

THE RELAY

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Two Trenton Churches Become Partners in Ministry and Mission

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.”

—ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10

By Heather Mistretta
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TRENTON, NJ

The energy and richness that comes with 250 years of memories swept through the sanctuary of Turning Point UMC at 15 South Broad Street in June as a blend of different cultures, ideas and backgrounds joined as one to make new memories as the New Hope for Trenton Parish Ministry. On this corner, where a colorful mural filled with people of color contrasts the hard cement, where young mothers hold the hands of their children while accepting food for their families, and where 40 years of memories of feeding the hungry pour out onto the busy street, change is happening for the congregations and the community.

“It’s collaborative ministry at its best,” said Turning Point’s Rev. Rupert Hall, who has been affiliated with the church for the past 14 years following two different careers in law and finance, starting as a lay person and then as its pastor for



Leon Rainbow painted the colorful graffiti-style mural outside Turning Point UMC in exchange for a room where he taught painting to the community.

the past five. For all those years, Hall has been dedicated to welcoming strangers as friends, from counseling men in the community and leading an impromptu prayer station on the sidewalk, to feeding the community and working toward instituting change.

The congregations of Turning Point and African UMCs, led by Rev. Moses Jarta Flomo, now both worship under the same roof following a trial run this past Easter Sunday, and in May they welcomed The Village Deaf Church NJ’s Pastor Emmanuel

Jean-Jacques Sterlin and their members, to also congregate at 15 South Broad Street in the heart of Trenton. Currently, there are about 28,000 deaf people in Mercer County alone, Hall noted.

“We want to draw in the community with more outreach services, like homeless, employment, advocacy and job replacement resources for the deaf community,” said Sterlin, adding that they hope to also offer sign language classes in the future.

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“Seek the shalom of the city where I have sent you, for in its shalom, you will find your shalom.”

—JEREMIAH 29:7

Responding to the Community with Hope and Care for over 50 Years

By Heather Mistretta
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It was 1967 and Wilbert Mitchell was teaching sixth grade at Sewell School in downtown Camden. He was not only active in the classroom but heavily involved in the school’s PTA and furthering his own education. Just shy of his 30th birthday, the young man from Camden who had always had dreams of making lives better for the people of his community was asked to be the executive director of a new nonprofit in the city, though Mitchell today jokes that it only happened because everyone else said no.

Now looking back on those 54 years and ahead to what his recent retirement holds for him, Dr. Mitchell reflects on what that time meant to him.



Dr. Mitchell is retiring after 54 years of helping people help themselves.

“In 54 years, there wasn’t a day when I did not have the opportunity to serve an individual or family. That was quite an honor,” said Mitchell. “We accomplished what we wanted to do,” he added as he reflected on the early days when he along with Rev. Dr. Charles Sayre and Dr. Stanley Menking started to create services for a needy community, with their main priority being to provide childcare so parents were able to get back to work and get the training they needed to grow their careers.

Camden in the late-1960s was burdened by an economic stagnation and deindustrialization. With the significant drop in jobs came a sharp downturn in the population as many of the middle class moved out to the suburbs to find employment and a better life. The poor, including many African Americans, stayed. As targets of a long history of job and housing discrimination, they had little choice. Crime and violence rose, exacerbating simmering racial tensions and leading to the two race riots.

Needless to say, the city was ripe with a need to get stronger and revitalize.

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Moving the Needle on Finances...and Ministry from Montclair to Tobago

By Heather Mistretta
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MONTCLAIR, NJ

Protecting the financial health of a church is vital to the longevity and prosperity of every church, but delving into that discussion can sometimes be uncomfortable. As the new Leadership Academy works to empower congregations, courses are being rolled out that continue to encourage collaboration between clergy and laity in mission, small groups, worship and planning. “Preparing a Balanced Budget,” a course led by Rev. Jana Purkis-Brash, executive director of the Stewardship Foundation, was one of those vital courses.

“This new course set up pastors and leaders in the finance area to move the needle, to move forward toward a healthy budget,” said Purkis-Brash, who noted that joining her during the two Zoom sessions in May were more than 30 people, including one from as far away as Tobago!

This new course allowed church leaders to review their church’s income and expenses, gather the church’s budget



Esther Canty-Barnes of St. Mark’s has seen growth in her church since participating in the recent Leadership Academy course on “Preparing a Balanced Budget.”

information and budget requests, identify projected income, create a budget spreadsheet and develop a process for living within the budget.

“Leaders just needed the tools to know what to do to develop a budget and work with other congregational

Continued on page 5

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP

Van Gogh Immersive

Bishop John Schol



Recently Beverly and I visited a unique exhibit in New York City, the Van Gogh Immersive. The exhibit was creative, inspiring and innovative. Standing in a light box we watched the works of Van Gogh emerge from under and all around us. His works are imaginative, his life a mystery. A dance between hope and despair, between faith and rejection.

Vincent Van Gogh, a Dutch painter born in 1853 was named after his stillborn brother, something that haunted him. His father and grandfather were both pastors, but Van Gogh was never fully accepted by the church. His brother, Theo often supported him with lodging, food and money to pursue painting.

He began painting at the age of 27 and painted 900 works of art by the age of 37 when he died. During his lifetime, he only sold two paintings, but today he is known as one of the great artists. Many of his paintings vacillated between dreary dark paintings of working class people hard at work and bright vibrant imaginative artwork.

I found the immersive exhibit to be extraordinary in which you find yourself in deep absorption (immersive) of the art and life of this extraordinary person. Many of the more than 300 people I watched the exhibit with had a similar experience. Yet there are others who found themselves deeply disappointed and feeling that the works of Van Gogh were exploited with modern technology. Like his life, the exhibit drew different reactions.

As we emerge out of the pandemic, I am hearing and reading that people are seeking something different than their pre-pandemic life, an immersive experience where life is emerging all around them. It is more than the fear of illness and even death, it has to do with life itself. The pandemic has taught us that we cannot prevent disruption or avoid dramatic changes in life's routines and relationships. Emerging out of the pandemic, some people are retiring, and others are looking for new jobs that are more purposeful, understanding of personal and family needs and have greater fluidity between work, meaning and life.

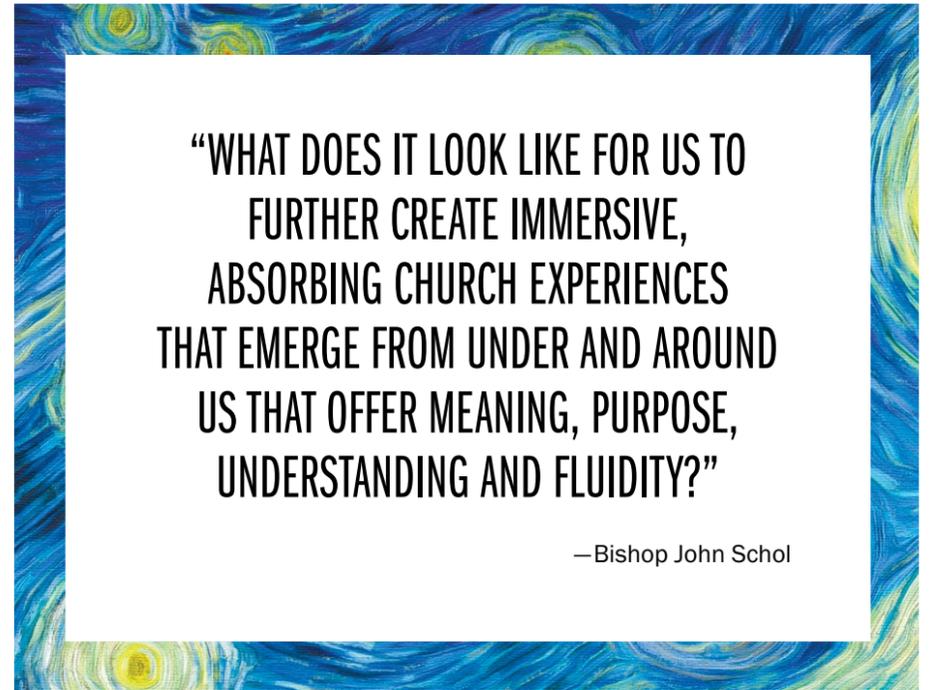
As we emerge from the pandemic, are we being called to be an immersive church where Christ emerges from under and all around us? As society becomes clearer about purpose and meaning, the church is called to examine who it is, and how is God calling us to engage with society and culture. This is particularly true of our

ministry with those who were not a part or marginally part of the church prior to the pandemic. Even the faithful are looking for something more. A church in which you find yourself absorbed in its worship, group life and service ministries. It emerges from under and around you. But I fear as we emerge from the pandemic, we are or will quickly settle into old routines and ways of being the church. Churches that settle into the pre-pandemic routine will not last.

What does it look like for us to further create immersive, absorbing church experiences that emerge from under and around us that offer meaning, purpose, understanding and fluidity?

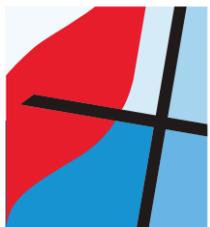
It is ironic that the church was not fluid enough to welcome Van Gogh, but Theo, which means divine or divine gift was grace for Van Gogh. What does it mean when grace is coming from outside the church rather than within the body of Christ?

It is ironic that computer and light exhibits are more inspiring and regenerative than Sunday worship. What will it look like for the church to become the light box where Christ emerges from under and around us?



—Bishop John Schol

In GNJ, I have been overwhelmed by the Theo's and the Theo congregations that gave themselves fully following Superstorm Sandy or stood up and stepped out during the pandemic to feed and care for people. I have been impressed by some of the creative online worship experiences during the pandemic. What the church is yet to become is within our reach. We are being beacons to be more graceful, purposeful, creative and fluid. God has a great future for the church, and I call each of you to help shape what God has next for the church. 🇺🇸



THE RELAY

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One of the programs added at Respond was training in the culinary arts.

Respond

Continued from page 1

For the past five decades throughout these challenges, Respond Inc. has had the common goal of helping people throughout the Camden community help themselves. Collectively, the group digs deep to give people the tools and support to overcome deeply rooted challenges, from poverty and drug addiction to a lack of education or training, affordable housing and job loss.

Today, the nonprofit on State Street delivers services throughout the city in job training and job development, childcare and early childhood development, summer youth employment readiness, affordable housing and home buying, elder care, assistance to the homeless and much more.

But 54 years ago, it started as a grassroots organization looking for a solution. While working at the UMC in Haddonfield (HUMC), a nearby suburban town inhabited by many former Camden residents, Rev. Dr. Charles Sayre, who died last year, became aware of the desperate needs of families in Camden. He mobilized churches throughout the region to support churches in Camden and assigned Stanley Menking to represent HUMC as the Minister of Mission at the church.

It was a joint venture of residents of the North Camden community and HUMC. The church assigned Dr. Menking to meet with neighborhood residents in North Camden. A survey of needs was undertaken and childcare for parents who were in school or training for employment became the highest priority.

The childcare project was incorporated in 1968, with two programs in operation, the first continuing at a space in the State Street UMC at Sixth and State Streets where a half-day preschool started a year earlier proved to be insufficient to meet the inordinate needs of parents; and a second, the Linden Street Day Care Center, opened at 9th and Linden Streets. The two schools, which served 90 children, remain in operation today.

In 1972 and 1974 the State Street Housing and the Community Elders Council were created. The Summer Youth Career Exploration Program, the Summer Enrichment Camp, the Teen Volunteer Program and Youth Advisory Board followed over the next two decades. A weekly intergenerational workshop at the Elders' center in partnership with members and staff of the Philadelphia Orchestra was also launched for children, senior citizens, adults and families.

"I enjoyed taking old build-

ings, renovating them and transforming them into childcare centers and places of learning," said Mitchell.

Respond opened the PATH Homeless Day Center in 1989 in response to the community's need for a facility offering essential services for homeless men, such as case management, education services, employment assistance and job training, life skills training and referrals for substance abuse and mental health treatment for single, adult males and females, including veterans, who lack or will lack a fixed regular and adequate night-time residence.

Year after year, Mitchell led these new building projects with enthusiasm, diligence and a team of dynamic people, some of whom started as clients, like LaToya Jones whose connection with Respond began as a baby at one of its childcare centers. Years later, she sent her daughter to one of the centers, and today, she is a school nurse for Respond. Her story resonates with many who stay connected to Respond after seeking their help.

"One of them became a lawyer (LaTonya Bland-Tull, who is also a board member), another one of the first Black captains on the Delaware River," said Mitchell who was also quick to remark that 75% of Respond's employees live in Camden. Mitchell is among that list.

But it wasn't just Mitchell's keen vision and passion to help others that led to Respond's extensive growth over the past five decades. During his tenure, he was instrumental in securing grants exceeding nine million in foundation dollars, which helped to facilitate the construction of playgrounds at the agency's city childcare facilities and a job training center in North Camden providing training in Culinary Arts, Automotive Technology and Adult Education. One grant from the William Penn Foundation totaled \$1.2 million, making it one of the largest ever rewarded in the state.



Dr. Mitchell congratulates the graduates of Respond's 21-week automotive technology job training program in North Camden.

Mitchell also recalled the project, facilitated by then Gateway South District Superintendent Bob Costello, that led to a grant several years ago to fund more training programs that Dr. Sayre was most proud of.

"All five ethnic churches in Camden worked together to get this done. This had never happened before," said Mitchell.

Amid all the building, Respond also concentrated on making communities cleaner and healthier. Respond's Clean and Green initiative began with 200 lots in the summer of 2010 and expanded to include the entire neighborhood in the summer of 2012. It helped improve the quality of life in North Camden by cleaning up vacant lots, creating new open spaces and training residents in landscaping, gardening and painting.

When superstorm Sandy struck the East Coast, Bishop Schol asked Mitchell to help lead the team to rebuild homes for about four months. Today, he remains on the board of A Future With Hope.

Respond and the community of North Camden are also a Community of Shalom, an initiative began in 1992 at the General Conference of the United Methodist Church. Through this partnership, they focus on the creation of economically and ecologically sustainable communities of peace, hope healing, harmony and wholeness in which all God's people experience shalom by supporting local congregations and community residents as they work together to renew community life.

Since that day in 1968, Mitchell and Respond have received more than 50 awards. Among many awards and proclamations, the NJ Department of Human Services awarded Mitchell the distinguished Aletha Wright Award for Excellence in Child Care and Early Education in 2013 and an honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters from Drew University and the Apple Award for its many contributions to the city, both in 2012. In 2019 Respond was given the Camden Legacy Award and Mitchell the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Campbell Soup Company on its 150th anniversary.

"Hope is an opportunity to gain an opportunity to open the door for someone else," said Vance Lofton, Mitchell's successor.

For Lofton, he fully realizes he has pretty big shoes to fill, but he's up for the challenge as only the second executive director at Respond. Calling himself "the adopted son of Camden," the Philadelphia native, who laments that finding a good cheesesteak is a challenge too hard to bear, is embracing the challenge that Respond brings with enthusiasm, vigilance and hope.

"Everyone has a gift. What Respond does well is tapping into that gift," said Lofton who added that he hopes the organization can expand its outreach and venture outside its comfort zone. One of his goals will be to rehabilitate some of the vacant buildings in the neighborhood and focus on first-time homeowners, financial literacy and building new resources.

Lofton is no stranger to making young lives brighter. He brings with him extensive experience working with youth, having worked at Big Brothers

Big Sisters and Better Tomorrows. In the early 90s, he even served as a Big Brother.

He has an MBA from DeVry University and a proven track record in fundraising, fiscal management and program administration. Lofton has also demonstrated his commitment to the community by volunteering his time and talent with several nonprofits engaged in youth and children's services, homelessness and community development.



Vance Lofton, Respond's new executive director.

When asked if he was planning to change the longtime motto, "helping others to help themselves," Lofton said unequivocally no. "That's what we are all about. We are about hope, a place where people can lift themselves and walk with their heads held high."

In addition to being committed to his new community, Lofton said he is also working with his staff, making them feel like they matter and that they can be a collaborative and empowered person.

"My goal has been to be more transparent and communicative with my staff



Rev. Dr. Sayre, Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Menking celebrated 50 years of Respond in 2017.

on a regular basis and make them accountable," said Lofton who added that he regularly lets others lead meetings and share their ideas.

He said he is amazed by the longstanding commitment of some of his employees, including Migdalia Polo, who started as a tenant and then teacher's aide over 40 years ago before becoming the director of early care and education.

"She has helped so many kids in our programs and then hired them later," said Lofton. "She is fiercely protective of this organization."

"We're becoming a cohesive team," said Lofton who added that he is planning to give back to his team this December by hosting a big holiday party.

When asked what he plans to do in retirement, Mitchell said he would like to rest. But a recent visit to the doctor, much to his dismay but with a smile, revealed that Mitchell is in top health and the excuse to slow down he had hoped to gain from the visit was not to be. 🇺🇸

An event to commemorate Dr. Mitchell's 54 years of service is planned for September 18, 2021, at the Haddonfield UMC.

2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE PROFILE:

Singing & Transforming

Her Way Toward Ministry

One Step at a Time



Rev. Dr. Tiffany S. Murphy gains strength from music, family and friends, including her late parents Betty and Ben, as well as the late Rev. Myrna Bethke.



“Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, she became a beautiful butterfly.”

—BARBARA HAINES HOWETT

By Heather Mistretta
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It was 2016, and the now late Rev. was on the lookout...as she often was...for a pastor to preach at two small churches in southern New Jersey each Sunday. She wouldn't be able to pay this pastor, but she could offer this special person a parsonage. Always the determined disciple, Myrna called Palmer Theological Seminary in Saint Davids, PA, to see if anyone there could help with her search.

The leadership at Palmer decided on a woman named Tiffany Murphy who had grown up in St. Louis, surrounded by a musical family and taught how to sing and play the violin. She had graduated with a dual degree in Music Business Management and Music Production and Engineering from Berklee College of Music in Boston, with the intention of working in the music industry. Her dream was to work on the sound system for a concert with Janet Jackson, the sister of her all-time favorite singer. Tiffany later became the school's assistant director of admissions, a role she held until 2005. It was also during this time that she was one of the founders of Four Winds Café, a Christian alternative to nightclubs for young adults.

But when the call came from Myrna asking if she would like the job, Rev. Dr. Tiffany Murphy said yes—a yes that made her recall her journey, a call that would later make her thankful for each transformational step she had taken.

Tiffany was commissioned in May along with seven others at the 2021 Annual Conference.

“The ball rolled from there. Myrna was such a big part of my journey,” said Tiffany. “She was the reason I came to the United Methodist Church. I miss her so much.”

The following July Tiffany found herself preaching on rotation for the congregations of both Mt. Zion and Barnsboro UMCs in Clarksboro, NJ. She never left.

“It was a huge revelation. Throughout seminary, I always said I wouldn't be a pastor. I would write Christian novels and

In retrospect, Tiffany realized that God was always moving, and after renewing her commitment to God in 2000, she was ordained as a deacon at Dorchester Temple Baptist Church.

After moving to Philadelphia in 2005, Tiffany received an M.Div. from Palmer in 2005. She was licensed to preach in December 2007 at Mount Olivet Tabernacle Baptist Church (MOTBC) under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Tokunbo Adelekan, a pastor and professor who

Since then, Tiffany has been involved in the issues of the community as a Black pastor working in a mostly White community. Now the senior pastor at Mt. Zion UMC Clarksboro on Kings Highway, a church rich in history first settled by the Lenni-Lenape Tribe, she admits that it has been challenging but rewarding.

“I'm one of the youngest people in my church. I've always been the only Black in my New Jersey congregations. It can be an uphill battle sometimes.”

But the native of St. Louis musters up her indomitable spirit and heart each day to engage with her congregation and small rural community through ministry and mission, or supporting her singing group. Recently, she delivered a sermon on vulnerability, which was well received, and in March Mt. Zion partnered with Family Promise, an organization that primarily serves families with children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, in an effort to reach a community hit hard by the pandemic.

But, she added, she hasn't yet been able to share her own reflections or dive into preaching anti-racism, adding “privilege comes in many forms.”

But all along Tiffany has led her life, believing that God wants us to be like the Good Samaritan and do good for others no matter the culture, class or education, that we have been called by Jesus to help others. Her father died in April 2020 following a battle with cancer.

As Tiffany takes each transformative step on her journey at the pace that works best for her, she continues to help and empower others with grace, humor and kindness, getting closer to a metamorphosis that will no doubt be beautiful. 🦋

“I'M ONE OF THE YOUNGEST PEOPLE IN MY CHURCH. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN THE ONLY BLACK IN MY NEW JERSEY CONGREGATIONS. IT CAN BE AN UPHILL BATTLE SOMETIMES.”

—Rev. Dr. Tiffany S. Murphy

be a motivational speaker for women in ministry,” said Tiffany, who added that she had even studied for the LSATs at one point. “But here I was, a pastor.”

Her calling that had snuck up behind her was now front and center.

Sixteen years earlier while living in Boston, Tiffany's mom died.

“I was mad at God,” said Tiffany, recalling how she felt in her late-20s as she struggled with the loss of her mom. “Then a friend asked me every Sunday to go to church with her for bible study.”

teaches courses in African American studies and Ecclesiology at Palmer. During this role, she joined the singing group, “Erek Mcfadden and the Praise Alliance” as a soprano in 2013.

In 2016, she finished her D.Min. in leadership and church renewal. Her final dissertation was “Establishing Foundations for Social Engagement: Moving from Conversation To Awareness At MOTBC,” in which she focused on the importance of the church being involved in the issues of their community.

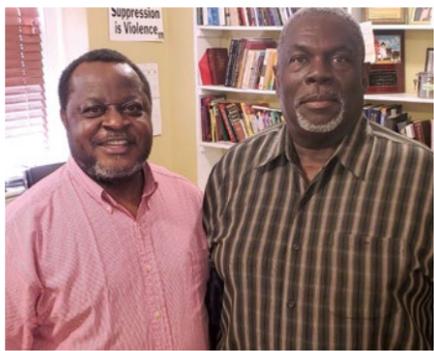
Turning Point

Continued from page 1

Hall, a native of Pasadena, MD, cited location, ample space and parking as sustainable solutions Turning Point can offer to alleviate problems plaguing the city and to provide African UMC a safe and spacious place to congregate. African UMC brings new cultures from its large congregation who are mostly of Liberian descent, a vibrant music program and its door-to-door “old-fashioned evangelism,” which earned the church the One Matters Award in 2020.

Together, they bring a transformational ministry and a strong Black history that will amplify ministry and bolster the impact they make on the community. Sharing the costs of expenses like utilities and building maintenance will allow the two congregations to grow in vitality and give them more time for discipleship.

“It is going great. We wonder why we didn’t do this sooner,” said Flomo who emigrated in 1994 to the United States. “We are combining our efforts to have a greater impact. This is an opportunity for our congregation to maximize resources and be together in ministry.”



Rev. Moses Jarta Flomo and Rev. Rupert Hall are now preaching under the same roof in Trenton.

The partnership between the two churches, which was created along with the help of Capital District Superintendent, Rev. Hector A. Burgos, also offers a sustainable solution to a city still reeling from the year plus-long pandemic.

“Over a period of three months, a team comprised of leaders from both congregations met to pray and engage in strategic conversations to assess and reimagine our connectional ministry in Trenton,” explained Rev. Burgos. “Throughout this discernment process, I have been inspired by the desire of these two congregations to join forces to increase their missional impact in the community. The vision for the New Hope Parish Ministry is to provide a unified, multicultural, multilingual,



Pastor Emmanuel Sterlin wants to provide more communication for his Village Deaf Church congregation so they can feel the music and read what’s being said.

multiethnic and multigenerational United Methodist missional presence in the city of Trenton, that provides radical hospitality to the community, nurtures disciples who make disciples and transform the community through Christ’s healing love,” he added. “I look forward to witness the continued development of this initiative and the learnings we garner that we can transfer to other missional locations in the district and GNJ.”

The parish covenant document stated, “Time of crises are ripe for innovation... This new reality is providing a unique opportunity for new learnings and reassessment of ministries.” Turning Point offers a sanctuary with a capacity of 300 people, a commercial grade kitchen, two multi-purpose rooms for 60 people, a large fellowship hall, three classrooms, Cathedral Pathway courtyard, three outdoor courtyards and upgraded technology.

“And we all still have plenty of space,” said Flomo who added that he would love to make disciples among the deaf community, strengthen the food ministry even more and possibly entertain the idea of adding a daycare center in the future.

In the meantime, the mission of feeding the hungry will continue to be a busy one. Groceries are distributed every other Wednesday and third Saturday, at which time books are also shared as part of a collaborative effort with Urban Grace, an affiliate organization of Showing Up for Racial Justice. Until July dinner is served Tuesday and Thursday.

The tradition of feeding the community at 15 South Broad Street started 40 years ago when the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK) was founded. In the early 1980s, TASK was serving over 50,000 meals a year.

“It’s all about turning hunger into hope,” said Hall who is also the presi-

dent on the board of the affordable housing project known as Kingsbury Towers and was also recently asked to be on the board of the TASK.

That hope is also evident in what is now a blended congregation.

“We get to share our Liberian culture with them, some of whom are also Liberian and family members of our own congregation,” Flomo said, as he spoke of his large congregation in which nine dialects are spoken. He noted that the Turning Point UMC lay leader is also Liberian.

But the road to get to this partnership has been a long and windy one. Hall recalled while attending Magothy-Mt. Zion Methodist Church in Maryland in 1968 the United Methodist Church was formed. He remembers how a once segregated church was now blending with other congregations.

Flomo first came to the United States in 1994 on a scholarship to Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. He has a Diploma in Theology (Master of Divinity equivalence) from the Gbarnga (barn’gah) School of Theology—a United Methodist seminary in Gbarnga, Liberia. He served in Liberia for 10 years before emigrating.

Flomo also volunteers as a chaplain of the Burlington City Police Department; coordinator of Team Builders Community Development Corporation—a 501 (c) 3 community development organization; and founding member and chaplain of African Immigrant Community of America, also a 501 (c) 3 organization dedicated to improving the lot of African immigrants in the United States.

But long before a young artist named Leon Rainbow painted the colorful graffiti-style mural outside the church in exchange for a room where he taught painting to the community, Turning Point’s story began in 1771, five years before George

Washington crossed the Delaware River for the battle against the British, which has come to be referred to as the “Turning Point” of the War of Independence. The city on the Delaware was about to be the capital city of the United States (1784).

It was also at that time when 19 people were meeting in Burlington, NJ, in an effort to deepen their Christian Faith in a manner as suggested by John and Charles Wesley. Known as “classes,” this movement later became known as the Trenton Society after the decision was made to move the group to the urban area. Francis Asbury was there as the first block was laid in building the church.

Fast forward to 1894, and the fourth and final structure was built to meet the growing demand of the community. The new building, with a capacity of two thousand, was dedicated on May 5, 1895. GNJ’s oldest church and one of the oldest churches in New Jersey, Turning Point was named in 2007 following the merger of the First United Methodist Episcopal Church, also known as “the Mother Church,” and St. Paul’s UMC.

In between in 1957, the church was almost destroyed by fire, but the passion for ministry was not extinguished. Now 64 years later, the church remains a beacon of light and hope in Trenton.

As these two pastors and their congregations embark on a new opportunity, there is no doubt it will be a transformative one. The 250th anniversary celebration being planned for next year promises to be one of collaboration, spirit and revelry.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Moses, his wife, Saba (meaning “gift”), their four children and the entire family following the death of Moses’ mother, Nyanman Farr in Liberia this past June. The mother of 14 was 90. 🇺🇸

Leadership Academy

Continued from page 1

leaders in the process,” said Purkis-Brash.

A well-developed, balanced budget that changes every year allows church leaders to open the door to more vitality, new initiatives for life-changing ministry. With a well-thought-out budget, churches are able to seize opportunities in ministry when they become available.

“It taught me to look at our budget from a mission perspective and to make it more inviting to our congregation,” said Esther Canty-Barnes of St. Marks UMC in Montclair. “By planning the budget way in advance, I can add things in the budget so that mission can be done.”

Canty-Barnes, who has been a member of St. Mark’s for over 20 years, took what she learned in May and ran with it. In addition to gleaning valuable advice from Purkis-Brash, Canty-Barnes said the course gave her the opportunity to see what other churches are doing and learn from them.

As a result, the St. Mark’s leadership team is now working on developing a virtual thrift store as well as a virtual comic summer program, led by Canty-Barnes’ daughter, which will generate scholarships for those unable to pay for education. The church is also now working on developing a life group that helps parents navigate the world and their children.

“We really want to be more visible in our community, and this has given us the boost we needed to get there,” said Canty-Barnes who added that the church is also working toward bolstering their stewardship efforts to ensure that these missions can come to fruition.

When asked if there was a next step to this course, Purkis-Brash said there will be a follow-up course exploring narrative budgets available in the near future.

The Leadership Academy is just getting started, continuing to build on a foundation of blessing the mission and ministry of congregations as it recognizes that fruitful ministry involves clergy and laity working together.



Canty-Barnes dedicates herself to all aspects of ministry and mission, including the new thrift store, which was started following this course.

In June and July, Eric Drew, executive director of Next Generation Ministries, led the course, “IGNITE Youth Discipleship Calendar” because discip-

ship doesn’t happen one weekend or week per year. By developing a yearly Discipleship Calendar, all congregations can create a journey for young people to connect with God, grow in faith and lead in the church and community. The course was designed to allow clergy and laity to develop a yearly Discipleship Calendar, learn how to facilitate small group conversations with youth and identify ways to raise youth into leadership positions in the congregation.

The vision for the new Leadership Academy is bold. The Academy will be expanding to provide year-round learning for clergy and laity, all of which will involve courses that support and align with A Journey of Hope plan. The goal is to create a pathway for learning where courses build upon one another and have clear outcomes that develop Christian leaders and church vitality.

Stay tuned for details at www.gnjumc.org/leadership-academy/, where you can also view recordings of previous courses offered. 🇺🇸

A GREAT MULTITUDE

 **IGNITE** CONFERENCE



I looked before me and there was a great multitude too large to count, from every nation, tribe, people and language... | Rev. 7:9

WILDWOODS CONVENTION CENTER OCT. 1-3, 2021

A high-impact, life-changing weekend for youth in grades 6-12. IGNITE includes worship, speakers, mission project, games and more! Concerts, Artists, Inspiration, Faith Exploration and Fun!

www.ignitenj.org



NEXT GENERATION
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY



Melissa Meiner (far left), Dominick Gonzalez (center) and Mike Mage (second from right) are three of the six members who will be going to IGNITE.



El Vow is always trying to build a bridge between pop culture and church culture through his music.

A Great Multitude of Blessings, Music and Hope Coming to Wildwood

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

When the doors to the Wildwoods Convention Center open on October 1, a sense of hope for the future will likely rush out as Next Generation Ministries hosts IGNITE 2021: A Great Multitude. A year filled with disappointments, restrictions and solitude will quickly be eclipsed by sounds of laughter, new opportunities to heal and grow, reconnecting with friends and lots of fun!

"We're so excited to bring back IGNITE this year with an awesome lineup of great performers and inspiring speakers," said Director of Connectional Ministries Eric Drew. "IGNITE is going to be exactly what they need after such a rough year."

Amid all the revelry and spiritual vitality will also be safety precautions to ensure that no one needs to worry about safety while they are there.

A Vow to Serve God Through Song and Positivity

Joining the brigade of performers this year will be an IGNITE veteran at the age of only 32. He had been at IGNITE in 2017 and 2018. Bryan Martinez, who calls himself El Vow because he has made a vow to serve the Lord, is committed to building a bridge between pop culture and church culture with his music.

Martinez still remembers his first time at IGNITE, walking into the green room to find a man cleaning up. He would later find out that the man was Bishop Schol.

"You don't always see that humility. It was great to see the leader cleaning," said Martinez who added how grateful he is to be part of the IGNITE culture.

Like most performers, Martinez' career went from 100 to zero overnight when the pandemic paralyzed his community and communities worldwide.

"It was really difficult. I want to bring a fresh breath of positivity and unity,"

said Martinez who lives with his wife and three children in Dallas. "I want to show young people that you can serve God with your gifts."

For Martinez, the son of two Mexican immigrants, being positive was not always easy.

"Growing up there was never a Bible in the house. My brother, who became a believer, dragged me to church one day when I was nine. By the time I was 12 or 13, it clicked for me. I said, God, I hear you."

But at age 14, his father was arrested and never returned home. Martinez found himself living in Los Angeles a year later and then on his own at age 17.

But in spite of the enormous adversity he has faced in his life, Martinez has always kept moving forward and has always had hope.

of music, snippets of familiar songs in ways they've never heard before and moving the music in the direction of the energy, an art that can only be done live.

When he's not mixing, mashing and revving up a crowd, he's writing music and dabbling in writing restaurant reviews as Bryan. But no matter what he's doing, he is working on establishing roots and connections.

"If all you do is live for the hype, you die with it."

There's no doubt Martinez will bring his all to IGNITE, which includes his deep love for his wife, Esmerelda, and children, Layla, Xavier and Luna, and of course, God.

More details can be found at <https://elvow.com/home>.

event, several people from this larger group are chosen to represent Bay Hope.

Mage went on to say how amazed he has been by the resilience of young people in the face of such adversity. He's hoping Bay Hope Worship can be the catharsis they need.

"No amount of social unrest can change how much God loves us. We need to lean into that. The kids need that."

Among those helping him to share his message this October will be his sister, Melissa Meiner, also a vocalist. Along with their brother, Andy, who is an online pastor for the group, Mike and Melissa grew up listening to music. In fact, their parents met in a band. Their mom, who died in 2017, was an accomplished Jazz pianist, and their father played the bass.

"It's a part of who we are. It's in our bones," said Mage. "It's an incredible gift to be able to have this, and I want as many people as possible to experience what I have."

But in December 2014, as he walked into day one of his job at Starbucks after moving back to Tampa from Atlanta with his wife, Kristen and newborn son, Caleb, Mage wasn't so sure that his future would be in music. He wasn't sure until a call came in at the end of his shift from someone at Bay Hope Worship asking if he would consider filling the music director vacancy at the organization.

As they say, the rest is history, which now includes two more children, Ella and Lukas, the latter born in 2017 whose name means "bringer of light and peace to the town."

"This is my passion. This is where I'm supposed to be," said Mage, who hasn't looked back since that day in 2014.

From "There's Only One" and "Can't Separate Us" to "Freedom Song," Mage and the rest of the team are spreading hope in every song they share, knowing that God will "overcome the brokenness with love." 🇺🇸

"NO AMOUNT OF SOCIAL UNREST CAN CHANGE HOW MUCH GOD LOVES US. WE NEED TO LEAN INTO THAT. THE KIDS NEED THAT."

—Mike Mage, worship director for Bay Hope Worship

"Everyone can relate to pain. Once you've experienced it, there's always a connection point. People can relate to a struggle."

He added, "I haven't figured it all out, but I believe God is holy and that he can take brokenness and use it, connect with people. Everyone has something they're dealing with, such as identity. My identity is in Christ. That's what keeps me grounded."

Sometimes known as the Lone Star Latino or the Texas Chico, Martinez has brought his whole self to the stage for more than a decade, entertaining crowds with his unique compilations

Leaning into God this October

Also no stranger to IGNITE is Mike Mage who is the worship director for Bay Hope Worship, a Tampa-based organization that collectively connects people to a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ through music. In 2016 he was there in Wildwood as part of the band, Bellarive.

"God is really speaking to me a lot lately, and I'm realizing that through it all, there's no amount of fear that can separate us from God," said Mage who sings and plays the guitar for the group of about 25-30 people who support the group's mission, whether that means writing, producing or leading. For each



GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

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." Do you have Good News to tell? Contact Heather Mistretta at hmistretta@gnjumc.org.

Remembering Grandma Rush

By Elsie Walker

Reprinted from the May 2021 edition of Mt. Olive Life

For several years, people going past the Stanhope United Methodist Church would see a sign in the fall proclaiming "Grandma Rush's Pie Sale." Some passing through may have wondered if Grandma Rush was a character the Netcong church created or whether there was a real Grandma Rush. There was. The sale was named after Marion Rush, who was a grandmotherly figure at the church and lifelong Netcong resident. She was also the first baby born in the parish after the church building was dedicated, and she had a goal to live to share both the building and her reaching 100. She did. Rush died shortly after her 100th birthday late last year. This March, she received a posthumous proclamation for her 100 years from Mayor Joseph Nameko of the Borough of Netcong and Sen. Anthony Bucco from the State of NJ Senate and Assembly. However, Rush's legacy is more than about living a number of years or being the mother of Robert, David, Candace, and Amanda Rush. Recently, some people who knew her commented on that legacy.

In noting Rush's many interests during her life, people shared that she was involved in everything from being on the Morris County Board of Elections for 50 years to serving in the stands at Netcong High School football games for many years. She also reached out to those beyond her local community in several ways including sewing blankets for children battling cancer (through Project Linus) to determining a holiday



Marion Rush, a. k. a. Grandma Rush, lived 100 years, leaving a lasting legacy.

need of a Sussex County nursing home and getting her church to help. For her outreach work, she received a Special Mission Recognition Award from the United Methodist Women's organization. However, helping Netcong and its neighboring areas was her focus.

"Marion was a valued, loved, and respected member of both the Hilltop Fire Co. #2 Ladies' Auxiliary and later the Netcong Fire Department. Ladies' Auxiliary," said Joy Sylvester, auxiliary member and past officer. It started with

Hilltop Fire Co. #2 Ladies' Auxiliary. Rush worked in various capacities, including being its president at one time. Rush's organizational expertise led to successful fundraisers, and her seamstress skills in making replacement uniforms helped in securing first place trophies for its marching unit (of which Rush was a part). When a unified auxiliary (Netcong Fire Dept. Ladies' Auxiliary) was formed in the 1990s, Rush was still there, offering her help and expertise, which included making coffee for firefighters fighting

nighttime fires. Rush continued her support into the new millennium, especially to the members of Hilltop Fire Co. #2. "Living across the street from Hilltop, she was always willing to jump in and assist," said Sylvester.

A project Rush started decades ago is still active and growing at her church. In the 1970s, Rush and the minister at the time saw that the community needed a food pantry. Rush made connections with Norwescap and ShopRite Partners in Caring to get food and also reached out to local groups for donations as well as caring for the pantry for many years. That project continues to be an important ministry at the church. According to Linda White, the current chairperson for the Pantry in the Glen (as it is known), that small pantry has been expanded in recent years by the church's eight person Team Vital committee. While the pantry still has its Norwescap and Shoprite Partners in Caring connections, it has added more. Also, it now has a refrigerator and freezer and serves 25-35 client families each day it is open, including offering a bilingual person for those clients who need it. The project Rush and the minister started has grown into a ministry that helps many in the local area in this time of food insecurity.

Of course, Rush will be remembered by many in the local community and neighboring towns who attend the church where she served in many capacities and interacted with generations of children. Scott Lefurge of Byram Township noted, "At Stanhope UMC, Marion Rush was seen as a mother and grandmother to many of the church members, their children and their families." Relative or not, for many in the church, she was their "Grandma Rush." 🇺🇸

Excellence in Youth: Connecting to God, Family, Church and Life

By Debbie Naley-Minenna

Michael Minenna, a 10th grade scout in Rockaway Township, NJ, and lifetime member of the UMC of the Rockaways, recently earned the God and Life religious emblem for Boy Scouts in grades 9 through 12. The religious emblem is offered through the P.R.A.Y. program for Protestant youth. Having completed the entire sequence of four awards, he has completed the requirements for the prestigious and nationally recognized Four Star award.

To earn the Four Star from P.R.A.Y., a youth must have earned all four levels of the P.R.A.Y. Series (i.e., God and Me, God and Family, God and Church, and God and Life) while in the appropriate grades. The program allowed him to grow in his understanding of their faith and his relationship with God, his family and scouts of other faiths who have completed the programs.

An accomplished trumpet player, Michael was selected to



Michael Minenna holds up his certificate of completion of the Four Star from the P. R. A. Y. program for Protestant youth.

"THE P.R.A.Y. PROGRAM ALLOWED MICHAEL TO GROW IN HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR FAITH AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, HIS FAMILY AND SCOUTS OF OTHER FAITHS WHO HAVE COMPLETED THE PROGRAMS."

be the Drum Captain for the Morris Knolls High School's Golden Eagles marching band. He is a member of the high school Concert Band, Jazz Band, Brass Ensemble and Musical Pit Orchestra.

Michael also volunteers with Youth Trumpet & Taps Corps, playing Taps for local veterans' funerals, and he has been selected through audition to be a member of the North Jersey Junior Region Symphonic Winds & Orchestra and Area Band. For all these efforts, he was selected as the recipient of the 2020 Hanover Wind Symphony Junior Division Scholarship.

When not playing his trumpet, he is a member of the high school fencing team and is on the High Honor Roll. Michael is a Life Scout with Troop 160 in Rockaway Township and is currently serving as the elected Senior Patrol Leader. He will be working on his Eagle project this summer.

As a Scout, he volunteered with the Boy Scout Holiday Jazz Band, and as bugler for Rockaway Township Memorial Day services. Michael is a member of Order of the Arrow, attended National Youth Leadership Training and went to BSA Sea Base High Adventure camp.

As he looks toward the future, Michael is considering becoming a professional trumpet player, a music teacher, or working in national security.

More info about the P.R.A.Y. program is available at www.praypub.org. 🇺🇸

JULY BOOKSHELF

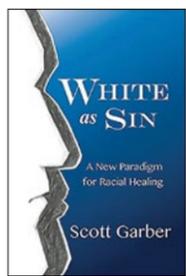
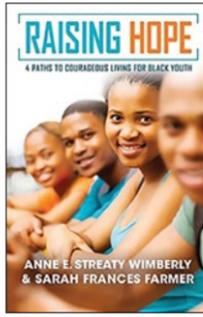
This month we celebrate both big and small moments. With summer before us, we celebrate Independence Day and longer days spent with family and friends. We also delve deeper into working hard toward ending the sin of racism. This month we celebrate HOPE!

Raising Hope: Four Paths to Courageous Living for Black Youth

(2017, UMGBHEM) by Anne E Wimberly and Sarah Frances Farmer

Raising Hope helps its readers move toward courageous hope in action. This book gives tried-and-true methods to effectively reach out to Black youth and motivate them to make healthier choices that promise positive outcomes. Written especially for pastors, teachers, leaders, and counselors, Wimberly and Farmer give new and powerful ways to become agents of hope who truly hear Black youth. The book's premise is that there is an eternal hopefulness on which Christian faith stands and pathways that can activate this hopefulness. The intent is to invite young people into these pathways and show them how to find it for themselves in everyday life. The approach is built on Black people's historical belief in God's promises, the faithful nearness and activity of God, and God's empowerment of youth and all of us to embrace and activate the courage to hope that makes possible a vision of life's possibilities and the ability to act on it.

Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, professor emerita of Christian Education at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC), is a renowned African American researcher, scholar, professor, advocate and champion of black youth. A leading Christian educator rooted in The United Methodist Church, she has inspired students, colleagues, pastors, church leaders, and countless admirers to pursue education with a "zest to know." She currently serves as Executive Director of the Youth Hope-Builders Academy at ITC and is founder and coordinator of the Annual Youth and Family Convocation. Sarah Frances Farmer is an associate research scholar and lecturer at Yale Divinity School and helps direct the Adolescent Faith and Flourishing Program at Yale Center for Faith and Culture.



White as Sin: A New Paradigm for Racial Healing

(2019, Outskirts Press) by Scott Garber

White as Sin is a formula for hope and healing. It identifies a moral flaw embedded in the very soul of white identity, showing how that defect enables an entire litany of racial ills. This book also explains the mindset that sustains a sinful solidarity between yesterday and today. It takes us on an epic journey into the origins of whiteness. It explores the twisted recesses of racial injustice. It lays bare our own hearts and our own hypocrisies.

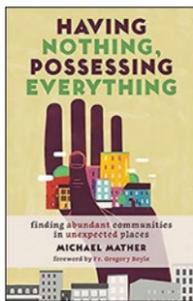
Scott Garber is a pastor-at-large at Bridgeway Community Church in Columbia, MD, where he teaches and interfaces with other members of the pastoral staff, occasionally preaching, and helping with simultaneous translation into Spanish. Bridgeway is one of the flagship multicultural churches in the U.S. He also does pastoral training in international settings, including a ministry group from Spain.

Having Nothing, Possessing Everything: Finding Abundant Communities in Unexpected Places

(2018, Eerdmans) by Michael Mather, Fr. Gregory Boyle (Foreword)

Having Nothing, Possessing Everything is the story of how one church found abundance in a community of material poverty in hopes of inspiring readers to seek justice in their own local communities and to find abundance and hope all around them. Pastor Mike Mather arrived in Indianapolis thinking that he was going to serve the poor. But after his church's community lost nine young men to violence in a few short months, Mather came to see that the poor didn't need his help—he needed theirs.

Michael Mather is pastor of the First United Methodist Church of Boulder, CO. As a preacher-consultant-storyteller, he speaks all over the country about community development and urban ministry.



The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right

(2016, WaterBrook) by Lisa Sharon Harper (Author), Walter Brueggemann (Foreword)

The Very Good Gospel explores what "very good" can look like today—in real time. It explores Shalom and its meaning—when all people are treated equitably and have enough. It's when families are healed. It's when churches, schools, and public policies protect human dignity. Shalom is when the image of God is recognized, protected, and cultivated in every single human. It is the vision God set forth in the Garden and the restoration God desires for every broken relationship. Shalom is the "very good" in the gospel. Because despite our anxious minds, despite divisions, and despite threats of violence, God's vision remains: wholeness for a fragmented world.

Lisa Sharon Harper is a prolific speaker, activist, playwright and the author of several books, including *Evangelical Does Not Equal Republican...or Democrat* and coauthor of *Forgive Us: Confessions of a Compromised Faith*. Harper has been recognized by *The Huffington Post* as one of 50 Powerful Women Religious Leaders and is considered one of the nation's most influential voices on a faith-rooted approach to advocacy. She lives in Washington, DC.

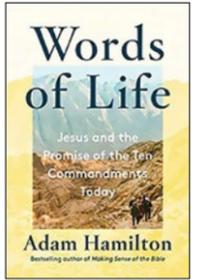
Words of Life: Jesus and the Promise of the Ten Commandments Today

(2020, Convergent Books) by Adam Hamilton

Words of Life brings modern eyes to the most important set of ethics in history. The book considers the commandments in their historical context, considering the meaning

of each commandment in Hebrew, unpacking how Jesus reinterpreted them and showing how every thou-shalt-not was intended to point to a life-giving "thou shalt." The latest research in science and psychology also helps to illuminate these commandments, rightly understood, as a way of ordering one's life beautifully in the present day. In a culture marked by workaholicism, materialism, and social media-driven envy, God has given us a time-tested path that leads to gratitude, confidence, and peace.

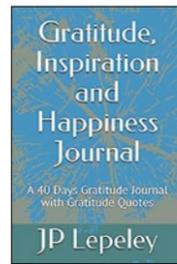
Adam Hamilton is senior pastor of the 20,000-member Church of the Resurrection, Kansas City. He is a leading voice for reconciliation and renewal in the Church, and the bestselling author of more than 30 books, including *Unafraid* and *Making Sense of the Bible*. He and his wife, LaVon, have two grown daughters.



Gratitude, Inspiration and Happiness Journal: A 40 Day Gratitude Journal with Gratitude Quotes

(2021) by JP Lepeley

This journal is an interactive journal filled with gratitude quotes, gratitude prayers, gratitude Bible verses, a gratitude list, gratitude images and more inspirational resources. It explores that through gratitude, you are able to appreciate everything that you have and everything that you are going through at this moment, and you have the wisdom to understand that everything is part of a divine plan. To be grateful is to be humble ("When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom." —Proverbs 11:2). Gratefulness is the way to achieve all your dreams, thanking God in advance for what you are as a person and for what you are receiving, either in the form of situations or things.



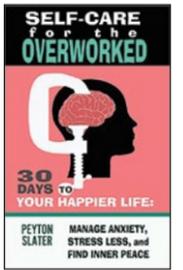
JP Lepeley is an acclaimed educator and artist. Coming from a family of writers, JP's grandfather was the director of the newspaper *El Mercurio de Valparaiso*, and his dad wrote several books and papers on the subject of theology in nine different languages. JP started his career as an educator when he was in sixth grade, and his career as an artist when he was in eighth grade, publishing cartoons in his high school's school newspaper.

Self-Care for the Overworked—30 Days to Your Happier Life: Manage Anxiety, Stress Less, and Find Inner Peace

(2019) by Peyton Slater

Self-Care for the Overworked is a guide to self-care, offering immediate tips for stress relief and relaxation. The author, Peyton Slater, learned the importance of slowing down and practicing self-care after several simultaneously stressful life events. Through mindfulness, breathing techniques and more, this book will alleviate stress during this challenging time.

Peyton Slater is a teacher, author and the adoptive parent of four children. He enjoys learning, researching and writing nonfiction works on a wide variety of subjects of which Peyton is well-familiar.



My Remarkable Journey: A Memoir

(2021, HarperLuxe) by Katherine Johnson, Joylette Hylick & Katherine Moore

My Remarkable Journey is the full story of Katherine Johnson's life, including what it took to work at NASA, help land the first man on the moon, and live through a century of turmoil and change. Johnson shares her personal journey from child prodigy in the Allegheny Mountains of West Virginia to NASA human computer.

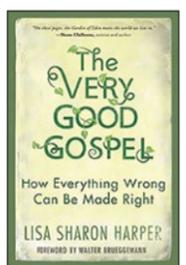
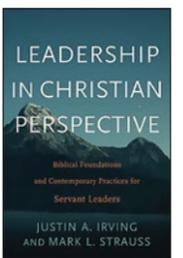
Katherine Johnson, a 1937 West Virginia State University graduate, was an American mathematician whose calculations of orbital trajectories for NASA were critical to the success of U.S. spaceflights. During her 35 years at NASA and its predecessor, she earned a reputation for mastering complex manual calculations and helped pioneer the use of computers to perform the tasks. The space agency noted her "historical role as one of the first African-American women to work as a NASA scientist." In 2015, President Barack Obama awarded Katherine the nation's highest civilian award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The upcoming 2021 launch of a USAF Space Force GPS III Satellite has been named in her honor, and she has been awarded 13 honorary doctorate degrees. Four major buildings, including two NASA facilities, have been named in her honor. She died in February 2020 at the age of 101.

Leadership in Christian Perspective

(2019, Baker Academic) by Justin A. Irving and Mark L. Strauss

Leadership in Christian Perspective combines leadership theory and research with biblical reflection and examples of leadership in action to offer a practical guide to Christian leaders. It explores how leadership models have moved from autocratic and paternalistic leader-centered models toward an increased focus on followers. The authors show how contemporary theories such as transformational leadership, authentic leadership, and servant leadership take an important step toward prioritizing and empowering followers who work with leaders to accomplish organizational goals. The book was written for students, church leaders and business leaders.

Justin A. Irving (Ph.D., Regent University) is professor of leadership at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. He previously served as professor of ministry leadership and director of the D.Min. program at Bethel Seminary. He has authored numerous journal articles and has contributed to leadership books, including *Servant Leadership: Developments in Theory and Research* and *Practicing Servant Leadership: Developments in Implementation*. Mark L. Strauss (Ph.D., University of Aberdeen) has a passion for teaching the Bible and has taught principles for reading and applying the Bible to students in undergraduate, graduate, and church settings. He is University Professor of New Testament at Bethel Seminary San Diego and the author of several books, including *How to Read the Bible in Changing Times: Understanding and Applying God's Word Today* and *Four Portraits, One Jesus: An Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels*. 🇺🇸



A Celebration of Freedom on the Atlantic

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

They spoke of freedom, celebration and the work that still needed to be done, seated in chairs just steps from the Atlantic Ocean, where an estimated 12.5 million African Americans were stripped of their own freedom and transported in shackles throughout a more than 300-year span. On the eve of Juneteenth--the day to commemorate and celebrate the day that African Americans living in Texas learned of the end of slavery in the United States two years prior--community leaders, pastors and elected officials gathered in the Oscar E. McClinton Memorial Park in Atlantic City.

Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) of GNJ welcomed Rev. Joseph

L. Scott, a United Methodist pastor for 33 years who was among those who participated in the Selma to Montgomery Marches in 1965, to be the keynote speaker.

On the day after President Biden had made Juneteenth a federal holiday, Scott recalled how Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called on people to "learn to live together as brothers and sisters or perish together as fools."

"Events like this create a sense of awareness, a sense of unity and hope for the future," said Scott, a former Marine during the Vietnam War who often says, "If I could get through Marine Corps basic training, I can get through anything."

He added, "These events like the one on June 18 create an opportunity to build bridges, make some see the need for change. Gatherings like this can sensitize



people and push them to go about making a change."

One attendee, Creed Pogue of West Side UMC in Millville, said, "Really great event with a nice group even though the

weather was less than fully cooperative. BMCR's Juneteenth was supported by local elected officials and leaders who were impressed with how quickly the event was put together. They had a great witness for Methodism in Atlantic City. As usual, Rev. Scott gave us all something to think about."

A former BMCR chair, Scott said the change may come slowly. "Change came slowly in the Methodist Church, but we got there. Now we're at another crossroads."

As he reflected on his place and the place of all Blacks in the United Methodist Church, Scott recalled a book by William B. McClain, *Black Methodists in the Methodist Church*, citing the quote, "John Wesley baptized his first Black convert November 29, 1958" and how Wesley opposed slavery. Since then, there have been different conflicts that have both divided and unified. Now in 2021, Scott said he wondered where the Black United Methodist fits in but that he's willing to have conversation to work through it.

Like Scott, the BMCR of GNJ is dedicated to helping others, strengthening the Black church and making opportunities available to all people.

Rev. Dr. John Randall, who is the secretary for BMCR of GNJ and senior pastor at Mt Zion Wesley Church said, "We need occasions where we put forth opportunities of conversations about being anti-racist, offering forgiveness, acquiring resources for growth and enjoying the gift of our diversity."

In a statement shared that day, Bishop Schol said, "Today we celebrate freedom. We celebrate the powerful testimony to the faith and conviction people have in God and the goodness of people. We celebrate African Americans and the amazing contributions they have brought to shape our country into what it is today. Black lives not only matter; Black lives inspire, uplift, educate. Black lives make the world a better place. Today we celebrate Black lives and Black freedom."

The BMCR has been evolving since 1968 when the then Methodist church terminated its de jure discrimination by eliminating its Central Jurisdiction. This jurisdiction was comprised of congregations of African descent regardless of geographical location. For instance, a Black Methodist Church in New Jersey was placed in the same jurisdiction as a Black church in California. Furthermore, the Black churches were treated as "separate but unequal." This policy was so ingrained in Methodist polity that Mt. Zion Methodist Church in Lawnside, NJ, had a stronger connection to the Black Methodist Churches in Philadelphia than it did with Haddonfield UMC only 2.4 miles away. BMCR was created to ensure that the rich legacy of both the historical contributions and the contemporary relevance of this segment of the Black Church identified as United Methodist would be maintained and fostered. For more info, visit www.bmcr-gnjac.com/.



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*Journeying toward vitality
and equality for all.*

LEARN MORE AT:
www.gnjumc.org/journeyofhope



UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 11-23	One-week Family Camps
July 17 at 3 p.m.	Memorial Service for Rev. Carl Kearns (at Bound Brook UMC)
July 25	Session 2 of Mission Retreats begins!
Aug. 1	Session 3 of Mission Retreats begins!
October 1-3	IGNITE Conference (Wildwoods Convention Center)
October 3	World Communion Sunday
October 14	Adjourned Session of the Annual Conference
October 17	Laity Sunday
November 28	United Methodist Student Day

JOB POSTINGS AT GNJ CHURCHES

Frankford Plains UMC – Organist

Qualified individuals should be available Sunday mornings, have a background in or experience playing religious hymns, and the ability to work cooperatively with the pastor on music selection as well as lead songs during worship. Preference given to individuals who are also willing to play the piano when necessary.

Frankford Plains UMC – Sunday School Superintendent

Qualified individuals should be available Sunday mornings, have a background in or experience working with children of various ages, and appropriate religious knowledge of the United Methodist faith and teachings. Requirements include coordination and implementation of curriculum, preparation and teaching of lessons, and direction of special events, all in accordance with Safe Sanctuary training and requirements.

Compensation to be discussed. Please send letter of interest to frankfordplainschurch@gmail.com or 99 Plains Road, Augusta NJ 07822.

St. Mark’s Hamilton Square – P/T Praise Director

- 10-15 hours per week
- Responsibilities include directing the praise choir and praise band as well as substitute for praise pianist when needed.
- Technical/audio visual skills a plus.
- Annual compensation is \$10,300.

Anyone interested should contact Pastor Bob Marks at stmarkbmarks@optonline.net or Staff-Parish Chair Alan Corson at palancorson@gmail.com.

Trinity UMC, Hackettstown

Position vacancies include the following:

- E-commerce and Thriftshop Assistant
- Director of High School Ministry
- Director of Middle School Ministry
- Director of Children’s Ministry
- KidVenture – Assistant Director Position
- Worship Arts Coordinator

For more details, go to www.catchthespirit.org/job-opportunities/ or call 908-852-3020.

Job Posting at GNJ – F/T Accountant

Responsible for the accounting functions and financial reporting of the Annual Conference and its vital mission partners. For more details, go to Accountant | United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey (gnjumc.org).

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. Two of Marlton UMC’s youngest disciples, Maggie and Jake, held a lemonade stand to support Shriner’s Hospital in Philadelphia, and raised over \$300 in one afternoon. Upon relaying this to the church council, they approved a matching donation to Shriner’s to show how proud they are and how much they support them in their efforts to transform the world. If you would like to submit a photo, please email Heather Mistretta at hmistretta@gnjumc.org.

OBITUARIES

A memorial service for former GNJ Treasurer/Director of Admin Services, **Rev. Carl Kearns** will be held July 17 at 3:00 p.m. at Bound Brook UMC, 150 West Union Avenue, Bound Brook, NJ. There will be a reception following the service at the church.

Former President of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church **Bishop Joseph H. Yeakel** died on July 4, with all his five children by his bedside.

Rev. Sungman Chung, retired full elder, died on June 23. A celebration of his life was held on June 25 and 26 at Grace-Bethel UMC of NJ in Leonia. Memorial donations, if you feel led, can be made at GoFundMe at www.gofundme.com/f/for-pastor-sungman-chung, which will be used for covering ICU and surgical medical expenses and to get one of his books translated from Korean to English. Expressions of sympathy can be sent to Grace Chung (spouse) at 420 Lincoln St., Palisades Park, NJ 07650-1610.

Rev. Walter Quigg, retired elder, died on June 12. A Celebration of Life service was held on June 19 at St. Paul’s UMC. Memorial donations may be sent to St. Paul’s UMC, 80 Embury Avenue, Ocean Grove, NJ 07756 or the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association in memory of Rev. Walter Quigg. Expressions of sympathy can be sent to Leona Quigg (spouse) at 12 Main Avenue, Ocean Grove, NJ 07756-1324.

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*Photo of: First UMC in Vineland
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