



“They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending its roots by the stream.” Jeremiah 17:8

United Methodists in Greater New Jersey demonstrated their leadership in the denomination, their love of Christ and their commitment to our mission to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world at the 2019 Session of Annual Conference.

Episcopal Address

In his opening address, Bishop John Schol celebrated the ministries of congregations in Greater New Jersey, sharing ways that clergy and congregational leaders have demonstrated their love through mission and outreach. He shared the good works of GNJ’s vital mission partners who witness to our communities through mission, financial management, engaging young disciples and serving housing needs. In a personal and emotional witness to the state of the church, he shared his commitment to explore new expressions of Methodism in the wake of current disagreements over homosexuality. “Let me be clear, I am not interested in changing a few paragraphs in The Book of Discipline and then call it a day. The Gospel demands more of us, of me and of you as leaders of the church of Jesus Christ. God is ready to do new things through us and while it will not look the same, it will be Wesleyan, it will be connectional, it will be transformative and it will turn the church outward.

Bishop Schol called for 50 congregations to volunteer to pilot the next Methodism. He called for others to continue to move our mission forward: 75 congregations who are interested in becoming the next Hope Center, 30 congregations who want to partner to start and grow a youth ministry program. 100 congregations who are ready and willing to be the next miracle in the Miracles Everywhere Campaign, 10 congregations ready to invest with the Stewardship Foundation to move us forward into what is next and 10 congregations who are ready to start a new worship experience.

Clergy General Conference Delegates

GNJ elected new delegates to the General and Jurisdictional Conference of the United Methodist Church for 2020.

Drew Dyson, Chair of the Clergy Delegation

Héctor A. Burgos
Kaleigh Tomich Corbett
Jennifer Cho

Clergy Jurisdictional Conference Delegates

Catherine Williams
Thomas Lank
William Williams, III
Eunice Vega-Perez

Clergy Reserves

Tanya Linn Bennett
Robert Costello
Sang-Won Doh

Laity Delegates to General Conference

Bethany Amey, Chair of the Delegation

Judy Colorado
Harriett Olson
Stephen Quigg

Laity Delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference

Dale Caldwell
Cynthia Kent
Moselle Jules
Carolyn Pendleton

Laity Reserves

Jane Ehlers
Creed Pogue
Andrea Wren-Hardin

Bethany Amey will serve as Chairperson of the delegation, while Drew Dyson will serve as chair of the clergy delegation.

Worship

We had powerful worship experiences starting with an ordination service on Sunday night which saw 18 newly commissioned and ordained clergy and one missionary who will serve in Mongolia for the Board of Global Ministries. We celebrated the ministries of 21 clergy who retired representing 549 years in ministry with the people of Greater New Jersey. Bishop Ernest Lyght delivered a powerful sermon for our Service of Remembrance where we honored 28 clergy and lay members who passed in the last year.

Leadership

GNJ leaders shared the fruits of our ministry and the steps we have taken to fulfill our 2023 Strategic Plan including resources like Leadership 100, the Pathway to Discipleship, the Breakthrough Worship Series, the Clergy Leadership Development Initiative, Clergy Coaching, PaCE groups, Team Vital, the Congregational Leadership Development Initiative and more.

Outside of regular sessions, United Methodists served communion on the beach and boardwalk, meditated in communal prayer at our prayer stations, shared fellowship at one of the group or general meals and packed 30,000 meals for Rise Against Hunger. GNJ received a generous offering of \$31,281.50 from our congregations for the Miracles Everywhere Campaign which is supporting our partnership with Tanzania and Puerto Rico, Next Generation Ministries and A Future With Hope.

Desegregation of NJ Schools

Sammy Arroyo, GNJ representative in the NJ Schools Desegregation Coalition, shared an update on the work being done as part of the efforts GNJ initiated last year through a historic lawsuit against the State of New Jersey that calls for the desegregation of public schools in the state. Next steps include a partnership with The Latino Action Network Foundation and the Salvation and Social Justice for program planning, outreach and organizing.

Cultural Competency

Kristina González, Director of Innovation for an Inclusive Church for the Greater Northwest Episcopal Area of the UMC, led us in a teaching session in cultural competency and the intersections with emotional intelligence to further our commitment to our ten-year cultural competency plan. Small group sharing brought home her message with a hands-on exercise to encourage conversation.

The Way Forward

Holy Conferencing took on new meaning Tuesday as the conference discussed the work of The Way Forward Team. Bishop John Schol invited all members of the Way Forward Team to join him in sharing

their work, by focusing on the tools of having an outward mindset. David Wherle, the vice chair of the Wesleyan Covenant Association and Amanda Hemenetz, the chair of Reconciling Ministries, both gave witness to how the team is lifting them up and giving them hope for a way forward. Members of the body stepped to the microphones to share where they saw themselves in the boxes that kept us inward and where in our lives we experienced outward ministries.

Our conferencing concluded at the table that Jesus set for us. We held communion as Bishop Schol proclaimed the mystery of our faith and the fragility of all of us in this liminal time.

More news stories, videos and updates will be posted throughout the week. Please share this information with your congregation.