

THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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Brigantine Family Kept Together, Given A Future With Hope

By Josh Kinney
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Ralph Giles ran his fingers across the smooth edges of a cabinet in his soon to be new kitchen. He marveled at the crown molding and stack of tiles in the corner that would become the floor of his new bathroom. The intricacies were impressive, and he seemed to find another around every turn. From outlets with USB ports to a thoughtful layout that incorporated a built-in elevator shaft for future wheelchair accessibility, left him awestruck.

"If I were to say what I would have wanted, this is essentially it," he said, pacing what would become his living room.

Giles and his son, Ralph Jr., toured their new energy star home with unmistakable enchantment. For four generations, the Giles' lived on the island of Brigantine until Superstorm Sandy threatened to end their family legacy. Nearly obliterated by the storm, the Giles' home, which was purchased in 1960 by Ralph Sr.'s parents, suffered catastrophic flooding and irreparable damage.

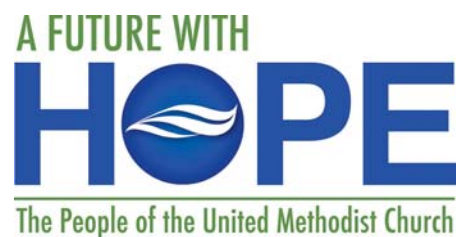
"Do you have any pictures of the old house?" Ralph Jr. asked his father.

"I have pictures of a pile," Giles chuckled.

"Yeah, that was kind of rough," Ralph Jr. replied.

The father and son duo recalled the night of the storm when in fifteen minutes, flood water went from a puddle in

the street to gushing through their living room. With the sound of each car alarm echoing across the island, they could



sense the tidal flood coming closer. The storm not only ravaged their home, it also destroyed their vehicles.

The Giles' spent years in a grim and worsening state of limbo wondering what they were going to do.

"We are so thankful for A Future With Hope," said Giles. "I don't know what else we would've done."

Prior to the storm, Ralph Sr., a single father working in residential irrigation, fell while helping a friend and broke several bones. Ralph, Jr., who was attending trade school in Pennsylvania, didn't want his dad to ride out the hurricane alone and traveled home to be by his side.

Sandy's aftermath not only left a battered house for the Giles, it also buried them in paperwork and arguments with insurance companies and the state.

"There was total confusion for years," said Giles. "The state would ask us to make it so the home was safe one week and the next they would tell us not to do anything or else they wouldn't be able to reimburse us."



Ralph Giles Sr. and Jr. of Brigantine are overwhelmed with thankfulness and joy because of A Future With Hope's faithful and committed dedication to seeing them over the finish line and into their home, four years after Superstorm Sandy. Photo by Josh Kinney

The Giles had insurance but fixing the house was like bandaging a mortal wound. The money ended up wasted after the house was ultimately demolished.

Despite his personal state of disrepair, Ralph Sr. felt compelled to help his community after the storm. He started working with the nonprofit Blankets for Brigantine which was birthed in Sandy's wake, and lent his building knowledge assessing homes to discern which could

be salvaged.

"I remember since I was a kid, dad saying that if he ever won the lottery, one thing he wanted to do was go to a disaster area and help people," said Ralph Jr. He added, "As strange as this kind of is, Sandy happening, especially here, he got to fulfill a dream of his helping people in the way he always wanted to. And I gotta say, just the fact that we've got all this

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Listening and Conversation Unites GNJ in the Midst of Denominational Controversy



Clergy and Laity throughout GNJ gathered at the Mission and Resource Center on March 4 to openly share, pray, and discuss a way forward for The United Methodist Church in the midst of denominational challenges. Photo by Josh Kinney

By Josh Kinney
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Clergy and laity from throughout The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey exemplified what it looks like to live in the midst of differences and challenges at 'Graceful Controversies,' a gathering to engage in conversation around the issues facing the United Methodist church over human sexuality. Held at the Mission and Resource Center on March 4, more than 100 people from throughout the conference gathered to engage in a deeper conversation to develop hopes and aspirations for the future of The United Methodist Church to be sent to the Commission on the

Way Forward.

The Commission, proposed by the Council of Bishops and approved by the 2016 General Conference, materialized to do a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph of the Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality and explore options that help to maintain and strengthen the unity of the church.

Hector Burgos, Director of Connectional Ministries opened with a feather, using it as a symbol for something that is both fragile and strong. Feathers were distributed to each table to be used in the circle process during conversations.

Participants heard four testimonies

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Proposed Budget Decreases Shared Ministry Apportioned to Church and Changes Formula

By the GNJ Staff
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The Council on Finance and Administration has proposed a 2018 budget to the May Annual Conference Session and apportionment formula that will decrease the amount apportioned to churches for shared ministry. The Shared Ministry formula proposes a flat percentage of 16.3% and to continue to decrease the amount to a goal of 15.6% over the next five years.

The proposal, by CFA will set the flat rate at 16.3% for shared ministry for all churches is down from 2017's average of 17.2%. The change reflects the commitment of GNJ to the congregation as the mission outpost for the United Methodist Church.

"The change is necessary to reflect the changing realities of the church," said Bob Dietz, CFA Chair. "The previous formula could fluctuate and is up from 15.7% at the time of the merger of the South and North Conferences in 2003. This change will mean the Annual Conference will better support the challenges facing churches at the local level."

Under the new formula and proposed budget, 83% of the congregations will receive a reduction in their shared ministry. The other 17% of the churches will receive an increase because their budgets have grown significantly because these congregations are growing in the mission and spending. Without the budget reduction and new Shared Ministry formula, these churches would have received an

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A Message from the Bishop



We have a future - Part 5

I see a 20 to 50-year view of GNJ, and I am encouraged.

One of my favorite encounters as a bishop was with a 70 year old farmer in South Jersey. He spoke with me about farming and the changes he had to make because the market/culture had changed. When West Virginia wasn't buying as many peaches, he started a

pick your own peaches program. When the local supermarkets weren't buying as many strawberries, he invited people to pick their own strawberries. He started hosting hay rides and games for children. He said, "I had to change in order to sustain the farm and make money."

This is the final article in a five-part series on building and growing a regenerative church and conference that is constantly generating:

- Passionate Faith
- Transformative Leaders
- Vital Mission Congregations
- Money, and lots of it for mission

The one who received \$500 made \$1,000. -Matthew 25:14 ff (paraphrase)

The farmer lived this parable. Today I want to talk with you about money, and the importance of raising a lot of money for the mission.

The farm and the church are experiencing very similar environments in GNJ. For farmers, the growing process, the production and marketing costs and people's purchasing preferences have changed. There are more corporate farms, more organic farms and more farmer's markets. Farmers are reinventing themselves.

Like the farm, people's spiritual and faith habits have changed. Farms that are not changing are going out of business. Churches that are not changing are going "out of business."

While the church has been consolidating, the mission has not. In fact, the mission is as great as ever before and is expanding. Key to the mission, just like farming, is money. Money is one of the things needed to sustain the mission. In GNJ we have taken several steps to strengthen our finances and the mission. For instance, A Future With Hope (AFWH), the nonprofit corporation that has rebuilt or built new more than 250 homes after Superstorm Sandy and raised \$17 million. Today, AFWH and GNJ are working together to create 100 Hope Centers, train congregations and communities to be Communities of Hope, and developing housing and church property. Through AFWH we are extending the mission through more than \$17 million that has been raised. This is a first in GNJ's history.

We also reorganized the United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of GNJ and refocused our efforts which moved us from \$4 million under investment to \$36 million. This change has enabled us to create a development team for local church fundraising, individual donor gifts and grants through church, corporations, foundations and government sources. The money raised by these new staff members will be used to continue to sustain and expand GNJ's mission through our congregations.

As we are becoming stronger and identifying other funding sources, it is allowing us to do more mission, work with our congregations to increase their financial sustainability and even reduce our apportioned Shared Ministry to our congregations. The 2018 proposed apportioned Shared Ministries will reduce the overall amount apportioned to our churches by 8%. Over the last three we reduced the apportioned Shared Ministries by 7% for a total of 15% reduction. All of this reduction is being done without shrinking the mission but expanding it and increasing resourcing to our congregations. How? We have taken the farmers advice and are reinventing ourselves.

We are beginning to see signs of this same spirit in congregations. Congregations looking at what they do and how they use their money and property to generate more money for the mission. These churches are like the parable Jesus tells in Matthew 25:14 ff where they grow what God has blessed them with. These churches tend to look at things like Shared Ministry savings and ask, "How can we spend this money to generate new disciples, increased mission, more lives transformed and more money for mission?" rather than put the money back into the status quo.

The future will not be built on doing more of the same or playing it safe but by risking -- we have a future with hope. Humbling ourselves before God and becoming the new church innovators of what is next for the church will expand the mission and give us a 20-50 year view of a vibrant and vital church. GNJ has a great future ahead, because leadership are committed to growing passionate faith, calling and equipping transformational leaders, developing vital mission congregations, and raising money, and lots of it for mission.

Let us work together to create a church that is transformational now and in 20 years.

Keep the faith!

John

John Schol, Bishop
The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey



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THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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FOR ADVERTISING RATES, INFORMATION and PLACEMENT

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4 STEPS TO ATTRACT YOUNG ADULTS TO SMALL GROUPS



EASY TO ATTEND

Make your small group easy to attend by:

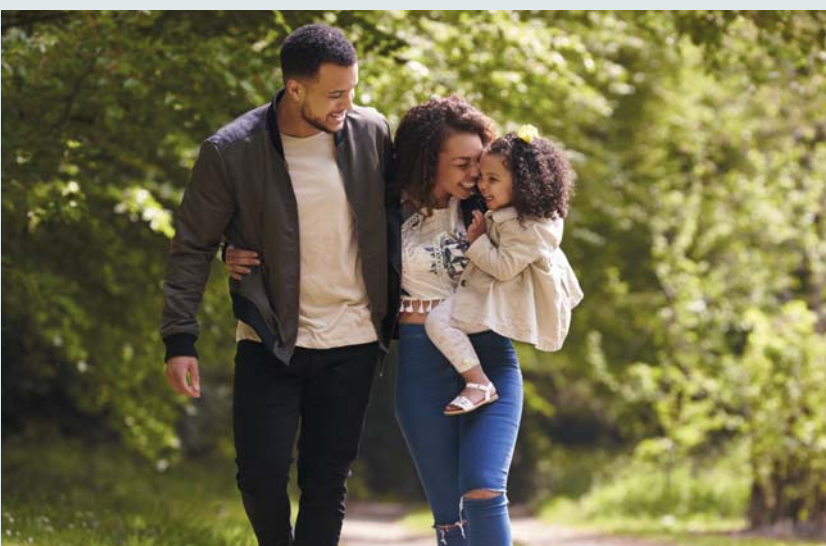
- Providing childcare
- Offering a meal
- Including online participation options that compliment in-person groups



COMMUNICATE VALUE

Be sure to communicate the value of small group participation, not just their topics. Small groups:

- Offer opportunity to grow relationships
- Are places to wrestle with issues and questions
- Are places to share struggles and to be real with one another



THINK LIFE STAGES

Rather than thinking in terms of age groups, think life stages instead:

- Offer working singles, newlyweds and young parent groups
- Offer opportunities to be in diverse groups with people of different ages and life stages



IDENTIFY AND EQUIP

Identify and equip solid, called small group facilitators:

- Young adults that relate to their peers
- Loving seniors can make great facilitators for young adult groups

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Attend the 2017 School of Congregational Development, Aug. 17-20 in Atlanta, GA and experience workshops and tools centered on young adult ministry. See details at: umdiscipleship.org

Growing Young: 6 Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church, by Kara Powell, Jake Mulder and Brad Griffin. Available at: amazon.com

Jackson UMC Goes Solar

By Denise Herschel
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As part of their commitment to being good stewards of the earth as well as setting an environmental model for other churches, Jackson UMC in Jackson Township has officially gone solar. What initially began as a conversation about a potential project in 2011 has now come to fruition.

"Our solar energy was installed within the first two weeks of 2017 and was turned on January 30th," according to

Jackson UMC Pastor Joe Tiedemann. "We are estimating saving \$200.00 to \$300.00 per month on our electric bill which is redirected into funding our vision and programs. Over the course of the next 15 years, we estimate over \$50,000 being poured into ministry and mission."

Tiedemann said that the solar project was revisited in March 2016. One of the church members, Paul Herink, initiated the plan and gathered all the information and bids for the ten-month project.

"Our Board of Trustees discussed the potential for solar. They gathered



Jackson UMC is saving on electric and redirecting funds to ministry while committing to being good stewards of the earth. Photo provided



Jackson UMC in Jackson Township has officially gone solar. Photo provided

research and evaluated every aspect of the project from the aesthetics to environmental impact. Financially, we discussed several options to pay for the project and finally decided to go with a Purchase Power Agreement (PPA)," he said.

Jackson UMC has nearly 300 members and about 125 people who worship each Sunday. Tiedemann added that "we looked at several other churches but PPA is a pretty standard option."

Tiedemann continued that the advantage for the church was that there was no outlay of money for the system and a reduced electric bill.

"After a few months of discussion within the Board of Trustees and then the whole church, we requested permission from the District Superintendent and the District Committee on Building and Location. Once we were granted approval, we began by appointing two people to head the project to receive bids for the project. Don Smith and Paul Herink

communicated with over 20 solar companies," he said. "Once they narrowed the field down, they presented the Board of Trustees and the church, Sea Bright Solar. Sea Bright was unique because we met directly with Brian Kelly, president of the company, and they provided the church with the greatest savings and were genuinely interested in helping us with our mission and our vision."

Tiedemann said, "I think this makes sense for every church and parsonage. It reduces the carbon footprint and allows churches to repurpose the money into their ministry and into their vision."

Jackson UMC, a family-oriented contemporary Christian church, was formed in the early 1990s by a group of people from various small churches in Jackson Township. The congregation met in Switlik Elementary School in the township until the current building was built in 1999-2000.

GNJ's Work Recognized by Denomination

By Josh Kinney
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NEW ORLEANS - GNJ was honored at the 2017 United Methodist Association of Communicators (UMAC) conference on March 23 in New Orleans, taking home six awards for work in design, writing, blogs, podcasts, and marketing of conference ministries. In addition, Carolyn Conover, GNJ's Director of Communications was honored as the 2017 Communicator of the Year.

The United Methodist Association of Communicators provides recognition, fellowship and vocational enrichment for professional and volunteer communicators of the denomination. Members enhance the professional quality of the work by United Methodists.

GNJ was recognized for The Uncovered Dish, a Christian leadership podcast that is hosted by Kaitlynn Deal and James Lee. The podcast started last

fall and highlights the work of conference ministries, church leaders and issues facing the church. The Connection, a blog written by GNJ's Connectional Ministries team was also honored. Current postings and archives of blog and the podcast can be found on the GNJ website and are regularly posted in the Digest and on Facebook.

Other award recipients included Brittney Reilly, Manager of Online and Digital Communications for the design of 2016 Annual Conference "Imagine", Josh Kinney, Editorial Manager for his work on Bishop Schol's Relay columns on Graceful Controversies, James Lee, Manager of Visual Arts for the CUMAC video and the IGNITE Squad for the marketing of the annual youth conference. Our sister organization, United Methodist Communities also won four awards for their work in video and photography.

Conover, who has excelled in communicating the vision and mission of GNJ,



Carolyn Conover, GNJ Director of Communications, was awarded the Communicator of the Year award at the 2017 UMAC Conference in New Orleans. GNJ's Communications Department also took home several awards for excellence. Photo provided

was nominated for the Communicator of the Year by Bishop Schol, who joined her at the conference to present the award.

"Every bishop needs a Director of Communications who is willing to come into their office and say you've got this one wrong, or let's look at this another way, or how about if we try this," said Schol, addressing the audience. "Carolyn is that kind of communicator and she has been a gift to GNJ."

Conover was hired after Superstorm Sandy because of the great need in communicating the work of United Methodists and A Future With Hope in the recovery effort.

"It's largely because of Carolyn's work in communication that foundations, corporations, and the government all began to realize that The United Methodist Church was a key player in restoring homes and lives after Superstorm Sandy," said Schol. He went on to share what GNJ staff members had said about Conover, describing her as a passionate, fearless leader who set the bar high for quality of work.

Schol told the audience that Conover helped move GNJ forward in ways never imagined.

"The only reason I'm standing here is because I work with a man who has a vision and believes that vision needs to be communicated well," said Conover.

"Bishop Schol brings me to the table so I understand where we need to go and I'm able to help the people around me get there."

Conover thanked her communications team and said that the award was one in which she shared with the group.

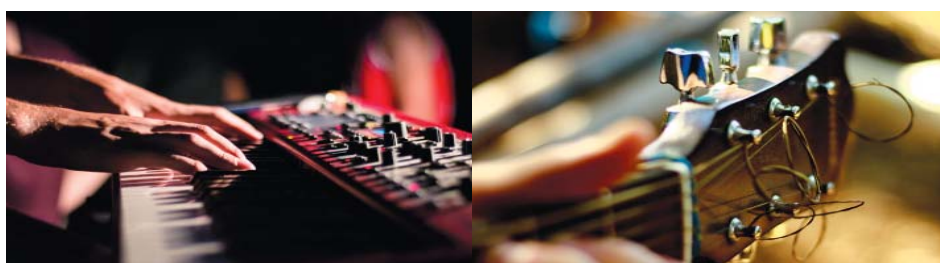
"Because like the conductor of the orchestra, I do not make the music," said Conover. "I just help make sure the music is heard and sometimes I make it better. You all are the ones who won this award and you make beautiful music that I simply get to push forward."

She encouraged her team to keep transforming the world, one apostolic leader at a time.

Schol expressed his gratitude on behalf of the United Methodist Church for the work of communications from across the conference.

"The story you tell and the way you tell it helps give life to what it means to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," he said.

Each year, UMAC recognizes excellence in communication through an extensive awards program which includes awards for print and digital publications, writing, internet communications, publicity and advertising, video production, audio, photography, visual design and media presentations.



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Price Break 3 Sept.1 - Sept.28	\$70	\$65	\$60
At the Door Sept. 29 - Sept.30	\$80	\$75	\$70

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Brigantine Family Kept Together



Ralph Giles shares his gratitude for A Future With Hope with excitement for he and his son's future in their new home in Brigantine. Photo by Josh Kinney

Continued from page 1

help means a lot to him because he's done so much for others."

Giles praised A Future With Hope for going with him to meetings, coming alongside him and explaining details; getting him through paperwork, patiently enduring and educating him through struggles with technology and onto a path of stability.

"Since the storm hit, I've connected with hundreds of homeowners who were impacted and witnessed the toll that being displaced for over four years can have on an individual and family," said Joy Foley, Intake Specialist and Resource Development at A Future With Hope. "Ralph is unique in the fact that he's never let the bad days get the best of him. He is an incredibly strong man who decided early on to trust the ever-changing recovery process and is the hero of his own story. I can't wait for A Future With Hope to welcome him home."

Giles thanked Foley for representing him and guiding his recovery back home.

"This house is more than a dream come true," he said. "We could've never expected this."

The two watched as neighbors, friends and fellow islanders dealt with loss. Many families were displaced, split up and scattered. For several people they knew personally, stress levels led to heart attacks and other health ailments.

"I saw all of this happening and thought to myself, you know Ralph, at least we still have each other," said Ralph Sr. "I think our story is a little different because if it weren't for A Future With Hope we might not have been kept together. If anything, it's really lived up to its name because that's exactly what it gave us."

With immense pride and appreciation, the father and son finished their tour of the place they plan to live out the rest of their lives. Ralph Jr. expressed his excitement to one day raise a family in the house and carry on the family legacy as Brigantine natives.

"We're more than thankful for everything that's been done for us," said Ralph Jr. "We could not have asked for anything

better. It's just so much better than we could've ever dreamed or expected. I really can't say enough, we're so happy and so thankful."

Nearly five years after the storm, A Future With Hope and three other recovery groups remain with the resources and funding to help the estimated 3000 homeowners like Giles. The four groups have formed a partnership, as each recovery group brings different skills and resources to the table. A Future With Hope, the SBP, Inc. and the Affordable Housing Alliance (AHA) working with the Episcopal Diocese of Trenton work to help homeowners as far south as Cape May and as far north as Middlesex County.

Recently, The Robin Hood Foundation recognized the extraordinary commitment and cooperation of these organizations with a new grant to provide funding to families in need. The collective was also recognized as Innovative Program/Partnership of the year 2017 by The New Jersey Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NJVOAD) Board for exceptional innovation and ingenuity through the development and implementation of a partnership that provides long-term solutions to communities.

Through the faithful commitments of GNJ United Methodist Churches, UMCOR, and funding partners, the recovery program established by A Future With Hope has continued to succeed in bringing families home. Through church fundraisers and volunteer sign ups that continue to come in, families like the Giles' are experiencing restoration.

Giles leaned against the kitchen window and peered out across the yard at another home in the rebuilding process with a trailer bearing the words A Future With Hope emblazoned across it.

"A Future With Hope kept us together for the remainder of my life," he said through tears. "Once they started helping me I just couldn't believe it. We weren't forgotten. We have another chance and a new life. We have a future with hope now."



The dynamic duo, Ralph Giles Sr. and Jr. stand together outside their new home, excited for what the future holds, and to be able to carry on their family legacy as Brigantine natives. Photo by Josh Kinney

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New Changes, New Possibilities for CUMAC

PATERSON - Change is defined as the act of becoming different and at CUMAC change is in the air. Executive Director, Rev. Pat Bruger, is retiring this summer. At the same time, after



Rev. Pat Bruger, Executive Director of CUMAC, will be retiring this summer after 26 years of faithful ministry.
Photo provided

eight years as a member of CUMAC's development team, Stephanie Ames is transitioning into her new role as Development Director. Taking Stephanie's place is Akeera Weathers, recently hired to lead CUMAC's volunteer department. The team has also hired a new driver, Joe Elder, who will help CUMAC pick up and distribute food and resources around the Paterson community. With so many changes happening and much more on the way, the CUMAC team is planning ahead and thinking about a future that's full of possibilities.

CUMAC's staff and Board of Trustees recently engaged in a strategic planning process that resulted in a four-year forward looking plan. The strategic plan



will act as a road map to guide the staff as CUMAC continues to grow. CUMAC's strategic plan consists of four objectives, which include achieving financial stability, developing and beginning implementation of a new facilities plan, strengthening programs to move clients toward self sufficiency, and maintaining highly competent and effective leadership during and beyond the transition from one Executive Director to another. If achieved, each of these objectives will allow CUMAC to better serve the Paterson community and expand the organization's ability to feed people and change lives.

Despite many changes at CUMAC, the organization's commitment to mission remains steadfast. At present, CUMAC pantries are serving groceries and fresh produce to thousands of people every month. The Community Closet is providing clothing, house wares, and other essential items for victims of disaster. At the same time, CUMAC offers housing to 11 people who were formerly homeless, and job training to a vulnerable, low income population. Over the next four years, these programs will continue to be central to CUMAC's work. However, the organization is also doubling down on its efforts to serve and that comes



The CUMAC staff, living out mission in Paterson and beyond. *Photo provided*

with its fair share of challenges. That's why support is needed more than ever. As it's often said, many hands make light work. Help CUMAC reach new heights by becoming a volunteer or donor this

year. Your commitment will help CUMAC move confidently through transition and will ensure that the ability to provide a lifeline to all of the neighbors in need — now and in the future.

Proposed Budget

Continued from page 1

even larger increase.

The previous formula used the Annual Conference budget needs as the driver for the apportionments that were paid at the local church level based on size and budget of the church. The proposed formula for 2018 is a reduced flat rate for local churches and the Annual Conference budget will be created based on the flat rate.

The proposal, which is included in the legislation in the Pre-Conference Journal, outlines a five year plan that will reduce the flat shared ministry rate even further to 15.6% by 2022. The Pre-Conference Journal is available online at the GNJ website and has been sent in hard copy to all voting members of the Annual Conference.

"This adjustment will help both GNJ and the congregations with budgeting and reinforces that our congregations are our mission centers," said Bishop John Schol. "Disciples are made in through local churches and we need to ensure that the resources remain with our congregations to carry out vital ministry."

Working together, CFA, Bishop Schol and the GNJ finance staff were able to create this plan based in part on the ef-

fectiveness of our affiliated organizations who are sharing resources and staff. With proven success in grants, fundraising and investments, A Future With Hope and The United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey are taking on vital mission and stewardship responsibilities within the conference. By sharing services and staff, conference resources go further.

The proposal, if passed, will reduce the Annual Conference budget by more than \$900,000 in 2018. Key to its success is the ability of our congregations to fulfill their commitments to shared ministry. In 2016, 87% of churches paid 100% of shared ministry. This percentage has continued to grow over the last several years.

Shared ministry is at the foundation of the United Methodist Church which undergirds the connectionism that people can do more good together than alone. Shared ministry supports seven denomination funds and the Annual Conference.

A few GNJ churches will see an increase in shared ministry because of their growth, development and budget increases. "We congratulate those churches for their faithfulness and progress," said Bishop John Schol.

The shared ministry legislation and the Pre-Conference Journal can be found on gnjumc.org.

Rejoice
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1 THESSALONIANS 5:16

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GUARDIAN



2017 ANNUAL CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS



CREATIVE WORSHIP: DISCOVERING THE POWER OF THE NARRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Workshop Leader: Jason Moore

Share best practices and time-tested methodologies to create narrative worship experiences. With an emphasis on creativity over style (traditional/non-traditional), this exploration has something for everyone regardless of church size, worship styles and budgets.



A CULTURAL TAPESTRY: DISCOVERING AND DEVELOPING A DIVERSE COMMUNITY

Workshop Leader: Rev. Giovanni Arroyo

Explore the biblical importance for engaging in intercultural competency and expand our concept of culture, its impact on our personal journey and its interaction with the greater community: the church.



CREATING NEW SPACES: ENGAGING VITALITY

*Workshop Leaders: Kia Shaw
and Millie Vickery*

Explore the realities of today's entry or connecting points for engaging new members, and various tools available to assist in these efforts. Learn and share creative ideas on how to create a welcoming space for diverse communities to be engaged in spiritual growth, fellowship, education, service, advocacy and mission through United Methodist Women.



FINANCIAL SECURITY

*Workshop Leader: Robert
Christpher*

Resources are available for clergy and spouses when it comes to thinking and planning for a healthy financial future. Learn about your benefits and how they will support you in retirement, free and optional services offered through Wespath Benefits and Investments, how to gain access to your online account and explore the helpful tools available and individual Retirement Benefits Projection.



HOW TO LEAD YOUR CONGREGATION THROUGH CHANGE

Workshop Leader: Trey Wince

We know where we want to go. We even know where we need to go. But what do we do when nobody else wants to go there with us? Leading people into a new era is not easy, but it doesn't have to be impossible. Join us as we practice a few habits that we can learn from great change-makers.



**FIND OUT MORE
AND REGISTER AT:**

www.gnjumc.org/2017-annual-conference

Church Responds to Ocean Grove Fire

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

A massive five-alarm blaze destroyed a vacant hotel, several homes and damaged two condo complexes in Ocean Grove on Friday, March 3.

The historic Jersey Shore town which is home to the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association founded in 1869 by Methodist clergy, made national news as flames engulfed nearly an entire block. Smoke billowed down the coast as firefighters spent most of the day battling to extinguish the fire and contain its spread while St. Paul's UMC in Ocean Grove wasted no time spreading assistance through food, shelter, and prayer.

The church, situated in the heart of the small, charming beach town, became the headquarters for the American Red

Cross and the hub of hope and relief for those affected by the fire.

"I am so grateful that we can help in times of great need," said Senior Pastor Rev. Rich Hendrickson. "I am so proud of our staff, church folks, and community for an amazing day of being the hands and feet of Jesus. The Red Cross did an awesome job and we were blessed to partner with them in this undertaking." Hendrickson also serves as the chaplain for the Ocean Grove Fire Department and went to the scene when firefighters first arrived at around 5:30 a.m. to check in and seek out residents he knew evacuated. Coordinating with St. Paul's youth pastor, Megan Faulkner, the church quickly opened up to receiving evacuees.

"We feel very strongly that part of living out the gospel is to be present in the community in ways that matter,"



St. Paul's UMC in Ocean Grove became the Red Cross headquarters and relief center following the beach town's five-alarm fire on March 3. Photo by Josh Kinney

Hendrickson said.

Known for picturesque and brightly colored Victorian homes, Ocean Grove suffered a smoldering blackened scar along Wesley Lake following the blaze, leaving as many as 100 people displaced. No residents were hurt, but three firefighters suffered minor injuries.

Red Cross Disaster Manager Kristee Laura spoke to the press, encouraging people to stop by St. Paul's to receive assistance.

"So proud of my hometown church in how they step up and lead in the care of victims," said Matthew Mitchell, originally of Ocean Grove.

Faulkner was moved by those who came to help "creating an entire culture of response."

"A steady flow of helpers and receivers were making their way through our doors for 15 hours," she said, inspired by her community. "Community was not a noun for us," said Faulkner. "It became a verb. Community is not who we are. Community is what we do."

Rev. John DiGiambardino, a GNJ elder appointed to serve as Chief Oper-

ating Officer of The Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association praised the local community's history of bonding together in times of need to help one another. Property in Ocean Grove is owned by the Camp Meeting Association, which leases the land to homeowners and businesses through 99-year renewable leases.

Throughout the day, The Red Cross in conjunction with St. Paul's worked to actively serve displaced residents and provide them with coffee, meals, charging stations, spaces to process and pray and shelter. The Asbury Hotel in neighboring Asbury Park joined forces with The Red Cross to provide free hotel accommodations for the displaced.

"Our doors will remain open until the work is complete," said Hendrickson.

On Sunday, March 5, the Ocean Grove community honored the first responders who helped battle the blaze with a bagpipe tribute along Seaview Avenue and collected donations for those affected.

"I'm proud of my community," said Faulkner. "Here's to many brighter beach days ahead."

Listening and Conversation



Sherri Shumate of the UMC of Summit and her son Riley participated in the Graceful Conversations event on March 4 so they could hear different voices. Photo by Josh Kinney

Continued from page 1

from various perspectives and examined specific questions around table discussions in 30-minute intervals. Questions included: What is the shared mission and purpose of the church in our diverse and global existence? Is there a proactive way for us to live in our differences that doesn't presume that we will resolve our differences? What might be a form of unity that empowers us living together? And what is our witness and what can be our witness to the world in relation to our differences?

In the afternoon, each table discussed seven options for the future of the United Methodist Church and what each person would need to participate in the life of the church if the Commission recommended that direction.

"Let understanding be our aim," Bishop John Schol addressed the group, "What is our mission and why is it most important?"



Church leaders and members wrote down their prayers and answered questions on post it notes to place around the room at the Mission and Resource Center. Photo by Josh Kinney

Acknowledging that the event's intent wasn't to have everyone "be alike" or "think alike" Schol shared his hopes that GNJ would find unity in focusing on and coming together to work for Christ in the mission.

"Our church controversy is just a part of who we are, and it will continue to be with us," he said, challenging participants to seek maturity in their thinking and emotions and to step out and see life through different lenses.

"We find new meaning, purpose,

and connection with God, church and people when understanding becomes our aim," said Schol. "Ultimately that's what happens when we let love be our aim," he said.

Church leaders and members wrote down their prayers on the windows and answered the questions on post it notes to place around the room. "I hope everyone realizes what's happening here," beamed Burgos. "We are writing our very own prayers for the hope of the church! We are indeed making a way forward filled with hope."

Rev. Kaleigh Corbett, Pastor of Frankford Plains UMC in Augusta, said a common thread in her discussions was that everyone deserved a chance to be loved.

"I need to be willing to listen, meet people where they're at and hear their stories," said Corbett. "When we do that we build bridges."

Sherri Shumate of the UMC of Summit thought the gathering was a "wonderful opportunity to hear different voices." She described the table discussions as spirit-filled and was thankful that her young son Riley was also welcomed to participate.

"I sensed a push for unity despite our diversity and the awareness of the complexity of that," said Shumate. She added, "Today was a really honest look at the hard work this will require of all of us and a great model that I hope we can take back to our congregations."

Over the course of the day, there were laughs and tears, heartfelt prayers, stories, and opinions expressed around the questions and options. Participants respectfully passed the feathers to the next person at their table who wanted to share and listened intently. Some took notes while others jotted down prayers and ideas.

"There were two points of consensus during the day," Schol added. "First, that the people of Greater New Jersey do not want the denomination to divide. Secondly, we cannot continue as we are and must find a way that honors difference and different biblical interpretation."

To help support people bringing the process and conversation back to their

Continued on page 10

ORGANIST/CHOIR DIRECTOR POSITION OPEN

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Loads of Love Reaches Pemberton Community

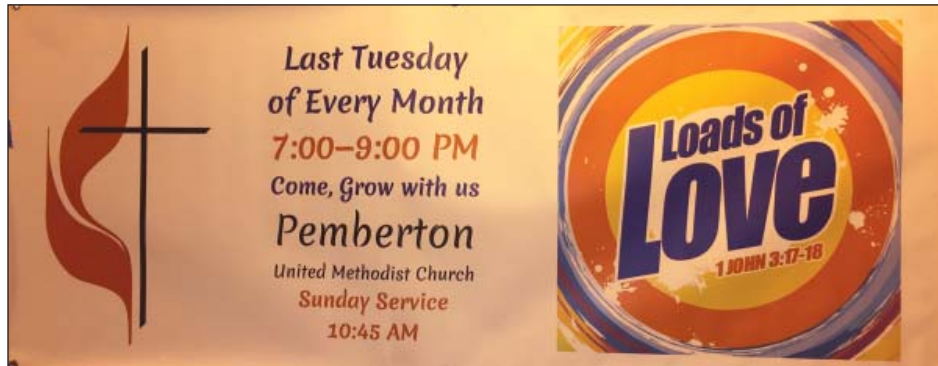
By Kaitlynn Deal
kdeal@gnjumc.org

In Pemberton, families living under the poverty line often have to make the difficult choice to spend \$13 on a load of wash and dry at the local laundromat, or buy food for their family. Members of Pemberton UMC recognized this sacrifice and responded by starting a hands-on ministry called "Loads of Love."

Rev. Hosuk Chung, Senior Pastor of Pemberton UMC first saw this great need

in the community after speaking with church members and the many families who utilize the church's food pantry.

Volunteers set up a table at the local laundromat and distribute coins and detergent packets to those in need. The ministry cost about \$250 a month and worshippers at Pemberton UMC put extra offering into a soap bottle each Sunday to support the Loads of Love ministry. The outreach provides an opportunity for church members to take part in helping their community on a regular basis.



Pemberton UMC's Loads of Love ministry is helping to meet needs and showcase the love of Christ in the community. *Photo provided*

Apostles in our Midst: Rev. Zach Wooten and First UMC of Mt. Holly A 2017 Series on Apostolic Leadership in GNJ

Mission: For First UMC of Mt. Holly, three main ministries are paving the way for apostolic leadership in the church and the community.

Family, Friends & Neighbors Day

Last year the church hosted its first ever "Family, Friends & Neighbors" day with an outdoor worship service, live band, clown ministry, face painting, food from The Feed Truck, community vendors, kids crafts, and more. Leading up to the event, the church launches a "Good Neighbor Campaign" which encourages the congregation to reach out to the neighboring community as well as the congregants own residential neighbors. Ultimately, the event seeks to celebrate what it means to truly love ones neighbor.

Hands Out, God In: Kids Art Camp

Through a college ministry grant, First UMC of Mt. Holly is hiring a second summer college ministry intern to direct the church's Kids Art Camp. The camp uses mediums of painting, theater, literary arts, music, and culinary arts to meet a need in the Mt. Holly community: low-cost camping experiences that connect kids to Christ, one another, and their neighborhood. This year, First UMC will be adding a gardening component to celebrate that God invites people into the artistry of creation wherever they go. This annual program provides a college student with an incredible experience and the kids with a week they'll never forget.

Hungry For More

Every Wednesday from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m., First UMC of Mt. Holly hosts 'Hungry For More.' Centered around community outreach, story-telling, and breaking bread together, the weekly tradition began because the church believed the community was not only "hungry for more" food, but also for what life has to offer. Each week, a few individuals are invited to share a story that connects the topic of the night to their lives. The first series was about the fruit of the spirit and each week focused on a different quality: love, joy, peace, etc. By identifying where they saw those qualities in their lives through the art of story, the group began to connect faith to their everyday living. 'Hungry For More' has had as many as 22 people attend, many of whom don't



To hear more from this apostolic leader, check out *The Uncovered Dish* Christian Leadership podcast at gnjumc.org/podcast

regularly attend Sunday worship service.

"In scripture, Jesus told a lot of stories," said Wooten. "Stories are powerful, and we believe the best stories are told around the dinner table. Informal liturgy threads the evening of dinner, stories, and discussion together, and every Wednesday we close with someone saying the following words while standing in an almost fully closed circle: 'We stand in a circle to remind us that we're better off together than we are alone. We stand in a circle to remind us that God loves us all no more or no less than anyone else. And we have a space in the circle to remind us that there's always room for more at God's table.'"

Apostle: Rev. Zach Wooten grew up in York, Pa. He graduated from the Honors College at West Chester University of Pennsylvania with a B.A. in Communication Studies. During his time at college he spent a summer as the Children's Ministry Intern at the Presbyterian Church of Falling Spring in Chambersburg, Pa. Hungry to do more ministry, he served as the Director of Youth Ministries at the Baptist Church of West Chester for two years. It wasn't long until he felt a call to seminary and "jumped at the chance" to learn from Trey Wince, Director of New Disciples, and serve within GNJ through Mosaic Ministries. Wooten has served as a co-pastor alongside Rev. Donald Kirschner at the First UMC of Mt. Holly since July 2015 and will graduate from Princeton Theological Seminary in May, 2017.



Volunteers from Pemberton UMC set up a table at the local laundromat and distribute coins and detergent packets to those in need. *Photo provided*

"Before this ministry, members did not have opportunities to see what the surrounding community really looked like," said Chung. "At the same time, people in the community did not know what Pemberton UMC does. Through this ministry, both church and community are getting to know each other."

One member of the community, Suzanne and her two roommates first heard about the ministry while at the church's food pantry. Suzanne expressed to the volunteers that it is often hard on limited income to do a load of wash and dry at the laundromat. She would often go two or three months without doing laundry.

"Over the months that we have been using this service, we have watched more and more request help," she said. "We also love the fact that while we are getting our laundry done we can add ourselves to the prayer list for whatever we need prayer for without anyone being judgmental to our needs."

The Loads of Love Ministry has not only strengthened the church's food pantry ministry but also helped start "God's Closet" which is a free clothing shop that is open twice a month.

"We have also used and contributed to the clothing ministry over the past several months as I have been losing weight," stated Suzanne. "I have needed to pick up smaller clothes and donate some of my larger clothes. This ministry has been such a blessing to me at this time."

Since its conception in October 2014, Loads of Love has launched in two other United Methodist Churches in GNJ. Chung, along with colleagues and members of Pemberton UMC have developed a system and put a manual in place for other churches to get involved and model the ministry in their communities. Congregations who would like to start a Loads of Love ministry should contact Rev. Chung at pastor@pemberton-umc.org or call 609-894-8015.



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Camping, Youth and Campus Ministries Planning Update

By Carolyn Conover
cconover@gnjumc.org

Since February, Ministry Architects, a consulting firm retained to create a new strategic plan for youth ministries in Greater New Jersey has been immersed in listening, learning and assessment of the opportunities for camping, campus ministries and youth. Their goal, under the leadership of Hector Burgos, Director of Connectional Ministries, is to make strategic recommendations to be presented at the 2017 Annual Conference in Wildwood in May.



Mark DeVries, president of Ministry Architects reported on his work, "You've got wonderful opportunities in Greater New Jersey. We've just begun to scratch the surface in building the systems to raise up a generation of young leaders in the conference."

Since February, DeVries and key leaders from Ministry Architects have met with 112 stakeholders in the project including youth, young adults, parents, youth workers, campus ministry workers, camp staff, pastors, and conference staff. In addition, 110 people completed surveys related to camping, collegiate, and student ministry.

An initial assessment of this work was presented to the Camp and Retreats Board on February 24th. The report included recommendations for moving forward over the next 36 months. This assessment, still being refined from its draft form, will serve as the starting point for the overall strategic plan to be presented in executive summary form to Annual Conference in May.

In April, the team is conducting a series of visioning meetings that will provide the foundation for creating clear, measurable, long and short-range targets for the conference's camping, student, and collegiate ministries.

"There is a lot of energy throughout GNJ among local church leaders to work collaboratively in clusters, regions and throughout the conference," said DeVries, "We want to build on that."

Listening and Conversation

Continued from page 8

local congregations, GNJ created a web page to post resources, liturgy and follow up which can be found at gnjumc.org/gracefulcontroversies.

"It's nice to have a space provided by the conference that allows us to talk about these things in a really structured way," said Rev. Gabrielle Martone, Pastor at Broadway UMC in Washington. "It's allowed a variety of stories to be heard." Martone was moved by the idea of needing to be in mission and to build up storytelling and relationships from all different walks of life and a variety of experiences.

"These conversations need to be had," she said. "We need to be talking to our congregations and each other and keep focused on discipleship."

Rev. Leo Park, Associate Pastor of Bethany Wayne UMC, found that love and acceptance were common threads in the discussions and found the event to be more than he expected.

"I was thinking it would be a hot debate," he said. "But the questions were really good and brought out what needed to be discussed and thought about." Park was challenged to see from various vantage points and was encouraged by the idea of focusing on the mission and purpose of the church.

"Let's struggle together," said Park. "And let's see what God does in our struggle and in the midst of our differences, to be a witness to the world."

Schol closed the event by holding up one of the feathers and spoke about its fragility.

"In many ways, this feather is like our conversations today," he said. "We can become vulnerable when we share from the depths of our experiences, but the wonderful thing about a feather is when you put a bunch of them together, things actually fly, and today our conversations gave rise to hope."

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Anderson UMC | 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

May 20, 2017

West Portal UMC | 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Allerton UMC | 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

May 27, 2017

First Salem UMC | 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Frances Child UMC | 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

June 3, 2017

Wrightstown UMC | 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Windsor UMC | 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

June 10, 2017

Gladstone UMC | 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

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CONFERENCE HAPPENINGS



Grace UMC in Wycoff Tackles Child Cancer

A Shrove Tuesday pancake dinner was held at Grace UMC in Wycoff to raise funds and promote awareness for the large number of children battling cancer in the neighboring communities. The church's special events committee teamed up with "Tackle Kids Cancer" a foundation of Hackensack University Medical Center, to coordinate efforts. All profits were committed to the foundation and over 100 people, many of whom were

children, and raised over \$1,100.00. Grace UMC is committed to continued support for this cause.

2017 Imagine No Malaria Marathon

On Saturday, April 29 from 4:00 - 10:00 p.m. the 2017 Imagine No Malaria Marathon will take place at Calvary UMC in Dumont. Open to Jr. & Sr. High youth from all houses of worship, scouts and other organizations. Email calvary185sundayschool.com or call 201-208-0743 for details.

GNJ is on YouTube

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey is now on YouTube. Visit YouTube.com/GNJUMC to subscribe to the GNJ YouTube channel and catch up on all of our latest video features. Please share this information with your congregations so they too can join the online video audience.

OBITUARIES

William C. Tilghman, Lay Member to Conference, died on March 6. A Celebration of Life took place on March 18 at Parkside UMC in Camden, NJ.

Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to: In memory of William C. Tilghman to Parkside UMC, 1420 Kaighns Ave., Camden, NJ 08103

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Lena Tilghman (Spouse) 249 Holly Ave., Woodbury Heights, NJ 08097

Mary Whitcher Crowther, Spouse of Retired Member Rev. Dr. Robert W. Crowther Jr., died on March 31. A Celebration of Life was held on April 8 at St. Andrew's UMC in Spring Lake, NJ.

Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to: In memory of Mary Whitcher Crowther, St. Andrew's UMC, 907 4th Ave., Spring Lake, NJ 07761. Or: South Seaville Camp Meeting Association, P.O. Box 588, South Seaville, NJ 08246

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Rev. Dr. Robert W. Crowther, Jr., 407 West Lake Ave., Spring Lake, NJ 07762

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Seniors Assign High Score to SCAN's SAT No Preparation Required



RED BANK, N.J. — Forget Math and English. This 'for seniors only' SAT has two parts: Successful Aging and Technology. Although they did not grow up with digital devices, your grandparents' SAT dispenses large doses of great health information, technology training and personalized hands-on coaching.

Every Thursday, Andrea Tarr, program director, and Frank Remski, volunteer, from the Eatontown-based SCAN (Social Community Activities Network), greet an eager group gathered in Red Bank. Sixteen applicants were accepted for the 11-week course which includes a mix of residents from the host organization, United Methodist Communities at The Wesleyan, and others from various Monmouth County locations. While the seniors practice on loaned Android tablets or personally-owned devices, students who financially qualify will receive a tablet at graduation.

Tarr shares, "Consistent with SCAN's tagline, Where Active Adults Meet to be Informed, Empowered, Inspired, we're always concerned about mind, body, and health. SCAN was one of seven organizations chosen nationally to participate in a two-year pilot Digital Aging Mastery Program funded by the National Council on Aging and Verizon."

This year marks the third SCAN is running SAT with a specific goal to give access to and educate low-income people age 60 and above to use technology and promote successful aging. The Wesleyan's Social Service Coordinator, Mary Patichio, helped secure SAT for the Red Bank senior residence. The course is designed around ultimate brain fitness and incorporates the natural pairing of technology and health.

Tarr starts each class with announcements, introduces the health and wellness topic and distributes a giveaway, which lasts for about the first hour. Topics range from Pain Management and Preventing Falls to Better Breathing and Advance Planning. The giveaways always reinforce the successful aging information. For example, week four on Exercise featured a walking journal. In addition to class handouts, a three ring binder of reference material distributed during the first class, serves as a resource.

With a very interactive format, Tarr writes student responses on poster-sized paper mounted on an easel for viewing ease. When asked about ways to combat shortness of breath, Cheri of Atlantic Highlands shares how her recent return to singing in a local church choir aided the condition. Sandwiches, snacks and beverages lend themselves to short breaks, lots of conversation, sharing, problem solving, and a casual atmosphere.

Remski handles the technology portion of the class aided by a large wall-mounted screen at the front of the Community Room. He reviews browsers and browser structure, mobile data plans, tabs, starting pages, links, and connecting to Wi-Fi. Stressing online security, he cautions them not to conduct banking or other personal transactions in public places with open connections.

Beyond navigation, he explains cookies, secondary security and ad targeting, and shows the seniors how to view and delete their browsing histories. Visits to Wikipedia and Snopes reinforce the lesson. As Remski demonstrates on the screen, students follow on their devices.

Research reports 77% of seniors say they would need assistance learning to use any new form of technology. Cisco adds that the right support is needed to empower older adults by educating them about communication technology and its benefits. It also mentions that seniors could use these technologies to enhance their well-being.

SAT's positive outcomes mirror that finding and touch nearly every facet of the seniors' lives:

- Gain digital skills
- Navigate the Internet
- Promote physical and cognitive health
- Access service and product information
- Make purchases
- Reduce isolation and create community
- Improve and expand social connections
- Facilitate staying in touch with others
- Access information to become healthier or maintain health

Addressing seniors' need for assistance, six volunteer coaches not only stand at the ready, but also circulate around the room to fulfill the essential need for individual attention. Among them are three enthusiastic Monmouth University students, Yixiong Huang, Ellen Jin and Nianqi Tian, as well as Bill Fountain, Vincent Masi, and Rich DiPersio.

Huang, a resident of Eatontown and software engineering graduate student affirms, "I want to share what I know and to improve my communications skills. So far, as my first experience with seniors, it has been a good one."

Fountain, a retiree and Farmingdale resident conveys, "I enjoy the program and used computers for years while in the workforce. We have a core group of people here willing to learn and determined to succeed."

The staff, volunteers and students look forward to graduation on March 30.

**The May 2017 Issue
Deadline is April 23, 2017**

MUSIC AND MISSION



CENTER OF IT ALL is a labor of love. It features contemporary Wesleyan music written and performed by Eric Drew, GNJ's Director of Worship.

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