

THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP

A Hard Fought Hope



Bishop John Schol

We know that affliction produces perseverance, and perseverance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope will not disappoint us.

—ROMANS 5:3

A Healing and a Thriving GNJ During COVID-19

We have hope! Hope in Jesus Christ; hope in the disciples God has gifted GNJ with; hope in the clergy and congregational leaders who have stepped forward and said, *here I am, use me during COVID-19.*

COVID-19 is an affliction, an affliction that requires perseverance. Perseverance fuels innovation, which produces resiliency and progress. Progress produces hope and together, with that hope, we will spread the Good News of Jesus Christ while working together to flatten the impact of COVID-19 and ensure zero infections from United Methodist activities.

Look at what hope in God has done in six short weeks.

- Moved more than 500 congregations to worship online.
- Enabled every congregation to give their offering online through the GNJ website. Presently 40% of our churches are using our online service.
- Increased GNJ worship attendance by 15%.
- Provided to our congregations a two-month holiday for shared ministry apportionments.
- Helped more than 300 congregations apply for the CARES Act Pay Roll Protection Program that has already raised more than \$6 million in funding for GNJ congregations.
- Moved all GNJ staff to work remotely except three essential employees.
- Expanded the Miracles Everywhere Campaign to include COVID-19 to assist congregations and their ministries and to provide food and other emergency services for people in our communities. On May 5 I shared with you a \$5 million expansion plan of the Miracles Everywhere campaign and the path to feed people and sustain mission and ministry because when people hurt, United Methodists help.

Our perseverance, our innovation, our resiliency produces a hope, a hard-fought hope. God is counting on us to be difference makers in our communities. God has a future with hope through you and me!

This hope takes flight on the wings of leadership. Already during the early weeks of COVID-19, we witnessed one of the greatest moments of clergy and congregational leadership in the history of United Methodism. We witnessed pastors fighting through insurmountable challenges, persevering to embrace technology, moving people

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Miracles and Mission Amidst Suffering

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

Much like no coronavirus or disaster is the same, so can be said about how churches respond in times of crisis. We've entered an unprecedented time, so the need to be courageous in the face of adversity can come in many shapes and sizes. Like a puzzle, GNJ churches are connecting through mission, the passion to help others and the commitment to follow the teachings of Jesus. Each puzzle piece is important in creating a cohesive group of 530 churches working together as one—from "Gospel Slam Fridays," watch parties and virtual youth groups to a sandwich ministry and more. In fact, more than 500 GNJ churches are now worshipping online!

The congregation of a tiny church in Sussex County appropriately called Tranquility UMC has tapped into whatever resources they have to feed the grow-



Many congregations have decorated their altars to provide a vital backdrop for online worship, like this one at Spring Valley UMC.

ing number of hungry members of their small community.

Unable to run its traditional food pantry, the congregation led by church member Barbara Gardiner, placed a used green file cabinet on its property filled with non-perishables like bottled juices and canned tuna and soup.

"We know that many people in our area have lost their jobs due to the coro-

navirus pandemic or are just having a difficult time getting enough food on the table," said Gardiner.

Members of Park Avenue St. John's UMC in East Orange who were unable to come to church for different reasons are now able to join a service. "People from many states and a few people from as far away as Guyana in South America have joined us for service," said Senior Pastor Lark McCalman who added that he also received a request from someone in Maryland to be a new member. Members from other churches, other denominations and other states join St.

John's service regularly for prayer service and Bible study.

"God is helping us to engage in something new, and to move beyond our comfort zones. God opened new possibilities and new avenues for us to seek those that are lost," said McCalman.

In Wesmont UMC in Camden County, disciples are being born and reborn. Rev.

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On the Front Line of Hope

"When we become aware that we do not have to escape our pains, but that we can mobilize them into a common search for life, those very pains are transformed from expressions of despair into signs of hope."

—HENRI NOUWEN

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

The once beautiful open-air courtyard in the entrance of a New Jersey hospital has been replaced by locked doors, warning signs and a police officer. Reflecting and radiating the hope and courage that lies within, however, are sporadic sounds of The Beatles song, "Here Comes the Sun" played over the PA system to signal that a COVID-19 patient has recovered as well as sporadic "clap-outs" and signs everywhere showing the previous day's recovery numbers. Albeit small gestures, the impact is powerful.

As George Harrison wrote in 1969, sometimes all it takes is a ray of sunshine to brighten a day and offer some hope. Much like the Beatle touted the power of the sun, these glimmers of light are sometimes what sustain us in difficult situations.

Throughout the GNJ conference, there are people like Don Gebhard, Diane Dyson and Stephen Faller, who are working every day to share that light with others in hopes of minimizing suffering and sustaining a more abundant life.

They are the dedicated people who are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 health crisis—chaplains, doctors, nurses, health aides, counselors and other support staff who courageously help others, often at the expense of their own fears, frustrations and hurting.



Stephen Faller

"The nurses, doctors, cleaning people and rest of the staff are brave and steadfast and know what they signed up for. However, they are terrified of bringing it back to the families and loved ones they go home to at the end of their shifts," said one recent patient.

Don Gebhard, a GNJ deacon takes strict precautions every night he returns home from his full-time role as a chaplain that he started in January at Hackettstown Medical Center. He called this crisis "a marathon, not a sprint," so whatever measure he needs to take is what he is prepared to do.

"It's so difficult not being able to hug someone whose mask is soaked with tears, often not allowed into the patient's room," said Gebhard. "This suffering has no boundaries with so many layers. It's raw humanity, big time grief—the love with no place to go."

He added that the only way to comfort people is with his words, sometimes only over the phone, so every day he struggles to find the words that bring the most solace.

Gebhard, who serves at Trinity UMC Hackettstown and had been a university chaplain for 15 years before taking on this new role, comforts patients as well as family members and staff who represent many different



Don Gebhard

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Bishop's Message

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to meaningful online experiences to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and engage people in worship and ministry.

We saw congregational leadership that stepped up to learn new technologies and systems to help spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We witnessed disciples stepping up to try new ways of worshiping and serving.

With God, all things are possible for those who are willing, in the midst of affliction, to persevere, innovate and practice resiliency so that hope comes to the afflicted, the anxious, the lonely, the unemployed and the grieving.

Friends, we grieve. We lost two of our clergy to COVID-19 and more than 100 members so far. We remember them. They will live with us in our hearts forever. They fought the good fight and today their souls have taken flight into the everlasting where there is no more pain, no more suffering, and no more COVID-19. Let us continue to pray for their families, colleagues and friends.

As we remember those who have died, we recognize that more than 600 of our members were diagnosed with COVID-19 and so we remember those who live. They are here because of the heroes who go to work every day to do their job. These heroes are doctors and family members, nurses and first responders, janitors and scientists, police officers and maintenance people. Make no mistake about it, they are the incarnational grace of God and the living hope of God.

In the midst of our hope as a people, there are great challenges ahead of us as a church. How do we facilitate pastoral transitions? How do we reopen our buildings? Deal with financial losses? How do we serve the people in our communities who are in great need right now?

After consultation with retiring pastors and pastors scheduled to change appointments, the cabinet made the decision that all appointment changes will occur as scheduled so that churches will receive their new pastors on July 1, 2020. We recognize that most likely we will be social distancing or possibly still live under stay at home orders but retiring clergy have already made plans and families with young children want to enroll them in their new schools. We recognize that farewell services may be scheduled following July 1 and that clergy may return for such a service.

We all long for the day when we will be able to worship and do ministry in our buildings. In our region, we must have a realistic hope that takes into account the significant challenges of stamping out COVID-19. Scientists and medical professionals are saying that the ultimate cure is a vaccine that may still be a year or more away. Until then, we can control the virus by staying at home and practicing social distancing.

We anticipate that even before a vaccine is developed, we will begin to worship in our buildings. When the death rate and new infections decreases substantially for two or more weeks and the governor lifts the stay at home orders, we will begin to reintroduce worshipping communities in our buildings. There will be limited numbers of people that can gather together initially, but as new cases of the virus decreases, we will also be able to increase the number of people who may worship in our buildings at the same time.

We are working with other United Methodists conferences, other denominations, health care officials and governmental leaders to establish the procedures we will use. We will release these once we are satisfied that we have looked at all issues and developed procedures that will ensure there will be no spread of the virus by United Methodist activity.

Some are saying COVID-19 is not as bad in our community as in other communities or that we believe God will protect us. Such thinking is not consistent with United Methodist beliefs and values. We believe the scripture when Jesus shared, we should not assume that God protects some people and not others (Matthew 5:45) and as a connectional body we believe we discern things like this together and not individually. As United Methodists, we also act as one. When one hurts, we all hurt, when one is sick, we are all sick, when one suffers, we suffer with them as a sign that we are one in Christ and connected, bound together to help all rise together.

In the area of finances, we have seen many of our congregations rebound from the decline in giving experienced in the first two weeks of COVID-19 stay at home orders. Acclimating to new forms of worship, ministry and giving took some time, but many of our churches are not experiencing the significant financial losses they experienced after the first two weeks. In our most recent survey, 12% of our congregations are reporting their income is up from the same time last year, 36% report their income is the same and 52% are reporting income is down. Initially, 72% of churches reported their income was down. Fifteen percent, 78 of our congregations are concerned that they will not be able to make payroll, pay basic bills including shared ministry, health insurance and pension for clergy. These churches include our largest and medium size congregations.

We also know that the unemployment rate has now reached 15% and some predict it will rise to 20% or more. At the height of the Great Depression in the 1930's, the unemployment rate was 25%.

As of May 5 46 of our full-time clergy appointments were right at the minimum salary required for a full-time clergy appointment and 147 clergy appointments were within \$10,000 of minimum salary. This means that if these congregations are unable to pay minimum salary, clergy will lose their health insurance. This is the last thing we want to happen during a pandemic.

Further, both GNJ and a number of our congregations' income decreased because of a significant drop in the stock market which caused the congregations' investments to decline.

Based on rising unemployment, the number of congregations struggling at this moment about their finances, the loss of income from investments and the number of vulnerable congregations, GNJ leadership has developed a \$5 million plan to sustain the mission and serve the people in our communities.

This plan will be a part of our Miracles Everywhere COVID-19 Relief Fund and includes the following.

- \$500,000 to be made available for food security. There are people in our communities who need food. We are working with state officials, community organizations, Hope Centers and our congregations to target where we can bring the most help and relief, not duplicating services but ensuring the most vulnerable have food. We are seeking to increase this by raising another raise \$1 million to further advance our food distribution through our Hope Centers and congregations. You can make a gift right now. It's simple. Text the words Miracles Everywhere to **77977** or go to **gnjumc.org** and make your contribution. No gift is too small or too large to help feed someone during this crisis.
 - We have offered a two-month shared ministry apportionment holiday for April and May for ALL of our congregations who need relief from shared ministry giving at this time. Based on what we understand at this moment, we will be extending the holiday for another two months, June and July as needed by congregations. These holidays will impact the GNJ budget by \$2.8 million. You may be asking, *what is a shared ministry holiday?* It means your congregation, as needed does not have to give your shared ministries for up to four months. Yes, forgiven. Not a loan but a holiday from giving. Even with this holiday, more than 100 of our congregations paid their April shared ministries. Thank you. You are hope for us all.
 - \$1.5 million has been set aside to provide grants to congregations in three areas:
 - Grants to assist our low income racial ethnic, rural and urban congregations to pay necessary bills.
 - Grants to sustain full time appointments. We will work with our vital missional congregations to ensure that they continue full time and that our full-time clergy maintain health insurance during this pandemic.
 - Grants to assist congregations that applied for the CARES Act Payroll Protection Program (PPP) funding but did not receive it. The majority of congregations that have reported receiving PPP funding are disproportionately larger and suburban congregations. I have a big ask for some of our congregations. Those who have received PPP funding, I invite you to consider, not from your PPP funding but maybe from other funds that might be freed up, a tithe equal to 10% of your PPP funding to this COVID-19 fund to help other congregations. It will be a testimony and witness to your generosity and connection as United Methodists.
- This \$5 million plan helps sustain strong, healthy vital congregations that makes for a strong GNJ, and a strong GNJ helps to make a strong United Methodist Church.

Where will the funds come from for such a bold outward plan.

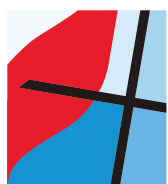
- We are borrowing \$1.4 million from our Harvest Mission Fund.
- We are using the sale of a church property.
- We have reduced our budget saving money or underspending because of COVID-19 to support our congregations and to serve our communities.
- We anticipate giving proportionately what we receive in shared ministry to the General Church apportionments.
- Our Wespeth Board of Pensions has reduced pension payments for three months. This reduction will not affect clergy and lay pensions.
- We will not fill four staff positions that are currently open, and we will furlough ALL staff. I have already committed a month of my salary; executive staff will furlough for three-quarters of a month and the rest of staff will furlough for one-half a month. This equates to laying off 20% of our GNJ staff for six months. I am proud of our staff. They all recognize that sacrifices must be made for the good of the mission and they would rather see all staff be affected rather than just a portion of the staff being laid off. Our staff gives me hope!

While we do not anticipate the stay-at-home order to be lifted in New Jersey in May, in the next few weeks we will share with you further about protocols for when congregations can begin to worship in their buildings again as well as how to apply for emergency grants and how to continue or begin food distribution in your community.

The most important things we all can do right now are to seek and pray to God, to remain outward, focused on those in our communities who are without a job, without food, those who are lonely, sick, grieving, and anxious, those whose hope is The United Methodist Church, and to stay focused on our mission, making disciples of Jesus Christ and growing vital congregations for the transformation of the world. I call upon each pastor and congregation to find ways to improve your online ministries, to connect your congregation with the needs in your community and to inspire generosity during COVID-19. I also call on all of us to pray about how we will be the church of Jesus Christ following COVID-19. COVID-19 has helped us realize that the world is changing, the world has changed and that we, the church can change to reach new and younger and more diverse generations of believers.

In this most challenging season, we will thrive creating the next church for the world because we are a people in the midst of challenge and *claim that affliction produces perseverance, and perseverance produces character and character produces hope, and hope will not disappoint us.* —ROMANS 5:3

Thank you for all you are already doing and thank you for helping to innovate and create the next United Methodist Church for the transformation of the world. 🌍



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John R. Schol, Bishop

United Methodists of Greater New Jersey
205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune, NJ 07753

Heather Mistretta, Editorial Manager
732.359.1047 | hmistretta@gnjumc.org

Carolyn Conover, Director of Communications
732.359.1016 | cconover@gnjumc.org

Laura Canzonier, Communications Administrative Assistant
732.359.1063 | lcanzonier@gnjumc.org

Brittney Reilly, Online and Digital Communications Manager
732.359.1040 | breilly@gnjumc.org

Christopher G. Coleman, The Relay Designer
chris@cgcoleman.com

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

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

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ENGAGING NEW PEOPLE AND BEING WELCOMING DURING COVID-19/ONLINE WORSHIP

An all-digital ministry is the new normal, at least for the near future, but that doesn't mean we stop empowering our congregants to invite new people into our community.

It DOES mean we will have to get creative by equipping our people with a few new ways to digitally invite someone to connect. Here are just a few things to keep in mind when building a culture of invitation in completely digital landscape:

Take the time to say WHO you are and WHAT your church is all about during your online services, don't assume everyone knows. In other words, expect visitors.

Particularly if you have a younger congregation, don't be afraid to experiment with newer platforms like Houseparty, TikTok, or IGTV.

Have an easy, weekly online small group that you can always point visitors to. This group should have a simple, consistent format that doesn't leave newcomers feeling out of the loop.

For instance, this could be a 30 minute ZOOM meeting that asks three check-in questions each week:

*How are you caring for your mind? How are you caring for your body?
How are you caring for your soul?*

Encourage your congregants to do the church a favor by commenting and liking your posts, Facebook live services, and other events. It creates a buzz and increases your church's visibility.

Create a hashtag and encourage people to use it when posting about opportunities.

*"Can't wait for open Small Group on Wednesday!"
#ArrivingAtHope*

If you pre-record your Sunday service, arrange for a Facebook "watch party" on Sunday so people can communicate with one another during worship.

Share an informational picture/graphic on Facebook or Instagram and ask your congregants to tag three friends.

Host Zoom room dance parties or playdates for kids to see and interact with one another and close in prayer together.

Every week, ask:
"Who are you going to invite?"

Organize Zoom room scavenger hunts for youth.

During this time of social distancing, keep in mind that many people feel more comfortable inviting friends to Church via social media than they would in person, so if we offer our congregation the right tools, we can actually see an increase in visitors to our online experiences.

COVID-19

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Debbie Barnett said one person who had been a member as a child and is now in her 60s has come back to Wesmont's worship services and encouraged the church to keep the online services going even after social distancing allows in-person worship.

In East Brunswick the energy normally felt in the sanctuary of Calvary Korean UMC was instead felt online in April as a talented group of musicians played several instruments and sang a virtual rendition of "God is Your Keeper." To listen, visit <https://youtu.be/gUKmhc1TNVc>.

Further south in Medford the sounds of bells chiming were heard online as the newly-formed "Lonesome Soundman Ringers" at Medford UMC played a beautiful rendition of "Amazing Grace" to a live audience of none but an online audience of about a thousand. The music can be heard here: www.facebook.com/MedfordUMC/videos/242420976864842/.

There are hundreds of examples of churches reaching out to their congregations and communities in new and innovative ways:

Absecon UMC rang their bells at noon on Easter Sunday as a sign of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and an act of solidarity in the fight to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus. During Easter week, it held a drive through prayer walk with prayer stations set up in the parking lot. In addition to worship and prayer services as well as book study groups, Rev. Chris Miller has been hosting "Coffee with Chris" every morning and online worship services on YouTube at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Sunday to stay connected to his congregation. Absecon UMC also offers a special children's worship service as well as a video showing how congregants can create their own family or personal altar space for worship. To help better connect with its congregation, the church also shared a survey to assess the status and needs of its church community. Check out their Facebook page, which includes videos on all their programs.

Lifegate UMC in Somers Point has awakened the Spirit of God in their congregation. Through online worship, prayer and daily devotion, one member organized an online group chat for other Lifegate members where she shares the daily devotions that she receives. This small act of faithfulness has grown into the desire and call for others in the congregation to lead an online Bible studies using her daily



Churches are scrambling to offer hope and a sense of normalcy in the face of adversity. Tony Rhino Albanese shown here from Trinity UMC Hackettstown.

devotions as a start. For the month of May Lifegate is also going to celebrate Mom, whether she is biological, adoptive mom, or even a spiritual mom by compiling the photos they receive into a special video presentation for Mother's Day, May 10. More information at www.lifegatenj.org

Trinity UMC Hackettstown is continuing their food pantry by now handing out pre-boxed food to an average of 55 families a week, or an estimated 150-200 people. The church is also receiving surplus free lunches from the board of education (lunches that are offered to low income families but not being picked up) and giving those out to neighborhood families each Saturday, as well as partnering with four local restaurants by distributing their food. About 125 meals have been delivered so far. They are participating in the face mask ministry and continue to worship and meet in small groups virtually as well. www.catchthespirit.org/spring-small-groups/

Rev. Enger Muteteke at Good Shepherd UMC in Northfield said one of her members, a 91-year old woman, calls her every Wednesday to check on her and her family and double check the church's prayer number and code through Zoom.

"The first week she called me, I was tired and really needed to call the other senior members to give them the prayer number and code," said Muteteke. "The Lord heard my silent prayer and answered me. This woman in our conversation said to me, 'Pastor, do you want me to call people for you and give them the prayer number and code?' What a blessing her offer was to my spirit and soul! To this day, she is the one who calls all senior members every Wednesday afternoon or Tuesday evening to remind them of our prayer call and give them the prayer number and code."

In addition to online worship, communion and prayer, Good Shepherd UMC hosts

"Gospel Slam Fridays" when the congregation shares in fellowship online through music.

Vernon UMC is offering online worship services as well as virtual meals together, Bible studies and Facebook watch parties of previous services. Its food pantry remains open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., with no appointments, no paperwork, and no questions asked. The pantry is located at 303 NJ Route 94.

"We want all to know that the church's food pantry and its volunteers are busy distributing food and personal care items to all those in need," said pantry coordinator Judy Miller.

Park UMC in Bloomfield held a sunrise service at 6:30 a.m. on Easter Sunday to show that even if its

doors are closed, its fellowship is not. The diverse church family with worshippers from more than 20 countries including Africa; Asia and the Pacific; Central, North, and South America; the Caribbean and Europe, is still operating its Food Depot on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11 a.m.-1 p.m. In the second week of April, it served 157 families, amounting to a total of 471 people. Park UMC also implemented the app Give+ to make giving for its congregation easier. To further solidify its connection, Pastor Joel Hubbard is leading bi-weekly Zoom calls on Tuesday afternoons and Thursday evenings. More information regarding Park UMC can be found at www.facebook.com/ParkUMC. Bloomfield.

New Dover UMC in Edison, which is an outreach center for UMCOR, recently donated about 50 N-95 masks to the Edison Police Department and another 80 to local fire departments, church members who work in healthcare and elsewhere. They have a women's ministry that is making masks from home for healthcare providers. In addition to this, through a new sandwich ministry they started following the onset of the virus, they are making hundreds of sandwiches each day for the hungry in Elizabeth by donating the food they make from their homes to the St. Joe's Social Service Center and other food pantries.

"We couldn't do what we do without our peeps in church and our neighbors in our community that see what we do and walk with us in mission," said Brian Richards, who is a lay delegate at the church. "I always keep a few lunch bags when we deliver to give to people on the street looking for a meal."

More information can be found at www.newdoverumc.org/ and on Facebook.

Spring Valley UMC in New York is staying connected to its congregation with a creative way each day via Zoom. From Monday Musings, Tuesday Trivia and Wisdom Wednesday to Name that Tune Thursday, Dinner & Movie on Fridays, Saturday Scrambles and Scavenger Hunt Sundays, the congregation is staying connected. Rev. Kay Dubuisson and her con-

gregation have also developed an Open Mic Praise & Worship Group, a Kid's Zoom Get2together and more. More information can be found at www.facebook.com/UnitedMethodistChurchofSpringValley/.

Rev. Henriella Griffin at UMC of Linden shared: "Last week, the Spirit put in my mind to do something with and for the children. I contacted the Sunday school teacher, and we had them watch the Easter story on deep blue adventures. One of them was able to explain the story in its entirety, to God be the glory. Beginning next week, with the parents' permission, I will have an hour a week specifically with them so they can elaborate on what they get from different stories, how these stories shape them spiritually, how they can contribute to God's kingdom with what they learn."

Here are some other miracles in the making happening in GNJ churches:

- Rev. Brian Joyce at Trinity UMC in Ewing led an online communion. He was joined by several TCNJ students from their homes.
- Moorestown UMC in one week collected over a thousand pieces of groceries to send to its local food bank.
- Browns Mill UMC's brand-new food pantry served 27 families in one week, with all supplies coming from donations from people in the church.
- Cookstown UMC held online worship in its little chapel for the first time in more than 200 years.
- Wesley UMC in Trenton welcomed 29 people in a Zoom Bible study, compared to an average of 10-12 in person.
- Roebling UMC hosted an emergency



Enger Muteteke, lead pastor at Good Shepherd UMC, shown here at Community FoodBank of New Jersey, said she is grateful for the support from her congregation.

blood drive, resulting in the collection of 39 units of blood.

- Emely St UMC's food pantry in one week served 50+ families in its community.
- Medford UMC's Easter Food Drive gleaned 1,929 food and toiletry items and 90 Acme gift cards for a total donation value of \$3745 to be shared between the Christian Caring Center of Pemberton and the Turning Point UMC Food Pantry in Trenton. ShopRite of Medford also donated 30 hams, which were distributed through various connections to families in their local area. To watch the YouTube video they created for this event, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGU62zxaB1Q&feature=youtu.be.

Share your stories of the miracles happening in your congregation. Send them to the Relay in care of Heather Mistretta hmistretta@gnjumc.org.



Members of New Dover UMC in Edison are safely distributing hundreds of sandwiches each day to the needy in Elizabeth.

MISSION CORNER

Ways to engage with United Methodist Missionaries in the midst of COVID-19:

- Pray for missionaries.
- Financially support a missionary and their ministries via The Advance.
- Global Ministries Virtual Missionary Itineration beginning May 2020: Churches will be able to invite a missionary to lead Sunday worship/preach/lead bible study/UMW gathering/virtual coffee hour on a Sunday to connect via the local churches' Zoom/video conferencing platform. New opportunities will become

available through the summer as well. Check out the GNJ Digest for opportunities and updates. If you are interested in hosting a missionary virtually, please contact Ashley Wilson (awilson@gnjumc.org).

- Global mission during a pandemic: Conversations with General Secretary Thomas Kemper: Global Ministries General Secretary Thomas Kemper interviews missionaries every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for 10 minutes on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/GlobalMinistries/>). Tune in as Thomas Kemper engages with mission partners all around the world and offers a glimpse into how mission continues in the midst of a pandemic.

Learn more about the Global Ministries Missionaries from Greater New Jersey



Yeo Jun Yun

Serving at Methodist Federation for Social Action
Bio found here: <https://advance.umcmmission.org/p-1992-yun-yeo-jin.aspx>

Advance #3022513



Chin Cho

Serving as coordinator of the United Methodist Mission in Mongolia.
Bio found here: <https://advance.umcmmission.org/p-1624-cho-chin.aspx>

Advance #3022047



Chun H. Cho

Serving as coordinator of Christian education of the United Methodist Mission in Mongolia.

Bio found here: <https://advance.umcmmission.org/p-1927-cho-chun-h.aspx>

Advance #3022506



Sung Lee

Serving at Methodist Lay Training Center as a Lecturer and Academic Adviser in Theology and Ministry in Fiji Islands

Bio found here: <https://advance.umcmmission.org/p-2013-lee-sung-ii.aspx>

Advance #3022596

Korean UMC: Lighting the World From New Jersey to South Korea

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

Just when some may have thought GNJ was a silo of Christian ministry that only caters to the diverse populations within the borders of the Greater New Jersey Conference territory, we are reminded that our boundaries are permeable, and the impact we make can be exponential.

And sometimes the impact stretches even farther than we could ever have imagined. The recent ministries carried out by Korean UMC of South Jersey were heard seven thousand miles away and beyond when they were broadcast on CTS News, one of the largest Christian broadcast networks in Korea that broadcasts all over the world. www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwxiALa9J9A&feature=youtu.be

"The reason we can shine the light to the world is because we have the True Light, Jesus Christ, in us," said Rev. Leo Park. Citing Jesus in Matthew 5:14-16, Park said, "In these dark times, our church prayed and discussed how we, as the body of Christ, can shine the True Light in us to the people in our community....what kind of good works can we do so that people can see the love of God in Jesus Christ and glorify God the Father?"

The answer? The "Movement of Giving Out Love Masks and Hand Sanitizers" ministry. With money derived from generous donations from the congregation, several church members waited in line for five hours at the Bed Bath and Beyond store to purchase hand sanitizers while a group of women sewed three-layered face masks.

Once collected, the group of dedicated servants visited homes of Korean people in their Atlantic County community and gave out face masks and sanitizers while praying with them. They also held a drive-thru on Saturdays, where they gave out face masks to people in Egg Harbor where



Members of Korean UMC safely distributed handmade masks and hand sanitizers to people in Atlantic County.

the church is located. Simultaneous, a drive-thru prayer station was set up.

The ministry continued when the people of Korean UMC donated handmade face masks to doctors' offices, nursing homes, post offices and police departments.

A video of this ministry in action can be found at <https://youtu.be/6S7ifqvt1GI>.

"We also visited AtlantiCare Hospital (in Egg Harbor) and Royal Suites Healthcare & Rehabilitation Center (in Absecon) to pray for the doctors, nurses, and caregivers and residents in the parking lot," Park added.

A video from the nursing home is at www.facebook.com/Royalsuiteshealthcare/videos/331258067833535/?vh=e&d=n.



The people of Korean UMC shared messages of hope and thanks with those working on the frontlines—messages that were heard as far away as South Korea.

Mourning at a Distance

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

BLOOMFIELD, N.J.

In this society, where we are often taught to keep our chins up and move forward toward closure, grappling with the loss of a loved one has become even harder for those who are grieving during social distancing as in-person funerals are not allowed, sharing a meal is often done in solitude and the embrace of someone who cares is absent. Some churches are recognizing this void and are offering their congregations an alternative that is both compassionate and God-filled.

"Our families are now not able to celebrate their loved ones' lives. A time when our church normally comes together to form a really strong bond of caring has now changed, and this hurts," said Rev. Joel Hubbard of Park UMC in Bloomfield who said he and his church leaders are planning to do livestreamed memorial services once a month or more for those members who have lost a loved one.

With 21 countries represented at this diverse church, this could be a tall task, but Hubbard said he's up for the challenge, which comes as no surprise given that once the COVID-19 crisis hit, Park UMC set up its "Food Depot" to feed the hungry in its community. On April 21, they served 80 families, equating to 273 people, many of whom are migrants. In partnership with a local synagogue, Hubbard said, Park UMC also continues to cook meals for the community every Sunday while practicing social distancing.

Hubbard said helping our congregations grieve is just another part of what they do. Families are being asked to send in a two- to three-minute video of memories as well as still photos, if possible. Each monthly memorial service will likely

feature this video and photos blended with music from a pianist or organist and a vocalist who will model social distance as well as cutaways to different scenes every two to three minutes.

"We're hoping that this will provide them with at least a little bit of the solace they need," Hubbard said.

Also recognizing the need to care for her congregation when they need it most is Rev. Heather Valosin from Denville Community Church who is preparing to offer "virtual memory circles" when needed.

This is conjunction with the congregational care system that was recently formed with 41 volunteers connecting weekly to 430 people with questions about physical, emotional and spiritual health that includes high schools, college students and older adults.

With the same sense of compassion, "the 'virtual memory circle' is not a grief group nor a funeral, but rather a hybrid to support people when they can't physically be together in the midst of grief by remembering and honoring their loved ones," Valosin said.

From a safe social distance, "virtual memory circles" will work to address Psychologist J. William Worden's "Four Tasks of Mourning," which are not linear, nor on a timeline:

- Accept reality of loss and acknowledge feelings
- Process grief and pain through expression, action and ritual
- Adjust to the world without the person who died
- Find a way to maintain a connection to the person who died while reconnecting to your own life.

These "mournings" will last up to an hour, depending on how many people are involved, Valosin added.

Like Hubbard at Park UMC, Valosin said she will connect with families to learn more about their loved one who died



Joel Hubbard, senior pastor, and Harriet Johnson, associate pastor deliver messages of hope.

so that she can determine how best to honor their memory, which may include music, poetry, guided meditation and/or something else.

Denville church leaders are also considering reflection questions to help facilitate the grief process. Either a song or poem can be contributed by the family or church.

"We also want to make sure they know how to use Zoom," said Valosin, who added that for larger groups, they will be asked which three people would like to share a favorite memory so they can prepare.

"The time of mourning is complicated, filled with emotions and memories both bitter and sweet. It's even more complicated in a moment like this one," Valosin said. "A screen is obviously not the same, but it shows that love doesn't die, even when people do."

For Rev. Joe Monahan at Medford UMC, the absence of fellowship has also been difficult, particularly as it relates to funerals.

"You can't have the process of grief stall out until the pandemic is over," said Monahan, who along with lay leaders held a memorial service via Zoom for

church member, Janet Scheffler who died from complications related to brain cancer on April 1.

Scheffler had been a fixture at Medford UMC, having been involved in Bible studies, stewardship, photography among many other things, so honoring her memory was important for the congregation as well as for her son, Robert.

"It was an amazing time of sharing. It looked like a normal service for the most part," said Monahan, who added that Broadway music and a rendition of "In the Garden" was incorporated as were moments of sharing from those who joined.

For those wishing to have an online memorial service, Monahan recommended the following: have more than one host, use two devices with audio open on one and record the video on Zoom so that it can be shared with family.

The states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York have issued strict guidelines on funerals that are being updated as the situation around social distancing changes. For the most current guidance on funerals, go to the worship pages on GNJ's COVID-19 resources. 🇺🇸

Front Line of Hope

Continued from page 1

faiths, backgrounds and socioeconomic classes.

He noted that need has exponentially grown as evidenced by the hospital's wellness support line, which has been receiving triple the amount of calls as usual.

"The mental health piece of this is inordinate," said Gebhard, who said he has instituted wellness walks and prayer times in the hospital chapel for staff in an effort to help them cope and heal.

In the face of such adversity, Gebhard said he is renewed by the sporadic "clap-outs" when a patient recovers and is heading home, or the recent recovery of both a mother and son after the son saved his mom doing CPR just weeks earlier. And then there are the texts he receives from colleagues, friends or family members like his friend and fellow chaplain, Randy Parks, or the freshly-cooked meals he and his colleagues receive from local restaurants or the many homemade masks and head coverings they have received.

"It's this kind of kindness that sustains us," he said. "We are grateful for each and every one of these moments and for the anchoring and strength I get from God. I feel like I was prepared for this journey."

Handwritten notes and cards are what also keep Diane Dyson going in the face of death as a nurse at Hunterdon Medical Center in Flemington. A nurse since 1985, Dyson had previously been working in a step-down unit in the hospital, but when the number of COVID-19 patients pushed



Diane Dyson shown here with her husband, Drew, who is executive director of the Princeton Senior Resource Center and chair of the GNJ Clergy Delegation to the General Conference.

the total number of patients to three times as much, she was transferred to work with COVID-19 patients in a cardiac unit that had recently been converted into an ICU.

"This is for sure the hardest part of my career," said Dyson, who noted that she has seen more people die from this virus than in the entire eight years she has worked at the hospital.

"As a deacon, it has always been part of my role to offer people a spiritual aspect, to consider their spiritual needs. Now I also do this for the families."

Dyson, who also serves Bloomsbury UMC, recalled recently how she set up a Facetime with the daughter of a 71-year-old man who was a patient. "It was difficult but so necessary for the family."

"Sometimes I feel like I'm spread so thin, but my calling is to be a nurse and to care

for people spiritually and holistically, doing whatever it takes."

When not caring for the sick, Dyson said she takes long walks and spends time with her husband, Drew, who is a full elder and executive director of the Princeton Senior Resource Center, to help rejuvenate so that she is better prepared for her next 12-hour shift. She also recently had communion with friends via Zoom and took a brief departure from the stark reality to jokingly lament about the poor timing she and Drew had in joining a gym just one month earlier.

For Stephen Faller, who is a chaplain and a clinical pastoral education supervisor at a large Trenton hospital, going for long walks to work through his frustrations is not possible so he spends his time at work on a scooter. Faller has cerebral palsy, which prevents him from being on his feet in large environments like a hospital for long periods and make new ways of doing ministry like those involving Zoom more difficult.

"I've dedicated my whole ministry to face-to-face connections," said Faller whose foray into chaplaincy began over two decades ago and specifically in New Jersey following the 9/11 tragedy.

"This is upending ministry. When 9/11 happened, I was in a tiny chapel with 15 seats packed with about 80 people. That kind of support obviously can't happen today."

He added that without that connection, bringing meaning is very difficult. "My goal is to find ways to serve the people who need it most," said Faller who added that

doctors and nurses who are actively being traumatized every day need help.

He added, "We have to think outside the box all the time." One way he is doing that is by setting up giveaways for the National Day of Prayer on May 7, which ironically coincides with National Nurses Week (May 6-12), in hopes of boosting morale.

"It's all about reimagining how this can work."

In his own personal life, Faller said he worries about the safety of his wife, Heather and their two daughters, so he has been living on the first floor of their house while the rest of his family lives on the second floor.

"I have spent hours Zooming people I love since February. It has been rough." As an alternative, Faller said he is looking for an RV so that he can further limit his exposure to them.

With the COVID-19 caseload in New Jersey hospitals eclipsing 100,000 in April and the prospect of a vaccine at least a year away, the future is filled with uncertainty. But the burden those on the frontlines are carrying as they light the way for so many needs to be lifted by those away from the frontlines for at least several months to come. Until we reach the other side of this pandemic, people throughout GNJ are supporting them the best way they know how, deeply rooted in Christ.

Clergy resources can be found on GNJ's COVID-19 resource webpage under "Clergy Care." GNJ will continue to feature GNJ heroes on the frontlines. If you have a story idea, please share it with Heather Mistretta at hmistretta@gnjumc.org. 🇺🇸

Covering the Needs of Frontline Workers

By Denise Herschel
Nj6pack@yahoo.com

On March 23, Bishop Schol raised a call for GNJ United Methodists to start making masks for United Methodist Communities, who serve seniors and vulnerable populations through 11 housing communities and home visits. They were in dire need of face masks for seniors and the people who care for them.

Since that time, dozens of congregations responded with mask making and dozens more reached out to their own community health centers to provide mask making.

"I read about the need for cloth masks in the GNJ COVID-19 emails," Rev. Jessica Campbell, pastor at Hamilton UMC in Neptune, said. "I knew that the congregation had a number of crafty people with a heart for mission. I put out a call for help via email and quickly had a team in place. It was just natural to connect the need with the gifts of our members."

Campbell added that with the box of fabric found at the church, crafters were able to start making masks.

"I am not personally a seamstress, but I know that the women followed the directions that are found on the GNJ website. So far more than 50 masks have been donated."

Trinity UMC members in Hackettstown also joined in the mask-making mission upon receiving an email from Atlantic Health Systems requesting people help create the masks, according to JoAnn Heembrock, a church member.

"I am a co-leader of a small group called 'Sew and Sews.' We do sewing projects for various needs. We began doing the masks because I started seeing videos and patterns on Facebook and received an email from Atlantic Health Systems," said Heembrock.

She added that using the written instructions and a video, about 20 people are helping.

"I do the sewing at home and it can be time consuming. I can make about 15 to 20 masks a day if I don't do anything else."

Heembrock added that there are many patterns and versions of masks on YouTube and on the internet in general to follow.

"People are using whatever pattern they prefer. I use the directions given by Atlantic Health Systems because that is what they requested. They ask for closely woven 100% cotton quilting fabric outside and 100% cotton flannel inside. Their directions call for using elastic, but when people run out of elastic, they are also using twill tape, ribbon and bias binding strips to make ties," she said.

Magnolia Road UMC in Pemberton, which has a long history with its sewing ministry, is also providing assistance to the healthcare community, dubbing their mission the "Healing Stitches Ministry." The church's UMW President Joy Haines and the church's lead seamstress Faith Parrott recognized the need and immediately got involved.

"Faith saw a YouTube video, the 'Million Mask Challenge' and organized the material from the sewing ministry's existing supply and supplemented it, as necessary," said Rev. Vanessa M. Wilson, the church's senior pastor.

"We have five people sewing in our church plus two external people. We are sewing in church and at home. It is not very difficult. Anyone can learn. From cutting to sewing about 20 minutes for experienced sewers and about 10 minutes sewing alone."

Wilson continued that the church has created over 200 masks so far, which are going to different states including New Jersey, Montana, New York and New Hampshire.



Congregations across GNJ stepped up to provide thousands of masks for those working on the frontlines. Hamilton UMC's James Robinson and Gary Engelstad shown here.

"Our 'Healing Stitches Ministry' is a vital part of the mission and ministry of Magnolia Road UMC. This church has been sewing for a long time. Over the years it has expanded to global outreach. This has allowed 'Healing Stitches' to be engaged in ministries of health, justice and gender equality as we live the love of Jesus in the world," she said.

As the coronavirus pandemic continues, face masks or coverings have now been required to be worn in New Jersey in public settings with their demand increasing dramatically. UMC church members and volunteers have said that they have made it their personal mission to continue the mask making as a way of helping during this worldwide crisis.

"It is very important for us to be able to help those that we can," Heembrock said. "My daughter is an RN, and I feel that anything we can do to support our health professionals is very important. Trinity UMC has an active mission program and tries to help where needed."

Campbell agreed and said that her church wants to do all it can to assist during this time of great need.

"So many people are hurting. We cannot fix all of the problems, but we can each do our part. Collectively we believe it all adds up and makes a big impact," she said. "I am hopeful as we fight this pandemic. People are really rising to this strenuous occasion by staying safe at home, practicing social distancing and staying grounded spiritually and emotionally. I truly believe that when we are on the other side of this pandemic, we will have an opportunity to create an even better culture with deeper values in place for ourselves, our families, our communities and our world."

For more information about making masks, including videos and places to donate, <https://www.gnjumc.org/covid19/covid-19-resources/mission>.

WHAT TO DO

When You Don't Know What To Do



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

The Breakthrough series now includes new mission and engagement ideas to help you stay connected and keep the conversations going like creating care teams and phone trees that establish a "buddy" system to ensure vulnerable and hard-to-reach community members also stay connected.

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

UMC Commits to Narrow Food Insecurity Gap with New Funding

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

The United Methodist Church has committed \$500,000 of new money to food security and plans to add an additional \$1 million to provide emergency support to food distribution sites across the state. Additionally, 11 United Methodist churches and Hope Centers have received emergency grants from the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund (NJPRF) to help distribute food to the more than one million residents in vulnerable communities across the state.

The churches are: St. John's United Methodist Church (Fordville), Bridgeton; Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry, Butler United Methodist Church, Butler; Dover United Coalition, including First United Methodist Church, Dover; St. John's United Methodist Church, Hazlet; St. Luke's Food Pantry, Long Branch (also a Hope Center); Pantry in the Glen, Stanhope United Methodist Church, Netcong; Lunch Break, Red Bank United Methodist Church, Red Bank; Sparta Ecumenical Food Pantry, Sparta United Methodist Church, Sparta; Hope United Methodist Church, Voorhees.

Hope Centers are: CUMAC, Paterson; and Norwescap Traditional Family Success Center, Phillipsburg.

Grants also were awarded to several interfaith food pantries that have United Methodist Churches participating.

Interfaith groups involving United Methodist churches include: God's Interfaith Food Table, including Centenary United Methodist Church, Berlin; and Dover United Coalition, including First United Methodist Church, Dover.

"When people hurt, United Methodists help," said Bishop John Schol of the United Methodists of Greater New Jersey. "During the pandemic, after health, food insecurity has emerged as the most immediate need in our communities. We are thankful to the NJ Pandemic Relief Fund for recognizing the important role United Methodists play in food distribution throughout the region."

There are 530 United Methodist congregations and 23 Hope Centers throughout New Jersey and small portions of New York and Pennsylvania.

"We founded A Future With Hope to mobilize a long-term disaster recovery when Superstorm Sandy hit our region," Bishop Schol continued. That effort raised \$18 million and an additional \$8 million in in-kind services as well as utilize 12,000,000 volunteers to rebuild or build new 276 homes for low income persons across the affected NJ Area. "Our leadership in disaster recovery makes us well positioned to deploy resources in the face of the COVID-19 pan-

dem. The people in our congregations are engaging their communities with resources — distributing food, sewing masks, supporting frontline workers and providing spiritual and emotional support."

Rick Reinhard, executive director of A Future With Hope, said, "We have hundreds of food pantries throughout the region, and we are working with them to increase their capacity either singularly or by combining efforts with other local food pantries to make a more regional approach. Our food pantries have had to transform to distribution centers that adhere to the state's guidelines for appropriate social distancing, which means they've had to act quickly and creatively to continue food distribution — including curbside pick-up, porch delivery and parking lot drop offs."

The current food security grants range from \$5,000 to \$25,000 and are awarded to organizations affiliated with the three main food banks in the state — Community FoodBank of NJ, the South Jersey Food Bank and Fulfill (formerly Food Bank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties)

"We organized the NJPRF to meet four critical challenges of our state in the face of the COVID-19 crisis," said Tammy Murphy, First Lady of New Jersey and founder of NJPRF. "Stop the spread, support the healthcare community, provide help for the

vulnerable, and rebuild. We begin with this food distribution effort, as it is one that is most urgent."

"In addition to food distribution, our churches have become critical food collection sites to help stock the pantries. Although only a few received financial rewards from the fund, hundreds of our congregations and thousands of our people are participating in food distribution in incredibly meaningful ways," said Reinhard. A Future With Hope coordinates disaster recovery and designates Hope Centers, which collaborate with community residents, leaders and organizations, addressing community challenges.

The non-profit NJPRF was launched March 24 to marshal resources to meet critical needs and fight the economic and social impact of COVID-19 within New Jersey.

This essential food security effort is only the beginning," said Josh Weinreich, CEO of NJPRF. "NJPRF is uniquely situated to analyze the statewide landscape of needs created by this pandemic. Our federal and state partnerships combined with a deep connection to local relief organizations give us a unique vantage point to target our grants and resources to help those most affected. We are fortunate that NJPRF is able to identify and provide funds to those organizations that can deliver aid most quickly, efficiently and effectively."

Sustaining Stewardship: Connecting With Donors

"What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us are tiny matters compared to what lives within us."

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Did you know that the best place to put your request for donations is in the top righthand corner of your website? What may seem like a simplistic nuance can make a world of difference in reaching potential donors. In this difficult time when struggles are common, uncertainty runs rampant and questions remain

on what lies ahead, making stewardship easy and meaningful for donors is crucial.

Answering the question of why is equally important. In Henri Nouwen's *A Spirituality of Fundraising*, he writes, "Fundraising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission."

As churches continue to delve into uncharted territories of online worship, ministry and just day-to-day life, the mission remains steadfast — to cultivate passionate disciples

of Jesus Christ and grow vital congregations and what lies within us is powerful.

However, in order to foster and nurture this, stewardship needs to continue and even grow.

"Making a commitment to give on a regular basis is imperative right now," said Jana Purkis-Brash, executive director of the United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey. "We want our churches to be able to continue the wonderful things they have been doing; not get stuck without enough money to help others."

A lot of progress in adapting to the transition has been made over the past two months, but, Purkis-Brash added, "My goal has shifted from helping churches set up online giving to getting a handle on recurring giving through online measures and things like text-to-give."

When approaching giving, one of the most important things to do, Purkis-Brash said, is to determine your audience and appeal to those people accordingly. The more traditional givers need to be able to have a way to continue to give by check, while the younger givers generally prefer to give through Facebook, texting or a crowd-source platform.

Although an estimated 90 percent of giving still comes in the form of checks, creating a mobile-friendly platform is important so that churches can reach the younger members of the congregation, new visitors to online worship...and again, make it easy and stress-free.

PayPal continues to be a preferred platform because they are the most familiar and offer reduced rates for non-profits, but GNJ's website lists additional options in the COVID-19 resources under "Giving." There, you will also find a video of a Discipleship Ministries webinar on Recurring Electronic Giving with excellent resources for pastors and finance committee chairs.

In addition to being tech savvy, setting up cohesive giving strategies is a great opportunity to tell your story, Purkis-Brash said.

"Communicating inspiring stories of mission and ministry is really important right now," she said, adding that these stories

are what may get the attention of a potential donor. "People don't want to just write a check to pay the bills; they want to know where their money is going and how lives are being changed."

Churches across GNJ are coming up with creative ways to tell their stories, particularly the smaller churches who are being challenged to think outside the box to sustain giving. As churches struggle to get up to speed with technology, some are also dealing with a lack of or limited access to Wi-Fi.

"They need to do something a little different than they're used to," Purkis-Brash said, adding that one idea is to mail potential donors a hardcopy of a letter with an inspiring story and four to six self-addressed, stamped envelopes included.

Again, make it as easy as possible.

Another important thing to think about, Brash said, is to ensure a seamless transition to a giving platform. Consistent branding is key — from the website to the online giving platform whether that is Give Lively, Tithe.ly, Push Pay or one of the other online giving platforms. Everything needs to look the same.

"This will strengthen the trust level in giving online."

Purkis-Brash also noted that switching the default on your online giving form from "one-time gift" to "recurring" can also make a difference as most donors will usually opt for the default option. "Donors will think about their readiness to make a commitment to the church."

She also emphasized the importance of a personalized thank you letter in both hardcopy and online giving. These letters help to forge a deeper connection with your donors, keeping the line of communication open. Sample letters are available on the GNJ's COVID-19 Resource webpage under "Giving."

For additional questions, contact Jana Purkis-Brash at jpurkisbrash@gnjumc.org or 732-359-1057, or visit the Giving pages at www.gnjumc.org/covid19. There, you can also find budgeting strategies, best practices for counting and depositing cash and checks, workshops and more.

LET GNJ HELP YOU WITH OFFERINGS

Laity across Greater New Jersey have contributed more than \$100K to local churches through the GNJ website!

Donate at:
www.gnjumc.org/onlinegiving

UNITED METHODISTS OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Congratulations to GNJ Award Winners!

The Helenor Alter Davidson Award

Sponsored by the Commission on Status and Role of Women for leadership, vision, passion, resilience, purpose, inclusiveness and perseverance.

Rev. Dr. Regina Hendrickson, Gateway North District Superintendent

Rev. Dr. Regina Hendrickson leads 62 churches in the Northern Shore District Superintendent. She is passionate about leadership development and is able to help clergy understand the dynamics of church family because of her background in family systems. For the past three years, Gina has hosted and facilitated a woman's cohort offering book reading and conversations for women clergy, covering topics on vulnerability, church leadership and courageous leadership. Because she understands the challenges women face, Gina listens, encourages and validates the contribution of women clergy and women in leadership roles. She also promotes self-care and leads in this area by example. She is a proud mom, grandmother and role model for women and women clergy.



Rev. Dr. Regina Hendrickson

The Harry Denman Evangelism Award:

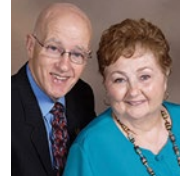
Sponsored by The Foundation for Evangelism to recognize a clergy member, lay person or a pastor who has an outstanding personal evangelism ministry.

Laity: Scott Bilquist, First UMC of Toms River

Scott Bilquist is an active member of the First UMC of Toms River. Since beginning his ministry in 1983, Scott has been a driving force for discipleship and evangelism, part of which included serving as the United Methodist Men's president at First UMC of Toms River. At every oppor-

tunity, he works to build Christian community and enjoys serving the Lord. He is humble, intentional and patiently encouraging to everyone he meets. Working with adults and youth, inside and outside the church walls, exemplifies Scott's call to discipleship.

Laity: Debra and David Chapman, Cape May UMC

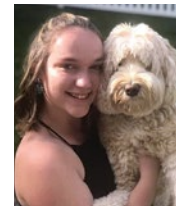


David and Debra Chapman

David and Debra Chapman are long time active members of Cape May UMC. Debra's cousin, Rev. Dr. Robert Carr, is a Presbyterian minister and church planter in Kenya. In 2017, when David accepted his invitation to participate in a building project in Guatemala, he felt called to travel and help others. When he returned home, he excitedly shared his trip with the congregation, inviting them to participate through attending the journey, giving financial gifts and/or purchasing the supplies needed for building and medical mission. As Debra has health issues, she has not been able to travel with him; however, David would not be the missionary that he has become without her commitment to his passion and his call to participate actively in international missions.

Youth: Grace Brameyer, Trinity UMC in Hackettstown

Grace stands firm in her belief of Jesus as her Lord and Savior, she gracefully displays her gifts by focusing their attention back toward the truth of Christ. She speaks about forgiving herself, just as God had forgiven her. Her self-acceptance comes from the understanding that if she was special enough for Jesus to die for her,



Grace Brameyer

then she indeed was special enough to love herself and others just the same. Grace is a beautiful representation of the sort of person Jesus calls us to be. She reminds us all of the assurance that God is always by our side. To quote her, "God's arms are wrapped around you, I promise. There are bumps in the road, but the Lord always has a plan. I know that things will look up because we are all wrapped up in His love, His care and His hope". Grace is intentional in building her Christian character and stands firm in her identity in Christ.

John C. Goodwin Multimedia Church History Award

Sponsored by the Commission on Archives and History

Haddonfield UMC



Meghan Martin

The Heritage Project (190th Anniversary) is a four chapter video chronicling the church's history, current ministry, ministries in communities near and far and other efforts to enrich lives in the Haddonfield area, especially in music. This engaging video makes the history and ministry come alive to the viewer as well as introduce a dynamic, growing church of 1,350 members.



Brent Donaway

Harry A. Seese Memorial Scholarship

Given to a pastor whose plans for continuing education will lead to strengthening his/her ministry in the local church. Guided by Rose Seese of Gibbsboro, his

widow and supported by ongoing gifts, the scholarship honors her late husband, the Rev. Harry A. Seese, who died while serving the Medford UMC.

Rev. James Lee



Rev. James Lee

Rev. James Lee is an innovative and trend-setting leader among pastors and growing congregations. As the lead pastor at Wesley UMC, he has a noticeable zeal for risk-taking and learning new ways to make ministry work inspiring his congregation as well as other leaders around him. He was previously the associate pastor for Calvary Korean UMC in East Brunswick and the senior pastor of Conklin UMC in South River. James is also an award-winning photographer, videographer and podcaster who believes photos should record the spirit, tell a story and grasp emotions. He has been married to his wife Julie since 2012, and they have three young children, Amy, Adam and Renee.

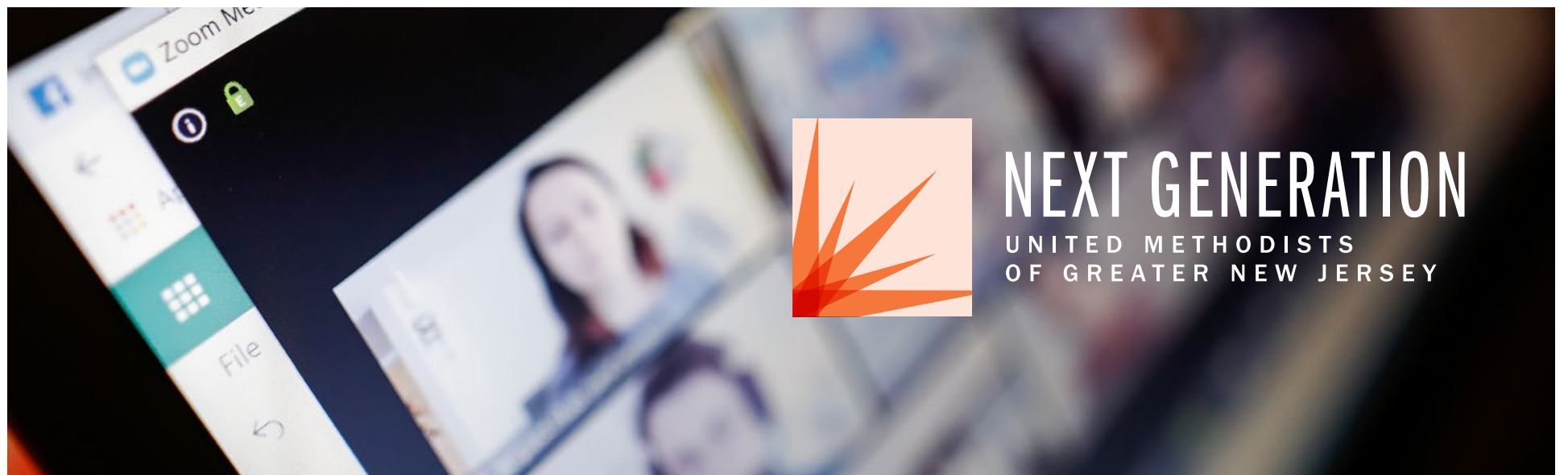
Rev. Juel Nelson

Rev. Juel Nelson, who at 13 preached her first sermon of many at New Dover UMC in Edison, has chosen to continue her education by pursuing a Doctorate in Education at New York University while continuing to serve in her role as GNJ's Director of Leadership Development and on the boards of Laity and Ordained Ministry. The NYU doctoral program focuses on leadership skills to develop innovative solutions that affect sustainable and scalable change in their setting. The work she is doing in relation to the doctorate directly supports GNJ's mission. The education will only enhance what she does, coaching and encouraging leaders to live into God's greater vision. 🙌



Rev. Juel Nelson

"Each week youth and young adult leaders from across New Jersey and beyond join together via Zoom. These volunteers and staff leaders share ideas, challenges and are building community together. If you're passionate about being in ministry with youth and young adults during these crazy times, we'd love you to join us!" - Eric Drew, Executive Director of Next Generation Ministries



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.

- Monday evenings at 8:00 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

Mustering Up Courage For Those Who Can't on Peace with Justice Sunday

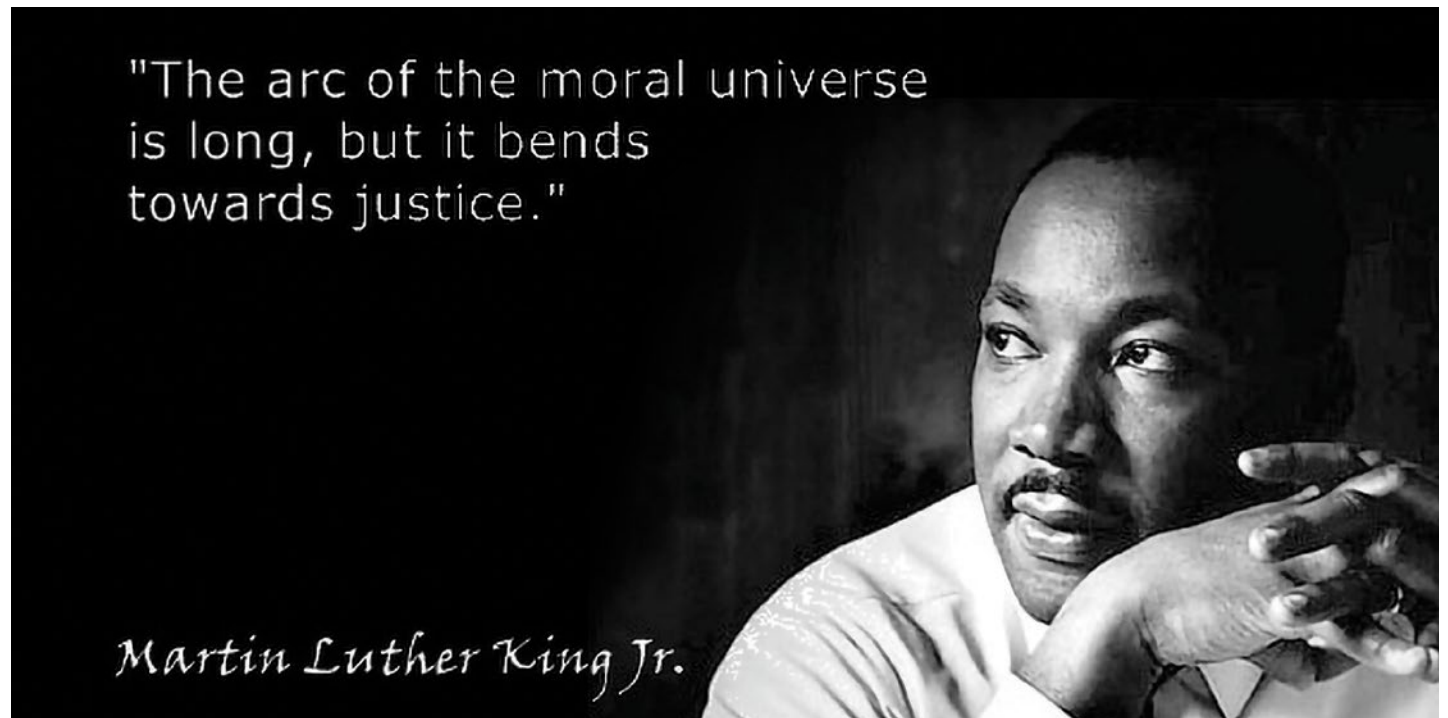
"And what does the Lord require of you but to DO JUSTICE, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." —MICAH 6:8

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

When Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. said outside Santa Rita Prison in California to a group of Vietnam War protesters on December 14, 1967, "There can be no justice without peace, and there can be no peace without justice," he was envisioning an inclusive model of social justice that subscribed to the philosophy that "nobody's free until everybody's free."

Though our society has trudged forward toward Dr. King's goal of peace with justice, there remains deep potholes and trenches that prevent the two from merging. And now the inequities that still exist over 50 years later, which GNJ has been committed to challenging, like school segregation, poverty, racism, immigration and incarceration disparities have been amplified recently by the onslaught of COVID-19.

The virus has not only exposed thousands to dangerous health problems, but it has also exposed the public to the fact that civil rights imposed many years ago have still not been fully realized. The Supreme Court's decision on May 17, 1954, outlawing segregation erased the whole doctrine of separate but equal. However, today segregated schools still exist, with New Jersey close to the top of that list.



"This pandemic has illuminated a lot of what we have been working on, focusing on," said Tanya Bennett, who serves Covenant UMC in Plainfield, chairs GNJ's Board of Church & Society and is associate dean of theology at Drew Theological School at Drew University. "We've come to a new point of concentration."

This comes as we approach the 2020 Peace with Justice Sunday on June 7, a day when churches tackle challenges and wrestle with where justice lies. Over 370,000 Black and Latinx children in New Jersey (63% of the state total) attend public schools that are segregated by race and by poverty. In 2018 the NJ Coalition for Diverse and Inclusive Schools, Inc. filed a

complaint that alleges that the state has been "complicit" in maintaining one of the nation's most segregated public school systems. This past January the court case, Latino Action Network v. State of New Jersey was brought to the NJ Supreme Court where it still presides.

"We cannot have true peace without justice. Peace with Justice Sunday provides an opportunity to highlight some of the injustices and disparities within our own communities and how we can work to alleviate them," said GNJ Director of Mission Ashley Wilson.

"Many injustices and disparities have been further illuminated by how the virus has impacted people of color, low-income communities and marginalized communities, especially when it comes to rates of exposure due to the nature of employment, access to healthcare and food security."

She added, "As Christians, we are called to love our neighbor as we advocate for just systems."

Throughout GNJ the amplification of inequities is being felt.

"COVID is bringing all of these things we have been fighting for to light," said Pastor Sammy Arroyo of First United Methodist Church in Hightstown, who also chairs the Salvation and Social Justice, the organization who among other public policy issues teamed up with the Latino Action Network to challenge school segregation in the state.

He added that in a city like Trenton, as is the case for many urban areas, the highly segregated schools that exist are at an extreme disadvantage because many of the minority students go to homes with maybe one computer and no Wi-Fi.

He added, "They're also dealing with teachers who aren't necessarily culturally and racially competent and turnover is rampant...They're behind the rest of the students before they even begin."

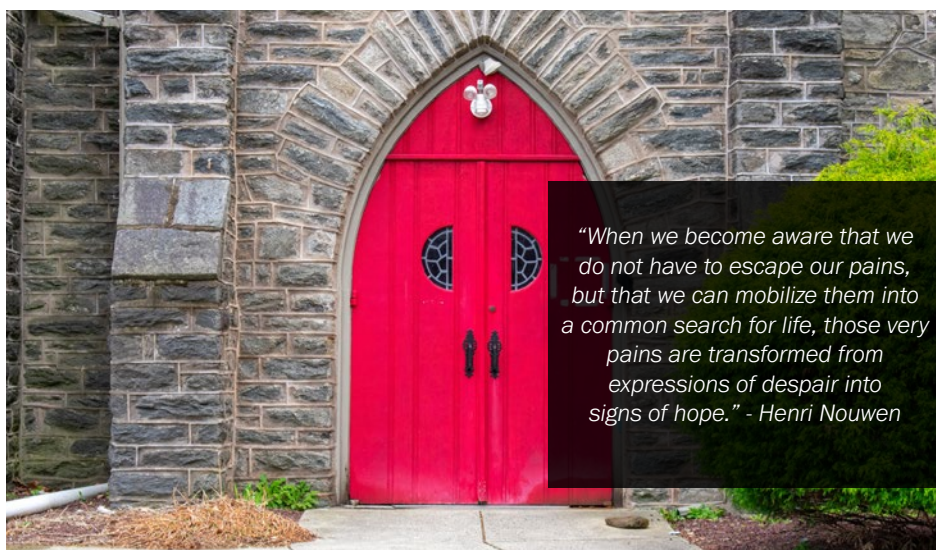
"COVID has brought these things to the surface. Some kids live in hotels. Hospitals are moving outside cities, making it harder for people to get there," said Arroyo, who added that creating partnerships between faith and lay leaders who together can do advocacy work is crucial.

Like Arroyo, those leaders who are valiant champions of human rights are not giving up hope.

"This pandemic needs to make us better," said Bennett, adding that she hopes we use this time of isolation to focus on determining how we emerge as better people, those who are seeking a society that has peace with justice.

"We need to emerge as prophetic leaders who work together to create systemic change...it's about economic reformation, not economic renewal," she said, adding that it needs to be a "thoughtful, meditative process."

Rev. Kay Dubuisson from Spring Valley UMC said, "My focus is to be with those who are in need one person at a time. When people have warm food to eat, a place to sleep and a peace of mind, there will be peace with justice." She and her church leaders continue to serve to-go meals on Thursday evenings as well as breakfast and about 300 meals packed in bags on Saturday.



A door signifies communication, conjunction and cohesion. Although we cannot enter through our physical church doors now, we can enter each other's worlds through Small Groups on Facebook, Facetime, Zoom or a simple phone call.

Now, more than ever, it's time to connect and let each other know, no matter what age, that we all matter and that our voices are heard. Here are some ideas:

- Coffee time with friends. Share your struggles, ideas and personal victories.
- A grief group. Without physical funerals, it is important for people to grieve.
- Sew masks together. Choose one organization where you can donate.
- Share recipes and maybe even make a dish together.
- Paint a picture together, maybe a sign that thanks those on the front lines with #GNJLightingtheWay.
- Start an exercise or yoga group and then share your progress together. Here's one: www.youtube.com and search "Wisdom Tree Yoga"
- Have a watch party. Here's one: "One World Concert" at www.youtube.com
- Book discussion, e.g. *Get Your Life Back: Everyday Practices for a World Gone Mad*

Remember...You are not alone.

We are in this together. #GNJLightingtheWay

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:



Gina Yeske, Director of Small Groups
gyeske@gnjumc.org | 732.359.1042



SMALL GROUPS
The front doors to the church.



King's Poor People's Campaign, which sought to bring economic justice to America's poor, is still alive more than 50 years since his death.

Donations accepted on Peace with Justice Sunday go toward valuable grants so that churches can continue their global ministries of reconciliation and make a difference in the world where peace and justice can coexist.

Jonathan Campbell, a pastor at Old First United Methodist Church in West Long Branch as well as the Peace with Justice coordinator, has extended the deadline to apply for a Peace with Justice grant to August 15 to allow churches to adjust to this new environment. More information can be found at www.gnjumc.org/church-and-society/peace-with-justice-grants/.

For more information and resources from UMC, visit www.resourceumc.org/en/content/peace-with-justice-sunday-pastor-and-leader-kit.

CONFERENCE HAPPENINGS

FOR ALL COVID-19 RESOURCES, VISIT GNJ'S WEBSITE AT:
www.gnjumc.org/covid19

Documenting Volunteer Hours is Vital

GNJ urges their 530 churches and 23 Hope Centers to keep rigorous track, both electronically and on paper, of the number of hours that volunteers are providing during the COVID-19 health crisis.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires that all funding from its Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), money that goes toward an action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from natural disasters, be matched by a local not-for-profit corporation with 25 percent.

However, FEMA allows the organization to match funding with "in-kind" contributions related to the project. In-kind contributions can include the following but exclude cash contributions by a third party:

- Volunteer labor hours
- Donation of use of property (e.g., for 12-step programs)
- Food for food pantries and contributions to food banks
- Clothes for clothes closets and drives
- Cost of transportation
- Special-event costs

While FEMA has not yet announced HMGP funding for COVID-19-related activities, it is anticipated that such funding may be available during the recovery phase of the COVID-19 response. In Superstorm Sandy, FEMA's program was a major source of funding for rebuilding.

"It is a good practice in general for not-for-profit organizations to keep track of in-kind contributions, as well as to congratulate volunteers for their donated goods and services," said Rick Reinhard, executive director of A Future With Hope, GNJ's vital mission partner.

The New Jersey VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), represented by GNJ's Volunteer Disaster Relief Coordinator Tom O'Hearn and Hope Center Developer Tara Maffei, also strongly advocates that not-for-profit organizations keep track of in-kind contributions now, in preparation for potential FEMA funding. Additional information about FEMA in-kind contributions may be found on the FEMA and Corporation For National and Community Service websites.

Cultivate College Internship Applications are Open

Next Generation Ministries' Cultivate College Internship, which starts October 1, is a rewarding opportunity for a college student who is eager to learn about ministry, worship and more! Applications for this paid year-long internship are open now.

"My faith is growing in ways I could never imagine. I am being pushed to think more theologically not only on issues of faith but as I approach my daily tasks in ministry," said one student.

For more information, visit gnjnextgen.org. Funds for Cultivate have been made possible by a grant from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.



NEXT GENERATION
 UNITED METHODISTS
 OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Healthcare For Uninsured and Underinsured

New Jersey has federally qualified health centers for people regardless of their ability to pay at www.nj.gov.

An appointment is required, and testing is provided.

Latest Upper Room Issue Available for Free Download

Since churches are unable to meet and gather safely in their buildings during the coronavirus pandemic, The Upper Room is offering the May/June 2020 issue, both in English and Spanish, as a free, downloadable PDF.

The Upper Room also has created a webpage featuring resources to help create and maintain spiritual wellness during anxious times. More information can be found at upperroom.org.

Rev. Sayre Turns 100!

Rev. Dr. Charles A. Sayre celebrated his 100th birthday on April 19 as people across Greater New Jersey reflected on the life of a man who has transformed so many lives through his strong faith, courageous actions and humility. The retired pastor who served Haddonfield UMC for 25 years was featured in the April 23 issue of NJ.com.

The impression Rev. Sayre made on the lives of so many, particularly in southern New Jersey, has been shown in many ways over the years, including back in 2011 when the Respond, Inc. New Workers Job Development Center in North Camden was dedicated as the Sayre Training Complex. He had established the nonprofit, Respond, Inc. back in 1967 to better support the urban communities of Camden.

The recent article can be found by searching "Sharp as a tack, retired N.J. minister enjoys a birthday celebration 100 years in the making" on NJ.com or by visiting www.nj.com/coronavirus/2020/04/sharp-as-a-tack-retired-nj-minister-enjoys-a-birthday-celebration-100-years-in-the-making.html.

2020 Mission u is Cancelled

Greater New Jersey United Methodist Women's annual event, Mission u was cancelled following advisement from the national United Methodist Women (UMW) in light of the Coronavirus pandemic. However, UMW will be hosting an online event.

More details will be announced at a later date. Visit www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/mission-u for more information.

Each year Mission u makes contributions to mission projects. This year's donations included The Camden Neighborhood Center and IGNITE Camping Ministries for arts and crafts supplies.

Donations can be sent to your UMW local unit treasurer or District UMW treasurer or to our GNJ's Mission u Treasurer, Carol Bloch at 8 Kayharts Ln, Washington, NJ 07882.

Mission u will be planning for the next gathering event in July 2021. More information is forthcoming.

Lay Servant Graduation Cancelled

The Lay Servant Graduation scheduled for June 6 for those who completed Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 classes has been cancelled.

Please stay tuned for more information on the GNJ website at www.gnjumc.org/lay-servant-ministries/.

OBITUARIES

Rev. John Q. Taylor, retired elder, died March 4. A memorial service was held March 12 at Zion UMC. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to the church at 22 E. Main Street, Myerstown, PA 17067. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Janet Taylor (spouse) at 11 Abbey Lane, Newmanstown, PA 17073.

Carol White, surviving spouse of Pastor Johnnie R. White, died April 13. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to Hamilton Memorial UMC at 609 Arctic Ave, Atlantic City, NJ 08401-5303. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Reuben White at 804 Cedar Lane, Pleasantville, NJ 08232.

Rev. George N. Frederick, retired elder, died April 10. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to the National Kidney Foundation in memory of Rev. George N. Frederick. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Marjorie Frederick at 343 Lauderdale Court, Kissimmee, FL 34759.

Rev. Layton Anderson, retired elder, died April 13. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to Mobility Worldwide in memory of Rev. Layton Anderson. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Viola Anderson at PO Box 1012, Penney Farms, FL 32079.

John Cameron Horne, spouse of retired full elder, Betty A. Horne, died April 15. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to Christ Church UMC at 644 E 27th. St., Paterson, NJ 07504-1923 for the boiler fund. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Rev. Betty Horne at 317 Isabella Ave., Irvington, NJ 07111-2507.

Please note that best practices for funerals are located on our website's COVID-19 Resources under "Worship."

Correction to the April 2020 issue:

On page 4, column 4, paragraphs 3 and 4 in the story, Black Leaders Celebrate and Lift Voices at Turning Point UMC," it should have read Kay Scott is lay member for the Camden: New Beginnings UMC where the Rev. Calvin Woods is the pastor. We regret the error.



In response to the 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)
- Utilizing personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Following CDC recommendations
- Monitoring all HomeWorks (homecare division) clients, caregivers, and nurses

The health and well-being of United Methodist Communities' residents, associates, and volunteers is paramount. 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
umccommunities.org



The Miracles Everywhere Campaign is Extending to Include a new COVID-19 Relief Fund

Our region is hurting. And when people hurt, United Methodists step up to assist. From 9/11 to Superstorm Sandy, our members and our churches have set a high standard of living as Christ's hands and feet in the world. Though this pandemic is different in some ways and our ability to provide hands-on assistance is limited, our reaction must be the same: we must be a beacon of hope.

The new Fund will provide urgent relief to:

- Individuals who have lost jobs, for their groceries and utilities.
- Local churches and Hope Centers to meet their communities' needs with food pantries and soup kitchens, senior care, and other frontline outreach.
- Innovative new missions and ministries that emerge to help our neighbors and neighborhoods recover from this terrible virus.

To Donate to the COVID-19 Relief Fund:

- Go online to www.gnjumc.org/miracleseverywhere
- Text MiraclesEverywhere to 77977
- Send a check with memo "COVID-19 Relief" to GNJ at the address below.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
ABOUT THE MIRACLES
EVERYWHERE CAMPAIGN,
CONTACT:**



Michaela Murray-Nolan | Director of Development
O: 732.359.1045 | E: mmurraynolan@gnjumc.org

Mission and Resource Center Address:
205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune NJ 07753