

GNJUMC Annual Conference Report - 2020

Submitted by Arun Thangaraj

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The GNJUMC 2020 Annual Conference was held via Zoom and YouTube on October 5 and 6, 2020. The Conference opened with a Welcome Video followed by the Episcopal Address. Bishop Schol spoke about the COVID pandemic and the sin of racism. The legislative process then began.

A Motion to open the conference passed with a vote of 485 in favor and 8 opposed.

The Nominations Report was presented and voted on. It passed by a vote of 497 to 18. **Our own Rev. Derrick Doherty has been nominated to the Commission on Equitable Compensation, Class of 2024.**

The Trustees Enabling Resolution passed 446 to 46. This resolution enables the Conference Board of Trustees to deal with property sales, including Parsonages and other residencies. Other resolutions enable the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary or Assistant Secretary to transfer or sell stocks, bonds and other certificates.

The Conference Advance Specials resolution passed by a vote of 504 to 10. This resolution supports various ministries and institutions supported by GNJ, such as Ranch Hope, Pennington School, The Maker's Place, Christian Outreach Project, Centenary Fund/Preachers Aid Fund, CAMP YDP, etc.

The Equitable Compensation Recommendations for 2021 passed by a vote of 543 to 18. These recommendations include minimum salary levels and vacation policies for clergy, Arrearage Policy for Clergy and Standards for Parsonages.

The Church Closures resolution passed 510 to 27. There were 13 churches listed for closure in the pre-conference documentation and 3 more were added at the conference.

The Next Generation Ministries resolution passed 457 to 56. These ministries include Camping, Campus and Youth (IGNITE).

A Journey of Hope legislation passed 303 to 68. Under this GNJ will Invest \$5 million for a more racially just, equitable and inclusive GNJ, and permanently forbear collecting billable debt for all African American/Black and Native American congregations, and all other congregations that meet the criteria for the forbearance program. An amendment to include Asian Americans passed 393 to 34.

Day 1 concluded with honoring those who have passed and a collection for Miracles Everywhere.

A video recording of Day 1 is available at: <https://youtu.be/OZqJePUILms>



Day 2 began with a worship service honoring retirees. There was the ceremony of the Passing of the Mantle and recognition of new appointments. In the Northern Shore District, to which MUMC belongs, there are new appointments at LBI, Long Branch, Howell, Asbury Park, Toms River, West Long Branch and Harvey Memorial.

The 2021 Budget was discussed at length. No surplus is expected in 2021. A shortfall of \$400K in the funding of Drew University Theological School from national sources will be met by GNJUMC in the 2021 budget. This school provides a stream of theology graduates that is vital for churches in New Jersey and beyond. There were a number of speeches for and against this item. The budget passed 473 to 41.

The highlight of Day 2 was an Ordination Service that lasted over 2 hours, with an elaborate procession of the participants followed by the Laying of the Hands on each of the 21 candidates. The service can be seen at this link: <https://youtu.be/kwR8RElkgHY?t=9196>



The legislative session continued after the Ordination Service.

Legislation on Pensions and Health Benefits for clergy passed 408 to 2.

Legislation on the sale of closed church properties passed 391 to 9.

The resolution on Black Lives Matter was discussed at length and passed 372 to 34. An amendment to add the word "Movement" to the title failed 110 to 297.

Finally, a motion on Nepotism failed 105 to 292. The GNJ secretary for Human Resources stated that it is common practice for generations of family members to serve institutions such as the Military, Non-Profits and Religious organizations, without triggering charges of nepotism.

The conference concluded with a hymn and a prayer.

A video recording of Day 2 is available at: <https://youtu.be/kwR8REIkqHY>

Respectfully Submitted on October 8, 2020,

Arun Thangaraj,

Lay Delegate to the Annual Conference