



2019-2023 Strategic Plan – Draft (12/31/2017) *Miracles Everywhere*

Building on Our Past, Creating A Bold Future

In 2013, GNJ embarked on a five-year plan to grow the percentage of vital congregations from 14% to 41%, an ambitious goal that focused on the five markers of vitality: worship, small groups, mission, stewardship and making new disciples. With one more year left in the plan, we have increased the percentage of highly vital congregations to 32%, and while we have not reach the goal yet, we have experienced a renewed effort to make disciples and grow vital congregations to transform the world.

The 2016 statistical report indicates we are making strong progress.

- 52 new faith communities have been started
- 67% of our worshipers are now in small groups
- 2,810 young adults are in small groups
- 50% of our worshipers are participating in hands on mission
- 22% of our worshipers are racial ethnic
- 150+ congregations are multicultural/ethnic
- 100 appointments are cross racial
- 17% of the average congregation's budget is spent on mission
- \$5.5 million was raised from our congregations for the Mission Fund Campaign
- \$17 million was raised for A Future With Hope for Sandy recovery
- 256 homes have been rebuilt since Sandy and 13,000 volunteers from across the country joined our efforts.

There are two areas that we have not made the progress we had hoped for: making new disciples and growing worship attendance. Only about one-third of our congregations grow in worship attendance each year and we continue to make fewer new disciples each year. We have learned that growth in these areas will take longer than we had hoped because adapting and embracing deep cultural change within society is challenging to congregations.

We also developed resources and strengthened our service and support for our leaders and congregations. We reduced shared ministry apportionments by more than \$1 million or more than 10% and we are on our way to an additional 5% reduction. We created five new resources to support and grow leaders and congregations. We also reimagined the role of superintending, moving their role from administrative to mission strategy focusing on leadership and congregational development.

Over the past 5 years, in the midst of our challenges, we embraced a vision of *a future with hope* that has uniquely positioned GNJ for transformational ministry today and the future. The proposed 2019-23 Strategic Plan builds on this solid foundation to cast a bold vision and set strategic priorities with the conviction that *miracles can happen everywhere*. This vision will:

1. Cultivate transformational leaders who make disciples who make disciples
2. Invite new and diverse people to follow Jesus Christ in their everyday life
3. Develop intercultural competence

4. Engage and mobilize new generations of disciples for leadership, ministry and mission
5. Grow vital congregations to make disciples and transform communities

Theological Grounding – *Miracles Everywhere*

“You are the God who performs miracles; you display your powers among the peoples.” – Psalm 77:14

God is creating signs and wonders in GNJ and there is even more God wants to do. God wants to continue working through the United Methodists of Greater New Jersey so that miracles of healing and transformation occur across GNJ and around the world (Isaiah 43:19).

The Gospels tell of Jesus’ miracle ministry using two Greek words *dunamis* and *simaios*. In the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, the Greek word *dunamis* is used which means power - God’s power to transform life. The Gospel of John primarily uses the word *simaios*, which means sign – a miracle points to God’s activity in the world. Miracles evoke wonder by demonstrating God’s power and pointing to God’s work in the world. In every age, God has been at work in the world healing and transforming lives.

Miracles happen everywhere. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the congregation, the body of Christ, is the primary actor to release the power of God to transform lives and the community (1 Corinthians 12:27). The congregation is the mission outpost where passionate disciples are formed, shaped and sent to love God and neighbors completely (Matthew 28:16-20).

Transformational leadership within congregations is crucial to fulfilling this mission (Ephesians 4:11-12) to release the Holy Spirit for miracles everywhere. Leaders who move the mission and turnaround forward are grounded theologically and biblically, possess competence and emotional intelligence, engage missionally and passionately, and are led spiritually .

As the church navigates through liminal times (a transitional time on the edge of what God has next for the church), the Spirit is calling GNJ to address our adaptive challenge and engage in new possibilities with courage (II Timothy 1:7). We are called to continue to imagine and discern innovative ways to effectively be in ministry in and with the community (Romans 12:2) so that we cultivate transformational leaders who make disciples and grow vital congregations to transform the world.

God is ready to perform miracles everywhere through passionate disciples, vital congregations and transformational leaders!

Why does GNJ exist?

GNJ exists to recruit and develop transformational leaders so that people and communities experience healing, renewal and wholeness from God. Transformational leaders grow vital congregations who shape passionate disciples of Jesus Christ and share faith, hope and justice in the community.

GNJ Vision

We see leaders cultivating disciples of Jesus Christ in vital congregations and faith communities with:

- Passionate Faith – Shape mature and fearless disciples that others want to emulate
- Boundless Hope – Inspire a positive vision of current and future ministry
- Courageous Spirit – Connect with the community through risk-taking relevant mercy and justice ministries
- Transformational Leadership – Change people’s lives, the congregation and the community
- Congregational Vitality – Worship God, make and grow passionate disciples, serve the community and give generously to mission

- Regenerative Resources – Develop innovative ways of supporting ministry.

GNJ expects disciples, leaders and congregations to embody passionate faith, boundless hope, a courageous spirit, transformational leadership, vitality and extravagant generosity to move the mission forward.

GNJ Mission

Transform the world by recruiting and developing *transformational* leaders who make *passionate* disciples of Jesus Christ and grow *vital* congregations. (Matthew 28:19)

GNJ Core Values

Our ministry is shaped and guided by *being*:

- Christ-Centered – the *unbreakable and unifying source* of our faith and hope
- Compassionate and Just – a *shared expression* of our Wesleyan heritage
- Diverse – a *true reflection* of the all-welcoming nature of the reign of God
- Innovative and Risk-Taking – a *bridge* to what is next
- Excellent – a *gospel imperative* for greater impact in the world

A GNJ Disciple

A Holy Spirit-led *follower of Christ* whose passion every day is to *know, grow in, live and share* the life of Jesus. (John 15:5)

A GNJ Vital Congregation

A Holy Spirit-led *community of passionate disciples who are working together* to grow new disciples, inspiring worship, active small groups, risk taking community mission, and generous giving to mission. (Acts 2:42-47)

GNJ World Transformation

A community where lives are changed, hope abounds, diversity is embraced, and all have the opportunity, knowledge and skills to live to their full God-given potential. (Micah 6:8, Luke 10:27)

A GNJ Leader

A Holy Spirit-led *servant-leader* that forges a path forward where others do not see the way. A GNJ leader reaches out beyond the walls of the church into the community to transform lives by spreading God's love and bearing witness to Jesus Christ. (Matthew 23:11, Philippians 4:13)

GNJ leaders are fruitful by growing new disciples, worship, small groups, mission engagement and giving.

GNJ will work with and grow leaders to be:

- **Fruitful** –grow new passionate disciples, inspiring worship, active small groups, risk taking community mission, and generous giving to mission.
- **Transformational** –lead congregations through missional, cultural and identity change.
- **Apostolic** –are on a clear mission to create something more than what is. Paul was an apostolic leader who went to places with few or no believers and his leadership transformed the community by generating congregations of passionate disciples.

Because of GNJ leadership, disciples will be even more *passionate*, congregations will be even more *vibrant and fruitful* and people and communities will *experience healing, renewal and wholeness from God*.

GNJ Adaptive Challenge

Increase the *motivation, urgency* and *ability* of disciples, leaders and congregations to connect and engage with a diverse group of people in the community so that the people in the pews look more like all the people in the community.

GNJ Cultural Shifts by 2023

GNJ will shift;

1. FROM a church that serves its members and clergy TO a mission that connects with the people in the community through relevant ministries
2. FROM congregations with a single cultural expression and privilege TO congregations with multicultural expression and intercultural competence
3. FROM concentrating ministry with current church members TO further extend ministry and thinking to make and engage younger and more diverse generations of disciples.
4. FROM using content sharing to train leaders TO using interactive experiences and coaching to form leaders
5. FROM sustaining congregations, ministries and buildings with our resources TO creating new, broader ministries through repurposing buildings and moving resources to the places that call and equip transformational leaders, regenerate disciples and congregations and start new faith communities
6. FROM depending on Shared Ministries (apportionments) for mission and ministry TO cultivating new sources of income to grow mission and ministry.

Holy and Audacious Goal - Leadership 100

Cultivate and equip 100 clergy and 100 laity *leaders who make disciples who make disciples*.

Leadership 100 will change GNJ into a disciple-making and disciple-engaging force to transform the world. *Leadership 100 will;*

- develop more transformational and apostolic leaders for our congregations and the community, and
- grow a pool of talented leaders who can be deployed to increase disciple-making in other congregations by:
 - *changing* the culture to nurture leaders who *multiply* passionate disciples
 - *growing* vibrant missional congregations and
 - *transforming* lives and communities

We will know we have achieved this goal when we have 100 churches whose worship attendance has moved from one category to the next.

In GNJ we presently have four categories of average worship attendance.

1. 76 churches with average worship attendance of 125 or more, with;
 - 21 churches with average worship attendance of 125-149
 - 23 churches with average worship attendance of 150-199
 - 14 churches with average worship attendance of 200-299
 - 9 churches with average worship attendance of 300-499
 - 6 churches with average worship attendance of 500-699
 - 1 church with average worship attendance of 700-999

- 1 church with average worship attendance of 1,000-1,499
- 1 church with average worship attendance of 1,500-1,749
- 0 churches with average worship attendance of 1,750+
- 2. 28 churches with average worship attendance of 100 – 124
- 3. 149 churches with average worship attendance of 50 - 99
- 4. 299 churches with average worship attendance of less than 50

GNJ 2023 Goals

- 1) Increase the number of new disciples and vital congregations by improving contextual paths for passionate disciples to know, grow in, live and share the life of Jesus every day.
- 2) Grow vital congregations by developing laity leadership resources to equip the local church with knowledge and ability to effectively lead congregations and address challenges in their ministry.
- 3) Grow cultural competency within the life and ministry of GNJ by incorporating intercultural competency training, language and practices into resources, events, agency work, and conference life.
- 4) Grow youth engagement by creating methods to recruit, resource and support congregational youth leaders so that they are equipped to lead and grow a youth program equal to 20% of their worshipping congregation.
- 5) Clarify the process, resources and support for Hope Centers so that we develop 30 Hope Centers focused on community mission with students, the poor and the elderly.

GNJ Strategies for the Next Five Years

1. *Intercultural Competency* - Develop leadership capacity for intercultural competence in GNJ so we can love and interact across boundaries and differences and work towards inclusion of all people.
2. *NextGen Ministries* - Cultivate and mobilize new generations of enthusiastic disciples of Jesus Christ that connect, engage and lead in their congregations and communities to transform the world through:
 - a. IGNITE - life-changing worship, relevant teachings and authentic community for 6th through 12th grade
 - b. Youth Groups – local, community focused places for young people to be introduced to Christ and shaped as disciples generally for 3rd through 12th grade
 - c. Camping – outdoors experiences that connect with God, purpose and promote meaningful relationships for elementary through high school students.
 - d. Campus Ministries - places for college students to be introduced to Christ, shaped as disciples and developed as transformational leaders
3. *Community Development* – Leverage existing human, relational and capital resources to create opportunities for healing, renewal and transformation to communities and sustainable financial support streams for congregations.
 - a. Repurpose church property into vibrant worship and mission centers
 - b. Repurpose church property into affordable housing, senior living, community space and mission centers
 - c. Create cooperative ministries within the community

4. *Hope Centers* – Develop church-based community ministry that meets the needs of the community and serves children and youth, families, seniors and vulnerable populations
5. *New Faith Communities* – Nurture apostolic leaders that invite new and diverse people to follow Jesus Christ, grow together as disciples and transform lives and the community

We will develop and resource these strategies partnering with the GNJ family of vital mission partners – A Future With Hope, Next Generation, Centenary Fund and Preacher’s Aid Society and the United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey.

GNJ Core Resourcing to Carry Out Our Mission and Achieve Our Goals

GNJ will resource congregations and leaders that are ready and desire to become vital and more like Christ through;

1. *Laitry Leadership Academy* – coordinated teaching and skill development with application and funding opportunities for laity to grow vital ministries.
2. *Team Vital* – congregational community and ministry assessment and strategic planning process for vital ministry.
3. *Communities of Hope* –strategic planning and implementation for asset-based community development.
4. *Coaching* – a resource to help clergy achieve ministry goals and action plans.
5. *PaCE* - facilitated peer learning groups that help shape pastoral identity, imagination and excellence.
6. *Mosaic Ministries* – a new way of thinking about and doing local church ministry, mission and leadership with promising young clergy and seminarians discerning their vocational calling.
7. *Leadership Seminar* – tools and applications for clergy to lead congregations to sustainable fruitful ministry

What Will Be Different?

As GNJ shifts the culture, accomplishes its goals, implements its strategies and resources leaders and congregations, it will see more disciples and congregations with:

1. *Passionate Faith* – Mature and fearless disciples that others want to emulate
2. *Boundless Hope* – Positive vision of current and future ministry
3. *Courageous Spirit* –Risk-taking relevant mercy and justice ministries
4. *Transformational Leadership* – Difference-makers who transform people’s lives, the congregation and the community
5. *Congregational Vitality* – Vibrant and life changing congregations
6. *Regenerative Resources* – Extravagant generosity that inspires new giving and resources

How we make decisions?

We invest our financial and human resources in decisions that:

1. Reflect our core values
2. Encourage innovative, risk-taking regenerative ministry that effectively connects with people in the community
3. Develop transformational leaders
4. Maximize new disciples, vital congregations and world transformation