



# The Messenger

First United Methodist Church Newsletter  
446 Camden Avenue, Moorestown, NJ 08057  
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Rev. Richard Nichols, Pastor  
Glenn Rodgers, Director of Music  
Kathy Clawges, Director of Youth  
Devika Gill, Director of First Light Learning Center

Rev. HeyYoung Horton, Associate Pastor  
Karen Murray, Director of Christian Education  
Doug Hamilton, Maintenance Coordinator

Join us for Worship - Saturday 5:30 pm, Sunday 8:30 am, 9:30 am, 11:00 am  
Visit us on the Web at: [www.meetwithGod.com](http://www.meetwithGod.com) -or- Email us at: [church@meetwithGod.com](mailto:church@meetwithGod.com)

JULY 2016



## OCEAN GROVE CHOIR FESTIVAL Sunday, July 10th, 7:00pm

On Sunday, July 10, at 7:00 P.M., a congregation of 5000 with a choir of around 800 will gather at the Great Auditorium in Ocean Grove, New Jersey for the 62nd Annual Choir Festival - "A Vision of Heaven."

Members from our choirs will be on hand to sing a wide variety of choral anthems including "DoXology for a New Day" which was composed for the 200th Anniversary of our church. Under the direction of celebrated conductors, with the sounds of brass ensemble and the world famous Hope-Jones organ in a magnificent historic venue, this is a worship experience not to be missed. Come and join in lifting your voices in heavenly praise!

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## LIGHT HARBOR MINISTRY

If you play an instrument, love to sing, are able to read scripture, are able to turn pages, or love to talk you meet the qualifications for this ministry. Our purpose is to show God's love through prayer, scripture, and music that is uplifting and fun for the residents each month. Do you have one hour a month to share God's love with others?

Recently the Director of Activities at Avista Healthcare in Cherry Hill asked if the Light Harbor Ministry would like to volunteer at her facility. She is familiar with our ministry because she worked at Mt. Laurel Center until they had major management changes.

Do you feel God leading you toward serving others? Please call Linda Wanagas at 856-273-1298 if you are interested in this ministry or have questions.

## AIR CONDITIONING RETURNS TO THE SANCTUARY AND CHAPEL!

We are happy to report that our sanctuary and chapel, which were without air conditioning since the original chiller failed last summer, are once again cool and comfortable! Many thanks to our Property Committee for their efforts to research and choose the best option and work with the contractor to have a new chiller installed and operating for the start of summer.

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## COOL AIR MINISTRY



Just a reminder - should you get caught unexpectedly without cool air, or you know of someone in need, please call the Cool Air Ministry. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated, and don't forget your sunscreen! Contact person: Elmine van den Berg, 856-778-3197.

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jul. 3-10	Host IHN
Jul. 3rd	Christian Children's Chat begins - 9:30am
Jul. 3rd	Summer Sunday School begins - 9:30am
Jul. 4th	Independence Day - church office closed
Jul. 6th	Youth Summer Program begins - 6-8pm
Jul. 10th	VBS registration deadline
Jul. 10th	Ocean Grove Choir Festival - 7:00pm
Jul. 10-16	Oak Hill, WV mission trip
Jul. 12th	The Serving Plate - 5:00pm
Jul. 16th	Eyes of Our Hearts breakfast - 7:00am
Jul. 17-22	The Philadelphia Project mission trip
Jul. 17th	Light Harbor - 2:30pm
Jul. 20th	Internat'l Women's Friendship Grp.-10am
Jul. 26th	Lunch&Learn,Collingswood Manor-10-2
Jul. 26th	Crafts for Good - 7:00pm



**FROM  
PASTOR RICHARD**

*"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

Ephesians 4:1-3

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church met this past May to carry out the work and legislation of our denomination that directs our policies and practices. Much of the attention of this past conference centered around the issues of human sexuality and the church's position and stance on homosexuality. After much prayer and discussion the many petitions on this issue were deferred and the Bishops of the UMC were requested to lead the church forward for our future ministry together. The result was the plan to develop a special commission to look at the parts of our Discipline related to human sexuality and to bring its recommendations to a future General Conference. The full statement from the Bishops pertaining to this matter can be found in this month's Messenger.

As senior pastor of FUMC, I am aware that even as the denomination is divided on this issue, that our local congregation is made up of people who hold different viewpoints on human sexuality. We have different understandings of Scriptural interpretation, we have different faith and church backgrounds, and we have our own personal perspectives and life experiences.

My hope and prayer for our church is that despite our differences, we can find ways to be in open conversation with each other and seek to deepen our own faith experience through the process. We may not come to a place where we all agree, but we are called to "make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Above all let us be a community of faith where all persons feel loved and welcomed. Even though this past General Conference made no changes in the Discipline on human sexuality, the current language of the Discipline reminds us that "we affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God...and that "we commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons."

Let us continue to be in prayer and ministry together seeking to be a loving community of faith where all persons will experience God's love and grace.

**ELECTRONIC GIVING OPTION**

**If you would like to use your mobile device to make an electronic donation to FUMC Moorestown, just scan this QR code and you'll be connected to our mobile giving page!**



*If you have already signed up to give electronically and no longer wish to receive monthly offering envelopes, please let Karen Halligan know (please email church@meetwithGod.com) so she can take you off the envelope mailing list . Thank you!*

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Newly Baptized

**Baptisms:**

Reese Avery Chiolan  
on June 12, 2016; daughter of  
Adam & Ashley Chiolan

Peter Phillip Kalick  
on June 12, 2016; son of  
Timothy & Beth Kalick

**Deaths:**

Carole Hare  
on May 27, 2016



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**OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

*First United Methodist Church is a community of faith committed to sharing the love of Jesus Christ with a hurting world through words and actions.*



**FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

*"I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works." Psalm 9:1*

Dear Friends,

As you enjoy the summer remember that God wants you to share with those around you all the marvelous works that he has done. Those marvelous works include the beauty of creation as well as your family and friends. It includes the difficult times that he has brought you through and it includes the undeniable joy that comes from growing in your personal relationship with him.

Remind yourself to PRAISE the Lord with your whole heart and share in his joys and blessings everyday. Now relax and look around I'm sure you can 'see' a marvelous work, just look in the mirror!

Happy Summer!

Karen Murray, DCE

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**NEWS! NEWS! NEWS!**

**Friends, Beginning July 3<sup>rd</sup> there will be a NEW addition to the 9:30 Worship Service!**

**"What is it?" you ask.**

**It's called "Christian Children's Chat"**

**(aka Children's Sermon time)**

**Our Pastors will be giving a short Children's sermon before dismissing the Children to our Summer Sunday School Program**

**ALL Children ages 2yrs. - 4<sup>th</sup> grade are invited to come to the Altar (when called) to enjoy a short message. When the message is finished the children will be dismissed to their Sunday School Classroom or the Nursery. This will occur every week in July & August. Beginning in September it will happen on the last Sunday of each month. We LOVE having your children in Worship and we know that through this opportunity MANY lives will be changed.**

**Please support this effort and bring your children to the 9:30 Worship Service!  
(Children's Bulletins are also available at EACH of our 4 Worship Services.)**

**SUMMER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE**

**Beginning July 3<sup>rd</sup> at 9:30 (After the Children's Sermon) Children's SUNDAY SCHOOL**

**for Children 5yrs. through 4<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**5's -1<sup>st</sup> grade Rm. E-103;**

**2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> grade Rm. E-104**

**Volunteer Teachers & Helpers Needed!**

**(Contact Karen Murray 856-266-0083 to volunteer. Curriculum Provided.)**

**ADULT CLASSES**

**9:30 - Heritage Room (Topical/Book Study)**

**11:00 - Heritage Room (Bible Study)**

**11:00 - Room E-203 (Sermon Discussion Group)**

**YOUTH SUMMER PROGRAM**

**Begins WEDNESDAY, July 6<sup>th</sup> - 6pm-8pm Dinner Included**

**Open to all youth in Jr. & Sr. High**

**Also look for Special Summer Activities/trips!**

**VBS REGISTRATIONS due by JULY 10<sup>th</sup>. Visit [www.meetwithGod.com](http://www.meetwithGod.com) for more details.**

## **YOUTH MINISTRY SUMMER 2016**



### **Summer Youth**

**Wednesday nights, beginning July 6<sup>th</sup>, 6pm-8pm**  
Dinner and fellowship - All Jr. & Sr. High invited

### **June 29<sup>th</sup> - July 2<sup>nd</sup> - Creation Fest 2016**

Cost: \$130.00 per person. Please visit the Creation website [www.creationfest.com/NE](http://www.creationfest.com/NE) for more information. "A Tribute to Our Creator"

### **July 10<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> - Oak Hill West Virginia Mission Trip - Sr. High & College age**

### **July 17<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> - The Philadelphia Project Youth Mission Trip - Jr. & Sr. High**

### **August 5<sup>th</sup> - Kayaking**

Cost: TBA - we will leave the church parking lot at 9:00am and Return approximately 4:00pm

### **August 11<sup>th</sup> - Ocean City Beach Day**

We will leave the church parking lot at 9:00am and return at 9:00pm. Cost: \$10 for beach tag / spending money for boardwalk

**August 19<sup>th</sup> - Peach Festival** - Jr. & Sr. High will participate by making hamburgers, hot dogs, pork roll & cheese, etc...

### **August 23<sup>rd</sup> - Ocean City Beach Day**

We will leave the church parking lot at 9:00am and return at 9:00pm. Cost: \$10 for beach tag / spending money for boardwalk

***We will most likely need drivers for our trips - if you are available, please let me know. Thank you!***

***For questions call, email or text: Kathy Clawges  
856-912-1148 [kclawges@gmail.com](mailto:kclawges@gmail.com)***

## **NOTES OF THANKS**

To my dear friends & church family at FUMC,

As many of you have been aware, I have been away from Church for much too long. I missed you during that self-imposed exile, but my accident last July resulted in many complications from the surgery beyond pain, such as 4 months in hospital, C.C. Unit for blood transfusions and then 6 days a week in rehab followed by 10 more days of rehab after I was discharged in October. By the time the Christmas holidays rolled around, I was already depressed and it only got worse the more I tried to get back to my old self before I lost my husband Bob in 2014.

So again, let me say I am so sorry I lost touch with almost everyone, but you didn't give up on me - all the cards and messages of cheer, the little quilted coffee cup coaster on Valentines Day, calls, a fun visit from Kathy C. and Youth Group kids with homemade soup, so many Heart-to-Heart reminders that I was thought of - and prayed for. Your caring & kindness during my absence will never ever be forgotten.

In closing, I have been praying to God to show me how I can get ready to return to the "outside world" again. I received two answers: (1) God sent beautiful springtime and birds singing and flowers, and (2) I happened to sit down and read a beautiful article in the May issue of "The Messenger" titled "Dis-appointed" by Rae Caputo. I reread it 3 more times as I realized that I had been existing in a very dark place for a long time, trying to find my way up through "the boulders of depression" and a darkness of physical pain to the light of God's grace and love. Amen.

With a grateful heart to all I send my sincere appreciation and love.

Barbara Lobe

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I wish to thank our ministers and our community of faith family for the outpouring of sympathy, prayers and love on the passing of our son, Mark.

Bob McCoy

**TRASH  
TO  
TREASURE**



There is something about scrap quilting that just makes me so happy. I cannot explain the joy of using what others would consider throwing out as the perfect piece in my quilt. I know I'm not alone in this idea. I quilt with a few ladies monthly that have created masterpieces from the bits and pieces others find useless. I love that!

We all know someone that saves bits and pieces of seemingly useless items. Come on! How many of you had Dads that saved screws and other bits like hinges and such in little jars with the lids screwed to 1x6's and placed under cabinetry by a workbench, right? Same idea. I'm sure there is a certain amount of pride when Dad has a honey-do project and he goes to the workbench to find the perfect piece to finish his assignment. Might not be the perfect piece that a master craftsman would use but it does the job.

I cannot help but think about the parable of the lost coin or the lost sheep. To an outsider, they would wonder what the big deal was about one little coin or one sheep. Especially the sheep. After all, the shepherd has a whole herd. What's one sheep? But the story is about our value not about tearing a house apart or going over hill and dale looking for potential wildcat food. We all have value in God's eyes and He wants nothing more than to draw us close.

I guess what I am getting around to saying is thank you. Thank you to all who have embraced this ministry through your support of prayer, participation, donating fabric and batting and, seeing the trash to treasure in the bits and pieces that may become comfort to another. Thank you for taking the time to pray over a quilt in the chapel, for tying knots that eventually cover our sick and recovering family members in prayer. We cannot do this without all of you. Every person that has had a hand, even in some seemingly small way, has made a vital impact. Please continue to contribute. You have value and you do make a difference!

Rae Caputo  
My Abba's Hands

**WHAT'S IN A NAME!!**

Our United Methodist homes have a new name, "United Methodist Communities". The Homes have always been a community within a community interacting with their townspeople encouraging shared events and activities. Now, within each Home, individual areas will be designed as to have a more family like atmosphere - less clinical in appearance. Each area will have their own living room and dining room hoping to encourage more interaction between residents. It will be like having neighborhoods within a town. One neighborhood might have a special event and invite the other neighborhoods to join them.

Collingswood Manor has always presented a very welcoming atmosphere to this writer; however, when thinking about this new concept, I recognize the need for it. The Manor has a beautiful lobby with a large living room adjacent to it. Also the dining room is large and inviting. I have noticed that after residents dine, they all seem to return to their own rooms unless there is a special activity. They do not use the large living room to just chat. By having smaller units, the residents should feel that they have their own living room to hang out in. The dining room table will seat more people providing more interesting conversations. As a retired nurse, it is sometimes the interaction between people on a daily basis that subtle changes are picked up on and brought to the attention of a staff member.

This new concept will take time to implement, Wesley Manor at Ocean City has already made these changes and is being used as a model.

For those interested in visiting Collingswood Manor for a "Lunch and Learn" session on July 26th; 10 A.M. to 2 P.M., please contact Joan Van Alstyne, Ambassador to Collingswood Manor, at 856-764-6638. A reservation will be made and a ride provided.

Joan Van Alstyne



**FAITH NOTES**  
**How God Is at Work in Our Lives**

*This month we will feature two of our youth, who shared the stories of their faith journeys during Youth Weekend, June 18-19.*

For those of you who do not know me, my name is Ceili O'Donnell. I'm currently a senior at Moorestown High School, but not for long! After Wednesday, I will officially be a Moorestown High School Alumni! I am also soon to be a "Hokie". In the fall, I will be attending Virginia Tech down in Blacksburg, VA and I plan on majoring in Human Development to one day become an elementary school speech pathologist. My family has been attending this church since we moved here in 2000 when I was two years old. Once I was old enough, I began singing in the Primary Choir and attending Sunday School every week where I met some of the friends I still hold near and dear to my heart today. I also started learning about the Lord.

I grew up always being told that Jesus loved me and he died for my sins and I was forgiven. I did not really know what that meant. I couldn't really grasp the concept of God and his power. It has taken me until this past year to finally understand and grasp the vastness of the Lord's love. I am proud to say his love has shaped me to be the person I am today.

I became a member of this church in eighth grade, like most of the kids here, when I was confirmed. My confirmation of my faith and to this church was a big step in my faith journey. Though I still did not fully understand God, I thought he was pretty cool because he made the church and I had fun at church. Therefore, I thought if church was cool, God must be cool too!

As high school started, my faith was put to the test. Numerous hours of studying and projects and homework made it hard for me to find the time I wanted to spend with God. Sunday night youth group was getting harder and harder to attend as Sunday night was usually my homework night. Relationships were lost and as high school dragged on, I saw my faith getting weaker and weaker.

Every summer, I, and many others, attend the Philadelphia Project, otherwise known as TPP. We go into Philadelphia for a week in the summer, usually the Manayunk and Roxborough area, and serve the community in many different ways such as helping at a VBS camp, helping rebuild houses, and even throwing a community BBQ. It is one of my favorite weeks of the summer, and I'm happy to be attending my fourth year on this trip this upcoming summer with my mom, sister, grandpa, and best friends at my side.

During the week of TPP, every night we have a big get together that we call "club". Club, in a nutshell, is basically all of us, including the leaders and interns that work at the project, going absolutely nuts at church singing, having dance competitions, playing games, and losing our voices. There is a live band that plays worship music and then either an intern or Pastor Ray, the pastor of the Roxborough Presbyterian Church where TPP is run through, share an inspirational message. It really is an indescribable feeling during those nights.

On the last night, the craziness of club goes away, and the solemnity of worship songs and prayer takes over. I really try to spend this night reflecting on my past year and how my faith has stayed strong through all the roller coasters life had brought me. I pray by myself, I pray with others, I pray for others, and even sometimes have people pray for me. As much fun as club is, this night has always been my favorite.

Two years ago, so the summer after my sophomore year, I had the most amazing week of my life at TPP. My friend Ali and I had become very close with one of the interns, Jenna, that week. She was so kind to share her wisdom and prayer and thoughts on the Bible with us. She really changed our lives. That summer, I had accepted Christ as my lord and savior. With my positive attitude on life, I was ready to end my fun summer and start, what I did not know was going to be, the hardest year of my life.

People always tell you junior year is the hardest year of your high school life. I did not believe them until it finally began. Not only was the workload bad enough, in November of that year, I found out that I was going to be needing kneecap realignment surgery. On December 23, 2014, my life changed forever. After being bedridden for two weeks, in a wheelchair for a month, non weight bearing on crutches for 2 months with my leg in a full extension brace, weight bearing on crutches for a month with a little bend, still in my brace for another month after that walking on and finally graduation to physical therapy in October of 2015, I had never been so discouraged in my life. I didn't understand why God would put me through something as hard as this after I just accepted him into my life. If God loved me so much, why would he do this to me?

My junior year finally came to an end and I had a full summer ahead of me. California for 16 days, a week

*Faith Notes, continued*

down the shore with my family, and another week at TPP. I was nervous to go back to the place where I found the Lord because I was fearful the same situation would happen again and I would reconfirm my faith in him again and then go through a tough year. My faith was on the fence going into the summer.

The week of TPP had come again and my excitement finally kicked in. Another fun week went by and I once again renewed my faith in Christ; this time, however, I was sure to use his power for me and not against me. Since I have accepted Christ in my life, I have never been the same. I live my days differently and have a different mindset going into situations.

This year I recently started attending Young Life, a local youth group that meets every week to sing songs, play games, and hear talks from the leaders about the Bible. It truly became a part of my life and I'm very happy I started attending. I met SO many new friends and built such strong relationships; some of which I will cherish forever.

A bible verse I hold close to my heart is Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through He who strengthens me". I have really tried to live my life according to this Bible verse because really we can do anything with God's help. Though it took me a while to understand and accept God and his love I am happy to say I do now and I don't plan on ever losing it.

Thank you.

\* \* \*

Hi my name is Selena Jani, and I have been part of this church for 4yrs. I have been on many mission trips, "Lock Ins" and paintball trips with the youth group here and it has been a pleasure to know them. They have seen me as the quietest person to the loudest and the most hyper among the group at 1 in the morning. I am going to miss every single Jr. & Sr. High, whether it be the sleepless nights or people laughing in the middle of the night for no reason whatsoever.

I've had the honor of knowing Pastor Steve, while he was here. We would always talk about books and that's how we connected. Pastor Richard and I talk sometimes and I look forward to getting to know him better, in the future, during my college years. I remember coming to my first Worship Service here and greeting Pastor HeyYoung afterward, with her saying namaste. That became the way we would greet each other and how I can tell you (Anyo Hasey on) \*in Korean\*. Thank you to all the Pastors for being so welcoming not only

towards me but everybody else and blessing us with your knowledge about the scripture.

And thank you to the Congregation for always supporting my family and I, even though I might not know everyone of you, I've had the honor of knowing some of you and it has truly been a blessing. Amen!

Selena's message: **What Brings You Peace?**

Peace means the absence of war, freedom from quarrels or disagreements, public security and order, these are all the definitions of peace that you could find on the online dictionary but the one that sticks with me the most is Inner contentment, peace of mind. The thing that brings me peace of mind isn't listening to music, surprisingly knowing the fact that I'm a musical person, but instead it is looking at the ocean and the green grass and trees, feeling the cold breeze on my face, it makes me realize that I'm alive.

The reason why the ocean makes me feel at peace is because it makes me realize that there are places out there which the humans can never conquer and that there is a God out there which loves me for who I am and that I am a free bird in the whole wide world and nobody can cage me. When I look at the ocean I feel like I can relax and just sit there and stare out there to absolutely nothing but water. Blue, blue water, countless amount of water, as far as your eyes can see. That's when I really go into deep thoughts and when I really talk to God. When I really feel like the whole spirit is upon me. Away from all the commotion and tranquility of life, from all the hassles and struggles and the routines that we all go through.

Have you ever felt that, the peace...of just sitting there and feeling the breeze and the presence of God...just getting your thoughts straight and figuring out who you are not who the world wants you to be?

The other thing that brings peace to me is just sitting in my backyard and listening to the birds sing and the leaves dancing with the wind and looking at the trees the beautiful green grass. It makes me feel how amazing God is and how amazing his creation is. In fact whenever I get mad I just walk out, not because I want to be rude to the other person but because I want to calm down and get my thoughts together because I know that when a person gets angry they say things that they don't want to say and then they hurt the people that they love. And I don't want to be that person because I don't want to regret it later.

The things that bring me peace are small but they mean a lot to me and even though they might seem weird to you they are the most amazing things that could ever exist in this world so I praise God for them every day.

**REPORT OF THE UNITED METHODIST ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
May 22-24, 2016**

Suanne Bryan and I were privileged to be a part of the United Methodist Annual Conference this May. More than 1400 people attended the conference. The United Methodist Conference is a yearly session for clergy and lay members to worship, learn about programs, and conduct the business of the United Methodist Conference of Greater New Jersey. During the sessions, we heard reports of past and ongoing work, adopted future goals, programs and budgets, and witnessed the commissioning of 13 clergy members and the ordination of 10 clergy.

The theme of this year's conference was "Imagine". Bishop Schol, in his message as part of the ordination service, talked about God's love of beauty, playfulness, and diversion. He encouraged us to embrace God's light to see what God is calling us to do. He talked about the dangers of letting familiarity and security get in the way of the possibilities of a new future that God has planned for us. Bishop Schol also talked about one of our goals as establishing 90 new faith communities by the year 2019.

One of the keynote speakers was Dr. Robin Di Angelo, who is a former Associate Professor of Education at the University of Washington in Seattle. She has extensive experience as a workplace consultant in issues of race relations and racial justice. Her talk addressed the issues of cultural diversity, racial justice, and race relations. Further information about Robin can be found on her website: [www.robindiangelo.com](http://www.robindiangelo.com), and also on LinkedIn.

Our other keynote speaker was Trey Wince, who is the Director of New Disciples of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. More information about Trey can also be found on LinkedIn and the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference website ([gnjumc.org](http://gnjumc.org)). Trey talked about settling into "right now", which does promote, he says, vision and imagination. He encourages us to trust our community as our own. He reminded us that God said: "Listen, come meet me here." He says that the Church can take risks (to live in the neighborhoods we are working in is to be deeply invested). He asked us to view the world by story, and to let our gut help in our decision-making. He urged us to "try stuff". He said that "failure is a measure of success", and that "God is worth taking a risk for." He said that we should assume

we have a future worth investing in, and to keep producing and trying.

Rosa Williams the lay leader for the GNJAC, also encouraged us, in several of her presentations, to imagine new ways of serving, and to equip our leaders for transformational ministry. She also said that genuine, diverse, purposeful life-giving will embody God's Kingdom. She urged us to carry out God's plan, and to go and make disciples throughout the world. She reminded us that we all are gifted, and to find a place to use our gifts. She said that all of us are needed to become more vital and intentional, and should work towards creating a supportive culture within our own areas. Rosa, and four young leaders, shared their vision of the church which included innovative ministries, meeting people where they are, and mission.

Each of the speakers encouraged all of us to allow God to work through our differences, and to be willing to work and serve together.

Five churches were voted to close this year: Allerton UMC, Anderson UMC, McCrea Memorial UMC, Riverside UMC, and St. Matthew UMC. In an amendment to the resolutions presented about church closures, the body agreed to study how best to care for cemeteries associated with churches that can no longer care for them.

A Service of Remembrance was held on Monday morning. Reverend Dr. Virginia Samuel delivered a message on having faith in the midst of grief and clinging to the old rugged cross. We worshiped together, remembering the loved ones who have gone on to be with the Lord since the Annual Conference session in 2015.

More than 875 people attended six workshops inspiring spiritual leaders with creative strategies to think big and pursue excellence in the church. The workshops included: Cultural Competence, Evaluating Worship Services, Unlocking the Power of the Imagination, Strategies to Build God-sized Brands, Little Habits to Produce Big Changes, and Financial Security.

*Continued on next page*

Annual Conference, *continued*

More than 150 volunteers working in unison helped to pack 30,000 meals to support Stop Hunger Now's effort to feed people around the world.

An offering for the Mission Fund was taken during the ordination service. More than \$63,000.00 was collected to help eliminate malaria and to continue to rebuild homes for people with damage from Superstorm Sandy.

We celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the work of deacons, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ordination of women, and the quadrennial passage of GNJ committee leadership who have served on chair positions on the Connectional Table. We also celebrated 32 clergy members who are retiring this year. Over 890 years of ministry were represented in the service of our retirees.

GNJ Delegates to General Conference shared highlights from the ten-day legislative gathering that ended on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. In the midst of difficult conversations about human sexuality and the future of the church, the delegates shared their thoughts about the powerful worship services, inspiring preaching and strong fellowship. The delegates distributed a statement from the Council of Bishops which called for a commission to study the issue of human sexuality and come back with recommendations. (*Editor's note - this statement can be found on pg. 10*). The General Conference also addressed financial issues ranging from the budget to pension fund investments. For more information on General Conference, please go to [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org) and search for "general conference 2016".

Powerful videos were used throughout the conference. They are available to view on the website, and I would encourage you to take some time to do that.

"A Future with Hope" is continuing. To date, 441 families who were affected by Hurricane Sandy have been helped, and 234 homes have been repaired. This has been accomplished through 11,000 volunteers.

The new conference center has been completed, and is paid for!

While vitality is increasing, attendance within our churches is decreasing. Some goals that were discussed are as follows:

- To increase the percentage of churches, which is now at 30%, to 32 - 51%.
- To open 90 faith communities (have already started 24)
- Increase by 43 - 75% the number of members in small groups (this goal has already been reached)
- Increase small group numbers of young adults by 23 - 29%
- Increase racially ethnic groups by 21%
- Increase worship in missions by 8 - 40% (already exceeded)
- Increase funding for missions by 15 - 17% (are already at 18%)

Two missionaries from Cuba were introduced. Our conference is looking at partnering with Cuba, as an exchange program with Drew University.

The United Methodist Church is on track to get its first hymnal since 1989. It will be Internet-cloud based and will only print on demand. This is the first high-tech hymnal for a mainline denomination.

I encourage all of you to spend some time reading the material on the Greater New Jersey website, as there is, of course, much more information from the conference. Thank you all for keeping all of us in prayer throughout the conference.

God bless you all,  
Kathy Appleton  
Suanne Bryan

"See what love the Father has given us,



that we should be called children of God."

1 John 3:1

*Reprinted below is the statement from the Council of Bishops issued at the United Methodist General Conference, as mentioned by Pastor Richard and in the report on the Annual Conference.*

### AN OFFERING FOR A WAY FORWARD

Galatians 3:25-29 (NRSV)

<sup>25</sup>But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, <sup>26</sup>for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. <sup>27</sup>As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring,<sup>[a]</sup> heirs according to the promise.

Your bishops were honored to receive the request of General Conference to help lead our United Methodist Church forward during this time of both great crisis and great opportunity. As far as we can discover, this is the first time that a General Conference has ever made such a request of the Council of Bishops, and we accept this request with humility.

We share with you a deep commitment to the unity of the church in Christ our Lord. Yesterday, our president shared the deep pain we feel. We have all prayed for months and continue to do so. We seek, in this *kairos* moment, a way forward for profound unity on human sexuality and other matters. This deep unity allows for a variety of expressions to co-exist in one church. Within the church, we are called to work and pray for more Christ-like unity with each other rather than separation from one another. This is the prayer of Jesus in John 17:21-23.

**UNITY** We believe that our unity is found in Jesus Christ; it is not something we achieve but something we receive as a gift from God. We understand that part of our role as bishops is to lead the church toward new behaviors, a new way of being and new forms and structures which allow a unity of our mission of “making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” while allowing for differing expressions as a global church. Developing such new forms will require a concerted effort by all of us, and we your bishops commit ourselves to lead this effort. We ask you, as a General Conference, to affirm your own commitment to maintaining and strengthening the unity of the church. We will coordinate this work with the various efforts already underway to develop global structures and a new *General Book of Discipline* for our church. Strengthening the unity of the church is a responsibility for all of us.

**PRAYER** We accept our role as spiritual leaders to lead the UMC in a “pause for prayer” - to step back from

attempts at legislative solutions and to intentionally seek God's will for the future. As a Council of Bishops, we will lead the church in prayer for God's guidance. We ask you, as a General Conference, to join us in this effort, beginning this week. We were moved by the sight of delegates praying around the table, and we hope these efforts will continue. As your bishops we are ready to join you and to lead you in these times of prayer.

**PROCESSES** We have discussed in depth the processes which might help our church heal and move forward - up to and including the possibility of a called General Conference in 2018 or 2019. We have not finalized our plans for such processes, but we will keep working on options we have heard from many of you, and we will keep reporting to this General Conference and to the whole church.

**NEXT STEPS** We recommend that the General Conference defer all votes on human sexuality and refer this entire subject to a special Commission, named by the Council of Bishops, to develop a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph in our *Book of Discipline* regarding human sexuality. We continue to hear from many people on the debate over sexuality that our current *Discipline* contains language which is contradictory, unnecessarily hurtful, and inadequate for the variety of local, regional and global contexts. We will name such a commission to include persons from every region of our UMC, and will include representation from differing perspectives on this debate. We commit to maintain an on-going dialogue with this Commission as they do their work, including clear objectives and outcomes. Should they complete their work in time for a called General Conference, then we will call a two- to three-day gathering before the 2020 General Conference (We will consult with GCFA regarding cost-effective ways to hold that gathering.)

**CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS** We will continue to explore options to help the church live in grace with one another - including ways to avoid further complaints, trials and harm while we uphold the *Discipline*. We will continue our conversation on this matter and report our progress to you and to the whole church.

*Today, as a way of beginning to find our way forward, we suggest that in place of the allotted legislative time we spend 1-2 hours of plenary time in prayer, confession and exploration of a creative way forward. The bishops are prepared to provide questions to guide your conversations. Your conversations will be the first step to a way forward.*