

# THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS  
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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## Christ Church Feeds its Community with Cans, Crops and Love

By Heather Mistretta  
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PATERSON, NJ

Jesus' teachings are alive at Christ Church in Paterson in so many fruitful ways. When the pandemic bore down on an already fragile community, Pastor Kermit Moss knew Christ Church needed to be a more vital resource for the local residents who were reeling from lost jobs and healthcare uncertainty and disparity.

"Paterson is a city that has been characterized as a food desert. The food ministries of Christ Church United Methodist are a compassionate response to issues such as lack of nutrition, food insecurity, food access, and food quality," said Pastor Kermit Moss. "This vital outreach to our neighbors is part of Christ Church Cares. We believe that good food is good for our bodies and our souls."

Established in March 2020 when no one knew the scope of the pandemic or the far-reaching effects it would have on families, the Christ Church United Methodist (CCUM) Food Pantry opened its doors and hearts. This ministry was in addition to the existing



Vinette Bishop, deciding what to choose for her staff and parents for her day care center.

three food ministries they had started years earlier—Bread of Life, Garden of Eden and Fresh Produce.

Now more than a year later, the faithful volunteers led by CCUM Food Pantry Coordinators Pat Fermin and Sharon Owens have distributed food to many neighbors and friends in the Paterson and surrounding areas.

The Pantry is stocked by the generosity of the CCUM congregation as well as non-members. Canned goods are collected throughout the week, and the coordinators meet to stock the shelves and take inventory in preparation for the next distribution.

During the pandemic, the empty parsonage has doubled as the collection and distribution site. As of late April, they had held five distribution giveaways. Plans

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**"WE BELIEVE THAT GOOD FOOD IS GOOD FOR OUR BODIES AND OUR SOULS."**  
—Pastor Kermit Moss, Christ Church, Paterson, NJ

## Creating Safe, Integrated Spaces for OUR CHILDREN

*"We must address with prayerful determination the issues of race and class that threaten both public education and democracy in America... Local churches and all communities of faith must become better informed about the needs of the public schools in their communities and in the country as a whole."*

—2016 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS, #3165, "UNITED STATES PUBLIC EDUCATION AND THE CHURCH"

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On May 17, 2019, the 65th anniversary of *Brown versus Board of Education of Topeka*, Bishop John Schol and 12 leaders from The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey stood with four other organizations to file a lawsuit against the State of New Jersey and the Board of Education to desegregate public schools in New Jersey. The Brown case was the U.S. Supreme Court

landmark decision, 9-0 ruling that racial segregation in general and in public schools in particular is unconstitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Yet today, New Jersey ranks fourth in most diverse states in the nation and yet ranks in the top five most segregated school systems, ahead of what were once Confederate states.

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Illustration by Christopher G. Coleman

*"For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore, I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'"*

—Deuteronomy 15:11

## A Collective Embrace Around the Shoulders of Camden County

By Heather Mistretta  
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CAMDEN COUNTY, NJ

On a cold day in January Dawn Weikel stood on a city sidewalk outside the Neighborhood Center next to her daughter, Lori, wearing a homemade mask and a heavy jacket from the Cooper EMS she had borrowed from



Newfield UMC's Dawn Weikel has dedicated her life to helping others.

her grandson, Christopher to keep warm as she handed out clothes, blankets, sandwiches and the cookies she had baked the day before to the people of Camden. Dawn, who still leads the UMW at her church, Newfield UMC at 83, has been embracing mission and helping people for more than six decades.

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## A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP

## Forward—Financial Accountability

Bishop John Schol



**M**ost recently, conference leadership informed the conference that designated program funds were being used to support the property and health insurance billings of all our congregations. Regretfully, this is a program we can no longer continue.

This program began in 2002 at the time of the merger of the Northern and Southern Annual Conferences to form the Greater New Jersey Conference. When the conference merged, they had different insurance and billing programs. To smooth out the billings to congregations and changes to the insurance programs, reserve funds were used that were created when the two conferences merged. While everyone agreed this was the appropriate action, there was not a plan in place or reporting mechanisms for how long the program would last and how long the reserves would last.

Once the funds from the merger ran out, other reserve funds began to be used without the full understanding of the board of trustees, board of pension, and Council on Finance and Administration (CFA).

### Did Anyone Personally Benefit

Over the last 20 years, millions of dollars have been spent on this program. Over a seven-year period, \$13 million was used from property sales and program reserve funds to lower the amount billed to congregations. Over 20 years it is estimated to be more than \$20 million.

People want to know if anyone personally benefited from this spending. Congregations and those insured through the conference health insurance program benefited. Congregations' bills were \$5,000 to more than \$20,000 less than the actual costs depending on the size of the congregation and the number of people in the conference health insurance program. Those insured also benefited because they received premium health insurance plans because the costs for churches were kept low. But there is no evidence that any money was taken or used by an individual through this program.

It is clear, neither congregations nor those insured asked for the subsidies. It was a program started in 2002 and not carefully monitored nor a long-term plan developed.

It is also true that without this support, many more churches would have gone from full time to part time pastors and/or closed.

### Who Is To Blame

As a bishop who served GNJ during this time, I take responsibility for my leadership. I had concerns about not having a consolidated GNJ budget and management budgets that would have highlighted the issues and while I raised these concerns. I should have pushed harder for such budgets.

This challenge also occurred over 20 years and included three bishops, three CFA chairpersons, four board of pension chairpersons, four board of trustee chairpersons, two treasurers, more than 30 district superintendents and more than 200 elected leaders to our financial agencies.

In fact, this was a breakdown in people, systems, policies, procedures and a lack of a clear plan that should have been developed early on to guide the program.

### What Money Was Affected

The money used for this program were reserves at the time of the merger and the sale of closed church property. The sale of church properties was designated to funds for ministry and mission of GNJ. The money used for this program was not shared ministry apportionment funding, not Miracles Everywhere giving, not the Stewardship Foundation Investments, not the Centenary Fund. None of these funds was spent on the program, only the money from the sale of closed churches.

### Does GNJ Have a Financial Crisis

No! Our shared ministry apportionments are strong. We have \$10 million in GNJ fund reserves, \$13 million in the Centenary Fund and a plan to grow the GNJ fund reserves from \$10 to \$30 million. We also have a plan to assist our churches with billables over the next five-years. At the end of April 2021, shared ministry and billable giving is up over 2019 and 2020 giving over the same period. Our budget is balanced, all bills are paid and paid on time and we anticipate a strong financial year. GNJ is not in financial jeopardy.

### Why Can't the Billing Subsidy Program Continue

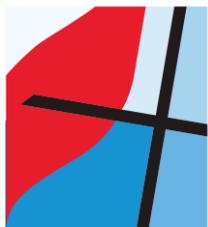
It is continuing but will not be able to continue as in the past. Over the next five years, we will assist all our congregations, and we have made a commitment through A Journey of Hope Equity Program to continue to assist congregations in low-income communities by reducing their shared ministries and billables by as much as half as a matter of equity and justice.

While the program continues, it will not continue at the same levels because it is not sustainable. A healthy GNJ mission requires strong finances in the present and for the future. Taking steps today to address the issues will ensure a health future mission.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Independent Financial Team for their diligent work to review the GNJ finances and make recommendations for best practices going forward. I also thank the CFA, board of pensions and board of trustees and their leadership for their work and continued work on the financial health of GNJ. You can read a summary report from CFA at [www.gnjumc.org/SummaryFinancialReport](http://www.gnjumc.org/SummaryFinancialReport).

Forward, with transparency, accountability and good policies and procedures that will identify and alert leadership and the members of GNJ when there are financial challenges are being put in place so that together we address the challenges.

The mission and ministry of GNJ and our healthy financial position would not be possible without the generous giving of United Methodists and their congregations across GNJ. You are a gift to the work of God through GNJ. Thank you. 🇺🇸



## THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS  
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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BREAKTHROUGH  
A GNJ guide to best practices for worship



UNITED METHODISTS  
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

# It's Never Too Late to Try Something New!

Many of you are still practicing online ministry now, and many of you plan to continue a hybrid ministry when all restrictions are lifted. Why not try something new to make new disciples?

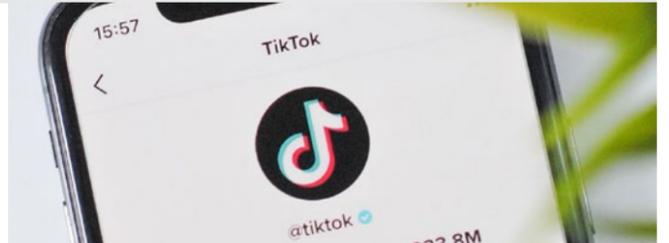


## 1. Expect Visitors

Take the time to say WHO you are and WHAT your church is all about during your online services. People love a good story. Make your visitors feel welcome.

## 2. Experiment

Particularly if you have a younger congregation, don't be afraid to experiment with platforms like Houseparty, TikTok, or IGTV.



## 3. Weekly Zoom

Have an easy, weekly online small group or prayer session. Consider a 30-minute Zoom meeting that asks three check-in questions each week: *How are you caring for your mind? Your Body? Your soul?*

## 4. Draw Some Attention to What You Do

Encourage your congregants to do the church a favor by commenting and liking your posts, Facebook live services and other events. It plants a seed and increases your church's visibility.



## 5. Create a Hashtag

Create a hashtag and encourage people to use it when posting about opportunities. *"Can't wait for open Small Group on Wednesday!"* #ArrivingAtHope

## 6. Communicate

During your Sunday service, encourage congregants to comment on your Facebook page so people can communicate with one another during worship.



## 7. Inspire

Share an informational picture/graphic on Facebook or Instagram and ask your congregants to tag three friends.

## 8. Dance Party Playdates

Host Zoom room dance parties or playdates for kids to see and interact with one another and close in prayer together.



## 9. Invite Someone

Every week, ask: *"Who are you going to invite?"*

## 10. Engage Youth

Organize Zoom room scavenger hunts for youth.



# Becoming Not Invisible and Journeying Toward Hope

*“I always say Tongva women never left their ancestral homeland, they just became invisible. ‘How do we make ourselves not invisible?’ is the question I ask every day.”*

—JULIA BOGANY, EDUCATOR, ACTIVIST AND MEMBER OF THE TONGVA TRIBE WHO DIED ON MARCH 28 OF COMPLICATIONS FROM A STROKE

By Heather Mistretta  
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For Rev. Alvin Deer, a retired United Methodist pastor, memories of his daughter, Michelle are bright and filled with happiness but lurking behind that joy are memories of sorrow and pain. In 2006 Deer’s 33-year old daughter, who was part of the Kiowa, Caddo, Wichita and Muscogee tribes, went missing, her body found shot in the face and neck on the side of the road. Years later her father is remembering his brave daughter who shortly before her death made the decision to seek treatment for her addiction before leaving behind six children and joining a staggering statistic that also includes Ida Beard, Aubrey Dameron and countless others. May 5 marked the fourth anniversary of the day designated as the National Week of Action to honor and call for justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) by the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center.

For the Native American community, this is just one more way they have been made to feel invisible, which

who is part of Lenni Lenape and the grassroots organization called The REDress Project. Red dresses hung to draw attention to the women murdered or missing, and traditional dance and music were featured at the seventh annual event.

The murder of Michelle Deer happened thousands of miles away, so for some it may be easy to turn a blind eye. But imagine being one of the more than a million American Indian and Alaska Native women aged 10 to 24 who have died from violence but whose case is never solved. Imagine being a victim of COVID-19 and instead of being included in a separate column labeled Native American, you are among those in the “Other” column. Imagine being told as a child that you need to “act more American” so that you can fit in, or that you need to abandon or suppress your culture in school so as not to disrupt the school day.

In talking with many Native Americans over the past year, it became evident that almost every one of them felt invisible, a sobering reality that many say leads to their vulnerability.

The murder rate of Native women is more than 10 times the national average. These disappearances or murders are often connected to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking and sex trafficking. Despite how high these statistics are, they cover only a small percentage of all the Native women who are victims of violence every year. Many of violent crimes do not end in murder, but most studies show that four out of five Native American women experience violence in their lifetimes.

“We feel devalued, disrespected, dishonored and disenfranchised, but we are also determined. We are determined to honor our ancestors, to educate our children, to speak out in a bold way, to revere our Creator and to practice our culture every day,” said Mosley.

It has been said that this feeling of invisibility along with unresolved historical trauma passed on from generation to generation, widespread poverty and healthcare disparity lead to this higher incidence of violence.

Native American women endure appalling levels of violence. According to the National Institute of Justice, about 84% of Indigenous women experience domestic violence in their lifetimes, and more than 50% experience sexual violence.

In recent years, Native Americans have become more vocal about this epidemic, causing some politicians to turn their attention to the issue. Now with a champion and Native American in their corner, Native Americans are hopeful that substantial change is on the horizon.

The new U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland said, “In spite of our agonizing history, Native American people find much to celebrate. The songs, the dances, the culture and traditions surrounding planting and harvests, the prayers that are sent upward for healing and peace, and the welcoming of children into our families, are all reasons for us to keep moving forward with optimism.”

Haaland’s appointment represents hope for undoing destructive policies, and it represents renewed hope for the land and for the Indigenous nations of this country. In an effort to provide more resources to investigate thousands of unsolved cases of missing and murdered Native Americans, on April 1 she launched a new Bureau of Indian Affairs unit.

“If we’re not protecting our women and we’re not protecting our girls and we’re not protecting the most vulnerable people in this society, who are we as a country?” wrote Haaland.

Without the proper resources like access to healthcare or adequate transportation, victims are often lured into cars. According to the Urban Indian Health Institute, homicide is the third-leading cause of death among American Indian and Alaska Native women aged 10 to 24. But without assistance from non-tribal federal, state and local agencies, these cases have gone underfunded and uninvestigated.

This past March, Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) re-introduced the Survivors’ Access to Supportive Care Act (SASCA), a bipartisan, bicameral bill to help improve and expand access to healthcare services for survivors of sexual assault, who face steep challenges in being able to get medical care and sexual assault examinations critical to their ability to seek justice. The bill will develop national standards of care for survivors of sexual

assault, strengthen the sexual assault examiner workforce and expand access to sexual assault examination services—including to rural and Tribal communities, and for higher education students.

Haaland also announced April 22 that she is creating a joint commission, led by the Department of the Interior and the Department of Justice, to identify and curtail violent crimes targeting Indigenous women. Her action stems from the enactment last October of the Not Invisible Act, which calls on the Interior Department to oversee grants and programs to tackle the crisis.

**“WE ARE DETERMINED TO HONOR OUR ANCESTORS, TO EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN, TO SPEAK OUT IN A BOLD WAY, TO REVERE OUR CREATOR AND TO PRACTICE OUR CULTURE EVERY DAY.”**

—Cynthia Mosley, of the Lenape tribe and chairs the GNJ CoNAM

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home -- so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. [...] Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”

At GNJ, it is in these small places that we have hope that we can be part of the change through committees like the NAIC and CoNAM and initiatives like A Journey of Hope, a five-year plan to work together toward ending the sin of racism. One way we are doing that in 2021 is by broadening our outreach to specifically include Native Americans as the pandemic bears down on their communities to reveal an epidemic of violence.

Through A Journey of Hope, GNJ has allocated \$1 million to preserve a Native American church and burial ground, and to give back church land and buildings to a Native American tribe. GNJ will also create and dedicate a memorial at its Pinelands Camping and Retreat Center in the NJ Pinelands to the Native Americans of New Jersey. Native Americans were forced to leave their land and settle in the Pinelands where the camp is located.

“This is a promise that has promise,” said Mosley, who added that after years of broken promises, she is encouraged by the new plan to end the sin of racism and restore dignity to her people.

When Deer was asked how he wants to remember his daughter, he said, “We are so thankful that Michelle had turned her life over to the Lord during that time. She and her husband had gotten back together and had a child, whom she named Cielo, which is Spanish for Heaven. We found out from her old friends that she started witnessing to them about the dangers of drugs and their need to turn their lives over to Christ. We know where Michelle is now.”

To learn more about the 2021 National Week of Action and how you can help, visit <https://live-niwrc.pantheon.io/>. Additional resources and news can be found on the GNJ CoNAM webpages. 🇺🇸



A recent Circle Legacy pow pow featured red dresses and artwork done by Paige McNutt of the Lenape Tribe to call attention to the MMIWG.

many see as the modern form of racism against the community. Because Native Americans are often “invisible,” so are their struggles.

Since that day in December, Deer has worked hard to call attention to these deaths, many of which fail to get the attention they deserve. Among those working with him are Raggatha (“RagghiRain”) Calentine and Cynthia Mosley, a member of the Lenape tribe who chairs the GNJ Committee on Native American Ministries (CoNAM), serves on the board of the Native American International Caucus (NAIC) along with Deer, Calentine and others and leads the food ministries at St John UMC Fordville, GNJ’s only Native American church.

In early May, CoNAM and Northeastern Jurisdiction hosted the Circle Legacy pow wow in Pottsdam, PA, with powerful artwork from Paige McNatt, a young woman

And as the chokehold of the pandemic strangled the freedoms of many, reports of all forms of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic abuse, began to rise.

But time and time again Native Americans are ignored, told to be compliant, keep their histories to themselves and made to feel invisible in spite of all the contributions they bring. There are more than 570 federally-recognized tribes, which of course does not count all those who are not recognized. With these many tribes come their own cultures, languages, spiritualities and histories. In spite of over 600 years of occupation, Native Americans continue to make enormous contributions to the church and to civil society.

For Deer, who is the treasurer for the NAIC, their voices need to be heard. Mosley echoes his feelings.

# Exploring Life's Passions with Her Mom By Her Side

By Denise Herschel  
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RED BANK, NJ

**R**ev. Jessica Brendler Naulty of the UMC of Red Bank was raised in the United Methodist Church. It has always been “a second home” to her, and the church family was always her “second family.” She experienced her first call to ministry at a young age while she was attending Aldersgate Summer Camp in New York after seventh grade. And after this revelation to her mother, Rev. Dr. Vicki Miller Brendler, she was provided with some inspiring but serious advice.

“My mother encouraged me to explore all of my options and my gifts because ministry is not something that should be entered into lightly. It’s a challenging road to travel and should only be taken on if you are ‘absolutely called,’” she said. “Great advice! So I followed my love of science and after graduating college as a Biology major and completing my master’s degree in Secondary Life Science Education, I taught Environmental Science at Westfield High School for one year. It was a whirlwind of a year, but I learned that while I love teaching, God was calling me to use my gifts to teach a different topic—the love of God.”

The following year, she started working as a youth director and began the process of ordination as a Certified Candidate. Brendler Naulty enrolled at Drew Theological Seminary the following year, graduating with a M.Div. in 2010, the same year she was commissioned as a Provisional Elder in GNJ; then was ordained in 2012.

Since her ordination, she has served as an associate pastor at Trinity UMC in Spotswood and Monroe Community Church, part time for one year while finishing seminary at Drew. In addition, Brendler Naulty served as an associate pastor at Haddonfield UMC for four years and is currently in her seventh year at UMC of Red Bank, starting there in July 2014.

“Red Bank is a progressive, reconciling, Green Faith congregation that strives to transform our church and world into the full expression of Christ’s inclusive love. We are a place where all are welcomed as they are and where we grow together in our knowledge, love and service of God and our neighbors,” she said.

“We are passionate about the environment and do our part to be good stewards of God’s creation, whether through our solar panels, our various recycling efforts, participation in annual beach sweeps and more. We also strive to serve our neighbors where they are. We have a very active Backpack Crew finding min-



Rev. Brendler Naulty with her twin daughters, Alyssa and Kristie, this Easter.

istry, and in the past two years we have expanded to include a food pantry that is open weekly, distributing packed bags of food where it’s needed through our ‘mobile pantry.’”

In addition, UMC of Red Bank has vibrant children and youth ministries, serving 40 to 50 children each week at youth gatherings (pre-COVID) and a youth-led VBS program involving 135 children and youth volunteers in total.

“We are also home to two preschool programs in our own Learning Tree Preschool and Red Bank Borough Pre-K program, which enables us to stay connected with and better serve the young families of the community through partnerships within our school system,” she added.

Currently, UMC of Red Bank has a membership of 284 people and an average worship attendance of 130 congregants. But the start of the pandemic last March has caused the church to now have strictly remote worship.

“The pandemic has been challenging on our church attendance because there are people who are not comfortable worshipping remotely and our congregation has not returned to in-person worship since March 2020,” she said. “We have



Rev. Brendler Naulty with her mom, Rev. Dr. Vicki Miller Brendler, at her ordination.

been intentional to stay connected with our membership during this time of remote worship as our financial standing has remained solid, but our worship attendance has decreased. We are in the process of installing a technology upgrade in our sanctuary, which will allow us to shift to simultaneous ‘limited capacity’ in person and livestream worship services in the near future.”

Brendler Naulty added that over the past year, the pandemic has put a strain on all pastors and congregations alike.

“Pastors have tried desperately to remain connected with their congregants and help them navigate the emotions and struggles we are all facing. I have relied heavily on the amazing leadership team here and always felt like we are in this together. Not only have we been struggling through the COVID pandemic, but the pandemic of racism as well and the divisiveness that has plagued our nation,” she said.

“We have not backed away from these challenging conversations, even as we worship remotely, but engaged them through the lens of our faith, wrestling with our social principles and the intersection of religion and race. It has been a year that has challenged us in many ways, but we always looked for where God was at work, wherever we saw the Holy Spirit in action and where God was calling us to step up and speak out.”

Despite the difficulties that the past year has brought, Brendler Naulty considers herself blessed with a beautiful family including her six-and-a-half year-old daughters, Alyssa and Kristie as well as her family clergy members who offer her continued support.

“My mother is Rev. Dr. Vicki Miller Brendler and while she is retired now, she was an active clergy member in our conference for many years. She was ordained a deacon in 1976 and an elder in 1978 in the Northern New Jersey Annual Conference and served as a local pastor for a year prior to that. She served for nearly 40 years, taking a few years out to care for my sisters and I when we were little,” she continued.

Her grandfather is the late Rev. Dr. Charles Miller Jr. He was also an elder in their conference for most of his career starting in the 1950s. And, her great grandfather, Charles W. Miller Sr. became a local pastor in the UMC after her grandfather became ordained.

**“I HAVE RELIED HEAVILY ON THE AMAZING LEADERSHIP TEAM HERE AND ALWAYS FELT LIKE WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER. NOT ONLY HAVE WE BEEN STRUGGLING THROUGH THE COVID PANDEMIC, BUT THE PANDEMIC OF RACISM AS WELL AND THE DIVISIVENESS THAT HAS PLAGUED OUR NATION.”**

—Rev. Jessica Brendler Naulty, Pastor of Red Bank UMC

“My mother’s cousin, Rev. Lisanne Finston is an ordained elder in our conference serving in the extension ministry as the executive director of Gould Farm in Massachusetts. My mother’s brother, Mark Miller, is a church musician and composer. He serves as assistant professor of church music at Drew Theological School and is a lecturer in the Practice of Sacred Music at Yale University,” she added.

Brendler Naulty said that the church has always been an integral part of their lives with her mother being a role model and mentor for her as a pastor.

“I feel like God created me to do this work. My greatest joy as a pastor is witnessing people embracing and embodying their authentic faith,” she continued. “I get to journey alongside people as their faith develops and help them explore deeper dimensions of who God is, and who God is calling them to be. It’s a gift that I do not take for granted.”

## Desegregation

Continued from page 1

“Even as our state grows more diverse, our education system is becoming increasingly segregated,” Bishop John Schol said. “From 2010-2016 an additional 20,000 children of color started attending schools that are more than 99 percent Black or Latino. These trends harm everyone.”

For United Methodists, segregation in our schools has always been a social justice issue. As United Methodists, we believe that every person has the right to education and that the responsibility for education of the young rests with the family, faith communities and the government.

GNJ has been working with other desegregation advocates as part of the Coalition for Diverse and Inclusive Schools to end the huge disparities in New Jersey’s educational system for the past three years, joining the *Latino Action Network et al. v. State of New Jersey et al* lawsuit, which condemned the many years of complicity surrounding the segregation and government-sponsored policies like subsidizing suburban housing for White people while at the same time refusing to insure mortgages in racially mixed neighborhoods. Schol on behalf of GNJ has provided a three-hour deposition about the case, testifying that segregation hurts not only children of color but all children who are not learning together in an increasing diverse society.

It is anticipated that Superior Court Judge Mary Jacobson in Trenton, who heard the case in January 2020, will make a decision sometime later this year. The State, while acknowledging the racial imbalance, has not addressed integrating New Jersey public schools.

The statistics speak for themselves. Today, 88% of students in poor communities attend underfunded schools, com-



Three social justice groups, which includes GNJ’s Rev. Dr. Sammy Arroyo, are working with a group of teenagers to institute a change amid a heavily segregated New Jersey.

pared with just six percent of students in wealthy areas, according to a 2019 analysis by the Education Law Center. Blacks are 5.4 times more likely to face out-of-school suspension, while Hispanics are 2.4 times more likely. In 2019 66 percent of teachers were white women, but only 22 percent of the students were white and female. This unjust disparity in opportunity is creating generations of children with unfulfilled promises and children who feel ignored because of the absence of culturally-sensitive curricula and practices.

In an effort to give our youth a voice and a more hopeful chance of receiving the quality education they deserve, three social justice groups—*The Inclusion Project*, *Salvation and Social Justice* and the *Latino*

*Action Network Foundation*—banded together several months ago to collaborate on a solution. Rev. Dr. Sammy Arroyo, pastor of First UMC Hightstown is the Public Education and Outreach Coordinator for Salvation and Social Justice.

To assist students to lead on the issue of integrating public schools, the team hired the youth-led organization, *IntegrateNYC*, who led eight weeks of workshops for 26 teenagers from all over New Jersey. Now known as the “amplifiers” or “torchbearers of hope,” the courageous team of 26 recently hosted a town hall called “Tomorrow is Too Late! Passing the Torch: Building our Legacy.” They shared stories, released sobering statistics and celebrated the little victories they have achieved in just two short months.

The group’s mission statement, “To create a safe and transparent space where we communicate, grow, collaborate, build community and leave a legacy of change” was flanked by harrowing stories of abject poverty, racism and an overall feeling of being invisible among their peers.

“Being you” gets eclipsed by “getting by,” hiding behind a facade and even dropping out in many cases.

According to a 2017 report by the UCLA Civil Rights Project, children in New Jersey schools start out in schools even more segregated than in the later grades, affecting children in a period in which stereotypes have not yet formed and interracial contact is usually easy. Part of this pattern in the public schools is a reflection of the state’s excellent court orders providing high quality preschool for many students of color.

“Schools should be places of trust. Kids need to see themselves reflected in all aspects of schools,” Arroyo said, adding that it’s not enough to add a course on diversity into the curriculum or send Black students to White schools. It needs to be part of the overall fabric of education.

But Arroyo takes the crusade one step further.

“We as churches have a role in this,” said Arroyo. “After all, the church was instrumental in driving the Civil Rights

“SCHOOLS SHOULD BE PLACES OF TRUST. KIDS NEED TO SEE THEMSELVES REFLECTED IN ALL ASPECTS OF SCHOOLS.”

—Rev. Dr. Sammy Arroyo

Throughout the event, Tyriq, Guilherma, Ningberi, Dedra, Vanessa and Yoselin invited the students to reflect on their own experiences in school to shed some light on how different the educational experience can be.

Imagine being that person who is called “thick lips” or “dark” repeatedly while you are trying to learn, socialize and grow as a person. For 18-year-old Bilkisu, this was a regular occurrence.

“My typical black features wouldn’t be so taboo if my school had more people who looked like me. People are not familiar with blackness so how can we progress as a society for everyone being equal if we still have people ashamed of their background?”

Echoing that feeling of not belonging, another student said, “I hated school. It was never the first place I wanted to go. Imagine yourself being a black student in a school with strict uniform policies, strict rules, no freedom and a lot of white superiors. You have a one percent chance of being you.”

Movement in the 1960s. It is our call as Christians to be good role models.”

While schools need to create policies that really make a difference and provide students with the protections and opportunities that students need to thrive, churches can also play a role by changing cultures, integrating and having liturgy that reflects the people we want to see.

“We need to organize and let our voices be heard. People need to understand there is a major problem,” said Arroyo.

The group’s next step is to map out a plan this summer that focuses on things like what an integrative curriculum looks like, how mental health issues need to be addressed and how should discipline change to be more equitable.

Arroyo said he’s hopeful that change is coming. He urges Gov. Murphy to stop delaying the process.

“Sit down with us to make this wrong right for our students,” said Arroyo, who added that he wants to be ready with a concise plan once that door is opened. 🏳️‍🌈



## A Journey of Hope

This month we recognize mothers of all races and how their love, compassion and courage shaped history and inspired those who follow in their paths to end the sin of racism.

FOR MORE DETAILS  
[www.gnjumc.org/journeyofhope](http://www.gnjumc.org/journeyofhope)

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**NEXT GENERATION**  
UNITED METHODISTS  
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**IGNITE**  
DISCIPLESHIP

The Relay encourages clergy and laity alike to share their experiences in their own words of adapting ministries and how that adaptability shines the light on others in the new section, "Go Tell it on the Mountain." This month we share a piece written by Mt Zion-Wesley UMC's Lay Leader Rebecca Tribbett and how the church provided free dinners to over 100 seniors on the Saturday before Easter. There is also a message from Rev. Peter Mantell of Frenchtown and Kingwood UMCs, recalling the anniversary of their new food pantry. Do you have Good News to tell? Contact Heather Mistretta at [hmistretta@gnjumc.org](mailto:hmistretta@gnjumc.org).

## Sharing God's Grace and Light at the Mount

By Rebecca Tribbett  
vtribbett@comcast.net

*"Jesus said unto him, Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all they heart, and with all they soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."*

—Matthew 22:37-39

**T**his pandemic has brought dark days, difficult nights, and yes light. Many have lost jobs, homes, loved ones and hope as they struggle to meet basic needs of food and shelter. In times like this, hope is sometimes all that is left for many, hope that tonight may be something new, tomorrow as the sun rises an answer will be found to all those questions swirling around in their heads and hearts. For those who understand the power of prayer, each day brings new opportunities to go to the father seeking his hedge of protection and prevenient grace. For we know that the darkest of days there is always a light, for God is the light. The book of John tells us that, "Light is essential for fellowship," God must be in the center. He calls us to "love thy neighbor as ourselves." It is identified as the first and great commandment. (Matthew 22:38)

Mt. Zion-Wesley UMC, under the leadership of Rev. Dr. John Randall Sr, shared our blessings with the community. Like most churches during this pandemic,



Mt. Zion Wesley Church provided free dinners to more than 100 seniors on the Saturday before Easter.

we found Zoom and were able to continue our services and Bible Study, undaunted by our inability to meet in a typical service. We sought the Lord by "any means necessary" and meetings allowing us to be able to go about the business of doing God's work. We yearned for the ability to fellowship with one another. Then God said yes, we shared our blessings with the community by serving 110 meals to those in need within the community.

Following CDC guidelines and weather permitting, we began to use our park-

ing lot on which we held our services. That first service that followed the long drought of quarantining was uplifting. We worshiped together, lifting up the name of the Lord under God's blue skies. Seeing how much joy we felt we began a discussion of how to share this joy with others. We wanted just to say thank you for God's grace and mercy. We could think of no better way than to follow what we are called to do. Many people continue to struggle; hunger is a daily occurrence for so many people. We

reached out to the community to inform them of the meal giveaway. We again made sure to follow all health and safety guidelines. When the people came, we were reminded of the joy of giving. We were blessed by their smiles. We again thanked God for placing on our hearts this opportunity to share and love.

There have to be conversations of making this an annual event and of holding another dinner during the summer when we can offer food cooked outside. 🇺🇸

## Opening its Doors to the Whole Community

**I**n March 2020 Frenchtown and Kingwood UMCs created a small pantry to feed the hungry in their communities. As the need for more food grew, so did the outreach at these two churches. That small pantry evolved into a building, the Open Door Community Pantry, where all community members were invited to partake in its bounty of food. Below is a message from Rev. Peter Mantell of Frenchtown and Kingwood UMCS on March 24, 2021:

*"Today, Facebook reminded me that it was one year ago today that we launched our Mini-food pantry in the parking lot of Frenchtown United Methodist Church. It was warmly and enthusiastically received by the community. We immediately began to see turnover of food in the box as some people gave as they were able, and others took as they needed. We learned a bit and tried to ensure that food was always available to anyone who might need it.*

*And then, just a few months later, we began work on expanding our mini-pantry into what is now our Open Door Community Pantry. Thank you to so many who have worked so hard to make this pantry a reality, the volunteers who come in each week to check the shelves, the many local businesses who contribute meals, pastries, or other items. And thank you to those who come to grab some groceries or a meal, for helping us serve you in this special and unique way.*

*I would like to say something trite like, "I'm overwhelmed by the response of the community," but it just isn't true. I'm NOT overwhelmed.*

*I am NOT surprised that our community has embraced this pantry, because we live in a beautiful and generous place in which*

*the love of Jesus is lived in so many ways. I am NOT surprised because the people of this community are well-versed in demonstrating compassion and blessings to one another, caring about others and providing a safe place in which our best selves are enabled to be lived. No, I'm not surprised.*

*But I am hopeful. I'm hopeful that work like the Open Door Community Pantry will inspire us – and others to strive toward that day in which we eradicate violence in its many forms, hatred and hopelessness. I'm hopeful that something as simple as donating a bag of groceries will inspire people to learn more about how hunger affects children and families in spite of outward appearances. And I'm hopeful that the love that this community has for one another will grow outward and will flow like the beautiful river upon which our town is built.*

*As we enter Holy Week, this Sunday, may God's love continue to be shared."*

The Open Door Community Pantry is located at 16 Third Street in Frenchtown and is available 24 hours a day.

Since this day in March, Mantell and his congregations have continued to build its pantry and open its "doors" to more people, embracing the mission to be inclusive. "It's inspiring how this has taken off. So many people in the community are using it as a community pantry. Since the beginning, we have been trying to remove the stigma of hunger," said Mantell, adding that volunteers at the pantry also hand out restaurant gift cards in an effort to support local businesses that have been hard hit by the pandemic. "We're trying to support our community the best we can." 🇺🇸



## MAY BOOKSHELF

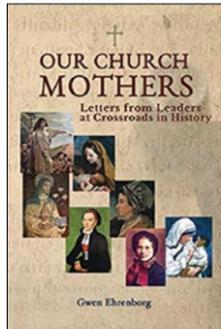
This month we recognize our mothers and how their love, compassion and courage shaped history and inspired those who follow in their paths. We also recognize Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month as well as the 2021 National Week of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) from April 29-May 5, a week meant to draw attention to the violence and a strong call to challenge the silence, tolerance and inaction in response to the crisis of MMIWG.

### Crossroads in History

(2020, Living Witnesses Ministries) by Gwen Ehrenborg

*Our Church Mothers* contains seven, first-person letters from formidable historical women, including John Wesley's mother, Susanna Wesley, who crafted for themselves roles of strategic importance in the history of Christianity. They also include Katharina Luther, first lady of the Reformation; Catherine Booth, co-founder of the Salvation Army; Mary, the Mother of Jesus; St. Clare, best friend of Francis of Assisi; Mother Teresa of Calcutta; and Judge Deborah, as a forerunner. The letters are meant to encourage today's believers as they share their thoughts, feelings and daring experiences as they were led by the Spirit of God. Learn how these female leaders and their partners in ministry overcame tremendous challenges to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God.

Rev. Gwen Ehrenborg is a gifted storyteller who has an energetic style of sharing Biblical truths with a warmth and relevance upon a sound theological foundation. She has been writing, speaking and dramatizing compelling stories for over 35 years through her pastoral ministry and non-profit drama ministry, "Living Witnesses." Pastor Gwen not only served five California congregations with her clergy husband, but also travels with her drama ministry portraying seven leading women of church history. Beginning in 1984, these well researched, one-woman dramatizations have been enthusiastically received by Catholics and Protestants alike across America.



### Mother Cox: Mission Accomplished

(2019, Outskirts Press) by Carol Barber

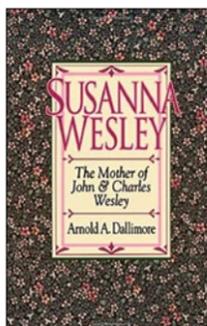
*Mother Cox* tells the story of Bertha Hummel Cox who in 1924 at the age of 56, left her comfortable life in Wisconsin to become a missionary for indigenous tribes in the Amazon rainforest. She had no idea that it would take nearly four years of frustrating delays and treacherous travels to reach her destination. Among her many challenges were months of isolation in a makeshift hut in a remote forest and a death-defying experience on one of the world's most dangerous stretches of whitewater rapids. But finally, in her 60th year, Bertha began her ministry for people who she believed "would be made whole by the Lord's grace." This book follows Bertha's path to the work that would occupy her life for the next 27 years. It's a tribute to a woman whose remarkable accomplishments remind us that the only thing standing between us and our goals is fear...of the unknown, of sacrifice, of ridicule, of failure. Bertha was fearless, some might suggest insanely so, but her belief in being "protected by the Lord" never wavered and led her to a "mission accomplished."

### Susanna Wesley

(1993, Baker Books) by Arnold Dallimore

The fascinating story of Susanna Wesley, carefully documented, reveals an intelligent, strong-willed woman who suffered much in a male-dominated world but who prepared her children well. She never preached a sermon, published a book, or founded a church, but she is known as the Mother of Methodism. Excerpts from her letters and writings of her husband and children are included along with illustrations of furniture, paintings and other items used by the Wesleys.

Arnold A. Dallimore was a Baptist pastor for 38 years and a successful biographer of Christian leaders. His books include *A Heart Set Free: The Life of Charles Wesley and Spurgeon: A New Biography*.



### You Are Just Right: Celebrating the Beauty of Diversity

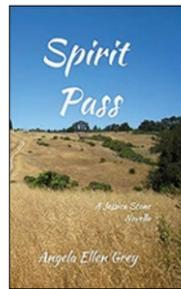
(2019, Outskirts Press) by Joni Crimmins

*You Are Just Right*, written by Joni Crimmins, is the story about a child's reaction to the discouraging words of strangers. This gentle reminder that even though life seems difficult and unfair sometimes, everyone brings value to the world exactly as is. This little book prompts children and adults to think about words that can be thoughtless, hurtful, or unhelpful and to look for what makes each person unique. The story's narrative creates an opportunity for parents and children to talk about everything from sensitive subjects like bullying to a fun and imaginative exploration of a child's thoughts and dreams.

### Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: A Jessica Stone Novella

(2020, Angela Ellen Grey) Audio book by Angela Ellen Grey, Maria Huard (narrator)

*Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* is relevant in the news today, rightfully so with the staggering statistics of racism, indifference, and the lack of historical pursuit for justice. This novella is fictionalized accounts of what our Native American women and girls lived through and died by the hands of assailants of all backgrounds that think indigenous women are invisible. The gutsy, intelligent Native American tribal detective in this novel is teamed up with an FBI special agent who she has to teach the culture and family life of the people he's sworn to protect but has barely been exposed to throughout his life.



### Spirit Pass: A Jessica Stone Novella

(2020, independently published) by Angela Ellen Grey

*Spirit Pass* tackles an all-too-real issue that gets all-too-little attention—the disappearances of young women on Native American reservations. This concept alone ensures plenty of emotion for the piece and the novel does a good job of showing the full scope of those affected. This is especially poignant when we see old friends Agnes and Bernice who find themselves possible rivals following Claudia's murder. That there are so many suspects for this killing is also a nice touch—this keeps us on our toes and guessing until the

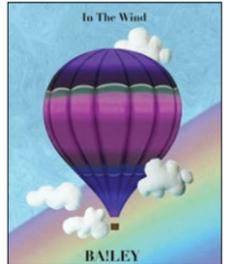
reveal in the climax. The script also does well to show the distrust of government on these reservations and how that can truly be a double-edged sword—it's great not to have FBI in your business until you really need their help. Part of what makes SPIRIT PASS believable is the well-written dialogue that feels especially natural when it's coming from the shadier characters, like Chet and Hunter.

Although she's a South Dakota native, an enrolled member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, Angela Ellen Grey lived in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, New York, on and off throughout her childhood. Currently, Angela resides in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, with the love of her life, Robert, their two bobtails, two Manx, and near their four adult children (their grown kids' spouses), and a grandson.

### In the Wind: The Beginnings of a Life Well Lived

(2019, Dreamreacher Creative) by Bailey

*In the Wind*, 100 pages of inspiration for children and families, is an introduction to meaningful ideas, to encourage growth and a positive mindset on the journey of life. Full of affirmations and quotes that the entire family can enjoy, this book is inspired by the potential of five-year old Bailey and all children around the world reaching toward their dreams.



### Women United for Change: 150 Years in Mission

(2019, UMW) by Ellen Blue

*Women United for Change: 150 Years in Mission* explores and celebrates the history of United Methodist Women and its predecessor organizations. As Blue says, "Women have done some of the most important ministry the church has ever accomplished." This book shares the voices and stories of our foremothers, including the former denominations that now compose the United Methodist Church. Despite serious resistance from churchmen,

these women formed foreign missionary societies to provide education and healthcare for women and girls internationally, and home missionary societies that tackled racial justice and other pressing social issues at home. They also helped establish the deaconess program, the first opportunity in our tradition for large numbers of women to perform full-time ministries of service and justice and opened the doors for women to take on leadership roles in many arenas.

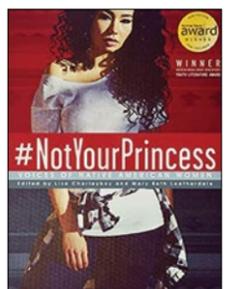
Ellen Blue is the Biggs Professor Emerita at Phillips Theological Seminary. She has taught in the areas of women's issues, the history of Christianity and United Methodism. She writes about New Orleans in the 20th and 21st centuries and about the work of Methodist women. She lives in New Orleans.

### #NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women

(2017, Annick Press) by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale

*#NotYourPrincess* is an eclectic collection of poems, essays, interviews and art from Indigenous women. Stories of abuse, humiliation and stereotyping are countered by the voices of passionate women making themselves heard and demanding change. Sometimes angry, often reflective, but always strong, the women in this book will give readers insight into the lives of women who, for so long, have been virtually invisible.

Lisa Charleyboy is a First Nations (Tsilhqot'in) writer, storyteller, editor and social entrepreneur. She is the editor-in-chief of *Urban Native Magazine*, which focuses on popular culture from an Indigenous perspective. Mary Beth Leatherdale writes and edits books for children and youth. In her books, she loves to share stories. Not conjured out of thin air, imaginative tales. Actual true accounts of ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. Her work has garnered numerous accolades and awards. Mary Beth lives and works in Toronto. More information about her and her books is available on her website at [www.marybethleatherdale.com](http://www.marybethleatherdale.com).



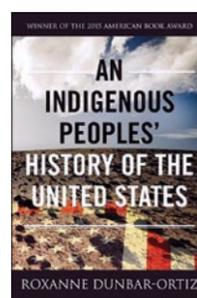
### An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States

(2015, Beacon Press) by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

*An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, the first history told from the perspective of indigenous peoples, challenges the founding myth of the United States and shows how policy against the Indigenous peoples was colonialist and designed to seize the territories of the original inhabitants, displacing or eliminating them. Spanning more than 400 years, this peoples' history radically reframes U.S. history and explodes the silences that have

haunted our national narrative.

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz grew up in rural Oklahoma, the daughter of a tenant farmer and part-Indian mother. She has been active in the international Indigenous movement for more than four decades and is known for her lifelong commitment to national and international social justice issues. After receiving a Ph.D. in history at the University of California at Los Angeles, she taught in the newly established Native American Studies Program at California State University, Hayward and helped found the Departments of Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies. Her 1977 book, *The Great Sioux Nation* was the fundamental document at the first international conference on Indigenous peoples of the Americas, held at the United Nations' headquarters in Geneva. Dunbar-Ortiz is the author or editor of seven other books, including *Roots of Resistance: A History of Land Tenure in New Mexico*. She lives in San Francisco. 🇺🇸



## Christ Church

*Continued from page 1*

are to partner with the other feeding programs to hold a big event this fall.

Their commitment to the community has not gone unnoticed. One client shared that he and his wife both lost their jobs due to the pandemic, so receiving groceries has helped him during a time of uncertainty and scarcity. In addition to food, families are also able to receive gift cards to local supermarkets and reusable cloth masks.

In conjunction with this new feeding program, the congregation offers its Bread of Life Ministry, which was born in April 2017, as a result of the church's participation in Team Vital, a GNJ program that is designed to help churches grow and become vital congregations. The purpose of the ministry, led by Joyce Thomas, is to help alleviate the needs of people experiencing homelessness in the city.

On the fourth Friday of each month, members put together sandwiches and distribute them along with bottled water, fruits and snacks to individuals on the streets. This gave the volunteers the opportunity to interact one on one with Paterson residents. Along the way they also honor individual prayer requests. In 2018 the ministry was recognized with a certificate from the Conference.

"This past February, the ministry was re-invented, thanks to the idea from Deborah Major, when Christ Church partnered with and adopted the Rehabilitation Center of the Salvation Army in Paterson with permission from Mr. and Mrs. Lieutenant Weems, administrators," said Andrya Edwards who co-leads the church's Communications team.

With this partnership, they have been able to supply sit-down meals each month. The ministry team recently hosted a sit-down meal with the Lieutenants and

32 residents of the Adult Rehabilitation Center who also received articles of clothing from the church.

As the warmer weather approaches and with vaccinations on the upswing, the plan is to continue with the Salvation Army partnership and to return to the one-on-one contact with people experiencing homelessness, said Edwards.

As sit-down meals are prepared inside, a garden outside thrives with crops to feed the hungry.

The Garden of Eden Ministry began in 2016 from a series of vacant plots, which extended around the sides of the church. This area was turned into four plots of an organic, flourishing garden with the fertilization of all organic products.

All of this was made possible with the partnership of City Green, which provided grants from 2016-2019. Christ Church is also in partnership with Public School Number 13. Their students visited the garden as part of a field trip and learned about planting, harvesting, sustainability and how the produce arrived at the dinner table. The students were involved in hands-on gardening as much as possible.

In November 2020, in conjunction with the Fresh Produce Ministry, 30 families were served from the garden, even in the mist of the pandemic.

Shirley Jordan chairs this committee along with Deborah Major (vice chair), Elizabeth Barr, McKnight-Young and Joyce Thomas.

The Fresh Produce Ministry began in July 2019, in partnership with Star of



**Garden of Eden Chair Shirley Jordan (right) with community volunteer, Jackie Jones.**

Hope Ministries as a monthly distribution to people in the community.

When the pandemic began, the distribution increased to weekly and began to partner with the local grandparents' orga-

nization, said Committee Chair McKnight-Young who added that the distribution then increased to three times a week and has continued, which has allowed them to serve at least 80 families each week.

"This past summer, volunteers from other churches by way of the Fresh Produce Ministry delivered boxes of food/vegetables to 10 home-bound persons for eight weeks," she said.

This Ministry is also in partnership with a local daycare facility and with another community church to aid with the distribution and ensure more persons are reached.

These four ministries have worked in tandem

over the past year to feed its community in a transformative way. As they look ahead to the future, there's no doubt that they will continue to grow this fall and beyond. 🌱

## Camden County

*Continued from page 1*

"I feel blessed to have such an amazing mom, who has always inspired me to do good in the world," said Lori Weikel Coblentz in a recent interview. "Our world is such a mess, that we all need to do something good. I try to share something inspirational each day on Facebook (even if it is a hug). I am so proud of my son and his dedication to care for people. I think that God's purpose for me is to help others!"

For the past several months, Dawn, Lori and Christopher of Newfield UMC, with the support and guidance of the pastor at Plainville UMC, Rev. George Lagos, and Malaga UMC have been working with congregants, Cooper EMS and the Camden Fire Department to take care of the homeless in Camden. They collect clothes, blankets, toiletries, socks, fruit, peanut butter and jelly and make sandwiches the night before in preparation for a day spent in a city burdened by yet another layer of hardship to distribute the material while they talk and pray with the people of Camden.

Lori recalled how difficult it was for her son, Christopher when the pandemic hit.

"He had to move out of his house for three months to avoid exposure to his family. He and the other guys were sharing respirators. Not to mention, they had targets on their backs."

So that his children could see their dad, Dawn, Lori and others started cooking for about 25 men at the Cooper EMS. This led to drives for food and essential items as well as donations of PPE. After Christopher responded to a call where a man was living with his children in one room, they decided to adopt the family for Christmas.

The ministry seemed to grow as the need seemed to grow in size and pathways.

"My mom started making face masks for nursing homes and hospitals, and she crocheted hats for chemo patients, newborns and the homeless," said Lori, who added that two years ago her mom was fighting for her life with breast cancer.

Today, Dawn, a breast cancer survivor, along with her family and the dedicated volunteers at Newfield UMC continue to work with Plainville UMC and Malaga UMC through the Malaga Food Pantry to collect blankets and clothes and make

sandwiches. They've added sanitary needs and makeup to their list of things to collect. Together, they go to Camden for distribution and fellowship.

"Pastor George has been amazing. He's a blessing," said Lori who added that because Plainville UMC does not have their own UMW group, they are helping Newfield UMC grow their group.

In late April, the mission grew when Cooper Hospital offered the use of its 101 Haddon Avenue building for their distribution to the homeless. Also helping to bolster the mission were the Street Docs of Cooper who offered to do wellness checks for the homeless and Camden's Metro Police.

Lori said she is grateful to have the opportunity to help those who need support, including her mom.



**Plainville UMC and Malaga UMC joined Newfield's effort to distribute blankets, food and other necessities.**

"I learned from my mother's example. From the time I was a little girl, my mom was with UMW," said Lori. "My parents did so much, so I learned that my purpose was to do good. Now I'm so proud of my son."

The legacy is clearly intact. As Dawn makes prayer quilts, supports the Emmanuel Cancer Center and raises money for other cancer survivors, Lori is continuing to give back to those her son serves in the community as an EMS worker.

The next distribution will be May 22 at 101 Haddon Avenue in Camden beginning at noon. To donate, the Malaga Food Pantry is located at 91 Old Delsea Drive in Malaga, NJ. 🌱



Move forward with GNJ... and God on May 24-25.

**Registration now open until May 15!**

**For details go to:**

[www.gnjumc.org/2021-annual-conference](http://www.gnjumc.org/2021-annual-conference)



# UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

May 3 & 10	Preparing a Balanced Budget 7 - 8:30 p.m.
May 13	Information Session for Clergy 9:00 a.m. - noon
May 15	Last day to submit an application for a GNJ scholarship
May 16	Last day to apply for an UMCOR Mustard Seed Migration Grant of up to \$2,000
May 22	Free COVID Testing/Vaccine at Willingboro Seventh-Day Adventist Church (w/Church of the Good Shepherd UMC) at 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.
May 23	Heritage Sunday <i>Sunday on or preceding Aldersgate Day, May 24</i>
May 24 & 25	2021 Annual Conference
May 30	Peace with Justice Sunday
May 31	Last day to apply to the Paycheck Protection Program
June 4	Denville IGNITE Community 6:00 p.m.
June 6	Haddonfield IGNITE Community 6:00 p.m.
June 11	East Brunswick IGNITE Community 7:00 p.m.
June 16, 30 & July 7	Leadership Academy's IGNITE Youth Discipleship Calendar   7:00 - 8:30 p.m.
August 31	Last day to take the Quest Diagnostics' free Blueprint for Wellness Screening
October 3	World Communion Sunday <i>First Sunday in October</i>
October 17	Laity Sunday <i>Third Sunday in October</i>
November 28	United Methodist Student Day <i>Last Sunday in November</i>

## NEW PHOTO OF THE MONTH!

Each month we will highlight one photo sent in from our congregations that really exemplifies the wonderful ministries they are doing.



This month we celebrate Good Shepherd UMC and the creative alter artwork they created for the Breakthrough Worship series called *I See You!*

We celebrate all of our churches who are working hard to see and hear everyone in their own light!

If you would like to submit a photo, please email Heather Mistretta at: [hmistretta@gnjumc.org](mailto:hmistretta@gnjumc.org).

## OBITUARIES

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of the following:

**Arthur Spell Jr.**, lay member, died on December 6, 2020. Memorial donations may be sent to: Asbury Community Church, 2220 Woodlynne Avenue, Woodlynne, NJ 08107. Expressions of sympathy can be sent via [www.carusocare.com](http://www.carusocare.com).

**Cynthia J. Bradway**, surviving spouse of Rev. Orville Clyde Bradway, Jr., died on April 5. Memorial donations may be sent to: Cedarville UMC, 206 Main Street, Cedarville, NJ 08311.

**Annabel Corena Wilson**, surviving spouse of Rev. Richard L. Wilson, died away on April 11. Memorial donations may be sent to: Blackfeet United Methodist Parish, P.O. Box 3007, Browning, Montana 59417. Expressions of sympathy can be made via [www.snyderfuneralhome.com](http://www.snyderfuneralhome.com).

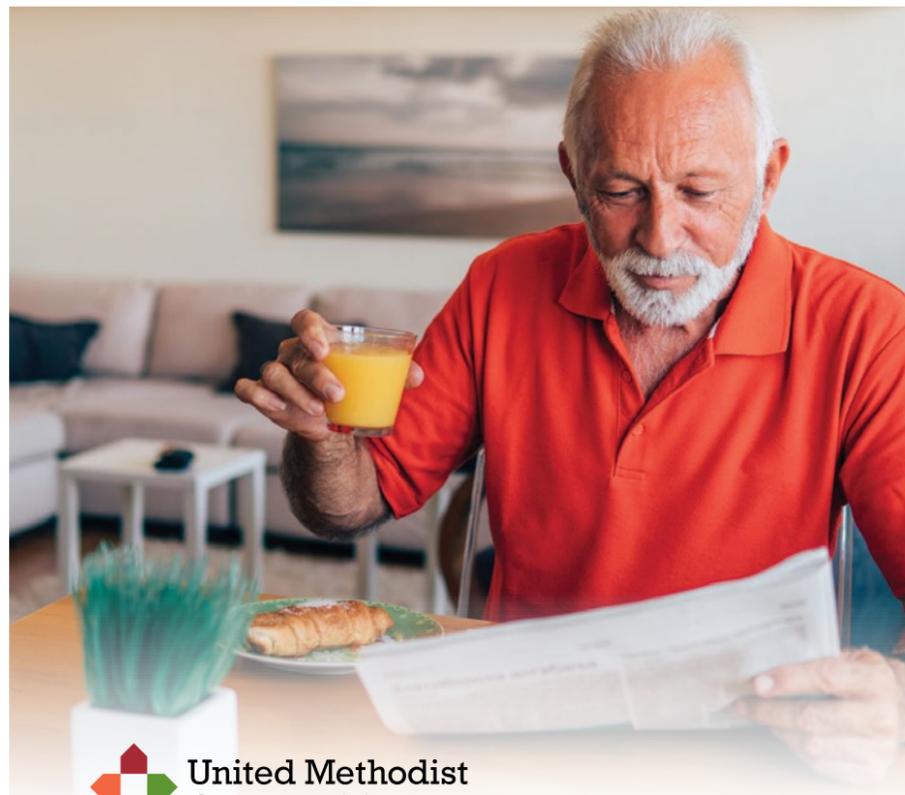
**Clara M. Hall-Black**, surviving spouse to William Black, deceased local pastor, died on April 1. Expressions of sympathy can be sent via [www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/20746229/Clara-M-Hall-Black](http://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/20746229/Clara-M-Hall-Black).

**Rev. Dr. Carlton J. Curtin**, retired full elder, died on April 20. Memorial donations may be sent to the Alzheimer's Association. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to: Kate Hein (daughter), 201 Boulder Drive, Lake In The Hills, IL 60156 and Matt Curtin (son), 83 Stone Avenue, Ossining, NY 10562.

Open until August 31

## Blueprint for Wellness & HealthQuotient in 2021

[www.gnjumc.org/benefits-overview](http://www.gnjumc.org/benefits-overview)



## 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](http://umcommunities.org) to see what United Methodist Communities has to offer.

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Neptune, NJ 07753  
[umcommunities.org](http://umcommunities.org)



# Miracles Everywhere

*Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided.*

*- Exodus 14:21*



## **Calling All Miracle Makers. Our Job is Not Done.**

When the pandemic shook our world, you listened and you acted to provide stability to those who needed it most. The Miracles Everywhere Campaign helped you make miracles come true in the face of what seemed like unbearable obstacles.

Today, we thank you for your dedication, compassion and generosity. As we approach the close of our campaign, we're counting on those who are able to continue to believe in this wonder by giving to our campaign today.

*Your donation, no matter how small, will provide  
a pathway for young and old alike.*

**Let's cross the finish line together making miracles.**

[www.gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere](http://www.gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere)