

THE RELAY

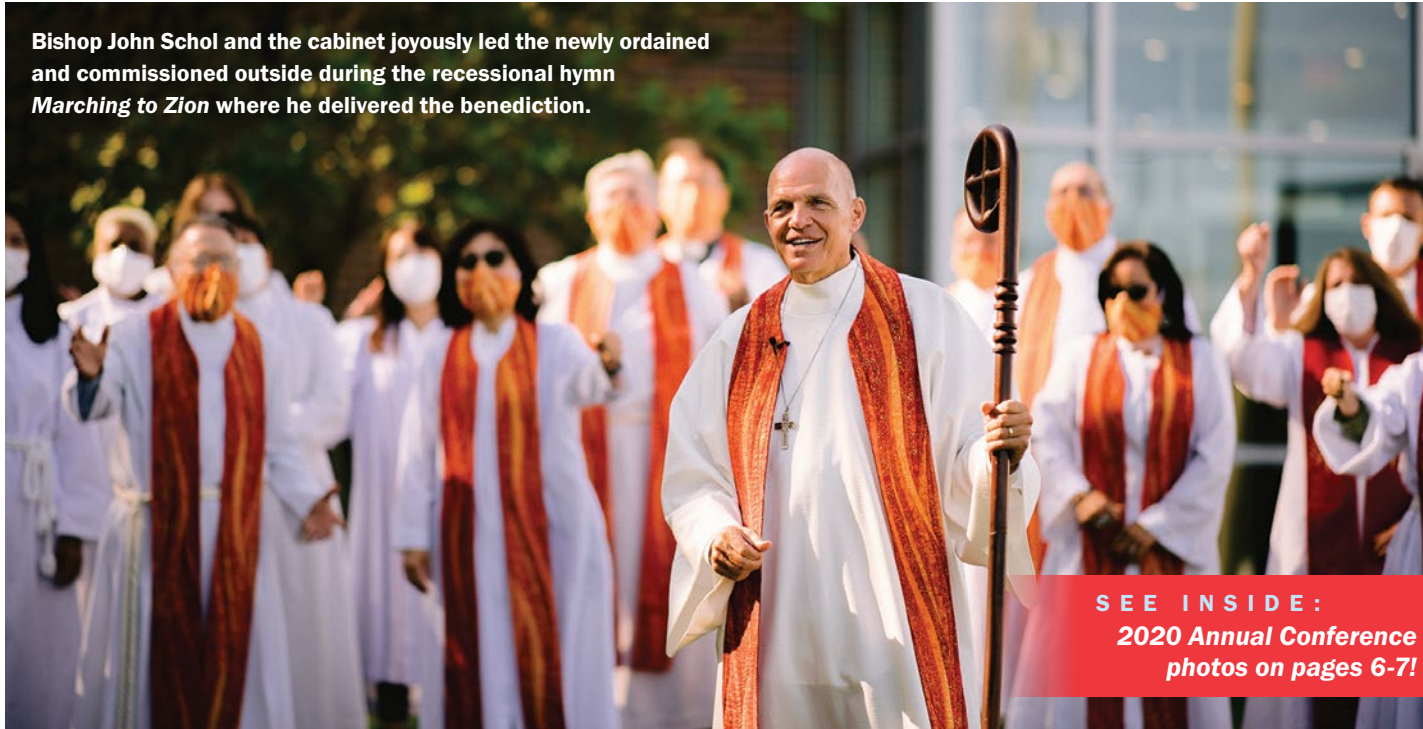
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

OCTOBER 2020
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gnjumc.org

Courage Abounds at the 2020 Annual Conference

Bishop John Schol and the cabinet joyously led the newly ordained and commissioned outside during the recessional hymn *Marching to Zion* where he delivered the benediction.



SEE INSIDE:
2020 Annual Conference
photos on pages 6-7!

Photo by Shari DeAngelo

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

From the passage of landmark legislation to the sharing of joyful worship experiences, the first virtual Annual Conference took bold steps and created surprising intimacy for the 857 registered members participating over Zoom and thousands more watching via YouTube.

"These masks can't hide our joy," said Bishop John Schol. "These masks can't hide the sense of God we have with us today!" He opened the two days of conferencing with an Episcopal Address that focused on overcoming the challenges we face.

Schol who urged the people of GNJ to be resilient in his address, said, "We are God's divine power together. God, give me blessings so I may be a blessing to others."

"My courage comes from God," said Schol as he offered perseverance and hope. "Crisis deepened conviction, and conviction gave rise to courage. You sacrificed, and God is resurrecting."

Signs of courage were evident throughout the two days as the people of GNJ passed *A Journey of Hope* (see insert) and voted to support Black Lives Matter, which move the church forward in its

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Baptized Forever: The Installation of District Superintendent William M. Williams III

By Heather Mistretta
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God's light clearly shines through Rev. William M. Williams III, and this was not more evident than on September 12 when he was installed as the Gateway North District Superintendent. The mood was full of life and light from the spirit and smiles of his children to his message of hope in being baptized Forever.

Amid many smiles, laughs and love, Rev. Williams was honored with clergy and laity from Gateway North reading scriptures in eight different languages and by a message from his parents, Dr. Idalene Williams and Retired Elder Rev. William M. Williams Jr who sent a video from Omaha.

"William has done a lot to prepare for this role, but nothing prepared him more than his love of Jesus Christ and giving his life to Christ," said Bishop John Schol.

"IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO
EMBRACE WHO YOU ARE.
THERE'S STILL TIME TO
LET GOD ENCIRCLE YOU."

—Rev. William M. Williams III

After accepting the gifts from representatives from Gateway North and his family including a pitcher of water from his daughter, Julia to "Rev. Daddy," Williams embraced the stole from the late Rev. Myrna Bethke, presented by Cape Atlantic District Superintendent Brian Roberts on behalf of the cabinet.

In his message, Williams encouraged people to strive for more and make their communities better places and "make a difference for good" for the "vulnerable and the voiceless."

"You never know where their love will allow you to end up," said Williams who formerly served Asbury UMC in Atlantic City and Westfield UMC. "It is never too late to embrace who you are. There's still time to let God encircle you."

He recalled with affection how his grandmother used to tell him to never let anyone stop your praise and to share that praise with others.

Citing the words of the late Rev. Gil Caldwell who he called "a giant in our world" and "a liberative voice in the UMC," Williams said, "Too many of us hide our light under a bushel where it is not seen and in time it goes out...We must remember who we are and use that light to make a difference."

Williams shared that light in the form of a song when he unabashedly sang a

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Sharing Ministries and Missions Together

By Heather Mistretta
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"Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways 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."

—ATTRIBUTED TO JOHN WESLEY

NEPTUNE, NJ

When John Wesley shared the message to do all the good you can by all the means you can he likely didn't mean all this doing should be a solitary job. He saw the power of connectionalism and how the whole of many parts could make the greatest impacts around our communities and the world.

United Methodism is built on the power of connectionalism. Our systems and processes, clergy appointments and resourcing are all based on the notion that the church can do more together than an individual can do alone.

"Our church wants to show how connected we are," said Pastor Sungduk Kim of Dingmans Ferry UMC, a church in Pike County who is doing its best to feed, clothe and nurture the youth in its community [see sidebar].

Dingmans Ferry was one of 15 GNJ churches who recently donated the



Consistent with wanting to bless others by tithing its PPP funding, Tuckerton UMC helped to reopen Manna's Farm Market after it was forced to close amid the pandemic.

value of 10 percent of the funding it received through the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) of the CARES Act back to the COVID-19 Relief Fund for congregations who were denied funding. "We believe God is not only going to take care of our local church, but God is going to take care of everyone."

"We envision a Dingmans Ferry United Methodist Church family who will reach out with Christian compassion, certainty and a sense of peace, and who will joyfully welcome, mutually embrace and wholeheartedly support them as our own—in a spirit of Christ-like Faith, Hope and Love."

The people of Dingmans Ferry UMC value the connection within the church and also throughout their local community.

"This community needs help, and we're doing our best to help them," said Pastor Kim who added that at the onset of the pandemic, he and his church packaged lunches for more than 40 families in need for three weeks.

Although its Baby Blessing Pantry, which normally provides formula, clothes and other supplies to young families with young children, has had to close its doors because of the pandemic, Dingmans Ferry UMC collects

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COURAGE

We Have Come This Far by Faith

In a moment,

Everything we knew as normal, was not normal;
Everything we knew as typical, was no longer typical;
Everything we knew how to do in ministry, changed.

Our world, relationships and ministry were all turned upside down.

We had a choice, isolate and be paralyzed, or seize new technologies, new ways of being in relationship, new ways of ministry that included how we worship, gather in small groups, serve others, make new disciples, and give generously. Within two weeks of being confined to our homes, 500 congregations, led by courageous pastors and congregational leaders, changed how they would be the church of Jesus Christ in Greater New Jersey.

We have come this far by faith and there is no turning back. We have been called for such a time as this and in the midst of changes, we are transforming ministry and lives.

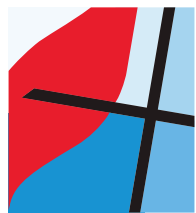
Because of our deep and abiding faith in God through Jesus Christ, when the world turned upside down, we stood up and stayed faithful to our core values and mission—to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Crisis led us to deeper conviction, and our conviction turned into courage.

The cross has two sides, one side representing sacrifice and the other resurrection. In the midst of the crisis, you became the cross, making sacrifices, which is leading to resurrection and renewed hope.

We have come this far by faith and we are not turning back. We have been called to be the cross, sacrificing and releasing God's resurrection power.

When COVID-19 raced across the world and our nation, GNJ leadership deliberately and swiftly moved \$5 million to provide congregations with a four-month shared ministry apportionment holiday, to provide grants for emergency food, and to help people in our communities pay utilities, and grants for congregational expenses including clergy salaries and benefits. GNJ through sacrifice, is witnessing a great resurrection, and hope is being reborn. Here are a few signs of the resurrected Christ among us.

- Our churches expanded their feeding programs to meet the rising needs of people in our communities, and we are now giving away 20,000 meals a month.
- We gave \$1 million to congregations and Hope Centers for new ministries and to continue to grow our mission.
- We assisted congregations and GNJ ministries to complete Payroll Protection Program (PPP) applications, which led to more than \$8 million in financial assistance through the PPP.
- We moved Next Generation Ministries online to engage young people in new ways.
- We opened our sixth college campus ministry at The College of New Jersey through the Trinity United Methodist church in Ewing. Friends, we opened a college campus ministry during the pandemic.



THE RELAY

UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

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- By all accounts we are achieving one of our most important goals, no spread of COVID-19 through United Methodist activity. Thank you for the precautions you are taking.
- We developed and are proposing to this annual conference session, A Journey of Hope plan to end the sin of racism as part of our ministry and mission. This plan is essential for our vitality and disciple-making.
- And I am here to share good news with you today. We have received a \$1 million grant to assist with our work in ending the sin of racism. Yes, that is right, a \$1 million grant from the Lily Endowment Inc. to GNJ. Praise God!

We are able to do these things with God's help and the strong leadership of clergy, laity and staff. Everyone is stepping forward to lead courageously through our current challenges and support one another. Crisis deepened conviction, and conviction gave rise to courage. You sacrificed, and God is resurrecting.

We've come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord, trusting in the Holy Word, and we can't turn around, we've come this far by faith.

While we have made strong progress, three challenges seek to deter us, even frighten us and cause doubt among us. These are real challenges, and we must face them with even deeper conviction and courage. As we face these challenges, God will strengthen us for the journey ahead.

The first challenge is grief and sadness.

- The death of loved ones, including members of our clergy has been doubly hard during COVID-19 because of the number of people who died, and the reality that we could not be with them in their passing hours as well as the difficulty that we could not honor and celebrate their lives as we would like.
- The pandemic has hastened the closing of churches. Sixteen churches are to be voted on to close this year, seven of which were pushed to this point by COVID-19.
- A number of leaders are struggling with fatigue as they continue to work with new technology, and now a number of pastors face the dual challenge of reopening buildings and continuing their online communities.

Today we mourn the loss of more than 200,000 people in the United States and more than one million around the world. You Lord are our Shepherd, we shall not want, you lead us by green pastures, you lead us beside still waters, even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will not fear, you God you are with us, your staff comforts us.

The second challenge we face is ministry in a strange land.

- After moving to online worship, we experienced an initial surge in worship attendance in April and May. People need God in times like these. But now, attendance is leveling off and is even declining in more than 50% of our congregations.
- Transitioning to in-person worship is difficult. In most cases we are seeing less than 30% of our worshipers attending in-person worship once it reopens.
- Uncertainties within the denomination continue to disrupt the mission in some of our congregations. We may need to look at what steps we can take to help congregations and clergy get to the next place of where God is calling them, particularly in light of a real possibility that there will not be a General Conference in 2021 because of the pandemic and we are a global body meaning visas will not be available.

In the midst of ministry in a strange land, Jeremiah speaks to us and says, Seek the well-being, the shalom of the community right where you are, for in its shalom you will find your shalom. God did not bring us to this place for our destruction, but for a future with hope. (Jeremiah 29: 7 and 11)

Ministry will be different when COVID-19 is defeated. We cannot turn back. We will not be able to resume a pre-COVID-19 ministry like a pandemic never occurred. People will expect online options for worshiping, gathering in small groups and engaging in meetings. Digital ministry will be an important component of developing leaders, making disciples of Jesus Christ and growing vital congregations for the transformation of the world. We are committed to assist leaders and congregations to adapt to the new and emerging future ministry.

The third challenge we are facing is ending the sin of racism. This year we have witnessed again the deep pain, division, violence, riots, oppression and even death.

Black lives matter. Racism from its beginning is rooted in perpetuating a lie, that some people because of the color of their skin do not matter, that they are not fully human. This lie has been perpetuated against Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics/Latinx and Asians.

I invite White people to remember with me a time when you felt that you did not matter, you didn't count, that you were less than, even less than human. Remember how it felt. Remember what it did to your very soul. Well now just imagine if this was your experience day after day, month after month, year after year, generation after generation. This is the experience of People of Color.

Any time someone does not see that others matter just like you do, it is an indictment against our Creator God. An indictment that the Creator was flawed in creating humanity. Racism ultimately is a sin against God. It is a complete turning away from God.

A Journey of Hope plan urgently calls us to work together to end the sin of racism in GNJ. Many are already on the journey and have made progress in their congregations, homes and communities. Keep making progress. There is more work to do. I call all of us to follow the scriptures,

In Christ there is neither, neither Greek nor Jew, bound nor free, male nor female. With God there is neither, lessor than or more important than, we are all one in Christ, we are all of sacred worth. -Galatians 3:28

We can't turn around and go back to a view held by white supremacists, to the rhetoric and behavior that oppresses; we must press on, we've come this far by faith and there is still more journey for us to travel.

The challenges of grief, ministering in a new land and racism are real and cannot be denied nor neglected. We all are called to work together and support one another. This will require compassion and sympathy as people lose loved ones and congregations close. It will require empathy and support for leaders who are learning new skills, who are frustrated by the pandemic because they cannot be in person to visit the sick, preach the Good News and counsel the hurting. And we need to be strong and courageous and act together to end the sin of racism.

This is hard work, but I have never seen the people of GNJ shy away from hard work. You have been strong in the face of the winds of Superstorm Sandy, you have faced down a pandemic and are leading forward, you are choosing to be an equitable, inclusive and just church—you are difference makers. You are sacrificing and releasing God's resurrection. This is no time to turn around, it is time for bold, risk-taking courageous faith following the cross of Jesus Christ that will lead us forward. God is with you and will not let you go.

We have come this far by faith, we can't turn around, we will journey together for what God has next for GNJ. 🇺🇸

WE ARE NOW ENTERING A SEASON OF GIVING

As followers of Christ we are asked to give of our time, talent and treasure.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO GIVE IN THE AREA OF MISSION:

TIME: Share the Good News in word and deed

- Volunteer at a GNJ Hope Center or local community organization. You can also register to volunteer hands-on or virtually via NJ VOAD.
www.gnjumc.org/mission
- Call a shut-in for fellowship and to assist with any needs they may have.
- Distribute meals and care packages.
- Advocate against injustice. Visit UMW's website to get started.
www.unitedmethodistwomen.org

TALENT: Serve using your gifts

- Support children and youth who are learning virtually by providing classroom space in your church, adults to support and tutor the students and classroom materials/supplies including technology and wifi.
- Create a support group to journey alongside and resource persons seeking employment.
- Become a mentor to someone in your congregation or the community.

TREASURE: Support missions financially

- Give to the Miracles Everywhere Campaign to support COVID-19 relief efforts: *Hope Centers, NextGen, GNJ's Tanzania Partnership and GNJ's Puerto Rico partnership.*
- Give to UMCOR to support disaster relief efforts locally and globally.
- Support United Methodist ministries and missionaries through the Advance.
www.umcmision.org/give-to-mission
Take it a step further by inviting them to itinerate at your church virtually!



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON MISSION, CONTACT:

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awilson@gnjumc.org | 732-359-1043



UNITED METHODISTS
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PURSuing CLERGY EXCELLENCE
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY



Rev. Dr. Frank L. Fowler III, senior pastor at Trinity Church in Hackettstown, explores a new type of worship outside for his congregation.

Navigating...and Sustaining Worship in the New Day—The All New Leadership Academy

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

“Leadership is not some mystical quality that some possess, and others do not. As humans, we all have what it takes, and we all need to use our leadership.”

—DAVID MARQUETTE IN
TURN THE SHIP AROUND

If there's one thing GNJ churches have learned in the past several months, it is how to be more resilient and innovative in their worship experiences. The Laity Board has prepared to help our clergy and laity with the all new Leadership Academy so that laity and clergy can be prepared as ministry continues to evolve. Kicking off the all-new virtual program this month is a three-part learning series “Navigating Worship in the New Day” with GNJ Director of Worship Lan Wilson.

“Before we were looking at survival. Now we're looking at sustainability,” said Wilson who plans to emphasize the importance of offering a hybrid worship service now that churches are facing reopening challenges and technology can connect with people that seemed unreachable before.

This first round of the new Leadership Academy will set the stage for three more programs, each designed to resource leaders with new skills to strengthen their congregations.

“It's time to raise the ceiling of excellence, and it's time to make people feel welcome,” said Wilson. As part of the program, he said he will be exploring hospitality and how it looks in this new environment as well as looking at hybrid worship resources involving the Breakthrough Worship Series. The curriculum will also cover copyright

licensing, worship presentation software and Open Broadcaster Software (OBS) Studio for high-performing live streaming and recording.

When asked what part of himself he hopes to bring to the program, Wilson said, “There's a lot I've experienced, and I've had to stay two steps ahead in order to help our churches.”

Wilson has experienced many different church settings from his early days in a small rural church, to his upbringing at a dynamic urban church, to one of the fastest growing churches in Kentucky, to new church plants, and finally to GNJ. He enjoys connecting with churches and leaders everywhere.

“As a 30-something, I think I'm exactly the kind of person the church is losing. If we're awake to it, this is an opportunity to grow the church again,” said Wilson, who has been leading worship and sharing his love of music since he was 10 growing up in Kentucky amid a family of four generations of pastors.

Future programs in the Leadership Academy will include “Making Worship Work Behind the Scenes” in November with Chuck DelCamp, of Haddonfield UMC and chair of GNJ's Commission on Communications, followed by “These Small Groups Make a Difference” in January with Rev. Gina Yeske, Director of Small Groups, Daniel Jimenez and Vivian Naa-Awa Nelson-Appiah and then finally “Missional Engagement that Opens Hearts, Minds and Doors” in February with Ashley Wilson, Director of Mission, Rev. Luana Cook Scott of Morristown UMC and Andrea Wren-Hardin, Hope Center Developer.

For more details and to register (deadline is one week prior to the start of each session), visit www.gnjumc.org/2020-leadership-academy/.

“This is an excellent resource. It has given me the opportunity to think outside the box and do something different.”

— Rev. Elouise Hill, Challenger of Galilee UMC

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www.gnjumc.org/breakthrough/2021-worship-series



BREAKTHROUGH

A GNJ guide to best practices for worship

Finding Hope and Hospitality in a Book at Island Heights UMC

By Denise Herschel
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ISLAND HEIGHTS, NJ

With the issue of systemic racism and injustice at the forefront of the news Island Heights United Methodist church is stepping up to meet the challenge of educating their local church community and beyond with their small group, Hope and Hospitality, expanding their goals to meet the changing needs of the community

“Hope and Hospitality’s usual mission is to assist and learn about newly arrived immigrants. Due to the pandemic and recent events, we decided to expand our focus,” said Island Heights UMC church member and Hope and Hospitality group coordinator Cindy Roche. “Many feel that the issues of discriminatory practices in our country deserve our attention. Thus, we have chosen this issue as our focus.”

Roche added that after much thoughtful discussion, the group decided their first step in educating themselves would be to organize a meeting in which church members and other community members could read and discuss the highly acclaimed book, “Just Mercy” by Bryan Stevenson, an account of his decades-long career as a legal advocate for mar-

“HOPE AND HOSPITALITY’S USUAL MISSION IS TO ASSIST AND LEARN ABOUT NEWLY ARRIVED IMMIGRANTS. DUE TO THE PANDEMIC AND RECENT EVENTS, WE DECIDED TO EXPAND OUR FOCUS, MANY FEEL THAT THE ISSUES OF DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES IN OUR COUNTRY DESERVE OUR ATTENTION. THUS, WE HAVE CHOSEN THIS ISSUE AS OUR FOCUS.”

—Cindy Roche, church member of Island Heights UMC and group coordinator of Hope and Hospitality

ginalized people who have been either falsely convicted or harshly sentenced. In his book, the Harvard Law graduate describes the racism, corruption and cruelty that pervade American court systems and lead to the systemic abuse of marginalized communities.

“We introduced this book to the congregation as a way to educate ourselves and have discussions about ways to combat this type of racism. This is not part of any previous book discussion group,” she said.

“We usually have about 30 people total participating who are evenly divided among Zoom meetings and masked socially distanced meetings with seven people who are not church members currently attending our group discussions.”

Roche added that the outreach so far has been to invite a local Island Heights non-church related book club to join the



Members of Island Heights UMC address racism, corruption and cruelty as part of a discussion centered around the book, “Just Mercy.”

discussion as well as individual church members inviting people who may be interested in the subject.

“The group has met four times so far, and we are still in the process of educating ourselves on systemic racism. Some very general thoughts have included meeting with local churches of color and with local school districts about their curriculum in regards to the history of racism as well as working with incarcerated people in local prisons and in other justice-related ways such as supporting bail bond funds or defense lawyer funds,” she said.

Roche continued that the process to initiate a larger outreach program will be a “longer one than something that will kick off in the fall” due to the pandemic.

She said, “We are currently just starting a discussion on ways other churches can be involved. One church member is also researching our Island Heights community’s history in terms of race.”

With conversations on how to move forward taking place, Island Heights UMC is leading the way for other churches as well as local communities to join in on the conversation, with Roche saying that she is hopeful that they can educate others and find ways to dismantle systemic racism in our society.

“If we can begin to identify our role in the perpetuation of these practices, we will be able to determine some ways we can be a part of the process that will eventually eradicate the unequal justice that exists today,” Roche said.

For more information about the Island Heights UMC social justice outreach mission, email the church at office@ihumc.org, or contact Cindy Roche at 908-507-5311. Island Heights UMC is located at 111 Ocean Avenue in Island Heights, NJ. 📍





JOIN THE MAKER'S PLACE DECEMBER DIAPER DRIVE

Families are struggling to afford diapers and wipes due to COVID-19. Help them make a change this Advent season.

Host a collection drive or donate diapers, wipes, and pullups for the Maker's Place "Diaper Depot" from Nov. 29 to Dec. 20. Virtual options available. More at www.makersplace.org/donate

 **National Diaper Bank Network**

 P.O. Box 54
Trenton, NJ, 08601
 (609) 751-9128

 hello@makersplace.org
 www.makersplace.org

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2020

2020 Annual Conference

Continued from page 1

goal to live out baptismal vows by ending the sin of racism. Rev. Vanessa Wilson, who chairs the Commission of Religion and Race (GNJCORR) voiced her affirmation by saying the actions of the conference “remember, acknowledge, commit and move forward to a journey of hope” for all People of Color.

GNJ voted to sell Camp Aldersgate, enabling Next Generation Ministries to bolster programming for youth and honor the mission and legacy of Henry Appenzeller and Dale Forsman.

“The passing of legislation for the sale of Camp Aldersgate is bittersweet for me,” said Next Generation Ministries Executive Director Eric Drew. “I’m in ministry today because I went to Music Camp at Aldersgate and met Mark Miller and Tanya Bennett. I sang in Appenzeller Chapel. I swam in the Forsman Pool Complex as a counselor. Both my brothers were music campers after me, and my parents would attend the final program even after we were all too old for camp.

“What is encouraging to me is that it feels like GNJ can finally take steps forward, together. Pastors and people in our congregations have a deep love of Aldersgate and desire to resurrect the transformational Spirit present

there. The camp properties will become state parks that all can access. The state will care for the grounds and Appenzeller Chapel, and through some proceeds from the sale, we will be able to invest in the future of GNJ Camps and Retreats, passing forward the legacy of missionary Henry Appenzeller, and passing on the spirit of transformation that Rev. Dale Forsman was so passionate about.”

Other legislation that passed included a new slate of leaders as a part of the nominations report, conference advanced specials including the addition of Justice for our Neighbors and the closing of 16 churches.

“We grieve with our sisters and brothers and recognize the pain they are feeling,” said Delaware Bay District Superintendent Glenn Conaway as he presented the churches that closed.

But Schol noted that closing a building does not mean a ministry will end and shared as an example Trinity UMC in Ventor will continue a feeding ministry as they work with another local church and the Amish to serve their community. “This is a great sign of ecumenical work!” he said.

GNJ also passed a \$12 million budget that continues and expands the mission and ministry of the conference while keeping the percentage that churches contribute in shared ministries flat. For six years the amount

congregations are apportioned has been reduced. The apportionment percentage continues at 15.2%, which is lower than the 15.6% goal set four years ago.

The session also featured the Service of Remembrance with a profound and heartfelt sermon from Skylands District Superintendent Rev. Eunice Vega-Perez. The service honored the 50 clergy and lay members who passed in the last year and a half. She said, “Today we celebrate the cloud of witnesses. We remember them. They are with us in spirit.”

The Service of Passage honored 22 retiring clergy who together have served 527 years of ministry and recognized the service of elders, newly ordained and commissioned, local pastors and laity. Representatives from each group lifted the stole of the late District Superintendent Myrna Bethke to pass on ministry to the next generation.

The people of GNJ celebrated the Miracles Everywhere Campaign, which in the past six months has funded more than \$800,000 grants from the COVID-19 Relief Fund, a fund set up to help those struggling in the face of a pandemic and the ensuing economic downturn. The funding has enabled churches to remain vital and distribute 20,000 meals each month.

Interspersed throughout the sessions and services was beautiful music led by Director of Worship Lan



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“THERE’S MUCH WORK TO BE DONE, BUT TOGETHER WE CAN DO IT.”
Rev. Vanessa Wilson



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ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2020

Wilson and the GNJ Praise Band. Music sent in from local churches also played each morning before the session began.

Twenty-two candidates processed into the MRC, marching and dancing to celebrate the Service of Ordination and Commissioning. Bishop Schol called the candidates to be mindful that this is a time for grace, to help others, to break down division and to build unity. Bishop Schol said in his sermon during the service, “There can be no courage without fear” as he embraced resiliency and the powers of God within us. “Embrace your fears,” he said.

Those commissioned and ordained included:

Kimberly Burse, Sung Il Lee, Cricket Brennan, Rachel Callender, Joseph Jueng, Rosario Quiñones, Eun Ok Cha, Juyeon Lee, Marissa van der Valk, Min Ho Cho, Hee Young Lim, Jessica Winderweedle, Peggy Holder, Jisun Nam, Yoseb Jeon, Miso Park, Hyun Hui Kim, Michael Reed, Seunghyun Lee, Dianna Stone, Joshua Mularski, Nova Villa Vitug-Thomas.

Bishop Ciriaco Q. Francisco of the Bulacan Philippines Annual Conference joined (through Zoom) for the examination of elders to ordain. Nova Villa Vitug-Thomas who was ordained as a member of the Bulacan Philippines Annual Conference, and will serve in Greater New Jersey. 🇵🇭

GNJ Commits to A Journey of Hope to End the Sin of Racism

The people of Greater New Jersey celebrated the passage of *A Journey of Hope*, which commits congregations to boldly work together to end the sin of racism and create a more racially just, inclusive and equitable church.

“Today we celebrate progress on our journey together,” said Pastor Kermit Moss who leads the Christ Church in Paterson and as a member of the Journey of Hope team worked this summer to bring the legislation before the Annual Conference. “Today we celebrate God’s faithfulness. Today we acknowledge that there is continued work to do based on the discussion and amendments. Tomorrow we get back to work because the journey continues. The journey will be challenging, but God is our companion on the road.”

The legislation commits the people of GNJ to take transformational measures and actions including:

- Resources to assist leaders, congregations and communities to end racism.
- Leadership that is diverse and culturally competent to lead GNJ to end racism.
- Ministry to develop African American/Black and other congregations of color.
- Policies and Procedures that do not lead to harm or bias against African American/Black or any other racial group.
- Investment in leadership, congregations and ministries to repair harm, start new and grow existing congregations and recruit and develop more transformational leaders.

When asked what congregations could do to help foster *A Journey of Hope* and its urgent calling to end the sin of racism, Judy Colorado, a member of the team and laity from UMC of Kenilworth said, “Leaders should live courageously. Invite congregations to learn. Have conversations, listen with no judgment.”

Vanessa Wilson affirmed the work before the conference, “There’s much work to be done, but together we can do it.”

“As we learn, we will perfect,” said Bishop Schol. “As we learn, we’ll learn to get better. This is a day of new beginnings.”

To read *A Journey of Hope*, visit www.gnjumc.org/2020annualconference/journey-of-hope/.



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“AS WE LEARN, WE WILL PERFECT, AS WE LEARN, WE’LL LEARN TO GET BETTER. THIS IS A DAY OF NEW BEGINNINGS.”
Bishop John Schol



10

Photo 1: Skylands District Superintendent Eunice Vegas-Perez cheers the candidates to be ordained and commissioned.; **2:** Jisun Nam in praise and prayer as she prepares for her commissioning.; **3:** Pastor Shelley Smith from Ferry Ave. UMC was elected Conference Secretary as a part of the nominations report.; **4:** Family members, Rev. Shawn Callender Hogan and Rev. Clark Callender, look on as Rachel Callender is commissioned.; **5:** Northern Shore District Superintendent has a moment of fun with the camera crew.; **6:** Vasanth Victor, representing CF&A presented the budget virtually. GNJ passed a \$12 million budget keeping the shared ministry formula at 15.2%.; **7:** Conference Lay Leader Rosa Williams raises the stole of the late Rev. Myrna Bethke during the Service of Passage.; **8:** Min Ho Cho celebrates his commissioning. **9:** Rev. Joe Monahan of Medford UMC served on the production team behind the scenes helping to make Annual Conference virtual.; **10:** Bishop John Schol bows in prayer during Annual Conference 2020.

Supporting Black Lives, Just a Phone Call Away: (888) 300-8105

After listening to the late Rev. Gil Caldwell speak at the Capital District Prayer Vigil held in Willingboro in June, Rev. Antoinette Gaboton Moss knew that more needed to be done to fight racism and keep Black lives safe, particularly in Middlesex County where she lives and works.

"It struck a chord with me. After three days of wrestling with my thoughts and talking to God, I knew work had to be done beyond just talking about it," she said.

The Black Community Watchline (BCW), which provides free and confidential support to Black people in the county experiencing racist violence or abuse, was born and went live September 9 in Feaster Park in New Brunswick where nine years earlier an unarmed Black man was shot and killed by police. The date coincided with the 281st anniversary of the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina, which was the largest slave uprising in the colonies and ended the way many others did, in bloodshed with the slave owners doubling their efforts to maintain law and order.

"We cannot ignore the past or present. We're hoping to give people a resource they can turn to when they need it," Moss said, adding that the newly formed group is in solidarity with all people of color and those who are marginalized and facing discrimination.

The senior pastor at Trinity UMC in Highland Park and now also the executive director of the BCW, said, "You could be dressed in a suit, but you can't change the color of your skin."

Moss, also the mother of three children, recalled how when her oldest son, who is in college, left late one night, she voiced her concern. "He told me, 'I have the number in my favorites,' and knowing that he had the Watchline number gave me peace of mind."

Moss wants other people to also have that peace of mind and feel safe, so six volunteer dispatchers, who undergo extensive training, are standing by 24 hours a day, seven days a week to take calls and record the incident. The dispatchers also encourage the callers to report their incidents with local authorities so that they are on public record.

The incidents can range from being followed in a store to the threat of violence on the streets. Although the

BCW is not a substitute for emergency services and urges anyone who's attacked or in danger to call 911 immediately and follow up with BCW when they're safe, Moss is hoping that the hotline will stop some incidents from escalating to a dangerous level.

In addition to taking calls from those who are experiencing racist acts, Moss said she also wants her White allies to call in if they witness any racist acts. Together, she hopes that by tracking racial profiling, police encounters, examples of institutional racism and whistleblower complaints and working in tandem with other local agencies who protect the marginalized, they can bring about transformative change and provide a layer of safety and hope that did not exist before.

The work clearly needs to be multifaceted, and working toward anti-racism is a consistent part of Moss' life. At Trinity UMC she and some church members have been meeting with another like-minded organization each week to discuss two books—White Fragility and How to Be an Anti-Racist. Through these conversations, the two groups are hoping to learn and institute change.

Moss, who was appointed to Trinity UMC this past July, is looking forward to beginning her M.Div. this spring at Boston University.

For more details or to get involved, visit BCW's website at www.blackcommunitywatchline.com and FB page at www.facebook.com/BCWatchline.

Black COMMUNITY WATCHLINE

ANNUAL ELECTION 2020

Mark Your Calendars!

Virtual Educational Sessions Coming Soon



**IMPORTANT CHANGES ARE COMING TO YOUR
CURRENT HEALTHFLEX BENEFITS**

EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS ARE SET FOR:

Oct 13: 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. | Oct 15: 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. | Oct 19: 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Learn more at: www.gnjumc.org/healthflexexchange

Installation

Continued from page 1

portion of the hymn, "Tomorrow," saying, "Here I stand. Won't you please let me in."

"We are people who are willing to take a journey of hope in order to live out boldly our baptismal vows," said Williams, adding that although these past several months have brought adversity, we all need to move forward with "a cheerful heart."

"Today can be the day we choose to participate in the divine invitation to make our moment, our homes, our communities, our church and our world a

better place...the day when ain't no rock gonna cry or shout out for me when who I am is one who is baptized forever by the love of Jesus."

More than 1,000 people joined in the service to watch the installation, and he encouraged them to post pictures of themselves playing in water and embrace the laughter that it brings and the love that our faith compels us to feel.

"The work of today's church needs a healthy and joyful you" because it is never too late to embrace your baptism.

To watch the installation, go to GNJ's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/GNJUMC



Laughs, inspirational moments and calls for action dominated Rev. Williams' sermon.



NEXT GENERATION
UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Cultivating and Exploring the Next Generation

By Heather Mistretta
hmistretta@gnjumc.org

The Cultivate: Summer of Exploration program kicked off its second year this summer with a good balance of familiarity and new faces. The program, led by Next Generation Ministries, is offered separately to both high school and college students. It is an opportunity to explore ministry “behind-the-scenes,” begin discerning a call to ministry and grow in leadership. It’s also a chance for clergy and church leaders to refine their own ministries while they guide and teach the youth. In the end, it’s a mutual learning experience.

“It’s a chance for students to try on ministry under the guidance of excellent mentorship,” said Youth and Campus Program Coordinator Ryan Clements. “Some of our students are coming back for a second time, and others are deciding that ministry is where they want to be.”

This summer there were five each of high school and college students interning with pastors in the local congregations. The college program will continue until May.

Although each program is designed for the specific age group, they both explore things like worship, children’s church, small groups and Bible study, church administration, congregational care, conflict resolution and more. It’s also a time for youth to determine if ministry is the path they plan to take.

After completing the eight-week high school internship last year, Braedon Dobrynio, of Wesley UMC South Plainfield, and Dalton Kaye, of Island Heights UMC, returned to be in the year-long college internship. Sara Schall also participated in the high school internship both last year



Ryan Clements, Youth and Campus Ministries Coordinator for Next Gen, leads the Cultivate highschool and college experiences.

now actively scouting seminaries to pursue being a pastor.

At Succasunna UMC, Rev. Myounghun Stephen Yun said he “was truly blessed by the ministry of Melissa Priester” as its intern for the high school program.

“Her active involvement, creativity and passion brought a new level of enthusiasm, excitement and joy in the life of the congregation. Working alongside me and two different ministry teams (Digital ministry and Education-VBS), Melissa developed new leadership skills and learned more about what it means to do ministry as a leader, which is fundamentally relational, collaborative and reflective in nature.”



David Geller, a member of the IGNITE Squad reinforced his calling at Exploration, a three-day conference sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministries.

“THE CULTIVATE: SUMMER OF EXPLORATION PROGRAM IS A CHANCE FOR STUDENTS TO TRY ON MINISTRY UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF EXCELLENT MENTORSHIP, SOME OF OUR STUDENTS ARE COMING BACK FOR A SECOND TIME, AND OTHERS ARE DECIDING THAT MINISTRY IS WHERE THEY WANT TO BE.”

—Ryan Clements, Next Generation Ministries
Youth and Campus Program Coordinator

and this year as a member of the First UMC of Avalon.

“This is how we hoped Cultivate would work: providing a pathway from high school to college to ministry,” said Clements.

Both inside and outside the church walls, youth are finding their callings.

Fabian Burgos Adorno is discerning that his call is to ministry with youth through camp and retreat ministries, so this year his internship is at Pinelands Center, while he is also leading the Morristown UMC youth ministry, where he served last year.

David Geller, who participated in the college internship under the tutelage of Pastor Erik Hall last year as a member of St. Andrew UMC, later that year participated in a three-day event in Orlando called Exploration, which was sponsored by the United Methodist Church’s General Board of Higher Education & Ministry. This experience reinforced his calling, and he is

He added, “We are grateful that the Cultivate Summer Internship program provided our youth with the opportunity to share this valuable experience with her own community of faith that wants to see her grow and flourish in the paths that God has laid out for her.”

Pastor Jack Fosbenner of First Millville UMC also saw the Cultivate program as a great opportunity, saying, “We really pulled Andrew into the running of the church. We gave him several areas of responsibility (led games outside for junior high, led devotions for junior high youth group, came up with a work project at Delanco Camp to include designing benches and picnic tables, getting volunteers, raising the funds, and seeing the project through, involvements in our weekly worship service).

When the internship was completed, Andrew continued to come into the



Fabian Burgos Adorno is discerning his call to ministry at Pinelands Camp and Retreat Center.

church and maintained the roles that he had started. He has even taken on the facilitation of our Samaritans Purse, Operation Christmas Child for this fall with a 200-shoebox goal. I believe this internship opportunity has moved Andrew

up to the next level in maturity as an adult leader.”

For more information about these programs, campus ministries, IGNITE Communities and others offered by Next Gen, visit <http://gnjnextgen.org/>.

A Life Lived with an Open Heart and Mind

Rev. Gil Caldwell liked to think of himself as a journalist at heart, he once said. The 86-year-old clergyman and Civil Rights activist was a dichotomy in the best and most profound way. In the 1960s he was part of the Selma “Bloody Sunday” march and the March on Washington alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. But his heart still had room in 2020 for a young person who had started a podcast addressing racial justice in Camden, a small group gathered at the Second Baptist Church Asbury Park for Martin Luther King Day weekend and a prayer vigil in Willingboro following the death of George Floyd.

Often by his side was his beloved wife of more than 60 years, Grace. Together they faced racism like not being allowed to be guests at the restaurants where they worked as teenagers, but that never dissuaded him from being vigilant and compassionate. One summer he served as a Student Migrant Minister for the Black Migrant workers who traveled from the south, to harvest crops in New Jersey, and in 2000 he was arrested for disrupting the quadrennial General Conference in 2000 when he showed his support for LGBTQ rights.

Caldwell’s ministry and passion to help others took him many places, serving as senior pastor of five predominantly African American churches and four mostly white churches over six decades from Massachusetts to Colorado. He was a member of Rocky Mountain Conference and served in GNJ at UMC churches in Asbury Park and Atlantic City. He was also a founding member of Black Methodists for Church Renewal.

No matter where his journey brought him his tireless, enthusiastic energy was contagious and filled the souls who met him.

Caldwell met Martin Luther King in May 1958 at Boston University School of Theology where he marched next to him and introduced him in 1965 before he spoke on Boston Common about Boston Public School racial segregation. He recently recalled Dr. King’s sermon before his assassination in 1968 remembering how he said to those gathered, “I may not get to the Promised Land with you, but I have seen the Promised Land.”

Despite medical issues later in life, Caldwell never gave up hope that racial justice was possible and was so encouraged by the recent development of a plan to address racial justice. In July he said, “I have long believed that Black United Methodists have a calling to be “Wounded Healers” of the UMC and the USA. Our hymnals include, Lift Every Voice and Sing, that has these words, “We have come over a way that tears have been watered traveling our path through the blood of the slaughtered.”

Ministries and Missions

Continued from page 1

donations to give to the nearby pantry at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church.

Dingmans Ferry is also filling the emerging childcare needs caused by the pandemic. Kim noted that its “Tree of Life” preschool is operating at half capacity with newly installed touchless faucets and soap dispensers and other innovative social distancing measures.

“Our church is very strong in mission, and we intend on staying that way,” said Kim.

GNJ churches and Hope Centers received more than \$7 million in PPP Funds as a part of the CARES Act. And while hundreds of churches were able to access these funds, others, particularly churches in urban settings were denied. Fifteen GNJ churches who received funds under the loan program, heard the call of the connection and donated a representative portion to the COVID-19 Relief Fund to benefit other GNJ churches. These churches, who shared \$58,000, witnessed the connection.

Another church who made a donation was Tuckerton UMC in the Northern Shore District.

“With the pandemic, we were thinking about those small churches who were struggling and couldn’t continue their ministries and missions,” said Pastor Jason Rios who moved to New Jersey from Puerto Rico three years ago to lead this rural church. “We wanted to bless the COVID Relief Fund, and we wanted to bless others.”

Rios and his congregation continue to bless others at the Manna’s Farm Market, a business the church helped to reopen after it was forced to close amid the pandemic. Since July 21 the people of Tuckerton UMC have been fostering business for two local farmers and five vendors, who are in turn helping to feed the community. 🇺🇸

ABOUT SHARED MINISTRY

As United Methodists, we agree to participate, help with financial support, offer our time, pray for the church and share our experience with others. Shared ministry, which includes many different facets from the Black College Fund that helps to develop tomorrow’s leaders to the Interdenominational Cooperation Fund that allows us to celebrate the presence and work of Jesus Christ among other Christian fellowships throughout the world. Each of the seven funds serves as a vital part of what we do. Each church’s contribution to these funds goes toward making a difference as a whole.

With open arms, hands and hearts, United Methodists in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania have shown grace by feeding the hungry, providing shelter, making face shields and masks, protecting the weak, keeping children safe and making futures brighter in the face of adversity.

Shared Ministry (sometimes called apportionment) connects the local church to the conference, the denomination and our global ministries. It is a universal expression of belonging and commitment that says we care about each other, take action, belong to a community, are growing spiritually and helping sustain the church for future generations.

The Shared Ministry formula is determined by the GNJ Council on Finance & Administration (CF&A) each year. It is a fixed percentage of the local church budget and based on the conference’s budget and denominational commitments.

For more information on shared ministry, including calculations and other Funds, visit www.gnjumc.org/finance-administration/shared-ministry/.

Christ-like Faith, Hope and Love in Pike County

Dingmans Ferry UMC, located near the Dingmans Falls and the Dingmans Ferry Bridge near the Delaware Water Gap in Pike County, PA, was once inhabited by the Lenape Native Americans. Although the demographics have changed, it still carries a strong sense of community.

Ministry at Dingmans Ferry happens both inside and outside the church. Outside the main building there sits a “Prayer Grove,” which was built four years ago so that the church could host events like confirmation class, weddings and prayer groups.

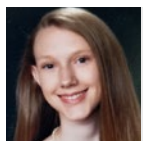
“At times, we even had baptisms in the Prayer Grove,” Pastor Kim said.

Today, the beautiful outside area is preparing for the start of the “Personalizing the Faith” Small Groups. Led by a lay member, the Small Groups of about seven to eight people designed to foster spiritual development, meet every Sunday afternoon using social distancing. They had hoped to make it a larger gathering, but with social distancing, they are doing the best they can.

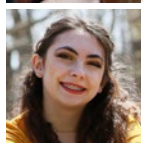
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2020 SCHOLARSHIP AWARD RECIPIENTS

The Board of Higher Education & Ministry has announced the 2020 scholarship recipients.

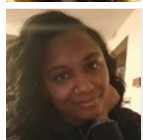
CONFERENCE TRUST FUND SCHOLARSHIP



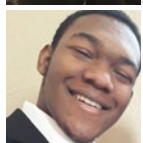
Joanna Barton
St. Andrew’s UMC, Cherry Hill
Millersville University



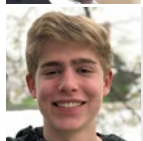
Brittany Boetticher
UMC of Hopatcong
Drew University



Alexandra Bolden
St. John’s UMC
Rowan College of South Jersey



William Tahier Logan
Franklin St. John’s, Newark
New Jersey Institute of Technology



Harvey Marcus
First UMC, Moorestown
Case Western Reserve University

FRANCES NELSON SCHOLARSHIP



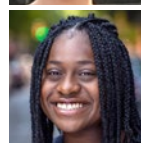
Jungin Ahn
Morganville UMC
University of Southern California



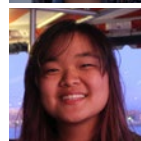
Luke Horton
First UMC, Cherry Hill
Brown University



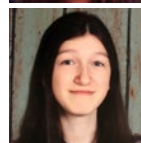
Hannah Hubbard
Atlantic Highlands Navesink UMC
University of New Haven



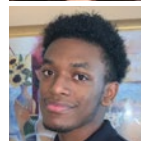
Moselle Jules
Haddonfield UMC
New York University



Ebenezar Shim
Wall UMC
Boston College

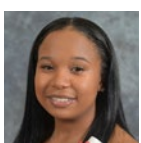


Miriam Yarger
Chatham UMC
American University



Andre Morales
St. Mark’s UMC
Drew University

KAPPLER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Camryn Murray
St. John’s UMC
Stockton University

CONFERENCE NEWS

First UMC Hightstown Plants a Pod

First UMC of Hightstown has turned one of their rooms into a school pod as children across their community are restricted to only online learning.

The Fellowship Hall now welcomes children and their parents from their church to learn and grow together, providing the space, wifi and other supplies. All parents involved are given background checks.

“It is time to be creative and find new ways to do ministry, and this one is an easy, effective and necessary one,” he added. “When we found out that our school district was going online, we decided to create this pod.”

“It is not a drop off. Parents need to stay, but if they need to step out for a meeting, call, or just to go to the bathroom and cry, the rest of the parents will cover.”



Hispanic Heritage Month Continues through Oct. 15

Hispanic-Latino Heritage Month celebrates the contributions of Hispanic-Latino people to this nation. This month is not only so that we may celebrate who we are, but also



for the whole nation to celebrate with us the fact that we can be part of this nation without abandoning or diminishing our Hispanic-Latino culture.

A special service to celebrate this vital Hispanic heritage from The Upper Room Chapel featured Capital District Superintendent Rev. Hector A. Burgos leading worship and Rev. Lilia Ramirez, a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries, bringing the message.

To view that service, visit the Upper Room Facebook page @UpperRoomCenter.

Healthcare for Active Clergy/Employees Looks Healthier in 2021

There has been a lot of buzz recently about a new healthcare plan for the Greater New Jersey Conference in 2021 called HealthFlex Exchange, and for good reason. The Board of Pension and Health Benefits worked hard to secure a new model that offers more options and additional services while keeping affordable healthcare at the same church rates as 2020.

“The Board ultimately decided to move into the HealthFlex Exchange through Wespeth after an extensive search of the most optimal plans for GNJ participants,” said Rev. William B. Wilson, Sr., who chairs the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits.

Open enrollment for this new healthcare coverage starting on January 1 for Active Clergy/Employees will be October 28 through November 12 when you will have the opportunity to enroll or waive coverage for yourself; add or remove an eligible child or spouse; or waive coverage for eligible dependents. Six unique healthcare plans—three dental plans from Cigna and three vision plans from VSP will be available. Guardian Dental Network will no longer be offered.

HealthFlex Exchange, also known as a Private Exchange, will continue to offer the same Blue Cross Blue Shield Network, prescription drug coverage from OptumRx, behavioral health benefits from United Behavioral Health as well as the Blueprint for Wellness and HealthQuotient programs. The well-being programs will include WebMD, Virgin Pulse, NutriSavings and more.

HealthFlex Exchange will also include an option to enroll in a Flexible Spending Account.

Three virtual workshops to explore the new plan in depth are being held on Oct. 13, Oct. 15 and Oct. 19. Details, including recordings of these workshops, will be available at www.gnjumc.org/benefits-overview/.

For more details or if you have any questions, visit www.gnjumc.org/healthflexexchange/ or contact Alexa Taylor at 732-359-1038 and ataylor@gnjumc.org.

alex
Check out a new tool from Wespeth called ALEX, an online tool to customize your plan according to your needs.

OBITUARIES

June McCullough, surviving spouse of Rev. William McCullough, died September 11. A memorial service was held September 17. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to First UMC of Vineland, 700 E Landis Ave, Vineland, NJ 08360 or UM Women Legacy Fund in memory of June McCullough. Send expressions of sympathy to Kristine Gordon (daughter) at 22 Meadowview Dr, Sewell, NJ 08080.

Bernard James Shropshire, retired, died September 3. A memorial service was held September 12 at Calvary Chapel in Merritt Island, FL. Memorial donations can be sent to Teen Missions International, Inc. at www.teenmission.org in memory of Bernard James Shropshire, and expressions of sympathy can be sent to <https://www.funeralsolutions.net/obituaries/Bernard-Shropshire/>.

WhaSei Park Kim, spouse of Retired Full Elder Rev. Hae-Jong Kim, died September 10. Viewing and memorial service were held September 15 at Korean Community Church of NJ in Englewood, NJ. Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to Korean Community Church of NJ “Missions”, 147 Tenafly Road, Englewood, NJ 07631 in memory of WhaSei Park Kim.

- A** Subsidize all retired GNJ pastors' healthcare costs.
- B** Offer emergency financial assistance to retired pastors and the families of deceased pastors for funeral, medical, or family needs.
- C** Provide a stable source of funding to support GNJ's annual budget.
- D** All of the above.

If you guessed *All of the above*, congratulations!

You know more about The Centenary Fund and Preachers' Aid Society than most, and understand what a vital part in our community it plays.



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UNITED METHODISTS OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Make a gift in honor of a colleague, mentor, or family member!
Go to: www.gnjumc.org/centenaryfund



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