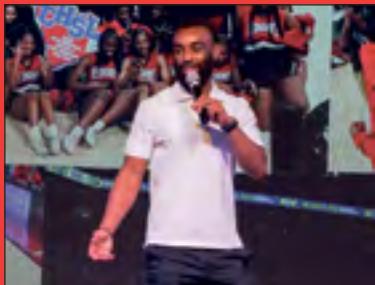


In this issue



Wise words from a winning basketball coach to Journey UMC. Page 10.



Grace UMC, Charleston, helps at Lowcountry Food Bank. Page 8.



One church, one mission: The merger that started with the people. Page 7.

Visit our new website:



Churches step up as Iran war rages on

By Jessica Brodie

Thousands lay dead and injured across Iran, Israel and surrounding nations after the United States and Israel launched widespread airstrikes Feb. 28 against Iran.

The joint military operative claimed Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other senior figures, resulting in counter attacks from Iran targeting Israel and U.S. facilities in surrounding countries.

“Our objective is to defend the American people by eliminating imminent threats from the Iranian regime, a vi-

cious group of very hard, terrible people,” President Donald Trump said on Truth Social.

Calling the conflict Operation Epic Fury, Trump pledged “a massive and ongoing operation.”

In the face of the ongoing conflict, a number of United Methodist churches across the state are doing what the church does best in times of great uncertainty and fear—turning to prayer.

Dr. Mark E. Thompson, pastor of Gilbert UMC, Gilbert, and a retired United States Army chaplain, immediately

See “Iran War,” Page 12



Mary Carter sketches her paper doll at Legislative Advocacy Day, which will be sent to congressional representatives to speak out about unjust family detention practices.

Photo by Jessica Brodie.

From paper dolls to policy

S.C. women push for change on environment, education, immigration

By Jessica Brodie

COLUMBIA—Women from across South Carolina got the chance to hear updates on important environmental and education reform, as well as do

some creative hands-on immigration advocacy.

Decked out in St. Patrick’s Day green, members of South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith headed to Epworth Children’s Home

March 17 for Legislative Advocacy Day, an annual event designed to help United Methodist and other Christian women across the state understand important issues of the day.

See “Women and Policy,” Page 11

From a playground to kids in worship, AC2026 ages down

By Jessica Brodie

If you thought Annual Conference was just for grownups, think again.

This year’s gathering will feature children and youth in a host of new ways, all designed to deepen the event and create a richer, more inclusive time of business, worship and fellowship.

When South Carolina United Methodists gather in Greenville June 7-10, they’ll find a decidedly more youthful feel to the occasion.

First, delegates will experience a “playground” in the same space as Annual Conference. Playgrounds are dedicated, child-friendly spaces located within a sanctuary that allow

families to worship together while accommodating young children’s needs. The playground at Annual Conference will feature activity stations designed for kids to do together with their families while participating in Annual Conference in age-appropriate ways.

Second, high school-age youth delegates will return this year. Rolled out by

SCMYP at last year’s event, the Annual Conference Youth Delegate Program is designed to bring younger voices to the table (in addition to a church’s regular delegates) and enable them to participate in Annual Conference. High schoolers fully participated in the conference in 2025.

See “AC Kids,” Page 24

Mount Hebron Memory Café welcomes all touched by dementia

By Jessica Brodie

WEST COLUMBIA—In the spacious room they gather, sharing conversations and stories—one with dementia, a caregiver by their side, eager to connect and share a meal and some joy in spite of the battle they endure. An-

other curious, trying to see how to get involved. Still another wanting to learn more about the disease just in case it one day affects someone they love.

At The Memory Café at Mount Hebron United Methodist Church, they’re all welcome, no matter the reason.

The Memory Café is a quarterly

gathering of people who come together for food and fellowship while learning more about dementia.

“It’s designed for caregivers and those they are caring for, as well as anyone interested in dementia ministry—maybe they have a friend going

See “Memory Café,” Page 13



Hours & Location
Open Monday through Friday
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
S.C. United Methodist Conference Center
4908 Colonial Drive, Suite 207
Columbia, SC 29203

Contact Us
803-726-6743
info@advocatesc.org
https://www.advocatesc.org

Accuracy Policy
The *Advocate* strives to produce error-free news reports. When mistakes occur, we will correct them as soon as they are brought to our attention. To request a correction, call the editor at 803-735-8772 or email news@advocatesc.org. In the event of errors in advertisements, the *Advocate* will be responsible only for the space occupied by the actual error. The publisher assumes no financial responsibility for omissions.

Advertising
Display ads, advertorials, sticky notes and inserts can be ordered at 803-726-3105 or sales@advocatesc.org. For classified ads, contact us at 803-726-6743 or classy@advocatesc.org. For more information and our media kit, visit https://www.advocatesc.org/advertise.

Artificial Intelligence Policy
Any uses of AI will start with journalism-centered intentions and will be managed by and accountable to journalists. If we make substantial use of generative AI, we will acknowledge this and explain how we reduce risks with human oversight. We will document and describe the tools with specificity. We will protect our audience’s data in accordance with general privacy policies and independently verify every fact. We do not use AI to manipulate photos unless they are for illustration purposes and clearly defined. No personal information from our staff or customers will be entered into AI software.

Back Issues
The *Advocate* maintains copies of back issues for sale for up to one year, as long as the supply lasts. Postage may apply. To research or review articles published more than one year ago, bound copies of the newspaper are available for review at the *Advocate* office, Wofford College in Spartanburg and the South Caroliniana Library in Columbia.

Deadlines
Deadlines are the 10th of each month for the following month’s paper (except July paper due June 6).

Letters and Op-Eds Policy
We welcome letters to the editor and commentary from guest writers who are members of or connected to United Methodist churches in South Carolina. Letters should not exceed 450 words, and commentary should not exceed 800 words. All submissions are subject to editing as needed to meet standards of grammar and style. We will not publish anonymous letters, letters praising or criticizing businesses by name, endorsements of or letters from political candidates, fundraising language or personal attacks. All submissions will be verified; include your name, phone number and church name with city and hometown. Email oped@advocatesc.org.

Obituaries
The *Advocate* prints death notices of clergy and their immediate families and laypersons who have served on conference boards and agencies or who work for the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Photographs
Photographs can be submitted to the newspaper for publication. High-resolution digital color images are preferred. Photographs should be in focus and should have proper exposure. People in photographs should be identified with names and ages, and a contact person with a phone number should be included. Email news@advocatesc.org.

Submissions
The *Advocate* encourages readers to submit items of interest to South Carolina United Methodists. There is no charge for running items involving activities or announcements. Items should be submitted as far as possible in advance of the event’s date or the date of requested publication. They appear in the newspaper on a space-available basis. Email news@advocatesc.org.

Subscriptions
The *Advocate* is delivered via U.S. mail monthly. The cost is \$20/year (print and online) and \$10/year (online-only). Church plans are available for \$1/member (online plan, based on average weekly attendance per current UMCSJ Journal) or \$10/member (print plan). To start your subscription, visit https://www.advocatesc.org/subscribe, call 803-726-6743 with credit card, or send a check (payable to *Advocate*) to the address above.

Heard and responding: Advocate charts new course after statewide listening tour

Over the past year, the *Advocate*’s staff traveled to all 12 districts of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, hosting listening sessions to better understand the needs and interests of its readers.

The findings were clear: the *Advocate* is valued—but somewhat unknown. Its greatest challenge is not the quality of its content, but how that content reaches people. Attendees pointed to poor distribution, an over-reliance on pastors as the primary communication channel and a disconnect from everyday church members.

Participants recommended the *Advocate* pursue a hybrid print-and-digital strategy; find new ways to engage laity directly rather than routing everything through clergy; and fill content gaps with local church stories, youth voices and practical ministry resources. They also saw an opportunity for the *Advocate* to grow beyond publishing and journalism, becoming a training and communications resource for churches across the state.

The *Advocate* heard them. And now, staff is hard at work responding, already rolling out a host of new projects designed to do these and more.

The listening sessions were typically held in one district a month, with the *Advocate* visiting the Midlands first, then the Upstate, then the Pee Dee and finally the Lowcountry, ending Dec. 1.

The most resounding feedback centered on increasing awareness about the *Advocate* directly to laity, strengthening the *Advocate*’s digital offerings, tweaking some content and adding youth voices and participation.

Board Chair Rev. Michael Henderson was able to attend several of the district listening sessions.

“I hear the laity say they do not have easy access to the *Advocate* and all it offers. And I know from personal experience how crowded pastors’ schedules are today,” Henderson said. “The new, updated website, along with the building of video content, will help with that. Additionally, it will make the news more up-to-date.”

Awareness and reach critical

The most consistent feedback the *Advocate* received was that the news ministry needed to do more to reach people directly.

“The *Advocate* is unknown throughout the state,” one Charleston District attendee noted.

Many said the *Advocate* traditionally had an over-reliance on pastors and little direct contact with laity. It needed to focus primarily on distribution and visibility.

“This is a key aspect of what we’re focusing on now,” *Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie said.

The *Advocate* launched a major re-

branding campaign last year, including a new logo, new print design and a brand-new website, plus an app in the near future. It will begin robust online advertising this month, hoping to reach people directly and encourage awareness and readership.

“The *Advocate* exists to inform, resource, report, and be a voice for United Methodist Christians in South Carolina,” Henderson said. “Over the past year we have started a process to upgrade all that we do. And, of course, all the information, resources, reports and voices are not an end in themselves. They are a way of God using us to transform individuals into the likeness of Christ and this world into God’s realm.”

No more pastors as ‘gatekeepers’

Historically, the *Advocate* has relied on pastors to encourage subscriptions or sign up for group plans. But as pastor workload has increased, this is no longer sustainable. At nearly every session, participants said pastors are overloaded and the information is bottlenecking at the clergy level. Therefore, the *Advocate* needed a more direct strategy to reach the people themselves.

Because the names and addresses of UMC members are not available to the *Advocate*, certain methods of reaching the people—such as direct mail—are not an option. The *Advocate* has been trying to reach out through people in lay leadership roles, as well as collecting the names of local church communicators (to add your name to the *Advocate*’s growing list, email news@advocatesc.org). Targeted ads on social media are also part of the plan.

Strengthen digital (but keep the print!)

Listening session feedback indicated a clear appetite for digital news, especially among younger audiences. This is something the *Advocate* has been working on, and its newly redesigned website and coming app aims to address this. Other aspects of this digital reach include weekly e-newsletters, podcasts, videos/reels and online extras beyond what is available in the print edition of the *Advocate*.

But attendees were quick to note the print *Advocate* remains valued.

Print is harder to ignore, one attendee noted, and many said older readers vastly prefer reading a physical copy than online only.

“We don’t plan to get rid of the print version of the *Advocate*, but we are focusing on a stronger hybrid model of print and digital, not one or the other,” Brodie said.

Content opportunities

Participants also had much to say about content they wish to see in the *Advocate*. Most requested were positive

local church stories, something the *Advocate* strives hard to feature each month. Some examples include stories about churches that stayed UMC, best practices from growing churches, rural church engagement and small church spotlights.

Youth and young adult engagement is also a priority, with requests including the expansion of the Young Methodists section, youth writers, coloring pages and activities and mentoring stories.

Other requested content included a series explaining Methodist core beliefs; practical ministry resources; and interactive and community features (an advice column or “this worked for us” section).

“While some of our conference communication helps lay leadership be aware of upcoming events, it is not able to report on the outcome of those events,” Henderson noted. “Annual Conference, Revolution, men’s ministry gatherings, United Women in Faith ministries and so many others are featured in the *Advocate*. There is really no other place to get the information we provide.”

Training wanted

Another frequently requested offering was training from *Advocate* staff around skills that can help the local church, such as communication workshops, social media training, marketing help for churches, writing and press kits.

“We’re finding there is clear demand for the *Advocate* as a service provider, not just a news source, and that was an interesting and unexpected revelation,” Brodie noted.

Younger audience could be key

Attendees overwhelmingly agreed younger readers are missing. Dialogue revealed younger people currently get news from social media, YouTube, group chats and podcasts, with shorter content featuring more visuals, catchy headlines, video and reels and interactive elements.

Other ideas

Many attendees had strong suggestions that weren’t necessarily shared in every district, but were helpful to the *Advocate* nonetheless. Some of these included:

- Make the *Advocate* an Advance Special Ministry
- Make a bigger splash with *Advocate* Awareness Day
- Consider affiliate marketing revenue
- Coordinate with recreation leagues/camps
- Explore the pastoral ordination process
- Start a “hidden gems” series
- Offer best-practice business-style features
- Do more intentional outreach to Black churches

Advocate wins two more journalism excellence awards

The *Advocate* has won two more journalism awards from the South Carolina Press Association.

Advocate Editor Jessica Brodie won second place in Faith Reporting for her article, “Clothes for the Taking” (February 2025 *Advocate*), and the *Advocate* as a whole won third place for the overall publication.

Lineup announced for Advocate Book Club

The Advocate Virtual Book Club is a Zoom-based monthly effort to bring together reading lovers to discuss books of interest to United Methodists.

The gatherings are hosted by *Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie.

The lineup for the next few months:

- April: “A Moment to Breathe,” by the Revs. Amenti Sujai and Daniel Hembree (April 7, 6:30 p.m. or April 9, 11 a.m.)
- May: “Seriously Seeking God,” by

Suzan Phillips (May 5, 6:30 p.m. or May 7, 11 a.m.)

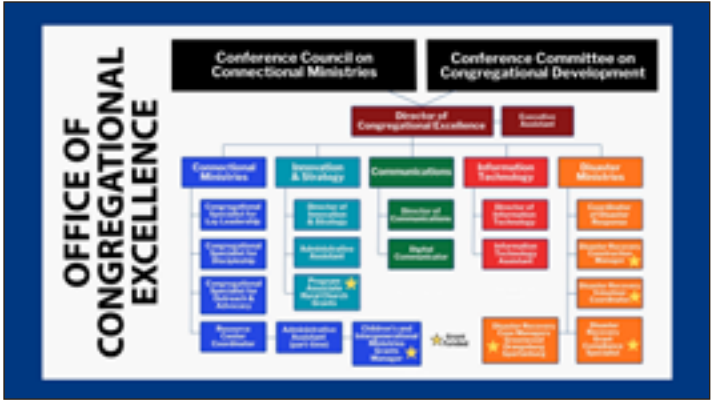
- June: “Loving Hands: A Caregivers’ Devotional,” by Stephon Void (June 2, 6:30 p.m. or June 4, 11 a.m.)

The Advocate Virtual Book Club is free, but participants must register to receive a Zoom link. Sign up at https://www.advocatesc.org/about/virtual_book_club.

To get the books for the club meetings, visit https://advocatepress.org.



Features.



UMCSC unveils plan for new Office of Congregational Excellence

By Jessica Brodie

Two offices will become one united “umbrella of ministry” this summer, and now South Carolina United Methodists are getting a full look at what that will entail.

At their Feb. 28 meeting, Conference Connectional Ministries released the plan for the newly created Office of Congregational Excellence, which is a merger of the Office of Congregational Development and the continuing work of Connectional Ministries.

More than 700 lay and clergy delegates approved that change Oct. 18 at an online called special session of Annual Conference. The creation of the Office of Congregational Excellence eliminates the Extended Cabinet-level position of Director of Congregational Development, creating instead a non-Extended Cabinet, part-time clergy appointment with the title Director of Innovation and Strategy. That new position will be supervised by the Director of Congregational Excellence, formerly known as the Director of Connectional Ministries.

“This is the umbrella of what used to be just Connectional Ministries and the Office of Congregational Development,” Director of Connectional Ministries the Rev. Millie Nelson Smith said.

Under the new plan, which takes effect July 1, Nelson Smith would be the Director of Congregational Excellence with Tammy Fulmer continuing as executive assistant. Encompassed in that office will now be five separate ministry areas, each with equal weight:

- Connectional Ministries, which will include a congregational specialist for Lay Leadership (Nona Woodle), a congregational specialist for Discipleship (Chris Lynch) and a congregational specialist for Outreach and Advocacy (the Rev. Amiri Hooker); a Resource Center coordinator (Betty Stalnaker); a part-time administrative assistant; and a Children's and Intergenerational Ministries grants manager (Toni Taylor)
- Innovation and Strategy, which will include the newly appointed part-

time Director of Innovation and Strategy (the Rev. George Ashford, also appointed to Journey UMC, Columbia); an administrative assistant (Laura Hill); and a Rural Church Grants program associate

- Communications, which will include the Director of Communications (Dan O'Mara) and a digital communicator
- Information Technology, which will include the Director of Information Technology (Jim Crews) and an information technology assistant (Russ McKissick)
- Disaster Ministries, which will include the coordinator of disaster response (the Rev. LaTonya Dash), the disaster recovery construction manager (Ward Smith), the disaster recovery volunteer coordinator (the Rev. Shay Long), the disaster recovery grant compliance specialist (Joe Patton), and three disaster recovery case managers: Greenwood (Felix Truett), Orangeburg (Chan Spigner) and Spartanburg (Theo White).

Several of these positions are grant-funded, Nelson Smith noted.

“While looks like our office has grown, it has not been based on dollars required from local churches but from funding from outside entities, such as the United Methodist Committee on Relief, the Lilly Foundation and the North Carolina Rural Center, and we hope to continue to do more of that in the future,” Nelson Smith said. “We hope to see us be able to more efficiently maximize our resources to help reduce the cost to the local church.”

At the called special session in October, the Rev. Brian Gilmer told Annual Conference members the new plan saves the conference about \$400,000 each year, not only by eliminating the full-time Extended Cabinet position of the Director of Congregational Development but by eliminating three former congregational specialist positions.

The current Director of Congregational Development the Rev. James Friday will become a district superintendent on July 1.

Lowcountry signing for bishop's book set for May 4



Bishop Leonard Fairley will visit New Life United Methodist Church, Walterboro, to sign copies of and speak about his acclaimed memoir, "Silver Linings."

All are invited to the event, set for Monday, May 4, at 6 p.m. at the church, located at 763 Green Pond Hwy., Walterboro, SC 29488. Fairley will speak about the book, as well as answer questions and sign copies. Books will be available for purchase.

“Silver Linings” is the coming-of-age account of South Carolina’s bishop, who recounts his upbringing through the eyes of a boy who grew up as one of nine children to a single mother in Laurinburg.

“Silver Linings” is published by the Advocate Press, the publishing arm of the *Advocate* newspaper.

In addition to being available for purchase at the book signing, the book is available as a paperback (\$25) and e-book (\$10) from <https://advocatepress.org>.

Registration continues for AC2026

By Jessica Brodie

GREENVILLE—Registration continues this month for Annual Conference, set for June 7-10 at the Greenville Convention Center.

With the theme “See the Possibilities, Live the Promises,” this year’s Annual Conference features four days of business, worship and fellowship as clergy and laity from United Methodist churches across South Carolina gather.

Events will kick off Sunday, June 7, with packet pickup for registered delegates beginning at 2 p.m. New lay member orientation will be held at 3 and 4 p.m., and the clergy session will be held at 4:30 p.m.

That night, a Commissioning, Ordination and Retirement Recognition Service will be held in the ballroom with South Carolina Resident Bishop Leonard Fairley presiding and retired Bishop Paul L. Leeland preaching.

Monday starts at 9 a.m. with an opening worship services preached by Fairley, then a day filled with business matters.

Dr. Sheila Elliot-Hodge, pastor of Virginia Wingard Memorial UMC, Columbia, is slated to preach the Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving at 2 p.m. Tuesday, June 9, and a conference mission project is being planned for late afternoon.

An intergenerational worship service is slated for Wednesday morning



A new addition to Manning UMC

The Rev. David McManus, pastor of Manning UMC, Manning, baptizes John Taylor Duke Jr., son of J.T. and Elizabeth Anne Duke.

Photo by Kelly Gottheimer



Advocate.
SERVING SOUTH CAROLINA UNITED METHODISTS SINCE 1937

Sign me up for a print subscription!

Select Type: ☐ New ☐ Renewal ☐ Gift

Select Duration: ☐ 1 Year ☐ 2 Years
 \$30 \$55

**For a digital subscription, please sign up online at
 AdvocateSC.org/Subscription**

Courtesy Title (e.g., Rev., Dr., Miss, etc.): _____

Name of Subscriber: _____

Subscriber's Address: _____

Subscriber's Email: _____

Subscriber's Phone: _____

Subscriber's Church: _____

Subscriber's Pastor: _____

Subscriber's District: _____

If gifting a subscription, please give us your name and address:

Payment

Submit this form with a check, made payable to the *Advocate*, to:
 4908 Colonial Drive | Ste 207 | Columbia, SC 29203

Questions?

Please email subs@advocatesc.org or call 803.726.6743.



Editorial
by Jessica Brodie

Care beyond our
comfort zone

“Not another conflict,” I thought when I first heard we bombed Iran. Perhaps it was denial or disbelief, or just having been here before, but I followed the world’s events almost detachedly. As reality sank in, my concerns turned to selfish things—will my sons, 16 and 20, get drafted if this turns into a big world war? Will terror hit our soil? But as the weeks progressed and the conflict continued 7,000 miles away, I confess I became even less concerned. It’s easy to do that, isn’t it, when an issue affects people I don’t know halfway around the world. That’s the problem sometimes with us, isn’t it? Our hearts only tend to break when something strikes personally. Then I learned about a pastor, Dr. Mark Thompson, who called upon his church to set aside five minutes every day for prayer about the war in Iran, the service members whose lives are affected and the people going through this suffering day in day out. Touched, I reached out to see if other churches were doing something, and soon my inbox filled with stories, some of which you’ll read on Page 1 of this month’s *Advocate*.

Their stories inspired me to care more. To step up myself. To start my own daily prayer time for the war, for the people impacted and for the service members sacrificing their lives. As with so many of the articles that run in the pages of this newspaper, that is the hope, isn’t it? That we hear about something someone else is doing, some action they’re performing in the name of Jesus Christ and in the spirit of God’s love, and become inspired to do something similar ourselves? As Christians, we are called to love our neighbor as our ourselves, and to remember that our neighbor doesn’t always live on our street. Our neighbor is a service member from Wisconsin strapping on military gear and stepping up in courage to ensure peace. Our neighbor is that mother in Iran, in agony right now because of this conflict. Our neighbor is that father in Alabama, grieving the loss of someone they love. I hope you will join me in taking five minutes a day to pray for peace, for God’s righteousness to prevail and for the people who are suffering in this time. This morning in my daily Bible reading, I came across a Scripture that reminds me of how important it is that we offer our hearts and kneel before the Lord in humble and holy surrender: “The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results” (James 5:16b NLT). Let us lift our hearts and our souls and our minds together in righteous prayer and never forget that just because something does not impact us personally today, right in this moment, that it doesn’t impact the whole of the body of Christ. We are all in this together. Lord, forgive my selfishness. Break my heart for what breaks yours.

Topic for May Advocate
How are you praying for the war? Share at news@advocatesc.org (include church name/city).



Bishop’s Column
by Bishop Leonard Fairley

April showers bring May flowers

I am sure you remember the following proverbial quote, “April showers bring May flowers.” The saying is attributed to Thomas Tusser, an English poet and farmer. It makes perfect sense that a poetic farmer would pen such words. In his collection of writings, “A Hundred Good Points of Husbandry,” the original words went like this: “Sweet April showers do spring May flowers.” In some temperate regions, the month of April marks a transition from winter snow to spring rain. This is vital for replenishing soil moisture and feeding plant roots, which causes growth of spring flowers like tulips and daffodils. The earth wakes up in beautiful blossoming splendor. I often wonder what metaphorical meaning “April showers bring May flowers” might have. Is it possible that it may have something to say to us after periods of hardship and discomfort? I decided to explore some possible meanings as they pertain to the cycle or circle of life. We are about to celebrate Easter, the season of resurrection that always brings with it the possibilities of new life arising out of death. I am always reminded of the words to one of my all-time favorite

hymns, “Hymn of Promise:”
In the bulb, there is a flower
In the seed, an apple tree
In cocoons, a hidden promise
Butterflies will soon be free
In the cold and snow of winter
There’s a spring that waits to be
Unrevealed until its season
Something God alone can see
Is it a stretch of the imagination to imagine that “April showers bring May flowers” could have something to do with endurance that encourages perseverance through difficult times, promising that “Weeping may endure for the night but joy comes in the morning” (Psalm 30:5)? “April showers bring May flowers” has a deep resonance to the hope of Easter. The hope of resurrection that is rooted in Jesus Christ—who is the living water raining down new life—is a reminder that adversity, pain and periods of waiting are temporary and build the foundation for future growth. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, “Into each life rain must fall.” But what comes after the rain are beautifully possibilities blooming all around us.

Letters to the Editor.

Shalom
The first six days of war in Iran cost U.S. taxpayers at least \$11.3 billion in munitions alone (Pentagon). The Pentagon’s yearly budget is trillions of dollars. Sadly there have been cuts in health care, education, farms resources, food stamps and FEMA. Americans are suffering with gas prices and inflation. For years the Council of Bishops and resolutions at General Conferences have addressed war. Scripture teaches us about war and peace (Isaiah 2:1-4, 11:4-11). The “basic beliefs” of the former Evangelical United Brethren church stated forthrightly “that war and bloodshed ... are not compatible with the gospel and spirit of Christ.” The Methodist Social Creed said, “We must activity and constantly create the conditions of peace.” We as UMC and members of the body Of Christ believe that war is incompatible with Christianity and religious beliefs.

At the heart of the Old Testament is the testimony to shalom, that marvelous Hebrew word that means “peace.” The enemies of peace are many. Blind self-interest is an enemy of peace. Persons obsessed with their “rightness” and power have sought to impose their wills on the surroundings. War results from greed, ambition and sinful self-interest. The continued reliance upon military violence is an enemy of peace. Peace is the gift of God, a gift that comes when persons meet the conditions of God. “Repent and believe” (Mark 1:15). “When anyone is united to Christ, there is a new world; the old order has gone and the new order has already begun” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Where are the peacemakers?” Believe in life, not death. Shalom.

*Rev. John Culp, retired
West Columbia*

Precious Pet of the Month.

Meet Jenny
Jenny is 8 years old and was a rescue kitty. “Since my wife, Lisa, died last year, Jenny has been a good four-legged companion,” said the Rev. Greg Thompson, who pastors the Central-Trinity Charge, Laurens. “She usually meets me at the door when I return home.” Thompson said he’s grateful to God for her. —Submitted by the Rev. Greg Thompson

Do you have a pet who is near and dear to your heart? Share a photo and brief story about your pet and what they mean to you in the *Advocate*, and be sure to include your name and church name with city. Whether your animal friend is furry or has feathers or scales, we welcome your submission. Email news@advocatesc.org.



Jenny

Advocate
SERVING SOUTH CAROLINA UNITED METHODISTS SINCE 1837

4908 Colonial Drive, Suite 207,
Columbia, SC 29203
803-726-6743
info@advocatesc.org
<https://www.advocatesc.org>

Publisher: South Carolina United Methodist Advocate Board of Trustees
The Rev. Michael Henderson, chairperson;
the Rev. Rebecca Rowell, vice chairperson; Jeff Wallace, secretary;
David Bryant, treasurer; the Rev. Eleanor Coaxum Ellington;
the Rev. Sharon Spann Gamble; the Rev. Darlene Kelley; Glen T. Levine;
Henrietta McCollough; Sadie Moss; Beth Padgett; Licita Rogers;
the Rev. Ed Stallworth III; the Rev. Paula Stover; Diane Wilson;
the Rev. Cameron Levi, ex officio; and the Rev. Millie Nelson Smith, ex officio

Editors emeritus
Maryneal Jones, the Rev. Willie S. Teague, Allison Askins,
Karl F. Davie Burgdorf, Emily L. Cooper

Staff
Editor: Jessica Brodie
jbrodie@advocatesc.org
803-735-8772

Assistant Editor: Allison K. Trussell
atrussell@advocatesc.org

Marketing Coordinator: Katy Renfroe
krenfroe@advocatesc.org

The South Carolina United Methodist Advocate (ISSN 1078-8166) continues the Southern Christian Advocate, authorized by the General Conference of 1836. Publication began June 24, 1837. The paper is published monthly by the South Carolina United Methodist Advocate Board of Trustees. We cannot be responsible for unsolicited manuscripts. Please direct all inquiries regarding submissions to the editor, 4908 Colonial Drive, Suite 207, Columbia, SC 29203-6070. Periodicals postage paid at Columbia, S.C., Postmaster: Send address changes to: South Carolina United Methodist Advocate, 4908 Colonial Drive, Suite 207, Columbia, SC 29203.

April 2026 • Volume 190 • No. 4



Commentary
by the Rev. Shannon Bullion

Ashen curiosity

Ash Wednesday is a tradition in our United Methodist denomination, as it is in most liturgical churches.

As an ordained elder, I am used to leading Ash Wednesday services. For at least the last decade, I have also come to practice what has become known as “Ashes to Go” in church-speak. While a typical Ash Wednesday service is held in the church sanctuary, Ashes to Go is held about anywhere. Church parking lots, street corners and main street squares, among others, are fair game for such an impromptu meeting of prayer, confession, penitence and ash.

Group chats among ministers on social media do not wholly support Ashes to Go, I have found. There is a certain thread of disrespect and irreverence implied, alongside a general feeling that ashes should be imposed within the domain of a sanctuary. I understand reverence, and I also feel that such holiness can be lifted up anywhere. Altars of God are wherever God’s people move them within lives that preach the gospel. Holiness is portable like water, and the world is God’s sanctuary.

So off I go onto Main Street with my black robe and purple stole to lift up and mark the season with holiness and a sign of penitence. I hand each person a brochure explaining the history of using ash as an ancient sign of our brokenness and leave them with the hope of God’s creative power.

God has and will forever take the dust of this life and breathe life into it. God will raise dry bones and restore them. God creates beauty and abundance out of the dry, barren dearth of life. God takes dust to the well, mixes it with water, and crafts, molds and sculpts as a divine potter. God is our forever artist in the midst of life.

Ash Wednesday serves poetically to remind us of what God can do with dust, with the everyday mundane messiness of life. And Ashes to Go provides holy space to bear forth the season of Lent: the 40 days before Easter. The simple imposition of ash says, “God is making all things new.” Ashes remind us as individuals that God is making us new. We only become resurrection people because we are first Lenten people.

Still, divine curiosity is not exactly what I had planned. While I love the poetry of Ash Wednesday, I did not expect it to manifest to me personally. I had planned to offer ashes to those who could not attend regular services or who wanted them earlier in the day. I had planned to meet some of the community and perhaps invite them to church, but sometimes divine curiosity meets you where you are.

At first, there were salty comments: “You look like a witch,” said with a smile. There was a woman who drove by with her windows down, yelling, “I am just learning about Ash Wednesday.” There were a few “I’m Catholic, what are you?”—questions resulting from my obvious female presentation.

A couple of young adults asked, “What kind of ash are you selling?” I was holding a sign that read, “Ashes to Go.” They seemed serious, and I told them it was free, but the light changed, and they kept driving, and I could not explain my free ash offering further. But they set me up for what was next.

Two young adult women drove by and yelled something; I couldn’t quite make it out. They drove around the square, parked across the street and made their way over to me.

They asked, “What are you protesting?” I let them know I was not protesting.

Then they asked, “What does it mean? What does all of this mean?”

Divine curiosity and holy confrontation caused me to explain something that I have been doing forever. While I am prone to offer explanations when needed, authentic questions are not typically the norm in church culture, which is more inclined to present ardent answers. Refreshing as it was to encounter genuine curiosity, it is also fundamentally Lenten. Lent is truly the season when we admit we don’t have it altogether.

To the naysayers who prefer pristine sanctuaries for the imposition of ashes, I offer the everyday path of traveling the Lenten journey and bringing others along. Meet them where they are, and tell them about our shared brokenness and the hope that God gives to all through the power of resurrection. Tell them about God who makes beauty from dust.

From the ashes, we find God creating such that we can all be inspired with divine curiosity.

Bullion is an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church. She holds a Master of Divinity from Vanderbilt University. She is a certified spiritual director. She is currently working on a Doctor of Ministry from St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas and pastors Trinity UMC, Honea Path.



Commentary
by Sandy Thrasher

Following Christ in a loud world

It is hard to ignore the noise right now.

Everywhere we turn, voices are loud, competing for attention. You turn on the news, and the headlines demand urgency. Social media rewards outrage. Conversations that once led to understanding now often leave us feeling guarded or divided. Strong opinions are constant, and negativity can feel overwhelming.

Division is not new, but it feels like it’s amplified. It appears in our communities, our relationships and sometimes even within our churches. Many of us feel caught in the middle, unsure how to respond faithfully while the world insists we choose which side we’re on, then stand firm and speak loudly.

In the midst of all this noise, faith can begin to feel quiet. We must look to the steady teachings of Jesus, rooted in love, humility, mercy and grace. Jesus’ teachings can be easily drowned out by voices telling us what should make us angry or afraid. We hear so much about what is wrong that we risk forgetting what is holy.

Perhaps most troubling is that even following Jesus can create division. When we choose compassion over condemnation, listening instead of arguing or extending grace where others expect judgment, it may be misunderstood as weakness. Yet these are the very practices Christ modeled again and again.

As United Methodists, we are shaped by tradition—a tradition that calls us to hold faith and action together. John Wesley taught that there is no holiness but social holiness, which reminds us that discipleship is lived in relationship with others, and that our love for God shows in the way we love those God loves. The Social Principles affirm the sacred worth of every person and call us toward justice, peace and reconciliation. Our primary identity is not rooted in ideology or affiliation, but in Christ.

When division is loud, faith must be intentional.

Following Jesus requires practice. We must practice holy listening. We must try to understand before responding. We must be careful with our words; are we building connection or causing further division? We must remain present in our communities because small acts of kindness and compassion often speak louder than public arguments.

These choices may seem ordinary, but together they form a quiet resistance against division. They reflect the ministry of Jesus, who changed lives not through winning debates but through mercy, presence and love.

The world has always been loud. Early Christians lived in times of conflict and competing voices; still, their faith endured, rooted in love rather than fear.

Today, we face the same choice. We can allow the noise around us to shape our faith, or we can allow our faith to shape how we move through the noise.

In a world eager for outrage, may we be known for grace. In a culture shaped by division, may we choose connection.

And in the midst of overwhelming noise and negativity, may our lives reflect the steady and unmistakable voice of Jesus Christ.

Thrasher is the Anderson District lay leader.

Correction

In the obituary for the Rev. Theodore “Ted” Roosevelt Morton Jr. (March *Advocate*), the incorrect address for donations to the South Carolina Methodist Foundation was listed. It should have listed the address as P.O. Box 5087, Columbia, SC 29250-5087.

We apologize for this error and, as always, strive to set the record straight.



Humanity Behind Bars
by the Rev. Nichole Middleton

After the third time

In my early twenties, I met a friend who has known me better than most. This is the friend who remembers the questionable hair choices, the poorly thought-out decisions and the kinds of stories that could qualify as affectionate blackmail. When we are together, we laugh at who we were before we knew better.

What makes that friendship sacred is not that I was flawless. It is that I was known—and still welcomed.

Most of us can name moments we would rather not have broadcast publicly. Words we wish we could retrieve. Choices that still make us wince. Failures that feel heavier because others witnessed them. We live in a culture that archives mistakes and rarely forgets them. “Three strikes and you’re out” is not just a legal phrase; it has become a social posture.

Failure—especially when it happens in public—often becomes identity. The gospel tells a different story.

After the resurrection, Jesus stands on a shoreline with a disciple who had failed him in the most visible way possible. Peter’s denial was not subtle. It was emphatic. Three times he distanced himself. Three times he insisted he did not belong to Jesus.

Yet on that shoreline, Jesus does not rehearse Peter’s failure. He does not demand an apology tour. Instead, he asks a question about love—and then he gives a commission: Feed my sheep.

The repetition is not accidental. Where there had been three denials, there are now three invitations. Not humiliation, but restoration. Not dismissal, but responsibility. The one who failed publicly is restored publicly and entrusted again with the care of others.

Redemption in the kingdom of God is not theoretical. It is enacted.

Imagine where any of us would be if our worst moment became our permanent label. Imagine if the mistake that embarrassed you most, the season you wandered furthest or the time you spoke when you should have stayed silent became the final word spoken over your life.

Many of the men and women I serve live in a world where that often feels true. Their past is documented, searchable and difficult to escape. Opportunities close. Doors lock. The message—spoken or unspoken—is clear: You had your chance.

But the theology of resurrection insists otherwise.

Second chances are not about pretending harm did not occur. Peter’s denial was real. So are the consequences of our own failures. Redemption does not erase responsibility; it transforms it. Jesus does not say, “Forget what happened.” He says, in effect, “Now let it shape how you love.”

To be restored is not merely to be forgiven. It is to be trusted again.

This is where the church must pay attention. We proclaim grace, but do we practice restoration? Do we believe that those who have failed publicly can lead, serve, nurture and build? Or do we quietly keep them at arm’s length, unsure whether resurrection truly applies to them?

The gospel we preach hinges on second chances. Peter becomes a shepherd not because he never stumbled, but because mercy met him in his failure.

We live in a world that counts strikes.

Christ counts restorations.

And if we are honest, every one of us is standing somewhere on that shoreline—grateful that love asked another question instead of closing the case.

May we be a people who extend what we have received. May we create communities where failure is not the end of the story.

And may we never forget that the one who knows us fully is also the one who calls us forward again.

Middleton is an elder in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, endorsed by the United Methodist Endorsing Agency for prison ministry. She serves as a chaplain in the federal prison system.



Commentary
by Susan Clark

Winter guard, Wesleyan warmth

This past weekend, while serving as a chaperone for my daughter’s high school winter guard team, I witnessed once again the power of United Methodist connectional ministry—this time, in unexpected circumstances.

On Friday, Feb. 27, I traveled with the Decatur High School Varsity Winter Guard from Decatur, Georgia, to Rock Hill, South Carolina, for the Winter Guard International Southeastern Regional Championships, a two-day competition for an indoor sport derived from military ceremonies. Before we even reached our final destination, the United Methodist connection was already at work. A family member of one of our coaches arranged for the team to rehearse at Marvin United Methodist Church in Martinez, Georgia, where the girls were welcomed into the church’s gym for a three-hour practice session.

But the heart of the story unfolded after we arrived in Rock Hill.

A last-minute change

The competition was taking place at Northwestern High School, with teams traveling to Rock Hill from all over the Southeast. When we arrived, our coach shared that the National Guard Training Facility—a designated warmup space for many teams—was no longer available. No teams could use it that weekend, and everyone was scrambling. She had secured our team a new practice site for Saturday morning, but if we advanced to finals on Sunday morning, we had nowhere to warm up.

By midafternoon Saturday, good news arrived: We had won our performance round and made finals! Our excitement was tempered by nervousness. Where would the girls work out their pre-performance jitters? Our coach asked the chaperones for any local leads. Calls to area YMCAs yielded nothing; they were closed or already booked.

I turned to a familiar source: our United Methodist network, texting colleagues at the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry to see if anyone had ties in Rock Hill. One colleague suggested that St. John’s United Methodist Church had a gym, but he didn’t have any current contacts there.

It was a long shot, but worth trying. Around 5 p.m., I emailed the church’s general inbox with a subject line that captured my desperation: “Sunday am favor for out-of-towners.” I explained who we were, why we needed help, and that I knew it was a very unlikely request for a Sunday morning. Then I put my phone away and returned to watch the competition.

A couple of hours later, my phone buzzed. To my surprise, I had received a text from Emily Bell, director of Children’s Ministry and Fellowship at St. John’s.

She told me that she was confirming with the senior pastor (the Rev. Cam Treece), but she was 99% sure we could use the gym at 8 a.m. the next morning. She even invited us to stay for their 9 a.m. worship service.

Her message left me stunned—and deeply grateful. I shared the news with our coach and the team sighed with collective joy and relief.

A warm welcome on Sunday morning

When we arrived at St. John’s the next morning, Emily greeted us. As the team warmed up in the gym, several church members were lured by the unfamiliar music to investigate. They asked about winter guard, this lesser known “Sport of the Arts” as Winter Guard International refers to it—a blend of dance, theater and equipment work performed indoors during the winter season.

Although we could not stay for the 9 a.m. service, we departed feeling the congregation’s prayers and well-wishes in our hearts.

That afternoon, the Decatur High School Varsity Winter Guard placed 12th in finals, securing a position in the top half of similar groups nationwide heading to the WGI World Championships in April.

The United Methodist connection at work

On its website, St. John’s United Methodist Church proclaims its commitment to radical hospitality. This past weekend, that commitment was made tangible to an out-of-town group of teenagers and their chaperones—some of them United Methodist, many not, but all of them touched by the gracious welcome extended by a church family they had never met.

The experience reminded me that connectional ministry is not just a structural feature of The United Methodist Church—it is a lived expression of God’s love. Sometimes it looks like a sanctuary. Sometimes, like a mission site.

And sometimes, on a Sunday morning in Rock Hill, South Carolina, it looks exactly like a gym.

Clark serves as chief communications officer for the United Methodist boards of Global Ministries and Higher Education and Ministry. Reprinted with permission of UMNews.



SOUTH CAROLINA
METHODIST CONFERENCE
CREDIT UNION

Savings * Certificates * Loans
All SC United Methodist Eligible to Join
800-532-8814 or scmccu.org

Youth writers wanted to help cover news, features, other events for the Advocate

Are you a young person who likes to write, or do you know someone who might be interested?

The *Advocate* is seeking youth writers to cover news, write feature stories, offer commentaries and more.

Anyone interested should email Editor Jessica Brodie at jbrodie@advocatesc.org.

One church, one mission: The merger that started with the people

By Dr. Anthony Hodge

Recently, I had the privilege of being in worship at Cornerstone United Methodist Church in Rock Hill. This was a special worship service because the group of worshippers gathered were having their first service together as the new Cornerstone UMC.

What’s new about Cornerstone UMC? What’s new is those who were previously known as Epworth UMC came together as laity and decided that they wanted to do more than simply be on a charge with Cornerstone UMC; they wanted to be in the same worshiping space every Sunday. As well, members of Cornerstone UMC felt the same way about Epworth UMC.

Prior to this initial service on Sunday, March 6, I observed the two churches embrace Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 as worshipping communities under the pastoral leadership of the Rev. Cindy Rumsey.

What stands out for me throughout the entire process was that from the onset to the initial worship service, this was a laity-led initiative. There was no pressure from me or our episcopal leader for these churches to come together as a merged congregation.

On the contrary, willing members of Epworth and Cornerstone worked together to establish a merger document that consists of the following: purpose of the merger, naming, mission statement, strategy, organizational structure and names of committees,



Hodge hopes others will continue this sort of approach.

personnel and financial assets.

From my perspective, this was a God-inspired process that will be beneficial to current and future members and attendees of the new Cornerstone UMC.

What do others have to say in regard to this newly merged congregation in the Rock Hill District?

Rumsey stated that after two appointments that ended in separation from the UMC, it was refreshing to be with people who would do what is best for building the UMC to do more for making disciples of Jesus Christ, which in this case meant joining efforts of both churches.

“We have already merged resources such as furniture and banners,” she said.

Ken Jones said coming together as one was a natu-

ral progression because of the camaraderie built over the years.

“With coming together, we’re continuing local missions and ministries that Epworth was active in,” Jones said. “They work well with the ministry direction we’re already involved in.”

Frank Knox said they have been working together as sister churches for more than 20 years.

“When we lost several members last year, it seemed like a good time to combine our efforts in one church,” Knox said.

Financial concerns were also a contributing factor.

I have been fortunate to help facilitate two mergers in the Rock Hill District since I was appointed as the district superintendent and am proud to say that those mergers were laity-led, which appears to be a key factor for establishing solid mergers.

As we move forward as an annual conference, it is my hope that other multichurch charges might also see the value and benefits of pooling resources to form merged congregations.

Perhaps this might be the time for others to explore new approaches to doing ministry which might entail connecting with others. It is something worth considering!

Hodge is the superintendent of the Rock Hill District of the South Carolina Conference of the UMC.

Leaders gather in shared tradition to mark the start of Lent



From left are the Revs. Nelson Stokes Jr., LaShelia Mack Wyatt, Wade A. Wyatt Sr. and Scott Allen.

In a display of unity and faith, the elders of four local churches in the community came together to observe Ash Wednesday at noon and 6:30 p.m.

The gathering, held in a spirit of fellowship, brought together representatives from Allen View United Methodist Church, Reidville; Sharon Methodist Church; Liberty Hill UMC, Greer; and Wesley Chapel UMC, Greer. It marks the last time these congregations will jointly celebrate the beginning of Lent under the current leadership.

The event featured a shared service where each church’s elders participated in the traditional imposition of ashes, signifying repentance and reflection.

Despite their diverse traditions, the elders emphasized the importance of coming together to honor the significance of Ash Wednesday—a day that resonates deeply across Christian denominations.

“Today, we stand as one community, united in humility and hope,” they noted.

Attendees were invited to reflect on the meaning of Lent, with prayers, songs and a homily, first by the Rev.

Scott Allen at noon, and at 6:30 p.m. by the Rev. LaShelia Mack Wyatt.

The collaborative service was well received, drawing the community and members from all four congregations.

Organizers hope the observance will inspire continued cooperation and dialogue, fostering a sense of togetherness beyond denominational lines.

The Ash Wednesday gathering served as a powerful reminder of the shared values that connect people of faith, offering a fresh start for the season of Lent and strengthening bonds within the local religious community.

Jeannie's House: Aldersgate opens seventh special needs home

By Jessica Brodie

COLUMBIA—Another house to help special needs adults live independently is getting ready to celebrate its dedication.

In January, Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry opened its seventh house, Jeannie’s House, designed for four women with special needs.

Founded in 2003, Aldersgate is a ministry of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church providing homes for adults with developmental disabilities. Residents live in a Christian environment and are encouraged to be as independent as possible with help from trained staff.

The first resident moved into Jeannie’s House in January, and the second resident moved in in early March. A third resident is expected to move in just after Easter.

Aldersgate plans to have a dedication for the house



Jeannie Makins



Aldersgate plans to have a dedication for the house in April.

in April, probably the third week.

Kim Thomas, Aldersgate executive director, said Jeannine’s House is named in memory of Jeannie Makins, who passed away in June.

“Jeannie was a resident at Aldersgate’s Columbia Builders Care Home, and she was a very special lady. I had known Jeannie since 2000 when I first started my career in this field,” Thomas said.

Back then, Thomas said, she was served by Newberry County Disabilities and Special Needs agency, where Thomas had her first job as a case manager right out of college.

“I lost touch with Jeannie after I left Newberry, so when I came to Aldersgate and visited Columbia Builders Care Home and saw Jeannie, I knew I was where God meant for me to be.”

Thomas said Makins was always happy, loved Michael Jackson and loved getting her nails and hair done.

“Jeannie had a difficult life but was really living her best life at CBCH,” Thomas said. “Losing her at such a young age, as she was only 54, was heartbreaking for our ministry and for her family. I wanted to do something to keep her memory alive, so I asked the board if we could name the new house after her. The house is bright and full of light, which seemed perfect.”

For more on Aldersgate and how to help their ministry, as well as to stay updated about the dedication and other events, visit <https://aldersgatesnm.org>.

UMCSC virtual sessions help people understand district consolidation plan

By Dan O’Mara

More than 200 South Carolina United Methodists attended four virtual Tri-District Listening Sessions in March to learn more about how the conference is implementing its plan to reduce the number of districts to 10 from 12.

The sessions were led by members of the Logistics Transition Team,

tasked with working out steps needed to make the plan go smoothly—from coordinating documentation to ensuring the integration of leadership from districts that are being dissolved into other districts.

In each session, team members shared information about several aspects of their work:

- The goals of the team’s work are to minimize anxiety, ensure smooth transitions and equip local churches for integration into new districts
- Files and documents from districts are being transferred to the receiving district
- How roles on district committees and nominations will be integrated and shared among districts during the transition
- The ongoing work of assessing scenarios for possible further district

reductions, taking into account litigation outcomes and new church developments

- Highlighting the need to consider the impact on staff workload and the importance of maintaining relationships between churches, even as district lines are redrawn

Read posted questions and answers about the Transition Teams’ work at <https://www.umcsc.org/transition>.

Ministries.

Disaster Recovery.

Q&A with Chan Spigner

UMCSC disaster recovery case manager

Chan Spigner is a case manager with South Carolina United Methodist Disaster Recovery serving in Orangeburg, Saluda and Edgefield counties. Here, Spigner answers a few questions about the ministry.

How does Disaster Recovery help those affected by Helene?

Disaster Recovery helps people by providing support, counseling, resources and recovery plans. It gives individuals and families hope for a future by guiding them through the devastation of their damaged homes and to help them to restore, rebuild and regain stability.

Why do you do this work?

I genuinely enjoy helping others. I am passionate about this position because it allows me to make a difference in individuals lives, especially during challenging times. We are the hands and feet of Jesus. It is rewarding to serve by being a guide and part of a support system when people are in need of help. Being able to combine my compassion with practical problem-solving makes this position a good fit.

How do you help the homeowner get the help they need?

The tasks that I am responsible for facilitate the recovery efforts to ensure that individuals and families receive the support they need to recover. I listen, observe, assess and identify the homeowners’ needs. This helps to assist and guide the individuals and families through this life-changing process, as I advocate for their needs, to help them move from a crisis back to safety, stability and everyday life.

How does your position contribute to the program?

Disaster Recovery is a team effort. Think of a disaster as troubled waters. On one side is damage, fear, worry, uncertainty and sometimes grief. On the other side is hope, faith, love in action, stability and a normal life. There are people who are trying to get to the other side. The work that the Disaster Recovery Team does forms a bridge over troubled waters, helping families on a difficult journey get back to their everyday life as it was before the storm.

Epworth News.

Volunteer with Epworth

National Volunteer Week is April 19-25, and we want to express our sincere gratitude to the individuals, church groups, youth groups, scouting organizations and businesses that volunteer with Epworth. In 2025 1,245 volunteers gave 3,785 hours to Epworth.

Volunteers hold a truly special place at Epworth. Their time and talents touch every part of our mission, from nurturing meaningful relationships with our young people and families to strengthening our programs and helping care for our beautiful campuses. Whether you are part of a group or want to volunteer on your own, we would love to have you. Your support helps us provide a safe, loving and enriching environment for the young people and families we serve.

Some of the opportunities for volunteering include hosting activities for our residents, campus beautification projects, serving as a cottage partner with a residential cottage, helping with administrative tasks, participating in faith formation activities and organizing or supporting Epworth-related community projects like supply drives and our Christmas with Epworth campaign.

Volunteers are welcome to come to campus on a weekday or during a monthly Service Saturday to complete their projects.

If you are interested or would like additional information, reach out to Cheryl Singletary, volunteer coordinator, at 803-256-7394.

—Beth Williams

Alston Wilkes Society.

Opening the door to second chances

For many justice-involved individuals, the hardest part of rebuilding life is not serving a sentence—it is what comes afterward. A record can limit employment opportunities, housing options and the ability to fully move forward.

At Alston Wilkes Society, helping individuals overcome these barriers is a central part of our mission. Through our residential re-entry and community services programs, AWS works with justice-involved individuals across South Carolina to help them rebuild

their lives and successfully reintegrate into their communities.

In 2025 alone, AWS assisted 1,979 individuals through these programs. Each person’s journey is different. Some receive structured residential support as they transition back into the community, while others receive guidance navigating employment, housing or legal processes such as expungements or pardons.

Marcus is one example of how this support can change a life.

Marcus reached out to AWS hoping to clean up his background and move forward. While expungement was not possible in his case, AWS helped him pursue a pardon. After completing the application, months of waiting followed before he finally received a hearing date. AWS attended the hearing with Marcus and spoke on his behalf. After months of uncertainty and a long day waiting for the board to call his case, the hearing was finally over.

Soon afterward, AWS checked the

system and saw the word Marcus had been hoping for: Pardoned.

When we called to share the news, Marcus began to cry and said something simple but powerful: “I can finally breathe again.”

Marcus is just one of the 1,979 individuals AWS served in 2025, and his story is a reminder that with the right support, second chances are possible and new beginnings can take root.

We don’t just fund programs—we help people reclaim their future.

Grace helps Lowcountry Food Bank

The Lowcountry Food Bank in North Charleston serves more than 200,000 people across 10 coastal counties of South Carolina. It works through more than 240 partner agencies such as on-site meal programs, school programs, senior programs, veterans’ groups, shelters and church food pantries.

So when the opportunity to volunteer at LCFB for a couple of hours on a Tuesday afternoon came up, the call was answered by members of Grace United Methodist Church, Charleston, including volunteers from their own Acts of Grace Food Pantry.

Isaiah 58:10 reads, “And if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.” Grace UMC Charleston’s Acts of Grace Food Pantry is one of the partner agencies of the LCFB.

Acts of Grace operates solely on volunteer labor, and the pantry is kept stocked through generous donations of monetary gifts, food, household and personal hygiene items from the congregation. Funds donated to Acts of Grace are used to secure a wide variety of fresh and frozen foods, canned and boxed goods, bakery items and beverages at a reduced cost from the LCFB to stock the pantry for distribution each Monday afternoon.

Grace UMC has firsthand knowledge of the important work of the Food Bank.

Their task that Tuesday was simple: sort



Standing from left are Martha Blackwelder, Jack Daniels, Linda Stewart, Jeff Walton, Will Daisley, Ken Sands, Bruce Kelly, Michelle Broadway, Judy Pittard and Mike Broadway. Seated from left are Kelsie Daisley, Melinda Schauer, Tricia Phillips and Robin Daisley.

and bag loose sweet potatoes to fill large pallet-sized cartons to be shipped out the next day to help meet the nutritional needs of Lowcountry residents who are food insecure.

While there, members sang or hummed along to the upbeat music playing in the background and conversed with other volunteers who were also there to help.

“It was an awesome opportunity to serve people we may never meet, but who we pray will be nourished well due to the work of our hands,” said Grace UMC Communications Coordinator Robin Daisley.



Golf tourney helps women’s home

A Killingsworth supporter takes a swing March 9 in the Killingsworth annual golf tournament, held at the Players Club in Columbia to raise needed funds for the residential home for women in crisis starting over. To learn more about helping Killingsworth or for future events for supporters, visit <https://www.killingsworth.org/events>.

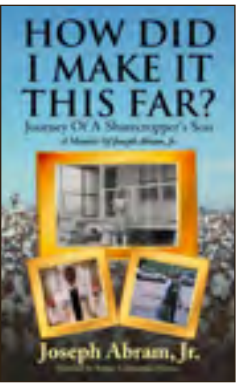
Photo by Matt Brodie

Abram releases his second book

The Rev. Joseph Abram Jr. has released his second book and memoir, “How Did I Make It This Far: Journey of a Sharecropper’s Son.” Bishop L. Jonathan Holston provided the foreword.

Abram held an official book release Saturday, Feb. 21, at St. Stephen United Methodist Church, Orangeburg.

The book is about how Abram, a South Carolina United Methodist elder, went from growing up on a small sharecropper’s farm in the backwoods



of South Carolina to being world’s preacher, traveler, entrepreneur, philanthropist and author and from the second of five sons to the only remaining sibling.

Rev. Abram was recognized by The Big Seven Association Feb. 28 at their Annual Community Banquet and Awards Program.

Abram’s first book, “Life’s Maze: Poems of Life,” was released last July.

Both books are available on Amazon and other book retailers.

A century of Black history: John Wesley holds commemoration

GREENVILLE—This year marks a milestone: the 100th anniversary of Black History Month, first established by historian Carter G. Woodson in 1926 as “Negro History Week.”

To honor this century of commemoration, the WEL Club (We Enjoy Living)—a Bible study class of older adults at John Wesley United Methodist Church in downtown Greenville—gathered for an afternoon of reflection, music, historical displays and fellowship.

Honoring Greenville’s trailblazers

The program opened with recognition of prominent African Americans from the Greenville community. Cleoma Honesty offered a Black history reflection honoring Lillian Brock Flemming, mayor pro tem of Greenville, a longtime mentor and member of the NAACP and one of the first Black women to attend Furman University.

Also recognized was Raymond McGee Sr, one of the first Black students to attend Furman University and a cherished member of the congregation.

A Tuskegee Airman’s legacy

Brenda Pendarvis paid tribute to Paul Adams, a

proud Greenville native and Tuskegee Airman. Adams graduated from Sterling High School in 1938—a school that traces its own roots to John Wesley—and went on to attend South Carolina State University, class of 1941. His distinguished military service was recognized with the Congressional Gold Medal, awarded to the Tuskegee Airmen as a group for their courageous contributions during World War II.

‘I Am Still Standing’: A story of courage

Katie McGee presented an informative tribute to Shoshana Johnson, author of “I Am Still Standing.” Johnson, the first Black female prisoner of war in American history, was captured during the Iraq War. During her imprisonment, her family was comforted and supported by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who later became her mentor as she navigated the difficult road to healing after her release. Her story is one of extraordinary resilience and faith.

Fellowship and closing

The program concluded with a delicious soul food lunch lovingly prepared by Brenda Pendarvis. The tables were beautifully decorated with African-American artifacts generously provided by John Pendarvis



The club gathered for an afternoon of reflection, music, historical displays and fellowship

and Luvenia Griggs. Griggs also created an informative display board celebrating the legacy of Black inventors. Closing activities were led by Emma Thompson, coordinator of the WEL Club.

The WEL Club is taught by Rev. Hicks and John Wesley’s pastor, the Rev. Daniel Hembree, both of John Wesley UMC. Attendees said their guidance and dedication continue to make gatherings like this one a source of inspiration and community for all who attend.

Native American Ministries.

A handbook, a powwow and a fight for justice: South Carolina’s MMIW movement

By LaShella Kirkland

“We remember missing, the murdered and the disappeared. We fight for the living!”

This powerful statement is a central tenet of the movement to support missing and murdered Indigenous people.

In 2023, I attended my first Missing Murdered Indigenous Women Summit, held in Columbia. The presentation was made possible through the South Carolina Indigenous Women’s Alliance, the South Carolina Indian Affairs Commission and South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

I am a mental health certified peer support specialist, and I was hoping to also be of any needed assistance. I was already familiarized with the overall statistics concerning mental health in Indigenous populations and other MMIW cases in Canada and other states: 84 percent of Indigenous women will experience violence in their lifetime; 56 percent will experience sexual assault; Native women are murdered 10 times more than the national average; 96 percent of rapes against Native women are perpetrated by non-Indigenous men but are rarely prosecuted in tribal or nontribal courts.

The cases of MMIW often go either unreported or underreported.

The South Carolina Indian Affairs Commission and University of South Carolina College of Social Work was asked to conduct a needs assessment for our state. A survey was developed and sent to all tribal communities and families.

The findings showed there was a problem here in South Carolina as well: 53 percent of Native families reported having a female member who was a victim of homicide; 23 percent of Native Americans who went missing or were murdered were younger than 18; children, girls and boys, were five times more likely to be trafficked; the main trafficking corridors were along I-95, the Upstate, the Catawba areas and along any tribal area borders.

In May 2023, a MMIW Task force was

formed with the goal of not only protecting Indigenous families, but to aid other communities as well. We enlisted women from various professional backgrounds to meet and produce resources and other information that could be compiled into a handbook and training presentations for tribals communities.

Relationships between law enforcement and tribal communities were going to be particularly important.

Unfortunately, racial classifications on law enforcement forms will list us as “other” or as another racial group, which plays into problems with the coroner.

That needs to be corrected. Identifying someone who may have been trafficked, as well as understanding legal terms, was just as important.

On Feb. 21, the South Carolina Indian Affairs Commission’s Task Force on MMIW and the Indigenous Women’s Alliance of South Carolina released their “Guide for Families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.” The handbook gives a guide of the dos and don’ts of filing a missing person’s report, a definition of legal and criminal terminology, knowing your rights, how to use social media to find a missing person and other resources.

For more information, please contact scindianaffairscommission@gmail.com or indigenouswomenofsc@gmail.com.

On Feb. 22, the first MMIW Informational Powwow was held in Lexington. Gov. Henry McMaster recognized that day as a special event. Not only were there dancers and speakers telling their personal stories, but there were also vendors there from various organizations. I was there representing National Alliance on Mental Illness South Carolina.

Hopefully, this event will be an annual event.

May 5 is considered MMIW Red Dress Day in South Carolina.

Kirkland is on the Native American Committee of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. She is a member of Lyttleton Street UMC in Camden.

Cognitive Connections.

Why early diagnosis, community matter

By Tori Anderson

According to the South Carolina Alzheimer’s Disease Registry at the University of South Carolina Office for the Study of Aging, at least 125,538 South Carolinians are currently diagnosed with a form of dementia.

Seventy percent of those diagnosed are living in the community. These numbers do not include those individuals living with dementia who are not currently diagnosed.

The impact extends far beyond those diagnosed. According to the Alzheimer’s Association 2025 Facts & Figures report, more than 224,000 South Carolina residents provide more than 360 million hours of care for loved ones living with dementia. As our population ages, these numbers are expected to increase significantly over the next decade.

Advances in research and treatment are providing new hope. Cutting-edge therapies can now help slow the progression of certain forms of dementia, and clinical trials are continuing to transform the future of care and research. These developments highlight the importance of early and accurate diagnosis, which can allow individuals and families to access treatments, resources, and planning opportunities sooner.

But the benefits of early diagnosis extend beyond medical care; they also include social and emotional well-being.

Unfortunately, dementia still carries a significant stigma in many communities. Misconceptions persist, such as the belief that dementia is simply a normal part of aging rather than a medical condition. Some people assume individuals living with dementia can no longer make decisions or live meaningful lives. Others may want to help but feel unsure how to support someone living with the condition.

These misunderstandings can lead to delayed diagnoses, social isolation for individuals and families, and reduced quality of life because of exclusion or lack of engagement.

Reducing stigma begins with all of us. We can take meaningful steps by increasing public education and awareness about dementia and brain health; using respectful, person-centered language that recognizes the dignity and abilities of people living with dementia; and creating dementia-friendly communities that not only include but actively engage individuals living with dementia and their caregivers.

The South Carolina Department on Aging created the Dementia Care Specialist program to provide support to families affected by dementia and the communities in which they live. To learn more about dementia, brain health and ways you can support families living with dementia in your community, visit our SCDOA Dementia Services page: <https://www.getcaresc.com/guide/dementia-services>.

Anderson is the Dementia Care specialist program manager with the South Carolina Department on Aging.

Advocate E-Newsletters

We've got a new collection of FREE e-newsletters to keep up with all things UMCS.

Advocate

Sign Up



Courtesy of Delaine Frierson

‘No Benchwarmers in the Kingdom’
In keeping with the sermon topic, “No Benchwarmers in the Kingdom,” Journey UMC, Columbia, welcomed the Westwood High School of Blythewood basketball team, winners of the 5A Division II state championship. They beat the defending champions, Greenville, 67-55. Westwood’s coach, Trent Robinson, grew up at Journey. He was proud yet humble as he spoke about his team. Robinson spoke about growing up in Journey and how now he is able to be a mentor to the community. Players spoke about the importance of practice, perseverance and working as a team. The congregation was impressed by the team’s decorum. Not only are they great athletes, but the team also has an impressive grade point average of 3.9. Journey enjoyed time with the team and shared dinner after.

SMC launches three new bachelor’s degrees

SPARTANBURG—Spartanburg Methodist College will launch three new bachelor’s degrees this fall to help strengthen the state’s workforce in high-demand fields.

The South Carolina Department of Administration lists technology, teaching and law enforcement among the top in-demand career areas in the state, and these new degrees aim to provide a meaningful boost to each one.

The college is adding a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice to its SMC Online lineup. They will also add two new concentrations to their Bachelor of Arts in Multidisciplinary Studies program; Information technology will be offered online and education will be offered on-campus.

“We are being very deliberate in our growth at SMC, adding programs that our students are asking for and the community is in need of,” said Dr. Curt Laird, provost and executive vice president of academic affairs at SMC. “Criminal justice, information technology and education are three areas we feel we can make a difference in developing more workplace-ready graduates.”



Wesley Foundations by the Rev. Jad Taylor

Exploring 'what's next'

For many college students, the search for “what’s next” is more than a career choice; it is a journey of the soul.

Recently, four students with Columbia Wesley (Methodist Student Network)—Jamie Conrad, Ian Moore, Ella Stilwell, and Kelsey Widener—traveled to Decatur, Georgia, to explore that journey at Emory University’s Candler School of Theology. Led by me, a campus minister and Candler alumnus, the group spent time immersed in a community dedicated to theological education.

For the students, the experience was transformative.

“Arriving in Decatur, I immediately felt the warmth of a home I didn’t know I longed for,” Moore said. “The rich conversations and open arms of students, alumni, and faculty ... will stay with me forever as one of revelation for the life I now feel called to pursue.”

Conrad shared a similar sentiment, noting the immediate sense of community.

“Before I stepped foot on campus, I was surrounded by the loving welcome of the Candler community,” Conrad said. “The love of God and one another is palpable throughout the school, and I was given a beautiful vision of what my life could look like as a member of that family.”

This visit highlights the vital role of campus ministry within the South Carolina Conference. Beyond weekly gatherings, campus ministry offers a sacred space for young adults to explore questions of belonging and calling. Because the United Methodist tradition affirms that all are called to ministry, whether lay or ordained, these ministries serve as laboratories for vocational discernment.

Sam Martinez, Candler’s associate dean of admissions and financial aid, emphasizes that this discernment is a guided process.

“Candler nurtures students’ sense of vocation from the time they apply through graduation and beyond,” Martinez said.

Martinez also noted that theological education serves many paths.

“A big part of what we do is educate prospective students about the vocational possibilities available to them through theological education,” he said. “The admissions team guides prospects through one-to-one conversations about which degree program best aligns with their goals, calling and sense of ministry.”

The success of the Columbia Wesley trip is now serving as a springboard for the entire conference.

All South Carolina campus ministers are joining forces to invite any young adult interested in seminary to Candler’s next fall visit day on Thursday, Oct. 22.

Whether you feel called to the pulpit or are simply seeking how to live out your faith in the world, you are invited to join this statewide cohort. By supporting campus ministry, the local church invests in the next generation of leaders who, like Moore, find “hopefulness and a determination” through these encounters with the living God.

To learn more about the October visit or to connect with your local campus ministry, visit <https://linktr.ee/UMCSCWesley>.

Taylor is the campus minister of Methodist Student Network (Columbia Wesley). To learn more about each Wesley Foundation: <https://linktr.ee/UMCSCWesley>.

Connecting Children.

Teach us to pray: a call to the whole church

By Toni Taylor

When the disciples watched Jesus pray, they saw a deep relationship with God and asked, “Lord, teach us to pray.” That same longing lives in us today—for ourselves, our families and especially our children.

Our Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer journey is one way we respond to that desire in this season.

In the first year of the Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer initiative, congregations in Cohort 1 focused on including children more fully in worship—inviting them to read Scripture, lead prayers and serve alongside adults. In this second year, they are taking a step further: learning how to teach children to pray so that they grow into a living, daily relationship with God.

This call is not only for young parents. It belongs to grandparents, aunts and uncles, godparents, Sunday school teachers, choir members and all who have ever promised to nurture a child in the faith. Even adults who feel unsure about praying out loud can discover, as they pray with children, that God is gently teaching them to pray as well.

We are using three key resources—“Pray with Me,” “The Book of Common Prayer for Families and Children” and “Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home”—to help congregations find simple, meaningful ways to teach prayer in worship, classrooms and homes. Through these tools, churches are remembering that prayer is not about perfect words. It is an honest conversation with a God who delights in hearing our voices. We are learning innovative ways to help parent and adults teach children of all ages why we pray and how to pray.

We cannot control what children will face in life, but we can give them a lasting gift: the ability to turn to God with trust, gratitude and hope. Teaching children to pray helps them know they are never alone, that God is with them in every joy and every struggle and that the church stands beside them in love.

Each time a child is baptized, the congregation promises to surround them with a community of love and forgiveness and to help them grow in their trust of God. Teaching them how to talk and listen to God is a concrete, beautiful way we live out that promise. My hope is that, in this second year of the Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer Initiative, churches will reclaim the simple practice of praying with and for children—and in doing so, deepen the prayer life of the whole body of Christ.

If you are interested in learning more, contact me at ttaylor@umcsc.org or Nona Woodle at nmwoodle@umcsc.org. You can also subscribe to our newsletter at <https://www.umcsc.org/children>.

Taylor is the grant coordinator for the Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer Initiative.

Prizes offered for Young Voices kids writing contest

South Carolina United Methodist children of all ages are invited to participate in a new Advocate Young Voices Writing Contest.

Any youth up to age 18 who attends a UMC in South Carolina is eligible to participate. Writing can be anything from a poem or song to an essay or short story, but it should address a matter of faith in some way.

There is no word count minimum, but there is a maximum of 1,500 words. The work must be completely original and not created through the use of Artificial Intelligence.

First, second and third place winners will be awarded Amazon gift cards.

Email writing submissions to jbrodie@advocatesc.org by May 15; include your church name and city. If it is handwritten, a photo of the entry is acceptable.

WOMEN AND POLICY

From Page 1

This year’s theme was “Racial and Environmental Justice for All,” and it featured two key groups of speakers. Evan Renshaw and Erin Siebert spoke about the environmental advocacy work of Conservation Voters of South Carolina, while Jennifer Rainville spoke about her education advocacy work through the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center, primarily because of unjust practices rooted in racial and disability injustice.

Bishop Leonard Fairley applauded the work the women are doing, noting, “Since the beginning of your history, it’s been a part of your DNA to speak in the public square on advocacy.”

He said he is grateful for United Women in Faith’s fearlessness over the years to show what’s happening in the world and in our state.

“Thank you for using your voices for those who are voiceless,” Fairley said.

UWF Social Action Coordinator Patricia Armstrong said the event was designed to help women understand how they can take action, which is something they all fervently wish to do.

Carrie Murray, Columbia District UWF president, called the day a “time of hope, peace, love, joy and justice.”

Energy-inefficient

Renshaw and Siebert began by sharing about Conservation Voters of South Carolina, which fights for our air, land and water in this state through bipartisan political action. They do what they can to help make environmental issues a priority not only for elected officials but also voters and political candidates, and they encouraged United Women in Faith to use their voice to reach out to legislators.

Siebert said that South Carolina is ranked as one of the least energy-efficient states in the nation, and that a sizeable percentage of our energy bills each month go to electric company profits. She said their group is trying hard to pursue affordable, efficient energy solutions that safeguard natural resources, as well as tracking new updates, such as a proposed Edisto Gas Plant, which could cause pollution concerns and would involve running a gas pipeline through the state.

Renshaw told the crowd their per-



Photos by Jessica Brodie

Women learn about more about advocacy.

See more UWF LAD photos at <https://tinyurl.com/uwf-lad-2026>.

spective as “regular community members” means a lot to legislators, and that simply reaching out and sharing their increased energy bill or another personal story goes a long way toward fostering change.

“Remember, you don’t need to be a policy expert to speak to decision-makers about this use,” Renshaw said.

They urged women to participate in an upcoming conservation Lobby Day set for March 31 beginning at 10:30 a.m., with a group lobbying effort at noon, a community cleanup at 4, and an oyster roast finale. Learn more and sign up at <https://www.cvsc.org>.

Highest rates of suspending preschoolers, disabled students

Rainville shared about her work as an education advocacy attorney, raising awareness about the rampant inequities in schools across the state when it comes to school removals such as suspensions and expulsions.

“It’s doesn’t matter your zip code, race or nationality—all kids deserve a quality education,” Rainville said.

She shared that nationally, boys are suspended far more than girls and that Black boys—who represent 18.2 percent of the population—comprise 43.3 percent of suspensions.

As well, she shared that students



Barbara Simpson offers a question.

with disabilities—who represent 13.2 percent of student enrollment—comprise 20.5 percent of in-school suspensions and 24.5 percent of out-of-school suspensions.

In South Carolina, Black boys—who represent 35 percent of the population—comprise 61.2 percent of suspensions, and that students with disabilities—who represent 8.1 percent of student enrollment—comprise 15.5 percent of suspensions.

“South Carolina suspends more students with disabilities than any other state,” Rainville said.

It also has the distinction of suspending more preschoolers than any other state in the nation.

Rainville shared that she felt called to her work because she grew up in a low-income family on SNAP benefits and in low-income housing.

“My mom always said, ‘Get an education so you don’t struggle like me,’” Rainville told the crowd.

She said it’s important that we know behavior is communication. What comes across as “bad behavior” is often a child’s way of telling people they are struggling with trauma, poverty or a learning disability.

Rainville shared about two bills pending in the state legislature that could be helpful: SB 430, Preschool Suspension Prevention, and HB 3974, Private Providers in Public Schools.

“Let’s tell our legislators this is important to us,” Rainville said.



Carolyn Hamby listens as the bishop speaks.

Paper doll advocacy

SCCUWF Vice President Kathy Roys closed the event with a project from the Kairos Center, Paper Dolls to Free Families. Every attendees received a blank sheet of paper and a paper doll figure to trace.

Then, all were encouraged to trace a paper doll to a sheet of paper and write messages “decorating” the doll encouraging fair immigration reform and ending family detention, which can be harmful and traumatizing to everyone, especially children. The papers were collected and mailed to congressional representatives.

“We hope it will be a visual they can see and understand who they are affecting,” Roys said.

Beth Williams, Epworth chief executive officer, welcomed all to their campus and thanked them for their advocacy. She shared a few key statistics about the children they work with, as well as the great need for foster families. According to the Department of Social Services, there are 3,349 children in foster care in South Carolina. Counties with the largest numbers of children in foster care are Richland with 473; Greenville with 384; and Charleston with 225. Williams said that in 2025, Epworth served 2,230 children and families. Epworth served 794 children placed in kinship homes in 2025 and 411 children in foster care. They also celebrated 33 adoptions, with 32 of those children adopted by Epworth families.

Salkehatchie gearing up for 30 camps this summer

Registration continues this month for 30 weeklong Salkehatchie Summer Service camps this year, offering youth and adults the opportunity to engage in meaningful home-repair ministry across South Carolina.

Salkehatchie was founded in 1978 by the Rev. John Culp. It brings youth, young adult and adult volunteers together to repair and rebuild homes for people in need, many who living in

poverty situations without the ability to fund the work on their own.

Volunteers must be at least 14 years old, and all adult volunteers must do a background check. Cost is \$250 per volunteer and covers the cost of shingles, building supplies and other materials. Lodging and meals are included.

Volunteers go directly into communities of chronic poverty and repair the

homes of local families there.

Salkehatchie’s main focus is serving God. Over the years, hundreds of homes received new roofs, ramps, flooring, ceilings, bathrooms, kitchens

and improvements in accessibility through the hands of youth at Salkehatchie.

To register, go to <https://www.salkehatchie.org>.

Interstate Transportation Equipment, Inc.

The South's Oldest Bus Company Since 1947

interstatetransportation.com

COLUMBIA, SC
800.726.0779

New and Used Buses
Financing Programs Available

2,995

Lives Rebuilt in 2025

Justice-involved individuals. Veterans. At-risk youth.

Through housing, support, and opportunity, Alston Wilkes Society helps people rebuild their lives and strengthen our communities.

Hope starts here.

www.alstonwilkessociety.org
(803) 799-2490

ALSTON WILKES SOCIETY
Rebuilding Lives for a Stronger Community

SCAN ME

IRAN WAR

From Page 1

called upon his church to pray for service members and their families.

In a message he shared with his congregation, Thompson wrote, “Brothers and sisters in Christ, I do not know how everyone feels about the war that we have just entered. After having served in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait, I have my own perspective and feelings about what we have just entered into. What I would like to ask of each one of you in the coming weeks, or however long this might last, is to set aside five minutes

each day to pray for our service members and their families. This will be an incredibly stressful time for all.”

Thompson said that he remembers during his time deployed to the war in Iraq with the 101st Airborne Division that every time a news report came out about the death of a service member, the people at home were asking: Is it my husband, is it my wife, is it my dad, is it my mom, is it my son, is it my daughter?

“Please, even if you have to set a daily alarm as a reminder, take the time to pray for our service members and their families,” Thompson said.

The Rev. Athena Dickey-Cathcart,

pastor of New Hope and Mount Olive UMCs, Rock Hill, is calling on her congregations to do the same. The church leadership, along with the members of the church, have committed to praying daily for the deployed soldiers. In addition, they are gathering for communal prayer every Tuesday and Thursday on their Intercessory Prayer Line at 240-220-6295.

“We stand in faith, covering our soldiers and their families in prayer for protection, strength and peace,” Dickey-Cathcart said.

The Rev. Nellie Cloninger, pastor of El Bethel UMC, Fort Lawn, said her church has been praying for all involved in the war, including President Trump, the House of Representatives and the Senate, United States Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, our service members and their families.

“We also pray for those suffering panic attacks and fear over what this war may bring to our continent and fear of Mr. Trump severing relations with NATO,” Cloninger said. “We are praying a lot for the people of Iran.”

The Rev. Jack W. Hutto said the Hampton-Varnville Charge, Hampton, is praying for our leadership at the national, local and state levels as well as for our military troops.

“We are praying for repentance and restoration and that we all might turn our hearts and minds back to the Lord God and put him first in all we say and do. 2 Chronicles 7:14 in the King James Version states, ‘If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.’”

The Rev. Ralph T. Bowling III said Main Street UMC, Greenwood, is having a time of silent prayer during the morning prayers section of its 11 a.m. service each week.

The Little Rock Parish in the Marion District, under Pastor Ronald McCall, is praying and fasting for the community and the world—including the war in Iran—every third Wednesday.

The Way, a satellite campus affiliated with Grace UMC, North Augusta, held a peace service March 12 with interactive prayer stations, lament, 167 seconds of silence (one second for each person killed in the school strike according to



The Way held a peace service March 12 with interactive prayer stations, lament, 167 seconds of silence and more.

the death toll at the time) and a prophetic call to be advocates and workshops of peace.

“Participants left with tealight candles to burn to foster small, bright spots of peace and keep vigil for those suffering or killed,” said the Rev. Patrick Taylor.

The Rev. Kenneth B. Middleton, pastor of St. Stephen UMC, Orangeburg, said his church is doing several things in response to the conflict in Iran. They have incorporated daily prayer for deployed service members and their families into their morning corporate prayer call. He noted they don’t pray in generalities—they pray with awareness of what military families actually carry. He is also developing a Bible study series, “The Hidden Weight of War,” designed to help the congregation understand the stress military members and their families experience through the lens of Scripture.

“We believe the Bible has always told the truth about what war does to people, and the church should, too,” he said. “As a Gulf War veteran who served as a Navy hospital corpsman, this is not an abstract concern for me. St. Stephen is a congregation that takes the full humanity of our service members seriously—before deployment, during and long after they come home.”

The Rev. Antuan L. Cromedy said the congregation of Jericho UMC, Cottageville, is praying for all families affected by the war and hopes to adopt a family with a loved one in the war if they can find one.

Dave Fields, pastor of the Target-Gerizim Charge in Holly Hill, said his churches are probably getting tired of hearing him quoting Jesus, praying for peace, mentioning wars and going over Iran’s long history during his pre-Call to Worship introduction. He says he’s been “crying and praying, sometimes simultaneously” since the news broke.

The Rev. Kim Strong, pastor of Joseph B. Bethea UMC, Myrtle Beach, said his church is uplifting the war in prayer. Strong said they are also taking steps to prevent terrorism during their church services while at the same time keeping all God’s children in prayer. They are starting to lock all exterior doors at 11:15 and have trained veterans who sit at the back of the church. Also, at the request of those who lead their Hispanic services, they removed that information from their outdoor message board.

If your church is doing something to help with the war in Iran, the Advocate would love to know. Photos are also welcome. Email news@advocatesc.org.



Founded to Make a Difference

Since 1854, Columbia College has prepared students to lead with purpose through faith, service, and academic excellence. Guided by a bold vision for the future, we offer small classes, personal mentorship, competitive athletics, and career-focused programs that help students thrive.

Apply anytime with no application fee and join a supportive community that is on the rise. Discover how you can make a difference at Columbia College.

COLUMBIASC.EDU/Apply



Epworth’s Mother’s Day Offering
Sunday, May 10, 2026

MEMORY CAFÉ

From Page 1

through the early stages, or they just want to know more,” said retired United Methodist elder the Rev. Larry Hays, one of the members of the café team who attends Mount Hebron. “We’re all in this together, and we try not to make any distinction about who all is there. Everybody is a valuable contributor to the gathering, and we try to push that very strongly.”

While Hays brought the idea for The Memory Café to the church council a few years ago, he’s quick to say he’s not the team’s leader. In fact, they don’t have an official leader, he says. The dozen or so members of the group do most of their work by text message, carefully planning the café meetings. The meetings tend to be simple—some music and food, along with a helpful speaker or brief program, simply allowing people to be together.

“The real value is not so much the information people get but them sitting around the table sharing their journeys with each other,” Hays said.

‘Uniquely positioned’

Hays lost his wife, Sally, to fronto-temporal dementia in 2010. After she died, he and his daughters decided they wanted to do everything they could to honor her life by supporting dementia ministries and awareness efforts.

“We knew that’s what she would have wanted,” Hays said. “She was a very giving person, unselfish, and we wanted to carry that on.”

When he became aware of other churches doing ministries around memory care and dementia, he decided Mount Hebron needed to get involved.

“I thought, ‘We certainly need to do that here.’”

After all, Hays said, the local church is ideally suited to this ministry.

“We are uniquely positioned to minister to people in this area,” Hays said.

“We see them on a weekly basis, and we know what’s happening in their lives.”

When the church council said yes, Hays put the word out, seeking other people to help. Immediately, 12 people stepped up to join him.

“We have so many gifted people on that team with different skills that made it happen,” Hays said. “The church has bought in so completely—it’s amazing.”

Strong support

Not only that, but pastoral support has been strong from the start.

“Oh, my goodness, every pastor at Mount Hebron has been so supportive, so helpful, so encouraging and so involved. They’re not just saying, ‘Hey, I’ll support you, go do it,’ but they’re right there as part of everything we’ve done.”

Dr. Ann Kovan, senior pastor at Mount Hebron since June, is heartened by the ministry.

“When you walk through those doors, you leave every stigma and embarrassment behind and enter a community with a shared interest.”

When the group gathered March 12, Kovan got the opportunity to hear from one man at her table who was just beginning to accept his cognitive decline. She witnessed him be able to share openly, even to tears, with those at the table—pastors, caregivers and others dealing with dementia.

“It was an authentic honesty about the experience of dementia that is hard to find anywhere else,” Kovan said.

Hays said the team hopes to do a workshop or lessons sometime soon for the whole church on some of the basic questions about dementia, such as how to talk with those who have it and what is the best way to minister to people you care about. They also hope to start a caregiver support group.

“It’s a passion for me, and I really hope hearing about what we’re do-

ing will encourage other churches out there,” Hays said. “It’s not for Mount Hebron to look good but so maybe someone else out there might think, ‘Gosh, that church is doing it and we might be able to, too.’”

See photos of Mount Hebron's Memory Café at <https://tinyurl.com/memory-cafe-mt-hebron>.

Visit SMC during Enrollment Days to experience The Way College Should Be.



#SMCBOUND

smcsc.edu/enrollmentdays



OPEN HOUSE

JOIN US!

SUNDAY APRIL 19th

FROM 1PM - 5PM

FREE ACTIVITIES

TOURS OF CAMP

ARCHERY

CORN HOLE

ROCK WALL

GAGA BALL

9 SQUARE

WE WILL BE GIVING TOURS OF CAMP AND HAVE STAFF AVAILABLE TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE ABOUT OUR SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM!

150 ASBURY DRIVE CLEVELAND, SC 29635





May on Millwood

Celebrating Epworth's 130 Years

Saturday, May 30th

11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Reserve Your Tickets at

friendsofepworth.org/may-on-millwood









Advoca+e

April 2026 | 13

2025 Record of Giving.

NOTE: Churches giving 100 percent are in bold.
Churches who increased their giving over 2024 are marked with a +.

Anderson District
31 out of 57 Churches Contributed 100%
58.98% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Ann Hope	10,087.00	–	0.00%
Arial	3,989.00	–	0.00%
Bethel/Iva	5,682.00	–	0.00%
Bethel/Pendleton	5,308.00	5,308.00	100.00%
Bethesda	56,420.00	–	0.00%
Calhoun Falls	5,237.00	5,237.00	100.00%
Central	5,260.00	5,260.00	100.00%
Chicopee	2,076.00	–	0.00%
Clemson	82,453.00	82,453.20	100.00%
Dickson Memorial	21,263.00	3,543.82	16.67%
Donalds	–	883.00	N/A
Double Springs	1,501.00	1,501.00	100.00%
Easley Chapel	12,098.00	12,098.00	100.00%
Ebenezer	3,292.00	–	0.00%
Emmanuel	4,966.00	4,996.00	100.60% +
Fairfield	6,583.00	6,583.00	100.00%
Fairview	6,047.00	6,047.00	100.00%
First/Easley	49,752.00	2,000.00	4.02%
Friendship	5,259.00	2,420.00	46.02%
Gilgal	–	2,060.50	N/A
Grace/Abbeville	35,620.00	–	0.00%
Grace/Pickens	31,864.00	3,700.00	11.61%
Grace/Williamston	9,692.00	9,692.00	100.00%
Hebron	2,731.00	1,000.00	36.62% +
Homeland Park	1,967.00	-	0.00%
Hopewell	4,078.00	4,078.00	100.00%
John Wesley/Anderson	3,100.00	3,100.00	100.00%
John Wesley/Easley	6,168.00	4,000.00	64.85% +
Latimer Memorial	9,864.00	1,200.00	12.17% +
Lawrence Chapel	23,537.00	23,537.04	100.00%
Liberty	8,538.00	7,299.25	85.49% +
Main Street/Abbeville	–	16,400.50	N/A
Marshall Memorial	3,613.00	3,613.00	100.00%
Moores Chapel	–	–	N/A
Mount Bethel	6,725.00	3,362.50	50.00%
Mount Pleasant	3,583.00	3,619.00	101.00% +
Mount Sinai	3,141.00	3,141.00	100.00%
Mount Zion	17,342.00	17,342.00	100.00%
New Golden Grove	1,107.00	–	0.00%
New Harmony	3,138.00	3,138.00	100.00%
New Hope	–	1,988.00	N/A
Pelzer UMC	4,329.00	500.00	11.55%
Pendleton	–	16,827.50	N/A
Porter Chapel	5,881.00	5,881.00	100.00%
Robinson Chapel	6,114.00	1,000.00	16.36%
Rock Springs	1,734.00	–	0.00%
Ruhamah	5,823.00	5,823.00	100.00% +
Salem	–	–	N/A
Sandy Springs	1,713.00	1,713.00	100.00%
Sharon/Abbeville	–	2,927.00	N/A
Shiloh/Abbeville	–	2,151.50	N/A
Shiloh/Piedmont	–	10,370.50	N/A
Smyrna	–	4,234.50	N/A
St Andrew	–	–	N/A
St James/Belton	516.00	516.00	100.00% +
St John's	91,308.00	17,956.00	19.67% +
St Luke / Walhalla	25,980.00	25,980.00	100.00%
St Mark	91,890.00	57,945.24	63.06%
St Paul	6,649.00	6,649.00	100.00%
Starr	2,666.00	2,666.00	100.00%
Tabor	6,530.00	192.00	2.94%
Thompson Centennial	3,411.00	3,411.00	100.00%
Toxaway	3,899.00	3,899.00	100.00%
Trinity/Anderson	69,589.00	20,876.71	30.00% +
Trinity/Honea Path	16,874.00	13,904.61	82.40%
Union Grove	13,427.00	13,427.00	100.00%
Westminster	3,454.00	3,454.00	100.00% +
Zion/Anderson	30,178.00	30,178.08	100.00% +
Zion/Easley	2,924.00	2,924.00	100.00%
Anderson District Total	857,970.00	506,007.00	58.98%

Charleston District
52 out of 63 Churches Contributed 100%
72.85% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Asbury-St James	24,943.00	–	0.00%
Bethany/Charleston	23,578.00	23,578.00	100.00%
Bethany/Summerville	216,205.00	35,046.93	16.21%
Bethel/Charleston	93,189.00	93,633.61	100.48%
Bethel/St Stephen	11,655.00	11,655.00	100.00%
Bethlehem-St James	6,727.00	6,727.00	100.00%
Boone Hill	17,663.00	1,000.00	5.66% +
Centenary/Charleston	3,919.00	3,969.00	101.28% +
Centenary/Moncks Corner	6,092.00	6,092.00	100.00%
Cokesbury	32,148.00	14,404.71	44.81% +
Cordessville	2,448.00	2,448.00	100.00%
Ebenezer	3,534.00	12.00	0.34%
Eccles	2,558.00	2,558.00	100.00%
Edisto Island	12,995.00	12,995.00	100.00%
Enoch Chapel	2,326.00	2,326.00	100.00%
Epworth	16,352.00	16,371.92	100.12%
First/Isle of Palms	62,689.00	62,689.00	100.00%

Folly Beach	16,381.00	–	0.00%
Goose Creek	16,717.00	16,717.00	100.00%
Grace	65,707.00	10,000.00	15.22%
Greater St Paul	12,997.00	12,997.08	100.00%
Grove Hall	2,525.00	2,525.41	100.02%
Hibben	84,040.00	84,040.00	100.00%
Hood's Chapel	4,130.00	4,130.00	100.00%
Jehovah	5,702.00	5,702.00	100.00%
Jerusalem	7,031.00	7,031.00	100.00%
John Wesley	121,241.00	121,241.01	100.00%
Joshua	22,719.00	22,719.00	100.00%
Knightsville	–	15,436.00	N/A
Lebanon	–	3,003.00	N/A
McClellanville	4,925.00	4,925.00	100.00%
Midland Park	15,673.00	15,673.00	100.00%
Moncks Corner	43,200.00	3,355.00	7.77%
Mount Carmel	9,621.00	9,621.37	100.00%
Mount Nebo	4,444.00	4,444.00	100.00%
Mount Zion	–	1,092.00	N/A
Murray	7,935.00	7,935.00	100.00%
New Francis Brown	17,712.00	17,712.00	100.00%
New Hope/Jamestown	–	1,143.00	N/A
New Hope/St Thomas	7,432.00	7,432.00	100.00%
New Hope/Summerville	–	4,070.50	N/A
New Light	4,919.00	4,919.00	100.00%
New Webster	7,679.00	7,679.00	100.00%
North Charleston	38,550.00	38,550.00	100.00%
Ocean Grove	3,768.00	3,768.00	100.00%
Old Bethel	9,303.00	9,303.00	100.00%
Ravenel	2,472.00	2,472.00	100.00%
Rehoboth	1,911.00	1,911.00	100.00%
Smyrna	8,431.00	8,431.00	100.00%
Spring Hill	2,778.00	2,778.00	100.00%
St Andrews Parish	36,668.00	36,668.16	100.00%
St James/Goose Creek	24,638.00	7,500.00	30.44%
St James/Jamestown	–	1,546.50	N/A
St Mark	31,149.00	31,149.03	100.00%
St Stephen	2,656.00	2,656.00	100.00%
Stallsville	22,905.00	22,905.00	100.00%
Steward Chapel	10,872.00	10,872.00	100.00%
Trinity	22,940.00	9,604.22	41.87% +
Washington	7,147.00	7,147.00	100.00%
Wesley Memorial	15,012.00	–	0.00%
Wesley/Charleston	14,426.00	14,426.00	100.00%
Wesley/Johns Island	22,210.00	22,210.08	100.00%
Wesley/Ladson	19,432.00	19,432.00	100.00%
Wesley/Pinopolis	23,342.00	23,342.00	100.00%
Wesley/Summerville	7,054.00	7,054.00	100.00%
Wesley/Yonges Island	17,326.00	17,326.00	100.00% +
Wren's Chapel	603.00	603.00	100.00%
Zion/Cross	5,392.00	5,457.00	101.21% +
Zion/St Thomas	6,809.00	6,809.00	100.00%
Charleston Total	1,379,545.00	1,004,969.00	72.85%

Columbia District
32 out of 48 Churches Contributed 100%
90.83% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Asbury Memorial	35,077.00	35,077.00	100.00%
Ashland	60,190.00	60,190.00	100.00%
Bethel/Columbia	30,042.00	3,000.00	9.99% +
Bethel/Winnsboro	–	3,883.00	N/A
Beulah/Blythewood	5,363.00	5,363.00	100.00%
Beulah/Gilbert	–	18,494.50	N/A
Bluff Road	12,171.00	6,000.00	49.30% +
Boiling Springs	19,958.00	–	0.00%
Brookland	14,154.00	500.00	3.53%
Cayce	37,098.00	37,098.00	100.00%
Columbia	30,473.00	30,473.00	100.00%
Ebenezer	–	953.00	N/A
Epworth Memorial	340.00	340.00	100.00%
Fair Lawn	20,900.00	20,900.00	100.00%
Faith	12,455.00	12,455.00	100.00%
First/Winnsboro	16,497.00	1,500.00	9.09%
Francis Burns	61,303.00	61,303.00	100.00%
Gilbert	13,052.00	13,052.00	100.00%
Gordon Memorial	10,422.00	–	0.00%
Grace	29,623.00	29,623.08	100.00%
Greenbrier	5,191.00	–	0.00%
Heyward Street	15,075.00	15,075.00	100.00%
I. DeQuincey Newman	15,377.00	15,377.00	100.00%
Journey	79,385.00	79,386.00	100.00%
Lexington	65,038.00	65,038.00	100.00%
McLeod	2,745.00	–	0.00%
Mill Creek	6,303.00	6,303.00	100.00%
Monticello	5,072.00	–	0.00%
Mount Hebron	96,972.00	96,972.00	100.00%
Mount Pleasant	4,308.00	4,308.00	100.00%
Northeast	27,278.00	7,200.00	26.39% +
Oak Grove	3,119.00	–	0.00%
Platt Springs	21,971.00	21,971.00	100.00%
Red Bank	26,781.00	–	0.00%
Rehoboth/Columbia	–	9,818.00	N/A
Salem/Elgin	–	2,636.50	N/A
Salem/Irmo	56,415.00	56,415.00	100.00%
Shady Grove	25,982.00	–	0.00%
Shandon	313,754.00	313,754.00	100.00%
Shiloh	21,985.00	21,985.00	100.00%
Shiloh/West Columbia	3,400.00	–	0.00%
Smyrna	–	1,549.00	N/A

St John	2,822.00	2,822.00	100.00%
St Mark	10,258.00	10,258.00	100.00%
Suber Marshall	6,051.00	–	0.00%
Trenholm Road	154,128.00	154,128.00	100.00%
Trinity/Blythewood	82,149.00	82,149.00	100.00%
Trinity/West Columbia	21,338.00	21,338.00	100.00%
Union	176,790.00	176,790.00	100.00%
Virginia Wingard	44,099.00	44,099.29	100.00%
Washington Street	82,942.00	82,945.37	100.00%
Wesley	35,170.00	35,170.00	100.00%
Whaley Street	6,947.00	6,947.00	100.00%
Windsor	28,907.00	10,682.00	36.95% +
Zion	–	1,312.00	N/A
Columbia Total	1,856,870.00	1,686,633.00	90.83%

Florence District
43 out of 64 Churches Contributed 100%
71.57% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Andrews Chapel	3,158.00	2,379.00	75.33%
Asbury/Kingstree East	6,287.00	6,287.28	100.00%
Asbury/Shiloh	12,517.00	12,567.32	100.40%
Bethel/Kingstree	13,887.00	13,887.00	100.00%
Bethesda/Kingstree	13,477.00	13,477.00	100.00%
Bethlehem/Jordan	5,210.00	5,210.00	100.00%
Bethlehem/Pamplico	10,910.00	–	0.00%
Bethsaida	5,015.00	–	0.00%
Browns Chapel	1,896.00	1,896.00	100.00%
Central	238,714.00	181,548.25	76.05%
Cumberland	25,189.00	25,189.00	100.00%
Dawsey	5,146.00	5,200.00	101.05%
Elijah	8,790.00	8,790.00	100.00%
Elim	2,410.00	2,410.00	100.00%
Faith	6,415.00	6,415.00	100.00%
Friendship/Florence	6,590.00	1,747.47	26.52%
Friendship/Kingstree	18,008.00	16,507.26	91.67%
Hebron	–	4,029.50	N/A
Highland Park	80,634.00	60,000.01	74.41%
Jeremiah	8,658.00	8,658.00	100.00%
Jerusalem	6,108.00	6,108.00	100.00%
Johnsonville	7,684.00	7,684.00	100.00%
Jordan	4,543.00	4,543.00	100.00%
Kennedyville	3,601.00	3,644.00	101.19%
Kingstree	31,318.00	–	0.00%
Lake City	32,903.00	32,903.10	100.00%
Lake Point	2,526.00	–	0.00%
Long Branch	4,097.00	4,097.00	100.00%
Lynchburg	2,348.00	–	0.00%
Manning	46,563.00	5,820.00	12.50%
Mount Beulah	8,389.00	8,389.00	100.00%
Mount Seal	4,121.00	4,121.00	100.00%
Mount Zion/Florence	13,537.00	13,537.00	100.00%
Mount Zion/Kingstree	20,943.00	20,943.00	100.00%
Mount Zion/Timmonsville	6,119.00	6,119.00	100.00%
Nazareth	6,090.00	2,500.00	41.05%
New Haven	5,942.00	5,942.00	100.00%
Ninevah	2,891.00	2,891.00	100.00%
Pamplico	5,270.00	500.00	9.49%
Paxville	3,751.00	–	0.00%
Pergamos	–	1,340.00	N/A
Pinewood	3,275.00	–	0.00%
Quinby	8,362.00	–	0.00%
Salem/Florence	14,805.00	14,805.12	100.00%
Scranton	6,763.00	6,763.00	100.00%
St John/Lake City	9,128.00	9,128.00	100.00%
St John/Scranton	3,998.00	3,998.00	100.00%
St John/Shiloh	4,472.00	4,472.00	100.00%
St Luke/Lake City	4,074.00	4,074.00	100.00%
St Luke/Lynchburg	2,760.00	–	0.00%
St Luke/Timmonsville	3,874.00	3,874.00	100.00%
St Mary	5,069.00	5,069.00	100.00%
St Michael	7,519.00	7,519.00	100.00%
St Paul/Elliott	7,506.00	7,506.00	100.00%
St Paul/Florence	46,069.00	–	0.00%
St Paul/Kingstree	22,682.00	22,682.00	100.00%
St Paul/Morrisville	3,745.00	3,745.00	100.00%
St Paul/Wisacky	5,779.00	5,779.00	100.00%
Summertown	11,924.00	–	0.00%
Trinity/Lynchburg	2,940.00	–	0.00%
Union/Hemingway	9,145.00	9,145.00	100.00%
Union/Manning	–	2,646.00	N/A
Vox Memorial	2,394.00	–	0.00%
Warren Chapel	2,444.00	2,444.00	100.00%
Wesley Chapel/Lake City	18,517.00	18,517.00	100.00%
Wesley/Florence	9,228.00	9,228.00	100.00%
Wilson Chapel	4,712.00	4,712.00	100.00%
Florence Total	912,739.00	653,285.00	71.57%

2025 Record of Giving.

Bethel/Simpsonville	7,599.00	7,599.00	100.00%	
Bethlehem	2,379.00	2,379.00	100.00%	
Bramlett	–	7,477.50	N/A	
Christ	4,619.00	2,309.52	50.00%	
Dacusville	8,950.00	8,950.00	100.00%	+
Disciples	30,313.00	30,313.00	100.00%	
Ebenezer	9,761.00	9,761.00	100.00%	
Emma Gray Memorial	13,695.00	–	0.00%	
Faith	4,053.00	4,053.00	100.00%	
Fews Chapel	5,659.00	5,659.00	100.00%	
Francis Asbury	11,300.00	–	0.00%	
Grace/Greer	15,083.00	3,851.76	25.54%	
Gray Court	1,945.00	500.00	25.71%	+
Green Pond	–	8,513.00	N/A	
Hopewell	23,063.00	23,063.00	100.00%	
Jackson Grove	5,591.00	–	0.00%	
John Wesley	20,005.00	20,005.00	100.00%	
Laurel Creek	7,866.00	7,866.00	100.00%	
Laurens Road	8,641.00	–	0.00%	
Lebanon	3,077.00	–	0.00%	
Lee Road	36,892.00	36,892.00	100.00%	
Liberty Hill	10,276.00	10,276.00	100.00%	
Memorial	68,390.00	25,700.00	37.58%	+
Minus Chapel	1,479.00	1,491.00	100.81%	+
Monaghan	6,574.00	6,026.13	91.67%	
New Saint Luke	5,245.00	5,245.00	100.00%	+
Northside	–	9,849.50	N/A	
Oak Hill	7,268.00	–	0.00%	
Owings	1,273.00	1,273.00	100.00%	
Piedmont	14,422.00	2,319.94	16.09%	+
Pisgah/Fork Shoals	4,903.00	4,903.00	100.00%	
Salem	12,025.00	–	0.00%	
Simpsonville	81,411.00	–	0.00%	
Slater	3,612.00	–	0.00%	
St John/Greenville	3,458.00	2,091.00	60.47%	
St Mark/Greenville	9,962.00	4,715.71	47.34%	+
St Mark/Taylors	36,209.00	36,209.00	100.00%	
St Matthew/Greenville	68,026.00	68,026.00	100.00%	
St Matthew/Taylors	12,287.00	12,287.00	100.00%	+
St Paul/Greenville	23,014.00	23,014.00	100.00%	
St Paul/Greer	4,182.00	4,182.00	100.00%	
Travelers Rest	47,103.00	47,103.00	100.00%	
Trinity/Fountain Inn	52,154.00	–	0.00%	
Wesley Chapel	9,059.00	9,059.00	100.00%	
Wood's Chapel	9,034.00	–	0.00%	
Greenville Total	1,069,299.00	677,773.00	63.38%	

Greenwood District
31 out of 56 Churches Contributed 100%
73.17% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Aldersgate	11,542.00	–	0.00%
Bethany	–	5,321.50	N/A
Bethlehem/Saluda	7,376.00	7,376.00	100.00%
Broad Street	36,619.00	1,680.00	4.59%
Cambridge	–	5,394.00	N/A
Capers Chapel/Langley	1,850.00	1,023.00	55.30%
Capers Chapel/Pomaria	2,936.00	2,936.00	100.00%
Central/Laurens	3,597.00	3,597.00	100.00%
Central/Newberry	56,679.00	56,679.00	100.00%
Crossroads (fka Branch Hill)	1,836.00	–	0.00%
Ebenezer/Greenwood	2,538.00	–	0.00%
Ebenezer/Newberry	4,266.00	4,266.00	100.00%
Edgefield	–	9,570.00	N/A
Emory	–	3,677.50	N/A
Epting Memorial	8,638.00	–	0.00%
Epworth	3,312.00	3,312.00	100.00%
First/Laurens	29,631.00	17,000.00	57.37%
Grace	117,659.00	76,479.00	65.00%
Harmony/Johnston	–	8,549.50	N/A
Harmony/Ware Shoals	2,953.00	2,953.00	100.00%
Harris	6,086.00	6,086.00	100.00%
Hodges	–	–	N/A
Hopewell	1,813.00	1,813.00	100.00%
Johnston	–	6,920.50	N/A
Kinards	4,769.00	1,000.00	20.97%
Kings Chapel	1,872.00	1,872.00	100.00%
Langley	15,814.00	1,734.12	10.97%
Lebanon	3,314.00	–	0.00%
Leesville	–	19,282.00	N/A
Lewis Memorial	9,023.00	9,023.00	100.00%
Lowell Street	8,385.00	8,385.00	100.00%
Lupo Memorial	6,383.00	–	0.00%
Main Street/Greenwood	76,253.00	8,534.68	11.19%
Martha Chapel	1,557.00	1,557.00	100.00%
Mathews	8,105.00	–	0.00%
Mays	5,200.00	1,200.00	23.08%
McKendree	–	2,301.00	N/A
Mount Bethel	7,590.00	7,590.00	100.00%
Mount Carmel/Greenwood	2,287.00	2,287.00	100.00%
Mount Lebanon	–	5,905.00	N/A
Mount Pleasant	–	5,634.00	N/A
Nazareth	–	6,035.00	N/A
New Chapel	–	1,910.00	N/A
New Hope	7,573.00	7,573.00	100.00%
O'Neal Street	3,726.00	3,726.00	100.00%
Panola	5,081.00	–	0.00%
Pentecost	5,033.00	5,033.00	100.00%
Rehoboth	10,819.00	–	0.00%
Republican	7,840.00	–	0.00%

Ridge Spring	2,160.00	—	0.00%
Sharon/Kinards	1,590.00	1,590.00	100.00%
Soule Chapel	6,873.00	6,873.00	100.00%
Spann	1,902.00	1,902.00	100.00%
Springdale	2,848.00	1,700.00	59.69%
St James	15,111.00	—	0.00%
St John/Graniteville	18,684.00	—	0.00%
St John's/Batesburg	—	8,068.50	N/A
St Mark	98,395.00	98,395.00	100.00%
St Paul/Ninety Six	21,581.00	—	0.00%
St Paul/Plum Branch	2,406.00	2,406.00	100.00%
St Paul/Saluda	32,434.00	32,434.00	100.00%
Tranquil	20,417.00	—	0.00%
Trenton	—	2,540.50	N/A
Trinity/Greenwood	4,363.00	4,363.00	100.00%
Trinity/Laurens	4,614.00	—	0.00%
Trinity/Newberry	13,685.00	13,685.00	100.00%
Troy	—	3,862.00	N/A
Vauluse	4,004.00	4,004.00	100.00%
Ware Shoals	2,880.00	2,880.00	100.00%
Warrenville	3,894.00	3,894.00	100.00%
Waterloo	6,845.00	6,845.00	100.00% +
Wightman	—	22,929.50	N/A
Zion	23,898.00	23,898.00	100.00%
Zoar	—	2,164.00	N/A
Greenwood Total	778,539.00	569,648.00	73.17%

Hartsville District
57 out of 75 Churches Contributed 100%
68.33% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Aldersgate	47,956.00	—	0.00%
Antioch	11,028.00	11,028.00	100.00%
Bethel/Bethune	3,995.00	—	0.00%
Bethel/Cheraw	4,393.00	4,393.00	100.00%
Bethel/Ruby	1,189.00	1,189.00	100.00%
Bethel/W Darlington	3,098.00	1,229.40	39.68%
Bethlehem/Bishopville	17,649.00	3,953.35	22.40%
Bethlehem/Hartsville	—	4,416.50	N/A
Camden First	18,861.00	18,861.00	100.00%
Centenary	8,151.00	8,151.00	100.00%
Clark	6,691.00	6,691.00	100.00%
Ebenezer/Lamar	3,104.00	3,104.00	100.00%
Ebenezer/Ruby	3,189.00	3,189.00	100.00%
Elim	—	2,922.50	N/A
Emmanuel/E Camden	7,080.00	7,080.00	100.00%
Emmanuel/Sumter	10,322.00	10,322.00	100.00%
Epworth	7,132.00	7,172.44	100.57%
First/Cheraw	25,764.00	6,144.00	23.85%
Fork Creek	5,770.00	—	0.00%
Good Hope Wesley Chapel	17,209.00	2,868.16	16.67%
Hebron/Bishopville	9,037.00	—	0.00%
Hopewell	4,528.00	2,500.00	55.21%
Indian Branch	5,098.00	5,098.00	100.00%
Jefferson	7,041.00	—	0.00%
John Wesley	5,451.00	5,451.00	100.00%
Kellybell	4,383.00	4,383.00	100.00%
Kingsville	4,961.00	4,961.00	100.00%
Lamar	17,534.00	17,534.00	100.00%
Lyttleton Street	140,901.00	30,000.00	21.29%
McBee	2,690.00	2,690.00	100.00%
Mechanicsville	16,444.00	16,444.00	100.00%
Mount Beulah	4,114.00	4,114.00	100.00%
Mount Croghan	1,371.00	1,371.00	100.00%
Mount Elon	2,254.00	2,254.00	100.00%
Mount Joshua	1,398.00	1,398.00	100.00%
Mount Moriah	3,727.00	3,727.08	100.00%
Mount Olivet	—	2,385.50	N/A
Mount Prospect	2,085.00	2,085.00	100.00%
Mount Zion/Bishopville	6,832.00	6,832.20	100.00%
Mount Zion/Cheraw	2,850.00	2,850.00	100.00%
Mount Zion/Sumter	12,150.00	12,150.75	100.01%
New Haven	5,514.00	5,514.00	100.00%
New Hope	2,378.00	2,378.00	100.00%
New Market	8,627.00	—	0.00%
New Providence	7,174.00	7,174.00	100.00%
Newman Swamp	3,261.00	3,261.00	100.00%
Pageland	5,576.00	2,788.00	50.00%
Pleasant Grove	4,813.00	4,813.20	100.00%
Prospect	—	3,151.00	N/A
Rock Spring	1,165.00	1,165.00	100.00%
Salem/Pageland	7,732.00	—	0.00%
Sandy Bluff	3,336.00	3,336.00	100.00%
Sandy Grove/Bethune	—	1,159.50	N/A
Sandy Grove/Jefferson	3,944.00	3,944.00	100.00%
Sandy Grove/Lamar	6,476.00	6,476.00	100.00%
Shepherd	5,783.00	5,783.00	100.00%
Shiloh/ Lugoff	2,638.00	2,638.00	100.00%
Shiloh/Chesterfield	—	8,745.50	N/A
Shiloh/Darlington	11,072.00	11,072.00	100.00%
Springhill	7,782.00	7,782.00	100.00%
St James/Darlington	10,420.00	8,983.00	86.21%
St James/Sumter	12,332.00	12,332.00	100.00%
St John/Darlington	8,537.00	8,537.00	100.00%
St John's/Lugoff	33,340.00	6,000.00	18.00%
St Luke	—	39,267.50	N/A
St Mark/ Sumter (Salterstown)	16,085.00	16,085.00	100.00%
St Mark/Oswego	1,895.00	1,895.00	100.00%
St Matthews/E Camden	10,720.00	9,826.74	91.67%
St Paul/Camden	16,504.00	16,504.00	100.00%

St Paul/Chesterfield	18,260.00	18,260.00	100.00%	
St Peter	657.00	657.00	100.00%	+
Tabernacle	–	2,454.50	N/A	
Trinity/Darlington	–	14,335.50	N/A	
Trinity/Sumter	88,670.00	7,068.66	7.97%	
Union	–	5,821.00	N/A	
Unity	10,517.00	10,517.00	100.00%	
Wesley Chapel/Darlington	8,088.00	8,088.00	100.00%	
Wesley Chapel/Lydia	–	7,123.00	N/A	
Wesley Chp/Chesterfld	2,048.00	2,048.00	100.00%	
Wesley Chp/Jefferson	3,702.00	3,702.00	100.00%	
Wesley Memorial	3,137.00	3,137.00	100.00%	+
Wesley/Cheraw	5,452.00	5,452.00	100.00%	
Wesley/Hartsville	39,684.00	39,684.00	100.00%	
Zion/Lamar Circuit	2,305.00	2,305.00	100.00%	
Zion/Pageland	7,999.00	7,999.00	100.00%	
Zoar/Chesterfield	–	6,268.00	N/A	
Zoar/Pageland	3,119.00	3,119.00	100.00%	
Hartsville Total	848,172.00	579,592.00	68.33%	

Marion District
33 out of 49 Churches Contributed 100%
91.81% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Aaron Temple	4,475.00	4,475.00	100.00%
Antioch/Conway	–	1,986.00	N/A
Asbury	2,173.00	2,173.00	100.00%
Belin Memorial	289,512.00	289,512.02	100.00%
Bethel/Bennettsville	3,289.00	3,289.00	100.00%
Bethel/Marion	3,397.00	1,838.64	54.13%
Beulah/Dillon Parish	1,311.00	1,311.00	100.00%
Beulah/Mullins Charge	2,569.00	2,569.00	100.00%
Bowling Green	3,043.00	3,043.00	100.00%
Camp Swamp	6,819.00	–	0.00%
Centenary/Conway	9,702.00	–	0.00%
Centenary/Marion	2,449.00	2,449.00	100.00%
Central/Marion	–	1,601.00	N/A
Duncan Memorial	68,603.00	–	0.00%
Ebenezer/Bennettsville Cr	4,982.00	4,982.00	100.00%
Ebenezer/Loris Charge	4,068.00	4,068.00	100.00%
Ebenezer/Marlboro Charge	5,434.00	–	0.00%
Ebenezer/Tatum	–	2,344.50	N/A
First/Conway	62,904.00	–	0.00%
First/Marion	31,112.00	31,112.00	100.00%
First/Myrtle Beach	–	99,340.00	N/A
Herbert Memorial	23,265.00	23,265.00	100.00%
Hopewell/Mullins	–	892.50	N/A
Joseph B Bethea	5,216.00	5,216.00	100.00%
Lake View	5,337.00	2,000.00	37.47%
Latta	–	9,659.00	N/A
Level Green	4,776.00	4,776.00	100.00%
Little River	70,335.00	70,335.00	100.00%
Macedonia	–	15,774.00	N/A
Manning Chapel	2,203.00	–	0.00%
McCoy Chapel	3,762.00	3,762.00	100.00%
Mount Andrew	–	1,546.00	N/A
New El Bethel	–	1,810.00	N/A
New Holly	2,285.00	2,285.00	100.00%
New Hope	–	897.00	N/A
Nichols	4,206.00	2,103.00	50.00%
Oak Grove/Georgetown	1,183.00	1,183.00	100.00%
Oakland	2,880.00	–	0.00%
Old Clio	1,454.00	1,454.00	100.00%
Parnassus	4,007.00	–	0.00%
Pleasant Grove	1,403.00	1,403.00	100.00%
Pleasant Hill/Mullins	–	1,321.50	N/A
Poplar	–	1,046.50	N/A
Salem	8,188.00	–	0.00%
Sampit	986.00	986.00	100.00%
Shiloh/Bennettsville P	2,828.00	2,828.00	100.00%
Shiloh/Bennettsville	–	1,844.50	N/A
Shiloh/Marion	–	5,647.00	N/A
Shiloh/Mullins Charge	2,358.00	2,358.00	100.00%
Smyrna/Bennettsvile P	2,695.00	2,695.00	100.00%
Socastee	49,127.00	49,127.01	100.00%
Springville	1,939.00	1,939.00	100.00%
St Luke	2,098.00	2,098.00	100.00%
St Michael	1,917.00	–	0.00%
St Paul's Waccamaw	–	21,185.50	N/A
St Phillip	4,949.00	4,949.00	100.00%
St Stephen	5,467.00	300.00	5.49%
Surfside	77,178.00	77,178.00	100.00%
The Brook	13,792.00	13,792.00	100.00%
Trinity/Bennettsville	12,317.00	12,317.00	100.00%
Trinity/Conway	69,025.00	–	0.00%
Trinity/N Myrtle Bch	62,997.00	62,997.00	100.00%
Union/Conway	–	9,172.00	N/A
Union/Dillon	977.00	–	0.00%
Wampee	4,147.00	4,147.00	100.00%
Marion Total	961,139.00	882,382.00	91.81%

Orangeburg District
47 out of 73 Churches Contributed 100%
95.88% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Andrew Chapel	–	3,751.00	N/A
Barnwell	13,481.00	13,481.00	100.00%
Bethel at Peachtree Rock	9,363.00	9,363.00	100.00%
Bethel Park	15,289.00	–	0.00%

2025 Record of Giving.

Bethel/Bamberg	5,357.00	5,357.00	100.00%
Bethel/Jackson	–	5,452.50	N/A
Bethel/Rowesville	2,026.00	2,026.00	100.00%
Bethlehem	5,152.00	5,152.00	100.00%
Beulah/ Sandy Run	22,728.00	–	0.00%
Blackville	1,367.00	1,367.00	100.00%
Branchville	8,377.00	900.00	10.74%
Calvary/Swansea	7,423.00	–	0.00%
Canaan/Cope	5,096.00	5,096.00	100.00%
Cedar Grove	3,632.00	3,632.00	100.00%
Clinton	8,703.00	355.00	4.08%
East Bethel	2,041.00	–	0.00%
Ebenezer/Bowman	–	3,706.00	N/A
Edisto Fork	15,526.00	15,526.00	100.00%
Elloree	–	4,604.00	N/A
Eutawville	4,772.00	–	0.00%
Forest Chapel	2,353.00	2,353.00	100.00%
Franklin	11,529.00	11,529.00	100.00%
Gerizim	1,687.00	1,687.00	100.00%
Holly Hill	–	11,704.00	N/A
Jericho	–	3,504.50	N/A
Jerusalem	–	4,420.00	N/A
Kearse	615.00	–	0.00%
Lebanon	10,188.00	10,188.00	100.00%
Livingston	7,678.00	–	0.00%
Main Street/Bamberg	4,004.00	4,004.00	100.00%
Mayes Chapel	3,667.00	3,667.00	100.00%
Mizpah	1,467.00	1,467.00	100.00%
Mount Carmel	9,065.00	9,065.04	100.00%
Mount Nebo	3,584.00	3,584.00	100.00%
Mount Zion/Bamberg Cir	5,214.00	5,214.00	100.00%
Mount Zion/Sandy Run	5,454.00	831.25	15.24%
Neeses	2,522.00	–	0.00%
New Covenant	15,703.00	15,703.00	100.00%
New Hope	–	1,779.00	N/A
New Light	18,925.00	18,925.00	100.00%
North	10,329.00	–	0.00%
North Orangeburg	26,475.00	26,475.00	100.00%
Norway New Beginning	4,894.00	5,990.00	122.39% +
Oak Grove	1,430.00	–	0.00%
Orange Grove	9,414.00	9,414.00	100.00%
Pelion	5,297.00	1,000.00	18.88% +
Pine Hill	5,600.00	5,600.00	100.00%
Pineville	6,172.00	6,172.00	100.00%
Pleasant Hill	5,350.00	–	0.00%
Prospect	3,047.00	3,047.00	100.00%
Providence/Providence	18,332.00	2,456.00	13.40%
Salem	817.00	817.00	100.00%
Salley	1,823.00	–	0.00%
Shady Grove	5,357.00	5,357.00	100.00%
Sharon/Pelion	6,792.00	–	0.00%
Silas	5,991.00	5,991.00	100.00%
Siloam	754.00	754.00	100.00%
Springfield	4,434.00	–	0.00%
St Andrews	34,368.00	34,368.00	100.00%
St John/Aiken	–	120,035.00	N/A
St John/Norway	7,347.00	7,347.00	100.00%
St John/Orangeburg	3,860.00	3,860.00	100.00%
St John/Orangeburg Cr	3,547.00	3,547.00	100.00%
St Mark	20,940.00	20,940.00	100.00%
St Paul/New Ellenton	15,075.00	–	0.00%
St Paul/Orangeburg	25,036.00	25,036.00	100.00%
St Paul/St Matthews	14,451.00	12,000.00	83.04%
St Stephen/Bowman	6,116.00	6,116.00	100.00%
St Stephen/Orangeburg	20,396.00	20,396.00	100.00%
Swansea	7,207.00	2,400.00	33.30% +
Target	4,396.00	4,396.00	100.00%
Trinity/Aiken	36,387.00	36,387.00	100.00% +
Trinity/Bamberg	25,545.00	–	0.00%
Trinity/North	1,761.00	–	0.00%
Trinity/Orangeburg	21,865.00	21,865.00	100.00%
Union	5,537.00	–	0.00%
Wagener	7,330.00	186.51	2.54%
Wesley	5,049.00	5,049.01	100.00%
Wesley Chapel/Calhoun	–	3,349.50	N/A
Wesley Chapel/Jackson	6,320.00	6,320.00	100.00%
Wesley Grove	5,634.00	5,634.00	100.00%
West Bethel	3,556.00	3,556.00	100.00%
White House	–	2,700.00	N/A
Wightman	–	3,539.50	N/A
Williston	5,036.00	5,036.00	100.00%
Orangeburg District Total	643,055.00	616,530.00	95.88%

Rock Hill District

36 out of 54 Churches Contributed 100%

70.69% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Adnah	–	10,233.00	N/A
Aldersgate	26,461.00	26,461.00	100.00%
Antioch	–	6,729.00	N/A
Belair	14,549.00	14,549.00	100.00%
Bethel/Chester	17,802.00	17,802.00	100.00%
Bethel/Rock Hill	15,516.00	15,516.00	100.00%
Bethel/Rock Hill South	6,451.00	6,451.00	100.00%
Bethesda	3,414.00	3,414.00	100.00% +
Camp Creek	9,078.00	9,078.00	100.00% +
Canaan	3,745.00	98.22	2.62%
Church of Good Shepherd	10,810.00	–	0.00%
Clover Chapel	4,892.00	4,892.00	100.00%
Cornerstone	15,358.00	15,358.00	100.00% +

Damascus	2,769.00	–	0.00%
Ebenezer	2,487.00	2,487.00	100.00%
El Bethel	7,645.00	7,645.00	100.00%
Epworth	7,278.00	7,278.00	100.00%
First/Clover	53,507.00	53,507.00	100.00%
First/Lancaster	38,812.00	38,812.00	100.00%
Fort Lawn	2,121.00	–	0.00%
Friendship	–	7,850.00	N/A
Good Samaritan	17,266.00	–	0.00%
Grace	14,471.00	14,471.00	100.00%
Green Pond	5,336.00	5,336.00	100.00%
Hanging Rock	5,305.00	–	0.00%
Harmony	5,722.00	5,722.00	100.00% +
Heath Chapel	1,789.00	200.00	11.18%
Heath Memorial	–	2,930.00	N/A
Hopewell/Lancaster	20,769.00	–	0.00%
Hopewell/York	3,833.00	3,833.00	100.00%
India Hook	28,606.00	9,178.00	32.08%
Kings Mountain Chapel	–	5,456.08	N/A
Mount Dearborn	6,628.00	600.00	9.05% +
Mount Harmony	4,992.00	4,992.00	100.00%
Mount Holly	–	20,476.00	N/A
Mount Olive	3,780.00	3,780.00	100.00%
Mount Prospect	2,552.00	2,552.00	100.00%
New Hope/Rock Hill	2,536.00	2,536.00	100.00%
New Zion	3,706.00	3,706.00	100.00%
Osceola	10,530.00	10,530.00	100.00%
Philadelphia/Fort Mill	57,878.00	57,878.04	100.00% +
Philadelphia/York	8,991.00	8,991.00	100.00%
Pleasant Grove	2,645.00	2,645.00	100.00%
Pleasant Hill	50,286.00	50,286.00	100.00%
Richburg	1,800.00	1,500.00	83.33%
Salem	4,584.00	–	0.00%
Shady Grove	1,999.00	1,999.00	100.00%
Sharon/Sharon	4,453.00	4,453.00	100.00%
St James	11,702.00	11,702.00	100.00%
St John/Fort Mill	62,446.00	62,446.00	100.00%
St John/Rock Hill	163,618.00	10,000.00	6.11%
St Luke	26,614.00	–	0.00%
St Paul	–	4,843.00	N/A
Tabernacle	8,525.00	8,525.04	100.00%
Trinity	6,597.00	–	0.00%
Trinity/York	35,513.00	35,513.00	100.00%
Van Wyck	1,283.00	–	0.00%
Wesley	7,536.00	7,536.00	100.00% +
Wesley Memorial	4,584.00	4,584.00	100.00%
Woodland	49,753.00	27,385.90	55.04% +
Zion	20,699.00	–	0.00%
Rock Hill District Total	912,022.00	644,745.00	70.69%

Spartanburg District

39 out of 53 Churches Contributed 100%

84.28% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Aldersgate	9,158.00	5,494.80	60.00%
Allen Chapel	2,897.00	2,897.00	100.00%
Arcadia	3,226.00	3,226.00	100.00%
Asbury/Gaffney	1,610.00	1,610.00	100.00%
Beaumont	4,935.00	4,935.00	100.00%
Ben Avon	6,483.00	6,483.00	100.00%
Bethel/Spartanburg	110,643.00	47,661.00	43.08%
Bethel/Union	8,534.00	8,534.00	100.00%
Bogansville	11,853.00	–	0.00%
Buford Street	26,930.00	26,930.00	100.00%
Cannon’s Campground	39,296.00	39,296.00	100.00%
Central	69,681.00	69,681.00	100.00%
Cherokee Springs	7,266.00	7,266.00	100.00%
Chesnee	4,957.00	4,959.83	100.06%
Church of the Covenant	31,165.00	31,165.00	100.00%
Cross Anchor Yarborough	3,041.00	3,041.00	100.00%
Duncan	10,443.00	8,363.25	80.08%
Duncan Acres	10,126.00	10,126.00	100.00%
Dunton	11,999.00	11,999.00	100.00% +
El Bethel	3,783.00	3,783.00	100.00%
Enoree	–	1,950.00	N/A
Fairmont	2,091.00	2,091.00	100.00%
Fingerville	1,565.00	1,565.00	100.00%
Florence Chapel	2,746.00	2,746.00	100.00%
Friends In Christ	10,952.00	6,355.00	58.03% +
Golightly	4,318.00	4,318.00	100.00%
Grace	30,255.00	8,208.00	27.13%
Gramling	–	17,924.00	N/A
Gravely Memorial	7,723.00	3,600.00	46.61% +
Hebron	2,818.00	2,818.00	100.00%
Immanuel	7,914.00	3,957.00	50.00%
Inman	16,138.00	16,138.00	100.00%
Jacksons Grove	12,440.00	12,440.00	100.00%
Jonesville	4,376.00	4,376.00	100.00%
Landrum	–	12,155.00	N/A
Liberty/Spartanburg	6,760.00	3,805.16	56.29% +
Limestone Street	8,194.00	8,194.00	100.00%
Mesopotamia	–	3,066.50	N/A
Montgomery Memorial	16,452.00	–	0.00%
New Beginnings	43,042.00	21,521.00	50.00%
New Hope	7,111.00	7,111.00	100.00%
Pacolet	5,297.00	5,297.00	100.00%
Patterson Chapel	–	2,492.00	N/A
Salem	5,621.00	3,630.00	64.58% +
Sardis/Blacksburg	3,873.00	3,873.00	100.00%
Silver Hill Memorial	36,269.00	28,845.02	79.53% +

Skylyn	4,271.00	4,271.00	100.00%
St Andrews	2,254.00	2,254.00	100.00% +
St James	44,119.00	44,119.00	100.00%
St John	5,184.00	5,184.00	100.00%
St Luke	4,017.00	4,017.00	100.00%
St Mark	6,868.00	4,382.00	63.80% +
St Paul	56,592.00	56,592.00	100.00% +
Tabernacle	3,578.00	3,578.00	100.00%
Trinity/Enoree	4,160.00	4,160.00	100.00%
Trinity/Gaffney	–	2,518.00	N/A
Trinity/Spartanburg	63,346.00	63,346.00	100.00%
White Stone	2,751.00	2,751.00	100.00%
Whitmire	3,342.00	3,342.00	100.00%
Spartanburg District Total	814,463.00	686,441.00	84.28%

Walterboro District

56 out of 73 Churches Contributed 100%

99.31% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Adnah	4,187.00	4,187.00	100.00%
Bellinger Chapel	2,991.00	–	0.00%
Bethel/Green Pond	1,147.00	1,147.00	100.00%
Bethel/Harleyville	–	2,633.50	N/A
Bethel/Ruffin	–	6,005.00	N/A
Bethel/Smoaks	7,094.00	7,094.00	100.00%
Bethel/Walterboro	44,972.00	44,972.00	100.00%
Bluffton	59,598.00	59,598.00	100.00%
Brunson	3,940.00	–	0.00%
Buckhead	6,320.00	6,320.00	100.00%
Canaan	18,179.00	18,181.72	100.01%
Carteret Street	64,544.00	64,544.00	100.00%
Church of the Palms	62,609.00	46,583.29	74.40%
Cumberland	3,785.00	152.00	4.02%
Duncan Chapel	–	1,935.00	N/A
Ebenezer/Ehrhardt	3,109.00	3,109.00	100.00%
Ebenezer/Ritter	–	1,902.00	N/A
Ebenezer/Yemassee	–	1,491.50	N/A
Estill	2,438.00	–	0.00%
First/Harleyville	–	7,504.50	N/A
Fisher Chapel	6,028.00	6,028.00	100.00%
Friendship	4,503.00	4,503.00	100.00%
Furman	1,716.00	–	0.00%
Gillette	1,112.00	1,112.00	100.00%
Green Pond	1,943.00	1,943.00	100.00%
Grover	–	4,153.50	N/A
Hampton	13,217.00	13,217.00	100.00%
Hardeeville	6,619.00	–	0.00%
Heaven Gate	932.00	934.00	100.21%
Hickory Hill	3,039.00	3,039.00	100.00%
Holy Trinity	2,615.00	–	0.00%
Indian Field	–	9,966.50	N/A
Isaiah	4,042.00	4,042.00	100.00%
Jericho	7,529.00	7,529.00	100.00%
Little Swamp	3,854.00	3,854.00	100.00%
Lodge	1,595.00	1,595.00	100.00%
Macedonia	6,170.00	6,170.00	100.00%
Morris Chapel	3,106.00	3,106.00	100.00%
Mount Carmel/Estill	2,036.00	–	0.00%
Mount Carmel/Walterboro	2,636.00	2,636.00	100.00%
Mount Nebo	3,421.00	3,421.00	100.00%
Mount Pleasant	811.00	811.00	100.00%
New Grace	13,363.00	13,363.00	100.00%
New Hope/Allendale	2,751.00	2,751.00	100.00%
New Hope/Ridgeville	4,677.00	4,677.00	100.00%
New Life	16,482.00	16,482.00	100.00%
Oak Grove/Ridgeville	5,120.00	5,120.00	100.00%
Peniel	1,313.00	1,313.00	100.00%
Port Royal	14,184.00	6,802.16	47.96%
Providence	–	684.50	N/A
Red Bank	2,677.00	1,440.42	53.81%
Red Root	3,367.00	3,367.00	100.00%
Rehoboth	–	3,924.00	N/A
Rizers Chapel	3,155.00	3,155.00	100.00%
Salem/Dorchester	4,801.00	4,000.00	83.32%
Salem/Hendersonville	–	2,374.50	N/A
Sand Hill	13,838.00	13,842.00	100.03%
Sandy Dam	1,576.00	1,576.00	100.00%
Shady Grove	13,046.00	13,046.00	100.00%
Simpson	3,036.00	3,036.00	100.00%
Springtown	10,091.00	10,091.00	100.00%
St Andrew By-the-Sea	11,921.00	11,921.12	100.00%
St Daniel	3,624.00	3,624.00	100.00%
St George	–	14,868.00	N/A
St James	496.00	496.00	100.00%
St John/Dorchester	6,655.00	6,655.00	100.00%
St Johns/Ruffin	–	1,677.00	N/A
St Luke/Ehrhardt	3,368.00	3,368.00	100.00%
St Luke/Okatie	14,601.00	14,601.00	100.00%
St Mark	8,049.00	8,049.00	100.00%
St Paul/ Ridgeville	4,866.00	4,866.00	100.00%
St Stephen	1,201.00	–	0.00%
Swallow Savannah	4,565.00	–	0.00%
Sykes Savannah	2,295.00	2,295.00	100.00%
Tabor	–	1,505.00	N/A
Tobys Bluff	2,282.00	2,282.00	100.00%
Trinity/Greenpond	642.00	714.00	111.21%
Trinity/Smoaks	1,090.00	–	0.00%
Trinity/St George	3,605.00	3,605.00	100.00%
Union	3,016.00	3,016.00	100.00%
Varnville	3,320.00	3,320.00	100.00%

2025 Record of Giving.

Wesley Chapel	1,847.00	1,847.00	100.00%	Williams	3,712.00	3,712.00	100.00%	Walterboro District Total	677,744.00	673,088.00	99.31%
Wesley Grove	3,484.00	1,500.00	43.05%	Zion/Dorchester	5,088.00	–	0.00%	Conference Total	11,711,557.00	9,181,093.00	78.39%
Wesley/Beaufort	12,621.00	12,621.00	100.00%	Zion/Ehrhardt	82.00	82.00	100.00%				

CHURCHES PAYING 100% OF ALL APPORTIONED FUNDS SOUTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE - 2023 through 2025									
DISTRICT	2023			2024			2025		
	Paying 100%	Total Churches	Percent	Paying 100%	Total Churches	Percent	Paying 100%	Total Churches	Percent
Anderson	50	71	70%	43	67	64%	31	57	54%
Charleston	63	74	85%	60	69	87%	52	63	83%
Columbia	46	62	74%	43	56	77%	32	48	67%
Florence	76	93	82%	50	67	75%	43	64	67%
Greenville	36	62	58%	30	54	56%	26	49	53%
Greenwood	65	78	83%	53	74	72%	31	56	55%
Hartsville	82	100	82%	70	90	78%	57	75	76%
Marion	65	89	73%	46	66	70%	33	49	67%
Orangeburg	87	89	98%	76	86	88%	47	73	64%
Rock Hill	56	68	82%	46	61	75%	36	54	67%
Spartanburg	59	73	81%	47	59	80%	39	53	74%
Walterboro	75	94	80%	75	87	86%	56	73	77%
TOTALS	760	953	80%	639	836	76%	483	714	68%

2025 Budget Receipts on Apportioned Funds			
Conference apportionments	2025 Budgeted	2025 Paid	% Paid
Conference Benevolences	1,838,720	1,480,996	80.54
Retiree Health	100,000	86,573	86.57
District Superintendent's Salary	1,076,814	877,490	81.49
Equitable Compensation	325,000	263,968	81.22
District Administration	692,000	556,164	80.37
Conference Administration	1,380,500	1,093,325	79.20
Congregational Development	805,000	639,365	79.42
Campus Ministry	600,000	479,849	79.97
Senior College Scholarship Fund	800,000	634,511	79.31
Spartanburg Methodist College	450,000	362,138	80.48
Methodist Homes Residents' Assistance	375,000	295,299	78.75
Camps & Retreat Ministries	250,000	203,299	81.32
District Parsonage/Office	785,000	595,950	75.92
Subtotal on Conference apportionments	9,478,034	7,568,927	79.86
General & Jurisdictional apportionments			
World Service	1,372,119	1,094,616	79.78
Episcopal Fund	676,339	515,836	76.27
General Conference Administration	231,898	180,245	77.73
Ministerial Education	474,613	387,792	81.71
Interdenominational Cooperation	19,641	17,306	88.11
Black College Fund	189,319	157,221	83.05
Africa University Fund	42,369	37,118	87.61
Jurisdictional Mission & Ministry	27,225	22,030	80.92
Subtotal on General & Jurisdictional	3,033,523	2,412,164	79.52
Apportionment Rebate	(800,000)	(800,000)	
APPORTIONMENT TOTAL	11,711,557	9,181,091	78.39

2025 Budget Receipts on Funds by District			
District	Total Apportioned	Total Paid	Percent Paid
Anderson	857,970	506,007	58.98%
Charleston	1,379,545	1,004,969	72.85%
Columbia	1,856,870	1,686,633	90.83%
Florence	912,739	653,285	71.57%
Greenville	1,069,299	677,773	63.38%
Greenwood	778,539	569,648	73.17%
Hartsville	848,172	579,592	68.33%
Marion	961,139	882,382	91.81%
Orangeburg	643,055	616,530	95.88%
Rock Hill	912,022	644,745	70.69%
Spartanburg	814,463	686,441	84.28%
Walterboro	677,744	673,088	99.31%
Totals	11,711,557	9,181,093	78.39%
Paid by 2024 separating churches		878,609	
Routine payments		8,302,484	70.89%

How Apportionments are Calculated			
The Conference formula is designed to set apportionments using a method comparing relative financial strength to calculate each church's fair share of the total Conference budget. It uses the same criteria for every church.			
Local Church Average Net Funds is a two-year average of the total of: pastor compensation; associate pastor compensation; housing allowances and amounts paid for the pastor(s) for housing; pastor and associate(s) accountable reimbursements;			
LOCAL CHURCH AVERAGE NET FUNDS	=	LOCAL CHURCH APPORTIONMENT	
CONFERENCE AVERAGE NET FUNDS		CONFERENCE BUDGET	
pastor and associate(s) other cash allowances; salary and benefits for Deacons, Diaconal Ministers, other church staff; local church programming expenses; and local church operating expenses. These are reported in Table II of the year end Local Church Report to the Annual Conference in lines lines 41-47. Conference Average Net Funds is the total of the average net funds figures for all churches in the Conference, excluding new church starts and mission churches.			

Across SC.

Mount Zion UMC women hold prayer, self denial service

By Toni Strawther

KINGSTREE—United Women in Faith at Mount Zion United Methodist Church recently held A Call to Prayer and Self Denial Service.

The service focused on the importance of advocacy especially for children and youth.

“United Women in Faith, formerly known as United Methodist Women, are grounded in a mission that focuses on the well-being of children, youth and women,” said UWF President Carolyn Scott.

Mount Zion United Women in Faith support missions in Kingstree, Williamsburg County and throughout South Carolina, such as Frierson Homes. They also provide financial support to national advocacy efforts like the National Mis-



Carolyn Scott speaks.



The women support many local and state missions.

sion Institutions that provide access to education and life opportunities for children and youth.

Mark 9:37 says, “Whoever receives one such child in my name received me, and whoever receives me, received not me but him who sent me.” Jesus was clear that when we advocate for children we are welcoming God.



Food for HOPE
Tabernacle UMC, Lancaster, collected 436 items for the annual Souper Bowl on Sunday, Feb. 8, sponsored by the College and Career Class. These food items will be donated to HOPE in Lancaster, the local food bank.

Photo courtesy of Jodie Plyler



Photo courtesy of Anthony Simpson

An annual time for fellowship
The men of Edisto Fork UMC, Orangeburg, share a smile with Bishop Leonard Fairley while at the Men N Ministry Retreat at Journey UMC, Columbia, Feb. 21. Edisto Fork was also a major sponsor again.

Carteret Street achieves major church renovations

By M. C. Chisum Jr.

BEAUFORT—In spring 2022, with a backdrop of trying to recover from the impacts and uncertainties of COVID-19 and the serious ongoing theological disagreements dividing United Methodism, members of Carteret Street United Methodist Church chose to come together and focus on what unites us as Christians and our local worship community.

We identified some badly needed upgrades and repairs to our church facility, along with cost estimates. Our list of needs included replacement of 88 deteriorating windows in our education building, a handicap ramp connecting the fellowship hall with the sanctuary, upgrades to both women’s and men’s restrooms and the repair and resurfacing of our parking lot.

A good start

In July 2022, our CSUMC Church Council approved a self-directed two-year Capital Campaign Committee to raise \$500,000. This committee comprised myself, Charlene Evaul, Linda Farrell, Todd Keyserling, Randy Kohn, Anne Marcengill, Ken and Rachel Mills, Pastor Bryson Williams, Gray Wilson and Courtney Worrell. “Faith in Our Future for the Next 100 Years” was chosen as our rally-cry campaign slogan.

That fall, we held a series of small-group informational meetings to cover the scope and projected cost. The committee elected to provide monthly updates to the congregation at Sunday services, using a “Barometer of Giving” to visually keep the church motivated and informed. In the sanctuary we placed a decorative glass cylinder to which we added faux gold nuggets representing cash receipts progress. At each update, a different church member gave their personal testimonial about what CSUMC meant to them and a quick campaign update, adding nuggets to the barometer representing new cash receipts since last report. A filled cylinder would represent our \$500,000 goal.

On Jan. 6, 2023, Commitment Sunday, CSUMC kicked off the campaign at both services. Progress was breathtaking. By the middle of June,



From left are Randy Kohn, Ken and Rachel Mills, Pastor Bryson Williams, Linda Farrell, Anne Marcengill, Charlene Evaul, Todd Keyserling, Gray Wilson and M. C. Chisum Jr.

the resurfacing of the parking lot was complete. On Sept. 15, 2023, eight months from our start, the new handicap ramp and the remodeling of both restrooms were complete and final inspection passed. That monthly report also included an amazing financial update: the combination of pledged and non-pledged gifts equaled 94 percent of our campaign goal. Our expenses were on budget.

A slowdown

Little did we know at the time that it would be another 22 months before we saw the first window installed. The story of those 22 months is a remarkable story of CSUMC’s faith, unity and resilience.

Hurdles to the windows project included the City of Beaufort’s Historical Review Board, a needed structural assessment of our 100-year-old building and supply chain delays and tariff uncertainties. The capital campaign continued. At the end of July 2024, we had cash receipts totaling \$501,715; our capital campaign goal had been achieved.

In August 2024, our CSUMC, like other individual UMCs in South Carolina, deliberated the ongoing

theological disagreements dividing the UMC. CSUMC chose to focus on what unites us as Christians rather than what divides us. After frank, difficult conversations and prayerful consideration, CSUMC chose not to enter discernment.

The building structural assessment determined the windows solution required additional structural work and reinforcement to mitigate and abate discovered structural issues with a solid brick building. By the end of October 2024, CSUMC had a set of architectural plans approved by Beaufort HRB—no small victory.

Goal achieved

In November 2024, as our two-year campaign was ending, revised cost estimates for the increased scope of work left a shortfall of \$160,000. To satisfy the shortfall, Church Council approved a two-pronged solution: the use of \$100,000 of church reserved funds and a one-year Capital Campaign Phase II to raise the additional \$60,000.

Our new goal: completion of the windows project, debt-free, by Thanksgiving 2025.

We launched Phase II Feb. 2, 2025. The enthusiastic response from our congregation was amazing. In a little more than six weeks the congregation responded with new pledges and cash donations totaling \$47,745 toward the \$60,000 needed.

In June 2025, CSUMC received an unanticipated \$50,000 donation to our capital campaign from the South Carolina UMC, thanks to Pastor Bryson Williams’s efforts and the support of our District Superintendent the Rev. Terry Fleming. This was a blessing from God, and the church was left in awe.

By Oct. 28, the entire windows project was complete.

Three years and five months after our committee’s initial efforts in May 2022, Faith in Our Future for the Next 100 Years is secure. All projects are complete, and CSUMC is debt-free, using less than \$30,000 in reserve funds.

The congregation continues to grow. Our faith is strong, and the spirit of Lord is in this place.

Goose Creek marks ‘very busy’ February

GOOSE CREEK—Goose Creek United Methodist Church had a busy February this year.

It all began Saturday, Feb. 7, with the Young at Heart Valentine dinner. More than 40 members attended a delicious seafood dinner at Gilligan’s Restaurant in Goose Creek. Lots of laughter, fun, games and seafood filled the evening. Young at Heart encourages senior and near-senior members to engage in outside church activities that ensure members travel home before dark!

Then Friday, Feb. 13, the Children and Youth Ministry Team held a “Ramen Dinner” with numerous exceptional toppings for youth and their families. They also hosted youth from their sister church, St. James UMC. They watched the Angel Network movie “David.” While the movie was almost two hours in length, even the church’s 5- and 6-year-olds seemed attentive and drawn to the story of David, especially the Goliath scene. Each young person drew a prize from a Valentine gift bag and went home with treats.

Then on Feb. 17, Goose Creek’s United Methodist Men had their



The “Ramen Dinner” featured an array of exceptional toppings for youth and families.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake meal. Tables were decorated with Mardi Gras-themed masks, beads, hats and feathered boas. However, many had one question: If this was a men’s fundraiser, why were there teens and women in the kitchen flipping pancakes and sausage and serving plates? Members decided it really didn’t matter—fun and laughter prevailed along with lots of teasing among the church family.

And that is the real story here: Goose Creek UMC is indeed a church family.



Aging gracefully

St. Mark UMC, Taylors, sponsored a community expo Feb. 24 to bring community awareness to the needs of the elderly. Dr. Carlton J. McClam Sr. and Dennis Latham planned this event to highlight the health care needs of individuals aging gracefully in the area. The event had a large turnout and was the biggest event the church has had in numbers.



Photos courtesy of Enid McClam

Will you be an ‘Advocate advocate’ in your district?

The *Advocate* is seeking *Advocate* advocates for every district in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Will you consider being the advocate for your

district?

Responsibilities are varied and involve sharing about the *Advocate* on social media, talking about the *Advocate* at your church and any district events you

attend, helping steer stories about good news in your district to the *Advocate* so we can share it, and more.

If you’re interested, email *Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie at jbrodie@advocatesc.org.

GHWC equips members with lifesaving CPR skills

On Dec. 6, members of Good Hope Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church participated in a CPR/AED certification class focused on one clear purpose: getting prepared to save a life.

Kershaw County Emergency Medical Services conducted the American Heart Association-sponsored training, ensuring nationally recognized instruction standards.

Church members representing multiple ministries and generations took part, including Brianna Lloyd, Derrick Stanley (Lay Leader), Jackie Holliday (Trustee chairperson), Edna Taylor, Sylvia Gary, Chandra Richardson, Linda Ikeji, Brittany Hughes, the Rev. Brenda Thomas and Shirley Hart. Their participation reflected a shared commitment to caring for both the congregation and the wider community.

During the session, Kershaw County EMS instructors provided practical, hands-on training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and



Standing from left are Brianna Lloyd, Derrick Stanley, Jackie Holliday, Edna Taylor, Sylvia Gary and Dr. Chandra Richardson. Seated from left are Linda Ikeji, Brittany Hughes, the Rev. Brenda J. Thomas and Shirley Hart.

the proper use of an automated external defibrillator. Using training mannequins and AED simulators, participants practiced chest compressions, rescue breathing, scene assessment and coordinated emergency response. Each participant gained confidence through practice rather than just observation, thanks to the practical format.

The instructors emphasized the importance of immediate response in cardiac emergencies by demonstrating how early detection, timely AED use and CPR can significantly improve survival rates. Being prepared when seconds count was reinforced by the training, according to many participants.

The training went beyond a certification program and showed Good Hope Wesley Chapel UMC's commitment to service beyond worship through equipping participants with lifesaving skills. The church upholds its standing as a sanctuary of responsibility, safety and care in the neighborhood.

Participants departed with certification cards and the knowledge that they are equipped to handle an emergency as the class concluded. The CPR/AED training on Dec. 6 was a powerful illustration of faith demonstrated through preparedness, collaboration and care for others.

The legacies of Bennett, Sassman impact Inman UMC long-term

By Bill McCartha

INMAN—Hang around Inman United Methodist Church, and you'll soon enough hear someone refer to the Sassman Fund, an endowment bequeathed to the church in 2005 by Betty Kyle Sassman, a New Jersey native, in the astonishing amount of \$868,000. She left equivalent amounts to the American Red Cross and Habitat for Humanity.

We refurbished our sanctuary and the church entrance with that money, paid for many other projects and, in tight times, ongoing expenses. It has, in short, helped us survive, even thrive, for 20 years.

The fund now stands at \$610,000 and is growing again.

Sassman was not a longtime member of the church, nor an active one. She wasn't consistent in her attendance. But she did become a friend of Hazel Correll Bennett, who died earlier this year at the age of 98.

Bennett was a member for decades and decades, as committed as any we've ever had. She eventually became a diaconal minister and served us and other churches in that capacity. But more than church member or minister, she was a Samaritan.

The following is an excerpt from a much longer letter Bennett wrote to a UMC colleague in January 2006, not long after the church was made aware of the Sassman estate:

"I have thought about Betty Sassman's large gift to Inman UMC since our telephone call. I knew she had almost no family ... but I still think it is unusual that she would leave such a sum to a church that ministered so minimally to her. Even when she did attend occasionally after her arthritis got so bad, I never saw many people speaking to her, which is one reason I always made a point to do so.

"When her husband died very soon after they (retired and) moved to ... Campobello, they had not yet attended any church. ... She got (Rev.) Allen (Long)'s number from the telephone directory and asked if he would do the funeral service. Knowing Allen, I am sure he was gracious, sympathetic and helpful to her. (After the funeral), she attended quite regularly until she had knee replacement. Being aware that she had no one to help her get to the hospital or to be with her before and after the surgery, I took her to the hospital, was there when she came out of surgery, and stayed until I had to be somewhere else.

"I felt she still needed someone with her for another hour or so and asked Nancy Justice to come and sit with her for a while, which she did. ... I took her home from the hospital, made sure she had what she needed, and continued to check on her daily. ... She was grateful, but actually, she was a joy to be with. ...

"She accepted my invitation to eat with us a couple of times, and took me for a ride in her new Volvo car. She was always concerned that she was 'trouble' to someone. I feel bad that after my schedule picked up, and her arthritis got so bad she could rarely get to church on Sunday, we were not together as much as previously. ...

"As I said, she was ministered to very minimally by Inman UMC. I dare say most of the people in the church, even those who were there when she attended, barely remember her, if at all. I hope they will be good stewards of her gift."

That is the challenge Betty and Hazel left us, to be good stewards of this unexpected, and perhaps undeserved, bounty, to spend it not just on the nuts and bolts of our little church, but also in service to our community.

Sandy Grove honors Black history throughout February



Youth were a big part of the events.

By Ernestine McCaskill

JEFFERSON—At Sandy Grove United Methodist Church, a Black History moment was presented by different members of the church each Sunday.

The moments were planned by Flora White. A "Test Your Knowledge" quiz about Black history was conducted by the church's lay leader, Ernestine McCaskill. African attire was worn throughout February 2026. There was a skit by Melody Davis and a poem by Brenda Gaskins. Youth did a beautiful skit as well.

On the fourth Sunday of February, the captain from each family reported the money representing their family. This is an annual church fundraiser that brings both competition and joy. On the first Sunday in March, "The Family of the Year" is announced for the family that has raised the most money. In appreciation of everyone's challenging work, each family captain received a certificate, and the Family of the Year received a plaque.

Congratulations to Family of the Year the Newman Family, whose captain is the mother of the church, Nannie Seegars.



Lifting up Black history in Lamar

Sandy Grove UMC, Lamar, celebrated Black History Month Feb. 22 at their 9 a.m. service; Ebenezer celebrated at 11 a.m. The Hon. Rosalyn Smith served as the guest speaker. Dr. J. Elbert Williams is host pastor.



February filled with joyful celebrations at Murray

By Jamelah Youmans

February was a month filled with joyful celebrations and exciting news for Murray United Methodist Church, Summerville.

We started off the month with an oyster roast and fish fry that not only brought out our members but also those in the community. Funds from this event will go to enrich our church.

We also got some amazing news this month: Our beloved pastor, the Rev. Darlene Moore Richardson, will be ordained as an elder at Annual Conference.

We were blessed to have Claflin University Concert Choir with us on the second Sunday as a part of our Black History Month celebration. One of our very own, Kiala Haynes, is a member of this choir.

Our very own Rev. Bernie Mazyck was named a top influencer for the city of Charleston. His work as the CEO of the South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development has led to generating homes for families as well as creating new jobs for thousands.

On the last Sunday of February, many of our members were dressed in their beautiful African attire. It was wonderful to see everyone looking so beautiful and handsome. We also had a special children's sermon highlighting Black inventors whose creations we use in day-to-day life, which was very educational for not only our young people but also for the adults. That afternoon, young people dressed up as Black history figures, and the audience had to guess who they were as they shared some important facts.

We also had a special Gullah storyteller performer by the name of Geechee Gyal, who talked about the history of the Gullah culture in the Lowcountry.

District News.

Anderson District

Lawrence Chapel UMC, Central, recently collected snack items for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes' trip to Jacksonville, Florida, scheduled for March 16. Because of the generosity of their church members, they were able to collect 2,424 individually wrapped snacks. "We are so grateful that we can contribute to this wonderful group of young people," Viky Thompkins said.

Greenwood District

Springdale UMC, Clinton, hosted an event focusing on healthy and safe aging. The program, "Stronger for Longer" was held March 21 and was intended for individuals age 65 and older as well as their family members and caregivers. Grace Durham, a student in the Occupational Therapy program at Presbyterian College was the presenter.

Gloria Jean Alford

LEXINGTON—Gloria Jean Alford, sister of the Rev. Anthony Alford, died Feb. 21, 2026. Rev. Alford is the pastor of Marion Parish Charge, Marion.

Funeral services were held Feb. 26 at Samuel Bartell Memorial Chapel, Dillon, with burial in Rest Haven Cemetery, Latta.

Rev. Robert Lee Allen



Allen

UNION—The Rev. Robert Lee “Bob” Allen, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died March 10, 2026.

Prior to his retirement in 2016, Rev. Allen served the Ehrhardt, Lowell Street, Summerton, Main Street-Pine Grove, Sardis-Unity and Orange Circuit charges. He served St. James Charge, Laurens, as a retired pastor.

Memorial services will be held April 4 at St. James Methodist Church, with graveside services at Leesville Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to St. James Methodist Church, 301 Watts Ave., Laurens, SC 29360.

Rev. Allen is survived by his wife, Rebecca Allen, two sons and stepson.

Kathleen Jane Cunningham

CLINTON—Kathleen Jane Cunningham, widow of the Rev. Ben Cunningham, died March 9, 2026.

Funeral services were held March 12 at Broad Street United Methodist Church.

Memorials may be made to VIA Hospice, 1304 Springdale Drive, Clinton, SC 29325; to The Clinton Presbyterian Community, 801 Musgrove, Clinton, SC 29325; or to Broad Street UMC, 310 N. Broad St., Clinton, SC 29325.

Mrs. Cunningham is survived by her son and four daughters.

Earline Mitchum Deese

SUMTER—Earline Mitchum Deese, widow of the Rev. Vernon F. Deese Sr., died Feb. 22, 2026.

Funeral services were held March 7 at Trinity United Methodist Church with burial in Bethel Methodist Church Cemetery.

Mrs. Deese is survived by her son and daughter.

Howard Edwards Jr.

KINGSTREE—Howard Edwards Jr., husband of the Rev. Joyce M. Edwards, died March 13, 2026. Rev. Edwards is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held March 19 at Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church with burial in the church cemetery.

Kermit Mack Long

LEXINGTON—Kermit Mack Long, husband of the Rev. Shay Long, died March 15, 2026. Rev. Long is the conference Disaster Recovery volunteer coordinator and pastor of Mill Creek United Methodist Church, Columbia.

Funeral services will be held April 4 at Cayce UMC, Cayce.

Mr. Long is survived by his wife, two sons and daughter.

Willie Marie McCall McPhail

SOCIETY HILL—Willie Marie McCall McPhail, sister of the Rev. Willie Mae Cannon, died Feb. 20, 2026. Rev. Cannon is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held March 1 at Mount Rona Baptist Church with burial in the United States National Cemetery, Florence.

Mrs. McPhail is survived by her husband, John McPhail Jr., son and daughter.

Pauline Castleberry Wyatt Stembridge

MARIETTA, Ga.—Pauline Castleberry Wyatt Stembridge, mother of the Rev. Wade A. Wyatt Sr., died March 16, 2026. Rev. Wyatt is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. His wife, the Rev. LaShelia Mack Wyatt, is the pastor of the East Greenville Charge, Greenville.

Funeral services were held March 24 at St. John Missionary Baptist Church, Springfield, Ohio, with burial in Rose Hill Cemetery, Springfield.

Carolyn LaTaunya Williams

WALLACE—Carolyn LaTaunya Williams, sister of the Rev. Dexter Williams, died Feb. 26, 2026. Rev. Williams is the pastor of the Rock Hill South Charge, Rock Hill.

Funeral services were held March 7 at Pee Dee Union Baptist Church with burial in the Ebenezer United Methodist Church Cemetery.

John K. Wise

GRANITEVILLE—John K. “Buddy” Wise, grandfather of the Rev. Patrick Taylor, died Feb. 28. Rev. Taylor is the associate pastor of Grace United Methodist Church, North Augusta.

Funeral services were held March 4 at Graniteville First Baptist Church with burial in the Graniteville Cemetery.

Mr. Wise is survived by his two daughters.



Photo courtesy of Kelly Gottheiner

Carbs and connection

Like many churches across the South Carolina Conference, Manning UMC, Manning, held a pancake breakfast and family fun night for Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras, a celebration held the day prior to Ash Wednesday to kick off the season of Lent. Here is a scene from the festivities.

Columbia College celebrates history

COLUMBIA—Columbia College celebrated its annual Founder’s Day Feb. 8, marking the institution’s founding in 1854 and recognizing more than 170 years of perseverance, academic excellence and community impact.

The day served as a time to reflect on the college’s legacy while inspiring students to carry it forward.

Founded as Columbia Female College, the institution opened in 1859 with just more than 100 students and a small faculty. Through fires, closures and periods of reinvention, the College continually rebuilt and adapted. The enduring columns of Old Main remain

a visible symbol of that resilience and the belief that what matters most can be restored and renewed.

Over the decades, Columbia College has expanded academic access, welcomed new populations of learners and broadened its programs to meet changing needs. Today, the college views its history not as nostalgia but as a catalyst for continued progress.

As Columbia College reflected on 172 years of scholarship and transformation, Founder’s Day stood as both a tribute to its past and a celebration of the students, faculty, alumni and community partners shaping its future.

LOSING YOUR RELIGION OVER PAYROLL?

Give us a call!

We specialize in church and clergy payroll, including:

• Direct Deposit

• Electronic Pay Stubs and W-2s

• Proper clergy compensation reporting on the W-2

• Electronic payroll tax deposits

• Quarterly and annual report filings

• Annual W-2/W-3 forms

• Assistance with back payroll issues

FOREST ACRES PAYROLL

www.forestacrespayroll.com

Contact us to obtain a free quote

Rebecca Neal Tompkins

Certified Payroll Professional

803-767-7880

rtompkins@forestacrespayroll.com

Advocate

SERVING SOUTH CAROLINA UNITED METHODISTS SINCE 1937

Advocate

28-DAY CALISTHENICS CHALLENGE BASED ON THE BIBLE

NOW LIVE!

ADVOCATESC.ORG

20 | April 2026

Advocate



Historical Society
by the Rev. Meredith M. Dark

Hymns and our theology

One of the best parts of Easter Sunday morning will be the hymns that we sing, new and old, in our congregations. For traditional churchgoers, John and Charles Wesley contributed quite a bit to hymnody. From our United Methodist Hymnal (1989) you may hear some hymns with great heart and sing them with gusto, such as “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today,” or “Crown Him with Many Crowns,” which are both by Charles Wesley.

In the book “Hymns and Hymnody: Historical and Theological Introductions: Volume II: From Catholic Europe to Protestant Europe,” Erika K. R. Stalcup explains the main idea of two hymns Charles wrote. The first hymn is “Listed into the Cause of Sin,” where Stalcup says Charles “defends the goodness of music in asserting that Jesus rather than the devil constitutes the soul of music.” The second hymn, “Jesus, Thou Soul of All Our Joys,” Stalcup said “affirms that the chief end of music is God’s glory and not our own.” Stalcup is speaking about Charles’ take on Christian music and its purpose.

When Easter Sunday comes around and we sing some of our glorious hymns, take a moment to soak in the sound around you, the vibration of the organ or piano and enjoy how the congregation collectively glorifies God. Consider the underlying messages of the hymns you are singing.

The brothers did not always agree. One source of disagreement in hymnody was different words sung simultaneously. John’s point was that “singing different words at once made it impossible to understand the text.” Charles did not have the same feelings about vocal harmony and “approved it without question.”

The two brothers also disagreed on the use of organs. Surprisingly, in the early years, John disagreed with the use of organ music. It appears that there came a time where he softened his views because John published “Sacred Harmony,” a tune book intended for harmonized voices, harpsichord and organ, in 1781.

One of the great facets of our modern hymnal (1989) is the subject headings at the top of each page according to the liturgical time of the year and themes in the Christian life or life of

Jesus. Interestingly, the 1780 collection of hymns titled “Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists” is often “considered by scholars to be the epitome of 18th century Methodist hymnody and the forerunner of future authorized Methodist hymnals,” Stalcup said. The 1780 hymnal is organized “according to spiritual state rather than liturgical periods.” To consider this change and how the hymnals have evolved over time is a fun exercise. Our theology is explained more thoroughly now as the stages of grace are pictured in the hymnal.

If you sit back with a 1989 hymnal and examine the headings, you will gain a greater understanding of your own theology. So much of our Methodist theology is held within our hymns. If you tried to explain your theology in each stage of grace, chances are you would need a hymn to fully express yourself. Charles used many scriptural references, and if one is speaking about the stages of grace, there’s a hymn for each stage to explain the spiritual conditions that are present in each period of a believer’s life. Hymns for the Wesleys’ were intended to be “a key means of embodying and enacting that theology,” Stalcup noted.

The hope of Charles Wesley, especially, was to help a person have a conversion experience through exposure to the hymns. The way in which the hymns are written imply urgency, the necessity of conversion, the possibility of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The hymns are designed, to borrow a phrase from one of John’s sermons, to “Awake Thou that Sleepest” and for the singer to be an enthusiastic Christian in thought, word and deed.

A hope for you this Easter Sunday is to pay attention to the hymns and the way in which they are written. Sing them loud and robustly, and receive the grace and pardon that only the risen Christ can impart to each of us through the words, tunes and titles we love so dearly.

Dark pastors North Charleston United Methodist Church, North Charleston. She is vice president of the Conference Historical Society and chair of the Conference Commission on Archives and History.



From the Archives
by Dr. Phillip Stone

Lorenzo Dow: Early evangelist

One of the earliest Methodist revivalists in the early nation was a very unusual preacher named Lorenzo Dow. According to some sources, Dow may have preached to more people than anyone in early national America. Even for a traveling revival preacher, his mannerisms were eccentric.

Born in Connecticut in 1777, Dow grew up with a Calvinist background and a fascination with religion that bordered on obsession. In his autobiography, he recalls asking a young playmate if he said his prayers every morning, and when the reply was negative, a young Dow announced, “You are wicked and I will not play with you” and left. He wrote that John Wesley appeared to him in a dream, but Dow remained worried about the status of his salvation.

After hearing a Methodist preacher, he converted in 1791. Wesley appeared in another dream and convinced him he was going to become a preacher, and he began preaching in 1794. He joined an annual conference around 1798 and received his license to preach from Bishop Francis Asbury. In 1799, Dow felt a call to visit Ireland and Britain, where at one point he was arrested for street preaching. It was the first of three trips to the British Isles over his life. He took an appointment in New England in 1801, but he left after six months. He wasn’t a member of the conference for long. Structures weren’t for the young preacher.

Dow preached to crowds throughout the countryside from New England to Florida to Louisiana. Some might call him an ascetic, for he took no money and traveled with no extra clothes or food. His only luggage was Bibles that he gave away. Any money he collected went to buy more Bibles. One writer suggests that neither his hair nor his beard ever saw a comb, and he wore clothes until they were threadbare. Sometimes he’d get a new article of clothing from someone in his audience. He might have been Methodism’s John the Baptizer.

The sources of the day suggest his sermons could keep the attention of thousands at a time. Many of them said he was the most memorable preacher they’d ever seen or heard. Occasionally his preaching could ruffle feathers, as he was opposed to slavery and said so. One report is that he had rocks and rotten vegetables thrown at him in one Georgia town, but perhaps following what Jesus told his disciples, he shook it off and went to the next town.

One source estimates he traveled 200,000 miles in the 30-odd years of his ministry, and he became one of the best-known figures of the early 19th century. Though histories don’t say much about his travels in South Carolina, his records and a few local church histories do mention him. After he’d been through an area, the local clergy would collect and organize those that he’d converted.

He did find time to write, and his autobiography was widely printed. It eventually made him some money. But he never really gave up his peculiar lifestyle.

Stone is archivist for the South Carolina Conference and Wofford College.

Leave A Legacy To Change Lives

The South Carolina United Methodist Foundation
P. O. Box 5087, Columbia, SC 29250-5087
scumf@bellsouth.net

A look back.



100 years ago

This ad appeared in the *Advocate* in May 1926 regarding developments on James Island.

Clipping courtesy of Dr. Phillip Stone

SILVER LININGS

A Memoir

By Bishop Leonard E. Fairley

SHOP NOW

PURPLE BOOK HYMNS

A Pastor's Poetic Liturgy of Poems, Prayers, and Litanies

By Rev. Amiri B. Hooker

SHOP NOW



Adult Lessons
by the Rev. Adrienne Fink

Take it to God in prayer

When do you pray to God? How do you pray to God? In this month's lessons, we will see four times and methods for praying to God. As we move through the lessons, remain aware of your responses to these prayers. Which are familiar? Which make you uncomfortable? Which do you want to try?

Apr. 5
Do You Believe This?
Lesson Scripture: John 11:17-27; John 20:9
Background Scripture: John 11; John 20
Key Verse: John 11:23, 25, "Jesus told her, 'Your brother will rise again.' ... Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die.'"

Jesus is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Happy Easter, my siblings in Christ! This week's lesson, however, is not so happy. Martha, one of Jesus' best friends, grieves the death of Lazarus, her brother, who died only a few days before. She laments to Jesus that if he had been there, Lazarus would not have died. She even tells Jesus that she knows he has the divine power to raise Lazarus. In this passage, she not once asks a question, but her words are a plea. Will you, Jesus, raise him from the dead? Will you bring him back and allow him to rejoin us? Her words also confront Jesus. Why weren't you here, Jesus? Why did you let him die? You could have saved him, but you did not. Why? You could still save him. You have the power, so it's not too late. Raise him up, Jesus! Raise him up!

When have you cried out to Jesus in grief? When have you dared to confront him? Sometimes we hear that confronting God means we do not trust God. Martha shows us the opposite. We confront God when we trust God. We plead to God because we know God's power and because we know God's love. Martha knows that Jesus can handle her grief, and she brings it to him without shame. When anger fills you, when you wonder why God has acted or not acted in a certain way, are you willing to trust God with your grief and your despair?

When do we pray? When we are grieving. How do we pray? With trust that God can handle our grief.

Apr. 12
Making Praise Real
Lesson Scripture: Psalm 34:1-6, 15-22
Background Scripture: Psalm 34
Key Verse: Psalm 34:22, "The Lord saves his servants' lives; all those who take refuge in him won't be held responsible for anything."

I love the Book of Psalms, a book of 150 prayers and songs written over thousands of years by a myriad of people who love God. In this book, I find the prayer I need when I do not know what to pray. Psalms of thanksgiving, of anger, of adoration, of grief, of celebration. Psalms to be prayed alone, psalms to be prayed in community. Psalms that instruct, psalms that testify. There's a little bit of everything in the Book of Psalms.

This week's passage, Psalm 34, is a psalm of thanksgiving. In it, the psalmist praises God for how God relates to God's people, particularly to people who suffer. When God's people cry out to God, God listens and responds. God protects and saves. The superscription of Psalm 34 attributes the psalm to King David: "Of David, when he pretended to be crazy before Abimelech, who banished him so that he left" (CEB). This superscription does not connect directly to any biblical passages on King David (It might connect to 2 Samuel 21, in which David does pretend to be crazy but before a different king than Abimelech), yet the Bible does share stories in which David needs protection and salvation. It is easy to imagine David writing this psalm after crying to God for help and receiving God's aid.

Just as David calls out to God, we also call out. When God listens to us and then answers us, we must do as David does. We must praise. We praise God for remaining near us when our hearts are broken and our spirits are crushed. We praise God for protecting our bodies. We praise God for delivering us from our fears.

When do we pray? When

God takes care of us. How do we pray? With thanks for God's provision.

Apr. 19
Divine Intervention?
Lesson Scripture: Psalm 35:1-14, 22-28
Background Scripture: Psalm 35
Key Verse: Psalm 35:24, "Establish justice for me according to your righteousness, Lord, my God."

Psalms like Psalm 35 often make me uncomfortable. In this psalm of lament, the psalmist prays with anger and petitions God for vindication against the psalmist's enemies. The psalmist even prays for their enemies to die. I, and likely you, know that the fifth commandment forbids murder. Yet, this prayer calls on God to murder! Should such words ever come from our lips? Would a "good Christian" ever pray Psalm 35?

Psalm 35 asserts a truth that I do not like to admit: anger exists. Anger makes me uncomfortable. I do not like being angry. In fact, I prefer to ignore my anger. I push it down deep inside. Eventually, all that anger I have pushed down bursts out of me like lava from a volcano. Then, I shout with the ire of Psalm 35. Hopefully, I turn those angry shouts toward God and not an innocent bystander. God can handle our anger, just as God handles the anger of Psalm 35's writer. God receives the prayers we are not sure "good Christians" would pray.

We, as Christians and as humans, have valid reasons for being angry. When I see my neighbors fear for their lives and when I hear news of war and death, I should be angry. You should be angry. Good Christians should be angry. We do not need to hide that anger, and we cannot hide it from God. To be honest, there are times when I wish harm upon my enemies. I feel so angry and so helpless, I pray to God to destroy them. Do I expect God to actually destroy them? No. Yet, sometimes, we need to pray those wishes to God. We give them to God with trust that God takes that anger from us and uses our anger for good, not for harm. In our anger, we trust that God's

About the
Author

Fink, a deacon, is chaplain for the Prisma Health Department of Spiritual Care and Education. She serves as the secretary of the Columbia District Committee on Ministry.

love ultimately wins. Are you willing to trust God with your anger? Are you willing to give your anger to God?

When do we pray? When we are full of anger at our enemies. How do we pray? By giving our anger to God.

Apr. 26
Lesson Scripture: Psalm 78:1-8
Background Scripture: Psalm 78
Key Verse: Psalm 78:4, "We won't hide them from their descendants; we'll tell the next generation all about the praise due the Lord and his strength—the wondrous works God has done."

Our final passage for the month, Psalm 78, falls in the category of "wisdom psalms." These psalms teach their readers and listeners. Psalm 78 shares wisdom on how to raise new generations of God's people. God's followers must tell the stories of God's "wonderous works." The psalm argues that for new generations to follow God, the older generations must teach them. Without the wisdom of the older generations, the new generations do not follow God's commandments and do not remain faithful to God.

Commonly, we pray with words, whether silently or aloud. We pray through dance, music, body movement, and stillness. We also pray to God when we teach others about God. As we teach others about God's wonderous works, we are thanking God for those wondrous works. We are praising God as we proclaim that God's works are worth remembering and retelling. When we teach others about God, we are teaching them how to pray. We teach them that they should take their grief to God because God cares for them as they grieve. We teach them to thank God because God listens to their cries. We teach them that they should take their anger to God because God can handle their anger.

When do we pray? When others need to learn about God's wonderous works. How do we pray? By sharing the good news of God's wonderous works.

Would you like to be a
Bible lesson writer
for the Advocate?

Do you enjoy writing Bible lessons? Would you like to write one of the Advocate's monthly Bible lessons? We'd love to have you. Email jbrodie@advocatesc.org with your interest.



Children's
Sermon
by the Rev.
Meg Cook

Breath of peace

Date: April 12 (Second Sunday of Easter)

Scripture: John 20:19-31 (emphasis on verses 21-22)

Supplies: None
Children's Sermon:

Do: Welcome the children and invite them to sit with you.

Say: In our Bible story today, Jesus' came to the disciples and breathes on them (make a face like "ew"). I know, right? I do not like when people breathe on me, but this is Jesus' breath. I wonder if it was cool or sweet? Hmm (shrug).

I do know that taking a deep breath is calming, and the disciples were hiding in a locked room. Do you think they were calm or scared? (Pause for answer) You're right—they were scared. They were super-duper scared.

I get scared sometimes, too. Can I share something that helps me when I'm scared? I like to pause (stop and wait a moment) and breathe. There are many ways to breathe, but today let's do bunny breaths, since last Sunday was Easter.

Bunny breaths are like this: three little sniffs in, like we are smelling a sweet flower, and then one LOOOOOOONNNNNNNNGGGGGG breath out of our mouth. Try it with me? (repeat at least twice).

Breathing helps our bodies calm down. When we take a deep breath, we often feel more peaceful. Breathing tells our insides we are OK.

In our Bible story today, Jesus' friends, the disciples, were very scared. Jesus had died, and they were hiding together in a locked room because they were afraid. But then something amazing happened. The resurrected Jesus came to the disciples and said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Then Jesus did something very interesting. The Bible says Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

A long time ago, the word people used for "Spirit" also meant breath or wind. It's the word ruach (ROO-AKH). It's Hebrew. God's breath is God's Spirit moving and giving life. So when Jesus breathed on the disciples, it was like sharing God's breath with them, sharing God's Spirit. Jesus was filling them with peace and courage.

When we feel scared or worried, we can remember this story. We can take a deep breath or try a bunny breath and remember that God's Spirit is with us, bringing peace. Isn't that powerful?

Say: Will you pray with me? Dear God (echo), we love you (echo). Thank you for your breath (echo) that brings us calm and peace (echo). Help us to pray and breathe (echo). Amen (echo).

Cook is the pastor of Grace United Methodist Church, Columbia.

Event Calendar.

March
Women's History Month
March 29—Palm/Passion Sunday

March 30-April 3—Stations of the Cross display, St. Andrew By-The-Sea UMC, Hilton Head, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. <https://standrewbytheseaumc.org>

April
April 2—Maundy Thursday

April 3—Good Friday (United Methodist Center closed)

April 3—"The Passion of the Christ" viewing, Celebration Center, St. Andrew By-The-Sea UMC, Hilton Head, 2 p.m.

April 5—Easter Day

April 10-12—Theotokos Confirmation Retreat, Hinton Life Rural Life Center, Hayesville, N.C. <https://hintontheotokos.org>

April 19—Native American Ministries Sunday

April 19—Musical program celebrating America's history by AC250 Community Choir of Cheraw and surrounding counties, First UMC, Cheraw, 4 p.m.

April 19—Open House at Asbury Hills, Asbury Hills, Cleveland, 1-5 p.m. Register: call 864-836-3711 or email summercamp@asburyhills.org

April 22—Earth Day

April 25—World Malaria Day

April 29-May 2—"Shifting the Atmosphere" Strengthening the Black Church leadership and training event, Hamilton Park UMC, Dallas. Register: <https://na.eventscloud.com/ereg/newreg.php?eventid=864197&language=eng>

May
Asian Pacific Heritage Month
Christian Home Month
May 4—Bishop Leonard Fairley's Lowcountry Book Signing, New Life UMC, Walterboro, 6 p.m.

May 7—National Day of Prayer

May 10—Mother's Day

May 10— Festival of the Christian Home

May 10—Epworth Mother's Day Offering

May 11—Orangeburg District Connectional Ministries meeting, St. Mark UMC, North, 6:30-8 p.m.

May 14—Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry Annual Meeting, Joy Classroom, Union UMC, Irmo, 10 a.m. to Noon. <https://aldersgatesnm.org>

May 14—Ascension of the Lord

May 15-17—UWF Assembly, Indianapolis, Ind. <http://uwf-faith.org/assembly>

May 17—Ascension Sunday

May 24—Pentecost

May 24—Heritage Sunday

May 24—Aldersgate Day

May 24—Memorial Day Service, Joseph B. Bethea UMC, Myrtle Beach, 11 a.m. <https://www.josephbbetheaumc.org>

May 25—Memorial Day (United Methodist Center closed)

June
June 6-11—Inaugural Wilderness Trail ministry event, Lake Junaluska, N.C. <https://lakejunaluska.com/events-calendar/ljwildernesstrail/>

June 7-10—Annual Conference, Greenville Convention Center, Greenville.

June 14—Flag Day

June 14—Juneteenth Service, Joseph B. Bethea UMC, Myrtle Beach, 11 a.m. <https://www.josephbbetheaumc.org>

June 19—Juneteenth (United Methodist Center closed)

June 21—Father's Day



Photos by Jessica Brodie



St. Mark, Mount Hebron UMC bishop book signings a success
Bishop Leonard Fairley visited two churches in South Carolina to sign copies of and speak about his acclaimed memoir, "Silver Linings." On Jan. 28, he was at St. Mark UMC, Taylors (pictured at top), and on Jan. 29, he was at Mount Hebron UMC, West Columbia (pictured below). He did the same in March at two churches in the Raleigh area of North Carolina. Next month, on Monday, May 4, he'll visit New Life UMC, Walterboro, to do a book signing. All are welcome to attend, and books will be available for purchase. The church is located at 763 Green Pond Hwy., Walterboro, SC 29488. "Silver Linings" is published by the Advocate Press, the publishing arm of the Advocate newspaper. The book is available as a paperback (\$25) and e-book (\$10) from <https://advocatepress.org>.

Advocate Press Book Signing set for Tuesday at AC

The Advocate Press will be hosting its annual book signing event during Annual Conference.

The book signing will be held Tuesday, June 9, from 12-2 p.m. in the Annual Conference information/registration lobby at the Greenville Convention Center.

A number of authors whose books are available from the Advocate Press will be available to sign books, plus all Advocate Press books will be available for purchase.

The Advocate Press is the publishing arm of the South Carolina United Methodist Advocate newspaper. To date it has produced 39 books, available on its website, <https://advocatepress.org>, as well as from Amazon and other major book retailers.

All are welcome.

Learn more at <https://www.umcsc.org/ac2026>.



Men's ministry leaders gather
The National Association of Conference Presidents annual meeting was held in Nashville, Tennessee, March 5-7 at the General Commission on United Methodist Men headquarters. Representatives from around the country came together, including the UMM Foundation, conference and jurisdictional presidents, prayer advocates and Scouting leaders. South Carolina Resident Bishop Leonard Fairley was in attendance and provided inspirational presentations, morning devotions and closing worship. Fairley is a recent inductee and recipient of the Society of John Wesley Fellowship Award, presented to him Feb. 21 at the South Carolina Men N Ministry event. Pictured from right are Fairley, GCUMM General Secretary Dr. Rick Vance and South Carolina Conference UMM/Men N Ministry President Dyron V. Anderson.

Aldersgate Special Needs meeting set for May 14

Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry will hold its annual meeting next month.

Founded in 2003, Aldersgate is a ministry of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church that provides homes for adults with developmental disabilities. It does not receive funds from apportionments and depends on contributions. Residents enjoy living in a Christian environment and are encouraged to be as independent as possible with the support of trained staff.

Aldersgate operates six homes for adults with special needs.

The meeting will be held at Union United Methodist Church, Irmo, May 14 in the Joy Classroom from 10 a.m. to noon. The ministry plans to showcase the residents of all their homes.

For more information, visit <https://aldersgatesnm.org>.

Classifieds.

Marketplace

FREE ESTIMATES

NEW Steeple cleaning service

New Pews • Pew Upholstering • Pew Refinishing • Pulpit Furniture • Carpet • Steeples/Baptistries • Chime Systems • Stained Glass • Classroom Furniture • Office Furniture • Social Hall Furniture • Budget & Project Analysis • Project Management

Nu-Idea

Church Furnishings
Sumter, South Carolina
1-800-922-0424
www.nu-idea.com

"Serving South Carolina's churches since 1921"

Did You Move Recently??

Send your new address to us!



AC KIDS

From Page 1

And finally, Annual Conference will feature its first-ever intergenerational worship service. Slated for Wednesday morning at the event, the service will incorporate children into most aspects of the service, serving as ushers and acolytes and reading scripture.

Toni Taylor, the conference’s “Con-

necting Children in Worship” grant leader, said these new ways of incorporating children and youth into Annual Conference are extremely healthy, both for young and older attendees.

“If you think of the metaphor of the family table at Christmas, you see that children are part of the family table,” Taylor said. “They can’t understand everything that’s going on, but they’ve taken pieces and parts and tuck them away till later. They’re able to ask ques-

tions and be a part of it from the place they can be at their age.”

Whisper phones and Band-Aids

Taylor said that when she learned Annual Conference would not be offering offsite childcare this year, she realized a playground would be a wonderful chance to help children and adults experience holy conferencing in a new and enhanced way.

Many European churches use playgrounds effectively, and at a gathering for the Lilly Foundation, she got to see how engaging and helpful a playground can be. Taylor is planning the playground at Annual Conference with Melanie Gordon, a South Carolinian who is now the director of the “Let the Children Come Initiative: Growing in Faith through Congregational Worship” at Duke Divinity School. She said the space will be on the floor of Annual Conference, on the left side of the room when one is facing the stage.

Offered every day of Annual Conference, the playground will feature different activity stations, all rooted in prayer. For example, one station will feature “whisper phones,” where kids will be able to whisper their prayers into the telephone-looking device. Another will feature candle lighting—using battery-powered tealights—so kids can light a candle for someone who needs prayer. Another will have different skin-colored Band-Aids, upon which children and their parents will be encouraged to write the name of someone who is hurting and then stick them on a poster. Discussion questions and Visio Divino cards will also help. Many stations will incorporate elements of Messy Church, and onhand to help will be Dr. Johannah Myers, director of disciple formation at Aldersgate UMC, Greenville, and executive director of Messy Church USA.

“It’s not babysitting—the families will be there with them,” Taylor explained.

She said she also hopes the activities will spark ideas in pastors and church staff to do something similar in their own worship experiences.

“What I’m finding is these little, simple things can be eye opening,” Taylor said. “Pastors can see, ‘Oh, I can use this as part of my message to engage more!’ When you do things that



One station will feature “whisper phones,” where kids can whisper prayers into telephone-looking devices.

attract children, you also are attracting adults—it brings out the child in adults as well—so these little things can have great impact.”

Conference Secretary the Rev. A. Melton Arant Jr. said he hopes the playground stations offer opportunities for the children to see adults they respect praying, singing and even struggling with Scripture and the work of the church.

“To play off of Bishop Fairley’s theme, I hope that we ‘see’ the children and youth’s more visible presence as a reminder that God is still doing something among South Carolina United Methodists,” Arant said.

Youth get voice, vote

This year’s Annual Conference will once again feature high-school-aged youth delegates to help guide and shape the future of the denomination.

Led by youth leaders, the youth delegates will stay in a hotel with other youth delegates and attend Annual Conference, where they will have the opportunity to share their voice and to vote. Prior to Annual Conference, there will be training days where they will learn what to expect, learn how to share their voice and vote and meet some of the people they will see on-stage at Annual Conference.

The goal of these trainings is to help the youth feel comfortable and confident at Annual Conference.

As 2025 youth delegate Jolie Tandy, of Trinity UMC, North Myrtle Beach, noted, “Youth can prove ourselves to be equal even through we’re younger.”

Intergenerational worship

Finally, Wednesday morning of Annual Conference will feature the first intergenerational worship the South Carolina Conference has ever had. Taylor and Gordon are developing the order of worship, which will have children and youth participating in every level of the service except the sermon, which will be preached by Gordon.

Arant said he’s excited about the intergenerational worship service.

“Attending Annual Conference with my father as a child became some of the most foundational experiences of my life,” Arant said. “From an early age it helped me not just understand that I was part of the body of Christ, but feel as if I was part of the body. At least in my life, this early participation helped me hear my call into the ministry. The intergenerational worship experience will help us celebrate everyone’s place, from the infant to the centenarian, in the body of Christ.”

To learn more about these plans, visit <https://www.umesc.org/ac2026>. For questions, email Taylor at ttaylor@umesc.org.



An Online Giving Event

Support Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry through



Midlands Gives

at CENTRAL CAROLINA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Tuesday, May 5, 2026

Your donation makes a difference.



SCAN HERE

Early Giving Starts April 1

Providing Christian homes for special needs adults



Aldersgate

SPECIAL NEEDS MINISTRY

AldersgateSNM.org



CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY

EARN YOUR DEGREE IN 18 MONTHS

- Accelerated Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programs
- In-Class and Online



803-535-5573

conedu@claflin.edu

www.claflin.edu

400 Magnolia Street | Orangeburg, S.C. 29115