



NEW Spirit!

UNITED METHODISTS OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
& GREATER NEW JERSEY

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A volunteer from Salem UMC helps student.

Connectionalism Brings New Life to VBS Ministry

Salem UMC hosts first VBS in 20 years

By Sarah Borgstrom Lee

SALEM, NJ

In 2023 Palisades Community Bible Church, asked Salem UMC if they could host a bible club for children in the community. Salem UMC gladly opened their doors, and the bible club reached two students.

In 2024, Barbara Davis, a newly retired member of Salem UMC, offered to step up to the plate and lead Vacation Bible School for Salem UMC. The 2023 decision to host Palisades Community Bible Church's bible club sparked the vision for a renewed VBS program, but United Methodist connectionalism made it happen. Lay Pastor Sue Kiefner, reached out to her home church, Wesley United Methodist Church in Bethlehem, PA,

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Delegates Eager to Collaborate with Incoming Bishop Moore-Koikoi



Jurisdictional delegates and representatives welcome Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi and her husband the Rev. Raphael Koikoi to EPA&GNJ.

James Lee photo.

By Sarah Borgstrom Lee



Bishop Moore-Koikoi greets delegates.

After the new episcopal areas were announced, EPA and GNJ sat down together to discuss their hopes and dreams for future collaboration and for their incoming episcopal leader.

"We were dating, now we're married!" laughed delegates from EPA and GNJ as they sat down together to discuss hopes and dreams for our continued work together and share the qualities that both conferences were looking for in a new bishop.

Over the past three years, EPA and GNJ have shared an episcopal leader and worked collaboratively with each other. The collaboration was born of necessity — an innovative adaptation — to the demands of COVID and the changing

denominational landscape. The official announcement that EPA&GNJ would continue in ministry together was as though a page had been turned and a new chapter was beginning. The room overflowed with hope about fresh possibilities.

Rev. Drew Dyson, co-chair of the GNJ delegation, shared: "We are excited about a new season of collaboration and Spirit-breathed work as we journey together as a new episcopal area."

Rev. Lorelei Toombs, Associate Superintendent for the North-West Region of Eastern Pennsylvania, set the intention. "I want to move into this time in openness. I want to lean in from a place of possibility."

Krystl Johnson Gauld, a lay delegate from EPA, shared "I've always admired the work of GNJ. It'll be great to bring

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Services of Welcome Scheduled for Incoming Bishop Moore-Koikoi

By James Lee

The United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania and Greater New Jersey are excited to announce the installation services for Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, who will begin her leadership on September 1, 2024. These services are set to be held on two consecutive Saturdays to honor and welcome the new bishop.

Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi was elected as a bishop during the 2016 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference in Lancaster, PA and has previously served the Western Pennsylvania and Susquehanna Conferences.

Ongoing Musical Collaboration

One of the highlights of the upcoming services will be the musical elements,

which are being thoughtfully designed by both conference's committees on episcopacy alongside Rev. Lydia Esther Munoz from EPA and Youngkwang Jun from GNJ. This dynamic duo is known for their ability to create spiritually uplifting worship experiences for both annual conferences and our most recent jurisdictional conference, ensuring that the music will resonate deeply with all attendees. Their ongoing collaboration signifies the unity and shared vision between the two conferences.

A New Season of Leadership

Bishop Moore-Koikoi's arrival is being met with great excitement across EPA&GNJ. Bishop Moore-Koikoi has been recognized for her intercultural competence, her dedication to



Bishop Moore-Koikoi processes in to the closing worship service.

ongoing Journey of Hope and Wholeness."

"We are excited about a new season of collaboration and Spirit-breathed work as we journey together as a new episcopal area," shared Rev. Drew Dyson, co-chair of the GNJ delegation. "I'm excited about this groundbreaking assignment of Bishop Moore-Koikoi and I look forward to God's future as we journey together."

"I was there when she was consecrated. I voted for her. When I heard her answers to a number of questions, I said this is a new day," shared Lenora Thompson, Chair of EPA's Connectional Table and long-term delegate. "I am excited that she's coming to EPA. I believe in collaboration, and I believe it's gonna be good for us. She really wants to know who we are, what we are, and be with us as she leads."

The installation services will provide an opportunity for clergy, laity, and community members to come together in celebration and prayer.



Bishop Moore-Koikoi, Bishop Jane Allen Middleton, Bishop Hector Burgos, Rev. Raphael Koikoi, and Rev. Mary Johnson worship together. James Lee photo.

anti-racist initiatives, and her collaborative style of leadership within the church. During a delegation gathering at the end of July's jurisdictional conference, the bishop shared about herself, her interests and hobbies, and her leadership style. "Collaboration is my go-to leadership style; my gut leadership style," she shared.

"It's better if you get the process right and end up making the wrong decision. I've made a lot of wrong decisions and God has fixed them up."

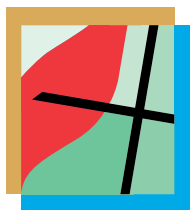
"Bishop Moore-Koikoi has a remarkable ability to inspire and lead with a spirit of inclusivity and justice," said Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, Director of Connectional Ministries for EPA. "Her vision for a church that embraces diversity and works towards equity aligns perfectly with our

Invitation to Attend

All members of the EPA and GNJ conferences, as well as the wider community, are invited to attend the installation services. This is a unique opportunity to gather in fellowship, to worship together, and to welcome Bishop Moore-Koikoi as she begins her episcopal leadership.

"The installation services are a time for us to unite and reaffirm our commitment to the work of the church," said Rev. Taylor-Storm. "We encourage everyone to join us in welcoming Bishop Moore-Koikoi and to participate in these significant events."

Don't miss this opportunity to be part of a historic moment in the life of the EPA and GNJ conferences. Join us as we celebrate the installation of Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi and embark on a new chapter of ministry together. 🌈



NEWSpirit!

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SAVE THE DATE:

Services of Welcome for Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi



Greater New Jersey Service

Saturday, September 14, 2024

Service begins at 10:30 AM

(Robing for clergy who will process begins at 10:00 AM)

Calvary Korean United Methodist Church

572 Ryders Ln, East Brunswick, NJ 08816

Livestream Available

Eastern Pennsylvania Service

Saturday, September 21, 2024

Service begins at 10:30 AM

(Robing for clergy who will process begins at 10:00 AM)

West Lawn United Methodist Church

15 Woodside Ave, West Lawn, PA 19609

Livestream Available



A MORNING CHAT WITH REV. JOE KIM:

Excitement for **IGNITE** Youth Conference



Rev. Joe Kim

“Go therefore and make disciples” is not a command to do something. It’s supposed to be an ongoing action begun in the past, continuing into the present, and expected to continue into the future.

By James Lee

We sat down with Rev. Joe Kim for a chat over Zoom, bridging the time zone difference between Seattle, WA, and the east coast. With morning coffee in hand for Rev. Kim and lunch for us, we dove into an engaging conversation about his ministry, the upcoming IGNITE Youth Conference, and what gets him going each day.

Q: Please introduce yourself, and what gets you up and going each morning?

Rev. Joe Kim: My name is Joe, and I get to serve as Lead Pastor of Bothell United Methodist Church in Bothell, Washington, just north of Seattle! Getting to hang out with my awesome family gets me up and going every morning—my spouse, Joann, and our two amazing kids! Coffee always helps, and the days I get to spend hiking the beautiful Pacific Northwest are always super exciting and rewarding!

Q: The theme of the IGNITE Conference this year is “&GO.” What does Matthew 28:16-20 (The Great Commission) mean to you? What does it mean to “GO” in your faith?

Rev. Joe Kim: I love this moment in the Gospel according to Matthew. The disciples are back in Galilee, the place where they first encountered Jesus, and they are reminded of both their belovedness and that there is still work to be done. And it’s in this moment that Jesus appears to

them and gives them what we now call the Great Commission.

I want to name and acknowledge the harm that this verse has done in the world. Sometimes we misread verse 18 and think that Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to you,” leading to oppressive and abusive situations where we make disciples in our image. We force people into believing like we believe, acting like we act, justifying the power we have, and the subjugation that happens all in the name of Christ. I think we’re still seeing this today, with a narrative of what a Christian is supposed to be and act like—and if it’s not like us, then it’s wrong.

But I think Jesus doesn’t say what we think he says. That “Go therefore and make disciples” is not a command to do something. It’s supposed to be an ongoing action begun in the past, continuing into the present, and expected to continue into the future.

My friend and mentor, Rev. David Orendorff, translates the passage like this:

“Going about your life, you create students among all the various kinds of people, baptizing them with forgiveness in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; teaching them to maintain my charge to you to act in servant love for God, neighbor, and self. And you will see (behold) that I am with you every day until the certain completion of the age.”

I really think that this work Jesus still has left for his disciples to do—it’s not a command to go and do life any

differently. He brings them back to Galilee to remember who they are, to remind them of their journey with him, to rattle their minds and hearts to remember all they have learned and experienced on that journey with him—and he says, continue doing that. Continue going about your life walking in the direction that I have led you, because by doing so, you will inspire others towards kin-dom-building living.

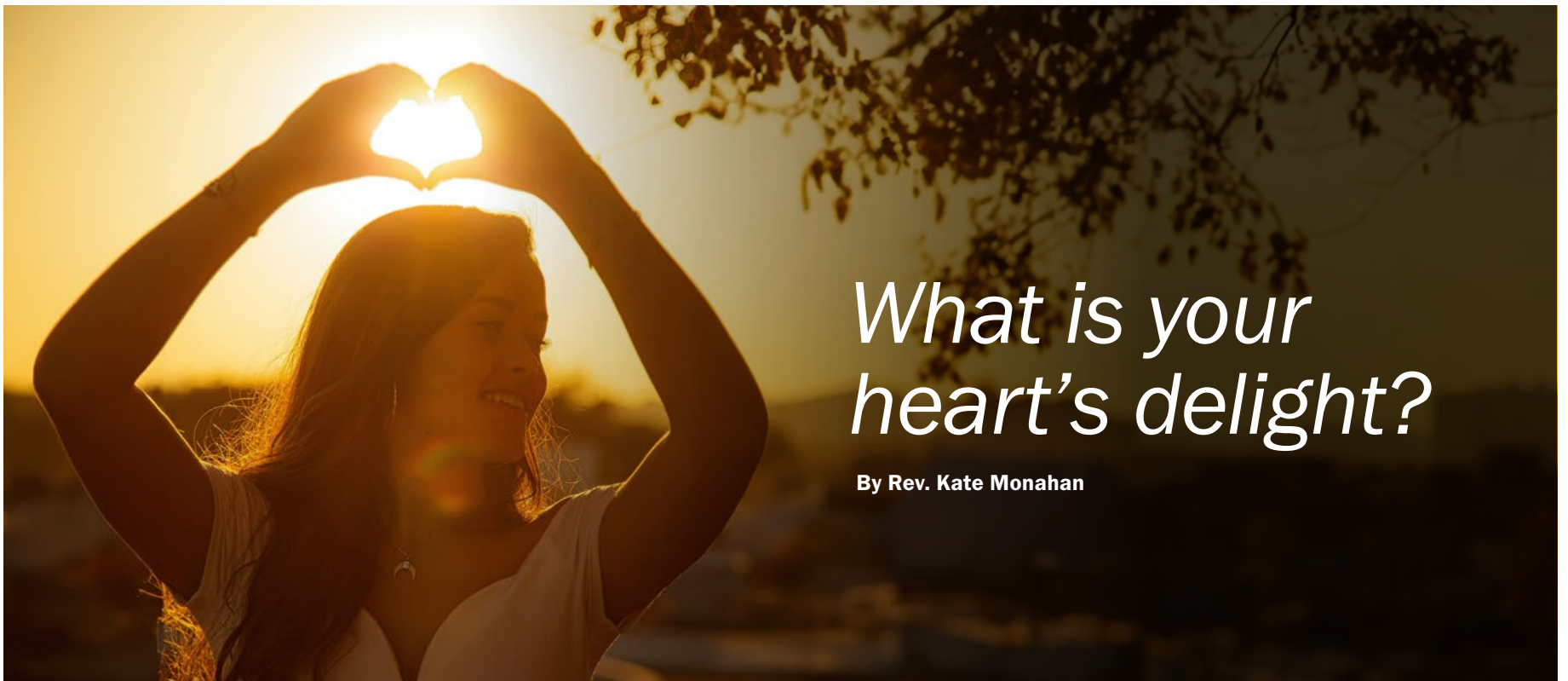
That’s your purpose—go about your life and change the world. That’s comforting to me. It compels me to live a life in holistic relationship with God and with community and to work towards a better future!

Q: To the 1,000 or so youth who will be attending IGNITE in October: What would you like to say to them?

Rev. Joe Kim: Get ready for what God has in store for us! I’m praying for all of you and looking forward to an amazing weekend of learning, growing, and fun!

As the conversation wrapped up, it was clear that Rev. Joe Kim’s enthusiasm and deep faith are sure to inspire and energize the youth attending the IGNITE Youth Conference in Wildwood, NJ, this October. Get ready for an incredible experience! 🎉

Rev. Joe Kim is one of four dynamic speakers coming to the IGNITE Conference, alongside Rev. YaNi Davis, Rev. Kate Monahan, and newly-assigned bishop of EPA&GNJ Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi. Register today and take advantage of the price break before September 15 at ignitenj.org.



What is your heart's delight?

By Rev. Kate Monahan

Photo by Lucas Pezeta

When I was young, Sunday afternoons were spent at my grandmother's house. The church we went to was just up the road. So, after worship, my family would show up there for lunch, and we would sit for hours. We would eat, talk, laugh, occasionally fight, watch TV, even stare into space when there wasn't much else to do. We always went. And if you didn't show up to grandma's house, you'd hear about it.

"Where did you go after church today, Katie?" she'd ask, her tone already denoting disapproval. As you might suspect, my teenage responses weren't convincing: "Well, grandma, I really, really, *really* wanted to.. [insert here: go to the mall, hang out with friends, drive to the beach, get ready for school, etc.]" Regardless of my answer, her challenge to me was always the same: "It is the sabbath day. A time for rest, not for work or play." The acts of working, driving, preparing, shopping, or general *busyness* were simply not appropriate sabbath activities for my beloved, strong-willed grandmother. And so, as you also might suspect, I *rarely* skipped Sunday lunch.

My grandma is one of the best, but I'm not sure her sentiments on Sabbath ever made sense to me. I understood the "no work" part – but why wasn't playing with my friends or participating in my favorite activities considered restful? Why would God find it unacceptable for me to have *fun* on the Sabbath day, or any other day?

Most of us have received some version of this message in our lives — the message that play isn't acceptable, even on days when there is nothing to do. We have internalized the idea that play is unproductive, a waste of time, the activity of immature children, inappropriate in challenging moments or when there is just too much work to be done.



Rev. Kate Monahan, Associate Superintendent for the Coastal Plains Region of GNJ.

learned by now that simply working harder, adding more to the schedule, and counting our successes, does very little to propel the mission forward.

In this season of the Church, we need to discover or (re)discover a different kind of value that is as evident in the story of scripture as the values of faithful work, service, and sacrifice: play.

In the opening verse of the Bible, in Genesis 2:2-3, once God made humans and finished the work of creation, on the seventh day, the very first invitation God issued to us was to rest [shâbath] with God. Generally,

but rather of laughter, dancing, singing, celebration, feasting, and joy. He states that for Christ-followers who are called to live into kin(g)dom values, it is imperative we play. "While ministry, service and sacrifice are part and parcel of life in the present... the truest expression of life in the kingdom is not found in successful work, or achievements in ministry as much as in the grace-filled expressions of joy, love, laughter, and play that break into the present world and that ought to permeate Christian lives. These moments are not merely moments of relief – they are anticipations of eternal life. They are the kingdom present."

From the unprecedented number of pastors experiencing burnout, depression and anxiety, to the enormous pressure churches feel to come up with any idea that might keep their doors open, to the overwhelming conflicts facing the world that put stress on our own lives, we can no longer afford to relegate play to the sidelines. Leading experts over the last 30 years in education, medicine, business, leadership, and the Church agree and have found that play makes everything from healthy relationships and meaningful community to creativity, new opportunities, and even success possible. Dr. Stuart Brown, founder of the National Institute for Play, wrote: "A life without play is psychologically disastrous... If anyone goes without play for too long, grinding out the work that is expected of them, they will at some point look at their lives and ask, "Is this all there is? Is this what I can expect for the rest of my life?"

Perhaps the most important question we could ask in seasons of great challenge and uncertainty is "What is the delight of my heart?"

What would change if as individuals we took time to examine our own lives and asked: "What is it that really brings me joy? And how much time can I give to it, in my work and rest?"

What new possibility might appear if we began each Sunday, each time we gather with something utterly delightful – as if we were being issued a fresh invitation by God to play in the miracle of creation, just as it was on that first full day?

What could emerge if we created ministries – not out of desperation and fear – but because they excited us and we loved doing them? Nearly every pastor or church I know that is living with a clear sense of purpose, passion, and vision is taking time to play and leaning into the delights that God has uniquely given them.

The reality is this: We can't shine God's light in us if we allow ourselves to burn out. And no one living in darkness is ever going to be inspired by a burnt-out bulb. We were made to connect with God through the joy, delight, and play. Our willingness to make time for these will directly affect whether people find the light in us, and how successful we are going to be in inspiring them to find the light in themselves. 🌈

Rev. Kate Monahan is an Associate Superintendent for the Coastal Plains Region of GNJ. She works on developing transformational leaders through the Mosaic Seminary Cohort and Cultivate Internship program.

PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION WE COULD ASK
IN SEASONS OF GREAT CHALLENGE AND UNCERTAINTY IS
"WHAT IS THE DELIGHT OF MY HEART?"

—Rev. Kate Monahan

Thanks to our Protestant work ethic, we have learned that our highest religious values should be that of productivity and success – and that one's ability to weather any challenge firmly depends upon how hard you are willing to work to overcome it. John Wesley himself prohibited play at the Kingswood School on the basis that "playing as a child would result in playing as an adult." Instead, he believed that to become holy, one must prioritize work, employ structured schedules, and waste no time.

Yet in seasons of incredible anxiety, disorienting change, and division – upholding these values as primary – has created a kind of pressure cooker environment for pastors and churches. Most of us have

when we think about "rest," we think about "ceasing," "putting down," or "being still" – and we should.

But in these verses, to rest also means "to celebrate," or "to delight." The very first activity God invites us into is one of delight. Abraham Heschel, in his book *The Sabbath* wrote, "The Sabbath is no time... for any activity that might dampen the spirit of joy... it is a day for praise, not petition." Before anything else, we were made to delight – and how does one do that except through play?

Brian Edgar, author of *The God Who Plays*, also reminds us that when scripture speaks of the "end," "the kin(g)dom of God," or "eternal rest," we do not find images of sacrifice, hard work, or productivity,

Mosaic Retreat Helps Incoming Pastors Find Their Feet

By Sarah Borgstrom Lee

On July 25, a group of pastors gathered at Princeton Theological Seminary's Farminary for the final activity of their three-date retreat. At first glance, one might wonder what does farming have to do with pastoral ministry? A lot, as it turns out.

Dr. Nate Stucky led the pastors on a tour of the farm and shared the lessons he'd gleaned over the last 9 years of bringing farming and theology into conversation with each other. As the pastors in the Mosaic program pulled weeds, tilled the earth, and spread compost, they learned leadership lessons that would strengthen their ministry.

"A good farmer knows how to pay attention to seasons, how to tend life, persevere through failure. They understand limits and how to ask for help and experience the interconnectedness of life and death. Those skills are pastoral, related to the pasture, and also pastoral, related to the parish. Good pastors and good leaders require those same skills."

Mosaic pastors share their call stories

A few of the pastors in the Mosaic program shared their call stories as they worked and toured the farm. This group of diverse young leaders from across the world had a lot to say about how they had experienced God in their life and how they saw the Holy Spirit moving in the United Methodist Church.

Josiah Mono John, a self-described pastor's kid from northern Nigeria, told the story of how his call to ministry came on slowly. When he was growing up, his friends would jokingly call him "pastor!" and he said, "deep within, I saw myself in that path." In high school he earned an A-level in accounting. While he was serving in youth ministry, he experienced a sense of freedom and he realized he didn't want to be an accountant, he wanted to



Doreen Mihlanda is allowing God to write her story.



Mosaic pastors gather with retreat leaders.

go and study theology at Africa University.

When asked where he sees the Holy Spirit in The United Methodist Church he said "In the United Methodist Church it's a dying season, but I am seeing how God is using this season to raise our consciousness to valuing each other. What dies within us is the hatred we have for one another. That genuine love is what God is helping us to bring forth... For me being part of the mosaic ministry, having the opportunity to serve in a diverse congregation is helping me to participate in what God is doing in the life of the church in this moment by showing genuine concern and love to transform our communities."

Chantel Makarawa, serving New Dover UMC in Edison, said it was the faith of the women in her family, particularly her mother and maternal grandmother, that inspired her journey to become a pastor. "Growing up, praying was really important to us. My grandmother would wake me at 4am to pray. She's a prayer warrior."

Faith rooted itself deeply in Chantel, and from an early age she sensed a call to ministry, but she faced obstacles, including a stammering disability. "I didn't believe in myself enough to speak out." She helped out in other areas of the church, such as the choir and pastoral counseling and visitation. When she attended Africa University, to study psychology, she found herself envying the person up front "I wish that I could preach and transform lives."

Fast forward, and Makarawa found herself in the United States to study at Social Justice and Advocacy at Drew University,



Chantel Makarawa tells her call story.

and she stepped through the doors of Morrow Memorial UMC. The very first day she came to worship, Rev. Janice Sutton Lynn asked her to read the scripture. That moment touched Makarawa deeply. "I felt special. I felt good about it. I felt good about leading and not being limited."

Doreen Mihlanda, from Zimbabwe, shared that her calling was rooted in youth ministry. She led the youth ministry in her community before going to college. While she was away studying marketing, she continued to come back home to do youth ministry. After spending some time in a career in marketing, she applied to Drew University to get a Master of Social Justice and Advocacy, hoping to find a way to bless children.

"God had other plans." Doreen joked. "It's a story that is still being written. I'm allowing God to write it for me."

When asked what she appreciated about Mosaic, Doreen responded "One thing that I like about Mosaic is it helps you see clearly where you are going and what you are getting into."

While others traced their call stories from the beginning, David Gaitan, pastor of Trinity UMC in Ewing, spoke about experiencing God's call at the recent 2020/2024 General Conference, he said, "I was able to attend because of Mosaic. I really felt God calling me there to serve the church. We are closing in on an exciting moment in history... The church approved new inclusion for others and removed the harmful language. It brought hope and drew a line that we should go on to pursue... We need to extend beyond us. Bringing relevant and pertinent answers to a world that is asking a lot of questions now."

Leadership is about planting seeds and knowing when to let go

After a morning of work and learning, the pastors gathered around the table to share their reflections about the day. One shared "the transition [into ministry] has brought with it lots of weeds, fears, and doubt."

Josiah Mono John tills the soil.



Dr. Nate Stucky teaches farming.

Another noticed that as they moved through the day "there's a place for everything. There's room for everyone to work." Someone else said, "At the compost pile I learned that death does not have the final say." This reflection led Josiah Mono John to ask a profound question "What needs to die in me that can be used as a fuel for others?"

As the group sat down with Nate Stucky to reflect on what struck them, the farm provided one last leadership lesson. Dr. Stucky told the group, "An underappreciated skill in leadership is knowing when to let go, and when to walk away. With planting, you have to let the sunshine, and the soil, and the seeds do what only they can do. You till the soil, you plant the seed, you water, and then you walk away. So often we put ourselves in God's position, and think, if I don't do it, it's not gonna happen. And by doing that, we kill the very things we were earnestly hoping to plant and grow."

These new leaders learned a lot from their day at the Farminary, but that wasn't the only space of learning. The three-day retreat was a kind of pastoral ministry boot camp. Leaders from across the conference made presentations in their areas of expertise, including sermon series planning, church administration, and pastoral care to give incoming leaders a strong foundation as they begin this new season of ministry. 🌱

Mosaic Ministries is part of EPA & GNJ's mission to recruit and train transformational leaders. Mosaic works with developing leaders who are in and coming out of seminary. Cultivate, is an internship program that works with young leaders who are discerning a call to leadership in the local church. If you, or someone you know is exploring a call to leadership in the local church or looking to serve a United Methodist church, you can learn more about Mosaic Ministries by visiting www.gnjumc.org/mosaic.



Mosaic pastors gather for leadership lesson.

New Life UMC's Prayer and Praise Service Lifts Spirits

By Jalia Moody

New Life UMC at Drexel Hill celebrated its 6th annual Prayer and Praise Celebration on July 13 welcoming all commuters for prayer, praise and worship at SEPTA's 69th Street Terminal Transportation Center Station in Philadelphia.

The pastor of New Life UMC, Rev. Shayla Johnson, mobilized church members to minister outside of the walls of the church. She advocates for followers of Christ to "do what God called [them] to do," leading her congregation to walk in their faith.

Music attracted commuters traveling on foot and by car. Rev. Johnson identifies music as "a call to attention" that forced commuters to pause and stop. "Talking just becomes noise. Music does something to one's spirit...it shifts their attitude. It shifts their mindset. It shifts their posture. It shifts everything because music is that blessing from God that's just universal for everyone," Rev. Johnson adds.

Seeing God Move

The language of music struck people's curiosity to walk over and receive prayer, deliverance, or something more.

"One lady was purging – just [crying] – from being cleansed and delivered from all that she was going through. Another lady was being delivered and...elated to be in God's presence and have an exchange of love with hugs, smiles, and someone looking directly at her," Rev. Johnson witnessed. She recalled the purging woman as a praise dancer, and the other woman expressed gratitude for being acknowledged. "Thank you for seeing me."

Through the deliverance of prayer, people's lives were changed. Rev. Johnson



A member of New Life UMC preps Blessing Bags.

speaks to the transformative power of the Prayer and Praise Celebration: "You could see spirits being lifted in short moments as people were traveling."

Love Your Neighbor

Love Renegades started in 2019 because church members of New Life UMC wanted to actively engage with the community by transforming lives through discipleship. They decided to organize an on-the-ground outreach event called Prayer and Praise Celebration.

"Loving your neighbor" has been a constant pillar to the growth of the Prayer and Praise Celebration. In 2019, a small crowd of Love Renegades with one music speaker ministered through prayer and

praise. Over the span of six years, prayer and praise have remained the focus of the celebration, but something new is always added to the mix. Last year's Prayer and Praise celebration included Blessing Bags and donated articles of clothing. A violinist even performed a short mini concert.

This year, more churches joined Rev. Johnson and New Life UMC in ministering to a much larger crowd, including First Media UMC, Wayne UMC, Havertown UMC and Trinity Lutheran Church.

Connecting Our Cultures in Christ

Many of these churches came to partner with New Life UMC through EPA's Connecting our Cultures in Christ Initiative.

The Economic Justice Council started the Connecting Our Cultures in Christ initiative for suburban and urban churches to develop supportive relationships to help end the sin of racism.

The 6th annual Love Renegades' Prayer and Praise Celebration was the third event in this new initiative connecting New Life UMC at Drexel Hill, First Media UMC, Wayne UMC, Havertown UMC and Trinity Lutheran Church together in ministry.

Rev. Johnson notes that the initiative provided an opportunity to serve with all kinds of sisters and brothers in Christ: "It was a show of all of God's people that were represented: there was Black, there was White, there was West Indian, there was African, there was Asian. Everybody was represented."

Wayne UMC, under the leadership of Rev. Greg Impink, donated 100 Blessing Bags that contained donated toiletry items, snacks and water, and sent 7 members to help out with the event. In total the churches reached an estimated 100 commuters. Public worship was led by music while pastors at churches prayed for and prayed with members of the community.

Rev. Impink, is glad that Wayne UMC took part, sharing "Wayne UMC was able to assemble 100 hygiene bags from items donated to our food pantry, Wayne Cares, and send 7 people to pray, praise, and support the work of the Love Renegades. But even more importantly, we're seeking a relationship with a church from a different cultural context than our own."

True ministry happens when Christians interact with people outside of their church walls. The Love Renegades of New Life UMC at Drexel Hill have another Prayer and Praise Celebration in November to move with the changing season and provide winter clothing to people in need. 🇺🇸

GNJ AWARDS THREE SCHOLARSHIPS

GNJ's Board of Higher Education and Ministry awarded three scholarships this year:



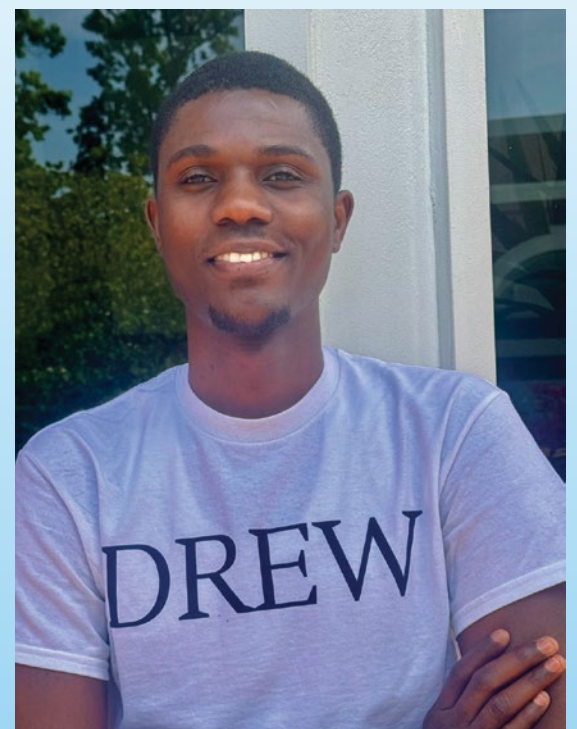
Lydia Smith

Lydia Smith, of Oakhurst, where she attends First UMC, received a Nelson Scholarship to study theatre and classical vocal performance at Miami University in the fall.



Ezra Shim

Ezra Shim, a member of Wall UMC in Spring Lake Heights, received a Nelson Scholarship. He attends Rutgers University.



Valter Gregorio

Valter Gregorio, who attends Madison UMC, received a Stetser Scholarship. He will begin his second year at Drew University Theological School as a Master of Divinity student.



Summer Camp

Where Faith is Formed and Fun Happens



Jurisdictional Conference Repents of Systemic Racism

Delegates explore history of structural racism in the Methodist Church

By Sarah Borgstrom Lee

PITTSBURGH, PA

In the space where episcopal elections would have taken place, delegates gathered for a holy conversation about race and the way that structural and systemic racism colors both our past and present. The city of Pittsburgh was an ideal place to have this sacred conversation. 60 years ago, Methodists gathered here for the 1964 General Conference, which came to discuss, among other business, how to move the church towards greater racial integration.

Bishop Peter Weaver, a retired bishop of the Northeastern Jurisdiction, told the story of that conference. He attended, not as a delegate, but as part of a group of students and clergy who had been working to integrate working to integrate churches in Jackson, Mississippi. The students of Tougaloo College, alongside their chaplain, Rev. Ed King, and others, organized a Pilgrimage to Pittsburgh to urge the church to address the structural racism and segregation perpetuated by the continued existence of the Central Jurisdiction.



Rev. Eric Carr tells history of the Central Jurisdiction.

Demonstrations outside the 1964 General Conference

More than 1,000 people gathered for an all-night vigil at the Smithfield Street Methodist Church. They brought with them a charred cross that had been burned by the KKK on the lawn of Rev. Ed King, the chaplain of Tougaloo college, who had been instrumental in the work towards racial integration.

After praying together through the night, protestors gathered outside the conference center. Bishop Weaver shared that those who participated in the protest prayed on their knees that “hearts would be changed, so that structures would change.” Protesters would later storm the floor of the General Conference to disrupt the proceedings and demand an immediate end to segregation by abolishing the Central Jurisdiction.

The Central Jurisdiction: A history of structural racism

The Central Jurisdiction was created in the 1939 merger of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the Methodist Protestant

Church. The southern church only agreed to this union after a compromise to create a jurisdiction based on race, rather than geography.

The Rev. Eric Carr, chairperson of the Black Methodists for Church Renewal of the Northeastern Jurisdiction (NEJ BCMR) spoke of the history of the Central Jurisdiction. “The Creation of the central jurisdiction was meant to separate and divide,” he stated. “It is said to be Methodism’s original and central sin, whose residual effects are still visible and felt in the denomination today and most specifically in today’s Central Conferences.”

While the Civil Rights Act of 1964 would soon end

segregation, Methodists at the 1964 General Conference would choose to maintain the status quo. Systemic and structural injustice was allowed to continue unchecked until the 1968 Uniting Conference, where the Evangelical United Brethren Church made abolishing the Central Jurisdiction a condition of the merger that formed The United Methodist Church.



Delegates pray together.

Delegates engaged in a litany of repentance that incorporated both the baptismal vow of all methodists to “reject evil, injustice and oppression, in whatever forms they present themselves” with *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, the Black National Anthem.

After time of collective confession and repentance, Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi stood and concluded the service with a rousing charge, adapted from the work

of Cole Arthur Riley, author of *Black Litanies*, and the book, *This Here Flesh*.

She called on every person present to honor their true selves and to hold fast to the commitments that they made today.

“Listen to the cries of those around you. And then follow a path of healing and liberation for yourself, but more importantly, for those around you and all you encounter,” she declared.

“Take peace in the sound of your own voice, And the sound of the voice of God that you hear coming from others. And choose a life, a life that honors your true self, and the commitments that you have made today. May it be so. Amen.”

We tell the story of our racist past because the work is not yet finished. The residue of structural racism remains, and it continues to affect our life together. May each of us choose today to follow a path of healing liberation for ourselves, for those around us, and for all who we encounter. #



Bishop Moore-Koikoi gives charge and blessing.

“LISTEN TO THE CRIES OF THOSE AROUND YOU. AND THEN FOLLOW A PATH OF HEALING AND LIBERATION FOR YOURSELF, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, FOR THOSE AROUND YOU AND ALL YOU ENCOUNTER.”

—Bishop Moore-Koikoi

A symbol Methodism’s racist past invites prayers of repentance

That same cross that was the central symbol of the 1964 demonstration stood on the stage as a focal point of the worship service. The body received the story and was invited to consider how the residue of systemic racism continues to affect us even today, and reflect upon our complicity in perpetuating and participating these systems rather than working to dismantle them.

Stirring up Love and Good Deeds

Reflections on the 2024 Laity Academy

By Sarah Borgstrom Lee

The Laity Academy of Eastern Pennsylvania met from August 2-3 at Eastern University to equip lay leaders with the tools they need to lead well in their contexts. The theme for this 40th year of equipping lay leaders came from Hebrews 10:24-25 “And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching.”

From Friday evening to Saturday afternoon, the people of EPA, gathered to “provoke one another to love and good deeds.”

The Friday night gathering opened with a deluge, but the Rev. Dr. Andrew Foster III, District Superintendent for the East District, and the Rev. Hun Ju Lee, District Superintendent for the North District, along with the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, Director of Connectional Ministry, were there with umbrellas, ready to hold open the doors and help people inside.

Those gathered continue to spur one another towards greater love and service as they gathered in their classes. Rev. David Piltz encouraged those gathered to read the bible from different viewpoints in his class, “Biblical Interpretation: The In’s and Out’s.” Rev. Harold Burkett helped those in his class develop their preaching voice.

Judy Ehninger, CLM, taught “The Journey Begins” which is the basic entry course for the CSM program. The Rev. Steve Morton helped participants learn how to move from biblical exploration



Laity Academy students discuss biblical interpretation.

and study to a sermon that engages hearts and minds with the Gospel.

Dr. Dave Harris taught the basics on how to effectively coach and nurture other leaders. Steve Myers encouraged those in his class, “Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design Theory” to think outside the box and consider how to reach people in this modern world.

Pastor John Lafferty, CLM, taught participants how to mold a functioning church board for effective and joyful ministry. Susan Adamczyk instructed a group of leaders on “Christian Peer Mentoring,” helping those present develop the skills needed to encourage and guide others mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Rev. Misty L. Fuller encouraged students in her class “Spirituality of Self Care” to listen to their bodies and be diligent in giving their bodies what they need. Eating nourishing food, exercising, and taking medication are all an important part of caring for the bodies that God gave us.

Participants were buzzing with excitement over all they had been learning when they gathered for lunch on Saturday.

Diane Maylen, of Otterbein UMC, took “In’s and Out’s of Biblical Interpretation.”



Bill Thompson, Lay Leader for EPA, addresses the gathering.



Rev. Andrew Foster III, DS for the East District, Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, DCM, and Rev. Hun Ju Lee, DS for the North District offer a warm welcome.

She said “I have a better understanding of why people interpret the Bible differently.” When asked if this was her first Laity Academy, Diane laughed and replied “I’ve been coming for years. A pastor sent me here in 2012. I was hooked. I love the fellowship.”

Maureen Sims of Mt. Zion UMC in Philadelphia shared “I started coming in 2015 as a CSM. This time I came because I’m Chair of the Administrative Council. The courses are great.”

Chris Tague Burnette from Conshohocken UMC came to take the church council leadership class and hopes to take preaching in the fall. He’s in the process of “discerning about whether to be a CSM (Christ Servant Minister).”

Bill Thompson, Lay Leader for Eastern Pennsylvania, spoke as part of the lunch program. He encouraged everyone present to keep their eye on the ball and be diligent about completing the work set in front of them. He boldly proclaimed, “These people out here are clamoring for what we have.” He ended his exhortation with a quote from John 13:34-35 “Love one another... This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other.”

In addition to the quality of the coursework, those present spoke again

and again that it was the quality of the connection that kept them coming back. Many who were gathered have been attending for a decade or more, and the relationships that they built over time continue to sustain them in their local ministry contexts.

Relationships matter, our connection to one another matters. No one can do this thing called faith alone. Celeste Schiller, member of Cornwells UMC, drove that point home with the devotion that she offered as part of Saturday’s lunch program. She told the group that “to provoke” in the original Greek means to poke one another. “There’s a good poking,” she said, “A God-ordained poking, to stir one another up, in a timely, God-driven way. Let us continue to poke one another in love, and not fall out of the habit of meeting together.”

Now, more than ever, we all need people in our lives who provoke us into love and good deeds. If something is stirring within you, and you feel like perhaps you’re looking to grow as a disciple, the next Laity Academy mini session meets on November 2, at Hopewell UMC, 852 Hopewell Road, Downingtown, PA 19335. You can register at christsservantministries.net. 🇺🇸



Lay Leadership Academy gathers for lunch program on Saturday afternoon.

Two Churches Celebrate Past Visions and Embrace New Ones

By Sarah Borgstrom Lee

On June 23, the Rev. Erica Munoz along with church leaders past and present gathered to burn the mortgage of Trinity United Methodist Church in Hackettstown, NJ. Their celebration sparked a leadership lesson. As they traced the history of the mortgage, leaders at Trinity UMC told the story of the congregation's vision and followed the way that vision was re-shaped over time.

Trinity UMC took out the mortgage in 1990 to finance the late Rev. Frank Fowler's "Trinity Y2K" vision. Rev. Fowler envisioned a new addition to the church that would include classroom space, a multipurpose room, kitchen and parking. That addition became what is now known as Starr Hall.

While the congregation was working on paying off the mortgage, the lumber yard behind the church went up for sale. Trinity didn't hesitate. The leaders saw something beautiful in the ramshackle lot. They increased their mortgage and purchased the lumberyard showroom, which would eventually become Trinity House, "a hub for community activities and support, including the vibrant food pantry serving over 400 families each month, and a thrift store providing affordable goods," said the Rev. Don Gebhard, a clergy staff member of Trinity UMC.

This bold move forever-transformed Trinity's missional capacity. As the celebration continued, Rev. Gebhard noted that not every dream became a reality. Some of the plans for renovation of the sanctuary and the construction of Family Life Center were left on the cutting room floor as the church confronted the reality of the 2008 recession.



Members of Millersville Community Church gather to listen for God's vision.

cart them to the site they had selected for their future home. Together they sorted the stones, took note of their shape and the quality of their edges, and turned them over and over again, until they found each's place. Stone by stone this couple built their house together. Rev. Munoz invited those gathered to consider the way that God had chosen them, gathered them in, and was at work in and among them, building them into a living house of worship even as things change.

"People of God... we are a house built by the loving hands of God... Each one of us carefully chosen, picked up, turned over and over by God's grace. Each one of us held together and made strong

joined-congregation discerned a vision to add a third campus. They undertook a mortgage of \$2.5 million and built the Hope Campus of Millersville Community Church in 2015.

The church was thriving but was also concerned about the debt they carried. Through it all, the church faithfully listened for the Holy Spirit's leading. They understood their vocation was to be a "community" church. They soon realized that they didn't need three properties to do that. They first discerned that they should sell the 1st UMC Millersville building.

It was not an easy decision. The 1st UMC Millersville building housed both Meals on Wheels and the HUB, an

faith community that was looking for a building, and the process of the sale is well underway.

Proceeds from the sale will help to finance Millersville's vocation to truly be a community church and expand its ability to fund its missions.

In the midst of the vision and revision process, Rev. Kerry Leeper is filled with enthusiasm and hope about God's possibilities. The decision to sell the first building "turned into a missional decision that continues to have a great ripple effect into the Millersville community. When we sell our Hope campus, it's going to have a great ripple effect into the Penn Manor community and help us fund future ministries."

Millersville Community Church is in the midst of a great re-vision. As it leans into its calling to truly be a "community church," it is continuing to launch new ministries, including a Cancer Care



The burning of the mortgage at Trinity UMC Hackettstown.

The gathered leadership told the story of how God had been working in Trinity UMC. The Holy Spirit inspired big dreams, and then the Holy Spirit gently pruned some of those dreams. In both the visioning, and the re-visioning, Trinity UMC faithfully followed where God was leading.

Rev. Erica Munoz, senior pastor of Trinity UMC, helped those gathered to see the hand of God in all that they were doing as she told the story of a couple who built a home together from natural stone. Every day the couple would go out and dig stones from the earth and

by the power of the Holy Spirit and set firmly on the bedrock, the cornerstone, the living stone which is Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord."

Millersville Community Church prioritizes truly being a "community" church

Millersville Community Church, under the leadership of head pastor Rev. Kerry Leeper, is engaging in similar work. Millersville Community Church was formed through the merger of First UMC Millersville and Grace UMC into a multisite church in 2013, and the

outreach ministry to students at the local university. God provided. A local church expressed interest in the property and in partnering with the HUB, which became its own 501c3. The church that purchased the building overhauled it, adding a commercial kitchen, and making it into something fresh and new.

Rev. Kerry Leeper said, "Look what God can do when we let go of a building."

Having gained confidence from the sale of 1st UMC building, Millersville then discerned that it was time to sell the Hope campus that was built in 2015. Again, God provided another

"WHEN WE SELL OUR HOPE CAMPUS, IT'S GOING TO HAVE A GREAT RIPPLE EFFECT INTO THE PENN MANOR COMMUNITY AND HELP US FUND FUTURE MINISTRIES."

outreach project, Gardens of Grace (a gardening ministry that provides fresh produce to local food pantries), and Next Gen ministries that reaches 70-150 middle schoolers every week. The sale of the Hope Campus will allow it to continue to invest deeply in local mission and outreach.

Our lives, our churches, our God-sized visions for our ministries, each of these are stones in the hand of God. The question for us, in this new season of The United Methodist Church, is will we continue to dream boldly, and trust God with the results? Will we look for the hand of God shaping both our vision and our revisions? Will we allow ourselves to be built, stone by stone, into a house of the Lord's design? 🌿

Delegates Eager to Collaborate with Incoming Bishop Moore-Koikoi

Continued from page 1

what they've got, and we've got to make something magic as we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Youth representatives weighed in with their perspective. Aditya Abraham noticed: "The two groups have similar wants and desires in a bishop, and for mission and ministry." Alisabeth Guepet shared that she's excited about "more opportunities for youth to get together and learn together."

The excitement continued on Friday when the episcopal assignments were announced. Delegates from EPA & GNJ gathered together for the second time in 24 hours to greet their new bishop and her husband with cheers and applause.

Newly-assigned Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi greeted the group warmly. "We're very excited about coming and being

among you. We are excited to see what God will do in and through us, and in spite of us... I know who God is, I know we are going to be doing some really good work together. Because God is in the midst of all of us. We can't even imagine right now what God is going to do."

Delegates spoke with the bishop for an hour or so, sharing about the work of EPA&GNJ and each one's unique stories and needs. Delegates lifted up the need for ongoing healing following the widespread challenges of the last few years. They named each conference's commitment to anti-racism work and the shared hope to continue nurturing and raising up the next generation of disciples and leaders.

Delegates left the meeting even more hope-filled than when they entered.

The Rev. Dr. Andrew Foster III, District Superintendent for the East District,

shared "I am hopeful for our new episcopal leader because she is spiritually grounded, has a listening ear, and a heart for people in ministry. I have worked with her on other boards, including BMCR, so I've seen her in action."

The Rev. Monica Guepet, pastor of Stroudsburg UMC, said "I love her energy. The churches in the North District value a relational leader, so, I'm particularly excited for the churches in the North District."

Rev. Tanya Lynn Bennett, clergy delegate from GNJ, shared "I'm excited to work with a leader who has a clear vision; who is confident, but also questioning; who brings a spirit of openness, collegiality, and collaboration."

Rev. Lydia Munoz, clergy delegate from EPA, shared that she's "excited about the energy and the creativity. The great possibility of healing and pastoral presence and a continued commitment to anti-racism."

Rev. Drew Dyson shared "I'm excited about this groundbreaking assignment of Bishop Moore-Koikoi and I look forward to God's future as we journey together."

Bishop John Schol is also enthusiastic, "These are exciting times as EPA&GNJ prepare for a transition of episcopal leadership. I am excited that Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi will be your new bishop. Bishop Moore-Koikoi is a gifted leader, is grounded spiritually, enjoys laughing, and is committed to the health and vitality of congregations and ending the sin of racism."

Welcome Bishop Moore-Koikoi and Rev. Koikoi! We echo the words of blessing spoken on Friday, July 12. "We are overflowing with hope, and we are grateful for the gifts you bring to the work set before you. Bishop Moore-Koikoi, we bless you and we will never cease praying for you." 🌈



Bishop Moore-Koikoi greets delegation.



Members of the delegation from EPA & GNJ wait to meet Bishop Moore-Koikoi



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Ms. Judy Ehninger, Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm, Rev. Raphael Koikoi, Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, Rev. Drew Dyson, and Ms. Bethany Amey.

VBS Ministry

Continued from page 1

and asked to borrow an old curriculum. Pastor Candy LaBar and children's ministry director, Deb Silliman, were thrilled to share from their abundance.

On the morning of VBS there were only two children registered for the event, but the joyful leaders of Salem were not daunted. They kicked off the program anyway, and the next evening 7 students were in attendance. By the end of the week 13 children participated, including 4 who had never attended Salem UMC before.

All week long the church was filled with music, dance, crafts, laughter and Bible stories. The joyful atmosphere nurtured the faith of every young disciple who walked through the doors of Salem UMC. It wasn't only the students who benefited. Shawn Latkis, member in charge of the Imagination Station shared "I'm always busy doing and filling my schedule with things that should be done. This experience taught me to let go a little and see the activities through the eyes of the children."

Barbara Davis, the program leader, was glad that she stepped up to the challenge of resurrecting Salem UMC's VBS. She said "we haven't had VBS in a very long time, but I remember how much my children enjoyed it. I wanted to have something that my grandchildren could experience... I learned a lot and look forward to implementing them into next year's program."

Sue Kiefner, pastor of Salem UMC, reflected "Even with an aging congregation, grandchildren and neighbors were able to take part in making memories that will last a lifetime, where Bible stories take on a new form to help our youngest learn about how great Jesus is."

It's easy to take our United Methodist connection for granted, but when churches



VBS students gather for praise and worship.

lean into each other's gifts and share from our abundance, we amplify one another's ministries and extend our impact.

Collaboration with cluster churches amplifies impact in the Cape Atlantic District

Rev. Tom Novack, now serving Asbury UMC in Egg Harbor Twp, learned that lesson first-hand. In 2022, as the shadows of COVID were beginning to lift, Dorchester UMC wondered how they might get VBS started again. The Holy Spirit struck with fresh inspiration, and they asked themselves a wild and wonderful question "What if we asked the whole cluster to be a part of this?" Dorchester UMC was part of a cluster of churches that gathered for hymn sings throughout the year, but the hymn sings paused during the summer months. Pastor Tom and the members of Dorchester UMC thought that VBS might be the thing to energize their ministry in the summer months. They put out a call for their sister churches to rally around VBS, and the churches answered that call.

Together they created a beautiful VBS program that was more vibrant than

anything they could have made on their own. They hosted VBS in the local town hall and 60 kids from the community attended. The theme for that year was Jerusalem Marketplace. Together members of different churches collected 9 different tents, that were arranged in the hall to make like alleyways and a little marketplace square. It made the experience really immersive and fun for the students who were able to visit the different shops through the course of the week.

Connectionalism paved the way for strong support. One church in the cluster, had only 20 people in worship, but there was someone who was passionate about leading outdoor activities. Another church stepped in to say "Oh, we'll take care of all the snacks and refreshments." Another church had a volunteer who really loved telling Bible stories to children.

People from 7 different churches in the cluster stepped up into active leadership, and the other churches participated by donating food and supplies. Pastor Tom Novack reflected "No one church could have done it by



Jack Brulely with his mother, Emily Bruley, from Dorchester UMC.

themselves. To see that come together was so exciting."

The collaborative VBS program is now in its third year of ministry. These churches are creating a beautiful opportunity for children to encounter Jesus, not only in the stories and games, but also through the eyes and hearts of the volunteers who lead the ministry. They're also raising up a new generation of leaders, as youth and young adult volunteers share their gifts and lead students throughout the week.

Together this cluster of churches is making a difference in the lives of young people in their community. Together they have built something far greater than they could have accomplished on their own. Pastor Tom Novack proclaimed, "We are 'United' Methodists. We should be doing things together. When we come together it's amazing what can be done."

Indeed, we are United Methodists. We are stronger when we work together. When we share decorations with each other, when we plan and lead together, we have a bigger impact, and frankly, have more fun. 🇺🇸

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