

THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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Moving into the Future, Finishing with Grace

By Carolyn Conover
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NEPTUNE - The transition from rebuilding after Superstorm Sandy to spreading hope further and wider in Greater New Jersey was a main focus of A Future With Hope's Board of Trustees



at their February meeting. By developing Hope Centers in partnership with congregations and other likeminded nonprofit organizations, an evolving vision of hope is unfolding.

The Hope Center team presented their progress in partnering with six nonprofit organizations to join the Hope Center movement including CAMP Y.D.P., Christian Outreach Project, CUMAC, Pathways to Prosperity (Noresescap), the Neighborhood Center and Camden Urban Ministry Initiative.

"Hope Centers are places of community transformation that offer youth development, education, food security, job development and social support within communities," said Hope Center Developer Andrea Wren-Hardin. She added that the team expects to establish three additional Hope Centers with GNJ congregations this spring.

While the transition to Hope Centers is progressing, the Board also spent time reviewing the final push of Sandy



A celebration was had for A Future With Hope's Executive Director Bobbie Ridgely on Feb. 8 at the Mission and Resource Center. Photo by Brittney Reilly.

recovery and rebuilding.

A Future With Hope Director Bobbie Ridgely, who has led the Sandy recovery efforts shared that through the end of 2017, A Future With Hope has rebuilt 254

homes with the help of 11,741 volunteers. She said there are nine homes currently under construction with work completion scheduled for June 2018.

"The mission has always been getting

one more person home. We have nine more people that are going to go home in 2018," said Ridgely. "Our staff remembers all the names and faces behind the

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Baptism Affirmation Reveals Mysteries

By Josh Kinney
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LAKEWOOD - Making her sermon inclusive for children was an intentional part of Rev. Iraida Ruiz de Porras Sunday, January 28th service at Christ UMC in Lakewood. The church was concluding its Water & Roots series, focused on baptism's power and significance, with the scheduled baptism of a ten-year-old boy named Ryan.

Throughout the interactive sermon, Ruiz de Porras explained how God views people as beloved. Six-year-old Steven



Rev. Iraida Ruiz de Porras of Christ UMC in Lakewood baptizes Steven (left) and Ryan (right) on Reaffirmation Sunday, Jan. 28. Photo provided

my spirit to ask, 'has anyone here felt the nudge of the Holy Spirit to be baptized today?'" she said.

Before completing the sentence, Steven raised his hand high and ran down the aisle toward the baptismal font.

"The joyous look on his face and the gasping for air with the excitement his little body carried was miraculously breathtaking," said Ruiz de Porras. "I looked him straight in his glassy eyes and turned towards his family and

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Stepping Up in Faith: Results of Generosity and Stewardship Campaigns

By Josh Kinney
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CAPE MAY - What began as a desire and dream to do something new and unique in the area of stewardship and generosity in GNJ's southern region has reaped a fruitful harvest. A partnership with Horizons Stewardship and GNJ began with the fundamental assumption that nothing happens or changes without onboarding passionate pastors.

In 2017, Horizons Stewardship Partner and Sr. Vice President Scott McKenzie met with approximately 80 pastors at a retreat in Cape May's Congress Hall. Intentionally designed to ignite passion for generosity and to reignite enthusiasm for the call to ministry, the retreat was highlighted by a closing worship service with communion where over 50 clergy came forward for anointing and healing.

"At the close of the retreat we encouraged clergy to recruit a generosity team that would then be trained in year round generosity," said McKenzie. "We met three or four times with the generosity teams from approximately 50 churches and began teaching fundamental principles and best practices around generosity."

The meetings then moved into planning and calendaring for year round generosity with a final meeting to set up an effective annual generosity campaign called 'Stepping Up in Faith.'

"We designed 'Stepping Up in Faith' to focus on the need of the giver to give

and not the need of the church to fund budget," explained McKenzie. "We asked people to step up their percentage of giving and consider moving toward tithing or beyond. We encouraged churches to tell stories of how people's lives are being changed by ministry."

The campaign resulted in celebration for several churches. Central UMC received 172 family pledges for a total of \$505,000; a 25% increase in pledged giving.

"My estimation of this program was that it was an amazing success, perhaps even miraculous," said Rev. Chris Miller, Senior Pastor of The UMC at Absecon, who celebrated an estimated giving of \$296,066, a 59% increase since the church's last pledge drive in 2015, despite an attendance decrease of 27% since the same year.

"The model of a retreat for clergy and then several work day sessions to train Generosity Teams which included 150-170 participants from 45 congregations of all sizes across the Southern Region is showing strong results," said Cape Atlantic District Superintendent Brian Roberts. He expressed excitement over the idea of telling stories of good news and impact.

"People give to changed lives and positive difference in the community and world, not to budgets," he said.

Additionally, Pitman UMC, Sicklerville UMC, Chews UMC, and First UMC of Millville have reported success in their generosity campaigns.



was sitting in the back of the sanctuary next to his grandmother, Joyce, a faithful church member. Steven raised his hand to answer the questions posed during the sermon.

"It was so refreshing to hear his honest responses and see how excited he was to be participating in church," said Ruiz de Porras.

Ryan, his family and sponsors came forward. Ruiz de Porras asked Ryan to share the many ways he used water before explaining that it would now be used to baptize him with the Holy Spirit. After the baptism, she reaffirmed the "beloved child of God" piece.

"That's when I felt that deep nudge in

A Message from the Bishop



How does a pastor spend his/her time?

Today's pastors are pulled in many directions and are required to know more and do more than their predecessors of 50 years ago. The high speed of change, new technologies, diversity of thought, experience and culture, the many challenges people face in their families, work place and community require pastors to know and do more.

A big challenge before the church is understanding and embracing the changing role of the pastor. Congregations at one time called the space where the pastor did their work, the pastor's study. A large part of a pastor's work was studying the Bible and theology for delivering sermons and leading Bible studies. Today, the space is called the pastor's office. It is a place where the pastor studies, prepares for carrying out ministry, administrates, counsels, writes, researches on the internet, answers email and supervises when there are staff.

This calls for a new style of pastoral leadership which is primarily leading. It is a shift from a majority of time doing the ministry to leading others in the doing of ministry. This shift is actually a move back to the biblical model of pastoral leadership. Jesus first and then Paul and the apostles equipped others for leading congregations. It is also the model of early Wesleyan circuit riders who had as many as 18 churches on their charge as they road from place to place equipping disciples to lead and carry out ministry.

This requires the pastor to understand, *less is more*, a team approach, and the primary role of equipping laity to carry out ministry. Clergy who understand this spend equal amounts of time reading religious, leadership and organizational books and articles. They go to workshops on preaching/worship, how to quip and motivate others, and how to be a better leader.

Organizing time, pastors are well served to think in terms of three areas of ministry in which each must be given appropriate amounts of time and attention for a congregation to be fruitful.

1. **Drivers of the congregation's health and vitality** – 40% of a pastor's time or 20 hours a week. Pastors develop congregational leadership and work with the leaders to plan, organize and implement ministries that lead to more engagement by the congregational members and new people. Leading these activities is core to the health, vitality and sustainability of the congregation. The planning, organization and implementation is attentive to including new people.
2. **Leading and engaging in the ministries of the congregation** – 40% of a pastor's time or 20 hours a week. These are the activities of a congregation. Pastors both lead and support lay leadership to carry out these activities.
3. **Congregational administration** – 20% of a pastor's time or 10 hours a week. These are the ministries that undergird the operations of the congregation.

Part-time pastors need to adjust their hours of service accordingly. Also, this is based on a 50-hour work week for a pastor. Many pastors are working 60 hours or more a week.

See the chart on right for descriptors of each of these ministries.

Successful clergy are continually figuring out how to spend more time in the 5 Vitality Drivers area, which is not *doing* these ministries but identifying, equipping leaders and working with them to plan, organize and carry out these ministries.

When GNJ superintendents shifted their time to be less administrative focused and spend more time with clergy and congregations, they did a time study to find out where they were spending most of their time and then asked, *what can I stop doing or do less of to spend more time coaching, consulting and equipping clergy and congregations?* Today, the DSEs are approaching 60% of their time developing clergy and congregations and only 20% of their time in administration. Superintendents started out doing the time studies twice a year. Today it is done at least once a year and each superintendent reports to the cabinet the results of their time study and how they continue to think and act differently in their role of being missional strategists and equipping pastors and congregations.

What would it look like for GNJ's pastors to do a two-week time study twice a year and report to the SPRC and their superintendent how she/he uses their time and what changes they will be making to spend more time leading and equipping laity to organize and lead the 5 vital ministries of the church? I particularly like a time study when full-time clergy are consistently working more than 55 or 60 hours a week. It provides the opportunity to assess how to organize differently, delegate, what to let go of, and how to achieve a healthy work week and patterns.

When I was a pastor, one of the ways my administrative time was reduced at the church occurred when we streamlined the structure to have only three committees, SPRC/Leadership Development, Trustees/Property, and Finance/Stewardship along with four teams for worship, small groups, mission engagement and making new disciples. The committees and teams met on the same night five times a year. We began with 30 minutes of worship and a strategic overview of where the church was. Then, everyone divided into their groups for a 90-minute meeting. I checked in with each chair/team leader ahead of time about the agenda, floated to where I was needed during the meetings and checked in with the chair/team leaders following the meetings about progress and next steps. Smaller congregations can further combine some of these groups.

To accomplish this, there must be a clear mission, goals and role for each group, and a high degree of trust. This is a leadership and equipping model – clear mission, goals, clarity of role and priorities.

These changes, particularly the role of the pastor is hard to embrace at first, but the more the laity engage, the more fulfilled and active they become. For clergy, many feel they went to seminary so they would continue to study so they could preach and teach. Today, the church needs you to continue to study but also lead more like the first century church and the circuit rider model so we make new generations of disciples and grow vital congregations to transform the world.

Keep the faith!

John Schol

Bishop

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

CHART		
VITALITY DRIVERS - 40% 5 CORE MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH	CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRIES - 40%	ADMINISTRATIVE MINISTRIES - 20%
Involve more disciples in worship	Worship design and planning	Finance
Involve more disciples in small groups	Worship leadership	Trustees/Property
Engage more disciples in hands-on mission	Preaching	Leadership/Nominations
Increase disciples giving	Visitation ministry	Administrative Council
Make and shape new disciples	Leading Bible studies	Staff Parish Relations Committee
	Leading confirmation class	Ensuring Safe Sanctuary policies are followed
	Developing lay leadership	Responding to emails
	Community outreach and participation in community meetings and activities	Writing and giving reports
	Attending church functions	
	Youth ministry	
	Pastoral counseling	

THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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IT'S ALMOST EASTER!

How are you preparing to share the good news with God's people on the busiest Sunday of the year?

AUTHENTICITY

Honor the strengths and passions of your church. Do what you do, and do it extra well. Don't try to be something you're not, people appreciate authenticity.

HOSPITALITY

Is the building clean? Do guests feel welcome? Is there a follow-up plan for first and second time visitors? No time like the present to set radical hospitality in motion.

CHILDREN

If your church is having an Easter Egg hunt, use this time not just to have fun, but to share the story of Easter. Don't let the moment pass by!

VBS

It's time to promote and provide registration for VBS! Parents plan their children's summer activities months in advance. Will your church's VBS be on their calendar?

SERMON

Launch a new sermon series ON Easter! End with a cliff hanger that invites people to worship next week.

LEADERSHIP

Utilize the variety of voices in your church during worship. Children and youth, men and women, young and old, should have a role in Easter Sunday so everyone in the pew sees themselves as part of the church.

MEDIA

Spruce up your website and social media sites. This is the front door of our church. It's where people go before they even show up at your doorstep. Are they up-to-date and mobile friendly?

SMALL GROUPS

Launch a new small group in the community after Easter Sunday. Those not affiliated with a church are more likely to stop in a coffee shop than the sanctuary. Let's meet people where they are.

MISSION

Engage in mission in the weeks leading up to and after Easter. It's not just about Sunday's worship, but lives being changed by the love of Christ.

AND MOST OF ALL...PRAY

Pray that not only people feel welcome, but that through the worship they experience the new life that is found in Jesus Christ.

GNJ Student Selected for Holy Land Journey

By Rev. Melissa Hinnen
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BLAIRSTOWN - This May, Jack Tironi, a young man from Blairstown, will board a plane for a ten-day pilgrimage to Israel and Palestine with 14 other United Methodist Young People's Ministries, part of Discipleship Ministries, sponsors the Holy Land journey and has invited one young leader from each region of the church across the globe. Tironi will represent the Northeast Jurisdiction.

He looks forward to the experience that not only will retrace the steps of Jesus but will also explore the current realities of the region in cooperation with young leaders from around the world.

"It will be wonderful to experience the places where the events in the Bible happened," he said. "I cannot wait to see the customs and culture of the area, and how people in the region live and worship God."

He continued, "I look forward to the ways that the Pilgrimage program will deepen my faith while strengthening my resolve to become a spiritual leader in ordained ministry."

A first year undergraduate student at Drew University in Madison, Tironi has exhibited a pattern of faithful living. He heard a call to ordained ministry his junior year of high school while serving at his home church, the First UMC of Blairstown. Since starting at Drew, he holds an associate membership with the nearby Morristown UMC where he occasionally leads the children's message and serves as a liturgist.

Under the leadership of Jonathan Golden, Tironi is active with Drew University's Center for Religion, Culture,

and Conflict. Through that program, he recently began tutoring students who are refugees in Elizabeth. He is pictured in the photo below, third from the right, with program participants:



Jack Tironi, third from the right, stands alongside student refugees he's been tutoring in Elizabeth. Tironi will embark on a pilgrimage to Israel and Palestine with other United Methodists from around the world. Photo provided

His involvement in Drew's InterVarsity ministries keeps him connected with other students who are deepening their Christian faith. Tironi also appreciates the opportunities to connect with Drew's Theological School and attends Wednesday chapel services and seminary events when he can.

As one of the younger participants chosen to attend the pilgrimage, Tironi feels privileged to represent the Northeast Jurisdiction. Expressing apprecia-

tion, he shared that Bishop John Schol wrote a letter of recommendation for him.

In preparation for the journey, Tironi, along with the international cohort, are meeting regularly by social media, email

and video chat to begin getting to know each other. Because the trip will include as much as seven miles of walking each day, they are encouraged to take care of their physical fitness over the next few months.

To begin understanding the historical socio-political dynamics of the region, participants will watch a one-hour video about the Holy Land and read "Blood Brothers" by Elias Chacour or "The Lemon Tree" by Sandy Tolan.

According to Michael Ratliff who leads the Young People's Ministries, "It is our hope that as this diverse group learns, hikes, and experiences the land and people of Israel and Palestine together, they will grow in relationship, in their understanding of scripture, and in knowledge of conflict and peace-building." He continued, "All of these experiences will enrich not only the participants, but all who are a part of their ministry beyond the pilgrimage."

Asked by program leaders to examine the source and potential solutions of conflicts in their own contexts, Tironi responded in part, "I feel as a church, one of our biggest problems is still working to overcome our differences with each other, and other cultures around the world. We must continue to overcome this by studying, understanding, and respecting these differences." He continued, "On a personal note, I feel that as a spiritual leader my job will be to help guide people to be the best they can be in the eyes of God, while helping people work out their personal struggles."

Throughout the journey, the young leaders will visit holy sites while taking time to meet with both Israelis and Palestinians, including those who have been displaced. They will hear the stories and experiences of Palestinian Christians to more fully understand the peace building efforts in the land. Israeli and Palestinian guides will provide perspectives on conflict and peace for participants.

Tironi hopes that through this experience in the Holy Land he will deepen his connection to God as he prayerfully visits the sacred sites. He expects to, "take the knowledge and skills I learn with the program home and apply it to my work and involvement in the church."

2018 ANNUAL CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS



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Workshop Leader: Melanie Gordon



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Creating Effective Pathways to Fruitful Discipleship

Workshop Leader: Ken Willard



Pastors and lay leaders will leave equipped to go back to their churches and begin the process of

creating their own discipleship pathway. Topics include 21st century discipleship and effective ways to develop an intentional pathway for fruitful discipleship in the local church.

God's Divine Economy of Abundance: Strategies for Church and Community Development

Workshop Leader: Katelin Hansen



Using real-life examples and interactive activities, participants will identify the assets in their

churches and neighborhood and learn to leverage those assets into successful ministries that bring opportunity to their community.

The Next Church Musicians

Workshop Leader: Eric Drew



We are in the middle of an arts revolution and this workshop will examine cultural trends, educational

trends, and practical steps that the church can take to engage the next paid and volunteer church musicians.

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Church and Society Hosts Young Adult Clergy Leadership Forum

By Josh Kinney
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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The General Board of Church & Society hosted 50 young clergy on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., for a Church and Society leadership forum on January 28-31.



Each United Methodist conference was encouraged to send two young clergy currently serving full time appointments in local United Methodist churches. GNJ was represented by Seunghyun Lee, English Ministry Pastor to First Korean UMC in Cherry Hill and Wesley Ellis of First UMC in Toms River.

Having served Union Grove UMC and Willow Grove UMC in Pittsgrove for the last two years, Lee has developed a passionate desire to grow together with his congregations in commitments to sharing the love of Jesus in daily life.



Seunghyun Lee

Lee received his Masters of Divinity from Drew Theological School and Bachelor of Theology from Methodist Theological University in Seoul, Korea.

“Lately, I have been challenged how to apply social justice to my ministry,” said Lee. “The news of gun violence and ecology issues always breaks my heart and as a disciple of Jesus Christ. I believe I need to keep working and continue to struggle on those issues. Through the discussions with other young clergies were a time of being refreshed during the conference. Even though we have different backgrounds and contexts on certain issues, we all agreed that Christianity is not only about ministries inside of the church, but about reaching out to the world and fighting for social justice for a human being.”

A passionate youth minister with more than ten years of youth ministry experience and a variety of pastoral roles, Ellis received his Masters of Divinity and Masters in Christian Education from Princeton



Wesley Ellis



50 young United Methodist clergy gathered on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. for The General Board of Church & Society’s Young Clergy Forum on January 28-31. Photo provided by GBCS

Theological Seminary. Originally from Ramona, California, Ellis received his BA in Theological and Biblical Studies from Azusa Pacific University and served as Director of Youth Ministry at First Congregational Church of Ramona for four years.

“I was excited to go and learn more about the ministry of Church and Society, as it is important to me that the church engages in society and the work of justice,” said Ellis. “I’m interested in the ways that the UMC is engaging in the work of justice and social action.”

The goals of the forum connect young clergy with the ministry of Church & Society, provide a forum to share knowledge and experience, create bridges for future ministry collaboration and build relationships with other young clergy from across the United Methodist connection.

“It was exciting to connect with other young clergy who are passionate about this kind of ministry and to be inspired to creatively collaborate,” he said.

Both Ellis and Lee left with a better idea of The United Methodist Church’s social presence, a network of contacts, and a renewed hope in the church.



Check Out Our Featured Episode:
PLANTING NEW CHURCHES V.S. GOING MULTI-SITE
Featuring Olu Brown

In 2007, Pastor Olu Brown peered through the windows of a middle school auditorium near downtown Atlanta and saw the perfect beginning of his vision. He launched Impact Church with 25 people, and within months, Impact launched a second worship experience.

By 2008, Impact welcomed 1,000 worshipers each week.

Today, Impact Church is one of fastest growing United Methodist Churches in the United States with an average weekly attendance of 2,700 across two locations and another 2,000 online. Pastor Olu comes on the podcast to talk about the pros and cons between planting a brand new church and going multi-site with an existing church - and to share leadership gems along the way.



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IGNITE Leaders Day Inspires Next Gen Leaders

By Rev. Melissa Hinnen
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EATONTOWN - "You have been called by name and seen and loved," Justin Forbes told youth leaders throughout GNJ. "God's message of love is on display in Jesus Christ. And when someone tells you they love you, the only response requested is, 'I love you, too.' Today we are making a plan to respond."

Forbes was the keynote speaker at the second annual IGNITE Youth Leaders Day on February 10. Through worship, workshops, fellowship and food, youth and adults were encouraged to connect with new people, identify at least one new practice to bring back to their home church, and be open to a new idea that might be challenging. The daylong conference was hosted at Monmouth Grace UMC in Eatontown.

Participants in this year's training event included middle and high school students who are active in their youth groups. High school junior Luke Kearns is a member of Lacey UMC. He is looking forward to his senior year and thinking about how God is moving him into leadership in his church even as he juggles football, work and school.

Several students attended with family members. Eighth grader Faith Herrick, from Conklin UMC in South River participated with her mother, brother and youth group. She values her youth group because it is a space to, "make new relationships and friends and helps me stay connected with God even when I can't go to church." She added, "the IGNITE youth leaders' day helped me learn more about how to be a leader for others."

Presenters included a diverse range of experts in youth ministry covering topics about urban ministry, discipleship with youth who have disabilities, incorporating youth into worship, Bible study to help youth hear their call in leadership and how understanding language and culture impacts discipleship.

A special youth track led by Wes Ellis and Erik "Skitch" Matson encouraged youth to experience assurance of God's love for them. Using humor and Bible study, Matson and Ellis guided students through Jesus' interaction with the rich man who wanted to know how to have eternal life in Mark 10:17-22. The students worked in small groups and discussed the pressures facing the rich man. Unpacking the illustration, Matson asked the youth about the pressures they face.

Many students expressed anxiety about school and grades, including preparation for college or facing the reality that college is not an option at this time. Some of the girls mentioned body image concerns and the sense that "guys are judging you." The youth discussed a pressure to be more successful than their parents that often feels unattainable.

Matson reminded the young people that, "God loves you not because of anything you do. God accepts you. You are enough. God's grace is given to you every day. In God's grace there is freedom from the pressure because God's love is bigger than the pressure."

Ellis added, "When Jesus calls you and invites you to follow him, he is not adding to these expectations. He is inviting you to let go of the anxiety. You are already called to be disciples. The enemy of discipleship is anxiety. The enemy of ministry is anxiety. You are already accepted in freedom and joy because Jesus has said 'I love you.' And as we heard earlier, responding 'I love you too' is all that is required."

Charles Perez led a workshop called "Making Disciples of Young People Through Language and Culture." He leads a new church ministry called Holy Hoops that uses Hip Hop to connect with young people through spoken word. Sharing the importance of authentic relationships with youth, he said, "I try to build one on one connections even when

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SEPTEMBER 28 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2018

we are not talking about Jesus. If you don't trust me you will not trust my God. Christ will come out in my mentoring and my coaching."

He told a story about bringing one of the Holy Hoops members to a "traditional" church service. The student's response was, "Man, so that's what a time machine feels like."

Because many of the youth who are part of Holy Hoops were not raised going to church, Perez uses a strategy he calls, "snack packing" for engaging them in discipleship.

"Offer young people a space where



IGNITE Squad Pumped for Youth Leaders Day. Photo by James Lee



Youth leaders throughout GNJ gathered at Monmouth Grace UMC to be fired up in youth ministry. Justin Forbes gave two powerful plenaries that inspired students and adults alike. Photo by James Lee

they can do what they want, and start the session with a prayer or devotional. Through that process start a revolutionary service," Perez said.

When Holy Hoops started three years ago, he would preach only five minutes but now that the youth trust him, he says can preach for 30 minutes and there is a sense of "quietness and awe" during Holy Communion.

When Perez asked youth in the IGNITE workshop about the importance of fellowship in the Wesleyan tradition, youth responded with accounts of how youth group, student leadership team, devotions, and lock-ins helped them avoid social cliques.

"Everyone is equal and we learn how to be friends with people we might not have been friends with if we met somewhere else," one student commented.

Asking where they experience meaningful connections with God, their responses varied. Many noted that at summer camp they experienced God through, "singing together and recognizing our spiritual bond while connecting with God's creation throughout the day." Others said they loved to worship at IGNITE where the "flavor" was more modern.

In a workshop about engaging youth in worship, Director of Worship Eric Drew emphasized, "Young people care more about community, creativity and engagement than worship style."

Echoing Perez' focus on relationships, Drew emphasized the importance of connecting students with adults in the congregation to develop intergenerational conversations and understandings.

"When students understand why certain traditions are important in the church setting, they are more likely to appreciate it. They want to find meaning and will more deeply engage if they understand the purpose of different parts of worship," he said. For example, "When youth sing in the choir, explain to them that they are offering their voices to God.

When students read Scripture, give them the background about the writer and the context of the text. Invite them to share their sermon ideas. Inviting youth to participate in worship keeps Jesus central to them. Young people love the radical person who lived and put it all on the line and died and was resurrected. They want to engage and work to figure it out."

According to Drew, this is a generation that engages first, and their faithfulness will follow. He believes giving students more responsibility helps them to know they are valued and trusted by the congregation.

As participants closed the day with worship, Forbes offered encouragement.

"We are recipients of a living love letter," he said. "We are clear on who the sender is. Who is the recipient? How will we translate the love of Jesus?"

The one event your youth will not want to miss.



IGNITE 2018
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UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY



NEXT GENERATION
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

IGNITECONFERENCE

Next Gen Holds Campus Ministry Summit

By Ed Allegretto
eallegretto@gnjumc.org

PINELANDS CENTER AT MT. MISERY- On Thursday February 15, Next Generation Ministries leaders, which included key stakeholders, Greater New Jersey leaders and GNJ pastors, came together for a day-long conversation about campus ministry. Leaders met with one goal: to orientate everyone in the same direction to reach and connect with college students.



Rev. Dr. Brandon Cho, Next Gen Ministries Board of Directors Chair, took part in the event along with the other members of the GNJ Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry and was "inspired by their passion, high energy and innovative spirits."

"For the entire group to come together as one and understand how important campus ministry is to vitality shows where Next Gen is heading," he said.

As leaders, the group wanted to follow in the footsteps of John Wesley who started his ministry through the "Holy Club" on the campus of Oxford. Because Wesley's first ministry was essentially campus ministry, Next Gen's work is following suit with the hope of being just as impactful in the present day.

Next Generation Ministries focuses on the three areas of youth, campus, and camping ministry. For campus ministry, the initial summit brought key stakeholders around the table and start talking about what Next Gen Campus Ministry looks like.

"We have been active the past couple months in youth and camping, and this summit was the beginning of our campus ministry work," said Ryan Clements, Next Gen Coordinator.

For youth, Next Gen has been building relationships with youth ministers and churches and finding the best ways to support and resource them, especially through IGNITE and IGNITE Youth Leader Day. For camping, they have been building up to the launch of summer

campus at Pinelands Center.

"Next Gen Ministries is always focusing and working on these three distinct areas," said Clements. "Even camping has the opportunity to tie youth and campus (through camp counselors) ministries together."

Trey Wince, Director of New Disciples, joined the summit.

"If we align all of these ministries the potential for impact is really significant," he stated. "It was really the first ministry event that we began to process things and really encompassed the future of Next Gen."

This summer, GNJ Next Generation Ministries will bring back camping to GNJ youth at Pinelands Center.



Next Gen ministry leaders gather at Pinelands Center on Feb. 15 to plan new ways to connect with youth. Photo provided



Ministry Architects founder Mark Devries helps Next Gen leaders plan and strategize for summer camps and outreach at Pinelands Center. Photo provided

Middle School:

Next Gen has partnered with Barefoot Republic Camp to offer an innovative multicultural camping experience for middle school students from July 30 – August 4.

Since its founding in 2000, Barefoot Republic Camp has built Christ-centered unity between campers from diverse racial, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds through a pursuit of common passions and engaging discipleship.

Open to middle school students, everyone will find something that they love. Choose specialty activities from football to dance, swimming to art. Campers make friends for life in daily competitions

like dodge ball, messy games, adventure relays and more!

Spiritual growth and leadership development are the heart of the program. Dive deeper in relationship with God and others through worship, Bible study and discipleship under the guidance of mentoring counselors.

High School:

Student Leader Boot Camp for high schoolers is being offered from July 23 – 28. The camp is designed for students

to grow leadership skills through active spiritual formation and hands-on mission training and opportunities. This camp experience serves as an "intense deep dive" into spiritual leadership for rising 9-12th graders and a launch pad for the young transformational leader on a journey throughout the year and beyond. Through experiential learning in the great outdoors, students will explore artistic, athletic, spiritual and service platforms. The camp will include swimming, hiking, campfires, worship, music, speakers, and discussion panels.

"Students will leave ready to start projects and initiatives in their churches," said Ryan Clements, Next Gen Coordinator.

Niños Para Cristo & Jovenes Para Cristo

Additionally, Niños Para Cristo & Jovenes Para Cristo camp, held August 6 – 10, will feature an experience for all ages, from niños (children) to jovenes (youth). This inclusive program invites campers of all backgrounds to come experience God's presence through the celebration of Latino heritage and culture.

For more information, downloadable brochures, and to register for camps, visit www.gnjnextgen.org



The Unvoiced Prayer

A 2018 Series on the power of miracles in GNJ

PALMER TWP, PA – When Rev. William Spangler was at the beginning of his ministerial career as a local licensed pastor (LLP) serving the former Glen Gardner UMC, a rural church in Hunterdon County, an 11-year-old church member's son died from a sudden onset illness. His funeral was held in the church, but the burial was to take place in Palmer Twp. PA.

"There were probably 50 cars in the procession," said Spangler. "At the toll plaza in Phillipsburg, the heavens opened up with a violent thunderstorm; the thunder and lightning were literally constant and remained so to the cemetery."

The gravesite was at the far end of cemetery. As Spangler stood under the canopy watching dozens of people walk across the field holding umbrellas, he began a prayer intending to ask God to remove the dangerous lightning from all the folks holding, in effect, lightning rods in an open space.

"That was my intent, but the funeral director interrupted me with a question,"

said Spangler. "I answered it, thinking that I must finish the prayer. Before I could begin again, I became aware that the thunder and lightning had stopped."

Spangler stood in the rain, awed. "As a beginning LLP, my personal thought was, 'How could this be?' but my pastoral thought was 'God can do anything, even answer an un-voiced prayer!'"

The Relay invites readers to share their miracle stories. If you have a story you would like to share, please email Josh Kinney, Editorial Manager at jkinney@gnjumc.org. Please share this information with other church leaders and members.

"God is creating signs and wonders in GNJ and there is even more God wants to do," exclaimed Bishop John Schol. "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."

Story submitted by Retired Rev. William Spangler of Wesley UMC, Phillipsburg, NJ.



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For complete details & registration info contact:
Reverend HeyYoung Horton
heyyoung@MeetWithGod.com

The April 2018 Issue Deadline is March 16, 2018

GNJ Youth Change Lives, Leave Changed in Cuba

By Denise Herschel
njf6pack@yahoo.com

HADDONFIELD - Seventeen-year-old Moselle Jules has been a member of Haddonfield United Methodist Church for the past four years and an active participant in the church's youth ministry since sixth grade. Working with Pastor Chris Heckert and youth leader Bethany Amey-Sutton, she also helped launch a youth council showing great ambition and initiative in her local community.

But her most noteworthy and life-changing experience to date has been a trip she recently took with 13 other youth to Matanzas, Cuba where they worked with Cuba Connection Ministry led by Yodalis Santiago. In what Jules called "mind-opening," she had the opportunity to participate in Mission of Peace (MOP), "a yearly journey of discovery and Shalom to nations in the global community" sponsored by the Northeast Jurisdictional Council on Youth Ministries of the United Methodist Church. Each year, every Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church in the Northeast Jurisdiction selects up to three youth to share in this experience, with Jules representing GNJ.

"Our trip began December 27th and we left Cuba on January 12th. I traveled with 13 other youth, four leaders and Bishop Cynthia Moore-KoiKoi and her husband Raphael. We worshipped in churches, met youth in their churches and civic organizations and shared with people who have a similar longing for peace and understanding. These times have been the high points of each MOP experience," she said. "It was my last year to attend MOP and I really wanted to experience this trip. I wanted to immerse myself into another culture."

According to Jules, the mission of the

trip, was, as stated in their newsletter, to "approach another people, another culture, another religion... by taking off our shoes... for the place we are approaching is holy. Or we may find ourselves treading on another's dream... more serious still we may forget that God was there before our arrival."

She added that they made mission goals during their trip to Cuba including, "to deeply experience the culture and faith of the people of Cuba; to experience and see the love of Christ through our friends in Cuba and to allow them to see the love of Christ in us; to discover and grow in our own personal and collective faith, and to continue to practice what we learned in order to live more spiritually meaningful lives."

While in Cuba, Jules said she stayed in Mantanzas and visited Old Havana and New Havana. They also went to the CCM Farm, Bay of Pigs Museum and Alabanza Church of Jovellanos.

"We also went to two orphanages. Our mission was to be in community with the people there. The people of Cuba showed me that they were not this government. I saw a country that needs help but can't receive it because of the position it is in. I will never forget the welcoming faces and warm smiles that I received," she continued.

Jules, who is a high school senior, believes that youth should understand the importance of helping others but also be aware that mission trips aren't just about giving.

"It is also about being in the community with the people who you serve. Those people can end up changing your life more than you realize," she said.

According to the NEJ Council on Youth Ministries Mission of Peace history statement, "MOP is a journey which leads



Moselle Jules of Haddonfield UMC joined 13 other youth in Matanzas, Cuba to work with Cuba Connection Ministry. Photo provided by Moselle Jules



Moselle Jules (right) high-fives her friend as they work together in ministry on a trip to Cuba. Photo provided by Moselle Jules

each participant to discover God's Spirit at work in the world. It is an experience of God's extended family. It is primarily a people to people experience in which we learn from our hosts how they live as disciples of Jesus Christ in their country. It is a mission which has brought us

closer to God's hoped for community where all are sisters and brothers. The Mission of Peace has traveled to the USSR, the People's Republic of China, Eastern Europe, Zimbabwe, Guyana, India, Nicaragua, Brazil, Cuba and Africa."

"I am beyond grateful that I had a chance to participate in Mission of Peace. It was a mind-opening and life-changing experience," she said. "One of the leaders, Ted Anderson, led us in song almost every day. I

will always continue to sing in my heart, 'We are travelin' on a road we've never seen before, and o it's hard to know which way to go, but somewhere there's a promise 'bout some distant shore, that those who seek will someday know.'"

Baptism Reaffirmation Reveals Mysteries

Continued from page 1

grandmother for their consent and asked for sponsors for Steven. I believe I saw everyone's hand go up and heard an 'amen' and 'hallelujah' here and there."

Ruiz de Porras asked Steven his name.

"So, Steven; you want to be baptized, right?" she asked.

"Yes!" he exclaimed.

"Do you know what your name will always be after today?" she asked.

"Yes!" Steven said, "Beloved!"

Steven was invited to face the congregation of approximately 100.

"Do you see all these people here today?" Ruiz de Porras asked. "Well, as of today, they are your family; your church and faith family. And you are a member of this family and of the Body of Christ."

Steven turned to his pastor and said, "Really?"

"Yup!" Ruiz de Porras affirmed. "And they are responsible for guiding you and watching you grow healthy spiritually and emotionally and will love you, nurture you, and care for you."

"Wow!" he said.

Ryan and Steven were baptized before a congregation that had been remembering, reminiscing, learning, and preparing through the Water & Roots initiative, customized for their church's setting, about the importance and significance of baptism in the life and journey of a Christian, and "as a clear reminder of how beloved we are and how we're called to ministry in, to, and for the world," said Ruiz de Porras.

"Ryan witnessed to Steven and to the congregation that it's the celebration that comes from the gift of preventient grace and the voice from the heavens that reminds us how pleasing we are in God's sight, and that here is a church family that will provide for our needs because that's what we're called to do," she said. "I believe Ryan witnessed God's grace and love during baptism in such a way that moved the hearts of many, if not all,



Rev. Iraidia Ruiz de Porras of Christ UMC in Lakewood baptizes Steven on Reaffirmation Sunday, Jan. 28. Photo provided

in the congregation; and in some grace-filled way inspired Steven to trust what Ryan was experiencing and witnessing through the ritual of the baptismal sacrament. The heavens opened up that Sunday morning to declare that Ryan and Steven are beloved and pleasing to God's sight and heart. And, that their ministry, discipleship, and witness began that very same day!"

After the service, Ruiz de Porras couldn't find Steven. She called his grandmother Joyce later and learned they had a birthday party to attend and could not stay for fellowship.

"But, pastor, I have to tell you," Joyce paused and sighed joyfully, "Steven told everyone at the party that he had been baptized!"

Community Joins Forces To Restock Food Pantries

By Betty Sayner
bettysayner@gmail.com

BYRAM - The Waterloo United Methodist Church in Byram hosted their first "Feed Fest" on February 11. The church organized a family friendly party with the goal of raising \$1,000 and collecting 500 pounds of food to support local food pantries, including Project Self Sufficiency, Byram Food Pantry, and NORWESCAP.

The church's pastor, Tim Nicinski, explained that food pantries typically get ample donations around Thanksgiving and Christmas, but supplies tend to run low during the late winter. The church is a regular supporter of the Byram Food Pantry, and has been taking a monthly collection for many years for the purpose of purchasing ShopRite cards that are provided to the town clerk's office for local residents in need of assistance. A member of the Byram Town Council attended Feed Fest, in support of the church's effort to continue to help their community.

JAM caterers of Waterloo Village allowed the church to host the party in their spacious hall. Feed Fest featured DJ Jonny Steelz, offering his music services which had guests dancing. God's Funny Bones, a local clown group, created balloon animals, face painting, and made "stamp out hunger" themed crafts with children. Two party princesses from a local business stopped in and made themselves available for photos. The event included a STEM education and 3D printing demonstration and a lunch provided by the church was offered for donations.

"It was a wonderful day of sharing and caring," said Lorna Wooldridge, a friend of the church who offered valentine crafts for teens and adults. "Well done, Waterloo UMC! The small church with the huge heart."

The church invited the community to collect non-perishable food and do-



A local Daisy Scout Troop works on crafts during Feed Fest at Waterloo Village on February 11, 2018. Photo provided

nations of grocery gift cards as both groups and individuals. Lee Burbank, a regular church attendee, took the lead on soliciting local vendors for prizes that were awarded for the largest donations. They included gift certificates for local restaurants, businesses, yoga, and laser tag. Local boy scouts were the largest group donor collecting over 100 pounds of food. As party guests arrived, they were directed to the scale where their donations were weighed and logged, so prizes could be awarded. Helen Cole, a senior church member rang a large bell to celebrate each donation. Guests received a Feed Fest reusable grocery bag, donated by Cloud-com, a local telecom & IT business. 150 bags were given out for food shopping use for next year's event.

Church members Ellen and Rick Scherr were the primary organizers of the event, but their enthusiasm easily recruited the assistance and support of others making Feed Fest a success through teamwork. The event garnered the support of numerous local businesses and brought the community together with the mutual goal of helping their hungry neighbors. There was fun and food, but the purpose was clear. And while the \$847 dollars collected was just short of the \$1,000 aim, the 500 pound objective was surpassed by the collection of 886 pounds of non-perishable food that was used to restock local food pantries.

To find out more about Waterloo UMC's Feed Fest visit Facebook.com/WaterlooUMC or waterloovillagechurch.org

Martone Joins Wespath Young Leaders Advisory Board

By Raquel Pichardo
Raquel_Pichardo@wespath.org

NEPTUNE - Gabrielle Martone, Pastor of Broadway UMC in Warren County and Port Colden UMC in Washington, will be working in 2018 to help shape the way Wespath Benefits and Investments (Wespath) serves The United Methodist Church by participating in Wespath's inaugural Young Leaders Advisory Board



Gabrielle Martone

(Y-LAB). Wespath is the general agency of the UMC responsible for administering benefits and investing retirement plan assets. Wespath created Y-LAB in 2017 to engage and better serve young adults dedicated to the Church.

Members are partnering with Wespath to identify gaps in connecting with young clergy and lay employees, generate ideas that help improve Wespath's products and services, and help shape how Wespath shares information.

In November, the group traveled to Pensacola, Florida to attend Wespath's 'revitup! For a Lifetime in Ministry' - an



event for young clergy, where they provided insights about how Wespath can enhance its educational outreach. The group also met at Wespath's headquarters in Glenview, Illinois in September, where they interacted with Wespath employees and senior leadership, including General Secretary, Barbara Boigegrain.

Their hard work continues in 2018. "The discussion among the Y-LAB members has been lively and energetic, and their feedback has already proven valuable," said Ms. Boigegrain. "We appreciate their willingness to help us better serve the Church, and look forward to hearing more from this engaging group of young UMC leaders!"

The 15 Y-LAB members are all aged 35 or younger, and represent both laity and clergy across the U.S. YLAB members were selected by Directors of Connectional Ministries in their UMC jurisdictions who viewed these individuals as young leaders within the Connection.

Wespath has created a similar Conference Advisory Board consisting of Conference Benefits Officers and

Treasurers across the UMC in order to better engage with, and connect to, the annual conferences and participants it serves.



Marcia's Melodies

Special Choral Music Suggestions for the Lenten and Easter Season:

- SP0511 | Lord, Not My Feet Only | SATB 38 measures: \$1.00
- SP1032 | Broken for Me | SSATB Anthem : \$1.20
- SP3401 | Mary" (the mother of Jesus), a good choice for the Sunday following Easter. It speaks of Mary's response to Jesus' birth, death and Resurrection. With God all things are possible. |SATB: \$2.00

A New Choral Anthem:

SP1045 | So Great Thy Love | SATB Anthem: \$2.00
Words by Margaret G. Juckett and music by Marcia J. Hendron

This anthem celebrates God's unfailing love, forgiving mercy and promise of peace, joy, and gladness of heart. All creation is meant for us to enjoy. But the giving of Jesus' life to pardon sin and the promise of eternal life when we join God in Heaven- that is the supreme example of the greatness of God's love.

To Contact, Please Leave a Message at:
Call: 732.988.3191 | Email: marciahendron@gmail.com



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Pitman UMC Hosts Southern Regional Day of Learning

By Larry Bakely
website @pitmanUMC.org

PITMAN – Many congregants at Pitman UMC “did church” all day on Sunday, February 11. After service, they joined nearly 200 other United Methodist clergy and laity engaged in various ministries from the southern region of New Jersey who braved torrential downpours to gather for a Day of Learning, featuring worship, workshops, and dinner. Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) members, Board of Trustees, Finance Committees, Administrative Board and Council Members, Lay Members and Lay Leaders were encouraged to attend.

Gateway South District Superintendent Myrna Bethke delivered a message to kick off the day. Church classroom space was used for groups ranging from ten to 30 gathering to learn from experts, and perhaps more importantly, each other. The afternoon was organized around two series of ten workshops so each attendee could participate in two.

Director of Worship, Eric Drew, provided powerful insights into the needs of Next Generation ministries. He shared his story of how he grew up in the church, reflecting on how someone engaged him at key points in his life, forming an honest relationship and inviting him to become involved in a meaningful way.

“Research has shown that as many as one in two young people have written and recorded their own song,” said Drew. “Next generations of disciples are incredibly creative. However, engaging them in worship services and worship planning continues to be a challenge.”

Drew went on to speak about how to engage next generation disciples to add

energy and freshness to worship. He challenged attendees to offer the same opportunities that were offered him growing up in the church: developing relationships with students, loosening a grip on how worship ‘must be done’ and setting people up for successful involvement.

“Try new things,” he said. “Youth won’t break the church.”

Drew encouraged the group to keep Jesus central.

“Most Next Gen people aren’t superficial,” he said. “They want to dive deeper to know the real Jesus. They don’t want ‘Jesus Lite’ or ‘Church Lite.’”

Heather Mandala, Director of Small Groups Ministry at Hope Church in Voorhees led a workshop helping to set a vision and plan to grow small group ministries. She challenged the concept of “small groups” and of “learning” or “Bible study” in the church and reminded attendees that Jesus was in a small group of about 12 core people.

“Are we a church with small groups or a church of small groups?” she asked.

Mandala also challenged the group to increase their leadership by 10% by creating one “out of the box” small group or groups addressing specific needs. A general consensus emerged for the need to create groups that address topics, talents, and current issues. Mandala explained that short-term small groups are more desirable to newcomers who don’t always want to commit long-term while providing opportunity to branch out into other groups.

How to effectively deal with difficult personalities without alienating people was also discussed. Mandala spelled out the personalities who tend to occasionally sidetrack a small group and the

diplomatic approaches to take to refocus. Josh Kinney, GNJ Editorial Manager, reminded attendees of his Church Storytelling workshop that each person has a story.

“Every Christian strives to know Jesus,” said Kinney. “We want to become like him by growing into his likeness, but in order to do that, we need to know what he looks like.”

Kinney described how although no one knows Jesus’ physical appearance, through individual relationships each person has knowledge of part of Christ’s character and hold a piece of the picture.

“Since we each hold on to a piece of the story, we are responsible for sharing it with the rest of the community,” he said. “The piece we have isn’t the whole, we have a story to tell and there’s an audience needing to hear it.”

He shared how stories come in the form of testimonies and the benefits of sharing life experiences, biblical insights, moving music, touching prayers, or challenging sermons.

“Each of us has stories of mentors or church history,” he said. “We can tell of small groups and of friends who stood by our side through difficult times. Each of these stories represents a piece of Christ.”

Kinney challenged the group to reflect on why they were called to the church they serve, where they see their ministry headed, and what their picture of Jesus is.

“As church members we need to discover our answers to those questions,” he said. “As a body of believers, we need to share those stories and learn from each other. As church leaders, we must provide avenues where our stories can be told and heard: through worship services, small groups, or publication.”

One attendee described how her church presented their history through drama. Others spoke of being challenged during their worship service to describe “where they have seen Christ this week?” Kinney shared how testimonies could

be told through writing, blogging, social media, video, or small groups specifically designed around stories.

Other workshops were led by Cape Atlantic and Delaware Bay District Superintendent’s Brian Roberts and Glenn Conaway on Wesleyan leadership and developing creative sermon series.

Executive Assistant to the Bishop, Nicola Mulligan directed two workshops on conflict resolution and the pastoral evaluation process and GNJ Property Manager, Alex Mayer led a session on caring for physical church property.

The United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey was represented by Director of Development Brian Mickle who led a workshop exploring ways to initiate electronic giving, year round stewardship planning, and helping congregations understand the importance of generosity. He also spoke to those new to the role of their church finance team.

Gina Yeske, GNJ Director of Small Groups Ministry, offered tools to help small church leaders evaluate how their church is prepared to move into the future.

Lynn Caterson, GNJ Chancellor Chair and Absecon UMC Board of Trustees, led a workshop instructing trustees in matters beyond supervising and maintaining church property.

A safe sanctuaries workshop was led by Debbie Barnett, Regional Safe Sanctuaries.

Additionally, Haddonfield UMC Pastor Chris Heckert talked about team building, Hope UMC Pastor Jeff Bills spoke about church as a “team sport” and Good Shepherd UMC Pastor Tom Stark discussed the importance of listening to the congregation and community to develop high impact ministry.

Larry Bakely reports news and updates for Pitman United Methodist Church’s website. Visit www.pitmanumc.org for more information and to read news articles.

Moving into the Future

Continued from page 1

numbers we report each month. The homeowners have been at the forefront of what we have accomplished.”

The February 8 meeting marked Ridgely’s last as Director and concluded with the Board joining GNJ staff in a celebration of her work to lead United Methodists in Greater New Jersey in the recovery effort.

Representing the Board of Trustees, Dr. Patricia Morton, Director of The Spinal Cord Injury Project at W. M. Keck Center for Collaborative Neuroscience at Rutgers University, led the accolades for Ridgely’s work.

“Three things have undergirded all that Bobbie did: initiative, innovation, and integrity,” said Morton.

“It was her integrity that secured a special place for A Future with Hope. As scams, shams, and charlatans descended on New Jersey to take advantage of the most vulnerable, A Future with Hope became the leader in building collaborations. Why? A great deal of that was because people saw that Bobbie was not concerned about getting credit, but about getting the job done. Organizations were willing to work with A Future with Hope because they trusted Bobbie.”

A Future With Hope has partnered with over two dozen long term recovery groups, funders and faith-based nonprofits thanks to Ridgely’s focus on making connections and building alliances. These alliances have been largely responsible for raising \$17.5 million for A Future With Hope with funding from the American Red Cross, the Robin Hood Foundation, the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund, UMCOR and others. It has also led to new relationships with ecumenical partners including the Episcopal Relief and Development, the Salvation Army, Lutheran Social Ministries, World Renew, Christian Public Service and others.

Ridgely, a member of the UMC in Red Bank, also credits the power of the United Methodist connection for the work that has been accomplished. More than 400 GNJ churches joined the work of A Future With Hope by volunteering, serving as host sites, hosting dinners, providing welcome home gifts and donating to the Mission Fund.

A Future With Hope Board of Trustees President Bruce Hartman summed it up, “Bobbie, we appreciate your work, your professionalism and your extraordinary sense of purpose.”



Bobbie Ridgely is pictured being congratulated by A Future With Hope board members John Bishop, Drew Theological School Dean Javier Viera and Nicole Caldwell-Gross. Photo by Brittney Reilly

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DACA Peace Vigil at Princeton

United Methodist gathered with others at a vigil for the Dream Act on Sunday, Feb. 25 at Princeton as participants called for "A Clean Dream Act Now" noting the March 5 Congressional deadline. A special task force created by the GNJ Board of Church and Society is advocating for Congressional legislation for the DACA Program (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival). If you'd like to engage your congregation visit gnjumc.org/church-and-society and click on immigration. Photo provided by Ernest Williams



CONFERENCE HAPPENINGS

GIGS Fundraiser

Girls in God's Service (GIGS) celebrated five years of service at St. Paul's UMC in Willingboro. The cooperative effort of five teenagers (Anna Calloway, Kylie Ekelburg, Gabrielle Irizarry, Jessica Reynolds, and Alyssa Shivers) dedicated themselves to following Jesus and full engagement in the life of their church. Directed by Kathy Kovach, President of St. Paul's UMW and with the assistance of Jennifer Irizarry, the group was honored for their efforts to assist and bless others. The girls raised \$1,270 during the 2017 holiday season for Ornaments4Orphans, an enterprise celebrating dignity and generosity by selling fair trade handcrafted ornament imported from impoverished areas in East Africa.



NEXT GEN JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Next Gen Engagement Specialist
The Next Generation Ministries (Next Gen) Engagement Specialist is a current part-time position that develops innovative initiatives for expanding the number of students, parents, youth leaders, volunteers, and other key stakeholders.

Next Gen Camping & Retreats Director
The Camping and Retreats Director leads all camping and retreats programs and initiatives, providing vision and direction to staff and volunteers.

To find out more visit nextgengnj.com



Soup-er Bowl Sunday at Midland Park UMC

Each year on the weekend of the Super Bowl, Midland Park UMC holds a special Soup-er Bowl event to collect cans of soup that are donated to CUMAC in Paterson. This year the goal was to reach 2018 cans. That goal was exceeded with the collection of 2203 cans! Hunger is an ongoing problem that MPUMC continues to respond to throughout the year.

GNJ JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Benefits Assistant
The Benefits Assistant will assist in administering health and dental insurance plans to participants in active and retiree plans.

Media Production Manager
The Media Production Manager is responsible for producing video content and managing the GNJ media production studio.

To explore these and more job opportunities throughout GNJ, visit gnjumc.org



Annual Conference Display Space

Now accepting requests for display space at the 2018 GNJ Annual Conference, May 20-22 at the Wildwoods Convention Center in Wildwood. We welcome you to represent your ministry and encourage you to use this opportunity to outreach to the GNJ community with informative displays. Please register by **April 15** to ensure your space. Visit gnjumc.org/2018-annual-conference and click on "Vendor Display Request Form."

Seeking Ushers, Pages, and Tellers for Annual Conference

Members of Annual Conference interested in serving as ushers, pages and tellers, please email Peter Jamieson at pastorjamie@gmail.com by **March 27** with your name, address, phone, district and email.

Important Fire Safety Information

Church Mutual has provided an informational brochure regarding fire safety, showcasing ways to minimize the threat of fires. Visit churchmutual.com/safetyResources for practical steps you can take to prevent fire at your church.

2018 Scholarship Opportunities

Visit gnjumc.org/higher-education-and-campus-ministries and click on "2018 Scholarship Opportunities" for the complete list of 2018 GNJ Scholarships from the GNJ Board of Higher Education and Ministry. The application deadline is **March 31**.

Waves of Grace Women's Retreat in Wildwood

This year's Waves of Grace Women's Retreat: Speak Life, will be held April 13-14 at the Wildwoods Convention Center in Wildwood and is open to all women. Visit beverlymethodist.org/waves-of-grace-womens-retreat.html for details.

ARMS Spring Meeting Scheduled for April 24

The Spring Meeting of the Association of Retired Ministers and Spouses (ARMS) will be held on April 24 at First UMC in Toms River, NJ. Those attending are encouraged to bring mementos, objects or pictures that serve as reminders of personal stories of ministry. Contact Don DeGroat (570) 646-9298 or Dfdegroat4@aol.com by **April 17** to make a reservation.

Facing the Future Conference

"Facing The Future" - a resourcing event organized by GCORR for pastors in cross racial and cross cultural appointments will be held **May 7-9** in Newark, NJ. Visit facingthefuture2018.com for more info and to register.



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