

DECEMBER 2022/JANUARY 2023
VOL. LXVI/NO. 11

THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

gnjumc.org



Church Finds Partner in Urgent Quest to Help Migrant Families

By John W. Coleman

UNION CITY, NJ

The Christmas story begins with a journey home and a blessed family's search for shelter and hospitality. It ends with that family fleeing from danger to a strange land and becoming refugees in search of asylum.

First UMC of Union City, NJ, is living part of that story now—the hospitality part. The predominantly Latino church is trying to find shelter and meet other needs for a recent influx of mostly Latino migrants bused to the New York City area from Texas—once again refugees in search of asylum.

Union City, just eight miles from New York City, is where many migrants have come after traveling thousands of miles from their home countries—on foot, in

Continued on page 8



Christmas dinner sponsored by First UMC in Union City, NJ

Webinars Explain Advent of EPA & GNJ Affiliation

By John W. Coleman

United Methodists of Eastern PA and Greater New Jersey learned in a series of webinars, Dec. 7-8, how structural collaboration will work to help both their conferences improve efficiency and effectiveness in achieving together their common mission to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

Leaders of the two conferences explained how “affiliation” will enable EPA and GNJ to do more ministry and better ministry together than they could alone. Thirteen panelists introduced to more than 300 participants in three webinars how they are already aligning Cabinet operations and appointments and also Communications to jointly serve churches and develop leaders in both conferences.

Meanwhile, collaborative efforts are being explored to help end the sin of racism, promote leadership development, resource congregations for growth and vitality, and support urban and racial-ethnic ministries. Additional areas of affiliation may include youth ministries, which are more developed in GNJ, and camping and retreat ministries, where EPA offers more sites and programming.

“These are two great conferences with lots of talents and great ministries,” said Bishop John Schol in opening the morning, afternoon and evening webinars.

Continued on page 8



Members of EPA and GNJ building a better ministry together in one of a series of webinars.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Call to Ministry
PAGE 4

District Bids Farewell to New Bishop Hector Burgos
PAGE 6

A Creative Outlet for Outreach
PAGE 6

The Spark of the Season
PAGE 6

December/January Bookshelf
PAGE 9

Job Opportunities
PAGE 10

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP

New Spirit

Bishop John Schol



Be transformed by the renewing of your mindset.
—ROMANS 12:2

The birth of Jesus was a transformational moment in history, pure and simple. God did a new thing. Change, shift, renewal, conversion was what God was up to through the birth of Jesus Christ. God has never stopped this deep call and expectation of humanity and the church. We are called to transform, first ourselves and the church and then the world. The birth story of Jesus is all about people who changed. The magi changed direction, the fear of the shepherds was transformed into belief and Mary let go of her childhood. God was transforming them through the birth of Christ. Today, our purpose is to recruit and develop transformational leaders to make disciples of Jesus Christ and grow vital congregations for the transformation of the world. Our purpose statement uses the word transformation twice. We cannot expect the world to believe and change unless we change ourselves. The first principle in changing others, the world, is to first change ourselves. Jesus was a change in God’s engagement with the world. God created a new way of connecting with us through Jesus the Christ.

We have seen a lot of change in the world, ourselves, our families, and the church in the last decade. Often it has been hard change and even forced change because it is coming from outside of us rather than transformational change that occurs within us. Transformational change renews, rekindles God’s possibility in and through us. Most of the change has been imposed change because of what is occurring in the world. It comes from outside of us. God’s transformation is a renewal.

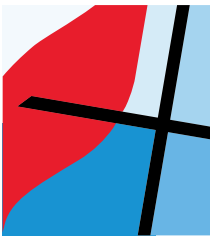


I invite you to pray and ponder how Christ is renewing your mind, your mindset. Our mindset is how we think and feel about ourselves, others, and the world. Christmas transformation begins with the renewing of our mindset. As our mindset changes, it opens the opportunity to transform our collective selves, the body of Christ, the church.

“TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE RENEWS, REKINDLES GOD’S POSSIBILITY IN AND THROUGH US. MOST OF THE CHANGE HAS BEEN IMPOSED CHANGE BECAUSE OF WHAT IS OCCURRING IN THE WORLD. IT COMES FROM OUTSIDE OF US. GOD’S TRANSFORMATION IS A RENEWAL.”
—Bishop John Schol

Recently I listened to a powerful story of how the church is transforming. I believe it is a call to the church for how to create new small groups or start new congregations or transform existing congregations. You may find it on our website here or go to <https://www.gnjumc.org/news/transformedchurch/> or <https://www.epaumc.org/news/transformedchurch/>. God wants to and is ready to transform your life and others through you. It is your Christmas gift from God. My prayers continue for you and your family and congregation this Christmas. May your joy be full and your hope eternal this Christmas.

—John



THE RELAY
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

- John R. Schol, Bishop
United Methodists of Greater New Jersey
205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune, NJ 07753
- James Lee, Director of Communications
732.359.1044 | jlee@gnjumc.org
- Laura Canzonier, Communications Strategist
732.359.1063 | lcanzonier@gnjumc.org
- John Coleman, Editorial Manager
jcoleman@epaumc.church
- Lindsey Cotman, Graphic Designer
lcotman@epaumc.church
- David Beverly, IT and Web Specialist
dbeverly@gnjumc.org
- Corbin Payne, Video Producer
cpayne@gnjumc.org
- Christopher G. Coleman, The Relay Designer
chris@cgcoleman.com

New Subscriptions, renewals, address changes, and corrections should be addressed to Communications Department at info@gnjumc.org or by mail to: United Methodist Relay | 205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753

FOR ADVERTISING RATES, INFORMATION & PLACEMENT
Contact: info@gnjumc.org

The United Methodist Relay (USPS 343-360) is published monthly by the United Methodists of Greater New Jersey. Office of Publication: Office of the Bishop, 205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753. Periodical Postage Paid at Red Bank, NJ and additional entry offices. Mailed free to selected lay leaders and clergy of each church. Others may subscribe at the rate of \$10.00 per year.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE RELAY, 205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753.

WONDER
CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS TOGETHER

Christmas Day is a Sunday?
We actually got you covered.

The Eastern Pennsylvania and Greater New Jersey conferences are currently working together to produce a full video worship service including liturgy, music, and a sermon preached by Bishop Schol. The video will be a Christmastide service designed for churches to use either on Christmas Day Dec. 25, or Jan 1.
Be on the lookout the first week of December!



Select a resource to help you and your church to begin your journey towards anti-racism.



For churches that have had little or no experience with cultural competency and seek greater vitality.



For churches where most members look alike but don't reflect the diversity of their community.



For churches ready to dig deeper into the relationship building and anti-racism work, embark on creating and living into a JoH plan to do their part in ending the sin of racism.

LEARN MORE ABOUT JOURNEY OF HOPE:

www.gnjumc.org/JourneyOfHope



UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Sammy Arroyo, Director of Resourcing, Coastal Plains Region
Email: sarroyo@gnjumc.org

Call To Ministry

By Gina Yeske

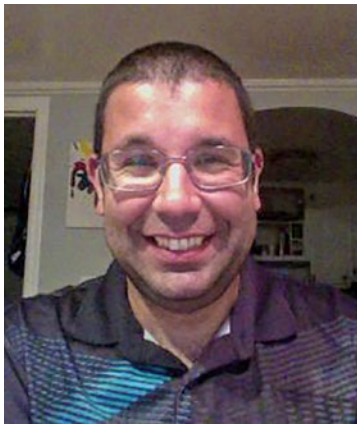
Have you ever wondered if you were being called into ministry? Last month we reflected on the call to ministry as an ordained Elder or an ordained Deacon. This month we will look at the call to ministry as a Licensed Local Pastor, an Associate Member, and as a Certified Lay Minister.

A Certified Lay Minister (CLM) is a qualified United Methodist layperson called to congregational leadership as part of a ministry team under the supervision of a clergy person. A CLM serves the church in many different ways.

My Call: Daniel Jimenez

Daniel Jimenez is a Certified Lay Minister, he is a CLM Course Facilitator, serves as an Associate Pastor of First UMC Passaic, Lyndhurst UMC, and Rutherford UMC and works with lay servant ministry in Meadowlands District.

Daniel began his journey in ministry through a retreat called Search for Christian Maturity in 2001. In that place, Daniel found a voice and a blessing from God.



Daniel Jimenez

He began serving as a leader on Search as a team member, youth leader and offered administrative support. Daniel knew God was doing something special. In 2004, after returning from this retreat, Daniel knew God was asking him to do something new. He started by helping in Tenafly United

Methodist Church's office and little by little, Daniel knew God had a hold on his life as a servant.

Daniel began living out this call as a Lay Servant in 2005, and then as a Certified Lay Minister in 2016. He truly believes in a lay servant ministry slogan: "We are stronger together". One of the first ways Danny was called outside his local church was serving as a District

Lay Servant Co-Director of the former Palisades District. He was later asked to assist with dinner church ministry at First UMC Passaic.

Rev. Juel Nelson, GNJ's Director of Leadership Development has been building on the good work of Jay Brown, who is a CLM, to offer a Certified Lay Minister Course annually. Certified Lay Minister, Ginny Thorp of Trinity UMC Hackettstown is a co-facilitator for the course. Ginny is on staff at Trinity UMC where she serves as the Congregational Care Lay Minister.

In June 2022 the Certified Lay Ministers established a monthly support cohort group that provides CLMs, and those who completed the CLM course, and are pursuing the next steps in the process the opportunity to share in a time of questions, answers, prayer, and devotion. For more information on understanding the role of a Certified Lay Minister or about the monthly cohort group, feel free to reach out to Danny Jimenez (danny@passaic.church) or join us at the Orientation to Ministry class in January 2023.

A Local Pastor answers God's call to serve the mission of Jesus Christ through serving a local congregation in The United Methodist Church. Licensed Local pastors must have reached age 40, completed service and education requirements and been approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry and Clergy Session. They are not ordained but are available for full-time or part-time service.

My Call: Gina Yeske

I was a deeply spiritual child, blessed to grow up in a vibrant church. On summer afternoons, I would gather my friends and serve them "communion" in my backyard church. I believed that someday I would be able to serve as a "priest" in a real church.

But, as a young adult, I felt there was no place for me in the church. Church life that was once life giving soon became draining. I came to recognize that I would not be able to serve the church in the way I had once desired. While I trusted that God was with me, I feared the church had abandoned me. Therefore, I continued to grow in my faith outside the structure of the traditional church.

As an adult I found a church, The United Methodist Church. It was in a Disciple Bible Study class that my call



Rev. Gina Yeske

as a minister was affirmed. I began the formal process of exploring the call to ministry while I began serving the church as a Minister of Education. There were times that I was frustrated that the process was not moving as quickly as I had hoped. However, in retrospect every

experience I had, every lesson I learned has been valuable at some point as I have served the church. After I was licensed, I chose to pursue becoming an Associate Member. I, Rev. Gina Yeske, am an Associate Member and have served in GNJ for 21 years. If you would like to learn more about the ministry of a Licensed Local Pastor or an Associate Clergy Member, please join us at the Orientation to Ministry in January 2023.

We would like to invite you to an evening to explore your call. On Monday, January 23, from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m., the GNJ Board of Ordained Ministry will host a virtual session of Orientation to Ministry. Those attending will have the opportunity to meet other clergy, and ask questions, and begin to better understand the diversity of ministry. Because we will explore the commonalities and differences among the work and responsibilities of those serving in the different varieties of ministry, this is a wonderful opportunity for those early in their discernment process. In addition, attendees have the opportunity to build relationships with others seeking to enter ministry.

For more information on serving as a elder, a deacon, a licensed local pastor or a certified lay minister in the United Methodist Church please register for Orientation to Ministry workshop on January 23, 2023, from 7-8:30 p.m. Learn more <https://www.gnjumc.org/ordained-ministry/orientation-for-ministry/>.

2023 Agency Awards Submissions are Open

GNJ Agencies are seeking submissions for several awards for clergy, laity, and youth, with a deadline of Jan. 15.

Awards include the *One Matters Award*, offered by the *Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church*, Nashville, TN, given around April of the following year. The award is presented by the Discipleship Ministries to the local church in each annual conference which has the highest number of professions of faith in the year. A plaque and check of \$1000 is presented by the District Superintendent of that local church. The selection of the award is based on the information submitted to the annual conference about professions of faith and consultation with the District Superintendents.

The *Harry Denman Evangelism Award* which 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. The recipient of the Harry Denman Evangelism Award will be presented to the awardees by their District Superintendent at a ceremony at their local church during the month of June or July 2023.

Helenor Alter-Davisson was the first woman ordained in American Methodist Church. The Davisson Award in her honor,

which is sponsored by the GNJ Commission on The Status and Role of Women, is given to a woman who is an active UMC member, has strong leadership skills, demonstrates vision, passion, resilience, sense of purpose, inclusiveness, perseverance, and a willingness to work with and stand for the status and role of women in ministry. Each year, GNJ agencies honor lay and clergy members for their leadership.

Visit <https://www.gnjumc.org/award-information/> to learn more about awards and submit your nomination.

BISHOP SAYS HOPEFUL, HUMBLE LEADERSHIP CAN HEAL TROUBLES

Bishop John Schol offered the State of the Northeastern Jurisdiction Episcopal Address Nov. 2, challenging NEJ Conference delegates to exercise leadership that is humble, non-judgmental, Christ-minded and outreaching. His message focused on the priorities of navigating the Covid pandemic, ending the sin of racism, learning to live into the future, and engaging in ministry with people in our communities.

While lamenting “pandemic exhaustion, anxiety, dissention and uncertainty within the denomination,” he nonetheless lauded many vital ministries happening across the jurisdiction where “God is doing a new thing in ministry as we work together.”

Indeed, working humbly together with God and working hard together with one another are key, he said, if we are to raise up and develop new leaders, as we discover and build on the signs of hope and progress in our midst. Read his full speech on EPA’s website. 🇺🇸



Bishop John Schol

District Bids Farewell to New Bishop Hector Burgos

Newly elected Bishop Héctor A. Burgos received a moving farewell tribute as the departing Central District Superintendent Saturday evening, Dec. 3, at Medford UMC. It was his final GNJ public event before moving on to his new post as episcopal leader of the Upper New York Conference Jan. 1.

During a worship service, Burgos was lauded for his 8½ years of leadership on the GNJ Conference staff as Director of Connectional Ministries, Director

of Worship and finally as a District Superintendent, following 11 years as a pastor at three churches.

Burgos recalled the surprise blessing of his election at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference in November. He expressed deep gratitude for all he had learned and received throughout his ministry in GNJ. And he urged his audience to continue being “welcoming, nurturing and of service to others,” as they had been for him and his family.

Bishop John Schol described his former Cabinet member as a man “called by God,” who “appreciates excellence,” and who like Moses, “parts seas to help bring people to where they need to go together.” The two celebrated Communion together with about 120 worshipers who came to say goodbye.

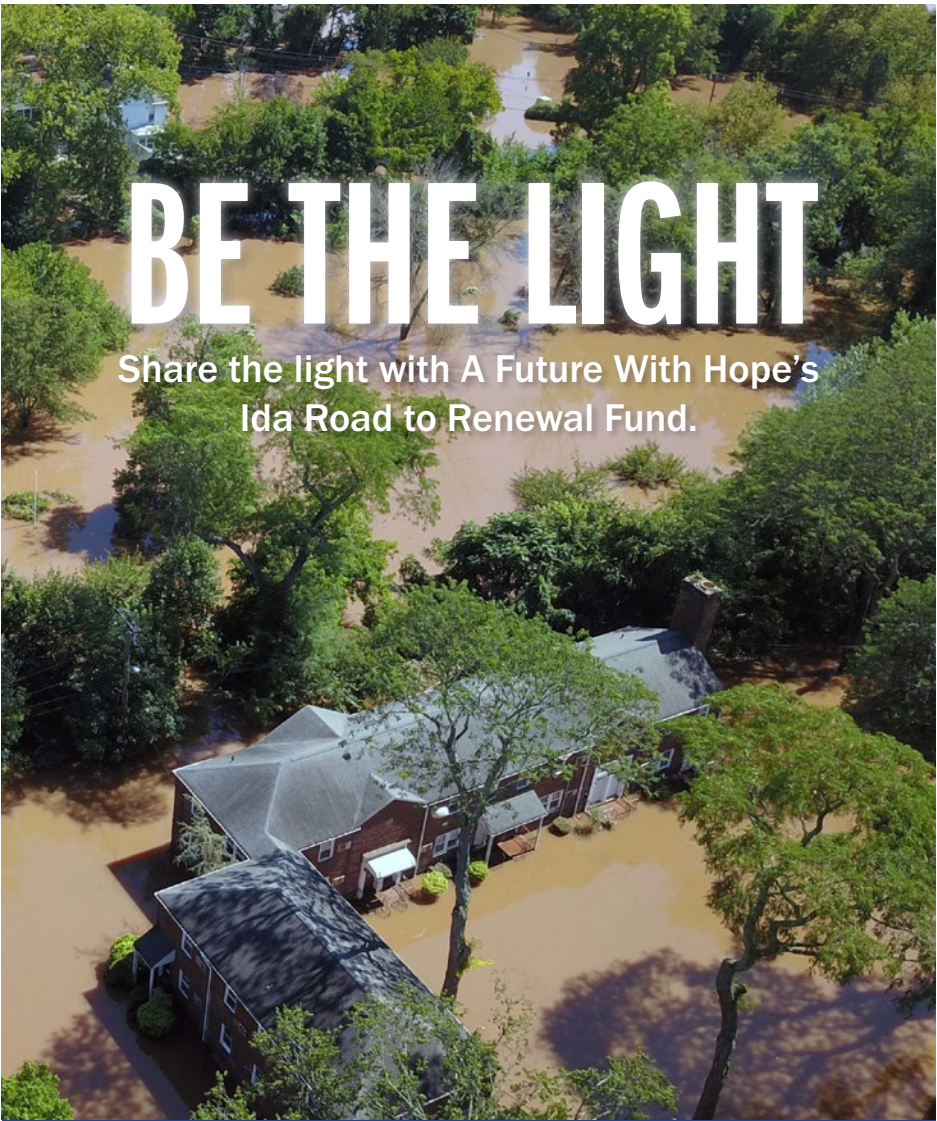
The Rev. Eunice Vega-Perez, Superintendent of the Skylands District, lauded her dear friend for his candor and insight, as “a blessing to work with,” and also praised his wife, the Rev. Jazelis Adorno, a GNJ pastor.

A time of fellowship with dinner, gifts and live music followed the worship service. 🇺🇸

BISHOP HECTOR BURGOS URGED HIS AUDIENCE TO CONTINUE BEING “WELCOMING, NURTURING AND OF SERVICE TO OTHERS,” AS THEY HAD BEEN FOR HIM AND HIS FAMILY.



Newly elected Bishop Hector Burgos.



Share the light with A Future With Hope’s Ida Road to Renewal Fund.

One hundred percent of the proceeds will go toward program goals and direct assistance to communities in need.



To learn more about A Future With Hope’s Ida Relief Fund, go to:
www.gnjumc.org/afwh/ida-relief-effort



Rev. Alison Van Buskirk Philip

A Creative Outlet for Outreach

By Krista B. Jeffries

WESTFIELD, N.J.

Covid affected every aspect of life, including how people worshipped. Churches were closed, and as churchgoers still attempted to attend services online, Rev. Alison Van Buskirk Philip and her team at First United Methodist Church Westfield, wanted to find creative ways to reach as many people as possible.

Pastor Alison said they had considered doing a vlog for a while, but the need for an online presence became more of a necessity than a luxury. As Pastor Alison shared, “we wanted to expand our virtual outreach, and the pandemic cemented that it was valuable to do this kind of work.” So, this idea became a reality, and Pastortiece Theatre made its debut.

This initiative was led by Pastor Alison, but she attributes much of the work and success to Carolyn Milhiser, who writes the scripts, creates the storyboards, recruits volunteers to participate, and then edits the videos to create the “pastortiece” that it is. Pastor Alison praised Carolyn’s efforts, stating, “her energy kept it going.” But both the purpose and the ideas are a joint effort by Alison and Carolyn. Even as churches reopened, this level of outreach remained relevant. As Carolyn shared, “Many people were so used to being online and others were apprehensive about stepping into the church again, so we decided to bring the church to them.”

The intention of the vlog is to not only highlight who they are at FUMC Westfield and what they do, but also to build a bridge between Christianity and everyday life. Carolyn explained, “We decided to create a vlog to help people understand the connection God has in our ordinary lives, trying to provide a service in a fun way. It has also brought our congregation together,” essentially allowing members to connect in a new, entertaining, and unique way.



Pastortiece volunteers from FUMC Westfield

Pastor Alison added, “We wanted to address spirituality and to bridge church with people who might not be used to church language.” Essentially, they wanted to show that church is meant for everyone, and I wholeheartedly believe they were successful in doing that.

They address topics that are relatable to anyone and connect them back to the church on a personal level.

In the video on “Embracing Rest,” they remind us to take time for ourselves, not only to worship but to do things that make us come alive, fill us with joy, and give us peace. They set our minds at ease in “Saying Grace,” taking the awkwardness and pressure out of saying grace at meals, reminding us that it’s not meant to be a perfect work of art but merely a simple prayer from the heart.

In “What is Epiphany?” we are encouraged to allow our good intentions and positive words to guide our lives. And in “Love is Yours This Valentine’s Day,” we are reminded that there are all kinds of love we can have, including love for ourselves and love for God. As Pastor Alison reminds us, “We are made for community, made for caring for each other.”

They have created four videos to date and have every intention of continuing in January as the new year begins. “It has been very rewarding to hear that it’s reaching people and getting the message out,” Carolyn said, “I would love for people to get out of it a better way to live their lives, to see that things don’t have to be that hard, to just sit back and take a moment to realize God is there with them.”

Their purpose is clear, their intention is good, and their success is evident. As I personally watched the videos, I found myself nodding along at their relevant messages, laughing at the built-in humor, and feeling a sense of calm after each one. And I am not alone—the feedback they have received from comments both online and in person, from people of all ages including young kids, shows what kind of impact FUMC Westfield is making. 🌈



FUMC Vlog

To view the vlogs produced in 2022, visit this link:
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLneXrL9QIAzuVwUjLDiJNTfsVrBuxKIOI>



Frankford Plains UMC Live Nativity Volunteers

The Spark of the Season

By Krista B. Jeffries

FRANKFORD PLAINS, N.J.

C hristmas is upon us, and among all the gift buying and giving, the feasts and festivals, and time with family and friends, people often forget

what we are really celebrating—the birth of Jesus.

Most often people just read about the Story of Christmas or hear it read aloud at church, but at Frankford Plains United Methodist Church, people get to experience the story through a Live Nativity.

On Sunday, December 11th, Frankford Plains UMC put on their annual Live Nativity performance, and despite the unexpected snowfall that kept some people home, it was a success. Blanketed in a sheet of white snow, family members stood together

Continued on page 7

Red Bank Theatre for Young Audiences Provides a Theatre Experience for All

By Bonnie Deroski

“Behold, I do a new thing.” —ISAIAH 43:19

R E D B A N K , N J

In years past, the United Methodist Church of Red Bank had a large, vibrant youth program built around volleyball. But times have changed, and sports teams and activities are readily available. Covid put a damper on many church activities, and youth group is one of them.

With many local theatre companies charging tuition for participation in their plays, UMCRB supported a fledgling theatre company and attracted 22 youth from across Monmouth County. These teens came together from various high schools and varied faith traditions and through the production, morphed into a company—a community. “Love, acceptance and welcome are all hallmarks of the Christian faith,” says Bonnie Deroski, “and theatre can provide a rich forum for promoting those values.”

“LOVE, ACCEPTANCE AND WELCOME ARE ALL HALLMARKS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, AND THEATRE CAN PROVIDE A RICH FORUM FOR PROMOTING THOSE VALUES.”

—Bonnie Deroski, Director of Children and Youth Ministries at United Methodist Church of Red Bank

Bonnie continues, “Theatre is an important art form, and all children and families should be able to attend live theatre performances. Theatre promotes empathy, love of reading, engages imagination and helps develop attention span. Many of the local theatres offer quality theatre, but at prices that many families cannot afford.” Built on inspiration from Joseph Papp’s Public Theater and Jon Bon Jovi’s Soul Kitchen, the Red Bank Theatre for Young Audiences presents plays at a pay-what-you-can ticket price and there is no charge to youth to participate in the productions.

On December 3 RBTYA presented, *Tinker Bell*, to delighted audiences of all ages. Directed by Melissa Moore Reimertz, it featured a cast and crew of high school students from around Monmouth County. *Tinker Bell* was written by Patrick Flynn, based on the works of J.J. Barrie and produced by special arrangement with The Dramatic Publishing Company of Woodstock, Illinois. RBTYA looks forward to their next production in the spring of 2023. RBTYA is an outreach of the Youth Ministries of the United Methodist Church of Red Bank.



Tinker Bell, a Red Bank Theatre for Young Audiences production, delighted audiences of all ages, with its performance by students from Monmouth County, NJ high schools. Photos provided.



Continued from page 6

in the cold and performed the story of the birth of Jesus for all in attendance.

Each year, the audience has the pleasure of gathering around the fence that gives the animals a safe space to roam while someone narrates, and the actors perform. They get to see Mary and Joseph exit the church and enter the enclosed area with the barn, live animals, and a manger. Visitors enjoy some caroling and then gather in Fellowship Hall for refreshments and crafts. “It’s a great way to invite the community to come in to hear the Christmas story,” said church member Doris Delmont,



Frankford Plains UMC Live Nativity “participants”

“This might be the only time they hear it during the season, and it sparks a light for some people. You never know when that first spark will happen for someone and what that will mean to them.”

Doris herself has been a light in the church and the community for over 30 years and shared, “When Pastor Robyne Mayer came to our church in 2005, she looked at our campus and said it would be perfect for a Live Nativity, and a tradition was born.”

The Live Nativity has become a beautiful fixture in this community for people near and far, including many who return each year to enjoy this occasion. Christmas is ultimately the biggest birthday party of the year, and this Live Nativity event is one that brings all people together in good will to celebrate life and faith, to commune with each other, to share hope, and to find peace.

Migrant Families

Continued from page 1

crowded vehicles, across rivers and finally on buses sent North by defiant, unwelcoming Southern governors. Many—seeking a better, safer life for their families—have traveled risky, roundabout, rigorous routes from South America and the Caribbean, through Central America and Mexico, and finally crossing the U.S. border.

Jani, a nurse, came with her husband and children from Peru, while Dalia came with her family from Cuba. First UMC has helped them and others to find housing, food and basic services, and also enrolled their children in its preschool program, thanks to scholarships.

A Difficult Time Housing Immigrant Families

Dalia's family is one of two living temporarily in the church's parsonage, along with other tenants. Meanwhile, the Rev. Elizabeth Gonzales, pastor, and the Rev. Manolo Sardiñas, copastor, are appealing everywhere for donations to help pay for hard-to-find, affordable housing in the area.

"We are having a difficult time housing two immigrant families...who have nowhere else to live," wrote Gonzales to the Rev. William Williams, Superintendent of GNJ's Meadowlands District. "This city is receiving many immigrants, and our church must give an answer. We are helping families with clothes and food; but we have to try to find places for them to live."

While some have found part-time work, they are often exploited and robbed of their wages due to their undocumented status, said Gonzales. They are too afraid to protest or complain. First UMC tries to

help them with food and financial support, much of which comes from its popular preschool and childcare program.

"This ministry has been with us for years. We give them not only food and shelter but also hope for each person to be treated with dignity and respect," said Gonzales. "We incorporate them into different support groups and invite them to join our church." The congregation is now back to pre-Covid numbers of about 60 worshippers on Sundays.

"If the district wants to get involved, it would be very good," she wrote to Williams. So, he put the UMC connection to work by linking First UMC with Morrow Memorial UMC in suburban Maplewood, near Newark. Morrow has been working for years with local partners to advance the cause of immigration justice and hospitality.

Lay member Dorothy Wetzel gathered church leaders to learn about and respond to First UMC's appeal. The two churches instantly became willing partners in mission.

Churches Seek Ways to Partner Together

To start, a small team of Morrow UMC members visited First UMC on Saturday, Dec. 3, and helped with its biweekly distribution and home delivery of free food to about 178 families. They plan to recruit and send more members in January, including children.

"It's a perfect volunteer opportunity for our young families who want to be involved in hands-on ministry," said Wetzel, a health care marketing consultant. She serves on the board of First

Friends of New Jersey and New York, which provides compassionate outreach to immigrants who are impacted by the immigration enforcement system to help them "survive detention, gain freedom and rebuild their lives."

Wetzel was also invited to join the First UMC at their annual Christmas dinner Dec. 9 at a local Cuban restaurant. During that celebration, several migrant families shared their stories, "full of suffering but with the desire to have a new life," said Gonzales. "Each has a story to share; and it is interesting to listen to them, so that one learns and appreciates more and more what God has done in our lives."

Morrow UMC will call on some of its community partners to help First UMC get support from the state's Community Food Bank, as well as legal aid for its migrant neighbors who are seeking asylum.

Meanwhile, Morrow and First UMC church leaders are brainstorming on ways to partner together to serve the community. They are considering donations of winter clothing and home furnishings for residents, Christmas gifts for children, collaborative fundraising activities—such as a Cuban cuisine cooking class—and some inter-church youth activities. Several of First UMC's youth enjoyed meeting peers from other churches at GNJ's IGNITE rally in October.

"My hope is that we will work together as partners, and they seem to welcome that," said Wetzel. "There's much we can do to help each other. There's a lot we can learn from them."

"I know our people are capable of helping those least favored," Gonzales wrote to Williams. "As I always say, we are the hands and feet of God." 🌈



Volunteers help distribute food to First UMC Union City's neighbors. Photo by Dorothy Wetzel

EPA & GNJ Affiliation

Continued from page 1

"We share the most creative, bold, resourceful servant leaders and a joint mission and shared vision to grow vitality, grow giving, grow worship attendance, end the sin of racism and promote congregational development," said the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, newly appointed as Assistant to Bishop Schol for EPA & GNJ, as well as EPA Director of Connectional Ministries.

She pointed out that "alignments and affiliations are going to become the future model" in other Northeastern Jurisdiction conferences—for example, Baltimore-Washington and Peninsula-Delaware—and possibly across the denomination, as a solution to shrinking resources and increasing ministry demands and opportunities.

collaboration and alignment. This shows that we are ready to move forward."

Clark and the Rev. Sang Won Doh, Dean of GNJ's Cabinet, explained that pastoral appointments may be made across conference boundaries with the pastor's request or agreement—for example, to accommodate special family concerns, or to deploy particular gifts when and where "strategic opportunities arise."

But clergy members will remain members of their conference unless they request a change. And churches in need of pastors in both EPA and GNJ will be listed on both conferences' websites.

The Revs. James Lee and John Coleman introduced EPA and GNJ's new joint Communications operations and six-member team located in both conferences. Lee, formerly a pastor and video producer for

congregational development initiative operating in both conferences.

"In GNJ we're hearing from churches that Pathways helps them understand there are better ways to connect with the community," said Williams, "and how to develop their in-person and virtual worship services."

"Our facilitators are doing a lot of coaching of pastors," said Morton, "but we're also working with teams of lay folks so that they can learn skills of accurate assessment (and) what are our strengths, what is our mission field?"

"It's brand new to us, but we've got great enthusiasm in Eastern Penn," he added, citing 33 churches that joined EPA's Pathways for Congregational Health and Vitality initiative in September, another 19 in November and more now on waiting lists for February 2023. But he noted that GNJ began their Pathways initiative much earlier. "So, we can learn a lot from New Jersey, and we look forward to doing that together."

Joint Commitment to End Sin of Racism

The Revs. Ronell Howard, who becomes Superintendent of GNJ's Central District Jan. 1, and Jennifer Freymoyer, Superintendent of EPA's West District, described both conferences' commitment to ending the sin of racism. GNJ's initiative, titled Journey of Hope, and EPA's Path toward Wholeness, are "committed to equity in our apportionment process and making adjustments for churches in low-income areas," they said. Both conferences are training clergy and laity in cross-racial/cross-cultural ministries, while promoting anti-racism practices and policies.

The Rev. Eric Drew, GNJ's Director of Connectional Ministries, noted EPA's Latino Ministries Coordinator, the Rev. Lisa DePaz, and its Latino Commission, among other racial-ethnic groups. "Both EPA and GNJ are passionate about raising up and empowering the voices of their caucuses and ethnic ministries," he said, "to learn and share together and to build connections."

EPA to Adopt GNJ's Regional Administration Model

Jo Fielding, EPA's Director of Administrative Services and Jay Kim, GNJ's Director of Human Resources, spoke about the regional administration model that GNJ already has, and that EPA will adopt in January. Districts are grouped into regions to enhance program support, resourcing and cross-district working relationships. Each region has a support team, a regional administrator, and a regional manager, to work alongside district superintendents and assigned conference staff.

Assisting Elders in EPA, known as Circuit Leaders in GNJ, will work on regional teams, as well as Regional Resource Directors. Krystina Michalopoulos, a Regional Manager in GNJ, will supervise the regional administrators of both conferences, as they connect across conference lines.

Following the presentations, Eric Drew fielded and panelists responded to numerous viewers' questions placed in the Zoom chat window. Included were questions about how information about affiliation will be communicated to churches, how affiliation will affect clergy to be commissioned and ordained, and how the progress and challenges of affiliation will be evaluated.

New FAQ Document Posted on Websites

All questions and answers posed during and since the webinar can be viewed on a new FAQ document that will be posted and updated on both conferences' websites. Both websites will publish a new Affiliation web page containing links to the FAQ document, a video recording of the second webinar, related writings from Bishop Schol, and more news and information about Affiliation. 🌈

The webinar, FAQs and letters from Bishop Schol can be found on our GNJ website at <https://www.gnjumc.org/news/>.

“WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER, MORE EFFECTIVELY AND MORE EFFICIENTLY TO SERVE CHRIST, THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD?”

Ensuring that Mission Thrives in EPA and GNJ

"How can we ensure that mission thrives in EPA and GNJ, where there's a common purpose and mission, shared goals and shared commitments?" asked Taylor-Storm. "What can we do better, more effectively and more efficiently to serve Christ, the church and the world?"

EPA and GNJ will not merge, but will remain distinct conferences, she explained. "Most functions between the conferences will remain distinct and separate, such as pension programs, finances, health insurance and property insurance programs."

The Rev. Evelyn Kent Clark, Dean of EPA's Cabinet observed "an Advent spirit of joy and anticipation as we move into this new affiliation." She cited joint Cabinet retreats and meetings that revealed "great synergy,

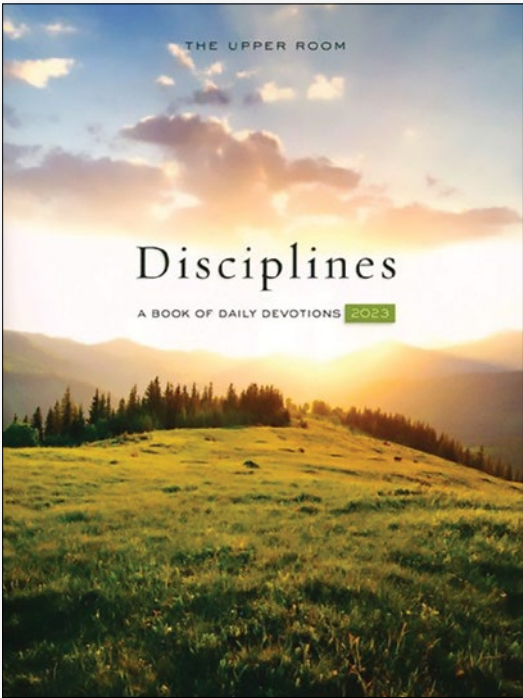
GNJ, is now Director of Communications. Coleman, former EPA Director of Communications and a part-time Local Pastor, is now Editorial Manager.

EPA's NEWSpirit Newspaper to Return in 2023

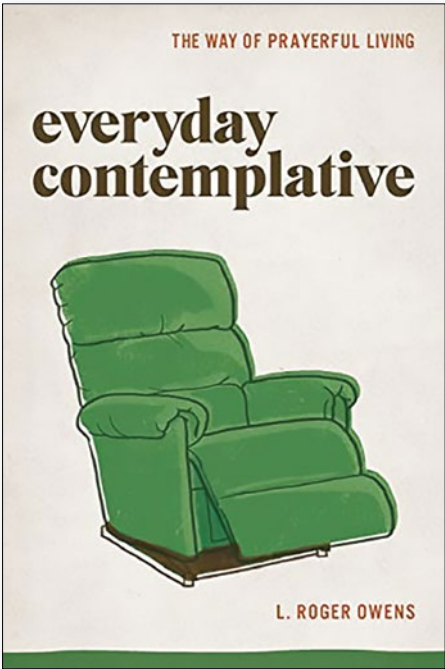
In addition to two conference websites and weekly newsletters, among other communications and marketing resources, Coleman announced that quarterly publication of EPA's former newspaper, NEWSpirit, will be restarted in 2023.

The Revs. William Williams III, Superintendent of GNJ's Meadowlands District and Metro Highlands Regional Team Leader, and Steve Morton, EPA's new Leadership Development Manager, discussed their imminent collaboration on Pathways—the innovative leadership and

DECEMBER/JANUARY BOOKSHELF

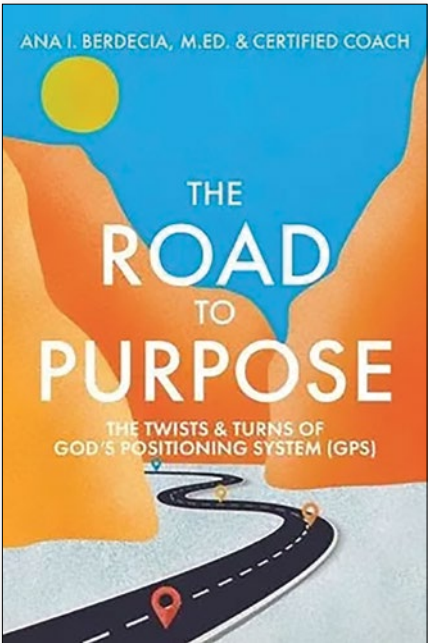


The Upper Room Disciplines 2023
A Book of Daily Devotions
The Upper Room
Strength for your spiritual journey, center your heart and mind on God each day with *The Upper Room Disciplines*. Readings in this year-long devotional will awaken and strengthen your awareness of God’s presence in your daily life. Each week a different Christian thought leader offers daily meditations, scripture readings, and prayers that will help you engage God’s Word.



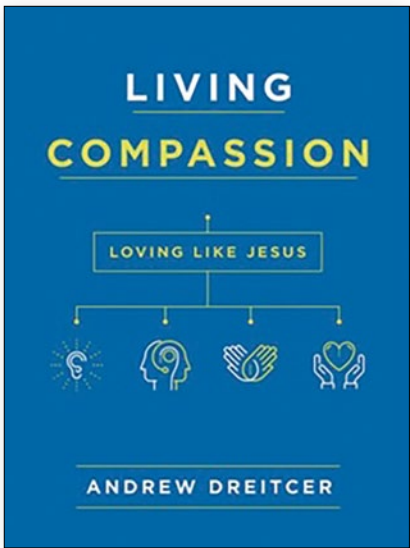
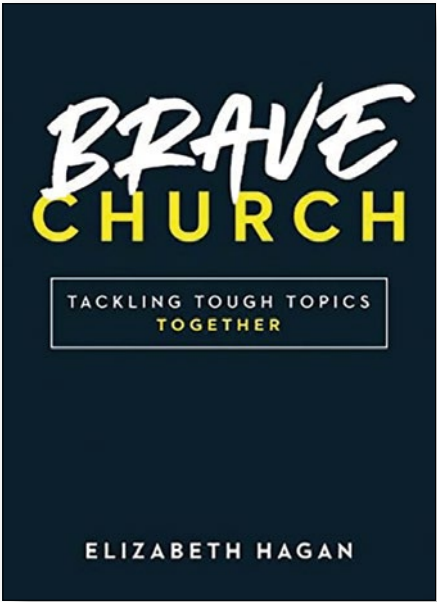
Everyday Contemplative
The Way of Prayerful Living
L. Roger Owens
What does it mean to live a contemplative life? How does someone become contemplative? Does being contemplative mean sitting around thinking about God all day? Does it require living a simple or even austere life, like a monk or a nun? Roger Owens challenges readers to expand their definition of contemplative living to encompass all ways of seeking to be more open, available, and responsive to God.

The Road to Purpose
The Twist & Turns of God's Positioning System (GPS)
Ana I. Berdecia
In recent decades there has been a dramatic recovery of a striking fact, that all the persons have a brilliant future if they follow the trilogy that the author presents in her book. The trilogy is composed of passion, potential and purpose. The potentialities of this development are almost unlimited. It is like a fresh wind blowing across our society, awakening a growing group of persons to the exciting idea of having a purpose in their lives. This book rests heavily in the already mentioned trilogy. This will allow us to conquer in life with an affirmative positive thinking and resting in the power of love of God.

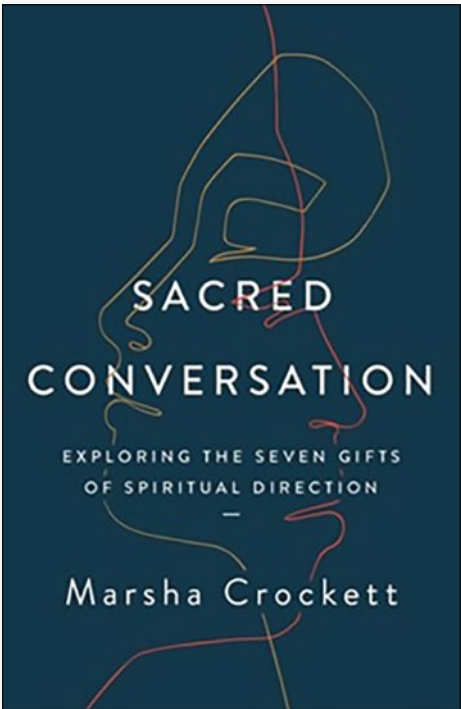


If you are struggling to find the calling that God has on your life, I highly recommend *The Road to Purpose*. It is available from Amazon. Ana, the author, met the Lord in the Spanish Methodist Church of Trenton, NJ, and her faith shows in this book. Review provided by Rev. Julio Gomez, ThM.

Brave Church
Tackling Tough Topics Together
Elizabeth Hagan
In today's deeply divided world where discussions can quickly become heated and uncivil, churches need to learn how to talk about sensitive issues. Our society needs brave churches where people can talk about the real struggles they are experiencing without fear of being dismissed, shamed, or judged. *Brave Church* helps congregations talk about controversial topics with sensitivity to those who see the world and have experienced life differently from themselves.

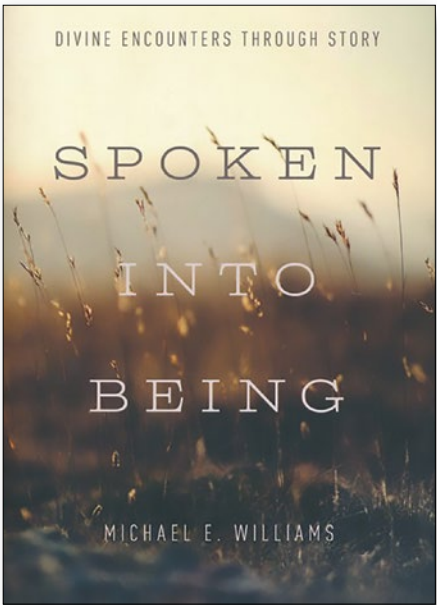


Living Compassion
Loving Like Jesus
Andrew Dreitcer
Living Compassion was named “One of the Best Spiritual Books of 2017” by *Spirituality and Practice* (Frederic & Mary Ann Brussat). In the face of hurtful public dialogue and worldwide conflict, many Christians want to practice and experience genuine compassion. After all, centuries of Christian teachings have insisted that compassion is at the heart of the Christian life. “Love your enemies,” Jesus said in Luke 6:35-36. “Do good to them. Be compassionate, just as God is compassionate.”



Sacred Conversation
Exploring the Seven Gifts of Spiritual Direction
Marsha Crockett
God created humans with the desire to both know others and be known. People weren't meant to go it alone on their spiritual journeys, and God has provided many fellow travelers to accompany us. Some of these fellow pilgrims—spiritual directors—are called to walk the spiritual path with others.

Spoken Into Being
Divine Encounters Through Story
Michael E. Williams
“Tell me a story.” Countless parents and grandparents have heard that request from children. People of all ages are captivated by a good story. Storytelling helps us makes sense of the events of our lives, the world around us, and God. When we tell stories, we speak a world into being—just as God did in the creation accounts in the book of Genesis. “Everyone is a storyteller,” says author Michael Williams. You don't have to be a professional storyteller to be able to tell good stories.



CURRENT JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Music Director

Trinity UMC of Hackettstown
Trinity UMC of Hackettstown is seeking a Music Director. The Music Director must demonstrate knowledge regarding types and availability of Liturgical music appropriate for the various events and scheduled of the United Methodist calendar including both traditional as well as contemporary liturgical music. The Music Director should be highly skilled in playing the organ (Allen 3 Manual), piano and rehearsing and directing the Chancel Choir. The job description and application is located at catchthespirit.org. Direct any questions to kanzel@catchthespirit.org.

PT Chancel Choir Director

First UMC of Cape May Court House
Looking for an ideal candidate who can develop, coordinate, and lead a choir for traditional (9:00am) Sunday church service at First United Methodist Church of Cape May Court House. Preferred background in music education or equivalent experience. Please send your resume by email to: cmchsecretary@comcast.net.

Worship and Media Production Director

St. Paul's Ocean Grove Church (SPOGC)
The Worship and Media Production Director will plan, organize, and lead worship experiences at St. Paul's Ocean Grove Church (SPOGC) while creating small groups and bible studies intentionally designed to build and develop teams of volunteers for leading contemporary/modern worship and an overall ministry audio/video production for promoting SPOGC. To apply email jobs@oceangrovechurch.com.

Media Ministry Coordinator (PT)

Denville Community Church
Seeking an individual who is passionate about bringing people to a relationship with Christ for this part-time position as Media Ministry Coordinator.

- We seek a person who generates creative ideas and designs, and who values a team concept of ministry; an energetic, dynamic leader who will engage all age groups online.
- The individual for this position will be responsible for producing videos, managing media, creating worship slides, and designing posts for social media.
- This will include, but is not limited to, teaching and training volunteers.
- The ministry will be evangelistic and discipleship-oriented and implemented by reaching to church and community members online. Proficiency required in social media platforms, AV and live-streaming technology.
- College degree preferred in a related field.

Interested parties should email their resume to Denville Community Church at staffing@denvillecommunitychurch.org.

Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries (PT)

Denville Community Church
Seeking an individual who is passionate about bringing youth to a relationship with Christ for this part-time coordinator position.

- We seek a person who generates creative ideas and programs and who values a team concept of ministry; an energetic, dynamic leader who will attract youth from beyond our church community to their program. The individual for this position will be responsible for developing, implementing, and growing the youth and young adult ministries.
- This will include, but is not limited to, overseeing a youth Sunday school, a weekly youth group program, Vacation Bible School, the Confirmation program, retreats and mission trips. The ministry will be evangelistic and discipleship-oriented and implemented by reaching to the church youth and the unchurched community.
- Prior experience must include at least 3-5 years developing and growing children and youth programs within the life of a church. College degree preferred in a related field.

Interested parties should email their resume to Denville Community Church at staffing@denvillecommunitychurch.org.

Director of Music Ministry

Centenary UMC
The ministry of music is one of the most essential elements of worship and nurture in the life of the United Methodist Church. The Director of Music Ministry appreciates the vital role of music in spiritual life and worship services. The successful candidate will have experience with a broad range of music styles, including traditional and contemporary genres. As a Christian, he/she will be able to lead others into deeper spirituality through the ministry of music. The Director of Music Ministry is responsible for planning and implementing a comprehensive program of music as a whole.
Visit www.gnjumc.org/job-opportunities/.

Grant Monitor and Evaluator

A Future With Hope
AFWH, seeks a Full Time, Limited Term Grant Monitor and Evaluator. The Grant Monitor and Evaluator is responsible for tracking data collection, program indicators and financial expenditures to ensure that so that they adhere to grant compliance requirements. They are responsible for completing all grant progress reports. They will work closely with the bookkeeper and GNJ's accounting department, ensuring grant compliance for a successful Greater New Jersey Ida Recovery. To be qualified for this position you must be competent and skilled in Microsoft Office Suite and Adobe Acrobat, experienced in financial software, and minimum of two years of grant monitoring and evaluation experience. You must have a bachelor's degree in finance, accounting or related field or similar job experience.
Visit www.gnjumc.org/job-opportunities/.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Statistical Reports Refresher and FAQ
Jan. 5, 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

2022 Statistical Reports
Due by Jan. 31, 2023

UMCOR ERT Training
Jan. 14, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Orientation to Ministry
Jan. 23, 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Healing Communities Training
Jan. 25-Feb. 1

2023 Annual Conference Award Nominations
Due Jan. 15

2023 Certified Lay Minister course
Registration closes Jan. 15

2023 Local Pastor Licensing School
Registration closes Jan. 15

Lay Ministry Recognition Nominations
Due Feb. 1

MRC Closures
Dec. 23 & 26 for Christmas
Jan.2 for New Year’s Day (observed)

OBITUARIES

Our thoughts and prayers are with these families and friends.

Dorothy Tracy Eppinger, Surviving Spouse of Rev. W. Benjamin Eppinger, passed away on November 13, 2022. Memorial Donations (In lieu of flowers) may be sent to The Centenary Fund & Preachers’ Aid Society or The Educational Society c/o: United Methodists of Greater New Jersey, Mission and Resource Center, 205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753. Send Expressions of Sympathy to: Glenn Eppinger, Son, 8164 Blue Marlin Way, Orlando, Florida 32822.

Leon F. Weaver, Retired Full Elder, passed away on November 8, 2022. A Memorial Service was held Dec. 3, 2022. Memorial Donations (In lieu of flowers) may be sent to The National Children’s Cancer Society at <https://thenccs.org/>. Send Expressions of Sympathy to Nannette Weaver (Spouse), 228 Fox Water Trl., St Augustine, FL 32086-8426.



DO YOU KNOW ALL THE BENEFITS OFFERED BY A DUAL SPECIAL NEEDS PLAN?

YOU COULD BE ELIGIBLE TO ENROLL IN A PLAN WITH BENEFITS INCLUDING **DENTAL, VISION, & HEARING** AS WELL AS **OTC** AND MORE

Have you recently turned 65, new to Medicare, loosing coverage or qualify for a SEP
Lets find a **Medicare health plan** that **meets your medical and financial needs.**

CALL **DON MEDLEY**
AT **609.980.3573**
TTY: 711

This is a solicitation to sell insurance. Don Medley is a licensed agent and is not a government entity. Plan availability varies by region and state. Enrollment in the described plan type(s) may be limited to certain times of the year unless you qualify for a special enrollment period. We do not offer every plan available in your area. Any information we provide is limited to those plans we do offer in your area. Please contact Medicare.gov or 1-800-MEDICARE to get information on all of your options. For a complete list of available plans please contact 1-800- MEDICARE (TTY users should call 1- 877-486-2048), 24 hours a day/7 days a week or consult www.medicare.gov.
MULTIPLAN_APAPFL20220526_M

United Methodist Communities
Abundant Life for Seniors

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 care, a short-term stay for your loved one, which in turn gives caregivers beneficial opportunities to rest, manage other demands, take a break, and otherwise balance work and family life.

Visit our website 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
UMCommunities.org

BRISTOL GLEN | COLLINGSWOOD | PITMAN | THE SHORES

Great Place To Work
Certified
MAY 2022-MAY 2023
USA

Begin the new year with a Fresh Start!

The Breakthrough Team will offer seven sermon series for 2023. Resources include small group guides, worship liturgy, preaching resources, and more.



GNJUMC.ORG/BREAKTHROUGH/2023-WORSHIP-SERIES

