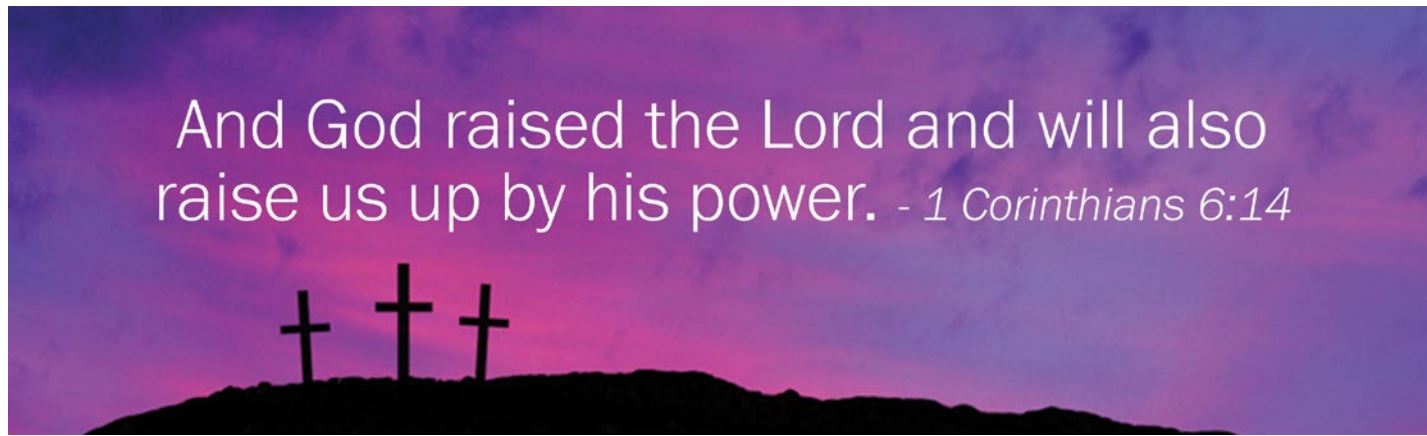


THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

APRIL 2020
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Everittstown UMC Creates a Blessing Just in Time

By Heather Mistretta
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PITTS TOWN, N J

When the small congregation of Everittstown United Methodist Church in Pittstown, NJ, opened an emergency mini-food pantry a few months ago, the magnitude of what a blessing it would be to so many whose struggles have been magnified by the coronavirus was likely lost at the time. But the small wooden structure that sits at the end of the driveway leading to the church's parsonage now serves as a beacon of hope.

The mini-food pantry, also known as a "Blessing Box," is the result of a few years of planning at this small church in Hunterdon County.

"We see the Blessing Box as our way of being the hands and feet of Jesus," said Associate Pastor Alicia Grey, who began her service there on January 1 while also serving Pattenburg UMC. "We're meeting their practical and immediate needs as well as



Everittstown UMC blesses community with mini food pantry.

their spiritual and emotional needs," said Grey who added that the congregation has needed to restock the box twice as much since the onset of the coronavirus.

Grey was also quick to mention that the impetus for this project that allows people in the community to visit the box anonymously any time of day began before her arrival by Bette Mayers, vice president of the congregation's church council.

"The pieces finally started coming together when one of our attendees volunteered to lend his expertise to making the project a reality," said Mayers. "We wanted to offer a way to help supplement the more established food pantries in our local area. People in our community area who run out of vital necessities now have a place to go to obtain non-perishable items such as diapers, powdered milk,

Continued on page 6

Love In the Time of Coronavirus

By Heather Mistretta
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"Do all the good you can by all the means you can in all the places you can at all the times you can to all the people you can as long as ever you can." These words often attributed to John Wesley have never rung truer than today. GNJ churches are doing good and taking care of each other and their communities. Their love and commitment are reflected in the many innovative and bold things they are doing to stay connected, help others and preserve the United Methodist mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Although church doors are closed, mission and ministry are open and alive. Many churches have delved into on-line worship and prayer services, some of them for the very first time as they

Continued on page 6



CUMAC is grateful for the many food donations they are receiving from local restaurants that will help them meet the rising demand.

Celebrating Native American Ministries Sunday...Remotely

*"We are a living people,
created with a place and purpose.
We are no greater or less than
other created peoples that walk
this earth with us."
—"BEING CULTURALLY SENSITIVE"*

By Cynthia Mosley, St. John UMC
Cmosley19@hotmail.com

Native Americans bring many unique languages, cultures and mores to their 124 churches. Through Native American Ministries Sunday (NAMS), United Methodists can equip and empower Native American pastors, congregations and seminary students to preserve their heritage and honor their past.

Although St. John Fordville will not be having an in-person NAMS service with the ceremonial table as its back drop amid sounds of Native American flutes, turtle shells, blankets and creek stones, Rev. Roy Bundy will continue to offer an online worship service every Sunday via Facebook so that the power of this message is not lost. Bundy also noted that if he can preserve the sanctity of the service, he will attempt to do a NAMS service on the fourth Sunday in April. This important day:



For the first time, Rev. Roy Bundy is doing his worship service online via Facebook Live.

1. Celebrates a commitment to racial reconciliation.
2. Believes in funding justice efforts for Native Americans.
3. Embraces the idea that when we give together, we do more than any individual can.
4. Believe in taking care of our own family.
5. Believes in modeling generosity for our communities and future generations.

The Book of Discipline requires a special offering, which is administered by the Conference Committee on Native

American Ministries (CONAM), but it is more than that. Some churches have said this rule of service is not applicable since there are no Native Americans in attendance at their church.

"Our answer to these churches is to refer them to the Act of Repentance held at the 2012 General Conference," said Cynthia Mosely of St. John UMC. "This was not a once and done action; it was designed to assist indigenous people to address the challenges faced by their churches and communities."

Continued on page 4

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP

Answering the Call and Doing Our Part

Bishop John Schol



United Methodists are making a difference. During Covid-19 —

- We are a vibrant worshipping community using the latest technology
- We are reaching out to the sick and the lonely using the latest technology
- We are Bible and small groups enthusiasts, creating new online experiences
- We are food depots, healthy mask makers, prayer partners, health care worker applauders
- We are givers, finding new ways to give generously online
- We are evangelists, inviting new people and family members to worship with us online
- We are modeling safe distancing and responsible ministry online
- We are United Methodists

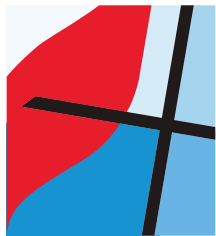
During a season of pain, fear and illness, you have been hope and healing. You have been the body of Christ. Thank you for your faithfulness, your ingenuity and commitment to be Christ Jesus in action. Jesus told us in Matthew 25, when you serve the sick, you have served me, when you have served the least, you serve me, when you serve those bound by loneliness and anxiety you serve me.

You and the church will not be the same once we defeat Covid-19. We will learn how resilient God has made us and that we can engage in ministry in new ways. We will discover our Wesleyan roots that know no bounds, but like our founder John Wesley, we will find our way to where the people are and nourish their souls and heal their bodies and minds. We cannot go back to business as usual, but we can use this season to see and understand where God is calling us to next. Let's travel together. GNJ is here to assist you through this season and to support you in discovering what God has next. 🇺🇸

Correction to the March 2020 issue:

On page 9, in the photo on the left, the man in the center was incorrectly identified. He is McWilliam Colon.

We regret the error.



THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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GIVE TO YOUR LOCAL CHURCH ONLINE

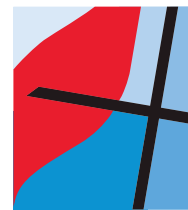
Laity across Greater New Jersey can now give to their local church online through the GNJ website at:

www.gnjumc.org/onlinegiving



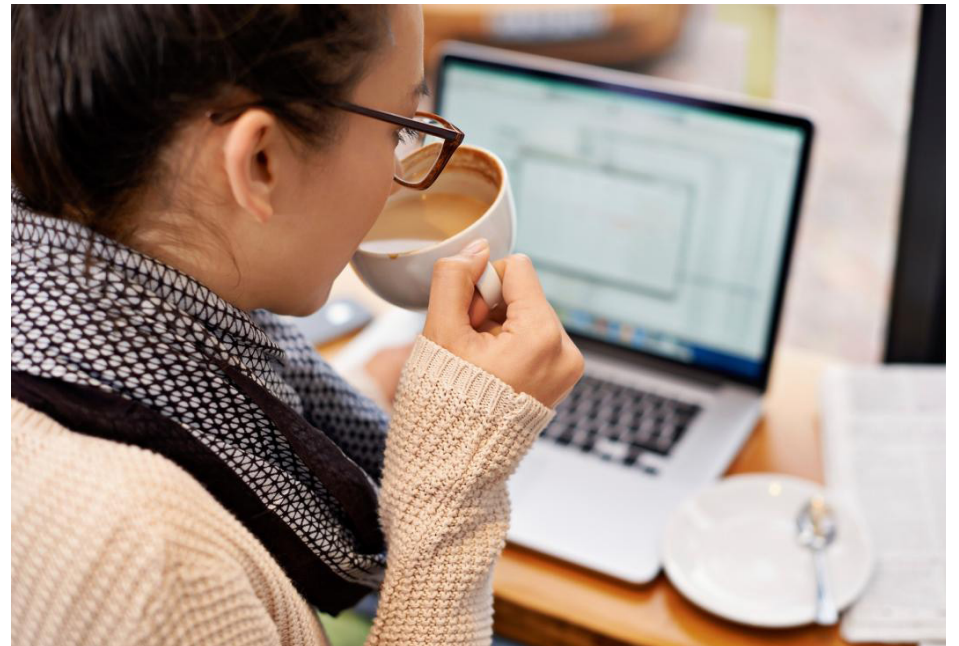
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Ministry and Mission in the Midst of COVID-19

Ways to spread the love of Jesus Christ while stamping out the COVID-19.



MISSION

Create a Feeding Ministry Team: Feed the homebound/quarantined, your congregation and your community. See GNJ website for ways to do so.

Form Care Teams: Check in on, connect and serve congregants and the community, especially those who are most vulnerable or working on the front lines, all while practicing social distancing.

Share Your Gifts Virtually: Teach (STEM, music, knitting/sewing, art, movement, cooking, job skills, etc.), tutor, mentor, technology set up and assistance and more!



CONNECTING THROUGH SMALL GROUPS

Small Groups create connections with God, each other and the world:

Encourage your small group members to continue to meet virtually or by phone.

Create a small group. Invite that person who usually sits next to you in church, a neighbor or a relative.

Invite members to give someone a call and ask the question, "How can I pray for you today?"

Tap into Breakthrough resources. They offer a scripture, questions to guide conversation about the biblical text and how to apply the text to your life.



STEWARDSHIP

When reviewing your current online giving process or setting up online giving for the first time consider these things:

- Is it easy to use?
- Does the donor have options? (text to give, credit/debit cards, electronic transfer)
- When the donor moves to the giving platform, does it feel seamless or do people feel like they have been directed somewhere else?



LEADERSHIP

Connect: Use a digital platform to connect with your church and community leaders. Listen to their stories and be willing to adapt your strategy as needed.

Be Compassionate: Don't overlook or undervalue those who are serving in these times. Find ways to say a genuine thank you! A handwritten note goes a long way.

Empower Others: This is the time for teamwork. New leaders arise in times like these. Who has the gifts that would be a blessing to your leadership team?

Seek Balance: Make a list of what brings you joy. Commit to engaging in one of the activities each day for the tending of your soul. You're worth it!



WORSHIP

In this season of virtual worship, include a giving ask each time you gather and in all communications. Keep in mind the importance of:

- Giving being a part of worship
- Thank donors
- Show and tell how the money is being used to impact or change lives. (Tell inspiring stories and share videos)
- Share examples of Biblical generosity
- Offer a call to action

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES, VISIT:

GNJ's COVID 19 Resources for Ministry page at
www.gnjumc.org/covid19



UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Black Leaders Celebrate and Lift Voices at Turning Point UMC

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

The sanctuary of Turning Point UMC in Trenton was filled with about 100 people and the spirit of God in the African American tradition on February 29 just before having to close its doors to shut out the threat of the coronavirus. Greater New Jersey Black Methodists For Church Renewal (BMCR) gathered for their 53rd annual celebration and installation of new officers.

"We engaged in worship in a culturally familiar fashion," said Pastor Rupert Hall, who added that the group's focus as they move forward is two-fold—support young African American clergy and support all African American youth, particularly as it relates to the IGNITE conference this October.

Testimonies from the Federation of Men of Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Salem Counties and a worship service led by Rev. John Randall, pastor of Mt. Zion Wesley and Kay Scott, Lay Delegate of the New Beginnings Church were enhanced by the sounds of the Mt. Zion Wesley choir. The Black National Anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" inspired the congregation to stand and join in.

Scriptures were read by Rev. Shelly Smith of Ferry Avenue UMC and Rev. Sandra J. Jenkins of The Church of the Good Shepherd.

A viewing of "A Change Is Gonna Come" and offerings were collected, while Evangelist Carolyn Drumgoole led a group of praise dancers from churches in the Southern Region of GNJ, including those from Camden, in a performance on how to humble oneself under the power of grace.

Rev. Shayla Johnson, coordinator of the Northeastern Jurisdiction of BMCR, cen-



Music was a big part of the BMCR celebration, including the Mt. Zion Wesley Choir and a group of praise dancers from churches in the Southern Region of GNJ.

tered her keynote address on doing work right now for the Kingdom of God.

Kay Dubuisson, pastor at United Methodist Church of Spring Valley in New York and chair of the GNJ Connectional Table, gave a prayer that lifted the tradition of praising and petitioning God.

Afterward, Rev. Johnson installed the new officers of GNJ BMCR: Rupert Hall as the coordinator, Jacklyn Love as the co-coordinator, John Randall as secretary and Charles Zeigler as treasurer.

The worship service closed with Rosa Williams, GNJ's Lay Leader and chair of the Board of Laity, sending forth attendees with the benediction. "The mission of BMCR is to raise up prophetic and spiritual leaders who will be advocates for the unique needs of Black people in the United Methodist

Church," said Williams. "I encourage each of you to go out in love, to do the work that God has called each of us to do, be in relationship with your neighbor and to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world!"

BMCR, the organized Black Caucus of The United Methodist Church, is one of the denomination's five U.S.-based racial-ethnic caucuses. The BMCR caucus represents more than 2,400 black United Methodist congregations and approximately 500,000 African American members across the United States. Since its 1967 inception in Detroit, BMCR has consistently been the voice of Black United Methodists and served as an advocate for the growth and development of Black churches.

Following BMCR's Event: Worship Reimagined

At Mt Zion, Senior Pastor Rev. Harden Hopper began preaching remotely on March 15 with the sermon, "In the Midst of All Things" where he explored the scripture from Romans 5:1-11. The video can be found at www.mtzionumc.org/sermon/midst-it-all.

Hopper said worship will continue this way until further notice.

At New Beginnings Church, where Kay Scott is lay delegate, Lead Pastor Joe Sorce along with his team stayed connected with their congregations by holding Facebook Live sessions for worship, prayer, communion, "healing teachings" and whenever they needed to share a message.

"God's people don't shrink away from difficult times," said Pastor Joe. "Instead we react in faith believing that God uses our increased generosity to meet needs and shine a light of hope into the darkness people around us are experiencing."

At Turning Point, Pastor Hall led a remote worship on March 22 via Zoom as well as via dial in phone for those who didn't have access to a computer and/or Wifi. One-hour prayer meetings are also being held.

Their Urban Grace soup kitchen is still open for breakfast but only through take out. Volunteers, including Hall fed about 200 people on March 14 and more than 100 on March 21. They are also continuing their grocery distribution on the third Saturday of every month. But now the bags are left outside the church.

Hall, who said he prefers to call it "physical distancing" rather than "social distancing," added that he and his congregation are also calling the elderly and shut-ins more frequently in an effort to stay connected. 🇺🇸

Native American

Continued from page 1

In New Jersey, the Nanticoke Lenni Lenape Tribe, the largest group of indigenous people in the state, live primarily in Fairfield Township in Cumberland County. The township represents one of the lowest incomes per capita in the County, which itself holds the distinction of being the County with the highest rates of poverty indicators in New Jersey.

Founded in 1841 St. John United Methodist Church is the church of the Tribal people. It is the only Native American Church in New Jersey and one of five in the Northeast Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church as well as the fifth oldest Methodist church designated as Native American.

Direct descendants of the founders still worship with by Rev. Roy E. Bundy. The gifts of time and resources provided by the NAMS offerings include, but are not limited to the following opportunities for the community:

- Students have received scholarship assistance for college and continuing education;
- Church and community leaders are provided the opportunity to attend training to use in church and community life;
- Vacation Bible School and afterschool programs reach children with cultural and scriptural education using a locally designed curriculum;
- Elders have been able to gather to study and learn within their own cultural community;
- Clothing and food giveaways sponsored by the church reach more than 200 people every month.



The ceremonial water table is typically used on NAMS along with flutes, turtle shells, blankets and creek stones.

This is a short list of the benefits of the NAMS offering.

"However, more importantly on NAMS the general church family can learn and understand more about the Native American community right here in New Jersey," said Mosely. "We share our drums, our dancers, our speakers and our love of the Creator with everyone."

And by the way, we are reported to be good cooks!"

Mosely extends this invitation to honor Native American Sunday with a special worship service, an offering or a visit to a Tribal church or activity. All of these can be done remotely. Resources to facilitate this can be found on the GNJ website.

NAMS Reimagined

At the onset of the coronavirus, St. John's congregation increased the amount of food they give away. The small church averages about 135 unduplicated families served monthly but added 50 more families.

"Normally we give away 7,000 pounds of food per month plus 400 pounds of clothing per month, but we will be adding more food to serve the extra families throughout our partnership with Community Food Bank of New Jersey and local businesses and farmers," Mosely said, adding that a produce giveaway day has also been added.

"We are a designated healthy pantry, and we know healthy nutrition helps

fight illness. We unfortunately had to cancel our nutrition classes, but we continue to have nutrition information upon request."

Mosely can be contacted at cmosley19@hotmail.com. The church is located at 680 Fordville Road, Bridgeton, NJ.

To read a recent article in The Relay about St. John receiving a 2020 Council of Bishop grant, visit www.gnjumc.org/news/st-john-umc-in-fordville-among-recipients-of-2020-council-of-bishops-grants/.

For resources for Native American Ministries Sunday from UMC, visit www.umcsgiving.org/resource-articles/native-american-united-methodist-churches1. 🇺🇸



UMC of Red Bank Celebrates 50 Years of Earth Day

By Denise Herschel
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Being green is a priority for The United Methodist Church of Red Bank and leaders there are not going to let social distancing and shelter in place orders stop them from holding their annual Green Fair to celebrate Earth Day. They will honor the earth with their annual Green Fair tradition, finding an alternative way to continue with their celebration in these extraordinary times.

While the church community has been forced to cancel its environmental festivities scheduled for April 19, church members formed other methods to still acknowledge and celebrate Earth Day which is celebrating its 50th anniversary,

"I remember the first Earth Day in 1970, and it was a big celebration. It was a great thing and brought a lot of awareness to people," said Jane Schildge, GreenFaith Team chairperson and UMC Red Bank church member. "Our church will do as much as possible to celebrate online, on our church website, in virtual displays and in projects to do at home."

She added that they are also working on photo displays and more for April as well as encouraging people to do things at home such as gardening, picking up litter and recycling all their extra plastics from supplies.

"We are educating about our earth and caring for it. We want people to share in our mission to protect and love the earth," said Schildge.

UMC Red Bank members have been long-standing proponents for environmental protection and awareness as their church

is the first United Methodist Church in the country to be certified green. As part of GreenFaith, New Jersey's interfaith coalition for the environment founded in 1992 to inspire, educate and mobilize people of diverse spiritual backgrounds, UMC Red Bank has discovered their relationship with the sacred in nature and their need to restore the earth for future generations through shared beliefs of the world's great religions.

"Our green certification started in 2009 when I began as chair of the team," Schildge said. "In 2019 we celebrated 10 years as a green congregation and a recognized community leader in environmental stewardship. We are a progressive and reconciling congregation of about 400 members with a strong youth program."

GreenFaith certification is designed to help houses of worship from diverse traditions become religious environmental leaders. The certification is the world's first comprehensive interfaith, environmental certification program. Over two years, participating institutions carry out a range of initiatives to integrate environmental themes into worship, religious education, facility maintenance and social outreach with the goal of becoming a GreenFaith sanctuary through the direction of GreenFaith.

"The Green Team at our church applied for certification and was accepted, joining other churches and synagogues in Monmouth County in this environmental effort," she said. "Our church wanted to be environmental stewards and share our enthusiasm for the earth, the air and the water around us and all that sustains us as humans."



UMC of Red Bank members with members of Club 77, a middle school age youth group, their three leaders and the Trex team work together to incorporate environmental themes and missions.

According to Schildge, caring for the earth is a religious value, and environmental stewardship is a moral responsibility. UMC Red Bank members performed an array of measures to become "green-friendly."

"We did audits of all areas including trash and began recycling and alternatives to plastic. We added vegetarian options to all meals served and stopped pesticides on our grounds. Our United Methodist Women's group began a garden plot where vegetables were raised and shared with the congregation and local soup kitchens," she continued.

"We also joined a community sustained organic farm and volunteered there. Our church has banned plastics such as cups, containers, flatware and more. We only use reusable and washable. We grow spiritually through our relationship with the earth. Everyone has a right to live in a clean, safe environment," she said.

The church's next environmentally-friendly step is its Trex Project, which grew

out of their 2019 Green Fair. A group of local eighth graders invited church members to participate in their own Trex Challenge to which they readily accepted.

"The kids came out to the church to teach us about it. We signed up on Labor Day and have met their challenge and exceeded it! We saved 600 pounds of single use plastic film, bubble wrap and cereal liners. If you collect 500 pounds there is a Trex bench challenge. We are now putting our bench together, and we will show it online for our green presentation in March. We will be putting our Trex bench in our preschool playground where 100 kids will be using it. Trex is wonderful because it is made from 95% recycled materials as well as recycled plastic. Trex saves 400 million pounds of recycled material from landfills each year," she said.

Schildge believes that because of UMC Red Bank's vast environmental efforts during the past 10 years through outreach and education programs, others can learn the vital importance of preserving Mother Earth in all her goodness.

"One of our goals has been to work with other faith communities to better care for the world around us. People of faith have a vital role in play in restoring healthy ecosystems around the world. We grow spiritually through our relationship with the earth," she said.

The United Methodist Church of Red Bank is located at 247 Broad Street in Red Bank, NJ. For more information, visit www.umcredbank.org. For more information about Earth Day 2020 and to check out and register for one of the many digital events going on that day, visit www.earthday.org.

Lighting the Way Online

By Jessica Stenstrom
jessica_stenstrom@yahoo.com

On Ash Wednesday, churches throughout GNJ gathered to begin their Lenten journey acknowledging the need for community with God and with each other, recognizing that God created us from the dust of the earth and to dust we shall return one day. Just weeks ago, pastors and laity throughout GNJ had no idea just how different the second half of Lent, Holy Week and Easter would be.

With gatherings of 10 or more people banned by New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy due to the Covid-19 pandemic, pastors and laity around GNJ are being pushed to up their creativity in how they are ensuring their communities stay socially connected in a time where physical distancing is necessary.

Seminaries and local pastor licensing schools teach clergy many skills needed



Martone said that with worship being exclusively online right now, worship is pre-recorded which allows her and other church leaders and members to interact in the comments section, while it's being streamed over Facebook.

"My advice would be this — figure out what your objectives are, and how you can reasonably and responsibly make

recorded herself using Facebook Live, which was much lower-tech and less involved.

"My advice for pastors just starting an online presence is go boldly," said Pillot. "It's super daunting the first few times you put yourself out there like this, but in this time of uncertainty, doing new things is one of the best ways to show people the love and grace of Jesus Christ. And there are all kinds of people willing to help figure out the technology hiccups."

While there are many technological advances that help connect people — the two that seem most used by GNJ clergy and laity are Zoom and Facebook Live. Zoom is a video conferencing cloud-based software that allows people to connect by video feed or phone line. Facebook Live is a streaming platform that allows for worship to be streamed live or pre-recorded and shared using a "Watch Party" feature.

Pastor Lynn Mears has been working on introducing Zoom at Fairmont UMC for both worship and Bible study. She said a benefit of using Zoom is that it allows worshippers to see, hear and respond to one another, but it has come with some challenges with many members of her congregation being uncomfortable with technology. "They are afraid of downloading something because it may harm their computer or tablet or that they might be spied on by using their camera on their computers."

She said she has been working one-on-one with members by telephone to help them work through their fears and come online using Zoom and is able to give them a number to join by phone if they are more comfortable.

One benefit Debbie Barnett, pastor of Westmont UMC, has found with Facebook Live is that members are able to watch the video streaming without being on email. She said that she texts them the link to her

page with instructions to click on it. "They have liked that they are able to connect without having to download anything or have a Facebook account," she said.

Barnett, who is new to streaming worship online, said that she has found it is helpful to have a plan for how your worship will flow, but that you don't need a lot of equipment to make it work. She has been streaming using just her iPhone and a tripod. She said that with the move to streamed worship online, worship attendance has doubled from around 35 physically present on a Sunday to over 72 people viewing the streamed worship service and 241 engagements with what's been posted.

Barnett said it has even helped her connect with at least two formerly active members. She's been starting each streamed worship service by telling those gathered, "to give yourself the gift of presence." She added that leaders new to streaming should "just keep experimenting and embrace the bloopers."

"WITH THE MOVE TO STREAMED WORSHIP ONLINE, WORSHIP ATTENDANCE HAS DOUBLED FROM AROUND 35 PHYSICALLY PRESENT ON A SUNDAY TO OVER 72 PEOPLE VIEWING THE STREAMED WORSHIP SERVICE AND 241 ENGAGEMENTS WITH WHAT'S BEEN POSTED."

—Debbie Barnett, pastor of Westmont UMC

for ministry like how to preach and lead worship, how to provide pastoral care during tough life situations, how to lead a Bible study and preside over the sacraments. Yet, one subject not covered is how to be the church when you cannot meet in the building.

At Pearl River United Methodist Church, a church that averages about 70 in worship, they have been streaming their regular Sunday morning worship to Facebook for several years. Rev. Gabrielle

that happen," said Martone. "That means that everything you do isn't going to be perfect, and you are going to drop some things you normally do. We're all living in trauma right now."

Trinity UMC in Merchantville has also been streaming their service in entirety to Facebook for a while to allow members who can't be present in body to participate from afar or watch it on replay later in the day. With the move to no in-person worship, Pastor Jackie Pillot said she just re-

At Pearson Memorial UMC, where Jessica Stenstrom is pastor, worship and the way they connect have also been turned upside down...in a good way. A worship service is held every Sunday morning, prayer sessions are being held throughout the day, both morning and night and for both young and old, and daily devotions are shared with others. There are some kid-specific Facebook Lives, and children are encouraged to pick up their colored chalk and share encouraging words on their sidewalks. More information and photos can be found on their FB page at: www.facebook.com/pearsonmemorialumc/

Coronavirus

Continued from page 1

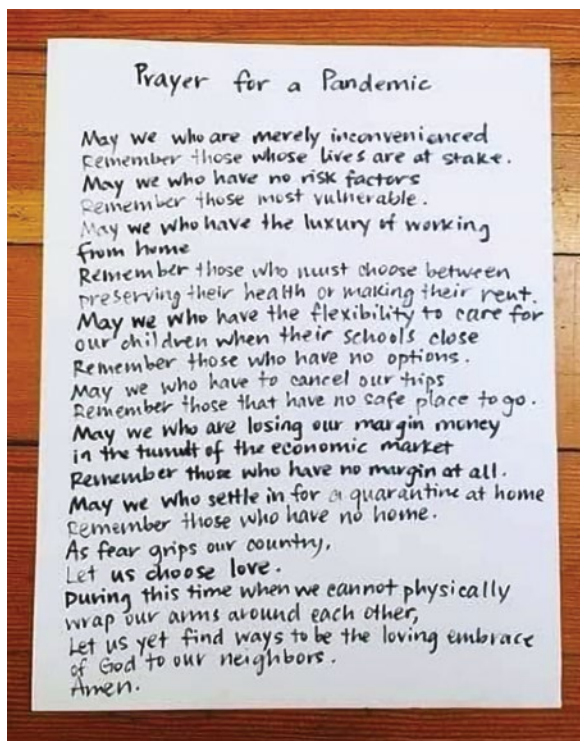
meet their new friends named Zoom and Facebook Live. Their commitment and courage to serve have outweighed the fears or apprehensions they have. The result has been inspiring and grounding in the face of such adversity.

Here is just a sampling of what some in GNJ are doing, each making a difference:

- Haddonfield UMC's congregation collected 400 pounds of food using social distancing and other safe practices for a local food bank in Camden. The church also continues to collect needed food for the Cherry Hill Food Pantry by collecting food items in a large wooden box placed outside the parking lot.
- Maker's Place of Trenton's Diaper Depot was kept open until March 14 and dis-

tributed wipes and double their usual amount of diapers, to help 93 families. They set up a sanitized "Grab and Go" layout to limit the spread of germs. "It was a demonstration of God's abundance in a time of great confusion," said Michael Reed, the pastor and managing director of The Maker's Place.

- At Waretown UMC, Rev. Dawn R. Corlew and her congregation decided to play their clarion bells for a half hour at noon each day and invite people to pray. "One mom was outside walking with her daughters and as soon as they heard the bells, her six-year old said, 'Mama that means God says it will be okay,'" said Corlew who recited the words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in "I Heard The Bells on Christmas Day" including "'God is not dead, nor doth He sleep; The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail, With peace on earth, good-will to men.'"
- Trinity UMC Hackettstown is continuing their food pantry (using the new guidelines for safe) practices that serves an average of one thousand people a month. They are also participating in the face mask ministry and continue to worship and meet in small groups virtually as well.
- Ricardo Ramos and his congregation at Bridgeton UMC have been feeding 200 people on Wednesdays. "People line up six feet apart, they chalk the sidewalk and only one person can be in line for each family," said Ramos.
- Innica Humphrey, pastor at First UMC in Englewood, is worshipping with her elderly congregation over the phone via a conference call.



Trinity UMC Hackettstown extended its online worship during Holy Week, adding things like meditation, a piece of music or a family activity.

Outreach Depot," an ecumenical non-profit who makes UMCOR kits. This Depot is run by Kim Burse who will be soon be commissioned as a deaconess in the UMC. Their storage is at the Andover UMC where Pastor Glenn Winzer serves.

- Despite reductions, CUMAC is still open during their normal hours, from 11-3 M-F and 4-6 pm on Wednesday and it is providing meals for those children who are not receiving school meals in Paterson. Due to widespread closures of local restaurants, many restaurants are donating their fresh food to CUMAC, which helps to bolster their depleted supply. For more details, visit www.cumac.org/blog.

The Relay will continue to highlight ministries and mission from our churches. Please continue to share with Heather Mistretta at hmistretta@gnjumc.org.



Lately, we may find ourselves not knowing what to do in times of trouble. While the answer is not always clear, together we can turn to Christ for comfort and guidance.

GNJ's Breakthrough Series, **What to Do** provides resources like sermon notes and visuals that may help you as you navigate the world of online worship.

TO ACCESS THIS VALUABLE RESOURCE TODAY, VISIT:

www.gnjumc.org/breakthrough

BREAKTHROUGH
A GNJ guide to best practices for worship

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Everittstown UMC

Continued from page 1



The mini food pantry allows visitors to take what they need anonymously and without shame.

peanut butter and other food items. Our purpose is to fill in when local food pantries are not open."

That "attendee" was Frenchtown resident Sarge Russell, who offered his expertise at putting the Blessing Box together. "He graciously provided the metal box which forms the heart of the mini-food pantry," said Mayers.

A large piece of cedar wood provides both a shelf to support the box and a place where those using the emergency food pantry are able to pick out the items they need.

"We're showing the community we love you and we want to help you," said Grey who added that the box is the church's "one small way it can transform the world" and give other churches a model to follow.

Everittstown UMC, who has its roots in the area's long history as an agricultural center with families going back many generations, held its first online worship service on March 22. Grey said they are planning to expand its outreach by also offering Bible Studies online too.

IGNITE Communities Branch Out Virtually

When youth gathered at the five IGNITE Communities groups in early March to worship, talk, pray and share a meal together, no one could imagine that this would be one of the last large gatherings of its kind. However, the coronavirus pandemic and the physical distancing it is creating, will not stop Next Generation Ministries stretch their connection to youth as teams are already working to schedule online IGNITE Communities in early May.

“IGNITE Communities has been a great experience for so many, and now we get to continue that energy, healthy conversation and connection to God in a different way,” said Next Gen’s Executive Director Eric Drew. “We didn’t want our youth to lose that connection, especially now when they need support more than ever before.”

In early March, the five groups met at Trinity UMC In Hackettstown, Calvary Korean UMC In East Brunswick, First UMC of Toms River, Haddonfield UMC and the new location of Asbury UMC in Atlantic City. They shared stories in small groups, listened to sermons and engaged in activities specifically designed for each group.

Now those teens along with many others who are eager to connect will be able to re-ignite in early May when the Next Gen team hosts one IGNITE Communities via Facebook Live so that the cohesiveness of stories that makes the IGNITE program so special can continue. It’s the stories woven together that the teens bring with them, sometimes sharing with others, that give all that happens meaning and makes it all matter.



IGNITE Communities gives youth the opportunity to connect to God while enjoying other activities like music.

Credit: Corbin Payne

This is what IGNITE Communities online will bring.

These regular youth worship nights that stemmed from the original IGNITE conference bring churches and youth groups together for fun and spiritual growth.

For details and to access valuable coronavirus resources, visit gnjnextgen.org/ignite-communities/.



NEXT GENERATION
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

To help youth cope with the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, Next Gen is holding open Zoom meetings with youth and young adult leaders in the conference. The meetings are designed to be a forum for our youth to think creatively and discuss the challenges of life today in the church. Meetings will be held through May 1:

- **Monday evenings at 8 p.m. | Join: <https://zoom.us/j/181802918>**
- **Thursdays at 12:30 p.m. | Join: <https://zoom.us/j/110478190>**

For additional youth resources, including suggested activities, self-care tips, book and video recommendations and more, visit:

www.gnjnextgen.org/covid-19-ministry-resources



CARES Act Funding to Keep Churches Operating During Covid-19

By Rick Reinhard, Executive Director
A Future With Hope
reinhard@gnjumc.org

United Methodists of Greater New Jersey and its vital mission partner, A Future With Hope, are assisting churches to apply for CARES Act programs designed to keep small businesses, including churches, operating during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bishop John Schol issued a letter on April 2 outlining the CARES Act Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), designed to keep as many employees as possible on the payroll of all small businesses — from small manufacturers to

restaurants to the service industry. For what is believed to be the first time, the federal government added not-for-profit corporations, including churches and related organizations, to the list of eligible participants.

The Bishop's letter was followed by two conference calls Friday. The calls drew more than 500 representatives of local churches eager for more detailed information. GNJ set up the special email address caresact@gnjumc.org. By April 6, staff members had fielded about 100 questions.

PPP applications are to be made to SBA-approved banks, not to SBA itself. GNJ advises churches to file applica-

tions with the banks with which they have existing account relationships. Bishop Schol and John Cardillo, GNJ's treasurer and director of administrative services, are endeavoring to find banks that will consider applications from non-customers.

Congress has authorized and appropriated \$350 billion for PPP, allowing small businesses to continue to pay employees. PPP is just one part of the \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed by Congress. "Urgency is required because if all congregations in the U.S. filed for funding, the total request would be more than \$4 trillion," noted Bishop Schol.

PPP will pay for two and a half months of payroll, with certain limitations and exceptions. Although the program is structured as a loan program, if a church continues to employ a full roster of employees for the eight weeks following the award, the loan is converted to a grant.

Information and the PPP application and information is available on the GNJ website: www.gnjumc.org/covid19. Banks may require more information than is contained in the loan application. Churches are urged to contact their local banks for details.

LAY MINISTRY RECOGNITION AWARDS

Lay Ministry Recognition Awards honor creativity and innovation in transforming lives and making disciples of Jesus Christ. We celebrate the following ministries.

CAPE ATLANTIC DISTRICT

Wendy Dorfman | Leadership Ministry-Grace, Union UMC

CAPITAL DISTRICT

Loretta Battis and Patricia Love | Shepherding Ministry, Good Shepherd UMC Willingboro

William Koetas and Carol Shipp | Church Vitality Ministry, Crosswicks UMC

Daniel Boone | Leadership Ministry, Pennington UMC

Daniel C. Brown and Mary Lee Bruno | Leadership Ministry, Ellisdale UMC

Jack Howard | Audio Visual Ministry, St. Paul UMC Willingboro

Joy Haines | Leadership Ministry, Magnolia Road UMC

Lorraine Donahue | Leadership Ministry, Hopewell UMC

Mark Van Bruggen | Leadership Ministry, Emley's Hill UMC

DELAWARE BAY DISTRICT

JoAnne Lawrence | Youth Ministry, Quinton UMC

GATEWAY NORTH DISTRICT

Janet Crowe & IGNITE UMW | Secret Pals Ministry, Community UMC of Kenilworth

Sharon Kessler and Mission Committee | Outreach Ministry-Community, UMC Roselle Park

GATEWAY SOUTH DISTRICT

Donald Hart Sr. | Servant Leadership Ministry, Emmanuel UMC Oaklyn

Amirah Kitchen | Youth Ministry, Ferry Avenue UMC

Geri Smith | Revitalizing Ministry, Mt Zion Wesley UMC in Wenonah

NORTHERN SHORE DISTRICT

Mary Jacobus | Outreach Ministry, Whiting UMC

PALISADES DISTRICT

Linda Bochese | Food and Pet Pantry Ministry, Cedar Cliff UMC

John Bruton | Blood Drive Troubadour Ministry, Calvary UMC Dumont

Carol Freeswick | Soup Ministry, Grace UMC Wyckoff

Danny Jimenez | Dinner Church Ministry, First UMC of Passaic

Joyce McKnight | Young-Outreach Ministry, Christ Church Paterson

Janis Torres | Knit One Prayer Too Ministry, Tenafly UMC

Melinda Iannuzzi and Millie Valentino | Walk-in Dinner Ministry, UMC at Demarest

Nancy and Dale Hutchinson | Walk-in Dinner Ministry, Calvary UMC Dumont

RARITAN VALLEY DISTRICT

Alice Bennett | Handbell Choir Ministry, Bound Brook UMC

Michelle Biggs | Leadership Ministry, Wesley UMC South Plainfield

Lou Diemer | Tutoring Ministry, UMC at New Brunswick

Elsa Mortensen | Fellowship and Community Outreach Ministry, Christ UMC Piscataway

SKYLANDS DISTRICT

Prayer Grove Team | Prayer Grove Ministry, Dingmans Ferry UMC

London Broil Dinner Team | London Broil Dinner Outreach Ministry, Dingsman Ferry UMC

“URGENCY IS REQUIRED BECAUSE IF ALL CONGREGATIONS IN THE U.S. FILED FOR FUNDING, THE TOTAL REQUEST WOULD BE MORE THAN \$4 TRILLION.”

—Bishop John Schol

“The District Superintendent and a charge conference must approve your application for this funding,” Bishop Schol said. “Because of the urgent nature of these funds, we suggest you file first, and we will work with you to set a charge conference if you are approved.”

PPP is but one program available to GNJ churches. The GNJ website also has information about the SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) Emergency Advance Program. As more information about other programs become available, A Future With Hope will keep church leaders updated.

“EIDL program allows a church to file an application for \$10,000 in direct funding,” said Rick Reinhard, AFWH executive director. Only over the weekend did Small Business Administration rule that churches would be able to file for EIDL funding. “So as we did with PPP funding, GNJ will forward more detailed information to churches as soon as it is available.”

MISSION CORNER

Our call to love our neighbor is even stronger today. While we are practicing social distancing, there are still ways we can engage in mission and share God's love. Here are two:

Give Blood

There is an urgent need for blood donations during this crisis. The American Red Cross is looking for healthy donors to sign up to give blood at one of their locations in your area. Search donation requirements, locations by zip code, and schedule an appointment via the American Red Cross website at www.redcrossblood.org.

Sew Masks for Healthcare Workers

United Methodist Communities is seeking masks for their healthcare workers. Visit the GNJ website for instructions and further instructions for how you can support.

Other healthcare organizations across GNJ have put out a call for homemade face masks as well, while others are not accepting them. Before donating face masks, contact the organization/facility you wish to which you'd like to donate to learn if they are accepting them and what their requirements are. Some facilities have specific requirements as to what materials to use and how to make the face mask. Visit the GNJ website for additional information.

For more information and resources, visit GNJ's COVID-19 Mission Page at www.gnjumc.org/covid19/covid-19-resources/mission/.

Food Pantries

The need for food donations is greater now than ever before, but all food pantries need to follow the "grab & go" and curbside pick-up guidelines as outlined on



Different patterns of tight weave cotton fabrics add a bit of personality to a homemade mask.



The congregation of Branchville UMC was busy in March making masks for Sparta Cancer Center, Chilton Hospital, Newton Hospital and Bristol Glen.

GNJ's website under "Mission." If you are unable to abide by these best practices due to the size of your food pantry or other reasons, consider merging with a larger food pantry or donating your food to a local food bank. 🇺🇸

VOAD: Celebrating 50 Years of Helping Others From Camille to Coronavirus

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

When Hurricane Camille struck the U.S. Gulf Coast with a vengeance in August 1969, numerous relief agencies rushed to the rescue of her survivors. The Category 5 storm, packing storm surges of 24 feet and winds in excess of 160 miles per hour, fractured communities and 300 deaths were left in her wake. While volunteers did their best to relieve those suffering in Mississippi and northward, Camille served as a wake-up call for others who realized that the silo approach to disaster relief was not working.

Up until that time, numerous governmental, private sector and nonprofit organizations served disaster survivors independently of one another. As a result, help came to the survivors haphazardly and sometimes not at all.

The same passion seen in 1969 from each agency still exists, but the overlapping of services and the inefficiencies they caused are no longer. Now in 2020, the disaster is the coronavirus, and VOAD is one strong force made up of nonprofit organizations, community-based groups, government agencies and for-profit companies working together using



For 50 years the organizations of VOAD have empowered volunteers to help others.

is sitting tight but poised to help as they closely monitor the pulse of this raging health crisis and share resources with others to keep residents of New Jersey safe.

Concurrently, A Future With Hope is also sitting at the table, collaborating and advising on the best ways for churches to engage in relief and recovery as they tap into all they gleaned while leading the disaster response in New Jersey in 2012 following the onslaught of Superstorm Sandy.

Members of the team, alongside Tom O'Hearn, GNJ's Disaster Response Coordinator, serve as representatives on the state, regional and national groups who are meeting weekly to provide guidance for how to engage volunteers and communicate needs.

The cohesive team is tapping into all resources they have, including a pile of leftover masks and other equipment from the Sandy recovery. Max Fisher, the Disaster Response Coordinator for the Capital District, uncovered some in tool trailers and donated them to a local fire department and rescue squad.

This prompted O'Hearn to check out their trailers, in which he found 300 new 3M safety masks. On March 25 he donated them to the emergency room at Ocean Medical Center in Toms River.

"When I entered, there were a dozen ER nurses and doctors waiting to greet me with smiles on their faces who couldn't thank me enough. Our donation may not seem like much to us, but to them it was like getting a million dollars because it could save their lives," said O'Hearn who among other missions spent several years working in Haiti following the 2010 earthquake.

O'Hearn added, "Many nurses and doctors are risking their lives without the

proper protective equipment to help patients who are carrying a deadly virus and today, a few were extremely thankful, that our GNJAC made their lives a little bit safer."

These waves of helping others reverberate from the coalition of groups as they reach out to the neediest the best they can.

But VOAD and the coalition of organizations weren't always this organized.

Camille clearly taught relief and recovery groups that in order to be effective, organizations had to work together. In 1970 seven national disaster response organizations convened for the first time to find a way to better coordinate responses and more effectively serve disaster survivors and their communities. The National VOAD was born, and the new approach to disasters — preparation, response and recovery — was created.

The state VOAD in New Jersey was founded in the late-1990s and put to the test in 1999 when floods ravaged Somerset County. Following a series of successful relief and recovery efforts throughout the state including the impact of 9/11, in April 2015, NJVOAD launched HELPNJNOW.ORG, an interactive, web-based resource providing education, direction, information and tools for people to help themselves and others better prepare for and respond to disaster. This site was developed in partnership with the New Jersey Governor's Office of Volunteerism and the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management to meet several needs identified post-Sandy — specifically the post-disaster coordination of spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers and donated goods.

50 Years Later

Today, National VOAD is a coalition of 56 of the nation's most reputable national organizations (faith-based, community-based and other non-profit organizations) and 56 State/Territory VOADs, which represent local/regional VOADs and hundreds of other member organizations throughout the country. 🇺🇸



**National
Voluntary Organizations
Active in Disaster**

the 4 Cs: Cooperation, Communication, Coordination and Collaboration.

The approach is very different. While general volunteers are not being widely recruited because of the immediate threat this virus brings, there are opportunities to connect with another organization for training and future volunteer opportunities.

Under the umbrella of VOAD, the statewide partnership known as NJVOAD

"We're all working together so we can support each other and identify the gaps together and avoid a duplication of efforts," said Hope Center Developer Tara Maffei. "Addressing disaster is a local one and you have to find a way to create partnerships and realize that no two disasters are the same. Smaller pantries might want to reach out to larger ones to see if they can support them instead in an effort to reach more people more efficiently."

Cultivating Faith through Open Doors...and Now Open Lines

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

PRINCETON, NJ

Every Tuesday evening in a room located at Princeton United Methodist Church a small group of people, mostly college students from the nearby Princeton University meet for a healthy dose of community and fellowship. Some attend out of curiosity; some come to be heard by others including God; while others come for both. They all come as farmers — farmers who not only need to cultivate their academic and social lives but also their spiritual ones, no matter what shape they take.

The Wesley Foundation at Princeton, led by Chaplain Erik “Skitch” Matson, welcomes those who are seeking what Jesus called the abundant life. The United Methodist group values questions, not conformity and welcomes all genders, sexual orientations, races, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, denominations and relationships with faith from the lifelong Christian to the questioning critic.

“What I really love about this group is the sense of Christian community and how it matched my own values,” said Paige Allen, who is a junior studying English at Princeton and a student intern for the group. “I’m a queer person of faith. We value questions, not authority.”

Although the health crisis has shifted how they connect, Matson is keeping the conversation going through Zoom and a regular string of phone calls between members. He also said that due to the success of the first two Zoom calls, they planned to move forward with having a panel discussion as part of their series on Christian Community and Conflict on April 21. Matson said he continues to



Although the health crisis has shifted how they connect, Chaplain Erik “Skitch” Matson is keeping the conversation going through Zoom and a regular string of phone calls between members. Credit: Paige Allen

have regular online meetings with Allen, his intern, to plan the group’s strategy moving forward.

“We still have to have that sense of community,” he said, adding that some students needed to stay on campus due to financial burdens, homelessness or mental health concerns. “We’re scrambling to meet in some way with these students. This crisis is just making us rethink things.”

Allen, who is contemplating studying for a master’s degree in England once she graduates, added that there are a lot of different denominations represented in the group, which creates rich conversation when they take a deep dive into one book of the Bible each week. They also pray, share personal stories, discuss current events and grapple with complex

issues like human sexuality, farming/agricultural metaphors in the Bible and the *Book of Job*.

Matson, who is no stranger to the campus as a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, is responsible for spending most of his time at Princeton UMC where he is discipleship pastor. In addition to leading the Tuesday evening session, Matson encourages members to worship on Sundays at either Princeton UMC or Kingston UMC.

Cultivating Hope in the Face of Adversity

Both churches began in mid-March offering services online via Facebook Live and collecting donations via their websites. For more information for Princeton UMC, visit princetonumc.org/

[this-weeks-worship](http://this-weeks-worship.com/princetonumc) and www.facebook.com/princetonumc. For Kingston, visit kingstonmethodist.org and youtube.com/kingstonumc.

This spring the Wesley Foundation launched “Community Groups,” a smaller, more intimate group who meet weekly over a meal, asking questions like how is your soul?

“We’re trying to create a space for sharing and being vulnerable and to care for each other,” said Allen who added that this group will resume in person when the health crisis improves.

“We’ve become known as a place where everyone is welcome,” Allen added. “It’s a place where people can share their anxieties and struggles and then forge deeper relationships.”

Allen is clearly not the only one who was relishing every Tuesday night. Kara Steele ’21 said, “As a freshman I was overwhelmed by the number of Christian groups on campus and struggled to find a group that I vibed with. I am thankful for a teammate who brought me along one Sunday where I met Skitch and got involved with the Wesley Foundation Bible study. This Bible study has provided me with an open and loving community, and I have been grateful for the opportunity to discuss big questions, grapple with difficult topics, as well as grow in my faith with this group.”

In addition to their weekly meetings and Sunday service, they also host fun activities like study breaks, game nights, movie nights and trips to get ice cream and also get involved in service projects on campus like Cornerstone Community Kitchen (www.princetoncornerstone.org) and The Farminary (www.ptsem.edu/discover/farminary/overview).

For more information, visit www.cultivateprinceton.com.

Resilience of Bound Brook Broadens in the Face of Adversity

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” —PSALM 119:105

BOUND BROOK, NJ

When a blaze devastated a large swath of homes in Bound Brook this past January, leaving about 50 families homeless, flashes of a natural disaster 20 years ago tugged at the memories of some residents as they sifted through the rubble and reached out for anyone who would listen to their calls for help.

One person who was listening was the UMC of Bound Brook’s Pastor McWilliam Colon. “When the town of Bound Brook reached out to us, asking if we’d be willing to distribute the funds they were raising, the answer was obvious. So, we started doing intake forms and distributing funds to speed up the process so that these families could recover.”

“The only criteria is that they’re survivors,” said Colon, who praised his community for rallying around those who needed help. “We want to be partners with our community.”

Situated in Somerset County in the foothills of the Watchung Mountains, where tributaries from Green Brook and Middle Brook run into the Raritan River, the town with a population of about 10,000 had been reaping the benefits of

extensive development in recent years following a trio of massive floodings, including the 12 feet of water left in the wake of Hurricane Floyd in 1999. Back then, about a third of its residents were sent to emergency shelters.

Thankfully in January, no residents were injured, but now about three months later many of the families impacted are still living in shelters, hotels and other temporary housing.

Colon said he and his congregation are gradually trying to change that by streamlining the process and getting checks in the hands of those impacted sometimes as quickly as 24 hours or even less. He noted that the benefactors include an undocumented family, a woman who is now worshipping online with the UMC of Bound Brook and three more families who are now living in apartments.

In addition to facilitating the distribution of funds, UMC of Bound Brook has also allowed those impacted to take advantage of what is in its Wesley Thrift Store at no charge, including clothing, books and household items.

In addition to the financial help, the UMC of Bound Brook also offers free math tutoring for middle schoolers as well as a free music program. Self-defense classes are also available at a nominal fee.

“My people built these relationships with the community — something I am so proud of,” said Colon. “Our church



The UMC of Bound Brook helps victims of a community fire last January while transitioning into online worship and ministry.

needs to reflect the community we live in.” The UMC of Bound Brook was the first church to offer a Latino service in the town about 15 years ago, and its leadership is about half Latino and half white.

In the midst of current Covid-19 health crisis, the church continues to offer two services — one in English at 9:30 a.m. and one for Spanish-speaking members at 12:30 p.m. Prior to the onset of the coronavirus scare, the congregation had been working on ramping up their technology and building their multi-media structure by accepting the donation of a professional camera, investing in software and devising an app that provides a daily devotional.

“We really want to reach the generation that’s not necessarily using tithing,” Colon said. He added that they also now have a WhatsApp account for the Latino population and starting on March 27 they introduced a Bible study online in Spanish via Zoom so that it could be accessed via online or by phone.

Colon and his congregation have also developed online worship services on both Facebook Live and YouTube. For more information regarding online messaging, visit www.facebook.com/UMCBoundBrook. For more background information including all their ministries, visit www.boundbrookumc.com/home.html.

CONFERENCE HAPPENINGS

GNJ Annual Conference Postponed

The Annual Conference Session, originally scheduled for May 31-June 2 at the Wildwoods Convention Center has been postponed. The planning team is considering rescheduling for early October.

More information forthcoming once dates and plans are set.

300 Homeless Fed Lunch Feb. 28 in Newark

The Bread and Love ministry at St. Paul's Centenary has been active for almost three years and is witnessing God moving through the community.



St. Paul Centenary has also added mission projects to the Bread and Love ministry project.

"Feeding the soul, helping the community, nourishing the spirit" is the mission statement of the ministry, Bread and Love.

Started initially as a monthly meal program, Bread and Love added a community food kitchen program called FACTS and several outreach mission projects under the leadership of Agnes Chessman-Levy and other laity of the church.

Through a partnership with Panera Bread, the program opened a weekly Saturday light breakfast for the community. Some people who have received this generosity have joined the

church for worship and are now part of the volunteer team. During the past two years, Love and Bread are reaching beyond their community to Honduras and Dominican Republic, sending plastic drums filled with clothes, backpacks, and Christian literature.

Needle and Thread Can Save a Life

The shortage of supplies like masks has been devastating, and for United Methodist Communities, an organization who has helped seniors live an abundant life for over a century, the absence compelled them to ask for help from all those who could sew. As the threat of the coronavirus loomed, healthcare workers called out for help in an effort to keep their senior residents safe.

"Our seniors and the workers that care for them need your help," they said in a press release. "A significant movement, perhaps even a revolution of epic noble intentions is underway in individual homes, in maker-spaces and sewing groups to come together and solve a problem to save lives at risk from the Coronavirus."



Sewers were asked to create masks using simple instructions given in the following video or to use their own pattern: www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FB-BOyTiU.

More information can be found by contacting the United Methodist Communities Foundation at ssharp@umcommunities.org or call/text 856-298-6350. Donations to the effort to support their residents and associates are also being collected at foundation. umcommunities.org/donate/.

Lay Ministry Will Still Be Recognized

Although the Board of Laity had to cancel its Lay Ministry Recognition event on March 28, members of the board still plan to recognize this formidable group of people once the threat of the coronavirus subsides.

"When we are on the other side of this, GNJ will be in contact with those laity and their pastor," the board said in a statement. "GNJ will mail award certificates, a ministry banner and liturgy to use in the local church setting."

The statement added, "We will be encouraging pastors and team leaders to set aside a time in your local congregation to celebrate the exceptional work of your Lay Ministry Recognition awardees. The work and ministry of these church leaders and teams are transforming lives and making disciples of Jesus Christ."

Teddy Bear Thanks and Hugs

"A little consideration, a little thought for others, makes all the difference."

—A.A. MILNE IN WINNIE THE POOH

On February 23 the sanctuary of Fellowship UMC in Haddon Heights became the 'winter den' for 244 adorable, cuddly teddy bears who came to celebrate Teddy Bear Sunday.



Fellowship UMC of Haddon Heights' Teddy Bear Sunday Committee.

"Ambassador Bear", K.I.C.S. (Kids In Crisis Situations) had been visiting for a month prior to help prepare for this special day. This project was part of the work of the First UMC of Mt. Ephraim for 22 years prior to their merger with First UMC of Haddon Heights in January 2019 to become Fellowship UMC.

"We hope to continue this tradition as a new church family for many years to come," said Barbra Barrar of Fellowship UMC.

The bears will be gifted to children coming from all over the area for treatments and therapies to the Osborn Family Clinic of Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Camden.

Thanks to their social work department, children in stressful situations will be able to select their very own bear to comfort and keep them company during times when they might be frightened or just need something to hold tight to.

Each bear comes with a card tied to its arm letting each child know that they are being thought of and prayed for.

"So many bears were donated this year that we will also be able to give bears to the Haddon Heights Police Department for their officers to give to children in difficult situations that they encounter on the job," Barrar said.

After the bears were blessed and gathered, stories of those who have been given bears in past years were shared, along with what that gift meant to their lives and faith. Then all in attendance celebrated the day by sharing in the covered dish "Teddy Bears' Picnic" luncheon.

"Our church family is tremendously grateful to all who donated bears and came to share the day with us, particularly members of our local communities and families of the church's preschool, New Beginnings Learning Center! It is amazing how many lives can be touched when we come together in God's Love for others," Barrar said.

OBITUARIES

Pastor Raul Terrero, spouse of Rev. Delta Terrero, died March 10. Memorial donations (In lieu of flowers) may be sent to MD Anderson Cancer Center in memory of Raul Terrero. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Rev. Delta Terrero at 2912 Powell Ave, Pennsauken, NJ 08110.

Rev. Mark Harris Earl, retired elder, died March 17. Memorial donations (In lieu of flowers) may be sent to UMCOR in memory of Rev. Mark Harris Earl. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Catherine Earl (spouse) at 3475 Hickory Lake Dr, Gainesville, GA 30506-4143.

Rev. John Q. Taylor, retired elder, died March 4. Memorial Donations (In lieu of flowers) may be sent to Zion UMC in his memory. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Janet Taylor (spouse) at 11 Abbey Lane, Newmanstown, PA 17073.



Health, Safety and Transparency

The health and well-being of United Methodist Communities' residents, associates, and volunteers is paramount. In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19), we are:

- Limiting entry into and out of our communities
- Using hand sanitizer and frequently washing hands
- Increasing cleaning and disinfecting
- Requiring social distancing
- Recording associates' and residents' temperatures
- Isolating and caring for residents who may become infected
- Connecting residents with others via increased use of technology to maintain important social connections (including Zoom, Skype, and Facetime)
- Securing personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Following CDC recommendations
- Monitoring all HomeWorks (homecare division) clients, caregivers, and nurses

For the most recent news, click the Our COVID-19 Response button on the UMC web home page or email questions to COVID19@UMCommunities.org.

 **United Methodist Communities**
Abundant Life for Seniors

UMC Home Office
3311 State Route 33
Neptune, NJ 07753
umcommunities.org

Miracles Everywhere

*“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least, you did for me.”
- Matthew 25:40*

The Miracles Everywhere Campaign has been expanded to include the Covid-19 Relief Fund.

United Methodists of Greater New Jersey continue to be at the forefront of long term recovery. We will bring hope, healing and wholeness to the people in our communities.

Funds raised will provide immediate emergency support to individuals, families, small businesses and missions adversely affected financially, medically or spiritually including:

- Emergency food, medical, utility and housing assistance for individuals and families.
- Congregational ministries initiated to address the virus' effects in their community
- Programs and ministries organized by mission partners, Hope Centers or other non-profits to assist their communities during this crisis.

Miracles Are Possible!

To give to the COVID-19 Relief Fund, text Miracles Everywhere to 77977, send a check made out to UMC of GNJ to the address below, or visit:

www.gnjumc.org/MiraclesEverywhere

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
ABOUT THE MIRACLES
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