

Greater New Jersey Conference of The United Methodist Church
Special Annual Conference Session Wrap-Up
November 2, 2013

A resource to share special session highlights.
Please post on your website, share in worship, and include in printed material.

A Special Session of the Greater New Jersey Conference was called on November 2, 2013 to vote on:

- changes to the organizational plan to bring GNJ's structure into compliance with the *Book of Discipline*,
- changes to the budget to enable GNJ to begin implementing the Strategic Ministry Plan approved during the 2013 Annual Conference Session,
- adoption and election of the nominations committee report, and
- a relationship statement with A Future with Hope.

Over 800 people gathered in the Great Auditorium in Ocean Grove, NJ for a day of remembrance, hope, prayer and discernment as GNJ celebrated the work of A Future with Hope and made important decisions to continue to move the Strategic Ministry Plan forward.

A Service of Hope and Remembrance

A Service of Hope and Remembrance, a special service to mark the one year anniversary of Superstorm Sandy, opened the Special Session of the Annual Conference. The service featured the work of A Future with Hope and highlights included guest speakers Cassidy Nablone, a young volunteer and member of the New Egypt United Methodist Church, and Rick Hall, an Atlantic City resident whose home was recently rebuilt by A Future with Hope. Clearly moved by the generosity of the volunteers who gave him back his home, Hall said, "The Lord says when I bless you, it will be abundantly." He continued, "I know this was a miracle because only God could do this. The miracle was God's children who came in the name of the Lord. When you're helping people in the name of the Lord, there is no bigger gift."

In addition to United Methodists attending the conference, the service welcomed volunteers, partners in the recovery effort, and community leaders, including state legislators and local officials from across New Jersey. During the service, Bishop John Schol announced a \$750,000 grant from the Hurricane Sandy NJ Relief Fund (the fund coordinated by New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's wife, Mary Pat Christie) to help continue recovery efforts. Bishop Schol went on to acknowledge the tragedies and challenges caused by the storm and then called on each individual to affirm their commitment to rebuilding *a future with hope*. "When people hurt, United Methodists help in the name of Christ."

Conference Plan of Organization

In order to move forward with the Strategic Ministry Plan and maintain compliance with the *Book of Discipline*, several changes to the organizational structure of the Greater New Jersey Conference were approved. A few of the major changes include:

- The addition of five agencies to bring the total to 34 as required by *the Book of Discipline*. (An agency is defined as a Board, Commission, Council or Committee).
- Renaming of the Primary Task Team (PTT) to the "Connectional Table" and removing its authority to act on the behalf of the Annual Conference in between sessions of Annual Conference. As part of the total mission of the Conference, the Connectional Table is to serve as the steward of the vision and resources for mission and ministry and establish policies and

procedures to carry out the mission of the conference. A full listing of committees affected can be found in the legislation online at www.gnjumc.org/specialsession.

- The practice of nominating eight people to each Conference agency unless the Book of Discipline mandates a different number of members or the Greater New Jersey Conference plan of organization stipulates a different number.
- The Committee on Nominations will consist of the District Lay Leaders, the Conference Lay Leader, the Director of Connectional Ministries and the District Superintendents.

Full details of the organizational changes can be found in the legislation available for downloading on www.gnjumc.org/specialsession.

Modified 2014 Budget Approved

In order to move the Strategic Ministry Plan forward, a modified 2014 budget is required. This revised budget allows for the hiring of three additional staff members: a webmaster and two new Connectional Ministries Staff. The creation of these positions will not increase the apportionment budget approved for 2014.

A webmaster will enable us to continue to strengthen our web presence for communication and reporting. By adding two new Connectional Ministry Staff, GNJ will have individual staff focused on each of the five areas of vital congregations:

- Making new disciples and increasing the number of professions of faith
- Growing worship attendance
- Increasing the number of small groups and disciples participating in small groups
- Engaging more disciples in justice and mercy mission
- Increasing giving stewardship of disciples

All five of the Connectional Ministries staff will be responsible for resourcing youth and young adults in the specific area he/she is assigned, with one of the positions focusing on the overall ministry of youth and young adults.

These staff persons will help GNJ grow vital congregations from 14% to 41%.

John Bishop, President of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, expressed his appreciation for what this newly adopted budget means for GNJ, "Establishing the budget to line up with the needs for implementation of the Strategic Ministry Plan was a vital step towards making the achievement of our goals possible."

Statement of Relationship with A Future with Hope, Inc.

A Statement of Relationship with A Future with Hope, Inc. was adopted. A Future with Hope, Inc. was established as a separate nonprofit organization after Superstorm Sandy left mass devastation throughout New Jersey in the fall of 2012. This relationship statement explains that although A Future with Hope, Inc. was initiated by the Greater New Jersey Conference and extends the missional goals and purposes of the Annual Conference, they are both independent entities of one another, making independent governing decisions. It goes on to state that while A Future with Hope, Inc. offers members of GNJAC local churches to serve in mission, including on its Board of Trustees, those persons do not represent GNJAC. A Future with Hope, Inc.'s Board of Trustees operates autonomously from GNJAC. The Bishop and the Treasurer of GNJAC will serve on the Board of Trustees with voice and vote.

The statement also goes on to say that the President of A Future with Hope, Inc. will provide a report to the Annual Conference Session each year and all trustees will be elected as part of the work of GNJAC's Nominations Committee.

The Greater New Jersey Conference encourages local churches and individuals to contribute to and support A Future with Hope, Inc.; however, GNJAC does not assume any responsibility for the obligations of A Future with Hope, Inc.

A Future with Hope Mission Fund Campaign Update

The 2013 Annual Conference Session in May approved the Future with Hope Mission Fund Campaign, which will raise:

- \$7 million for Sandy Recovery efforts through A Future with Hope, Inc.,
- \$2 million to eliminate deaths and suffering from malaria in Africa through the support of Imagine No Malaria, and
- \$3 million to connect local churches to their communities through mission.

In the 5 short months since this campaign was approved, the Mission Fund has received overwhelming support:

- 82% of our clergy have made a commitment
- Two-thirds of our congregations are in the process of planning or implementing campaigns of support, and
- Gifts and commitment to the campaign to date total: \$2,622,156 -- which is nearly 22% of our total goal. This is \$1 million ahead of our benchmark for the end of October.

"The initial response and support of our clergy and congregations are an affirmation of our connection as United Methodists," says Carolyn Conover, Director of Communications and Development who is coordinating the efforts of the Mission Fund for the Conference.

For more information and resources about the Future with Hope Mission Fund Campaign, visit www.gnjumc.org/missionfund.