

THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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Butler UMC volunteers at
Christ Church, Jersey City



Neighbors Helping Neighbors

By Heather Mistretta

JERSEY CITY, NJ

As the scripture proclaims, “when one of us hurts, we all hurt together.” With compassion and courageous spirit that exemplified the United Methodist mission, a group of 21 volunteers led by Butler UMC’s Jack Inglis gathered on Dec. 18

in Jersey City to help Christ Church, which had been devastated by Ida. Together, they were able to complete the work they needed to do.

“A big thank you to all of the volunteers who came by the church to help clean up following Hurricane Ida. It’s been a rough few months as we’ve tried to get help with this huge project,” said Rev. Mark Schol. “A special thanks to the people of Butler UMC

and GNJ who, without their help, we would not have been able to make this happen. Praise God!”

In November, a smaller team of volunteers spent a day removing all the water damaged carpeting, furniture, floor tiles, books and other debris, but a lack of dumpsters resulted in only being able to fill two dumpster bags.

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Trinity First Hope Center

By Jack Fosbenner

MILLVILLE, NJ

The Trinity First Hope Center (Millville) has received their 501c3 (non-profit) status after opening in 2020. The Hope Center, overseen by Pastor Tom Stark, Pastor Jack Fosbenner, Heidi Diemand, and ran by Andy Rief and Dona Stiles, is a vital outreach to an impoverished community, hit especially hard by COVID-19. A mission of First United Methodist Church, Millville, the Hope Center is supported by various



Trinity First Hope Center volunteers prepare food packages for pick up

other churches and denominations in and around our community, which is part of our success. The Hope Center strives to serve the needs of the people

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Developing Fearless Leaders to Take the Journey Together

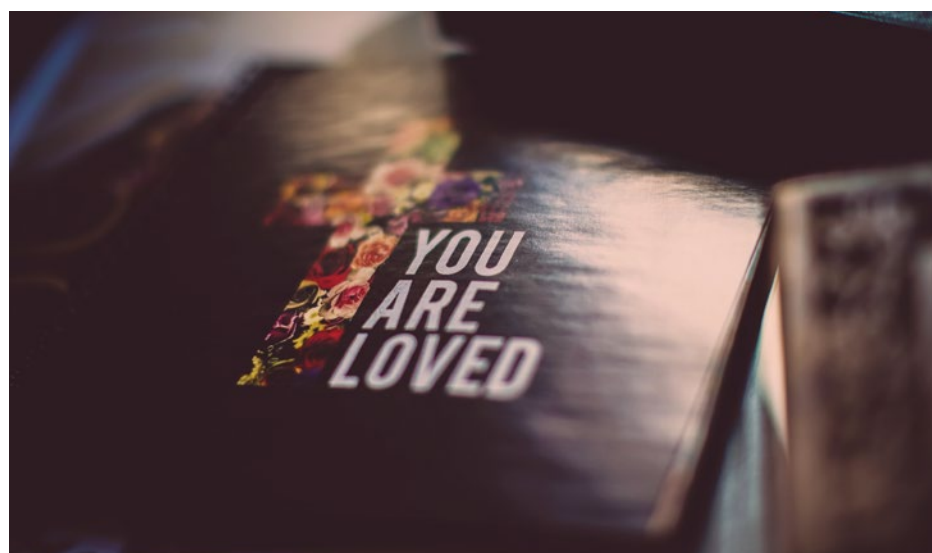
“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.”

—NELSON MANDELA

By Heather Mistretta

When the team for A Journey of Hope set out on its own journey to find a group that could help them boldly move forward to develop a plan to end the sin of racism, there was one group that stood out from the rest, one group that wasn’t afraid to have uncomfortable conversations or challenge others to step outside their comfort zones and get out on the bumpy road of justice and inclusion.

Enter Fearless Dialogues, an organization that is committed to seeing the



invisible and hearing the voiceless in its quest for justice and compassion.

In November, Fearless Dialogues hosted its first training session, “Five Fears Workshop,” for about 58 people in GNJ. The reception was a resounding cheer

for what the grassroots organization is doing to change lives.

An identical session to this one was offered to a new group of GNJers on Jan. 6 with Part 2 content of the “Five Fears

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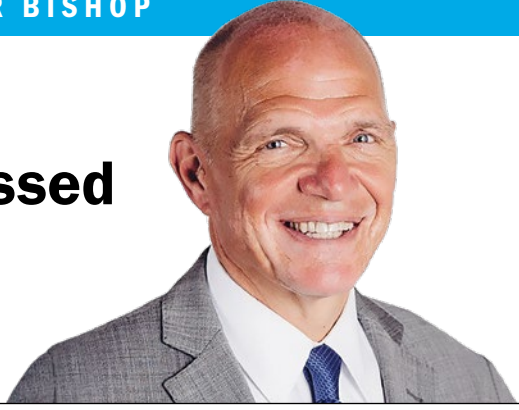
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A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP

Happy and Blessed New Year!

Bishop John Schol



You have probably heard the saying, practice makes perfect. There is a lot of truth to that. Of course, if you are practicing the wrong thing, you may be perfecting the opposite of what you are trying to achieve.

In my experience, there are three things that I have found that helps me be better at something I do, particularly leadership—*challenge, failure and practice.*

“IN MY EXPERIENCE, THERE ARE THREE THINGS THAT I HAVE FOUND THAT HELPS ME BE BETTER AT SOMETHING I DO, PARTICULARLY LEADERSHIP—CHALLENGE, FAILURE AND PRACTICE.”

—Bishop John Schol

Challenge

A corporation wanted to better understand why some within their company excelled and were promoted and others did not. They studied all of their training and leadership development programs, both internal and external to the company. They studied bonus programs. They looked at particular supervisors and their success rate. They found none of these made the difference. Instead, the common denominator was that those who excelled were those who were given a challenge and accomplished the challenge. They were then given a harder challenge and excelled. They found that those who excelled, like challenges and applied themselves to

overcome the challenges. Good leaders like challenges. They see in the challenge opportunities to learn, excel, and accomplish something for a greater outcome. Life, ministry, and the church has been filled with challenges over the last two years. More challenges than are reasonable and healthy. In this new year, focus on a couple of challenges that will make a difference for ministry, family and community. Embrace these challenges as opportunities to learn, grow and help move the church's and your personal mission forward.

Failure

When I look back over my career in ministry, 43 years now, and identify when I grew the most, it was when I failed. It wasn't a book I read, a class I took, or a workshop I attended. These are all important, but most helpful to me was when I failed and asked what can I learn from this and what will I do differently in the future? I have failed many times over my lifetime and my attitude was critical. Many times I was defensive. Not helpful. There were times I looked to someone else to blame. Not helpful. There were times I tried to put a good spin on it. Not helpful. There were times I tried to hide it. Not helpful.

What was helpful was to apologize as appropriate, own my own mistakes, assess what I did and what I would do differently in the future. On a few occasions, I pursued outside help through a coach and even in a more challenging situation, a therapist. With God's help and when I was willing to face into my failures, I grew. Not by a little, but by a lot.

Today, I tell young clergy, fail early and often. Take risks. To employ this strategy, you have to have healthy people around you. Healthy people are people who reserve judgement, care about you, encourage you, support you and give you honest, thoughtful feedback. Healthy people are not always easily found. People who only tell you what you want to hear are not the type of health you need. People who only blame or criticize are not healthy people.

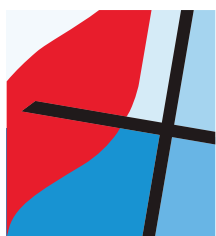
Practice

When you understand and engage in taking on challenges and healthy failure, practice is beneficial. The best leaders practice. A gymnast's routine may only be minutes or even seconds, but they practice for years. Anything worth doing well or becoming takes practice. Leaders do not practice enough. Practicing leadership requires observing the best leaders, volunteering for challenges, and mentally and emotionally going over what you do and how you do it. It involves looking at various scenarios and how you will respond. The days leading up to an annual conference session, I run through my mind all of the things I might encounter and how I will handle them. In my leadership, I ask people what they might expect will occur and how they would handle something. I envision myself in the role and what and how I would engage, lead.

I still have a lot to learn about leadership. I believe leadership is a lifelong learning experience. In this new year, I continue to identify how to be empathetic in the midst of a pandemic, how to lead through difference in the midst of denominational challenges and how to equip leaders to be their best. I invite you to think about what challenges you will seek and what you practice so you can be the best for the mission, your family, and the world. 🌍

CORRECTION:

In the article *Embracing the Legacy of Aldersgate* on page 6 of the December issue of *The Relay*, it should have stated that Mark Miller is a full professor at Drew University, not an assistant professor. We regret the error.



THE RELAY

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A Journey of Hope

Every community deserves to be healthy in mind, body and spirit.

LEARN MORE AT:
www.gnjumc.org/journeyofhope



UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY



UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

MAKE A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

Connect with your leaders, church and community all year long.

JANUARY

Dedicate church council leaders during a worship service by giving thanks to God and praying for these servant leaders.

FEBRUARY

Review the church's mission statement each gathering so that each team remains focused on their "WHY."

MARCH

Beginning planning a big event for the summer so that the congregation and community remains involved and connected.

APRIL

Host a faith sharing workshop to help people share their faith and the message of the Risen Christ in their daily lives.

MAY

Celebrate new life with creation care opportunities such as planting a community garden!

JUNE

This Pentecost, embrace a time of spiritual revival in ways such as an outdoor worship service, a day of spiritual retreat or church wide community prayer walk.

JULY

Schedule one-on-ones with key leaders in the church and community to learn how you can best serve alongside them.

AUGUST

Meet with your Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development to identify gifted individuals to serve in church leadership.

SEPTEMBER

Kick off the fall with not only a prayer over backpacks as kids start school but the leaders who are launching new programming.

OCTOBER

Embrace the Halloween season as an opportunity to connect with young people and the community in new ways that share Christ.

NOVEMBER

Be thankful. Make a habit of thanking your leaders by email, personal note, phone call or a potluck. Gratitude is a gift!

DECEMBER

Less is More. Offer a single churchwide mission project for all ages that shares the Christmas spirit.

GBHEM to Award Scholarships Totaling \$5 Million

By Laura Canzonier

GNJ celebrates that the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) Office of Loans and Scholarships will be awarding over 2,100 students a total of \$5 million in financial assistance for 2021! These future leaders range from first year Freshmen to Doctorate level students across the denomination.

Several events including United Methodist Student Day, World Communion Sunday, and Native American Sunday helped fund a portion of the scholarships. The remaining funds for these awards come from gifts, annuities, and endowments GBHEM has invested and administered for decades.

Additionally, GNJ has partnered with GBHEM on the Excellence in Clergy Leadership Scholarship, a debt-avoidance scholarship address economic challenges facing pastoral

leaders. For 2022/2023, meritorious United Methodist seminarians will be eligible for a \$2,500 scholarship from GBHEM, as well as additional support from foundations, annual conferences, and seminaries. GNJ will match these scholarship funds so that the recipient receives a \$5,000 scholarship.

The seminarians will also receive intentional opportunities to enhance their personal financial literacy. The purpose of this scholarship program is to create a collaboration across United Methodist organizations in support of future clergy reducing or eliminating educational debt and building upon financial acumen.

Applications for the Excellence in Clergy Leadership Scholarship are accepted online by March 24, 2022 at www.gbhem.org/scholarshipapplication.

Students who are members of The United Methodist Church may apply for a Fall 2022 GBHEM scholarship online by March 24, 2022, at www.gbhem.org/scholarshipapplication.

Congratulations to the following recipient of GBHEM scholarships for Fall 2021:

Student	Church	Institution	Award
Brittany Boetticher	UMC of Lake Hopatcong	Drew University	Rev. Dr. Karen Layman Gift of Hope Scholarship
Gerald Cameron	Trinity UMC	Seton Hall University	United Methodist General Scholarship
Sheena Cameron	Magnolia Road UMC	United Theological Seminary	Baxter Roelfson Sands Scholarship
Timothy Conaway	Trinity UMC	Drew University Theological School	United Methodist General Scholarship
Emily Da Silva	Davis Memorial UMC	Kean University	Ethnic Scholarship
Daewoung Jo	Calvary Korean UMC	Drew University Theological School	HANA Scholarship
Melissa Johnson	Bishop Janes UMC	Messiah University	Rev. Dr. Karen Layman Gift of Hope Scholarship
Heeyoung Jung	Omega Mission Korean UMC	Claremont School of Theology	HANA Scholarship
Jene Lee	Arcola Korean UMC	Drew University Theological School	Journey Toward Ordained Ministry Scholarship
Meridith Mandala	Hope UMC	Rowan College of South Jersey	Rev. Dr. Karen Layman Gift of Hope Scholarship
Kayleigh Morpeth	Hackettstown Trinity UMC	William Paterson University of NJ	Miriam Hoffman Scholarship
Rachel Nyantakyi	Ghana Calvary UMC	Rutgers University-New Brunswick	Ethnic Scholarship
Roeline Ramirez	Trinity UMC	Drew University Theological School	E. Craig Brandenburg Scholarship
Sarah Schall	First UMC Avalon	Messiah University	Rev. Dr. Karen Layman Gift of Hope Scholarship
Lila Villasenor	Congers NY UMC	Berklee College of Music	Ethnic Scholarship
Sarah Williams	UMC in Madison	Drew University Theological School	Journey Toward Ordained Ministry Scholarship
Benjamin Wiseman	Centenary UMC	Emory University	Baxter Roelfson Sands Scholarship
Dylan Wyss	Cranford UMC	Rowan University	Rev. Dr. Karen Layman Gift of Hope Scholarship
Christabel Zimbeva	Morrow Memorial UMC	Drew University	United Methodist General Scholarship

AWARD SEASON IS HERE!

We are beginning our plans to celebrate GNJ Agency Awards that will be given in 2022.
The deadline for entries is Feb. 1.

Francis Asbury Award

The Francis Asbury Award is a non-monetary award given to the recipient to recognize and encourage support of higher education and campus ministries within The United Methodist Church.

Robert B. Steelman Church History Award

The GNJ Commission on Archives and History (GCAH) is now taking nominations for its Robert B. Steelman Methodist History Award, which recognizes the best overall local church history submitted in a given year.

The Morris L. Smith Ethnic Church History Award

The GNJ Commission on Archives and History is now taking nominations for this award that encourages and seeks to spotlight the rich faith stories our diverse ethnic congregations. The award is named after Morris L. Smith who was a strong advocate and mentor to many in building bridges across racial and ethnic divisions.

The John Goodwin Multi-Media Church History Award

The GNJ Commission on Archives and History is now taking nominations for the John Goodwin Multi-Media Church History Award, which recognizes the many different ways that churches may tell and celebrate their faith stories today.

Christian Unity Award

The Commission on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relationships is seeking nominations for an individual and a congregation that work in the areas of Christian Unity and Interfaith Relationships.

Harry Denman Evangelism Award

The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference is seeking nominations for the Harry Denman Evangelism Award. The Harry Denman Evangelism Award recognizes a person whose life and ministry exemplifies the teaching of Christ and the Great Commission. Nominations for lay, clergy, and youth are being sought. One lay, one clergy, and one youth award will be presented.

Harry A. Seese Memorial Scholarship

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey pastors are invited to apply for the Harry A. Seese Memorial Scholarship for continuing education. Each year this award is given to a pastor whose plans for continuing education will lead to strengthening his/her ministry in the local church.

Helenor Alter Davisson Award

The Commission on the Status and Role of Women is seeking nominations for the Helenor Alter Davisson Award for outstanding women leadership and influence in GNJ.



More details about the awards can be found at:
www.gnjumc.org/award-information

Jersey City Neighbors

Continued from page 1

“What an awesome day! We started out thinking it would be our team of five and it would take 21 days to finish cleaning out the church and filling a dumpster,” said Butler UMC’s Outreach Chair Jack Inglis.

He added, “Thanks to a shout out for help, we ended up being a total of 21 joyful volunteers coming from Christ Church, northern NJ, southern NJ and NY State. The dumpster was filled, the church was

“AS NATURAL DISASTERS BECOME MORE PREVALENT AND EXTREME, HAVING AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE TO RESPOND IS IMPERATIVE.”

—Rev. Cricket Denton,
Disaster Response
Coordinator for GNJUMC

completely cleaned out and broom swept by mid-afternoon. Teamwork makes the DREAM work! God is so good. This is what the “United” in United Methodists means to us.”

But with 24 of our churches also needing help with clean up and repairs, more volunteers, both untrained and ERT-certified, are going to be needed as A Future With Hope progresses through this process through renewal. Gathering volunteers has been difficult as 71 other declarations of disaster have been made in the United States, including the most recent in Kentucky and Tennessee.

The onslaught has crippled any efforts of volunteers coming from out of state as was the case during super-storm Sandy. GNJ’s Disaster Response Coordinator Rev. Cricket Denton is working hard to find team leaders who can rally volunteers in getting the work done.

“As natural disasters become more prevalent and extreme, having an



GNJ volunteers assist with Hurricane Ida clean up at Christ Church, Jersey City



GNJ volunteer loads debris into dumpster during clean up in Jersey City



Butler UMC volunteers sort items at Christ Church after Hurricane Ida damage

organizational structure to respond is imperative,” said GNJ’s Disaster Response Coordinator Rev. Cricket Denton. “Our conference Disaster Response Committee is working hard to make sure we have the right people in the right positions in an

effort to minimize our response time for future events.

She added, “We’re partnering with different organizations to pull our resources and volunteers together to help those in need. As we begin to assess homes, our goal is to work

in low-income areas so that we are helping the most vulnerable in our community.”

More resources regarding training, volunteering and funding can be found at www.gnjumc.org/afwh/ida-relief-effort.

Trinity Millville UMC

Continued from page 1

around them. This vision of hope has become a trusted beacon of light to food-insecure families and delivers food, hand-in-hand with compassion, hope and the message of salvation. A primary success of this mission is that of building

relationships with the people. We know their names, we know who they are, we care and love each one of them. When one passes from an overdose, or unfortunate motor vehicle accident, it is a loss for our community.

The Hope Center primarily serves the homeless population in Millville providing food and meals, a mailing address

for persons who are homeless, opportunity for rehab, and serving as a Code Blue facility. During the year 2021 the hope center served over 2100 meals to those in need. The Hope Center is currently in the process of securing funding and a contractor to update bathrooms and put in showers in the Hope Center.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Trinity First Hope Center volunteers; GNJ volunteers prepare food for distribution in Millville, NJ; Warm beds await those in need as part of the Code Blue Facility at Trinity First Hope Center



Journey of Hope

Continued from page 1

Workshop” scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 29.

This enthusiasm and passion to see, hear and change all started back in 2013 when a verdict found George Zimmerman not guilty of second-degree murder charges in the lethal shooting of Trayvon Martin. The shocking decision raised critical questions about the American legal system and the historical and systemic injustices plaguing communities of color. Now nearly nine years later, we continue to face these unfathomable actions and decisions.

Dr. Gregory C. Ellison, II, one of the founders who unofficially dubs himself the “Craftsman of Care,” saw the need for transformative dialogue that embraces difference, cultivates hope and leads to change. Three weeks following the Zimmerman verdict, over 300 unlikely partners from all walks of life gathered at Emory University for the inaugural Fearless Dialogues community conversation.

The team led by Ellison who has a Ph.D. and M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary, calls themselves “animators,” people who bring conversations to life and give inspiration, encouragement or renewed vigor to unlikely partners in dialogue.

“As animators, we vitalize conversations that move unlikely community partners from fear and apathy to self-discovery and culture change.”

Rev. Peggy Holder-Jones of Calvary and Wesley UMCs, who joined the November session, said, “It was extremely impactful with straight-talk,



“THE SIN OF RACISM IS A CONSTANT IN OUR WORLD BUT SHOULD NOT BE A CONSTANT IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.”

—Rev. Peggy Holder-Jones of Calvary and Wesley UMCs

Rev. Peggy Holder Jones, Food For Friends program

He said, “My most powerful reflection of that day is this — I was impressed with how quickly and efficiently the moderators moved such our large Zoom gathering out of that Zoom lethargy so often present and into intimate, small group conversations, with only two simple exercises.

to stories is engrained into how I was trained as a pastor. I actually would have liked a little more time in the small groups.”

Montanye, who has been a pastor for over 40 years, said he is looking forward to going through the whole process and the possibilities that it will bring. During his ministry, he has worked to create possibilities for others, having worked with groups in Haverstraw, NY, Senegal and Paterson. At First UMC, they host the Blind Center on Tuesday and Thursday of each week, make prayer shawls for others and provide physical, emotional and spiritual support to those in need.

But as he looks ahead to the next session, he said, “Here I am in the second wealthiest zip code in New Jersey, and I wonder what my role is in a highly privileged congregation.”

Dorothy Wetzel, a lay member at Morrow Memorial Church in Maplewood who leads the immigration committee, also sees herself as privileged and now feels a greater awareness of listening and being heard. “Coming from a repressed WASP upbringing, learning about the five fears that stifle conversation gives me hope that change is possible, both for myself and my church. I’m excited to be gaining skills that will help our church have the hard conversations around race that we need to become a truly antiracist church.”

She added, “The workshop reminded me of the power that just being heard can have on someone. So often I find myself focused on coming up with solutions to people’s problems, that I don’t actually make them feel heard.”



“I’M EXCITED TO BE GAINING SKILLS THAT WILL HELP OUR CHURCH HAVE THE HARD CONVERSATIONS AROUND RACE THAT WE NEED TO BECOME A TRULY ANTIRACIST CHURCH.”

—Dorothy Wetzel, lay member at Morrow Memorial Church, Maplewood, NJ



“TO CREATE A BRAVE SPACE FIT CONVERSATIONS AROUND DIFFICULT ISSUES THE NECESSITY OF MOVING QUICKLY TO SUCH A PLACE IS NECESSARY BUT ARE NOT ALWAYS SO EASILY ACHIEVED.”

—Rev. Brian Joyce of Trinity UMC Ewing

hands-on and mind-structuring exercises preparing us to address a topic which is long overdue. The sin of racism is a constant in our world but should not be a constant in the Church of Christ.”

Holder-Jones, who also chairs the Committee on Disability Concerns and whose churches are boldly serving their communities like Irvington with food, backpacks and grocery store gift cards, continued, “GNJ is intentional by creating this program and selecting a group of motivational leaders to help us move from being ‘fearful’ to being ‘fearless.’”

She continued, “Beginning with conversation allows us to ‘seek understanding not necessarily agreement’ was a statement made by Rev. Dr. Ellison, which caught my attention when the session started. These gatherings will teach us how to see all persons and hear their voices so that in becoming free to see and hear each other, there is an innate desire to make a generational change. I sense that with these sessions we will start to remove the bandages placed to cover up years of hurt, and with these dialogues healing can truly begin so that revival and the work of God becomes truly authentic.”

For Rev. Brian Joyce of Trinity UMC Ewing, he too saw that authenticity and seamless transition from stranger to neighbor.

To create a brave space fit conversations around difficult issues the necessity of moving quickly to such a place is necessary but are not always so easily achieved.”

At Trinity UMC, its members are a faith-in-action community where individuals engage the world through loving service. They believe that there are no spare people—every person is vital to God.

Rev. Dave Montanye of First UMC of Avalon also liked the fluid nature of the session and how open it was to hearing and embracing different stories.

“As a Caucasian, my job was to keep silent. I didn’t want to get in the way of people telling their stories. Listening



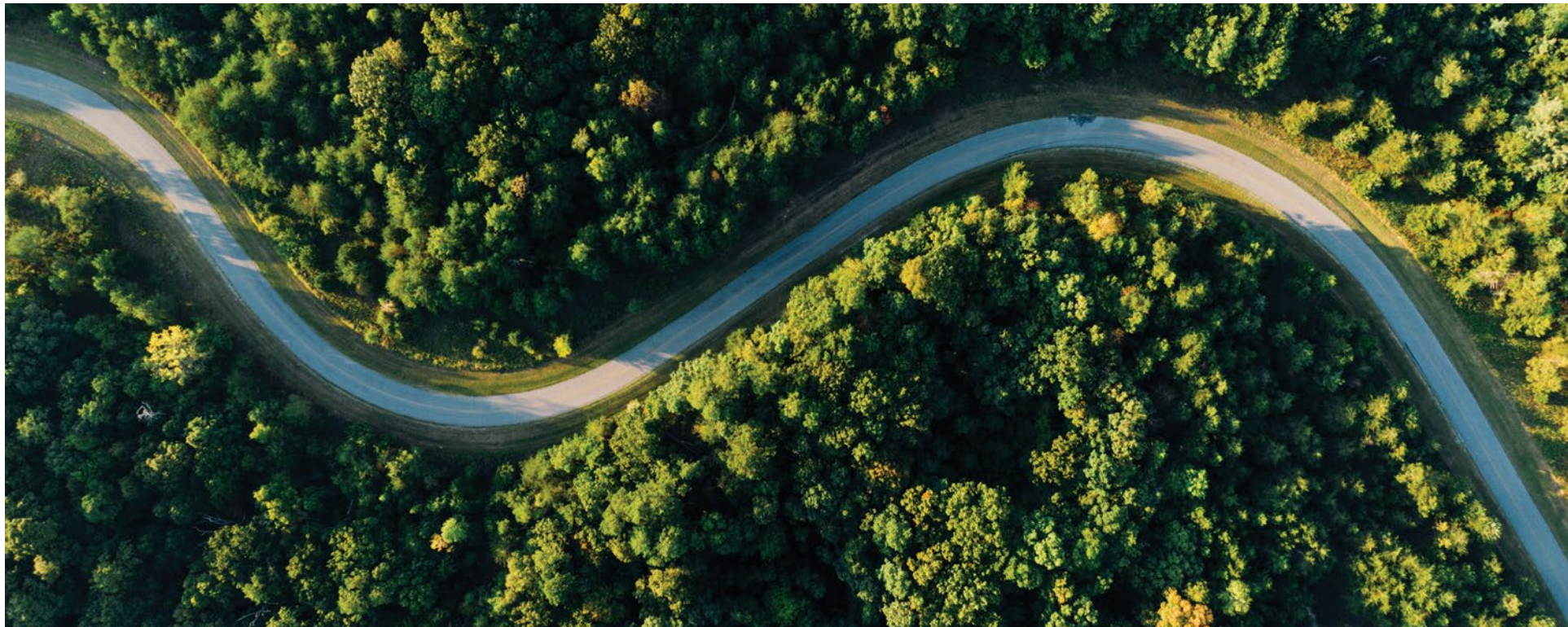
“HERE I AM IN THE SECOND WEALTHIEST ZIP CODE IN NEW JERSEY, AND I WONDER WHAT MY ROLE IS IN A HIGHLY PRIVILEGED CONGREGATION.”

—Rev. Dave Montanye of First UMC of Avalon

Fearless Dialogues is clearly up for the challenges before them. No matter what the story is, this grassroots organization is dedicated to unraveling each story and empowering others to claim it as their own.

“Our hope as we do this work is that we will partner with others to foster strong communities for the common good by creating spaces for unlikely relationships to change the way people see themselves and the world around them.”

As mentioned, the second stage of training is scheduled for Jan. 29. If you have additional questions, please contact Rev. Enger Muteteke, director of resourcing, at emuteteke@gnjumc.org.



Pathways to Congregational Development

By Gina Yeske

As we begin the new year many congregational leaders are asking the same questions. What will 2022 hold for our congregation? What strategy can we use to move our church forward in the new year? What processes are available to support healthy and sustainable ministry goals for the future?

We would like to introduce Pathways to Congregational Development. Pathways offers congregations an intentional process to prepare, assess, learn and grow in their understanding about what it means to be a healthy, fruitful congregation post COVID-19. Pathways offers the tools to create a plan that provides clarity and focus to take the next faithful steps in ministry and mobilize leaders and disciples to world-changing discipleship and



ministry. Pathways builds on the work your congregation has already done and offers new directions for being connected and engaged in mission and ministry.

United Methodists in Greater New Jersey are called to recruit and equip spiritual transformational leaders to make disciples and grow congregations for the transformation of the world. Healthy & fruitful congregations will invest in intentional discipleship systems to invite, connect, engage, nurture, and send out disciples to make a difference in the community. Pathways will assist you in living out this call.

You can learn more about the Pathways process and fill out this interest form by visiting <https://www.gnjumc.org/pathways>.



United Methodists of Greater New Jersey

REDISTRICTING IN 2022

METRO HIGHLANDS REGION
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Meadowlands District
Rev. William M. Williams III

Skylands District
Rev. Dr. Eunice Vega Perez

Raritan Shore District
Rev. Sang Won Doh

COASTAL PLAINS REGION
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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Rev. Héctor A. Burgos

Cape Atlantic District
Rev. Brian Roberts

Delaware Bay District
Rev. Glenn J. Conaway

Learn more, including an interactive map to see where your church fits, on the GNJ website at:
www.gnjumc.org/districts



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 Laura at lcanzonier@gnjumc.org.

Lay Servant 101

by Terri Pagani, Conference Director for Lay Servants Ministries

Have you ever wondered what a Lay Servant is? In the United Methodist Church, a lay servant is an active member of a local church who desires to serve the Church and has received specific training to develop skills and utilize their spiritual gifts. The Lay Servant Ministries program offers learning opportunities and experiences to equip disciples of Jesus Christ to realize and respond to their personal call to ministry.

One who wishes to serve in this way starts by taking the Basic/Local Lay Servant class offered by the GNJ conference twice each year. This is the first step to become a lay servant.

This class focuses on Leading, Caring and Communicating and offers the opportunity to explore your gifts and how to use them to better serve your church and community. The class also includes a basic understanding of the structure of the UMC and an overview of Lay Servant Ministries. The ten-hour class, taught by clergy or Certified Lay Servants, may be held in two-hour sessions over five weeks or longer sessions over a weekend. Attendance at all classes is required. Classes are currently on Zoom, allowing you to choose the class schedule that works best for your personal schedule.

If you are interested in taking the Basic class, I encourage you to speak with your pastor or your District Director for Lay Servant Ministries. The list of directors is found on the GNJ website (www.gnjumc.org), Laity Leadership page. Click on Lay Servant Ministries for more information.

After the completing the Basic class, you may wish to take the next step – Certified/Advanced classes, which are offered twice a year in the GNJ Conference. Classes focus on diverse topics such as Storytelling, Leading in Prayer, Leading Bible Study, Caregiving, Stewardship, Planning and Leading Worship, Spiritual Gifts, History & Polity of the UMC, Preaching, and more. One topic per season (spring/fall) is chosen by the Lay Servant Ministries Committee. The Certified/Advanced is also ten hours of contact time and is taught by clergy.



Photo: Gift Habeshaw

The Lay Servant Ministries program is an excellent way for people to be better servants of Jesus Christ, to become stronger church leaders, and to assist their pastors more capably. Will you consider taking the first step and take the Basic class this spring? Registration information for both the Basic and Certified/Advanced is posted in The Digest and on the conference website. 🇺🇸

New Providence UMC: The Power of Connecting in Newark

By Sally Hoffman

NEWARK, NJ

Once in a while someone you may casually know, suddenly becomes instrumental through deeds and actions that bridge time and place in order to achieve something truly special. In that way, a single worshipper at the New Providence UMC was in the right place and time to design a bridge between the non-profit grassroots Kinney Street Community Garden (Newark); the fourth oldest Methodist Church in the country (New Providence); and a North Jersey non-profit organization.



GNJ volunteers at Kinney Street Community Garden, Newark, NJ

It all began with music—and a serendipitous string of events.

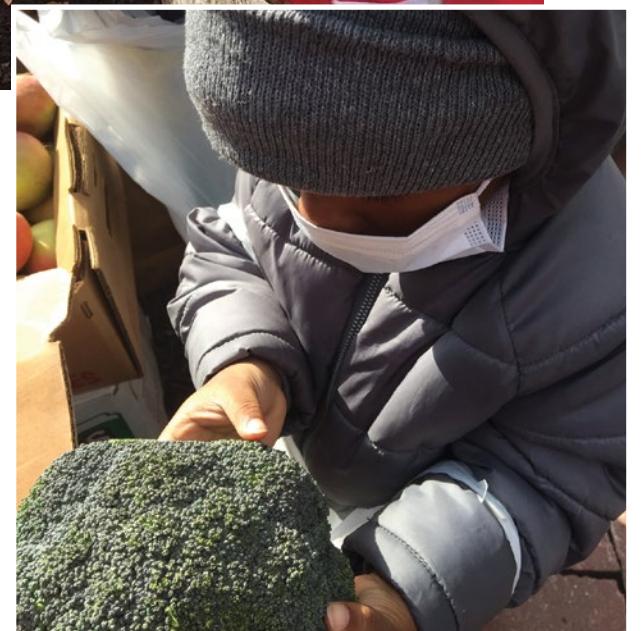
After church one Sunday morning, Jee-Hoon Kryska, a worshipper, accomplished professional pianist, and founder of the Newark-based non-profit Keys-2-Success, mentioned that the keyboard students she works with would be doing a presentation at the non-profit Kinney Street Community Garden in Newark.

She asked if any worshippers wanted to come out to support her and her students. President Sally Hoffman and Administrative Council Chairperson, Pat Kennedy, enthusiastically accepted—and were greatly impressed with both the students' talent and what the Kinney Street Community Garden has done for the health, education and well-being of people living in Newark's Central Ward.

Barbara Weiland, founder and executive director of the non-profit Kinney Street Community Garden, explained the multi-tiered mission—to provide a hands-on educational experience, produce fresh, nutritional food; and to form a purpose-driven community within a small gathering place.

The church women were impressed with everything they heard and saw, and what initially began as an invitation to a small recital blossomed into a multi-county web of community connections that made everything else possible.

As a result of the power of connections, Kinney Street Community Gardens received donations of the most essential items on their Grow-A-Garden wish-list: potting soil, nutrients, compost, organic fertilizer, daffodil and tulip bulbs for the children to plant for spring, along with fresh, nutritious produce to distribute to their Newark family members in time for Thanksgiving.

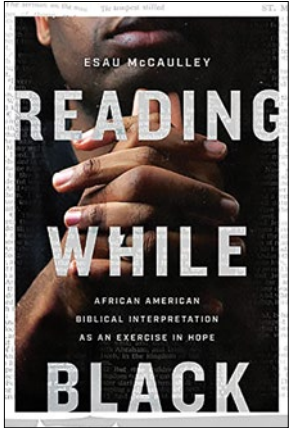


To accomplish this, the New Providence UMC Women reached out to a Pittstown, NJ non-profit, who in turn was able to provide bins of white potatoes, sweet potatoes, and cabbage.

Church members then purchased an additional 18 boxes of broccoli to augment the other vegetables and assisted in the distribution in time for a happy and wholesome Thanksgiving. 🇺🇸

JANUARY BOOKSHELF

Happy New Year! This month we are looking to ring in the new year with hope and a new outlook. Discover the varied selection of books below, including one from Matawan UMC's Nick Connolly, that we hope will be restorative and/or empowering for you in the new year. We invite you to read these on your own or consider using one for a book club small group.



Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope
(2020, IVP) By Esau McCaulley

Reading While Black is a personal and scholarly testament to the power and hope of Black biblical interpretation. At a time in which some within the African American community are questioning the place of the Christian faith in the struggle for justice, New Testament scholar McCaulley argues that reading Scripture from the perspective of Black church tradition is invaluable for connecting with a rich faith history and addressing the urgent issues of our times.

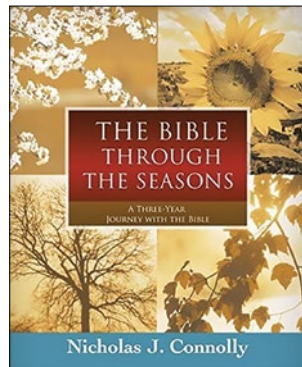
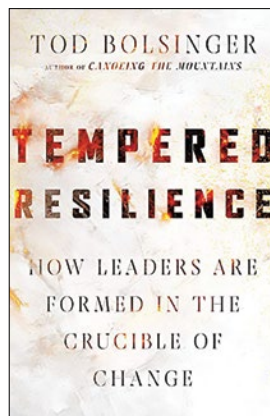
Esau McCaulley (Ph.D., St. Andrews) is assistant professor of New Testament at Wheaton College and a contributing opinion writer for *The New York Times*. His publications include *Sharing in the Son's Inheritance* and numerous articles in outlets such as Christianity Today, Religious News Service and The Washington Post.

Tempered Resilience: How Leaders Are Formed in the Crucible of Change

(2020, IVP) By Tod Bolsinger

Tempered Resilience explores the qualities of adaptive leadership in contexts ranging from churches to nonprofit organizations. The book, which also includes a study guide, examines both the external challenges we face and the internal resistance that holds us back.

Tod Bolsinger is the vice president for vocation and formation and assistant professor of practical theology at Fuller Theological Seminary. He is the author of *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives* and *Show Time: Living Down Hypocrisy by Living Out the Faith*.



The Bible Through the Seasons: A Three-Year Journey with the Bible

(2007, iUniverse) By Nicholas Connolly

The Bible Through the Seasons provides an opportunity to read the Bible over the course of three years, using a structured plan. The book introduces every daily reading with a "Firestarter," a one-minute message designed to ignite the creative imagination. Each day of the week is dedicated to a part of the Bible—the Psalms, the Gospels, etc. The program follows the ancient Jewish lectionary of dividing Genesis to Deuteronomy—known as the Torah—into fifty-four portions read yearly on the Sabbath.

Nicholas J. Connolly entered the Society of Jesus in 1960. He has ministered as counselor, retreat director, teacher and pastor in Puerto Rico, New York and New Jersey. He is the pastor of Matawan UMC.

Divine Disruption: Holding on to Faith When Life Breaks Your Heart

(2021, Thomas Nelson) By Dr. Tony Evans, Chrystal Evans Hurst, Priscilla Shirer, Anthony Evans & Jonathan Evans

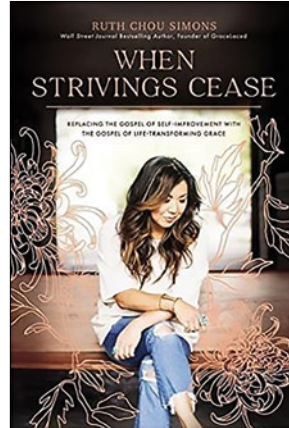
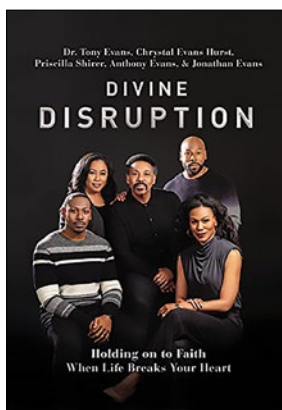
Divine Disruption pulls back the curtain on faith-shaking experiences during these challenging times, in order to provide biblical wisdom and practical encouragement for how to deal with the hard, unexpected things we all inevitably face.

Dr. Tony Evans is the founder and senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, founder and president of The Urban Alternative, and bestselling author of more than 100 books, booklets and Bible studies. The first African American to earn a doctorate of theology from Dallas Theological Seminary and to publish the first full-Bible commentary and study Bible, Dr. Evans has been named by Baylor University as one of the twelve Most Effective Preachers in the English-speaking world.

Chrystal Evans Hurst is the bestselling author of *She's Still There* and co-author of *Kingdom Woman*, with her father, Dr. Tony Evans. She reaches a wide audience speaking at conferences, sharing on her blog and podcast, and teaching and leading women in her home church and around the world. She is a mother of five. You can find out more about Chrystal at chrystalevanshurst.com.

Anthony Evans has voiced the gospel with a melodic, thought-provoking style for two decades and has emerged as one of Christian music's premier worship leaders and singer/songwriters. Along the way, he has released 10 solo projects, two of which debuted #1 on Billboard's Top Gospel Album charts, released his first book, *Unexpected Places*, produced numerous music videos, acted in three movies and performed as "Beast" in the Disney Hollywood Bowl production of *Beauty and the Beast*. Most recently Anthony received his first Grammy nomination for his executive production work on the gospel album *My Tribute*.

Jonathan Evans is a mentor, author, speaker, chaplain and former NFL fullback. He serves with his pastor, friend, and father, Dr. Tony Evans, both in the local church and the national ministry. A graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary with a master's degree in Christian Leadership, Jonathan also serves as the chaplain of the Dallas Cowboys and co-chaplain of the Dallas Mavericks. He and his wife Kanika are the proud parents of Kelsey, Jonathan II, Kamden, Kylar, and Jade Wynter and live in Dallas.



When Strivings Cease: Replacing the Gospel of Self-Improvement with the Gospel of Life-Transforming Grace

(2021, Thomas Nelson) By Ruth Chou Simons

When Strivings Cease shows you how to confront the ways you look to superficial means of acceptance and belonging; find relief in realizing self-help isn't the answer because you can't be so amazing that you won't need grace; stop seeing God as someone to perform for and start finding delight in responding to his welcome; and let go of trying to rely on your own strength, your own abilities, and your own savvy by truly understanding the freedom Jesus purchased for you.

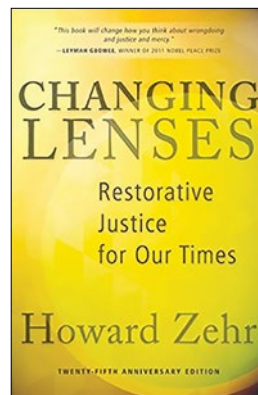
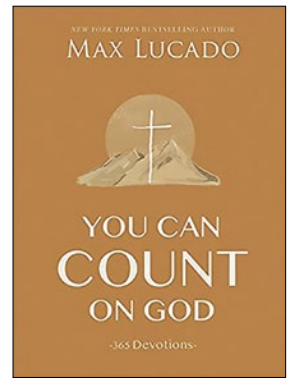
Ruth Chou Simons is a Wall Street Journal bestselling and award-winning author of several books, including *GraceLaced*, *Beholding and Becoming*, and *Foundations*. Her first Bible study curriculum, *TruthFilled*, was released in 2020. She is an artist, entrepreneur and speaker who uses each of these platforms to spiritually sow the Word of God into people's hearts. Through her online shop at GraceLaced.com and her social media community, Simons shares her journey of God's grace intersecting daily life with word and art. She and her husband, Troy, are grateful parents to six boys.

You Can Count on God: 365 Devotions

(2021, Thomas Nelson) By Max Lucado

Each dated entry in *You Can Count on God* includes an engaging devotion; comforting Scripture to bring us back to God's promises; encouragement to receive God's peace even in challenging circumstances; reminders of how God gives us courage to try new things and strength to make it through any trial we face.

Since entering the ministry in 1978, Max Lucado has served churches in Miami, FL; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and San Antonio, TX. He serves as teaching minister of Oak Hills Church in San Antonio. He is the recipient of the 2021 ECPA Pinnacle Award for his outstanding contribution to the publishing industry and society at large. He is America's bestselling inspirational author with more than 145 million products in print.



Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for Our Times

(2015, Herald Press) By Howard Zehr

Changing Lenses, a 25th anniversary edition, uncovers widespread assumptions about crime, the courts, retributive justice and the legal process. It offers provocative new paradigms and proven alternatives for public policy and judicial reform, and in this newer edition, there are valuable author updates on the changing landscape of restorative justice and a new section of resources for practitioners and teachers.

Widely known as "the grandfather of restorative justice," Howard Zehr began as a practitioner and theorist in restorative justice in the late 1970s at the foundational stage of the field. He has led hundreds of events in more than 25 countries and 35 states, including trainings and consultations on restorative justice, victim-offender conferencing, judicial reform and other criminal justice matters. A prolific writer and editor, speaker, educator and photojournalist, Zehr actively mentors other leaders in the field.

The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times

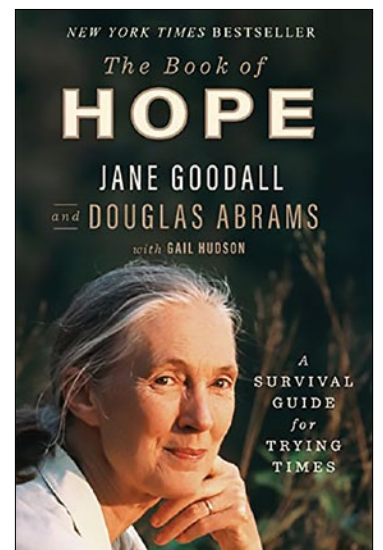
(2021, Celadon Books) By Jane Goodall, Douglas Abrams, Gail Hudson

The Book of Hope explores through intimate and thought-provoking dialogue one of the most sought after and least understood elements of human nature: hope. It touches on vital questions, including: How do we stay hopeful when everything seems hopeless? How do we cultivate hope in our children? What is the relationship between hope and action?

Dr. Jane Goodall, founder of the Jane Goodall Institute and UN Messenger of Peace, is an iconic voice for holistic, compassionate, and sustainable solutions. Through her global advocacy as an ethologist and environmentalist, she is shaping attitudes and policy on issues ranging from human rights to the climate crisis, and inspiring action through the power of hope.

Douglas Abrams is a former editor at the University of California Press and Harper San Francisco. He is the co-author of several books on love, sexuality and spirituality, including books written with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar and Taoist Master Mantak Chia. He is the co-founder of Idea Architects, a book and media development agency, which works with visionary authors to create a wiser, healthier, and more just world.

Gail Hudson is an international bestselling writer who writes about the power of human relationships to heal the world. She has written three books about saving animals and the natural world with Goodall.



Bringing the Invisible into the Light

By Heather Mistretta

Last January, it was determined that there were 8,097 men, women and children in 6,210 households who were experiencing homelessness in New Jersey as the pandemic put a stranglehold on congregating, job opportunities and the health of many. Eight hundred and 35 of these people were unsheltered, and 899 households were counted as families.

“As we expand our understanding of the changing population experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness, we work to maintain a sense of urgency in identifying solutions,” said Taiisa Kelly, CEO of Monarch Housing Associates, a nonprofit dedicated to working toward ending homelessness.

“In this time when we are struggling to emerge from the pandemic and rebuild, it is imperative that we don’t lose sight of those in vulnerable positions within our communities, especially those experiencing homelessness. We

faith-based organizations had to be put on hold because of the restrictions.

First UMC of Avalon continued to house those homeless people when the thermometer dipped below 32 degrees at its Trinity First Hope Center in Millville. Vincent UMC focuses on helping the homeless by assisting Family Promise of Essex County, as do others like Grace UMC-Wyckoff in Hackensack, the UMC of Madison in Morris County and St. Paul’s in West Deptford. Family Promise continues to expand its client services to include things like drop-in centers for area homeless; Keys-to-Housing, a rent and shelter subsidy program with mentoring and support to permanent housing; and transitional housing for individuals and families affected by domestic violence.

Despite the changes in the way homelessness was assessed in 2021, New Jersey continues to see disparities in who experiences homelessness. Consistent with other measures, people of color experience homelessness at disproportionately higher rates. On par with trends observed in prior years, Black people in New Jersey represent about 13% of the state population but about 50% of the identified population experienced homelessness.

“We cannot begin to address the racial inequities in our systems and begin to identify effective solutions without creating space for collaboration with the communities we seek to serve,” said Kelly.

Because so many ministries address these populations, churches make for valuable volunteers in the counting process that looks for homeless in many places including emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, safe havens, on the streets and under bridges.

For reasons ranging from job loss and mental illness to addiction, abuse and the COVID-19 pandemic, homelessness impacts young and old alike.

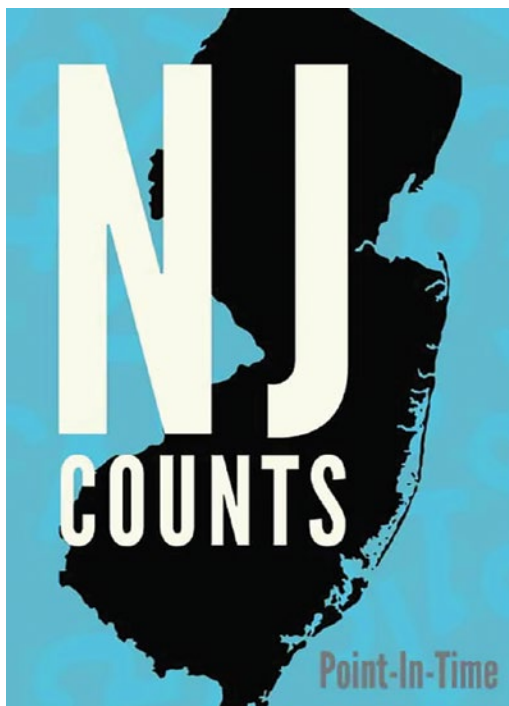
Some organizers use the count as an opportunity to provide resources such as warm clothing, meals, medical screening or other needs that can be delivered to those in need while they wait to meet with the surveyors. Things like warm socks, small bags of hygiene items, clean coats, gloves, scarves, hats and waterproof boots are recommended.

Counties can have “drop in sites” in various places where those in need are invited in to receive those resources, while other volunteers go out into the community to handle the same jobs.

In addition to volunteers and resources, locations are needed, as some counties like to set up fixed sites where those in need can come in, warm up, have a hot meal and meet with volunteers. Warm meals, bag lunches, snack foods like protein bars, juice boxes, hot coffee and bottled water are always useful donations for those in need who come forward to be counted.

Once complete, this data allows policymakers and program administrators to delve into where the need is greatest and work toward ending homelessness. Collecting data on homelessness and tracking progress can inform public opinion, increase public awareness and attract financial resources that will help alleviate the problem.

More information can be found at <https://monarchhousing.org>.



have a unique opportunity to seize this moment and make critical changes to end homelessness in our communities.”

On January 26, the next Point in Time count will be underway. The annual statewide effort is a count of sheltered and unsheltered people who are experiencing homelessness on a single night in a given community. Counts are carried out by staff and volunteers who conduct surveys that allow people who are experiencing homelessness to express their specific needs and housing status.

The process was first mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 2005 to identify homeless people so that assistance programs can be tailored specifically to these people with the intent of helping them.

On a local level, these counts allow agencies to plan for real needs. People who are experiencing homelessness are naturally difficult to track because they move frequently and do not always feel comfortable using community resources available to them.

In addition to identifying the homeless, Point-in-Time counts demonstrate real needs to funding entities like HUD and other agencies so that they can make monetary decisions based on data.

However, in 2021 the pandemic made it difficult to reach some of these people as homeless shelters limited the number of people they could house, and the Code Blue measures usually reserved for many

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan. 11	National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, #wearblueday (January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month)
Jan. 15	2022 Local Pastor School applications due
Jan. 15	2022 Certified Lay Minister Course registration ends
Jan. 15 9:30 a.m. – noon	GNJ's United Methodist Women's "Lead Like MLK" training event
Jan. 16	Human Relations Sunday
Jan. 22 from 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Metro-Highlands Foundational Leadership Training
Jan. 29 (new date) 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Part 2 content of the "Five Fears Workshop" from Fearless Dialogues
Jan. 31	Glenn Mandeville Memorial Scholarship applications due. More info at www.eecu.org/home
Feb. 1	2022 Laity Ministry Recognition Award nominations due
Feb. 1 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Breakthrough Lent Planning Workshop
Feb. 15, 22, March 1 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Faith Sharing in Innovative Ways
Feb. 16, 23, March 30 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Simple Board Model
March 3, 17, 31 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Blessing as a Way of Living

Additional details can be found on the GNJ website at gnjumc.org.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



This month we feature Waretown UMC where Anthony DeFranco volunteer interpreted in American Sign Language (ASL) at the altar during a service. De Franco, who is both deaf and autistic, teaches local ASL classes within the Barnegat/Waretown area for people of all ages. He uses both ASL and English to communicate with his cochlear implant. Stay tuned for more of this story in *The Relay*!

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 Laura at lcansonier@gnjumc.org.

CURRENT JOB POSTINGS

Administrative Assistant (P/T) – First UMC of Glassboro

This is a temporary position while our office manager is on an unexpected leave. Potential as a substitute fill in after the manager resumes her duties. Salary: As of January 1, 2022, \$13 per hour. To apply, send your resume in care of Julie Balkenhol to 60 State St., Glassboro NJ, 08028 or email it to glassboromethodist1@comcast.net.

Administrative Assistant (P/T) – UMC of Branchville

A part time Administrative Assistant for 20 hours per week—preferably Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday for five hours each day. Please submit a resume to the church office via email at mcbranchville509@gmail.com or by mail at P.O. Box 509, 8 Broad Street, Branchville, NJ 07826.

GNJ JOB OPPORTUNITIES

- Director of Resourcing
- Communications Manager

All details can be found at www.gnjumc.org/job-opportunities. If you'd like to have your job published, please contact Laura Canzonier, Communications Coordinator at lcansonier@gnjumc.org. Your posting can also be placed in the weekly Digest.



Check out all the latest job postings at:
www.gnjumc.org/job-opportunities

OBITUARIES

Our thoughts and prayers are with these families and friends. We share with you this special scripture in honor of Barbara Frohock, who in spite of the enormous adversity she faced left a legacy of courage, determination and compassion for her husband, Doug and their family, friends and the Trinity Prayer Warriors:

Harvey E. VanSciver, retired full elder, died on Dec. 18. A memorial celebration of his life is being planned for this spring. Memorial donations may be made to Central UMC of Linwood at 5 Marvin Avenue, Linwood, NJ 08221-2006 or The Fellowship Fund of the Shores at Wesley Manor at 2201 Bay Avenue, Ocean City, NJ 08226 or The Neighborhood Center, Inc of Camden NJ at 278 Kaighns Avenue, Camden, NJ 08103. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Beverly Baird (daughter) at 184 Woods End Drive, Little Silver, NJ 07739.

Namhong Choi, spouse of Retired Elder, Rev. Hyosup Choi, died on Dec. 13. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Rev. Hyosup Choi at 361 Elkwood Terrace, Englewood, NJ 07631.

Barbara Frohock, retired full elder, died on Dec. 12. Memorial donations may be sent in her honor to Trinity UMC at 20 Route US 9 North, Marmora, NJ 08223-1432. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Douglas Frohock (husband) at 19 Hollyberry Lane, Marmora, NJ 08223.

Kenneth Austenberg, retired full elder, died on Dec. 1. Memorial donations may be sent in his honor to The Raptor Trust at theraptortrust.org. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to The Austenberg Family at 36 North Road, Flanders, NJ 07836.

Bernice Marie Podesta, retired full elder, died on Nov. 13.

Anna Drummond Stevenson, surviving spouse of Rev. Harry R. Stevenson, died on Oct. 24. A memorial service was held at Betts and West Funeral Home in October. Memorial donations may be sent to Asbury University or The Malachi Network malachinetwork.org. Expressions of sympathy may be sent in her memory to the funeral home.

“Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”

—ROMANS 5: 2-5




WE ARE SEEKING A FULL-TIME DIRECTOR

Haddonfield United Methodist Early Childhood Center

- Commitment to HUMC’s values and principles, and comfortable in the HUMC environment.
- Minimum of a Bachelor’s Degree in Education, with a specialization in early childhood/elementary education or other related field.
- Minimum of 5 years experience in an educational field or position, including some teaching experience.
- Willingness to learn and embrace existing and emerging technologies, for both the day-to-day running of the school and for communication with members of the HUMECC and HUMC communities.
- Strong interpersonal, organizational, and communication skills. Ability to build healthy relationships and instill confidence in the program whenever engaging with children, parents, HUMECC staff, Church Staff and the community at large.
- Leadership, creativity, and vision to implement, enhance, and expand current enrichment offerings that serve the needs of the community.
- Have a heart for children, education, and child development.

Send your resume to:
office@haddonfieldumc.org


Find us on the web: www.haddonfieldumc.org/humecc
Contact us: office@haddonfieldumc.org

ENJOY A WINTER RESPITE

Are you a caregiver seeking a break from responsibilities, desiring a winter vacation, investigating senior living options, or needing other support for your loved one?

United Methodist Communities offers respite, which gives caregivers beneficial opportunities to rest, manage other demands, take a break, and otherwise balance work and family life.

Visit us on the web or call to discover the innovative ways we can support your loved one.





Bristol Glen
BristolGlen.UMCommunities.org
Newton | 973-300-5788

Collingswood
Collingswood.UMCommunities.org
Collingswood | 856-854-4331

Pitman
Pitman.UMCommunities.org
Pitman | 856-589-7800

The Shores
TheShores.UMCommunities.org
Ocean City | 609-399-8505

Home Office
3311 State Route 33 | Neptune, NJ 07753
732-922-9800 | UMCommunities.org

Independent Living | Residential Living | Assisted Living | Rehabilitation
Tapestries® Memory Care | Respite | Bridges™ Hospice and Palliative Care | Long-Term Care | Transitions

Helping Our Neighbors Recover



One hundred percent of the proceeds for the A Future With Hope's Ida Road to Renewal Fund will go toward program goals and direct assistance to communities in need.



A FUTURE WITH HOPE
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

To learn more about A Future With Hope's Ida Relief Fund, go to:

www.gnjumc.org/afwh/ida-relief-effort