

Voices of Purpose

September 2022

Quarterly Newsletter of the Greater New Jersey United Women in Faith

President's Message

The Charter for Racial Justice and Intersectionality

The Charter for Racial Justice opens with these words: "Because we believe... 1. God is the Creator of all people, and all are God's children in one family," and continues in 6. "in our common humanity in creation, all women and men are made in God's image, and all persons are equally valuable in the sight of God."¹

These words are echoed in our new Statement of Welcome:

"GNJ United Women in Faith affirms that the grace of God is extended to all God's children without exception.

We are committed to the inclusion of people of every gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, as well as people of every age, ethnicity, physical and mental ability, level of education, and family structure, and of every economic, immigration, marital, and social status.

We make a bold choice to work for intersectional peace with justice and to create inclusive communities that respect the dignity and sacred worth of all God's children, and honor our shared, common humanity."

Our fall program on October 15th at Bridgewater United Methodist Church, was a resounding success. It was our first ever attempt to do a hybrid meeting (other than Mission U) and our first live meeting in three years. Thanks to the awesome tech team at the church, Michelle, Jim and Ken, everything went smoothly. Thanks also to Kathy Schulz and her "team!" You may watch the

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September Issue Highlights

- Social Action and the Church
- Justice for Children
- Voting Counts!
- LGBTQIA Neighbors
- District News

¹ <https://uwfaith.org/what-we-do/serve-and-advocate/racial-justice/#charter>

September 2022

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Editor: Joyce Pratt
GNJUWF Communications Coordinator



September 2022

Welcome Statement

GNJ United Women in Faith affirms that the grace of God is extended to all God's children without exception.

We are committed to the inclusion of people of every gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation as well as people of every age, ethnicity, physical and mental ability, level of education, and family structure, and of every economic, immigration, marital, and social status.

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President's Message (continued from page 1)

program and meeting on YouTube and Zoom, respectively.²

The topic of the meeting was “Intersectionality: Where Love and Justice Meet,” with guest speaker and musician, Mark Miller. He deeply believes, as scholar-activist Cornel West says, “Justice is what love looks like in public.” A video was shown to explain intersectionality³, which is when several systems of oppression and discrimination “intersect” to cause even greater harm. Therefore, even though the Charter for Racial Justice addresses racism specifically, we try to understand how Black or Asian or Latinx individuals who are also part of the LGBTQ+ community could be subject to greater difficulty.

Mark shared his story of joy and hope with beautiful music. He emphasized what his father told him when he came out as gay at age 15, “God loves you no matter what.” The stories he told, the music he shared, and the people’s response to them were very moving.

As a follow-up to Mark Miller, a very hard act to follow, we will have two opportunities to listen and ask respectful questions. Our Charter for Racial Justice programming continues at noon to 1pm on November 5th and 19th with stories that will help you to “Know Your Neighbor in the LGBTQIA Community.” Please see the flyer in this newsletter for the speakers we have invited and the Zoom link.⁴

Mark Miller told the story of sitting around the kitchen table with his family, knowing that being gay, “This is who I am, this is who God intended me to be.” He concluded with his song, “Child of God,” which simplifies the assertions of the Charter for Racial Justice and our GNJ UWF Statement of Welcome. “No matter what people say... or think about you, you are a child of God.” He then challenged us that “if there is a moment where you can stand up for someone and speak to the truth that God’s love is for everyone, then go for it!”

Sue Zahorbenski, President, GNJ UWF
Diaconal Minister
United Methodist Church at New Brunswick

²bridgewaterumc.org/mark-miller and [Fall Annual Meeting Oct. 15, 22.](#)

³ <https://youtu.be/w6dnj2lyYjE>

⁴ <https://tinyurl.com/CRJFlyer>

REMEMBER TO VOTE BECAUSE



Today, most American citizens over the age of eighteen are entitled to vote in federal and state elections, but voting was not always a default right for all Americans. Because the Constitution did not specifically say who could vote, this question was largely left to the states into the 1800s. It was not until the 15th Amendment was passed in 1869 that Black men were allowed to vote. But even so, many would-be voters faced artificial hurdles... Women were denied the right to vote until 1920, when the long efforts of the women's suffrage movement resulted in the 19th Amendment.

With these and other constitutional amendments and legislation like the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the struggle for widespread voting rights evolved from the Founding Fathers' era to the late 20th century. If you ever think that just one vote in a sea of millions cannot make much of a difference, consider some of the closest elections in U.S. history.

You can make yourself heard! Participating in elections is one of the key freedoms of American life. Many people in countries around the world do not have the same freedom, nor did many Americans in centuries past. No matter what you believe or whom you support, it is important to exercise your rights.

Source: [Why Voting Is Important | National Geographic Society](#)



While voting rights were expanding for some areas of the population, states began enacting laws that barred women, African Americans, Native Americans, and many immigrants from casting ballots. The New Jersey constitution of 1776 gave voting rights to "all inhabitants," and in the 1797 state legislative election, a number of women voted. [<https://www.britannica.com/story/voting-in-the-usa>.]

Image: Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (digital file no. 00037)



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Social Action

Empower the population and use strength in numbers to spread awareness of the issue and the community on a common cause.

WHAT IS SOCIAL ACTION?

Social action is the practice of taking action – usually as part of an organized group or community – to create positive change. Sometimes social action can lead to profound social change, as in the case of the Civil Rights Movement; sometimes social action seeks more limited and specific changes – the preservation of an open space, for example, or better pay for a specific group of workers.

Social action, by its nature, is often practiced by those who either traditionally have little power in society – the poor, minorities, or people with disabilities, for example – but it may also be used by any group that feels its concerns are being ignored. By working together, members of these groups can exercise power collectively because of their numbers, using the media, their votes, boycotts, and other types of social, political, and economic pressure to convince those in power to rethink their positions.

WHY ENGAGE IN SOCIAL ACTION?

There are several reasons why social action is often the appropriate choice:

1. It can empower and energize populations that have traditionally been powerless or haven't understood their potential for exercising power.
2. It can unify communities.
3. It can demonstrate to the larger community that the organized group is a force to be reckoned with.
4. It may be the only thing that will move a stubborn opponent.
5. It may be seen as morally necessary.
6. It can motivate people to take other kinds of positive action.
7. It can be the beginning of a process that ends in a more unified larger community.
8. It can lead to long-term positive social change.

HOW DO YOU ENGAGE IN SOCIAL ACTION?

- Get to know the community.
- Identify the issues that are likely to lead the community to social action.
- Identify and contact key individuals and groups.
- Recruit community members to the effort.
- Create a structure to help the community accomplish its goals.

Visit Community Tool Box, Section 4. Social Action, University of Kansas, for more information.



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CHARTER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

of Greater New Jersey Presents:
“Know Your Neighbor in the LGBTQIA Community”



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Saturday, November 5, noon-1pm
Rev. Junehee Yoon, Obed Perez & Rev.
Jessica Campbell share their stories

Saturday, November 19, noon-1pm
Meg Isbitski, Diversity Specialist,
Somerset Co Dept of Human Services

Save the dates: January 14 & February 11,
noon-1pm, Days of Action & Love

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://tinyurl.com/CRJ-Event>

Meeting ID: 831 7753 8185 Passcode: 657110

Phone +1 309 205 3325 Phone passcode: 657110

<https://uwfaith.org/what-we-do/serve-and-advocate/racial-justice>



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Faith and Futbol

United Methodist Scores Big with Kids



The Aldersgate United Methodist Church with Pastor Juan Julio Paredes started a youth soccer program in 2017 to teach children how playing soccer helps build faith. Pastor Juan Julio stated the area used to be full of trees, snakes and glass. But with the help of the moms, we cleaned this soccer field and turned it into a sanctuary. Hispanics here in the United States like soccer. So, if we bring them to church, where we have a good field, have a devotional, and read the Bible, we will grow in faith and in the sport.

David Herrera shared that they focus on teaching children the basics of soccer, but what they really care about is their heart, their soul, their relationship with God. The kids are learning essential values on the soccer field. Such as loving your neighbor, letting go of anger, like we read in Proverbs So we try to back up those values and disciplines with the Word of God and teach them to the kids so they can leave this place and apply them to their lives. Soccer is, in our culture, everything. It's a sport that unites us and it is a priority.

The program is very important to the families because it helps the children become better human beings. The families come to support their kids. They bring jerseys, wash the uniforms, bring and hand out watermelon, and help clean and take out the trash. Teachers and families have seen a great difference in the kids from when they were 3-5 years old and now at 8-12 years old. It's a huge development, a huge growth, they are other people now.

Pastor Juan Julio stated he sees the church's commitment to the Hispanic group because they know the children are growing in their faith, and one day they will go to university and the United States will grow more and be stronger with these kids.

September 21, 2022

[Faith and Futbol: United Methodists score big with kids \(umc.org\)](https://www.umc.org)



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SOCIAL ACTION AND CHURCH GROWTH

Social action is helping churches connect to local communities and has resulted in church growth. Christian social action is word-and-deed ministry by Christians that brings deliverance to people in their total need. Social action courses cover the biblical basis for tackling poverty and injustice, and what it means to have a heart like God's. Following is just a few of these endeavors.

Advocating for Justice



The United Methodist Church has a long history of advocating for social justice. During university, John & Charles Wesley and their Oxford 'Holy Club' visited the local prison and tutored neighborhood children. The early Methodists expressed their opposition to societal ills such as slavery, smuggling, inhumane prison conditions, alcohol abuse, and child labor. Today United Methodists work, march and pray for racial justice, environmental care, and fair treatment for everyone.

The People of the United Methodist Church

<https://www.umc.org/en/>

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Social Action and Church Growth (continued from page 9)

We serve.
We advocate.
We make a difference.



United Women in Faith supports partners providing direct services to women, children, youth and families in neighborhoods around the country. Internationally, we support partners empowering women, children and youth with education and economic development opportunities. We advocate for a more just world to improve life for women, children and youth.



[United Women in Faith | Love in Action \(uwfaith.org\)](http://uwfaith.org)

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Social Action and Church Growth (continued from page 10)

Intersectional Peace with Justice



The Greater New Jersey United Women in Faith (GNJUWF) makes a bold choice to work for intersectional peace with justice and to create inclusive communities that respect the dignity and sacred worth of all God's children and honor our shared common humanity. GNJUWF's current projects include activities under its Charter for Racial Justice. (www.gnjumw.org)



The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church has a unique and glorious history. It was unique in that it is the first major religious denomination in the Western World that had its origin over sociological and theological beliefs and differences. It rejected the negative theological interpretations which rendered persons of African descent second class citizens. There was a theological declaration that God is God all the time and for everybody. The church was born in protest against slavery – against dehumanization of African people, brought to the American continent as labor.

The AME Social Action Commission are representative of the ongoing fight for Civil Rights and Social Justice in this country. They uplift and educate throughout all their endeavors with the knowledge that Social Action is basic to ministry in African Methodism."

Wikipedia – African Methodist Episcopal Church



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DISTRICT NEWS

Cape Atlantic United Women in Faith Annual Luncheon Business Meeting October 1, 2022



Pledge: \$20,000
AM&D: \$3,334
Hygiene Kits Collected: 89

The Boscov's Ticket Sales for the Neighborhood Center at Camden: \$75

Love Offering -Victory Junction Camp: Enriching the lives of children with serious illnesses by providing life-changing experiences that are exciting, fun and empowering, at no cost to children or their families: \$1,220

Top right photo: Holly Cyrus leading us in singing The Lord's Prayer

Immediately below: Laurie Bode on her violin

Below Laurie: Grace Rapp leading the memorial moment



DISTRICT NEWS

Central District



JOIN

UNITED WOMEN OF FAITH

FALL HARVEST

TEA PARTY

Turning Point United Methodist Church
15 S. Broad Street
Trenton, NJ 08608

NOVEMBER 12, 2022 1-4 PM

NEEDED ITEMS

Men's Body Wash	Bar Soap	Stick Deodorant
Cocoa Butter Lotion	Laundry Bags	Shampoo
Razors	Shaving Cream	Wash Clothes
Gift Cards (Kohls, Walmart, Target, Marshall's, Old Navy)		

JOIN US!
"EVERYTHING IS BETTER
WITH
TEA!"

CONTACT: Annie Hall 609-315-2895 for Further Information



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Raritan Shore District Annual Fall Meeting

Sat., October 29, 2022

9:30-10am gathering, coffee

10am-noon Event

Speaker: Marsha Benovengo

Fly fishing retreats for women with breast cancer



At Wesley UMC, 1500 Plainfield Ave, South Plainfield

or Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://tinyurl.com/RS2022FallZoom>

Meeting ID: 889 9097 7560

Passcode: 530029



Justice for Indigenous Children:

What does it mean to advocate?



This summer my primary efforts as your Social Action Coordinator have focused on building our partnership as advocates for our GNJ Indigenous communities.

You might be aware that United Women in Faith National has agreed to conduct a research project to better understand Methodist sponsored Indian boarding schools. You can read more about this in the letter linked below. Indigenous communities are asking for the names of these boarding schools and the names of their children who were taken from their homes and sent to these schools. They are asking for meaningful ways to bring their children home from mass graves back to their native lands. Our GNJ Indigenous communities reached out to me asking us to be advocates for them in continuing to move this UWF research project forward to fulfilling its promises.

Our Greater New Jersey Conference of the United Methodist Church has also made bold promises to our Indigenous communities, including restoring stolen land to Indigenous communities. Hopefully by the time of this newsletter publication some of these promises will have been fulfilled.

This relationship building process is teaching me about Indigenous values like the strong, visceral connection to previous and future generations Indigenous communities hold. I've listened to the anguish and pain they feel as more horrible truths are uncovered about the harms done to their children in Indian boarding schools. I've listened to the stories of how some of our United Methodist Indigenous people were mocked and ridiculed by our elected delegates as they sat in the crowd at a United Methodist Church General Conference waiting to participate in a ceremony that was supposed to be an effort to make amends for harms done to their people. I've listened as they share how Indigenous people still fight today to be seen and valued as equal members of our society while struggling to keep their traditions and cultures alive.

In spite of all this, our Indigenous neighbors still hold incredible hope and courage as they keep trying to build partnerships with people like us who are trying to learn how to do a better job of being in relationships with others. This month we listened and learned together in a program advocating for justice and healing for Indigenous children and communities. We are being asked to contact our Bishop and conference director and let

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Justice for Indigenous Children: What does it mean to advocate? (continued from page 15)

them know that we want the names of these church sponsored Indian boarding schools, and we want the children's remains returned to their families in a way that honors Indigenous values and traditions. See more in the Week of Awareness and Action letter below.

So, I ask again what does it mean to advocate? Who are the people in your life, your church, and your community for whom you are an advocate? To whom do you listen, who are the people teaching you, who is working in partnership with you for a better future for us all?

Thanks for all you are doing for healing and justice for our Indigenous communities and for all those people still fighting simply to be seen, heard, and welcomed.

-Sherri Shumate
Social Action Coordinator
United Women in Faith

Resources:

United Women in Faith Indian Boarding School Research Project

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QcJ-ajV2ZJZ1Y2EelxdKOH2GB40llyU0/view?usp=drivesdk>

NAIC Week of Awareness and Action

<https://tinyurl.com/AwarenessandAction>

Native American International Caucus of the UMC

<https://tinyurl.com/NativeAmericanCaucusUMC>

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GNJ United Women in Faith Calendar of Events 2022-2023



2022

Nov 5 and 19, noon-1pm, Know Your LGBTQIA Neighbor

<https://tinyurl.com/CRJ-Event>

Meeting ID: 831 7753 8185 Passcode: 657110

Phone +1 309 205 3325 Phone passcode: 657110

<https://tinyurl.com/CRJFlyer>

Nov. 16, 7-8:30pm, Planning Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83396872153?pwd=aUNHckxIV0RZVE1aNlpCK284SGVzd09>

Meeting ID: 833 9687 2153 Passcode: 621827

Phone +1 646 931 3860 Phone Passcode: 621827

Nov. 19 Micro Retreat 10AM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88357043253?pwd=b24yS0gxdIB6UTJVb0NxSlJnbmlHUT09>

Meeting ID: 883 5704 3253 Passcode: Peace

Phone: +1 301 715 8592 Phone Passcode 154290

2023

Jan. 14 - 9:30am- 2pm - Leadership Development and Charter for Racial Justice Day of Action followed by Leadership Team meeting

Jan. 19-21 National Leadership Development Days “On Towards the Goal,” Philippians 3:12-16
Virtual for conf & dist pres, conf VP, conf & dist MNO
Thur 7pm, Fri & Sat noon-7pm

Feb. 11 Noon-1pm, Charter for Racial Justice, Day of Action & Love

Mar. 11 Leadership Team, 9:30-11:30

Apr. 15 Spring Celebration

May 6 Leadership Team

May 10 Finance Comm., Wed., 7pm

Aug. 26 Treasurers’ Meeting, 9:30am, followed by LT

Oct. 14 Annual Meeting

Nov. 15 Planning meeting, Wed. 7-8:30pm

Voices of Purpose **Newsletter Deadlines & Distribution**

Issue	Deadline for Articles	Newsletter Distribution
Spring 2022 (January – March)	April 4, 2022	April 8, 2022
Summer 2022 (April – June)	July 4, 2022	July 8, 2022
Fall 2022 (July – September)	October 3, 2022	October 7, 2022
Winter 2022 (October – December)	January 3, 2022	January 6, 2022

Visit GNJUWF website for published newsletters: www.gnjumw.org/news.