sacred worth, to be loved and respected," said Colorado who is Filipino-American. After sharing her own personal stories of racism and encouraging others to work both individually and collectively to end racism, she said, "Oh, let justice roll on and flow like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!"

Rev. Jongin Lee of Franklin Lakes UMC led the "Communal Prayer for the End of Asian Hate Crimes and Peace," saying, "We thank you for your mercy and grace in salvation, and in desperation, we lift up our prayers for all ethnicities and nations to live in peace."

With energy and conviction, Rev. Myung Sun Han of Demarest UMC said he has been silent for too long, adding, "I refuse to be silent anymore...I am Korean. I am Asian. I am American. I will not stop raising my voice."

The event continued with a candle lighting led by Rev. Miso Park of Bergen Highlands UMC, Rev. Lysette Perez of Iglesia Oasis UMC, and Rev. Eun Kyong Kim of Cedar Cliffs UMC, followed by a beautiful rendition of "Let There Be Peace on Earth," led by Rev. Hyoik Kim and the Korean Clergy Choir.

Rev. Hyoikyoung Hannah Lee, who is the president of the caucus in GNJ, reaffirmed the call for peace in her benediction as everyone there that day and throughout the week voiced a strong call that the end of racism needs to "begin with me" for there to be peace on earth. "Go with the power and love and glory of God," Lee said. 🇰🇷

Below are some tangible and practical ways to respond and be God's agents of transformation. At the vigils, people were encouraged to select and participate in at least one of the following:

- Encourage those who experience or witness acts of hate toward the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities to report an incident.
- Be civically engaged in your local community by reaching out to elected officials, demanding ordinances and resolutions to condemn hate, and advocate for civil rights protections.
- Work with your workplace, school, faith-based institution, union, or community organization to issue a statement denouncing anti-Asian racism and to encourage everyone to work towards racial justice.
- Support Ethnic Studies in your local school districts and educational institutions.
- Support local Asian-owned businesses.
- Share safety tips with your friends and families on what to do if encountering or witnessing hate.

A Hopeful Journey of Discovery to Combat the Sin of Racism

By Hazel Edwards, member of the Equity and Social Justice Committee of FUMC of Moorestown

MOORESTOWN, NJ

Johnny had the warmest smile that I had ever seen. I was entranced by his sunny disposition and the way he polished his apple until it shone. I was eight-years old, growing up in an all-white town in England in the 1950s and his was the first black face that I had encountered.

Beresford had an equally warm smile and outgoing fun-loving personality, and his was the second black face I encountered. He was the only black student in my secondary school in the 1960s.

Christopher and Evan were the two black students in my elementary school class in Tottenham, North London in the early 70s. Christopher was small and had the sweetest face while Evan was big-boned and had a boxer's rugged face, but both were completely lovable personalities.

These were my very positive experiences with black folk, so imagine my surprise when coming to the USA in the late 70s when one day driving in Philadelphia my husband and I stopped for gas in what turned out to be a black neighborhood. We were comfy, but it was clear that the neighborhood was not comfy with us. Why were they so wary of us?

We were living in a predominantly white neighborhood in South Jersey, so I didn't really think much about race. However, as I began to find out more and more about the black/white experience in this country. I began to realize what made those black folk at the gas station wary of us, a white couple.



Hazel Edwards with her daughter's children—three biological and two adopted from Uganda. Left to right: Caleb Beeson, Jeremiah Beeson, Hazel Edwards, Katie Beeson, Micah Beeson, Zoe Beeson.

In the late 80s I began to teach elementary school and for myself learned more about black history in order to articulate the relevance of Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and Harriet Tubman, Abraham Lincoln as we celebrated Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday and then went into Black History Month. Even more realization of what made those black folk at the gas station wary of us.

Josh was a bright, articulate, well-mannered black student of mine who loved having his hair braided. His mom did a great job and was very happy to do it with the proviso that she would not do it once he began to drive because then he needed to have the tidiest haircut possible to avoid being targeted by the police. No wonder those black folk were wary of this white couple in their neighborhood.

Jeremiah and Katie, my two precious Ugandan grandchildren adopted in 2014 by my daughter and her husband, who already had three biological children, brought the prospect of racism directly into our home.

George Floyd's death heightened wariness to fever pitch, and our town of Moorestown, NJ responded and showed its support to stand against racism with an ecumenical prayer service at a local baseball field at which our senior pastor, Pastor Tom Korkuch was one of the speakers. Many people from our church, First UMC of Moorestown were in attendance including our associate pastor, Pastor Hey Young Horton. She had a friend who attended one of the black churches in town, the Second Baptist Church of Moorestown, and a dialogue began.

I had missed the service but was very appreciative when Tom Kulp, a member of our church offered an eight-week Anti-Racism seminar series in September 2020. He sent us a link to a video for us to watch on our own each week, with videos ranging from "Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man," hosted by Emmanuel Acho, to "Deconstructing White Privilege" with Dr. Robin De Angelo, followed by a Zoom link to a follow-up discussion. The whole series was extraordinarily fruitful as those in attendance had vastly different backgrounds and different experiences with racism but were all united in one goal to try to come to terms with this difficult and delicate subject.

Our prayers were answered when Pastor Hey Young Horton's dialogue bore fruit, and a connection was forged between our church and the Second Baptist Church, whose pastor, Rev. Thomas Holmes was very enthusiastic for our two congregations to explore this delicate subject together.

Next step was Zoom meetings for members of the two congregations to begin to get to know each other. First one just to chat, second focusing on white privilege and the third a conversation with a local African American detective on policing. It was a match made in heaven as there was immediate respect and openness and understanding that we all come with different baggage, and our backgrounds and baggage shape our opinions and understanding. For those of us who are members of the predominantly white Methodist church, it became clear that we needed more understanding of white privilege and black history. Both Pastor Korkuch and Rev. Holmes exhorted our church to educate ourselves in the history of the black church and gain more understanding of the prejudices felt by black people.

So, the Equity and Social Justice Committee of the FUMC of Moorestown was born under the leadership of Bob Keppel. Coincidentally our first meeting corresponded with the GNJUMC where a resolution was passed for individual congregations to develop a "Journey of Hope" plan to end the sin of racism. Hence, it seemed that our goal had been set for us—for us to develop a Journey of Hope plan for our church.

As a committee, we realized we needed to pray for guidance as we didn't know how to form a plan, though we did plan to use all the help and guidance from the Conference as soon as their trainers were in place. We realized that we were a grass roots movement at this point, and to show that we were trying to develop a plan, we should meet on a regular basis, once a month, and that we should keep a record of our meetings, activities, discussions, resources and actions, which we have done.

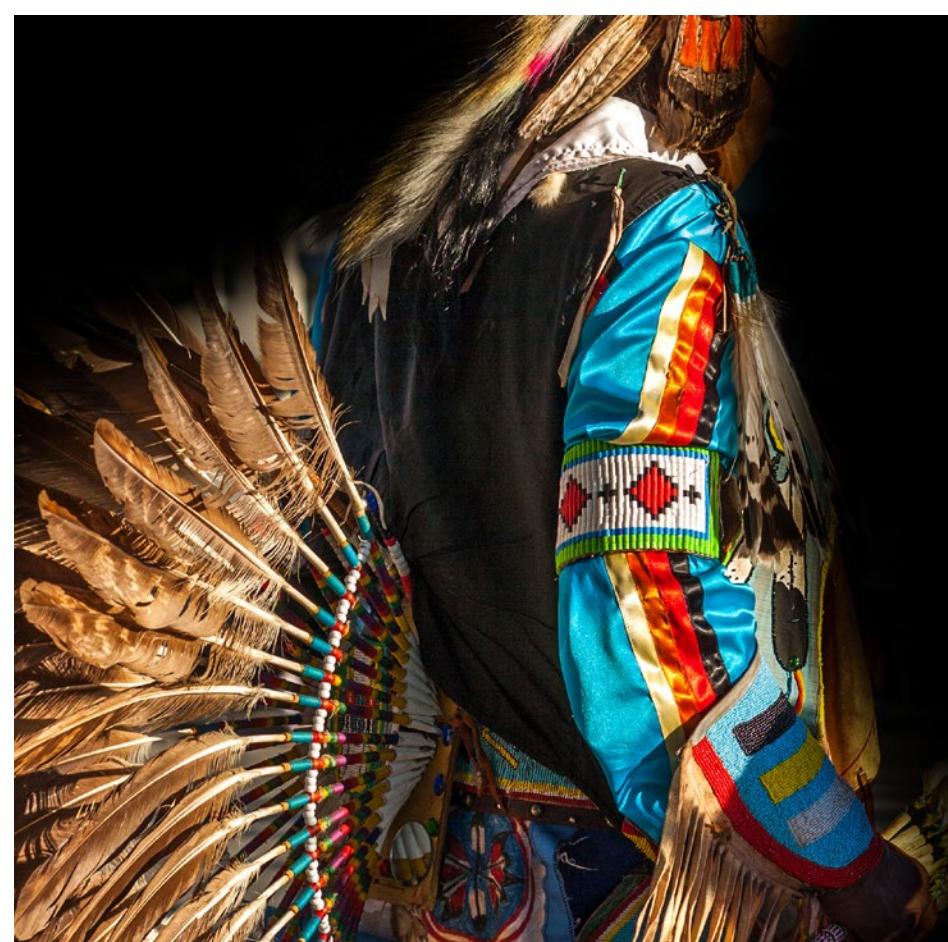
In order to pursue the education that Rev. Holmes exhorted us to get, we began by setting up a "Discovery and Discussion" in which we invited our friends at Second Baptist to participate. Rev. Patti Walz, a retired Methodist minister offered to facilitate two discussion sessions after we had all watched the PBS series "The Black Church," which aired in February. It was an incredibly comprehensive and informative series, and secondly what a blessing to have such rich conversations where there was again trust, respect, openness and an eagerness to learn. We identified some tough topics for future discussions. Our next "Discovery and Discussion" will use the PBS series "Reconstruction" as our springboard.

Rev. Walz furthered our education by putting together a video-slide presentation, "Methodism in Black and White," which describes the founding of the Bethel Church by the African American Methodists in 1793 in Philadelphia.

Further activities that we are planning for our two churches are pastor exchanges, potlucks, possible combined Sunday Schools, combined services once we are clear of COVID-19, a book club, a field trip, exploring the possibility of working with other organizations to recognize the accomplishments of African Americans in our community and a combined blog for open dialogue all spiced with plenty of good conversation and merriment as we appreciate us all as "children of God."

Rev. Holmes stressed that people can work towards anti-racism just by informing one another and that people of faith who are different have to come together to have these conversations. "I believe that this model is a model for the nation.

Our Journey of Hope has begun. 🇺🇸



A Journey of Hope

The Journey of Hope team is partnering with the Native American community to restore their dignity and heritage.

FOR MORE DETAILS
www.gnjumc.org/journeyofhope



APRIL BOOKSHELF

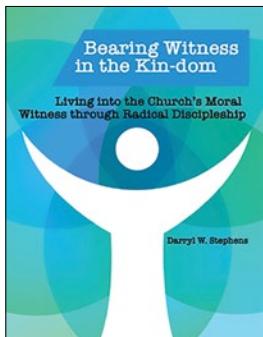
This month we recognize National Poetry Month and Native Americans in light of Native American Sunday, including Joy Harjo, the first Native American named Poet Laureate of the United States in 2019. We also recognize Cathy Park Hong's collection of poetry called Minor Feelings.

When the Light of the World Was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through: A Norton Anthology of Native Nations Poetry

(W. W. Norton & Company, 2020) by LeAnne Howe, Jennifer Elise Foerster, Joy Harjo

When the Light of the World Was Subdued is a collection of poetry from more than 160 writers, who represent nearly 100 indigenous nations. This landmark anthology celebrates the indigenous peoples of North America, the first poets of this country, whose literary traditions stretch back centuries. Opening with a blessing from Pulitzer Prize-winner N. Scott Momaday, the book contains powerful introductions from contributing editors who represent the five geographically organized sections. Each section begins with a poem from traditional oral literatures and closes with emerging poets, ranging from Eleazar, a 17th century Native student at Harvard, to Jake Skeets, a young Diné poet born in 1991, and including renowned writers such as Luci Tapahonso, Natalie Diaz, Layli Long Soldier and Ray Young Bear.

Joy Harjo, U.S. Poet Laureate, is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. She is the author of nine poetry collections, most recently *An American Sunrise*, and a memoir, *Crazy Brave*. Her many honors include the Ruth Lily Prize for Lifetime Achievement from the Poetry Foundation, the Academy of American Poets Wallace Stevens Award, two NEA fellowships and a Guggenheim Fellowship. She lives in Tulsa, OK, where she is a Tulsa Artist Fellow. LeAnne Howe is the author, most recently, of *Savage Conversations*. She teaches at the University of Georgia—Athens. Jennifer Elise Foerster, author of *Bright Raft in the Afterweather*, lives in California



Bearing Witness in the Kin-dom: Living into the Church's Moral Witness through Radical Discipleship

(United Methodist Women, 2020) by Darryl W. Stephens

Bearing Witness in the Kin-dom explores the idea of living into the Church's moral witness boldly through radical discipleship. Women in the United Methodist tradition have courageously led ministries in race relations, creation care, substance abuse, sexual orientation and inclusion, poverty, relationships with indigenous nations and other concerns.

However, The United Methodist Church and its predecessors have a sometimes-uneven history of resisting the evil and violence that damage the world. This book explores this history, empowering us to imagine God's justice and to lead with compassion. Together, we bear witness to God's gracious presence in ways that make a material difference to all of creation, all persons, especially victims of injustice and those who are most vulnerable. This is the moral witness of the church.

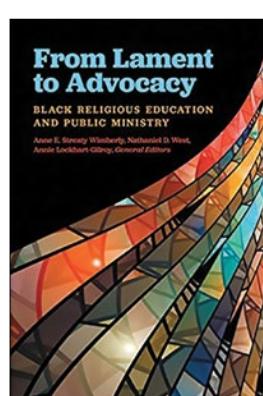
Darryl W. Stephens, an ordained United Methodist deacon, works in the specialized ministry of teaching. He directs United Methodist studies and the Pennsylvania Academy of Ministry at Lancaster Theological Seminary and served as assistant general secretary of sexual ethics and advocacy for the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women in The United Methodist Church.

The Daniel Plan

(Zondervan, 2013) by Rick Warren, Dr. Daniel Amen, Dr. Mark Hyman

The Daniel Plan explores a path to achieving a healthy lifestyle by optimizing the five key essentials of faith, food, fitness, focus and friends. The concepts in this book will encourage you to deepen your relationship with God and develop a community of supportive friends who will encourage you to make smart food and fitness choices every day.

Dr. Rick Warren, founding pastor of Saddleback Church, leads a 30,000-member congregation in California with campuses in major cities around the world. His book *The Purpose Driven Life* is one of the bestselling nonfiction books in publishing history. As a theologian, he has lectured at Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, University of Judaism and dozens of universities and seminaries. As a global strategist he advises world leaders and has spoken to the United Nations, U.S. Congress, Davos Economic Forum, TED, Aspen Institute and numerous parliaments. He also founded the Global PEACE Plan, which Plants churches of reconciliation, Equip leaders, Assists the poor, Cares for the sick and Educates the next generation in 196 countries.

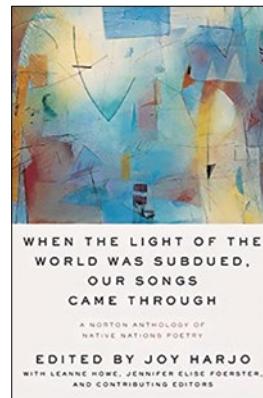


From Lament to Advocacy: Black Religious Education and Public Ministry

(Wesley's Foundery Books, 2020) by Anne E. Streaty Wimberly (Editor), Annie Lockhart-Gilroy (Editor), Nathaniel D. West

From Lament to Advocacy sets forth the cultural imperatives of ministry and the contextual nature of a public theology of religious education that connects faith formation and action in addressing profoundly difficult, unjust, and wounding experiences of Black people in society. The book begins with the, often neglected, practice of lament as a necessary first step in vital public theological reflection and action.

The book proceeds with meanings and ways of equipping persons within and beyond church settings to critically reflect on life and leadership in the throes of present-day social and political realities. It further provides practices for



forming skills and shows how to partner with the spiritual guides needed to shape a just public arena and fruitful individual lives.

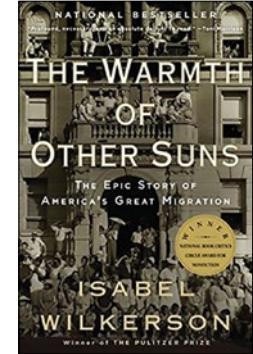
Dr. Anne E. Streaty Wimberly is professor emerita of Christian education at the Interdenominational Theological Center and executive director of the Youth Hope-Builders Academy, a youth theology program funded by the Lilly Endowment. Her publications include *In Search of Wisdom: Faith Formation in the Black Church* and *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*. Annie Lockhart-Gilroy is assistant professor of Christian education and Louisville Institute postdoctoral fellow at Drew University. Nathaniel D. West is a Licensed Professional Counselor, PhD, MA, LPC.

The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration

(Vintage, 2011) by Isabel Wilkerson

The Warmth of Other Suns chronicles one of the great untold stories of American history: the decades-long migration of nearly six million Black citizens who fled the South for northern and western cities, in search of a better life. More than a thousand people were interviewed for this award-winning book.

Isabel Wilkerson won the 1994 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing for her reporting as Chicago bureau chief of *The New York Times*. The award made her the first black woman in the history of American journalism to win a Pulitzer Prize and the first African American to win for individual reporting. She won the George Polk Award for her coverage of the Midwest and a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship for her research into the Great Migration. She has lectured on narrative writing at the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University and has served as Ferris Professor of Journalism at Princeton University and as the James M. Cox Jr. Professor of Journalism at Emory University. She is currently professor of journalism and director of narrative nonfiction at Boston University. During the Great Migration, her parents journeyed from Georgia and southern Virginia to Washington, D.C., where she was born and reared.



Queering Lent

(CreateSpace, 2017) by Slats

Queering Lent is a collection of 41 poems (one for each day of Lent and one for Easter) and one sermon written as part of a simple Lenten discipline: write one poem every day. An exploration of queerness and Christianity—and the queerness of Christianity, this collection contains references to transphobia, violence against trans people, mental illness and suicide. Tithes from the royalties will go towards organizations that supports queer/trans people in the church.

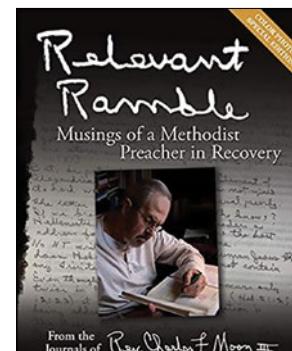
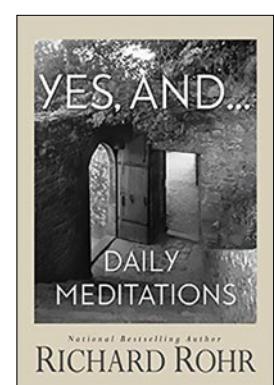
Slats (they/them/theirs) is a queer/trans/nonbinary Presbyterian. They hold a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Drama and a Master of Divinity. They most often work as a theater director, sound designer, and/or pastor.

Yes, and...: Daily Meditations

(Franciscan Media, 2019) by Richard Rohr

Yes, and... features daily meditations, each written by Rohr and adapted or excerpted from his many written and recorded works. The meditations are arranged around seven themes: Methodology, Foundation, Frame, Ecumenical, Transformation, Process and Goal.

Fr. Richard Rohr is a globally recognized ecumenical teacher bearing witness to the universal awakening within Christian mysticism and the Perennial Tradition. He is a Franciscan priest of the New Mexico Province and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



Relevant Ramble: Musings of a Methodist Preacher in Recovery

(Powerful Potential & Purpose Publishing, 2021) by Chuck F. Moon

Relevant Ramble provides a deep and honest look at the author's past and present as a recovering alcoholic with humor, insight and education. This book compiles the first four volumes of Moon's journals. Moon died on March 1, 2020.

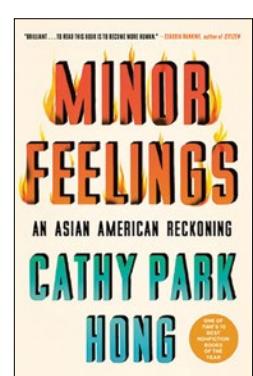
Chuck F. Moon was a United Methodist Minister for 50 years and a recovering alcoholic 30 of those years. He was born in Biloxi, MS, in 1942, graduated from Mississippi Southern and Emory University Candler School of Theology. The first 13 years of his ministry were devoted to choral conducting and singing with the Robert Shaw Chorale. He felt it was time to enter the pulpit and preached the remainder of his career.

Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning

(One World, 2021) by Cathy Park Hong

Minor Feelings is a blend of memoir, cultural criticism and history to expose fresh truths about racialized consciousness in America. With humor and vulnerability, this book explores vital questions around family and friendship, art and politics, identity and individuality, which will change the way you think about our world.

Cathy Park Hong is the author of three poetry collections including *Dance Dance Revolution*, chosen by Adrienne Rich for the Barnard Women Poets Prize, and *Engine Empire*. Hong is a recipient of the Windham-Campbell Literature Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. Her poems have been published in Poetry, The New York Times, The Paris Review, McSweeney's, Boston Review and other journals. She is the poetry editor of The New Republic and full professor at the Rutgers University-Newark MFA program in poetry.





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, Mission Retreats and Hispanic Cultural Heritage Camp.

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!
www.gnjnextgen.org



CONFERENCE NEWS

Native American Ministries Sunday is April 18

Native Americans bring many unique languages, cultures and mores to their 124 churches. Through Native American Ministries Sunday (NAMS), United Methodists can equip and empower Native American pastors, congregations and seminary students to preserve their heritage and honor their past.



Typically celebrated on the third Sunday of Easter, NAMS nurtures this mission by providing scholarships for United Methodist Native American seminarians. The collection taken that day helps to develop and strengthen Native American ministries in GNJ, Native American rural, urban, reservation ministries and communities relating to the General Board of Global Ministries.

UMW to Celebrate Spring in April

GNJ United Methodist Women (UMW) will host a spring celebration on Zoom on April 25 to explore environmental justice.

Rev. Luana Cook Scott of Morristown UMC will lead the session based on Luke 18:1-8, "Nevertheless, She Persisted," starting at 3:00 p.m.

To register and to find out more about GNJ UMW, visit www.gnjumc.org/united-methodist-women-2/.

Blueprint for Wellness Available for Free

BFW screening and HealthQuotient are now open for HealthFlex participants through Aug. 31. This free service allows participants to grab hold of your good health.

While you earn 20 credits for each of seven health measures that meet the American Heart Association's recommended range, take advantage of the biometric screening, a valuable tool for identifying health concerns and finding ways to improve your well-being.

Testing involves one blood draw and a few measurements (height, weight, blood pressure and waist circumference). More than 25 key indicators are measured, including blood glucose, cholesterol and hemoglobin A1C. Test results provide valuable information about several common health risks, such as heart disease, diabetes, thyroid function and more.

More details are available on the GNJ website under "Benefits Overview."

Life-Giving Water Flowing in North Jersey

Life-Giving Water Devotions is a bi-weekly devotional and ministry of Rev. Todd R. Lattig of First UMC in Newton, NJ. Started in August 2012, Lattig each week writes two devotions that bear witness to the relevance of Scripture and faith in the modern culture and society. The devotions often include references to films and songs and other pop culture references, finding the divine within the secular.

Life-Giving Water has published over 600 devotions, and it has grown to include a weekly podcast show called Life-Giving Water Messages and The Party On JohnCast, co-hosted by Lattig and Rev. Salvatore Seimacco, an ordained elder of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church.

"The study of, and meditation upon, scripture is vital to spiritual growth," writes Lattig. "It is truly life-giving water to those who seek hope, healing and wholeness in their lives; it is the foundation upon which we build upon to become agents of hope, healing and wholeness in the lives of those around us. Come to the well and drink of the life-giving water that God has drawn for you."

Check it out at <https://lifegivingwaterdevo.org/>.

Bringing Hope to Salem County

New Hope Methodist Church of Penns Grove prepared 36 comfort and hygiene bags for the unhoused in the surrounding area in January.

Five local police departments aided in the distribution of these bags that contained among other things basic hygiene items like soap, wash cloths, dental items, shampoo, band-aids and antibiotic cream, non-perishable food items, undergarments and socks.

Each bag was paired with a winter coat, hat and gloves. The program was a first in building a bridge between the church, local police and the unhoused. The success of the program has inspired New Hope to begin planning a June offering and to make both programs an annual event. Also, the church is working with the Penns Grove Housing Authority to develop an ongoing program to aid food insecure seniors. To learn more, www.newhopepennsgrove.com/.

OBITUARIES

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

Robert L. Frost, retired full elder, died on February 2. Memorial donations are being accepted at Wayside UMC at 1229 West Park Avenue, Ocean, NJ 07712. Expressions of sympathy can be sent to his wife, Dorothy at Wayside UMC.

Diane Koob, retired full elder, died on March 17. Memorial donations are being accepted at Ocean Heights Presbyterian Church, a local AAUW branch, environmental groups, or any charity that speaks to your heart. Expressions of sympathy can be sent to: Gerry Koob, 25 S. Laurel Dr., Somers Point, NJ 08244-1252.

1870's Era Gothic Revival Camp Meeting (post and beam) Cottage in center of Lancaster County Pennsylvania, convenient to *Sight and Sound*. Located in the camp meeting on the Green and facing the 850 seat Tabernacle. Originally Methodist Camp Meeting, now is multi-denominational. Two bedrooms, with front porch, newer kitchen, new roof and with two balconies.

Open between April 1-October 31



CAMP MEETING COTTAGE,
FOR SALE IN LANCASTER COUNTY, PA
609-315-8446



Trinity UMC's Trinity Learning Center is seeking a Director of a Preschool & Daycare

Needed for a.m. and p.m. hours.

Care program for the 2021-2022 school year needed. Our daycare/preschool exists to integrate the highest levels of academic curricula with intentional biblical principles, and with the modeling of Christian character and values as we care for children.

Requirements

- The director must be in line with our goals
- Have a master's degree in any field related to children or business
- Or a bachelor's degree with one year managerial or supervisory experience

Please send resume to

Jen at director1@trinitylearningcenter.net

For more details, go to

trinitylearningcenter.net



 **United Methodist
Communities**

Abundant Life for Seniors

Move Forward with United Methodist Communities

Take spring cleaning a step further with a fresh start this season. Enact your plans for retirement at United Methodist Communities—leave behind household maintenance with our Senior Living options and feel confident with a full range of services available. Visit umcommunities.org to see what United Methodist Communities has to offer.

Home Office

3311 State Route 33
Neptune, NJ 07753
umcommunities.org



Miracles Everywhere

Miracles happen all year-long!

Now imagine being able to be part of making one come true for someone who needs it most. By giving to the Miracles Everywhere Campaign, you will be a miracle maker.



Join us in making this last year the best year ever. Donate Today!

www.gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere