

# THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS  
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

FEBRUARY 2022  
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## Agape Meal Missions Ministry, Feeding Families As Well As the Soul

By Javier Guillermo Barroso

MILLVILLE, NJ

Shortly after the pandemic started, Fourth UMC in Millville began the Agape Meal Mission on Friday afternoons to feed shut-ins and various families in the community. This initiative was born out of various needs in the community and the burdens that weighed on our members. Many of our

“A WEEKLY DINNER MAY NOT SOUND LIKE MUCH TO SOME, BUT TO OTHERS IT CAN MEAN EVERYTHING, AND GOD HAS USED IT TO TRANSFORM LIVES.”

seniors could not get to the grocery store since they were at high risk of contracting COVID-19, some nearby families lost their jobs, and a large part of this community lacks resources necessary



Volunteers prepare meals at the Agape meal Mission

for day-to-day living. A weekly dinner may not sound like much to some, but to others it can mean everything, and God has used it to transform lives.

After a while, some of the families no longer need these dinners, and they enjoy the chance to bless others by joining as volunteers, helping us identify other

places where there is a need, and even sending their own donations. Thus, the ministry continues to bless. One of the most beautiful aspects is that it is truly a community effort. Meals are planned in advance, prepared in our parishioners' homes, packed at church, and then delivered door-to-door by another

group. In addition to dinner, we send communion and daily devotional books every first week of the month, which helps the beneficiaries not miss out on this sacred opportunity. This service has increased the number of people who praise with us in online Sunday services,

*Continued on page 6*

## Journey of Hope: Boosting Church Morale & Ministry

“Carry one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

— GALATIANS 6:2

By Enger Muteteke

Some of the major components of the Journey of Hope have been the financial pieces that serve to reduce shared billables for congregations in low-income communities. Presently, 66 congregations in GNJ have had the burden of their shared billables

**JOURNEY**  
*of Hope*

lightened, which has had a profound and positive impact on the ministries of these congregations.

Rev. Kay Dubuisson, pastor of Spring Valley UMC, witnessed to the fact that God is good all the time when she shared the following: “The global pandemic cast



doubt on how we could continue to carry out our missionary goals when faced with reduced attendance, which often translates into reductions in tithes and offerings. The news of inclusion in Journey of Hope was a true gift from God, and the blessing is far-reaching. Overall, the reductions in our shared ministries and billables have helped us to respond to God’s calling to be a blessing to God’s people.

Needless to say, while numerous churches and organizations closed their doors, Spring Valley UMC was the only church resourcing the community in 2020 and part of 2021. As a result, we fed a hot meal to over 7200 individuals through our Dinner Church and Breakfast and we helped 25,709 families and still continue to supplement their grocery needs.”

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## A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP

## Five Characteristics for Effective Leadership

Bishop John Schol



Last month, I talked with you about how leaders develop and that the best leaders are willing to take risks, fail, and learn from their experiences.

Today, I want to talk with you about five leadership characteristics essential to being an effective, fruitful leader. These characteristics begin with the mind and heart of Jesus, *servanthood*. Anyone who leads recognizes that, ultimately, the leader is in a position of authority to serve God and the mission. Everything the leader does is to honor God and advance the mission.

The following five characteristics are areas identified by the cabinet and through surveys among our congregations.

### 1. Positive and Realistic

The best leaders create an atmosphere of joy, but not at the expense of reality.

There are leaders who bring excitement, happiness into the room. Congregations appreciate these leaders because it makes them happy; it makes them feel good. There is a caution here, however, in that happiness is something that occurs from an outside stimulus. We feel better when the weather is nice. Nice weather brightens our spirit. There are leaders whose personality is contagious, but it cultivates happiness, not necessarily joy.

The best leaders cultivate joy, which is cultivated by practicing the following:

- Give thanks for small blessings.
- Recognize and celebrate progress and accomplishment.
- Remain hopeful and positive in the midst of challenges.
- Grow the gifts, skills, and abilities in others to lead.
- Affirm and honor others' leadership.

These generate an inner conviction and fulfillment that does not require the leader to be the joy maker but the joy cultivator. Also, while being positive and joyful, the best leaders do not ignore realities and challenges. Instead, they talk about challenges and opportunities; they talk about what went well and look toward what is next to fulfill the mission.

Positive, realistic leaders smile a lot, are enthusiastic, cultivate the best of others, celebrate accomplishments, and keep people focused on the next steps for fulfilling the mission and the goals the congregation is working toward.

“POSITIVE, REALISTIC LEADERS SMILE A LOT, ARE ENTHUSIASTIC, CULTIVATE THE BEST OF OTHERS, CELEBRATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND KEEP PEOPLE FOCUSED ON THE NEXT STEPS FOR FULFILLING THE MISSION AND THE GOALS THE CONGREGATION IS WORKING TOWARD.”

—Bishop John Schol

### 2. Warm and Assertive

The best leaders have a warm tone and manner; they are transparent, empathetic, compassionate, understanding, and they assert ideas, concerns, and direction as needed to engender trust in the leader.

Being warm and assertive is a difficult balance and often misunderstood. Jesus was both warm and assertive; he cared deeply about people, yet he also held people accountable. His accountability was not vindictive, self-righteous, or harmful, but invitational, clarifying and forgiving. Jesus' warmth was not sentimental, but a deep sense of care and wanting the best for others. The best leaders find a healthy balance between being warm and assertive.

### 3. Listen to Learn

Listening to others, in order to learn and understand so that the leader grows, builds trust and develops confidence of others in their leadership.

We all have experienced people listening merely to formulate their response or to advance their position. Listening to learn is one of the most outward things we can do. It focuses on the other—their interests, their need, their objectives—without losing sight of our own objectives and interests. Listening to learn is being curious and seeking to understand the other person.

The best leaders are learners and listen to grow in their understanding, not to understand how they can counter someone else's viewpoint.

### 4. Connector

The best leaders connect well with others and connect people with one another to build a team and partnerships in order to accomplish the mission.

I have seen very popular leaders who are good at connecting others with themselves but not connecting people with one another, and dare I say with God. Popular leaders use their personality to help people like them. I spoke with a leader who

said her leadership style was “to get people to like [her] and then people do things for [her].” She was very effective. This is called transactional leadership. Providing something for others to receive something in return.

The best leaders are more interested in connecting people with God, the mission, and others rather than themselves. These leaders, when in a conversation, are introducing others and lifting up something of interest about the other person.

They are encouraging

conversation between others. Connecting leaders tend not to use “I” but “we” and give credit to others. When they leave their leadership position, they set up the next leader and prefer that people attach to the new leader.

### 5. Purposeful

The best leaders create clarity about and focus on the mission, goals, and direction. They also provide boundaries to create a healthy community, a healthy congregation.

These leaders recognize everything is about honoring God and accomplishing the mission. Every day they wake up and ask, “How will I honor God today, and how will I lead to move the mission forward?”

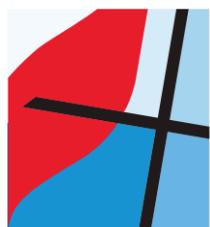
Leadership is hard work. These five characteristics identified by leaders and people among us are not easy and must be kept in creative tension. The best leaders recognize that sometimes a situation calls for more warmth than purpose and other times for more realism than positivity. But they always recognize they are trying to balance all five of these to be an effective leader. Balance is not that sometimes I am assertive and sometimes I am warm, but how will I be warm and assertive in the present moment.

You can grow in your leadership by talking to a close friend, a family member, and a colleague and ask each of them to rank, in order from 1-5, which of these you practice most and best. Ask for feedback, such as *what do I do well in each of these five areas, and what is an area to grow?* Receiving feedback from people who see you in different leadership roles or through different experiences can help you better understand your leadership. Grow by focusing on one area—not your weakest, but a middle strength—and find ways to improve. As you become better in one area, move to another.

As a leader, I am still learning, adjusting, and finding ways to improve my leadership because God needs me and you to lead well. 🇺🇸

“THE BEST LEADERS CONNECT WELL WITH OTHERS AND CONNECT PEOPLE WITH ONE ANOTHER TO BUILD A TEAM AND PARTNERSHIPS IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION.”

—Bishop John Schol



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UNITED METHODISTS  
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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GNJ is offering courses that will bless the mission and ministry of your congregation.  
*Courses are open to laity and clergy!*

## Upcoming Courses

**Faith Sharing in Innovative Ways** | Feb. 15, 22 and Mar. 1 | 7 – 8:30 p.m.

When was the last time you shared your faith with someone? Throughout this course, you will explore ways to connect with your community, build relationships and identify opportunities to share your faith story in word and action.

**Simple Board Model** | Feb.16, 23 and Mar. 30 | 7 - 8:30 p.m.

The Simplified One Board Model is one that congregations of all sizes are exploring and adapting across the country as they seek an adaptive leadership structure. Those participating will learn a step-by-step process for discerning and possibly implementing the shift to a Simple Board Model.

**Blessing as a Way of Living** | Mar. 3, 17 and 31 | 7 - 8:30 p.m.

What does it mean to bless others and ourselves? Throughout this course, you will gain a deeper understanding of the nature of blessing. First, we will examine the blessings of Jesus in scripture, then reflect on our everyday blessings, and finally, there will be the opportunity to write blessings of our own.

**The Welcoming Church and Worship** | Mar. 14, 21 and 28 | 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Worship can be the center of the welcoming church God desires us to be. This course will focus on how we become the Christ-centered, welcoming church our communities are longing for. We will focus on ways of welcoming by exploring the “every member commitment” that is rooted in the Great Commission for all to take part in the growth of the body of Christ.

**Courageous Conversations: Racism** | Apr. 21, 28 and May 5 | 7 – 8:30 p.m.

What is the connection between anti-racism and discipleship? That is the question we will explore. Our hope is this course will encourage and equip church leaders to feel more confident about understanding the need for such conversations about racism and to glimpse potential outcomes for the local church.

**For More Courses and Registration Information:**  
[www.gnjumc.org/leadership-academy](http://www.gnjumc.org/leadership-academy)



Damaged Household Items From Flooding in Newark



Flood Damage in Newark

## Relief Grants Help Local Churches Recover from Ida's Ire

By Andrea Wren-Hardin

**O**n September 1, 2021, Hurricane Ida brought disastrous floods, winds, and tornadoes to communities in the Greater New Jersey area, damaging homes, churches, and businesses in its swath. The scope of the destruction is far reaching with the loss of thirty lives, a federal major disaster declaration in twelve counties, and more than 85,000 FEMA registrations from impacted households.

Several of our churches experienced unprecedented flooding in their buildings, resulting in a disruption in ministries, facing yet another challenge to overcome. Franklin St. Johns in Newark had been operating their Agape Food Ministry out of their basement using Covid safety protocols. However, after Hurricane Ida flooded the entire space, destroying their HVAC system, floors, and contents, they were forced to move their ministry outdoors and improvise to help their community. While Franklin

St. Johns did receive insurance to cover the damage, it was not enough to cover mold remediation, the purchase and installation of a new HVAC system, and restoration of the basement, leaving them drowning in devastation.

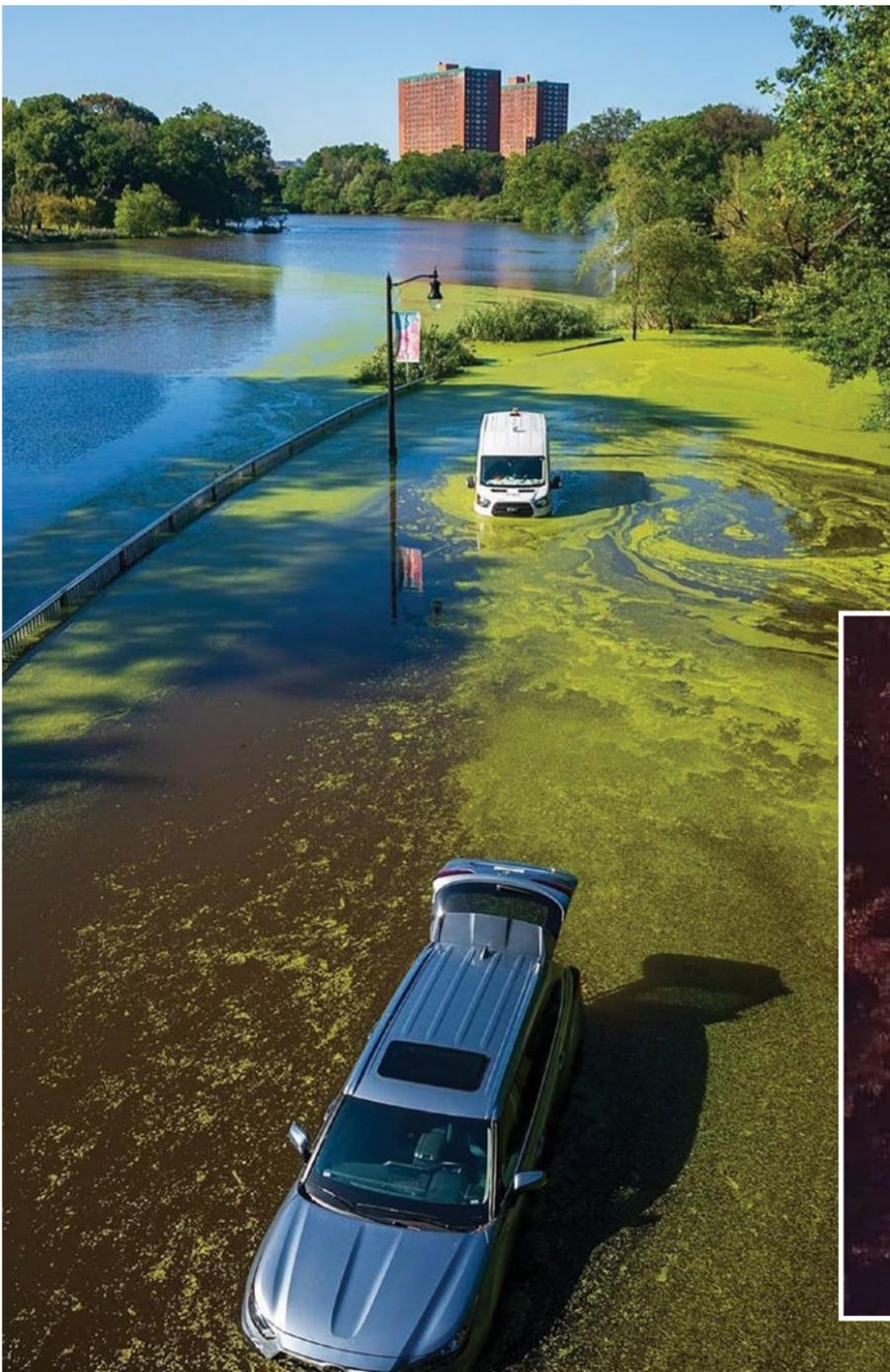
Roselle UMC trustees, David Yamboah and Philip Rawlins shared a similar story. Water gushed in through the basement windows, flooding the space with five feet of water. Walls had to be taken down and all the contents, including their chapel pews, had to be thrown out. As a result, they expressed deep appreciation for the funds that will allow them to complete the renovations in phases.

After hearing from District Superintendents on the status of Hurricane Ida's impact on churches and the financial gap between paid-out insurance claims and the cost of repairs, GNJ conference leaders who serve on the Council of Finance and Administration and Trustees decided they needed to act. They established the GNJ Ida Relief Grant and invited churches to apply for much-needed funding. Chair of CFA, Vasanth Victor, shared that that is what the connectional church does—we support each other in our times of need. Vasanth added that CFA and the Trustees have faith in churches to use grant funds wisely and

explore mitigation planning to reduce the impact of future disasters.

Trinity United Methodist Church in Jersey City, a recipient of a GNJ Ida Relief Grant, is doing just that. The water from Hurricane Ida overflowed into their basement through the windows and door, flooding the entire area. As the basement brimmed with water, their minds brimmed with worry. They had never experienced flooding before and were not prepared for the damage. Roeline Ramirez said that Trinity UMC is grateful for the grant and intends to replace the exit door, repair the windows, and renovate the space that is used for fellowship, education, and celebrations. They are also investing in preventative measures that will direct water away from their church building going forward.

GNJ values the ministries of the local church and seeks to support them by providing resources that grow vitality in all areas of ministry. The Ida Relief Grant is an investment in our church buildings, pillars where the heart of ministry begins. These grants not only restore our houses of worship but also the hope that resides within them. Ida may have flooded these buildings, but the outpouring of support in the aftermath has pulled these churches from her devastating grasp. 🇺🇸



Branch Brook Park in Newark



Fire Damages a home in Newark after Hurricane Ida

# ANNUAL CONFERENCE

May 23 & 24, 2022

# DELIVER

Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.

He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

*- Luke 4:16-19 (NRSV)*

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UNITED METHODISTS  
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY



## Breakthrough Worship Series: Behind the Scenes

By Emily Wilton

**T**he Breakthrough worship series have become well known in local churches for bringing worship to life with music, prayers, and sermons, all focused on themes that are relevant to people's daily lives. But how are these series created? Come "behind the scenes" of Breakthrough to find out!

It all starts with brainstorming. In the spring, GNJ's resourcing staff connect with pastors in their regions about what's happening in their churches and what's important to them in this season. From these conversations come ideas we use to pick our series themes for the year. We try to touch on the diverse needs and situations of people all over our conference.

The next big step is the "summer writing day," in which upwards of twenty-five clergy meet to develop sermon outlines. Before the excitement of the big writing day, Breakthrough Coordinator Emily Wilton works with staff to break the themes down into weekly topics and to select scriptures. She builds teams to write for each series. It's important that each team has writers who come

from different perspectives and backgrounds. Writer Rev. Waleska Trinidad (Pastor, Dobbins Memorial UMC) says, "It's always a blessing to work with other pastors and to experience the Holy Spirit leading us as we prepare the series and worship material. Breakthrough has given me the opportunity, as a Hispanic-Latino pastor, to share my voice, theological interpretation, and context with others." You can find a full list of contributors here: <http://www.gnjumc.org/breakthrough/>.

The writing day is always full of energy and creativity as clergy come together to dig into God's word and ask, "What is God saying to us and our churches today?" Rev. Josh Shuster (Pastor, St. Andrew's UMC, Cherry Hill) shares, "For me, participating in Breakthrough has been a wonderful way to share creative experiences with others. Whether it be creating children's sermons, ideas for sermon series, or helping to outline an established sermon series, I am always astounded and amazed at the creativity of the leaders in our Conference!"

Once the sermons for the whole year are outlined on the writing day, Emily starts focusing on the details for each

series, one at a time. She reaches out to leaders who are gifted at writing prayers and other liturgy for the worship resources. Lan Wilson, Director of Resourcing and Worship, and other music lovers in our conference provide the music suggestions. Director of Resourcing and Small Groups Gina Yeske works with cler-

gy and experienced small-group leaders to create a small-group curriculum to go with each series. While all this is underway, the Breakthrough Team works with the Communications Team to dream up a "look" for the series' graphic components and to create a short video for

churches to use in worship and on social media. This is yet another place we feature the talent of our amazing clergy and lay leaders in Greater New Jersey—as voice actors!

Before each series goes live on the GNJ website, Emily compiles and edits all the pieces created by a wide array

**"BREAKTHROUGH HAS GIVEN ME THE OPPORTUNITY, AS A HISPANIC-LATINO PASTOR, TO SHARE MY VOICE, THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION, AND CONTEXT WITH OTHERS."**

—Rev. Waleska Trinidad, Pastor of Dobbins Memorial UMC

gy and experienced small-group leaders to create a small-group curriculum to go with each series. While all this is underway, the Breakthrough Team works with the Communications Team to dream up a "look" for the series' graphic components and to create a short video for

of leaders and sends them off to the Communications Team for some final polish and sparkle. As you can see, every Breakthrough series reflects the love and energy of many people working together to bring dynamic worship to our churches! 🇺🇸

## Agape Ministry

*Continued from page 1*

extending the community connection well beyond the dinner table.

Agape Meal Missions ministry has grown exponentially in its reach. Having begun with less than 15 volunteers feeding 80 persons weekly, this mission continues today and currently feeds 45 to 60 persons unwaveringly. It's supported by donations of both food and funds from their parishioners and those close to the community. On many occasions we have been short of volunteers, especially during the pandemic when some have unfortunately fallen ill, but we have witnessed week after week that the hand of God provides, and this humble mission prospers and blesses each volunteer who serves with love. We thank God for being able to share what has been given to us. We hope to be able to do it for a long time to continue sharing His grace and Word of life. 🇺🇸



Agape volunteer is packaging Swedish meatballs

# Pathways to God's Healing Love

By Gina Yeske

I remember near the start of the pandemic, a video came across my Facebook feed of a pastor doing cartwheels and high-fiving people as he was walking down the aisle of a crowded sanctuary. There was a caption: "This will be me when we get back into my church building." Little did we know how much our world would change by the time we got back into our sanctuaries, and I am not sure how many had those high-five moments.

There is no doubt that COVID-19 has accelerated changes already underway in the church and, literally overnight, moved congregations into a new world.



However, our mission has remained the same, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. More than ever, people are longing to experience God's healing love. Healthy and fruitful congregations connected and engaged missionally with the people in the community are bearers of God's love, as experienced through the life of Jesus Christ. GNJ would like to introduce a process to help you get there and, along the way, will support your congregation toward becoming more sustainable, vital, and culturally competent.

*Pathways for Congregational Development* offers your congregation an opportunity to assess your current situation, to learn and grow in understanding, and to create a plan that will give your congregation the tools and a plan to transform lives, the congregation itself, and the community. It will engage the congregation in intercultural competency work, which is an essential part of Christian discipleship. It will create clarity and focus for your ministry that will bear fruit and sustainable results.



Considering the unique needs of 2022, Pathways includes some important questions to consider as your congregation moves through the pandemic and ministers in a post-pandemic world. Here are a few questions your congregation might take time to consider:

- Name three areas where you have seen momentum in the last few months? These are opportunities for your congregation; how can you lift them up or expand them?
- How did your congregation connect with your community during the pandemic? What was successful that needs to continue? What might be

new needs in your community at this time? Are there community members who have been impacted more by the pandemic? Is this a need you might be able to address?

- What are the unique strengths of your congregation that can be adapted or leveraged to move your ministry forward coming out of the pandemic?

You and your congregation are in an important season of mission and ministry. You have the opportunity to reconsider what it means to be the church and how to live out that call. You are invited to learn more about *Pathways for Congregational Development* by visiting <https://www.gnjumc.org/pathways>.



Your congregation has a great future!

**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT *PATHWAYS***

- *Vital mission congregations creating a more just, equitable, and inclusive church and world.*

[www.gnjumc.org/pathways](https://www.gnjumc.org/pathways)



*And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. - Romans 5:5*

# **JOURNEY** *of Hope*

**LEARN ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING  
WITH JOURNEY OF HOPE TODAY!**

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

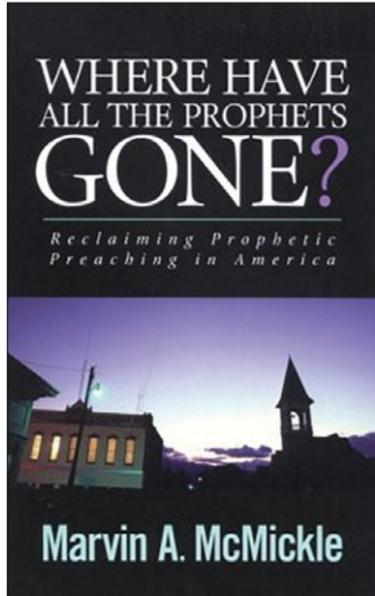
# FEBRUARY BOOKSHELF

For Black History Month, our bookshelf includes books and resources from the Journey of Hope Resources webpage on GNJUMC.org. To learn more, and for preaching series, articles and videos, please visit [www.gnjumc.org/journeyofhope/joh-resources](http://www.gnjumc.org/journeyofhope/joh-resources).

## Where Have All the Prophets Gone?: Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America

(2006) By Marvin A. McMickle

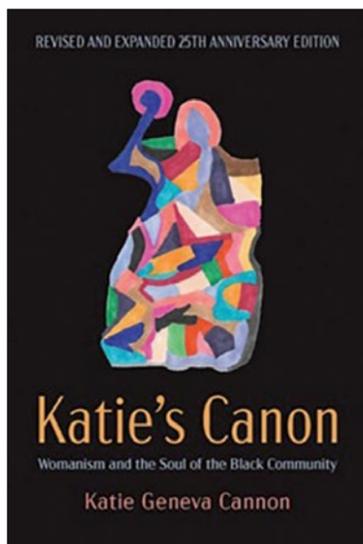
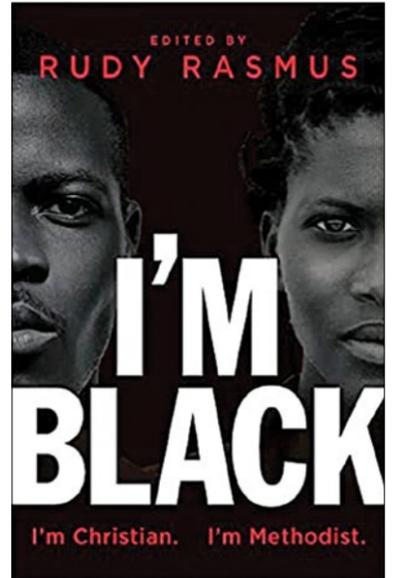
Prophetic preaching in the American pulpit has suffered a decline in the last 20 - 25 years. Several things are to blame: an overzealous preoccupation with praise and worship; a false and narrow view of patriotism; and a focus on prosperity and personal enrichment themes. *Where Have All the Prophets Gone?* is a call for preachers to learn the importance of keeping their eyes on the vision of Jesus and the biblical prophets when preaching—that of doing justice, caring for others, and being equitable. The book makes a biblical argument for the importance and the content of prophetic preaching, and argues that the issue is not preaching from a text taken from the prophetic corpus but preaching on the themes that echoed over and over from the biblical prophets themselves.



## I'm Black. I'm Christian. I'm Methodist.

(2020) By Lillian C. Smith, Erin Beasley, Justin Coleman, Jevon Caldwell-Gross, Pamela R. Lightsey, F. Willis Johnson, Vance P. Ross, Rodney Lorenzo Graves, Tori C. Butler, Rudy Rasmus, Bishop Gregory Palmer

Ten Black women and men explore life through the lens of compelling personal religious narratives. They are people and leaders whose lives are tangible demonstrations of the power of a divine purpose and evidence of what grace really means in face of hardship, disappointment, and determination. Each of the journeys intersect because of three central elements that are the focus of this book. We're Black. We're Christians. We're Methodists.



## Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community, Revised and Expanded 25th Anniversary Edition

(2021) By Katie Geneva Cannon

*Katie's Canon* is a selection of essays written for a variety of occasions throughout Cannon's celebrated career. This new edition contains three additional essays and a new foreword by Emilie Townes. The volume weaves together the particularities of Cannon's own history and the oral tradition of African American women, African American women's literary traditions, and sociocultural and ethical analysis. The result is a classic. Cannon addresses racism and economics, analyses of Zora Neale Hurston as a resource for a constructive ethic, the importance of race and gender in the development of a Black liberation ethic, womanist preaching in the Black church, and slave ideology and biblical interpretation.



## Breaking Barriers: An African American Family & the Methodist Story

(2001) Angella P. Current

On July 19, 1984, Leontine Current Kelly was elected bishop of The United Methodist Church, making her the first African-American woman to become a bishop within a major American religious denomination. *Breaking Barriers* recounts the story of her journey and that historic achievement.

## Towards the "Other America": Anti-Racist Resources for White People Taking Action for Black Lives Matter

(2015) By Chris Crass

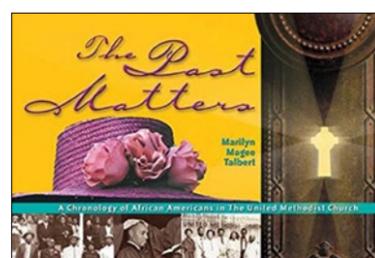
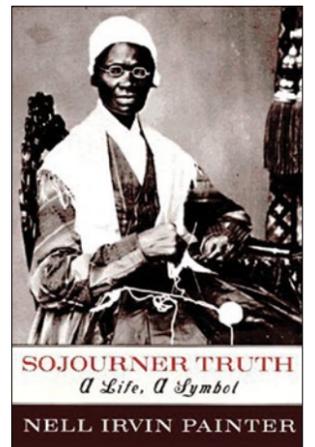
Chris Crass calls on all of us to join our values to the power of love and act with courage for a world where Black lives truly matter. A world where the death culture of white supremacy no longer devours the lives of Black people and no longer deforms the hearts and souls of white people. In addition to his own soul-searching essays and practical organizing advice in his "notes to activists," Chris Crass lifts up the voices of longtime white anti-racist leaders organizing in white communities for Black Lives Matter. Crass has collected lessons and vibrant examples of this work from rural working class communities in Kentucky and Maine, mass direct action in Wisconsin and New York, faith-based efforts among Jewish communities, Unitarian Universalists, and the United Church of Christ, and national efforts like Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) and Jewish Voice for Peace.



## Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol

(1996) Nell Irvin Painter

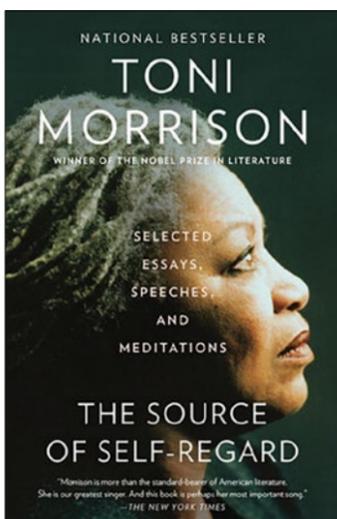
Eminent black historian Nell Irvin Painter goes beyond the myths, words, and photographs to uncover the life of a complex woman who was born into slavery and died a legend.



## The Past Matters: A Chronology of African Americans in the United Methodist Church

(2005) Marilyn Magee Talbert

A chronology of African Americans in the United Methodist Church compiled and with a forward written by Marilyn Magee Talbert.



## The Source of Self-Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches, and Meditations

(2020) By Toni Morrison

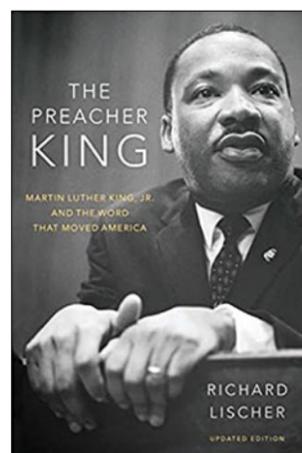
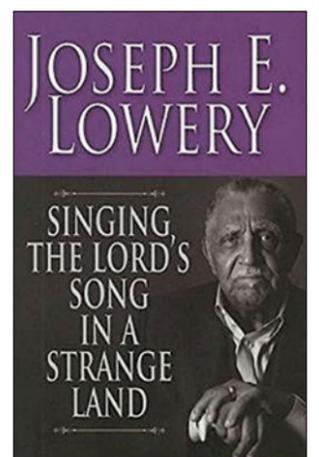
These pages give us her searing prayer for the dead of 9/11, her Nobel lecture on the power of language, her searching meditation on Martin Luther King Jr., her heart-wrenching eulogy for James Baldwin. She looks deeply into the fault lines of culture and freedom: the foreigner, female empowerment, the press, money, "black matter(s)," human rights, the artist in society, the Afro-American presence in American literature. And she turns her incisive critical eye to her own work (*The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Tar Baby*, *Jazz*, *Beloved*, *Paradise*) and that of others.

An essential collection from an essential writer, *The Source of Self-Regard* shines with the literary elegance, intellectual prowess, spiritual depth, and moral compass that have made Toni Morrison our most cherished and enduring voice.

## Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land

(2011) By Joseph E. Lowery

In this book are Dr. Lowery's most enduring speeches and messages from the past fifty years including Coretta Scott King's funeral and the benediction given at President Obama's inauguration. This book, however, is not simply a collection of words. It is the heart of a movement and a call to a new generation to carry the mantle—for all people.



## The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Word That Moved America

(1995) Richard Lischer

This book chronicles Martin Luther King, Jr.'s religious development from his childhood as a "preacher's kid" in segregated Atlanta to the most influential American orator of the twentieth century.

# Come Back

*“Now faith is the substance of the things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.”*

— HEBREWS 11:1

By Lan Wilson

It’s February and many of us have had busy days and rough days. Spikes in COVID numbers have hit home in our churches and amongst our clergy. Cold weather has affected us physically, emotionally, numerically through finances and attendance, and so much more. And many of us find ourselves wondering, when will they come back? *When will they come back?*

But just for a moment, I’d like to shift your thinking to a different invitation to “come back”. As you continue the day-to-day and week-to-week struggle to maintain, I invite you to find ways to ‘come back’ from maintenance mentality to dreaming and driving forward. I understand we can’t just pop back to the way things were. But it is time to come back to vision thinking. How do we re-align ourselves to the vision? How do we come back to figuring out how to make things come alive instead of just keeping things from dying? I know, things are hard. We all are in unique struggles and face challenges every day. But I also know that with God all things are possible. What

needs to change, to shift, to stop, to start, to be delegated, or needs to be re-invested in? How do we begin making time to come back to dreaming?

And finally, where in your life is Christ calling you to come back to Him? For me, something shifted and awakened in me as we preached the Reset series this month. God spoke to me about resetting my purpose, and my call was affirmed in a deeper way than I’d ever experienced. Christ beckoned me back to my purpose.



*What does that look like for you? What area of your life is Christ calling you to refocus and grow deeper in Christ?*

Friends, I invite you to take this new season as a time to:

- Reclaim your faith
- Realign with your purpose
- Give yourself literal space and time to dream again
- And believe God like never before. 🇺🇸

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Happening Now	Spring Basic and Advanced Lay Servant classes are open for registration
March 3	Virtual Pre-Retirement Webinar
March 3, 17, 31 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Blessing as a Way of Living
March 14, 21 and 28 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	The Welcoming Church and Worship
April 21, 28 and May 5 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Courageous Conversations: Racism

Additional details can be found on the GNJ website at [gnjumc.org](http://gnjumc.org).

## 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

**Central District**  
Rev. Héctor A. Burgos

**Cape Atlantic District**  
Rev. Brian Roberts

**Delaware Bay District**  
Rev. Glenn J. Conaway

## Journey of Hope

*Continued from page 1*

Pastor Hugo Rey, pastor of Church of the Covenant UMC, shared his gratitude for this blessing in his congregation. Pastor Rey witnessed to the power of our connectional nature and, more important, God’s abundance when he said: “The Journey of Hope-related 30% reduction in our shared ministry and 2021 billables was gratefully received by our congregation, given the prevailing financial hardships caused by the Coronavirus pandemic. Some of the savings was invested in Nurture Ministries — namely bible study materials and worship supplies. This past Christmas, Church of the Covenant engaged in outreach ministry by donating much-needed items to St. Lucy’s Emergency Shelter (a homeless shelter) in Jersey City with an estimated cost of \$1,500. In 2022, our intent is to invest more of our savings in Nurture, Outreach, and Witness (NOW) ministries.”

For Pastor Ralph Terrell, pastor of St. Matthew’s UMC and Trinity UMC in Newark, this reprieve has helped revitalize stewardship in both congregations in radical ways. Pastor Terrell shared his witness saying: “As a pastor of two Black churches in Newark, NJ, I am encouraged that our conference is striving to end the sin of racism and sexism. Both the St. Matthew’s and Trinity Churches in Newark, NJ had our shared ministries and billables reduced and this helped our ministries tremendously. The reduction gave both churches a boost in morale. With that morale, our finance

committees were able to come together and begin to have conversations about stewardship and tithing. Those conversations led us to creating realistic goals for our ministries, and great things happened. We were able to pay 100% shared ministry and 100% billings at both locations. At St. Matthew’s, we celebrate that we went from 1 tither to 20% of our congregation tithing. And to God be the glory, we have already in

**“AS A PASTOR OF TWO BLACK CHURCHES IN NEWARK, NJ, I AM ENCOURAGED THAT OUR CONFERENCE IS STRIVING TO END THE SIN OF RACISM AND SEXISM.”**

—Dr. Ralph Terrell, pastor of St. Matthew’s UMC and Trinity UMC in Newark

2022 received a major contribution that will help us pay 100% again.”

Reading these testimonies of the power of sharing in the burdens of some our congregations, through our commitment to Journey of Hope, gives me much hope and joy as we continue to journey on toward working to end the sin of racism in Christ’s church. The work is long, slow, and, many days, tiring. These testimonies, though, help us open our eyes and celebrate, in many places in GNJ, all the ways God is giving us grace upon grace to be the Church and be the children of God. 🇺🇸

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

## CURRENT JOB POSTINGS

### General Secretary – the General Commission on United Methodist Men

The General Commission on United Methodist Men is seeking a qualified individual to serve as General Secretary. This person will serve as the Chief Executive Officer of the Commission on United Methodist Men, exercising general administrative oversight over the activities and policies of the Commission. This person is accountable to the Commission for the planning, coordination, interpretation and implementation of goals and objectives to support the mission of the General Commission on United Methodist Men and the directives of General Conference.

### Children and Family Ministries Director, First UMC of Glassboro

Hours are varied, as needed. Salary is \$6,500 (\$7,000 after six months upon successful review).

Responsibilities include directing volunteer staff in carrying out ministry functions; attending and participating in staff meetings; appointing and overseeing Young Adult volunteer coordinator; coordinating functions with other all other church/laity leaders; monthly planning meetings with the CFM team, working with VBS coordinators; other duties assigned by the Pastor and the SPRC team.

To apply, send your resume in care of Julie Balkenhol to 60 State St., Glassboro NJ, 08028, or email to glassboromethodist1@comcast.net.

### Pianist (P/T) – Fourth UMC In Millville

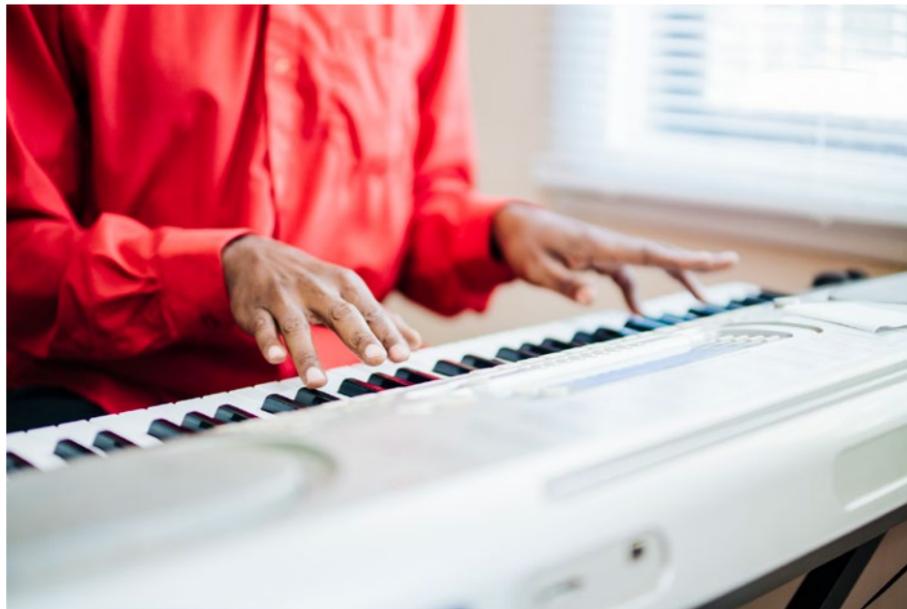
The Fourth UMC in Millville, NJ is looking for a part-time pianist to accompany the praise team and their choir on Sunday mornings (must be able to read music). Previous experience and knowledge of playing the organ are optional. This is a great opportunity to gain work experience for students or a professional musician to stay active on their instrument in a very welcoming church. More info at: (609) 364-9133 or (856) 825-7007 or email: fourthumc.millville.nj@gmail.com

### 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.



## PART-TIME PIANIST WANTED

The Fourth UMC in Millville, NJ is looking for a part-time pianist to accompany the praise team and our choir on Sunday mornings *\*Must be able to read music.*

Previous experience and knowledge of playing the organ are optional. This is a great opportunity to gain work experience for students or a professional musician to stay active on their instrument in a very welcoming church.

**For more info:**  
**609-364-9133 or 856-825-7007**  
**fourthumc.millville.nj@gmail.com**

## GNJ JOB OPPORTUNITIES

- Executive Director of the U.M. Stewardship Foundation
- Communications Manager
- Next Generation Ministries of Greater New Jersey  
Aldersgate Caretaker

All details can be found at [www.gnjumc.org/job-opportunities/](http://www.gnjumc.org/job-opportunities/). If you'd like to have your job published, please contact [communications@gnjumc.org](mailto:communications@gnjumc.org). Your posting can also be placed in the weekly Digest.

## OBITUARIES

*Our thoughts and prayers are with these families and friends.*

**John Hutchinson**, Spouse of Rev. Joan D. Hutchinson, passed away on January 14, 2022. A service was held on January 20 at Haddonfield UMC, with a burial at the Atlantic County Veterans Cemetery in Mays Landing. Memorial donations may be sent to Haddonfield UMC, 29 Warwick Rd., Haddonfield, NJ 08033-3704 or UMCOR. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Rev. Joan D. Hutchinson (spouse) at 134 Southampton Dr., Galloway, NJ 08205-6623.

**Helen McCahill**, Deaconess, passed away on January 7, 2022. A memorial service will be held at a later date at the United Methodist Church at New Brunswick. The service will be live-streamed and recorded on YouTube. Memorial donations may be sent to Town Clock Community Development Corporation, 11 Bayard St., #301, New Brunswick, NJ 08901. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Sue Zahorbenski (daughter), at 13 No. Dover Ave., Somerset, NJ 08873.

*“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

## 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](http://UMCommunities.org)



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 Tapestries® Memory Care | Respite | Bridges™ Hospice and Palliative Care | Long-Term Care | Transitions



# NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

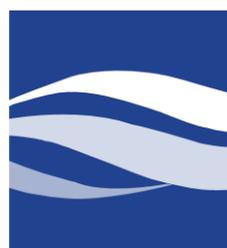
On September 1, 2021, Hurricane Ida brought devastating floods, wind, and tornadoes to communities in the Greater New Jersey area damaging homes, churches, and businesses in its swath.

The scope of the destruction is far reaching with the loss of life of thirty people, a federal major disaster declaration in twelve counties and over 85,000 FEMA registrations from impacted households.

**The Ida Relief grant is an investment in our church buildings, pillars where the heart of ministry begins.**

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

[www.gnjumc.org/afwh/ida-relief-effort](http://www.gnjumc.org/afwh/ida-relief-effort)



**A FUTURE WITH HOPE**

UNITED METHODISTS  
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY