

THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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Ida Rages Through Leaving Destruction in Her Wake

*“When the storms of life
are raging, stand by me.”*

—CHARLES ALBERT TINDLEY,
THE GREAT PASTOR AND HYMN WRITER

By Heather Mistretta
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When the storm named Ida barreled up the East Coast after ravaging the low-lying areas of Louisiana and Mississippi as a Category 4 Hurricane, those in Greater New Jersey and surrounding areas braced for the havoc they knew she could bring on the night of Wednesday, September 1. Ida, whose power failed to wane despite her one thousand-mile plus trek through several states, brought with her record-breaking rainfalls, high winds and powerful tornados that touched down in the small Gloucester County towns of Mullica Hill and Mantua.

Director of Disaster Response for UMCOR Lara Martin quickly reached out to Bishop Schol offering support, and GNJ’s disaster response leadership and superintendents stepped in to assess damage and the challenges, Schol said in a morning email to all clergy as he prayed “for everyone that was in the path of Ida from the Caribbean through the United States.”

By Thursday afternoon, most churches in GNJ had managed to control the flooding while floodwaters prevented some



District Superintendent Rev. Sang-Won Doh and Revs. Mcwilliam Colon and Chuck Coblentz along with others helped Bound Brook UMC muck out their thrift shop following extensive flooding.

from leaving their homes or forced others to bail out basements and buildings’ interiors. Thousands coped with no power.

“Some sump pumps failed; other churches/parsonages do not have them. Some pastors are without generators and thus still without power. Some pastors are stuck in their homes because of floodwaters around the community. Some pastors are reporting injury, loss of transportation, water to the ceiling, and/or feeling traumatized by the event,” said Rev. William M. Williams III, Gateway North & Palisades District Superintendent

who was closely monitoring the impact of Ida along with NJ Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (NJVOAD). Rev. Tom Lank, Conference Disaster Response Coordinator for Greater New Jersey, noted that there are about 250 UMCOR cleaning buckets available between GNJ’s Skylands and Northfield hubs as well as several hundred hygiene kits.

GNJ’s Delaware & Gateway South District Superintendent Glenn Conaway, who knows the area all too well having served as pastor in Fairton, Moorestown and at Trinity Church in Mullica Hill for 30

years before becoming district superintendent in 2017, said, “All four churches in the town were miraculously spared. The tornado took a path between four Methodist churches from Mullica Hill to Mantua. If there had been a quarter mile difference in either direction, it would have been a different story.”

Conaway added that many homes in the Mullica Hill area were damaged in varying degrees, including two farms. The National Weather Service reported that debris from some of the destroyed homes was pulled into the tornado and reached the atmosphere, traveling around 23,000 feet into the air before landing miles away.

“We lost one of our two dairy farms. One hundred cows are gone. Hopefully, they can rebuild,” Conaway said, adding that Gov. Murphy has visited and asked FEMA to help step in the community.

Conaway also mentioned that “Trinity UMC in Mullica Hill has reached out to the mayor and emergency management to offer the church if needed, to help families that have lost everything, and will continue to see how they may help in the weeks to come.”

Characteristic of a powerful and broad storm, Ida continued to wreak havoc as it moved northward on Wednesday night, causing rampant power outages along the way as humid air collided with a much cooler system to create severe thunderstorms. As heavy rains fell, as much as

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Megan Needs a New Kidney TO GO WITH HER BIG HEART

By Heather Mistretta
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Each day for 12 consecutive hours, Megan Delaney is attached to a long plastic tube so that she can stay alive.

Peritoneal dialysis involves using the peritoneum in her abdomen as the membrane through which fluid and dissolved substances are exchanged with the blood. Through a surgically inserted catheter, excess fluid is removed, electrolyte problems are corrected, and toxins are removed. Her mother, Donna administers it each day so that Megan can stay alive. Twice a day she also needs to be weighed to ensure that she is maintaining her weight and not putting too much stress on her kidneys.

Megan was born with two small kidneys, in addition to cerebral palsy with a significant educational disability and a seizure disorder, but none of this ever stops her from smiling or showing people they matter each and every day. You might also catch her playing with her dog, Tyler, gifting her



homemade braids she makes or watching one of her favorite movies, “The Hunchback of Notre Dame.”

“Megan is renowned for her hugs,” her father told me one day recently. “When she can’t think of what to say, she gives a hug,” said Rev. Dave Delaney of St. Paul’s UMC Deptford. Donna called them “hugs that you don’t forget.”

All 4’11” of this 36-year-old shows the love of God wherever she goes and with whomever she meets. Hugs aren’t possible for her 88-year-old grandmother in Florida, so Megan instead calls her four times a day, so she never forgets that she cares.

“She has hugged senators, governors, celebrities, Academy Award winners and congressmen as well as homeless people and prostitutes, all with the same genuine love,” said Dave who along with his wife, Donna are determined to locate a living donor for their child, in between doing ministry for Dave and caring for others with chronic illnesses like Parkinson’s for Donna.

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2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE PROFILE

James Lee: Embracing the Unexpected Light

By Heather Mistretta
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James Lee grew up as the son of a pastor. After experiencing the first part of his calling as a child while growing up in Madison, NJ, he stashed that feeling away when the doubt was too heavy. But, as always, God was patient with James.

He and his family moved to Korea for a few years, but his mother brought James and his brothers back to the United States for more opportunities, while his dad stayed in Korea.

He wound up seizing one of those opportunities, enrolling in pharmacy school at Rutgers University in hopes of garnering a lucrative salary.

But an unexpected car accident during finals interrupted that goal and opened up a door to a new journey for James.

“My friend drove me to exams, and my mind went blank. I wound up getting two Ds. I flunked out,” said James who added that the feeling of failure was paralyzing. “I felt emptiness.”

But through a lot of soul-searching and a faith in God, James changed his direction by brushing up on his video editing

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP

The Thin Line Between Survive and Thrive

Bishop John Schol



Image Source: NBC Olympics

There is a powerful television commercial about a woman who receives a call from an adoption agency who says, “we have found a baby for you, but the child is in Siberia and will need to have both legs amputated.” The adoption agency says, “it won’t be easy” and after a brief moment, the adopting mother says, “no, it will be amazing.”

The adopted child, Jessica Long grows up to be a medal winning swimmer.

Why is it that in the midst of adversity, challenge, crisis, some people are able to say, it will be amazing?

There is a thin line between merely surviving the crisis and thriving in the midst of the challenge. Jesus could look into the most troubled sinner, the most physically challenged person, the most difficult time and could see possibility, transformation and resurrection deep within the person. Jesus saw that their life could be amazing. Not only did Jesus thrive in the midst of the challenge, but he lifted others up so that they would thrive.

When we are met with a challenge or crisis, we either see problem or possibility. Over time, it becomes our nature, problem or possibility. In actuality, the challenge is neither; it is simply a challenge, but the difference is made in how we approach it. Jesus approached these challenges as possibility, and his ministry and people thrived because of his mindset.

There are several reasons why people see problem or possibility, and today I would like to lift up one, mindset and outlook. A mindset formed by God’s good gifts of faith, hope and gratitude see that with God there is possibility in everything we encounter. A life continually shaped by hope, faith and gratitude literally transforms one’s mindset and outlook on life. It is not that problems go away; it’s that our problems become God’s great possibility for our healing, growth, change, improvement and the creation of the new.

Faith, hope and gratitude are foundational for thriving in the midst of life. It creates a mindset that asks, God, what can we do together to accomplish something great for others, for the world, for the church. Those who see the challenge as a threat, revert to a survival mentality in which the instincts to protect, preserve and resist “kick in.” Those who see the challenge as possibility revert to creativity, planning, networking with others to see God’s best intention in the challenge.

Today, we live in a time of crises and challenges. The pandemic, natural disasters, war and the ending of war, racism, a culture that does not see the church as relevant and a denomination searching for its emerging identity is enough for a lifetime, and we are experiencing all of this at the same time. What is your mindset, survival or seeking the opportunities in the midst of the challenges to see what God has for us next?

It will be hard, and it will be amazing.

Thrive!

John
Bishop John Schol
The United Methodists of Greater New Jersey

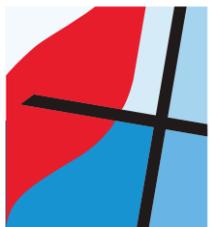
“FAITH, HOPE AND GRATITUDE ARE FOUNDATIONAL FOR THRIVING IN THE MIDST OF LIFE. IT CREATES A MINDSET THAT ASKS, GOD, WHAT CAN WE DO TOGETHER TO ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING GREAT FOR OTHERS, FOR THE WORLD, FOR THE CHURCH.”

—Bishop John Schol

CORRECTIONS:

In the article, “Asbury UMC: Lifting Hearts and Hope,” the correct author is Kirk Jones, not Carol Jones.

In the article about Joshua’s House, it should have read that Rich, “anticipates completing his doctoral program in 2022 with a Ph.D. in Religion and Society at Drew University. He currently does not possess a D.Min. from that institution or any other.



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UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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ADJOURNED SESSION | ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2021

FORWARD

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

Adjourned Session Workbook materials will be posted digitally Sept. 22 on the GNJ website.

Information Sessions will be on October 6 at 3:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

For details go to: www.gnjumc.org



Ida

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three inches in one hour in some areas, Ida collapsed roofs and caused heavy flooding along roadways and in buildings. Newark International Airport even had to shut down as water rushed into its first floor, making navigation impossible.

Nearby in Bayonne in Hudson County, Ida caused waterways to swell rapidly to unmanageable levels, severely flooding Wesley UMC and the parsonage of Rev. Emad Gerges. Those floodwaters also made their way to Jersey City.

"I was driving from work last night and got caught in a flash flood about a mile away from home. The car in front of me came to a sudden stop as waters from the river overflowed the bank. It happened so fast," said Rev. Dawrell Rich who leads Clair Memorial UMC in Jersey City. "I tried to push my car into the clearing. I got a few yards but had to give up since the waters were rising so fast. I was able to grab my things (laptop) and treaded through the waters until I got to a restaurant where they helped me," said Rich, who added that he returned to the scene a few hours later.

"My car was perched atop the highway divider like Noah's ark," said Rich. "I just went back, and my car and a dozen others have been moved to the side of the highway. I seriously doubt it's salvageable," he added, noting that despite feeling a little traumatized, after checking on church members, he discovered no one sustained any real damage.

In Bound Brook, a town of about 10,000 residents along the Raritan River, once again fell victim to a powerful storm after being devastated by superstorm Sandy. At the UMC of Bound Brook, where food ministry has been strong throughout the pandemic and vaccination clinics welcomed the community, the education



wing of the church that had been rebuilt following its destruction nine years ago was once again destroyed along with the adjacent thrift store.

Ida continued on her path raging to Union County where unrelenting floodwaters in Elizabeth caused a partial collapse of the roof at Living Hope UMC, and in Rahway caused widespread flooding at Trinity UMC and the parsonage of Rev. Arturo Bautista.

"I had to move my car to higher ground in the middle of prayer service," said Bautista. Further north in the town of Belleville, the heavy rains also wreaked havoc on the parsonage of Wesley UMC. "The parsonage flooded, along with many homes in Belleville. The church also had water issues, but we thank God all lives were spared," said Rev. Peggy Holder.

About 20 miles northeast of Belleville in Bergen County's Tenafly, heavy rains rushed into the home of one pastor and

her family, causing the water level to surge to the ceiling. No one was injured. Nearby in Englewood, where the public housing senior center has been condemned, Galilee UMC received about four inches of rain in its basement, said its pastor, Rev. Elouise Hill-Challenger. To the west in Passaic County, which was also hard hit by the storm, Hawthorne UMC suffered extensive damage from flooding, but no injuries were reported.

As people throughout GNJ continued to clean up and assess damage, NJOAD offered tips to keep people safe and kickstart their recoveries. In Ida's wake, it was reported that there were 14 deaths in New Jersey.

Bishop Schol wrote, "I know there are many challenges you are facing already, and storm damage adds further to the demands upon your leadership. We are grateful for all you do to lead the church and are here to support you."

Echoes of this solace were felt on Thursday evening and into Friday as talk of helping others surfaced. As the holiday weekend progressed, many were seen rolling up their sleeves and putting on work gloves.

One pastor said he would plan a fundraiser to help the farm in Mullica Hill, while others offered their intact churches as safe houses or held out a helping hand to bail water or clean up. Another pastor made sure her food ministry continued in spite of the flooding, soliciting the help of others including her husband, while another church hosted a collection of over 100 bags of new and used clothing, shoes, toys and books. The original intention was to give to refugees, but as the need arose following Ida's destruction, they shifted their focus to now also include victims of the storm.

On Monday, Rev. Chuck Coblentz of New Dover UMC, along with fellow Methodists including District Superintendent Rev. Sang-Won Doh and Pastor McWilliam Colon, helped Bound Brook UMC muck out their thrift shop following extensive flooding.

Centenary UMC in Lambertville, which was hard hit by Ida, opened its doors to the Delaware Valley Food Pantry so that its important food ministry could continue when its community needed it most. In Mullica Hill, Trinity UMC stepped in to help clean up a community devastated by tornados, donning protective eyewear and carrying chainsaws to clear away fallen trees. The church also opened its doors on Labor Day to serve a free lunch to those in the community who needed it.

Likely as the weeks progress, more and more of this sense of connectionism will arise. As the scripture proclaims, "when one of us hurts, we all hurt together." 🇺🇸

Apply for assistance at [disasterassistance.gov](#) or using the FEMA app with FEMA DR#4614-NJ.

Megan

Continued from page 1

They set up a Facebook page called "Kidney Hugs 4 Megan" to get more visibility for their cause and to share photos of Megan. Between the three of them, there is never a shortage of love, laughter and yes, hugs, even the one-armed ones.

"There's not an ounce of bias, dislike, prejudice or hate in Megan," said

neurologist, it was discovered that her kidneys were small and ceasing to function normally.

Since that day, she has been on a waiting list for a kidney transplant from a healthy donor with the same Type O+ blood.

Underneath all the smiles and compassion are frustration and worry. "Few people understand how it is," said Dave

who works every day to make sure Megan's life is as normal as possible. In between teasing, water gun fights and attending Philadelphia athletic events much to Dave's chagrin as a Buffalo fan, they cook together, creating masterpieces from around the world in the kitchen.

But in addition to the waiting list for a kidney is another list—the list that continues to grow of things she plans to do once she receives her new kidney.

When asked what she is going to do first, Megan said, "I want to sleep over someone's house," most likely at the house of her sister, Colleen, so she can also spend time with her nephew, Ryan. "Then I want to go to church." The young woman, a champion of the less fortunate, also dreams of going to Paris one day to see Notre Dame.

Dave recalled how 10 years ago he, Donna and Megan attended a Peter, Paul & Mary concert in Ocean Grove. Peter Yarrow, likely seeing the beauty of Megan within, introduced himself, inviting

Megan to sit next to him while he gave out autographs. He even asked her up on stage to sing "Puff the Magic Dragon" with him.

"I was so scared standing on stage," said Megan.

But two years later while at another one of their concerts, Peter recognized Megan and even remembered her name. "This is the kind of impression that Megan has on others," said Dave, who remembered how once again, Peter asked Megan to assist with autographs, a mission she embraced with a smile and conviction.

When asked what makes her happy, Megan said, "My family makes me happy...and getting to pet a pig."

"We are waiting for the greatest gift that Megan deserves to receive, but it's one we can't buy. We can only hope that one of you has a gift ready to share with her," said Dave.

It was once said, "The purity of a person's heart and soul can be quickly measured by how they regard animals." Megan's heart is pure, kind and charitable. Her indelible smile, infectious laugh and intense sense of loyalty and passion for living and loving others resonates in the hearts of those who have had the pleasure of meeting her.

Please visit Megan's FB page at "Kidney Hugs 4 Megan." It can be reached at www.facebook.com/KidneyHugs4Megan. Register to be a donor or just share this with everyone you know! 🇺🇸



Megan revels in creating masterpieces in the kitchen and watching the Phillies with her dad, Rev. Dave Delaney of St. Paul's UMC.

the father of two. He recalled how while working at a nursing home for about 11 years, Megan poured out her heart to dying patients so much so that she earned the reputation of being the most loving employee, one that was mutually missed during the pandemic.

"The hugs make me feel better too," said Megan. "When I lost my two friends, I was pretty upset, and hugs helped."

Megan was born with her umbilical cord wrapped around her neck. Eighteen months later she suffered a massive seizure. In her early-20s during a visit to her

What is involved?

Currently, there are about 100,000 people waiting for a healthy kidney. The kidney donation process involves the surgical removal of one kidney from a healthy donor and transplanted into a recipient in need. In a healthy, approved donor, the remaining kidney is able to compensate for the removed kidney by increasing its functioning capacity. A kidney from a living donor lasts about twice as long as one from a deceased donor...and it's more likely to avoid being on kidney dialysis.

If you are interested in living kidney donation:

- Contact the transplant center where a transplant candidate is registered.
- You will need to have an evaluation at the transplant center to make sure that you are a good match for the person you want to donate to and that you are healthy enough to donate.
- If you are a match, healthy, and willing to donate, you and the recipient can schedule the transplant at a time that works for both of you.
- If you are not a match for the intended recipient, but still want to donate your kidney so that the recipient you know can receive a kidney that is a match, paired kidney exchange may be an option for you.
- For more details, visit www.kidneyfund.org/kidney-disease/kidney-donation.html.

It's important to recognize there can be benefits to the donor, as well as the recipient. Some of these are:

- Saving the life of another person
- Giving a renewed, and improved quality of life to another person
- Greater understanding of your own health or health conditions
- As a kidney donor, your risk of having kidney failure later in your life is not any higher than it is for someone in the general population of a similar age, sex or race.
- Most kidney transplant surgeries are done laparoscopically, which means a much shorter recovery time, usually one to three days in the hospital.

Ripping Off the Mask of Racism to See the Gaping Wounds and Heal

By Heather Mistretta
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BRIDGETON, N J

It is said that in the Native American culture, the natural world is sacred in both life and death. To harm a place of this sanctity, like a burial ground, would crush their beliefs. At a Native American ceremony, sounds of a steady rhythm played on a hand drum are heard, rocks are formed as a medicine wheel to honor the life, the smell of sage bundles burning wafts the air, and a willow branch or rosemary is laid sometimes with a ribbon tied to it for prayer. The word loss is never used, but rather it is often said, “He is not lost. We know right where he is.”

On August 13, the property of St. John UMC in Bridgeton, GNJ’s only Native American church, incurred thousands of dollars of damage to its property due to vandalism overnight—flag poles were pulled down, memorial garden flower boxes torn apart, a new memorial stone honoring veterans pushed over and grave markers in their sacred cemetery damaged. This reckless act in a small city plagued by gang violence and poverty caused fear among the congregation and community and more heartache in the wake of the recent death of their pastor, Rev. Roy Bundy.

St. John, which celebrates its 180th anniversary this month, is one of the city’s historic sites having been designated one in 2017. This should be a time of celebration in a sanctuary filled with memories and artifacts that speak to its long history of tradition, respect for their ancestors and a commitment to its community. It should also be a time when they take a bold look toward the future, but this recent act of violence has opened wounds that are many layers deep.



Members of St. John erected a new veterans memorial last May to honor the many Native American fallen soldiers.

It also followed news that surfaced several months earlier of the bones of hundreds of children found near boarding schools across North America, uncovering the truth once again that between 1869 and the 1960s, hundreds of thousands of Native American children were removed from their homes and families and placed in boarding schools operated by churches and the federal government to “Americanize” them.

“We pray for the lost souls who feel it is okay to attack our Native American church, which means they have also chosen to attack our people,” members of the Native American International Caucus (NAIC) said in a statement. “Elders are afraid to visit the graves of their loved ones. Neighbors are nervous and have a right to feel frightened. But we will fight back. We will not be made invisible ever again. We are a people who honor our ancestors. We continue to seek their wisdom even after they have walked from this place to place beyond.”

Native Americans have proven time and time again that they are resilient and courageous and that they are not invisible as often projected to be. By the following week, the cleaned Memorial Day flags were flying again in front of the church next to the little Shackamaxon Elm, once again honoring the many Native American veterans who have fought for our country. Native Americans serve

in the military at a higher percentage than any other ethnic group. Since 9/11, nearly 19 percent of Native Americans have served in the armed forces, compared to an average of 14 percent of all other ethnicities.

Following the act of violence in Bridgeton, a letter from Bishop Schol and District Superintendent Glenn Conaway, called for prayer and compassion: “Throughout the pandemic, St. John UMC has been a source of hope and healing as each week they give food and clothing to more than 300 families. Many in the community of different ages, races and church affiliations have partnered with them to be a beacon of light. It is this congregation and tribe that have been invited into the local schools to share Native American history, customs and even their faith story.”

Our hearts go out to the congregation of St. John UMC and to our Native American family that has lived peacefully in this area for so many generations only to still find themselves victims of hate and vandalism.”

Rev. Conaway will preach at the church on Sept. 19 to show his support and compassion for the congregation.

St. John was founded in 1841 by the Pierce brothers following the Indian Removal Act that was enacted in 1830 during Andrew Jackson’s presidency. The legislation required the Nanticoke Lenni Lenape to relocate.

“Many of the Lenape were pushed off their land by colonizers prior to Andrew Jackson’s formal mandate. Some of our ancestors moved from their ancestral land and began the long walk on one of the routes to Oklahoma territory,” said Cynthia Mosley, St. John’s lay leader, NAIC member and chair of the GNJ Committee on Native American Ministries.

Mosley, also a Lenape tribal member, added, “Others decided to stay on the land in Southern New Jersey and Delaware and hide in plain sight. Initially the most common way to avoid confrontation was to assimilate. Some Lenape assimilated with white communities while others joined Black communities. The church was safe from government interference according to the country’s new Constitution, and the church grew to be the center of religious and social life for Tribal families. They traded goods with each other at church. You met your wife, your husband at church. Old newspapers tell us of upcoming ‘ice cream socials’ at the church. The church was packed, standing room only from Friday night to Sunday evening. Those days were good in some ways because they drew us closer to each other. We hid in plain sight like this until the late 1950s. Civil rights affected us too, and we hid less and less over the years.”

But today, there are times when we feel invisible. Hiding is by choice; being invisible is something imposed on us.”

A Call for More Healing on October 6

In 1893, Congress allowed the Bureau of Indian Affairs to withhold food rations and supplies from parents or guardians who refused to enroll and keep their children in the boarding schools where abuse and poor medical services were rampant. Some families hid their children to avoid capture, and some children ran away from the schools.

In its letter following the boarding school news, the NAIC wrote, “How many more lost lives are needed before Native Americans are made visible? As the bones of the 215 children, some as young as three, found in a common grave at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in Canada are collected; the tally of missing and murdered girls, which is already 10 times the average, grows; and the echoes of historical trauma reverberate throughout Native American communities in North America, the call to address the horror of abuse against Native Americans is once again brought to the forefront.”



The artist, Paige McNatt, explains her image: “The school is in the background with the children’s moccasins and shorn braids being buried with the truth in the foreground. I wanted to have dark, looming clouds in the sky behind the school to convey the darkness and pain that it represents. I chose to have “justice for our children” behind a yellow, more hopeful part of the sky. On the grass, there are brown spots to show that there are many other holes where the truth of the devastation has been buried, just like the one in the foreground of the drawing.”

This unresolved historical trauma associated with the cultural genocide and years of stripping Native Americans of their culture, land and language so that the Indigenous boys and girls would become “Americanized” has wreaked havoc on Native American families. The stereotypes of the compliant, noble savage or violent aggressor have become entrenched in our culture.

From addictions and domestic abuse to suicide and mental illness, insufficient reparations have taken their toll on Native American communities for generations despite efforts from others in the community to emphasize that you are not what happened to you. The pull from the past has proven to be much stronger in far too many cases.

As the Native American community once again recovers from a trauma and bridles the energy to move forward, the community is now looking toward October 6, the day the Boarding School Healing Project and the NAIC have called for a Day of Truth and Repentance for Our Children.

On that day in 1879, Gen. Richard Pratt took children from First Nations and opened the boarding school in Carlisle, PA. This action set off a radical movement that tore families apart, resulted in early deaths for many children and caused the historical trauma that still exists today.

“These concrete acts will begin healing, justice and reconciliation for families and communities to start healing,” said Ragghi Rain Calentine, chairperson of the NAIC and member of the Indian Mission UMC in Millsboro, DE. “Indian Boarding Schools forcibly silenced our children. Let us break the silence as our children speak the truth once again. They are honored with respect and love they did not receive from the Christians of the time.”

It is hoped that by recognizing this day, more awareness will come to the surface along with a rebirth of a culture long suppressed. The groups are encouraging others to create awareness by holding an event to remember those tribal children and to remember that another death happened, a spiritual death, for many children who had their culture and spirituality taken from them.

From collecting old shoes or moccasins to represent the children to wearing orange to represent both the sun as it sets and rises and domestic violence awareness to gathering a drum group and making birds that represent the spirits of children as they take flight, the groups are asking for the day of recognition with hopes it will start the healing process.

“We need to create a place where our children can thrive, live peacefully,” said Rev. Chebon Kernell, an ordained elder in the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference and executive director of the Native American Comprehensive Plan. “We have our own ideas, thoughts and plans. They are in the stories of my grandmother. They need to be heard.”

More ideas for October 6 can be found at the FB page for “Justice for Our Children: Healing for Our Communities.”

New Hope Center in Vineland CONNECTS A COMMUNITY TO ITS CHURCH

*“Where the treasure is,
there will also be your heart.”*

—MATTHEW 6:21

By Heather Mistretta
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VINELAND, NJ

It was June 2019, and Yeika Huertas was full of hope and loads of missional experience as she traveled by herself from her hometown of Arecibo, Puerto Rico, one of the oldest colonial towns founded in 1616 to a town founded more than two hundred years later in Cumberland County, NJ, called Vineland, also known as “The Land of Accidents.” Her daughter, Alanis stayed in Puerto Rico to attend college, and her husband, Carlos would come one year later.

Just months earlier she had been appointed as a senior pastor at First UMC in Vineland. Clearly those who decided on her cross-cultural appointment saw something in Huertas that made them realize that she was the right fit. It quickly became apparent to me that they were right.

“I started just before the pandemic hit, so it was definitely a learning experience in so many ways,” said Rev. Huertas, a pastor since 2011 who speaks of her commitment to God often with love.

Two years later, she is opening her church and her heart to those in need every Wednesday morning from 9:00-11:00 a.m. as part of the Vineland Ministerium’s Emergency Food Bank. When needed, they also deliver food outside that designated time and share additional items during the holidays.

The Clothes Closet Ministries offers a complete clothes closet to the public. It has men’s, women’s and children’s clothing. Children’s clothes are in sizes from



In addition to food ministry, Rev. Yeika Huertas (third from right) leads a memorial service each month.

infant through teen. There also are shoes in all sizes, and the clothing is gently worn and free.

“We try to be as nimble in this ministry as possible,” said Huertas.

First UMC’s mission is to support a thrift store with used clothing and a food pantry, partnering with Spirit and Truth Ministries, a nonprofit that has assisted the poor and homeless in Vineland and surrounding areas for over 25 years. The church became one of A Future With Hope’s Hope Centers in 2020 after receiving a grant from Global Ministries.

“We try to be pertinent to our community every day,” said Huertas, who is an elder in full connection with

Puerto Rico Methodist Conference and received a M. Div. from Puerto Rico Evangelical Seminary in 2011. The demographic of her community is mostly Hispanic (primarily Mexican) and Black.

“We provide the kitchen and the social hall for their soup kitchen, where they cook and offer hot meals, serving at noon Monday through Friday,” said Huertas, who added that they also provide monthly activities in our parking lot and provide

portable showers and bathrooms, a vaccination site and other services.

Huertas added that many in her community are plagued by unemployment and a lack of school preparation, which further exacerbates their current situation.

Having served youth ministries, Walks to Emmaus, Chrysalis from the Upper Room, as a missionary within and outside of Puerto Rico and as superintendent of Northwest Region, Huertas is clearly comfortable working with marginalized communities and embraces love, mercy, justice and dignity every day.

“There’s hope. There are still people who are willing to fight for change,” said Huertas. “I don’t have any doubt that I’m here because of God.”

Part of her career was spent in Honduras working with a poor community, many of whom were handicapped children. She also helped in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.

In addition to the Hope Center, Huertas said once a month she and her church host a grieving forum where they read the names aloud of those who have died. In an effort to make it an ecumenical service, she invites other clergy including a local rabbi, a monsignor, a Lutheran pastor and two Baptists.

Huertas is passionate about Christian education, Wesleyan traditions and teachings, social justice, children and pastoral care. In her free time, she is also a pet lover and Star Wars’ fan, loving to quote Yoda, “A Jedi must have the deepest commitment, the most serious mind.” 🇺🇸



First UMC’s new hope center is a collaboration of the entire congregation, including the Youth Group, shown here bagging food.

Lee

Continued from page 1

skills and starting his own video production company in 2012. For six years his business provided him with a conduit for storytelling, a passion he continues to carry with him today. It was also in this year that he married the love of his life and frequent laughing partner, Julie.

“Then God told me it was time to pursue my calling,” said James who enrolled at Drew Theological School, which was his dad’s alma mater. He received a M.Div. in 2014.

The pastor with an inviting smile and sharp but humble wit never looked back. Despite some difficult years, his relationship with his dad is now amazing.

“He told me, ‘you are my son, and I am proud of you,’” said James who now relishes the conversations he has with his dad.

Today, the 33-year-old pastor at Wesley UMC, who was ordained as



Rev. Lee embraces life, never missing the opportunity to share his love with others.

an elder this past May, is passionate about cultivating the divine spark in people through creative worship, Christ-centered discipleship and visual

storytelling. He shared some of his story through a powerful session of spoken word at the ordination.

When asked if he feels any differently since being ordained, James said, “I’m still the pastor of the church I love.”

Prior to coming to Wesley in 2018, he served as the associate pastor for Calvary Korean UMC in East Brunswick, as the senior pastor of Conklin UMC in South River and as the manager of visual arts at GNJ, during which time he created The Uncovered Dish Christian Leadership Podcast, a wonderful communication tool that connected congregations.

Now in 2021, James is still having conversations to learn and grow, even if they are uncomfortable ones.

“Whenever I’m placed in a situation when I’m asked to accomplish something that is far greater than me, my strategy is to have a lot of fun,” said James.

As he continues to navigate through uncharted waters, James is moving forward with hope. “At the beginning, the

uptick in technology was exciting. Then the realization hit how those online relationships are just not enough. I’m looking forward to the time when can hold hands, make eye contact, feel the vibrations of our heartbeats and hear each other breathe. We all need this.”

He added, “I want people to experience a God who is fun and likes to play.”

“Sometimes there are parts of me that come out that I never knew existed,” said James who is often faced with the unexpected and plenty of laughter as the father of three children, Amy (6), Adam (4) and Renee (1).

When he’s not doing ministry or spending time with family, James loves to play the guitar or hunt for a good cup of coffee.

For James, life has always been one of pursuing happiness, opening up his heart to God’s brightness and being open to reveling in what makes him laugh. GNJ is lucky to be the recipient of James’ reflected brightness. 🇺🇸



Rev. Erik "Skitch" Matson is looking forward to making ministry more intergenerational and rooted in and with the local church.

Princeton Pastor Receives Award on 250th Anniversary of Francis Asbury's Arrival

In October 1771, Francis Asbury made the arduous journey via boat and horseback to the United States after being sent by John Wesley to organize the new Methodist church in the British colonies. After landing in Philadelphia on October 27, he went on to spread the Gospel, opening up several schools along the way as he rode an average of six thousand miles each year. His first stop was a Methodist church in Woodrow, Staten Island as chronicled in a journal he kept. He would later visit courthouses, public houses, tobacco houses, fields and public squares, making friends along the way like Henry "Black Harry" Hosier, a guide and driver who would later become the first African American to preach directly to a white congregation in the United States. In 1784, Asbury became American Methodism's first bishop.

Two hundred fifty years after Asbury embarked on his unwavering mission landing in a city only about 45 miles away, Rev. Erik "Skitch" Matson of Princeton UMC and the Wesley Foundation was one of 10 recipients of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's Francis Asbury Award, which recognizes and encourages outstanding support of higher education and campus ministries.

"I am grateful for the award, and the nomination, but most of all I'm grateful to lead, work with and learn from the amazing young adults in our area," said Matson. "Their passion for justice, commitment to wrestling with Scripture, and authentic living out of the Gospel enliven my own faith journey."

In his dual role as the discipleship pastor at Princeton UMC and the Methodist college chaplain (Wesley Foundation Director) at Princeton University, he has spent almost a decade in ministry in both churches and summer camps and received a M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary and a B.S. in Physics from Point Loma Nazarene University.

The United Methodist group he leads at Princeton values questions, not conformity and welcomes all genders, sexual orientations, races, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, denominations and relationships with faith from the lifelong Christian to the questioning critic.

When asked what's next, Matson said he has been accepted into a Lilly-funded two-year cohort called The Vinery (thevinery.org). They focus on "awakening faith and flourishing at the intersection of church and university through deep listening and purposeful design."

"I think this will really help our ministry become more intergenerational and rooted in and with the local church," said Matson.

The Oct. 30-31, there will be a celebration of Francis Asbury at Historic St. George's UMC in Philadelphia. It will feature Bishop Schol as one of the preachers, along with Bishop Cynthia Fiero Harvey, who will help celebrate Holy Communion using the historic Wesley Chalice. Bishop Sally Dyck of the council's Ecumenical Office will attend, along with representatives from UMC general agencies and the Methodist Church in Britain. Other invited guests may include leaders from the African Methodist Episcopal Church and other groups related to Methodism's history.

The UMC's General Commission on Archives and History is partnering with the Eastern PA Conference to plan the affair, led by General Secretary Ashley Boggan Dreff and the agency's two previous general secretaries, Rev. Drs. Alfred T. Day III and Robert J. Williams. Members of the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB) will also celebrate the 250th anniversary, in part by watching the livestream video of the event.

Other recipients of the Francis Asbury Award in GNJ have included Rev. Don Gebhard, who is chaplain at Centenary College; and Rev. Frances Preston, former pastor at Christ UMC in Piscataway. 🇺🇸

"We must," he said, "... give the key of knowledge to your children, and those of the poor in the vicinity of your small towns and villages."

—FRANCIS ASBURY

Freedom, Peace and Reconciliation

Every August 15 is a special day for Koreans. It marks the day when Korea became independent from Japan. But August 15, 1945, was a blessing and a curse to Koreans. The Korean

Peninsula was liberated from Japanese occupation, but at the same time the nation was divided in two.

"In the Korean church, independence from Japan is especially celebrated on

that day because God's guidance was there, just as Israel's people escaped from Egypt," said Rev. Yongil Lee, who was appointed to Livingston Korean UMC on July 1. "However, there is still a sense of hatred and competition for Japan in the curriculum of Korea and the emotions of Koreans."

To break this chain of hatred, Lee and his church are trying to convey a message of forgiveness and reconciliation through prayer. On Aug. 15, the church offered a special service called "Korean National Liberation Day Memorial Worship Service," with an offering, delivering it to those who fight hard for freedom and peace reconciliation in the world.

This year marks the 71st anniversary of the start of the Korean War on June 25, 1950. The war caused the death of about 50,000 Americans and allies, one mil-

lion South Koreans, two million North Koreans, and 500,000 Chinese.

Though a ceasefire was issued in July 1953, the war is technically not over. It remains under the Armistice Agreement signed that same year since a formal peace treaty was never approved. 🇺🇸



STAY IN LOVE WITH GOD

The future is not happening to us. It is happening for us, and if we choose to follow in faith, it is happening with and through us too! Listen to God's nudging through Breakthrough's new series, Living Faith.

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BREAKTHROUGH
A GIVE GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICES FOR WORSHIP

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OF GREATER NEW JERSEY



As part of the celebration, the church collected a special offering to be given to those who fight for freedom and peace.



Rev. Yongil Lee of Livingston KUMC called for reconciliation at a celebration of independence on August 15.



SUMMER AT THE PINELANDS: Arrows and Campfires and Spirit, Oh My!

As we've been reminded many times over the past year, sometimes things are just different. Not any less impactful, just different. The same can be said about summer at the Pinelands in central New Jersey. The summer may have looked a little different this year with the addition of Family Camps instead of typical summer camp, but that same feeling of comraderie, connection and fun still burst onto the 150-acre campus nestled in the Pine Barrens this summer!

"Throughout the weeks of Family Camp, Mission Retreats and Ninos y Jovenes para Cristo, we spent time in prayer, worshipping and reflecting on our 2021 summer theme 'Reconnect,'" said Mekan Payne, GNJ's program specialist.

She added, "Campers of all ages discussed what it means to reconnect with God, nature and each other, after a year filled with many twists and turns! We also spent time playing games, participating in outdoor activities and enjoying our beautiful lake through swimming and boating. It was a beautiful summer to be back at camp, and we are so thankful to have spent time together this summer at The Pinelands Center."

The Next Gen is now in planning stages for 2022, when summer camps will likely make a return! Have a great idea? We want to hear from you! 🇺🇸



"The talks each night were great, the team provided a Spirit filled atmosphere and I really enjoyed connecting with people!"



"I love all things water! I think there are great opportunities to connect with scripture and the holy spirit through being in and with the water through things like swimming and boating!"



IGNITE Cancelled for Safety

After much thoughtful consideration, the IGNITE team, which includes both GNJ and the New York Annual Conference, has made the difficult decision to cancel the 2021 IGNITE Conference scheduled for this October.

The safety of our youth and their leaders is our main priority. With all 21 counties in New Jersey designated as high risk for COVID-19 transmission and counties in New York and Pennsylvania reporting similarly, we believe that a large in-person event at this time is not the right thing to do.

We have begun discussing alternate resources that are still engaging and inspiring and will be back in touch with you very soon with an update! Thank you for understanding.

In the meantime, we'd love to hear about what ideas you may have about alternate resources. Please share your ideas or questions with Heather Mistretta at hmistretta@gnjumc.org, so we can design a plan that works best for all of you. If you have a question, please reach out to Ryan Clements at rclements@gnjumc.org.

Wishing you all the best during this challenging time.



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.

ROLLING HARVEST FARMERS MARKET: Sharing God's Bounty

By Joan Schwarzwald, member,
Pennington UMC

"They gave us beets!" exclaimed a senior citizen as she pulled a bunch out of her allotment bag. "And they're the golden kind! When told the beets were organic, she heartily responded, "God Bless you!"

Excitement, appreciation, and happiness prevailed at the special July 29 Rolling Harvest Farmers Market held outside Homefront headquarters in Lawrence Township, NJ. Rolling Harvest began 10 years ago as a way to distribute free, fresh produce to underserved city residents who lack the means or opportunity to enjoy summer's bounty.

This summer, the Missions Committee of the Pennington UMC (PUMC) partnered with Rolling Harvest to produce a farmers market that provided large, colorful cloth shopping bags filled with freshly picked organic produce and eggs to 100 underserved Homefront families.

Produce included: potatoes, jalapeno peppers, beets, kale, lettuce, tomatoes, potatoes, radishes, cucumbers and squash, all obtained from local farms including Titusville's Gravity Hill Farm, Zone 7 Farms as well as corn from the None Such Farm. In addition, cartons of organic eggs were provided by Alderfer Farms. All this food is purchased at cost most of the time, and some of the farmers donate their products.



PUMC missions members pose after having assembled 100 produce bags for distribution at Rolling Harvest the next day.

The day before distribution, 14 PUMC Missions members met at Gravity Hill Farm to assemble the 100 bags for distribution. The team worked well together, enjoying the lively Christian fellowship of "kindred minds" with others from the local community. Within two hours, the many large bags were filled and stacked into Rolling Harvest's new refrigerated truck that would keep the produce cool overnight until transport the next day.

Early the next morning, the first distribution team of three mission members from PUMC began unloading Rolling Harvest's truck at Homefront's Lawrenceville headquarters. They arranged the 100 shopping bags onto long tables near the loading docks, transforming the entire area into an oasis of color.

Midmorning, the second distribution team of four mission members and Rev.

Joseph Jueng, began handing out the large shopping bags plus smaller bags of corn and cartons of eggs to 75 Homefront families. The other 25 bags and extra boxes of corn were later moved to the Ewing Homefront Family Campus and distributed to residents there.

From 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., the bustle and noise of nearby busy streets hardly penetrated the calm and peace of the Homefront distribution area. Families were consistently pleasant and polite; their children appeared well cared for and relaxed. Whether giving or receiving, each participant lived in the moment, enjoying positive experiences and blessings of being human. All were grateful for the Rolling Harvest Farmers Market experience.

To find out more about this mission, visit <http://rollingharvest.org> and www.homefrontnj.org.

It's the Little Things

By Rev. Mike McKay of Butler UMC

A fghanistan.
Haiti.
COVID's 4th Wave.

A Methodist Church in South Jersey Vandalized.

The phone shouting all manner of news and information to me that doesn't inform...it just mostly deadens my sense of caring.

Losses of people and friends in a seemingly unending line.

It's enough to make you want to quit. Or at least just tune out for a while (forever?).

But Jesus says that yes, life is like that, firestorms of bad news and discouraging results for all your efforts.

But he also says that the Kingdom of God is like seeds you plant, and despite everything, they grow, they prosper, they overcome.

And that is what the Gospel is about this subversive God of ours who through simple grace and goodness let's you and me know that life is still worth living and that your efforts and mind matter in the end.

**THE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY
= YEAR-ROUND LEARNING**

- fruitful ministry
- collaboration among laity and clergy
- stronger connectionalism
- bold, new visions

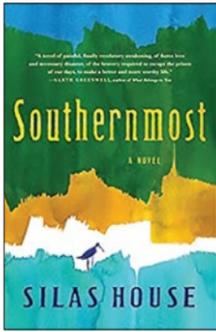
NEXT COURSE:

Launching a Stewardship Campaign begins Sept. 16!

Get your spot in virtual class today!
www.gnjumc.org/leadership-academy

SEPTEMBER BOOKSHELF

This month we are working on learning and growing as we navigate into the new year. This can mean many different things for everyone. Embrace your own journey and get out there! Discover the varied selection of books below.



Southernmost

(2018, Algonquin Books) By Silas House

Southernmost is a novel about judgment, courage, heartbreak and change. It wrestles with the limits of belief and the infinite ways to love. In the aftermath of a flood that washes away much of a small Tennessee town, evangelical preacher Asher Sharp offers shelter to two gay men. In doing so, he starts to see his life anew—and risks losing everything: his wife, locked into her religious prejudices; his congregation, which shuns Asher after he delivers a passionate sermon in defense of tolerance; and his young son, Justin, caught in the middle of what turns into a bitter custody battle. With no way out but ahead, Asher takes Justin and flees to Key West, where he hopes to find his brother, Luke, whom he'd turned against years ago after Luke came out. And it is there, at the southernmost point of the country, that Asher and Justin discover a new way of thinking about the world, and a new way of understanding love.

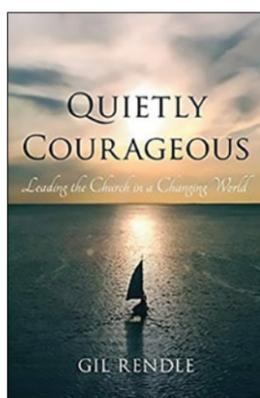
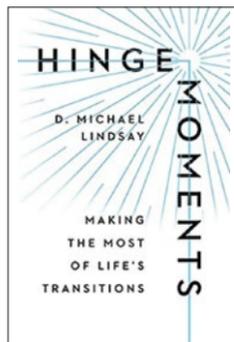
Silas House is the author of five novels. His book for middle-grade readers, *Same Sun Here*, was a finalist for the E. B. White Read-Aloud award. A frequent contributor to the *New York Times* and a former commentator for NPR's "All Things Considered," House is a member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers and is the winner of the Nautilus Award, the Appalachian Writers Association's Book of the Year and other honors.

Hinge Moments: Making the Most of Life's Transitions

(2021, IVP) By D. Michael Lindsay

Hinge Moments explores those times when we have an opportunity before us to make a change or to respond to a situation, and the decisions we make—opportunities to open (or close) doors to various pathways of our lives. The book shares faith-based stories of success and failure from the author's 10-year study of 550 PLATINUM leaders. There are seven phases of transition charted, which provide both practical and spiritual insights for making the most of each stage. In uncertain and tumultuous times, there is no better advantage than wisdom gained early.

Gordon College President D. Michael Lindsay is an award-winning sociologist and educator who is an expert on religion, culture and leadership. Since his inauguration as president of Gordon College in 2011, Dr. Lindsay has introduced several successful leadership mentoring initiatives and expanded the College's global outreach. Previously, he directed the Program for the Study of Leadership at Rice University, where he served on the faculty. *View from the Top*, Dr. Lindsay's second book, is to be released in May 2014. It reports the findings of his 10-year Platinum Study, the largest-ever interview-based study of leaders. His Pulitzer-nominated first book, *Faith in the Halls of Power*, was listed in *Publishers Weekly's* "Best Books of 2007." His research has been funded through fellowships awarded by the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Academy of Education and the National Science Foundation.



Quietly Courageous: Leading the Church in a Changing World

(2018, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers) By Gil Rendle

The changing dynamics of contemporary church life are well-known, but what's less well-known is how leaders can work most effectively in this new context. In *Quietly Courageous*, esteemed minister and congregational consultant Gil Rendle offers practical guidance to leaders—both lay and ordained—on leading churches today. Rendle encourages leaders to stop focusing on the past and instead focus relentlessly on their mission and purpose—what is ultimately motivating their work. He also urges a shift in perspectives on resources, discusses models of change, and offers suggestions for avoiding common pitfalls and working creatively today.

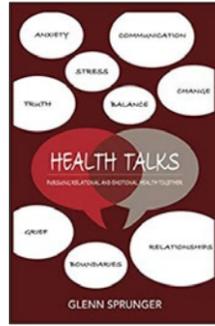
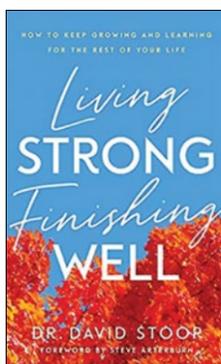
Gil Rendle is former senior vice president for the Texas Methodist Foundation as well as former senior consultant and director of consulting for the Alban Institute. As an ordained minister with a Ph.D. in organizational and group dynamics, he has worked with congregations across denominations for more than 30 years. He is the author of several books, including *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as Spiritual Practice for Congregations*.

Living Strong, Finishing Well: How to Keep Growing and Learning for the Rest of Your Life

(Sept. 7, 2021, Fleming H Revell Co.) By David Stoop

Living Strong, which is scheduled to be published this month, features counselor and cohost of the popular "New Life" Live broadcast. It encourages those at midlife and beyond to live well, keep growing, keep learning, nurture relationships and leave a positive legacy.

Dr. David Stoop (1937–2021) was the founder and director of the Center for Family Therapy and cohost of the nationally syndicated *New Life Live!* radio and TV program. The author of more than 30 books, including *Forgiving What You'll Never Forget* and *Change Your Thoughts, Change Your Life*, David coauthored several books with his wife, Jan, and led seminars and retreats on topics such as marital relationships, parenting, men's issues, fathering, and forgiveness.



Health Talks

(2013, independent) By Glenn Sprunger

You are personally invited to gather people around you to have weekly conversations about significant life issues which we all face but seldom discuss. People want to connect but frequently do not know how to engage in meaningful conversations with the people they rub shoulders with day-after-day. "Health Talks" provide you with a brief, educational, topical prop that will get your conversations started. "Health Talks" have been used in the workplace, in the family, in church, in small groups, and in counseling. If you set aside 15-20 minutes each week to have a "Health Talk" with people around you, communication and relationships will be strengthened. People will look forward to connecting on a more meaningful level. In the process, you will gradually be introduced to a biblical worldview and a series of questions which will potentially help you get to know and to love one another and to strengthen your community.

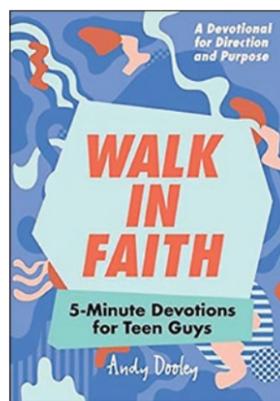
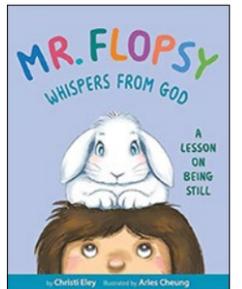
Glenn Sprunger received a bachelor's degree from Evangel College, a master's degree from Wheaton College Graduate School and a M.Div. from Ashland Theological Seminary. As an ordained minister in the Brethren Church, Sprunger has served churches and parachurch ministries in Indiana and Ohio. He is the executive director of Spirit-Driven Sports. He has spent nearly 30 years doing counseling and people-helping ministries in community mental health centers, churches and parachurch ministries.

Mr. Flopsy Whispers from God: A Lesson on Being Still

(2021, Cottontail Publishing) By Christi Eley

Mr. Flopsy, Whispers from God is an early reader storybook that shares the simple message and guidance from a pet bunny to help your child find stillness and peace. By connecting with animals, children learn to see and hear God's love and feel secure as they learn to be quiet, patient, brave and trusting. Written in a rhythmic bouncy script, *Mr. Flopsy, Whispers from God* provides a platform for your child to begin their own relationship with God and is reaffirmed by the gentle words and affirmations of God's love through the Bible verse "Be still and know that I am God" Psalm 46:10.

Christi Eley developed a deep love for animals as a child inspired by the bunny she and her grandfather rescued and raised together. It was her dream to grow up and do something with bunnies. She did this with her successful local ministry, Mrs. Cottontail and Friends. She has been working with children and animals for over 20 years, spreading joy and love through her educational bunny programs. This work has deepened her faith and opened her eyes to the most important things in life. Her desire is to teach children to slow down, connect deeply with animals while drawing close to God.



Walk in Faith: 5-Minute Devotions for Teen Guys

(2019, Althea Press) By Andy Dooley

Walk in Faith connects powerful excerpts from scripture with the everyday ups and downs of being a teenage boy—from dealing with peer pressure to setting goals for the future. These five-minute Christian devotions will help teen guys successfully navigate some of life's most important and trying moments with a little faith—and God's unwavering guidance.

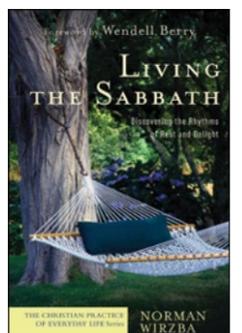
Andy Dooley is committed to empowering the next generation of leaders as a passionate youth director at Elevation Church in Charlotte, NC. He has been working with young people for two decades, through sports, fitness and ministry. Dooley was named the 2016 Face of Reebok One, which allowed him to expand his platform of helping people understand and implement a holistic approach to spirituality and health. He is married to Tiffany, and they have three children, Hope, Skylee, and Andy II. You can visit his blog at AndyLDooley.com.

Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight

(2006, Brazos Press) By Norman Wirzba

Living the Sabbath explores a much more holistic and rewarding understanding of Sabbath keeping. Wirzba shows how Sabbath is ultimately about delight in the goodness that God has made in everything we do, every day of the week. With practical examples, Wirzba unpacks what that means for our daily lives at work, in our homes, in our economies, in school, in our treatment of creation, and in church. This book will appeal to clergy and laypeople alike and to all who are seeking ways to discover the transformative power of Sabbath in their lives today.

Raised on a farm in the shadow of the Canadian Rockies, Norman Wirzba is a professor of theology and ecology at Duke University. He writes and makes public presentations on a wide variety of topics ranging from environmental philosophy and ethics to food studies and sustainable agriculture from a theological point of view. His goal is to show that Christian faith is a lot more interesting and compelling than people might think.



The Hubbard Family: Committed to Loving God and Their Neighbors Through Mission

By Denise Herschel

ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS, NJ

Raised as a United Methodist Church member since birth, Rev. Jill Hubbard-Smith of Atlantic Highlands Navesink UMC values and treasures the essential role that mission has played throughout her life and during her decades-long years of service to the community. She continues to carry close to her heart what she learned as a young child and that is “missions change the lives of individuals and church communities.”

“It builds communities and moves our hearts. Missions were very important to my family. Since I was eight-years-old, my family started participating in the Red Bird mission in Kentucky. I can also remember distributing Christmas presents out of the back of my parents’ red station wagon with my brother dressed as Santa throughout communities in Georgia with kids running after the car, so excited thinking it was Santa’s car,” she said. “My greatest joy as a pastor has been to see how missions move the heart and faith of participants. To see how people grow in faith and grow in leadership to share that faith and also to see community build within and far beyond the walls of the church.”

Hubbard-Smith’s family was raised in Fairfax, VA, with her mother centering the family in daily devotions and church life. They moved often as Hubbard-Smith said that her father, who she called “a Corp Gypsy,” was transferred for his job every four years or so, from Virginia to New Jersey to Georgia and to New Jersey again.

“Every time my parents found the church they wanted us to attend, we would pick our home in a community nearby. While in Georgia, my mom took classes in religion at Wesleyan College. We were very active in every church...especially in Macon, GA, and then at Mendham

“MY GREATEST JOY AS A PASTOR HAS BEEN TO SEE HOW MISSIONS MOVE THE HEART AND FAITH OF PARTICIPANTS. TO SEE HOW PEOPLE GROW IN FAITH AND GROW IN LEADERSHIP TO SHARE THAT FAITH AND ALSO TO SEE COMMUNITY BUILD WITHIN AND FAR BEYOND THE WALLS OF THE CHURCH.”

—Rev. Jill Hubbard-Smith,
Pastor at Atlantic Highlands Navesink UMC

and Bridgewater UMC when my mother started working there,” she added.

Hubbard-Smith graduated from Mendham High School and attended West Virginia Wesleyan College. However, she didn’t graduate, coming home after one semester to work at Tiffany and launching her own catering business called Hubbard’s Cupboard. She later attended the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York for interior design. And, while active with her church community, she volunteered to lead youth fellowship at Bridgewater UMC and went on mission trips within the United States and to Haiti. It was while leading youth at the National Youth Gathering that she decided she had been called to youth



Hubbard-Smith and her congregation do a yearly mission trip, community soup lunch, blood drives, Family Promise and backpacks to the community.



Rev. Jill Hubbard-Smith of Atlantic Highlands Navesink UMC along with her entire family have always embraced mission.

ministry and seminary. However, she added that there was one small issue.

“I needed an undergraduate degree. So within a week I was accepted to Centenary College and sold my townhouse,” she said.

She later graduated from Centenary College in Hackettstown, NJ, receiving a B.A. in Psychology and Business and chose Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, MO, where she would receive a MDiv. specializing in pastoral care.

Hubbard-Smith is now the pastor of Atlantic Highlands Navesink UMC, which she said is “a blend of two churches” coming to fruition in October 2016 when Navesink UMC and AHUMC voted at a church conference to become one united church community with two sites. In addition to serving this community, Hubbard-Smith has also served at West Belmar UMC, Chatham UMC and Lebanon UMC (now Round Valley UMC).

Hubbard-Smith said that her church community is very mission-minded. They do a yearly mission trip, community soup lunch, blood drives, Family Promise and backpacks to the community, to list only a few.

“Our community has a lot of fellowship and is very caring. Last week we had 58 people come to our thrift shop and over 20 people gathered around to work at our Open Door Craft group. It is wonderful to have such a sense of togetherness,” she added.



Jill’s brother, Rev. Dr. Joel Hubbard III is an elder who is currently pastor at Essex Center UMC in Vermont after serving Park UMC Bloomfield.

Hubbard-Smith’s own family has a deep connection to the Methodist community as her mother, Rev. Virginia Stein Hubbard is a retired elder, having served at various churches throughout New Jersey and her brother, Rev. Dr. Joel Hubbard III is an elder who is currently pastor at Essex Center UMC in Essex, VT.

Hubbard-Smith, who has three children - Adam Smith, Hannah Hubbard and Lydia Smith with her husband, Garry, has found the past 18 months to be challenging due to the pandemic but has witnessed how loving God while loving our neighbors has provided comfort during these trying times.

“It has been difficult to not be an in-person community. It has also been hard to learn technology, which takes more time than the spiritual care, which is what I believe is the ministry that I feel called to...to preside over services for many pillars of our church. But I believe that the love of God and of the community has been abundantly clear throughout my life with my family and my church families,” she said. “Loving God while loving our neighbor, in ways that speak and show love, care and respect, are so very important, and this is what we have all learned during this past year and a half.”

Atlantic Highlands Navesink UMC is located at 96 3rd Avenue in Atlantic Highlands. Their phone number is 732-291-0485. 🇺🇸

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 16, 23, 30	Leadership Academy's "Launching a Stewardship Campaign"
Sept. 21-23	Southern Region (that ROCKS) Pastor's Retreat at Sandy Cove in Maryland. All clergy are welcome.
Sept. 25	Lay Servant classes begin
Sept. 27- Oct. 3	National Diaper Need Awareness Week. More info on The Maker's Place website.
Oct. 3	World Communion Sunday
Oct. 5, 12, 19	Leadership Academy's "Simplified Board Model"
Oct. 6	Day of Truth and Repentance for Our Children (NAIC)
Oct. 6	Information Sessions for Adjournment Annual Conference Session at 3:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.
Oct. 6, 13, 20	Leadership Academy's "Building a Healthy Church Staff Culture"
Oct. 14	Adjourned Session of Annual Conference
Oct. 16	GNJ UMW's Fall Meeting.
Oct. 17	Laity Sunday
Oct. 21	One-day Leadership Academy workshop on Advent Breakthrough Series
Nov. 2, 9, 16	Leadership Academy's "Local Church & Community: Building Missional Relationships"
Nov. 3, 10, 17	Leadership Academy's "Be a Lead, Lead a Leader – Small Group Hybrid Training"
June 18-25, 2022	Joshua Generation Civil Rights Pilgrimage

OBITUARIES

Rev. Dr. Marguerite Davis, retired diaconal minister, died on Aug. 24. A service was held Sept. 4 at St. John UMC in Berlin. Memorial donations can be made at <https://www.camdendreamcenter.org>. Expressions of sympathy can be addressed to Keith Davis (son) at 10 Stead Court, Voorhees, NJ 08043.

Joan G. Robinson, surviving spouse of Retired Frank A. Robinson, died on Aug. 20. A viewing and memorial service were held at Bradley Funeral Home in Marlton. Memorial donations can be made to the Marlton UMC, P.O. Box 1160 Marlton, NJ 08053.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



This month we feature a group of educators who are active members of the Wayne UMC. They work in various school systems as teachers, learning consultants and school nurses. They gathered for brunch before the start of the school year to offer support and fellowship to one another. They are dressed as "Rosie, the Riveters" and have adopted the "We Can Do It" slogan to help with positivity for this year. Another meeting is scheduled for later in the fall when the group will continue to offer each other support.

Each month we will highlight one photo sent in from our congregations that really exemplifies the wonderful ministries they are doing. If you would like to submit a photo, please email Heather Mistretta at hmistretta@gnjumc.org.

NEW JOB POSTINGS AT GNJ

St. Paul UMC Willingboro – P/T Bookkeeper

Qualifications:

- Bookkeeping experience and knowledge
- Must know QuickBooks and QuickBooks payroll
- Familiarity with UMC structure a plus
- Salary commensurate with experience
- Flexible hours. Hours per week: 6-10. Will fluctuate with work required.

Submit resume to St. Paul UMC at stpumc@verizon.net or 201 Levitt Pkwy, Willingboro, NJ 08046

Sparta UMC – Director of Youth and Children's Ministry

Sparta UMC is seeking a creative, energetic and committed Director of Youth and Children's Ministry for approximately 15-20 hours per week. Responsibilities include organizing and leading youth ministry opportunities as well as overseeing and supervising children's workers in Sunday School and VBS.

Resumes should be sent to Jeff Leonard, Chairperson, at jleonard136@gmail.com.

Two vacancies at Atlantic Highlands Navesink UMC Audio/Visual Coordinator

This position is under the general supervision of the clergy and is responsible for the oversight, direction, and function of all audio, video and streaming systems.

Music and Creative Arts Director

Approximately 15 hours a week to prepare, play and sing for all worship services. For more information please email AHNUMNCoffice2@gmail.com.

Park UMC – Director of Music

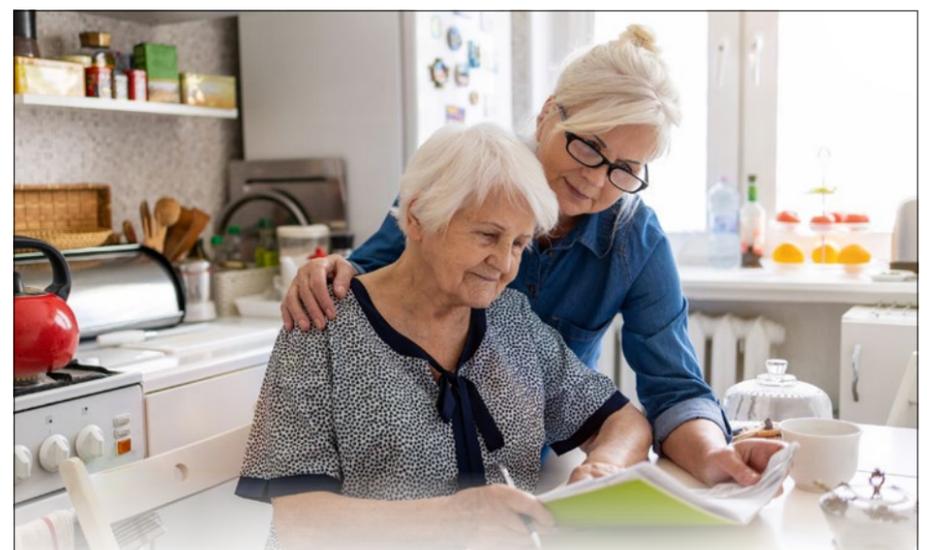
Park UMC seeks to hire a Director of Music to oversee the planning, organization, and execution of music ministry for the church. The Director will lead worship through a diverse range of musical expression, from traditional church hymns to contemporary music representing musical styles from around the globe.

For a complete description of the position, go to https://parkumcbloomfield.org/?subpages/Music_Director.shtml.

AFWH Disaster Response Coordinator

The Disaster Response Coordinator organizes and directs efforts to identify work sites, recruit volunteers, and raise and allocate funds within Greater New Jersey. The coordinator also works collaboratively with A Future With Hope Inc. to create systems and best practices for disaster response across Greater New Jersey.

For more detailed information on all current GNJ job opportunities please, visit: <https://www.gnjumc.org/job-opportunities>



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Home Office
3311 State Route 33, Neptune, NJ 07753
umcommunities.org



BRISTOL GLEN | COLLINGSWOOD | PITMAN | THE SHORES

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.

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Let's cross the finish line together making miracles.

www.gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere