

South Carolina United Methodist Advocate

CONNECTING METHODISTS IN SOUTH CAROLINA SINCE 1837



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November 2022

November Jurisdictional Conference to elect new bishops for UMC

S.C.'s Ken Nelson among nine episcopal nominees

By Jessica Brodie

How many bishops is the jurisdiction electing? Will South Carolina's nominee become bishop? Will our annual conference get a new bishop, and if so, where will our current bishop go?

These are among many of the questions being asked as delegates prepare to gather Nov. 2-4 in Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, for the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference of The United Methodist Church.

It is the first SEJ Conference to be held

in-person since 2016, and while there are many unknowns, a number of things are clear.

Foremost is that elected delegates from the 14 annual conferences in the jurisdiction will gather in-person to elect UMC bishops

and set the scope of missions and ministries for the jurisdiction. South Carolina will have 32 delegates at SEJ to vote; 16 are clergy and 16 are laity, all elected at the 2019 Annual Conference.

See "Jurisdictional," Page 6

Close call



The Rev. Fred Buchanan and Felix Vazquez remove a tree that fell on a home in Vance during Hurricane Ian.

Photo by Billy Robinson

S.C. poised to help Florida after brush with Hurricane Ian

By Jessica Brodie

Many in South Carolina are counting themselves blessed after a near-miss with a deadly storm last month.

Hurricane Ian was a powerful Category 4 hurricane when it slammed the southwestern coast of Florida Sept. 28, then swept north, making landfall in South Carolina south of Georgetown

as a far-weakened Category 1 storm Friday afternoon, Sept. 30.

Ian ripped apart piers, downed trees and flooded streets on South Carolina's coast, causing damage to a number of homes and businesses, but disaster response leaders are calling it all "relatively minor" compared to hits from previous hurricanes.

See "Hurricane Ian," Page 24

Embracing Change, Sharing Grace

United Women in Faith mark 50th annual meeting

By Jessica Brodie

Women of faith from across South Carolina gathered in Myrtle Beach Oct. 21-22 to celebrate 50 years of turning faith, hope and love into action for women, children and youth around the world.

With the theme "Embracing Change, Sharing Grace," the event marked five decades of annual meetings for South Carolina Conference United Women of Faith. Nearly 200 women representing every district in the annual conference gathered at First United Methodist Church just blocks from the ocean to hear inspiring speakers, celebrate their bold and active history, collect items for UWF mission projects, elect a new slate of officers for the coming term and learn how to live into their new name with Holy Spirit passion. In March, the organization rebranded with a new logo and

See "Embracing Change," Page 12

Church vandalism becomes mercy opportunity

By Jessica Brodie

LAKE CITY—A church vandalism that could have incited much wrath is turning into an opportunity for mercy in the Florence District.

In the wee hours of Thursday, Aug. 28, a group of people broke into Lake City United Methodist Church, vandalized

the fellowship hall and administration building, then went on a burglary and vandalism spree at other sites around town, including the Baptist church and other small businesses.

At first, Lake City pastor the Rev. Bill McCown said he and the congregation were upset about the damage, which felt like a personal attack.

"It was all just to make a mess, just to destroy things," McCown said, shaking his head as he points to broken windows and plates, smashed coffee pots and the fine layer of fire extinguisher dust coating everything in the fellowship hall.

See "Vandalism," Page 3

Stop the wait to stop the weight: Gadson's health journey

By Jessica Brodie

GREER—The Rev. Telley Lynnette Gadson has spent most of her life battling obesity and shame. As Gadson puts it, even when she was a little girl, she wasn't a "little" girl.

"I was teased, taunted, laughed at," Gadson said, from the boy in third grade who called her fat every single morning to the mean girls who'd walk by her Lowcountry house tossing out jeers. "I'd come home and cry and cry."

Her mother would remind her she was wanted and prayed for, a beau-

tiful creation beloved by God and by her family, but a childhood of weight issues turned into an adulthood soon marked by obesity and health issues—even as she followed God's call into ordained ministry. Today, she is a United Methodist elder and a superintendent for South Carolina's Hartsville District.

Still, the weight, as she says, weighed on her, creating obstacles and issues. One day about a decade ago, Gadson had enough and knew it was

See "Gadson Health," Page 13

Summit on the Black Church addresses health, improvement

By Jessica Brodie

FLORENCE—Pastors and laity from across South Carolina headed to the Florence Center Oct. 6-8 for the Summit on the Black Church, a time to focus on helping the Black church stay strong and address obstacles keeping it from

doing all God intends.

With the theme this year of "Heathy Churches: It's Time for a Checkup," the event featured a host of powerful teaching.

The summit opened Thursday evening with a time of praise music led by Nichelle Mc-

Cann, then a welcome from Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, who asked those present to take a good, hard look at themselves.

"If the church is not healthy, then what are

See "Summit," Page 7

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Submissions

The *Advocate* encourages readers to submit for publication 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. Since there is no charge for these items, they appear in the newspaper on a space-available basis. Deadlines are the 10th of each month for the following month's paper.

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Photographs can be submitted to the newspaper for publication. High-resolution digital images are preferred. Photographs should be in focus and should have proper exposure. Color or black and white photographs are accepted. People in photographs should be identified with names and ages, and a contact person with a phone number should be included in the information.

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The *Advocate* maintains copies of back issues for sale for up to one year, as long as the supply lasts. When requesting by mail, back copies are \$2 each, to cover postage and handling. 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.

The little church that feeds people

In spite of small size, Salem UMC in Greenville steps up to help many

By the Rev. Eric McKee Sr.

GREENVILLE—Salem United Methodist Church is a small, aging church located in what has become a multicultural, industrial area. We have been called “the church that feeds people” by those outside our church and, after hearing that, began using it as our motto. We generally have 35-40 at our Sunday worship services. There is only one neighborhood in our area that used to be teeming with our members. Several of our members still live there, but most are unable to come to church.

But God has instilled in us a heart for our community, and we have been running a food pantry called Rachel's Cupboard for 19 years. We serve our clients with meal bags that contain two to three full meals and will feed two adults, plus extra items for breakfasts, lunches and snacks. We do not ask for proof of need or any financial documentation. We simply serve those who come based on the number and ages of those in their household. We do require identification.

We also distribute toiletries, socks, underwear and pop-top food bags for those who are homeless and special bags for children including instant hot breakfast cereal, crackers, fruit cups, etc. Last year we added coats and blankets to our ministries through the pantry and gave away 38 coats and 51 blankets.

Our other food ministry is our Monday night meal. Through our partnership with Project Host, we serve hot, delicious meals to anyone who comes. We serve these meals every Monday from 6-7 p.m. in our Family Life Center. We just started offering the food pantry service during this meal so that with the price of gas, clients would not have to come twice to get what they need.

Also, for the first time this year we planted a community garden that has allowed us to provide fresh vegetables to many of our clients and our elderly church members. Many people helped to get this going, but it is the brainchild of and passion for Jan Elliott.

So why are we telling this story and why now? We have seen a marked increase of approximately 33 percent in clients since June at both of our ministries. Our pantry has gone from serving 10 families per week to 14 families per week, and we are seeing more and more multigenerational



The meal bags contain two to three full meals and will feed two adults, plus extra items for breakfasts, lunches and snacks.

households than ever before. In September, we saw our greatest increase when we served a total of 159 people with 100 bags of food through the pantry. Our Monday night meals have also increased from 40 per week to 60.

The recent economic downturn has increased the need for those in our community on fixed incomes, and it is only going to get worse. Even our president has said twice recently that we can expect food shortages this winter. These ministries are not a budget item for us. They are totally funded by donations from our members and our community's businesses and social groups.

The need is great and becoming greater, so I am offering a challenge to every church great and small: What can your church do in obedience to our Lord Jesus' command to “feed his sheep”? It doesn't matter how small, how elderly or how remote your church is; you can do something to feed the bodies and the souls of those in need in your community.

May God bless you to be a blessing as he has for us. Remember, there is no such thing as a retired Christian. He expects to find us doing his work when he comes again.

McKee pastors Salem UMC, Greenville.



Prayer vigil for gun violence

On June 1, St. Paul UMC, New Ellenton, held a prayer vigil for Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, and for every school and community inflicted by gun violence. During the prayer vigil, 21 candles were lit as the names of every person killed in the school shooting were lifted in prayer. In addition, five candles were lit for every school in the New Ellenton and Jackson area as prayers for peace and justice were lifted in the service for all school students, teachers, administrators and staff. The candles were lit by Dr. Randy Stowe, a retired school administrator and a member of St. Paul UMC. St. Paul's pastor, the Rev. Joseph D. Kovas, invited the Rev. Matt Turner, pastor of the Jackson Charge, and Rev. Chris Holley, pastor of Four Mile Baptist Church, to participate in the service. The service was overhead being described as “holy” and “truly a moving service.”



Derwin Gray to keynote in-person UMMen retreat in February

By Jessica Brodie

LEXINGTON—After two years of gathering online, United Methodist Men are ready for a return to an in-person spiritual retreat.

Set for Saturday, Feb. 25, at Mount Horeb United Methodist Church, their focus this year will be on “The Good Life”—that is, what Jesus teaches about finding true happiness.

“We look forward to an event somewhat like three years ago, with fellowship, music, Bible teaching and workshops,” said Marvin Horton, president of South Carolina Conference United Methodist Men. “Our goal is always to help men know Jesus Christ and grow in their relationship with Jesus.”

Dr. Derwin L. Gray will be the keynote speaker. Gray is the co-founder and pastor, along with his wife, Vicki, of Transformation Church, a multiethnic, multigenerational, mission-shaped community church in Indian Land. He is also a former NFL football player with a Master of Divinity degree and a concentration in apologetics from Southern Evangelical Seminary.

In 2015, he was awarded an honorary doc-



Dr. Derwin L. Gray

torate from Southern Evangelical Seminary, and in 2018, he received his Doctor of Ministry in the New Testament in Context at Northern Seminary under Dr. Scot McNight. Gray teaches at conferences nationwide.

He is the author of “Hero: Unleashing God's Power in a Man's Heart” (2010), “Limitless Life: You Are More Than Your Past When God Holds Your Future” (2013), “Crazy Grace for Crazy Times Bible Study” (2015), “The Good Life: What Jesus Teaches About Finding True Happiness” (2020), “Building a Multiethnic Church” (2021), “God, Do You Hear Me?” (2021) and “How to Heal the Racial Divide” (2022).

Two fellowship opportunities are part of the weekend, starting with a golf tournament on Friday, Feb. 24, at The Spur at Northwoods in Columbia (a new venue), then an oyster roast at Mount Horeb at 6 p.m.

Horton said they are hoping sponsor churches will again participate.

“This will be the fifth year that our sponsor churches have made it possible for Men N Ministry to have an event in February, and to be able to fund the ministry to men all year long in South Carolina,” he said.

More information and registration should be available in early November at <https://menministrysc.org>.

Apportionment payments begin ramping up as 2022 winds to a close

By Lillian D. Williams

As the South Carolina Conference gears up for the close of another budget year, conference financial leaders are hoping to achieve as close to the budgeted goal of \$16.7 million as possible.

By Sept. 30, the South Carolina Conference Treasurer's Office received about \$9.8 million of the total budgeted for 2022, or about 58.8 percent. In comparison, last year at this

time we had received \$10.4 million of the \$17.3 million budgeted for last year, or 60.22 percent.

While the numbers are lower this year than last year, all are hopeful the ultimate goal—100 percent in apportioned giving—is achieved.

Of the 958 churches in the South Carolina Conference that are asked to pay apportionments, 170 have paid nothing toward their apportionments as of Sept. 30. However,

233 have paid 100 percent or more.

Among the districts, the Walterboro District had the highest percentage of its apportionments paid as of Sept. 30, at 69.3 percent. Greenville had the lowest at 51.2 percent.

As the year approaches a close, there is still time to pay apportionments.

For more information: <https://www.umcsc.org/treasurer/> or 803-786-9486.

Bolsinger to speak at Fall Clergy Orders set for Nov. 17 in Chapin

CHAPIN—Dr. Tod Bolsinger will speak at the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church's Fall Clergy Orders, set for Nov. 17 at Chapin UMC.

The event will be held from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and is an in-person gathering of the Order of Elders, Order of Deacons and

the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members. The theme is "Leading Into the Unknown."

Bolsinger is co-owner and principal of AE Sloan Leadership Inc, an executive coaching and consulting firm. He is also the executive director of the De Pree Center

Church Leadership Institute, a senior fellow of the De Pree Center for Leadership, associate professor of leadership formation at Fuller Theological Seminary, was the founder of the Fuller Leadership Platform and served as a vice president of Fuller Seminary for six years. Prior to his educational

career, he served as a pastor for 27 years. He is the author of five books.

With completion of the event, .5 CEUs will be earned. There is a \$5 registration fee, and the deadline is Nov. 10 at 10 a.m.

Clergy can register at <https://www.umcsc.org/clergyordersregistration>.

VANDALISM: 'I don't think those kids even understand'

From Page 1

It wasn't a robbery but rather the work of angry, bored people wanting to break stuff, McCown said, noting they destroyed a computer and took his Cherry Coke from the office refrigerator, but didn't take anything of value. They raced through the building, wreaking havoc in McCown's young daughter's Sunday school classroom, throwing pool balls at the walls, breaking youth trophies and more.

But police had images of the suspects, both from bank and local business security cameras, and they were able to home in on three teens, who were ultimately identified.

"They sent the images to area schools, and no one recognized them, so they sent them out on the police wire and discovered one who was underage in Georgetown, and he confessed," McCown said, adding that they got lucky in identifying suspects so quickly.

But when it came time for the arraignment, McCown was asked to speak on behalf of the church. He discovered it was a first offense for two of the teens, and their moms were there with them, sobbing over and over, "We are so sorry."

McCown urged the court not to try the

young men as adults. He decided mercy was a better course for them.

And now he's praying they will find the path to redemption—sooner rather than later.

"I don't think those kids even understand what they did," McCown said.

One of the boys has sent an apology letter, and McCown said he'd love to see some sort of arrangement worked out where the teens can do community service or raise funds to pay back some of the damage they caused. But McCown and the church aren't looking for harsh penalties—they just want the kids to understand they did something very wrong, and to turn their lives around before it's too late.

McCown said insurance will cover all the damage, and costs are estimated in the high \$40,000 range. Most of the damage came from the fire extinguisher dust, which is caustic.

"It gets in and destroys pianos and electrical things," he explained.

In the end, he said, they were blessed. The sanctuary wasn't harmed, and they never missed worship, even though they are eagerly awaiting the use of their fellowship hall again after repairs are complete.



Photos by Jessica Brodie

McCown shows a piece of broken glass from a window in the fellowship hall.



The damage was "just to make a mess," McCown said, from broken dishes to trampled trophies.



Fire extinguisher dust caused the worst damage, such as to this children's classroom.

Sign me up for the Advocate!

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Viewpoints



Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

Healing in the revealing

As I write this month's editorial, I've just come back from the doctor with my teenage daughter, who is experiencing a strange hurricane of emotional, mental and physical health issues that are culminating both in chronic pain and in debilitating depression and anxiety. It's nothing new—she's been going through this for a while and under the care of a lot of doctors, and she's seeing slow but steady progress. She's working hard, and as her family, we are coming alongside her in support and love.

But I share this as one more example of the truth contained in two of the front-page articles of this month's edition. Both in the article on the Summit on the Black Church and the article on the Rev. Telley Gadson's health journey, the point is clear. We cannot ignore these issues anymore in our society, in ourselves or in our families. The effects spill over, and like a virus begin to affect every ounce of our lives—our churches, our relationships and our souls.

We know that as Christians, we are a connected body with Christ as our head. We know that when one part is hurting, we are all hurting (1 Corinthians 12:26). And yet so many of us continue to hurt in silence, paralyzed by shame or fear or pride or some other reason that makes it difficult to speak it aloud or get help.

This must change. So much is at stake, and we have been silent about these issues for far too long.

It does not make a person "weak" to have mental illness, emotional disorders or physical ailments. Sometimes it takes naming the issue and bringing it to light to drive out the darkness. Other times that is just the beginning, and it sets us on a course of seeking proper care, whether that's medication or therapy or something else.

No amount of praying can get rid of depression or bipolar, Dr. Michael Bowie said during his plenary at the Summit on the Black Church, and God can't heal what you don't reveal.

For a year or more, I've been collecting stories from people about their mental illness struggles and how they have experienced or found God in the midst of them; when finished, these will become a book published by the Advocate Press tentatively titled "Darkness to Light." Because of the struggles going on with my daughter, it is taking some time to finish the collection, but my hope is it will be ready in the spring. When it is, I hope it will be one more tool to help us talk about these things.

In the meantime, I invite you to share your story with others, to be willing to get vulnerable so healing can happen within you and awareness can be shared. (And if you'd like to contribute something to the book-in-progress, please email me at jbrodie@umcsc.org.)

Remember: We are all in this together.

Letters Policy

We welcome letters to the editor. We urge brevity, as succinct writing often produces clarity. Letters should be no more than 450 words. All letters are subject to editing as needed to meet standards of grammar, space and interest. We will not publish anonymous letters, letters praising or criticizing businesses by name, endorsements of or letters from political candidates, fundraising appeals, or letters containing inappropriate language or personal attacks. All letters will be verified, so you must include a name, daytime phone number, church membership and hometown. Letters should be sent to The Advocate, 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203 or e-mailed to advocate@umcsc.org. Deadlines are the 10th of each month.



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Bishop's Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

Beyond a shadow of a doubt

"I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."—Philippians 6:1 (NRSV)

For 10 years now, we have been "seeking a more excellent way" as United Methodists in South Carolina. We have worked together to be strong in our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, partnering together as laity and clergy and seeking to align conference resources with the needs of each congregation.

In the midst of such challenges as gun violence, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, pandemic, civil unrest and rampant divisiveness, to name a few, our story has been written. This is a story of hope, a story of bold conversations and deep listening. Ours is a story of learning, forgiving, growing and relentlessly focusing on God's purpose for our church.

We know that if it's important to us, we can find a way. If it's not, we will instead find an excuse. And so we have found a way. Even in the midst of uncertainty, even when the odds seemed stacked against what we were trying to do. With God's help, we have persevered and made a difference in this world for the sake of Christ.

The late Maya Angelou once said, "Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage, you can't practice any other virtue consistently." With courage and a deep well of faith, we have listened to God and to our neighbors, seeking deeper relationships with Christ and creative ways to meet the evolving needs of those in our communities, being the hands and feet of Jesus.

And the best part of it all, is that we have done this work together. We have studied together, worked in mission together, traveled together, had some fun together and, most importantly, prayed together. We have taken each step in faith, trusting, believing and knowing that God is with us from anywhere to everywhere.

When we committed to seeking a more excellent way, doing things well became our standard. We know that the mission and ministry of the church is worth doing, and because of this recognition, we are willing to roll up our sleeves and get to work. Even when the task is complicated. Even when the best next step is unclear. Even when looking for an excuse might seem simpler. Even, and especially, when we feel like the deck is stacked against us.

One hundred twenty-five years ago, the Methodists of South Carolina took a step in faith, trusting, believing and knowing that God was with them, as they established what we now know as Epworth Children's Home. Over the century-plus of Epworth's existence, they have met the challenges they have faced with a willingness to overcome, and today they are strong in ministry.

During the summer of 2019, Epworth launched an ambitious multiyear capital campaign to position themselves to meet the current and future needs of children in South Carolina, also committing a tithe of the campaign earnings toward the ministry of Fairfield Children's Home in Old Mutare, Zimbabwe. Epworth has been faithful, willing to share from the bountiful gifts they receive to broaden the impact on children's lives around the world. Less than a year into this campaign, the COVID-19 pandemic began. Despite this seemingly unsurmountable obstacle, the United Methodists of South Carolina showed up to ensure the campaign goals were met.

There could have been a gear shift, or a pause because of the realities of living through uncertainty. There could have been a decision to lessen or cancel the partner tithe to the Fairfield Children's Home. But instead, the Epworth team remained focused, leaning into God's covenant promise and trusting what Paul teaches in Scripture, that God is faithful to complete the good work begun in us.

May we all continue to trust in God's abundance, living our belief that God will, indeed, provide.

Appointment Changes

Bishop Jonathan Holston has announced the following changes of appointment:

Effective Aug. 1, 2022, Charleston District: Midland Park, North Charleston: Cooper Stonestreet (RE) (1/2)

Effective Aug. 19, 2022: Marion District: Little River, Associate: Patti Molik (OE) (1/2)

Effective immediately: Florence District: Asbury, Andrews: Patrick Wilson (PL) (1/4)

Effective Oct. 1, 2022: Charleston District: New Hope, Summerville: Robert Nix (RE)

Letters to the Editor

On casting stones

With all due respect to Franklin DeWitt McCoy Sr.—who stated, "After she is pregnant it is no longer her body. It is their shared body, that of the woman and that of the unborn child. When a woman has sex without regard of the consequence ..." (October *Advocate*)—well, sir, there is one more shared body in that equation, or at least a body part.

If you are going to cast stones at women, at least acknowledge the role of the man who participated!

Virginia Barnette, member
Ebenezer UMC, Greer

Social justice and equality for all

If you have attended Washington Street United Methodist Church, Columbia, you have seen this statement on the front of its bulletin: "The congregation of Washington Street

See "Letters," Page 5



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Warren Ashmore

To stay or to go?

To stay or to go? That is a question facing members and churches in The United Methodist Church. Some have already begun to take up the discussion and have signaled their desire to leave the UMC. Some know the question needs to be discussed, but for many reasons have put it off. Others don't know what to do and are not openly acknowledging that the question even exists.

Let me be clear (for what it's worth): I plan to stay in The United Methodist Church whenever the question is brought up. Why?

I came to the UMC from a denomination that looked down on the ministry of women, except as Sunday school teachers and mothers. They also looked down on people of color who should find their "own church" not our "White one."

In the UMC I found a more open door for all people to be part of the ministry to the community and the world.

The UMC was not, is not, nor will ever be a perfect church. As a United Methodist pastor for 25 years, I lived by our *Book of Discipline* even though I fully disagreed with the addition of rules that declared LGBTQ+ individuals not worthy to be included in the active life and ministry of the church.

I am saddened that some want to strengthen the rule in our *Discipline* by creating a new church that completely closes the door on their lives. They will not be allowed to be pastors, love who they love, marry and be faithful in that union.

It also saddens me to hear that some members of the new church have been spreading tales about what will happen in the UMC when the new Global Methodist Church leaves. I am sorry that we can't find a way to live together, but to take the low road seems to me contrary to God's love that we all rely on in our daily lives.

As I said earlier, I plan to stay with the UMC. I pray that those who want to leave find peace in their new home. May God's abundant grace help all of us to live out the message of Christ and help bring God's kingdom into reality in this world.

Ashmore is a retired United Methodist pastor and member of the South Carolina Reconciling Ministries Council.



Guest Commentary

by Dr. Phil Thrailkill

My read of our current crisis

Though the details are still to be decided and much is uncertain, what's clear is The United Methodist Church will soon divide or splinter and dissolve into multiple parties.

This should not surprise us since six of that what used to be termed "the mainline Protestant churches" have already divided (Presbyterians, Evangelical Lutherans, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalians, American Baptists and United Church of Christ) and all over the same issue of clergy standards and sexual morality. We are torn apart by ethics because we have lost our confidence in the faith.

We United Methodists are the last of the "seven sisters" to divide, perhaps because of the residues of our evangelical, holiness theology and our system of polity where church property is held in trust by the denomination. While issues of who may or may not marry and where and by whom such services are conducted are presenting issues, the deeper issues are those of authority and continuity with the faith and practices we ultimately received from the apostles as found in Scripture. What is on offer by progressives is in fact a new religion.

The current *Book of Discipline* 2016 grounds our church in classic Christian and Protestant teaching, puts Scripture as the first authority in faith and life, limits marriage to heterosexual pairs and requires celibacy in singleness and marital fidelity of all the ordained, and all in the service of holy living. To label this as "conservative" is only partly true and does not easily map over current political categories of right and left. It does conserve the central issues of the faith and the sexual ethics that flow from it, but when contrasted to our current cultural setting it may more properly be termed "radical."

Relevance to the culture is a secondary issue because the primary issues are fidelity to the faith received and the preservation of

it against both internal and external challenges. The barbarians are at the gates, and the accommodators within the walls are running church bureaucracies and cataloguing the deeds and endowments they will survive on after the division.

Corpus becomes corpse.

So how did we arrive at this difficult, painful, confusing place? We will have to wait a generation for the historians to perform a detailed post-mortem, but the basic story is already clear. Methodism began as one of the renewal movements within the 18th century Church of England. The goal of the Wesley brothers was to recover a spiritually robust form of the apostolic faith and make it widely available. Now because the Crown lost the war, the followers of Wesley in the colonies soon became a church of their own.

What followed was nearly a century of remarkable growth as the Wesleyan form of the classic faith drew more and more into its web of conversion and accountable discipleship through revivals and the required Class Meeting.

Saved and then trained was the model. So successful were we that the standards were slowly lowered. Accountability through the weekly Class Meeting became an information-oriented Sunday school, and we all grew in respectability, so much in fact that we became a key part of the Protestant Establishment that served as the nation's unofficial chaplains and social conscience. Much good was done for perhaps eight or so decades, but with the sexual revolution of the 1960s, we found ourselves unprepared to make much of a defense against the damages that came with the new freedoms.

We had been in the arms of the culture for so long that we could not extract ourselves. We were not only in the world but now thoroughly of it.

Some counsel surrender. I say circle up and repent!



Helping hands

Cross the Ashley Youth put together 54 health and hygiene kits recently for the Charleston District from donations collected at St. Andrews Parish UMC, Charleston, and Cokesbury UMC, Charleston.

Want to be on the Advocate Board?

The *Advocate* is governed by a board of trustees, an equal mix of clergy and laity, who serve as the official newspaper publisher. Board members serve four-year terms and are eligible to serve two terms. If you are interested in serving on the *Advocate's* Board of Trustees, email and let us know of your interest: advocate@umcsc.org.

LETTERS: Sounding off on saints, equality, social justice

From Page 4

UMC praises and serves God from the heart of the city in ways that reach our neighbors near and far. We welcome and affirm all who seek the love and mercy of Christ regardless of race, creed, age, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or economic status. We honor traditions as rooted in our history, our expression of worship and our respect for theological curiosity. We nonetheless see vital change and ongoing renewal as essential for spiritual growth."

WSUMC has a long history of social justice activism. This focus on social justice has included feeding its neighbors in its soup cellar. Many church partners have helped us serve our neighbors over the years.

As part of its Engaging God's World Team, WSUMC has taken intentional steps to expand from that mission and to respond to current events.

Following General Conference's vote to continue its discriminatory treatment of LGBTQIA+ individuals, WSUMC completed a churchwide discernment process resulting in a unanimous vote by the church council to join the Reconciling Ministry Network, which is committed to achieving full inclusion for LGBTQIA+ individuals in the church. The Reconciling Next Team was formed and has implemented a number of initiatives, including church participation in Pride Weekend, conducting an LGBTQIA+ intergenerational

dialogue (with three other churches), offering a Service of Repentance and Healing for LGBTQIA+ people, creating SAFE Space (an affirming gathering place during the Sunday school hour) and co-hosting Friday Unwind (an online social gathering) with Reformation Lutheran Church.

Following the murder of George Floyd, the Racial Justice Action Team was formed and undertook a discernment process to educate its members on the many facets of racial injustice and the sin of White supremacy. This team has implemented a number of initiatives including a comprehensive library of resources, bias training, book group discussions, voter registration, church participation in Walk for Life to reduce gun violence and co-hosting (with Journey UMC) a Service of Repentance and Healing acknowledging the sins of racism.

In the past year, banners were placed on the grounds. These banners have shown our beliefs that Black Lives Matter, that All Are Welcome in the church and we should work to reduce gun violence. Sadly all of these banners have been cut down and stolen. WSUMC is currently considering a digital sign on the Bull St. corner to get its messages out to the community.

Read more about us at wsmethodist.org, or on Facebook and Instagram.

*Cindy Cox, member
Washington St. UMC, Columbia*

Real saints

The first Sunday in November, Nov. 6, is All Saints Sunday. As the hymn says, "Rejoice in God's saints, today and all days." Let us remember the brave saints who brought the Black conference and the White conference together. A great celebration over this merger happened 50 years ago, January 1972. These saints had a social conscience and believed in justice for all humankind. These saints told and lived the truth about Jesus Christ. Jesus loves everyone.

The late Dr. Eben Taylor said, "We must not lose the hope and dream of one church made up of all human beings in an inclusive, caring Christian community." Where are the modern-day saints who believe in love and justice for all? There are many who have nowhere to turn. Jesus is there for all.

The late Dr. Larry Jackson wrote these words: "If I preach with even the tongue of an angel, and have not love, I got no business in the pulpit. And if I have prophetic powers and know the Bible backwards and forward, and have faith enough to move mountains and have not love I am nothing."

These saints who united the Black church and the White church truly loved everyone. It is sad that the Global Methodist leaders want to divide this great church of inclusion.

Christian history shows the saints who truly loved everyone and practice justice. Let us rejoice with God's saints.

*Rev. John Culp, retired
West Columbia*

JURISDICTIONAL: COE recommends election of three bishops

From Page 1

One of the first items of business at SEJ will be voting on how many bishops the jurisdiction wants to elect.

While it is allowed to vote for a maximum of five—four bishops retired since the last election, and one more bishop, James Swanson, announced he will retire in December—the SEJ Committee on Episcopacy is recommending the election of only three bishops this year.

The COE cites “potential negative financial impact” as its justification for recommending three instead of five.

Delegates will decide at SEJ whether to agree with the COE recommendation of three or not. Currently, there are only nine active bishops in the 14-conference jurisdiction, and some bishops are serving multiple episcopal areas because of the pandemic-related absence of a General Conference in 2020 and 2021.

As the COE stated in its rationale for the recommendation, “We understand the desire for the presence of a bishop in each episcopal area. We realize that asking a bishop to serve conferences that are not contiguous makes the situation even more strenuous.”

With three elections, the COE said, only two bishops would be asked to serve two areas until September 2024.

“We believe it would be irresponsible to ignore the potential negative financial impact of electing five bishops until we have clearer evidence of the sustainability of such elections,” the COE rationale added. “At least four conferences have planned a called annual conference meeting regarding disaffiliation this fall, which adds to this uncertainty. Bishops are elected and assigned to an area to serve until retirement, and their positions are funded by apportionments.

“Therefore, realizing the anxiety of not knowing the future, while trusting that future into God’s hands, we are confident that our recommendation offers a prudent resolution based on the information known to us today.”

They said no decisions or discussions

Alvarez Austin Berlin Bowers

Coles Gleaves Nelson Shelton Thomas

The Rev. Ken Nelson, conference secretary and Orangeburg District superintendent, is South Carolina’s episcopal nominee. Other episcopal nominees from other annual conferences are Dr. Iosmar Alvarez, Kentucky Conference delegation nominee; the Rev. Sharon G. Austin, Florida Conference delegation nominee; the Rev. Tom Berlin, Virginia Conference delegation nominee; the Rev. Sharon Bowers, Holston Black Methodists for Church Renewal nominee; the Rev. Amy Coles, Western North Carolina Conference delegation nominee; the Rev. Edith Gleaves, North Carolina Conference delegation nominee; the Rev. Connie Shelton, SEJ Clergywomen nominee; and Dr. Byron Thomas, North Georgia Conference delegation nominee.

regarding potential assignments will be made until the COE begins the assignment process following the November episcopal elections.

Ken Nelson is South Carolina’s episcopal nominee

SEJ will open Nov. 2 at 9 a.m.

After the number of bishops is determined by the body, balloting will begin as the delegates consider which of the nine episcopal nominees they wish to elect.

The Rev. Ken Nelson, conference secretary and Orangeburg District superintendent for the South Carolina Conference, is South Carolina’s episcopal nominee.

Other nominees include Dr. Iosmar Alvarez, Kentucky Conference delegation nominee; the Rev. Sharon G. Austin, Florida Conference delegation nominee; the Rev. Tom Berlin, Virginia Conference delegation

nominee; the Rev. Sharon Bowers, Holston Black Methodists for Church Renewal nominee; the Rev. Amy Coles, Western North Carolina Conference delegation nominee; the Rev. Edith Gleaves, North Carolina Conference delegation nominee; the Rev. Connie Shelton, SEJ Clergywomen nominee; and Dr. Byron Thomas, North Georgia Conference delegation nominee.

Learn more about the nominees—including biographies, pictures, videos and Q&As—at <https://www.sejumc.org/episcopal-nominees>.

Balloting and other business will continue until the evening of Nov. 3, when episcopal assignments will be announced and area receptions held.

The conference is expected to close with consecration of new bishops Nov. 4.

Who are South Carolina’s 32 delegates?

South Carolina’s 16 clergy delegates are the Rev. Ken Nelson, Dr. Robin Dease, the Rev. Keith Hunter, the Rev. Susan Leonard, the Rev. Emily Sutton, the Rev. Will Malambri, the Rev. Tiffany Knowlin, the Rev. Karen Jones, the Rev. Tim Rogers, the Rev. Cathy Mitchell, the Rev. Fran Elrod, the Rev. Connie Barnes, the Rev. Mary Teasley, the Rev. Kathryn Hunter, the Rev. Elizabeth Murray and Dr. Stephen Love (alternate the

Rev. Sara White).

South Carolina’s 16 lay delegates are Jacqueline Jenkins, James Salley, Michael Cheatham, Herman Lightsey, Chris Lynch, Martha Fridy Thompson, David Braddon, Emily Evans, Betty Void, David Salter, Valerie Brooks-Madden, Marlene Spencer, Jennifer Price, Tony Watson, Lou Jordan and Doug Coffeen (alternates Marvin Horton and Vicki McCartha).

What will happen to our current bishop?

Current bishops will also be assigned to annual conferences. Per the UMC *Book of Discipline*, bishops may serve two four-year terms in one episcopal area and can be assigned for a third for missional purposes. Bishops are then assigned to a different episcopal area by their jurisdictional or central conference.

South Carolina’s Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston has served this conference since 2012, when he was elected. He nears the end of his second term as bishop, as the 2016 appointment was extended beyond four years because of the pandemic.

The *Advocate* will be at SEJ to cover the news, which will appear in the December edition of the *Advocate*. For more information on SEJ: <http://sejumc.org>.

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Make a year-end tax-deductible contribution to the Advocate

You might not be aware that the *Advocate* is an independent newspaper published by a board of trustees. This independent status gives us journalistic and editorial freedom, which is a responsibility we carry with honor and humility. It gives us the ability to operate fully led by the Lord and to offer what we hope are balanced, authentic perspectives from our readers and our editorial team. While we receive apportionment funding from the South Carolina Conference, the conference’s support covers less than half our operating budget. The rest of our income comes from subscriptions, ads, book sales and donations, both from businesses and from individual readers like you.

This is why your financial support with a year-end tax-deductible donation to the *Advocate* is needed and gratefully appreciated.

Founded in 1836 with our first edition in 1837, the *Advocate* is currently the oldest newspaper in Methodism and one of a very small number of still-thriving print publications (let alone an independent one!). The mission of the *Advocate* is to inform and connect South Carolina United Methodists by independently reporting relevant news, engaging readers, providing a forum for dialogue and sharing the Gospel of Christ.

We hope you will consider a tax-deductible donation to help the 501(c)(3) *Advocate* newspaper ministry continue our work for God. Your support is truly appreciated.

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*Praise the Lord! Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord! (Psalm 150:1,6 NRSV)*

1358 Quaker Road, St. George, SC 29477
Rev. Dr. Constance Nelson Barnes, Senior Pastor
231newgrace@gmail.com | (843) 931-1055



Rev. Walter Strawther (top) and Dr. Michael Bowie teach on prioritizing health.



When it comes to stewardship, Dease said, "Our issue is not that we don't have money—it's a spiritual one."



The crowd listens as Bishop L. Jonathan Holston brings a greeting and a word on self-care.

Photos by Jessica Brodie

SUMMIT: A checkup is needed for people and churches

From Page 1

we? If we are not leading people to Jesus Christ, then what are we doing?" Holston asked, reminding all, "The church was created for God's purpose, not your pleasure, and God's purpose is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Next, State House Representative Chandra E. Dillard, also a United Methodist lay servant and district lay leader, brought greetings on behalf of the State House of Representatives.

The Rev. James Friday issued a call to worship, and the Rev. Victoria Richardson led the body in prayer.

The Rev. Corey A. LaSane brought the Scripture reading, which was Jeremiah 17:8-10 and 13-14.

Then the Rev. Walter Strawther brought his message, focusing on healing.

Feasting on Christ

As Strawther noted, diet, exercise and physical fitness are a million-dollar business, and it's always pushing a "better you."

But when we look at Jeremiah, we realize he understands his healing is not within; rather, God is his source of healing. And God gives us the tools, whether that is medication, diet or counselors.

Baptism is our exercise program, Strawther preached, for we confess our sins and then experience forgiveness. And similarly, communion is our nutrition program.

"The meal is the medicine," he said, for in partaking of Holy Communion, we partake of the body and blood of Jesus, our saving grace and the true intersection of human and the divine.

We have to remember that we are joining Jesus in saving the world, Strawther said.

"Sometimes we think we can meet wickedness with wickedness, but instead we are invited to resist evil, injustice and oppression," he said.

Communion is an opportunity to get right with God and each other.

"But I've got to ask you: Are you feasting on Christ or on the junk food this world has offered?" Strawther said to a chorus of amens.

'God in the midst'

The summit continued Friday morning with a time of worship music by McCann. Then the Rev. Ken Carter opened with a morning devotion, drawing from 3 John.

Carter's message was that we all should pray for each other's "better self" that we can obtain through Jesus.

Our spirits can grow weary and cause us to do bad work, Carter said, and taking care of our entire self must be an effort, one that we focus upon. Physical problems, negative thinking and bad spiritual habits can overwhelm and drag us down. But we must dominate and replace them with praise,

replace them with good and worthy things.

"It doesn't just happen when you show up for church," Carter said to applause. "God has to be in the midst of your calls for healthiness."

A spiritual checkup is important, and not just for us. The church must do the same.

Next Strawther welcomed all, and then came a ministry glimpse from congregational development.

A skit, "Healthy Churches from Head to Toe," narrated by the Revs. Doris Bright and Jeffrey Salley and written by the Rev. Mary Johnson, used humor to emphasize its main point: We must assess our church and get a checkup from head to toe, then ask now what? Is Christ our head? For a church without Christ as the head is a brain-dead church.

Understanding emotional and mental health

Dr. Michael Bowie, SBC21 national executive director, brought the day's first plenary, "The Why for Healthy Congregations and Pastors."

Bowie said it is critical we help people understand the importance of mental and emotional health and how a soul reset can impact our health and well-being. This does not only impact us but the church and community as a whole.

After all, Bowie said, the church must do an annual checkup just like we do at the doctor, and not just physical but mental and emotional, too.

"Pandemic taught us many things, and the key is that we must focus on the main thing," Bowie said, which is making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Bowie said we must understand the importance of mental health, which can cause changes in how we think and feel and affect our mood. It also can be realized through post-traumatic stress disorder, domestic violence, mood disorders and suicide.

Bowie offered several statistics from the National Alliance on Mental Illness, including that 1 in 4 adults have experienced a mental health issue; 1 in 10 young people have experienced major depression; 1 in 25 have had a serious mental illness; and suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S.

Many throughout the Bible suffered with mental health issues, from Jeremiah (extreme grief) to Job (grief, loss, PTSD) and Elijah (depression and suicidal thoughts)—we are not alone in this.

He taught about signs of mental health issues including sleep issues, increased substance use, lack of energy, family issues and feeling unsafe or anxious. Help is available, Bowie said, urging people to consider medications, therapy, support groups, exercise, yoga and expression through writing or music.

"People of color hear me: You can't pray harder or fast more to get rid of bipolar," Bowie said.

In 2014, Bowie shared, he hit a wall and

had to take eight weeks off to reset. The experience taught him that we often struggle with embarrassment, shame, pride and fear about mental health.

But, he said, "God can't heal what you don't reveal."

Secondly, Bowie said, we must understand the importance of emotional health, when we are in control of thoughts, feelings, behaviors and able to cope with life's challenges.

Emotional health is about how we feel, he taught, while mental health is about how we think.

Bowie offered five ways to improve emotional health, including to be aware of your emotions/reactions, manage stress, strive for balance, stay positive/surround yourself with positive and nontoxic people and take care of your physical health.

"When we're not emotionally well, a molehill becomes a mountain," Bowie said.

He encouraged people to consider a "soul reset," which is a hard stop of chronic busyness to take a deep look within and to God. It's seeking God's presence through prayer and fasting and living your life how God planned in the beginning.

"To get to a soul reset, you must admit something isn't working," he said.

Getting creative

Dr. Robin Dease brought the day's second plenary, on stewardship. Dease shared that data is essential to church growth, and we need to learn how to make the most of the data we collect.

With 84 percent of churches plateauing or declining, it's vital to put data to good use.

"We need to tell the truth about our numbers," Dease said.

She noted that Black churches are seeing an increasing number of small congregations, declining numbers and a drop in giving.

"The average giving is \$17/week, but in the Black church it's \$11/week," Dease said. "Yet U.S. Christians make \$5.2 trillion annually! Our issue is not that we don't have money—it's a spiritual one."

She said data shows Black spending power reached \$1.6 trillion in 2021, but net worth declined.

As well, 99 percent of Black churches are behind in direct billing (more than \$3 million).

"We spend our money to cover up the pain, spend on what we wear and drive, give the appearance we are doing OK, but we live paycheck to paycheck," Dease said.

This needs to stop, she said.

God can do great thing with the remnant—what is left. We need to consider our plan: Where are we now, where do we want to be and how will we get there? Instead of two- or three-point charges, we need to be cooperative parishes. We also need to recognize the fastest-growing churches are multiracial and multicultural and we need to start equipping churches to do this. Other churches are taking unique approaches to

funding in order to stay afloat financially. For example, she said, Ebenezer in Washington, D.C., is now offering some of its space as condos for rent. A church in Dallas, Union Dallas Coffee, is part worship space and part coffee shop.

"Get creative," Dease urged.

Challenging ourselves

Next came a luncheon and time of sharing with Holston, who talked about leadership and relationship-building when it comes to difficult times.

"People visit you Sunday the way you visit them Monday through Saturday," he said. "When you connect with your community, your community will connect with you. What are we willing to do?"

If want to be a church that thrives, he said, we have to challenge ourselves.

We are Boomers and Generation Xers in a Millennial and Generation Z world

"That means people we are trying to attract are not like us," Holston said. "So what we do Monday through Saturday can't just be for Boomers or Gen Xers. We've got to start doing things Millennials and Gen Zers recognize."

It's the same thing when it comes to the difficulty facing the denomination.

"Our denomination is at a place of a tough challenge, and we are going to have to learn to thrive," he said, noting the next General Conference will be in 2024, though the official dates are not yet set.

As General Conference is the only body in the denomination that can change the *Book of Discipline*, he said, everyone must remain patient until that time comes. In the meantime, we must focus on the mission of the church.

Currently, there is one pathway for a local church to disaffiliate from the UMC, and that is Para. 2553.

For now, Holston said, he is establishing a task force across the annual conference of people identified by district superintendents to give him input how to lead well during this time.

Beyond that, Holston said, there are a few others things all can do: Pray for our church, be patient and focus on ministry and missions, trusting that God is with us.

Wrapping up

Workshops rounded out the afternoon on a host of topics, including church administration, technology and the church, avoiding predatory lending, Faith-Activity-Nutrition Ministry, economic empowerment and the Here I Am app.

Saturday concluded with another skit, as well as a teaching session on discipleship and church growth regarding reaching Millennials (led by the Rev. Zachary Dillard).

For more on the summit and how to get involved with next year's event, visit www.umcsc.org, or email Strawther at westrawther@umcsc.org.

Around the Districts

Charleston District

Congratulations to the Rev. Roye Lynn Kulik on the birth of her great grandchild. Audrey Marie Hardiman was born Nov. 16, 2021 to Lauren Marie and Maurice Hardiman. Rev. Kulik is the pastor of the Sewee Santee Charge.

Columbia District

The combined choirs of Shandon UMC, Washington Street UMC, Trenholm Road UMC, Cayce UMC and Salem UMC will hold an All Saints Sunday Concert Nov. 6 at Shandon UMC, Columbia.

Greenwood District

Wightman UMC, Prosperity, celebrated Golden Age Sunday Oct. 9. All Golden Agers (age 75-plus) were invited to attend as the church celebrated those who have given so much in service to Wightman and to the Lord over the years.

Holston to preach at New Grace rally and campaign kickoff

ST. GEORGE—Bishop L. Jonathan Holston will be the guest preacher at New Grace United Methodist Church Sunday, Nov. 20, as the church hosts a “Thanksgiving Rally” worship celebration and luncheon for the kickoff of its new Grow-In-Grace Campaign.



Holston

It will be held at noon at the Lovely Hill Baptist Convention Center, 5905 W. Jim Bilton Blvd, St. George, SC 29477. Walterboro District Superinten-

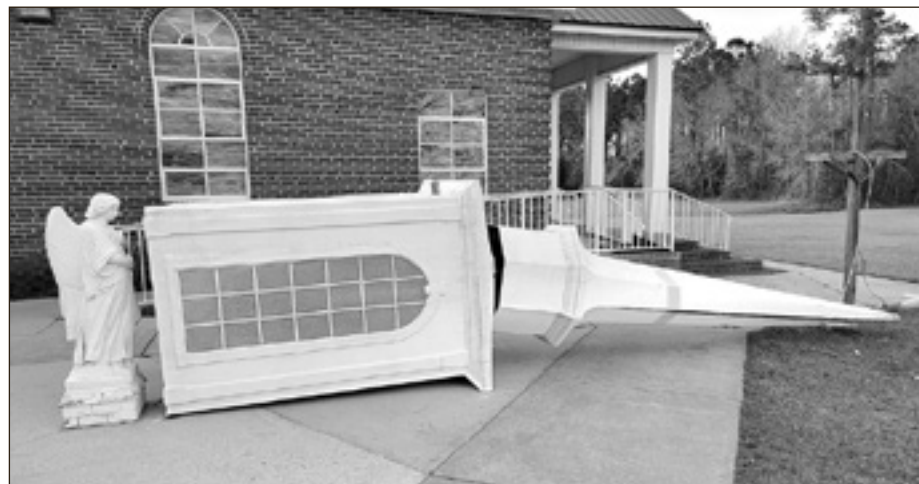
dent the Rev. Joseph “Joey” McDonald will also be in attendance and will introduce the bishop.

The Grow-In-Grace Campaign is a fundraising effort to secure resources for New Grace’s construction project.

The title of the campaign originates from 2 Peter 3:18.

For information, contact pastor of New Grace Dr. Constance

Nelson Barnes at 843-902-7900 or 231newgrace@gmail.com.



Photos courtesy of Brad Richardson

New steeple erected after storm

The afternoon of March 12 brought an isolated thunderstorm with heavy winds to Good Hope UMC, Hemingway. The heavy winds caused the church’s steeple to topple and fall to the ground. The steeple almost knocked over an angel statue in the prayer garden. Members of the church worked diligently to get a new steeple on top of the sanctuary. The new steeple was erected Sept. 3. The church trustees, led by Larry Green, worked countless hours to ensure the steeple would be up by Good Hope’s homecoming service in November.

Zimbabwe elder with ties to S.C. missionaries to speak at Union

The Rev. Lloyd Nyarota will serve as guest preacher at Union United Methodist Church, Irmo, Nov. 20.

Nyarota is completing his Ph.D. studies at the Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, running as the episcopal candidate for the Zimbabwe Annual Conference and living with his family in Canada while serving an ecumenical appointment in The United Church of Canada. He has deep friendships with many United Methodists in South Carolina, including South Carolina United Methodist Volunteers in Mission trips to help construction of Hatcliffe UMC in Harare.

Born in Mavhezha, Zimbabwe, Nyarota was raised in the Chitenderano village. He is the third child in a family of six—four girls and two boys—and was raised by his maternal grandmother under difficult circumstances. Because of the wars of liberation, he didn’t start school until he moved to stay with his mother and other siblings in Rusape, where he went to Vengere primary and high schools.

He responded to the call to ministry as he was finishing high school. He started his ministry in August 1989 as a lay pastor serving 16 churches. In 1992, he started theological training at United Theological College in Harare, Zimbabwe, and in 1994, he was temporarily withdrawn from school to serve seven rural churches. He shortly returned to complete his studies and was ordained in the Zimbabwe Annual Conference in 1995.



Nyarota

There he served several circuits and also became the first District Council on Ministries director of the newly created Bulawayo Midlands district from 1997-2000.

Nyarota attended Africa University to further his studies where he graduated with a bachelor’s in divinity and a master’s in peace, leadership and governance. When he graduated, he served congregations in Mutare and at the Nyakatsapa Mission. In July 2005, he was appointed to serve as the first area projects and communications coordinator responsible for organizing all mission partnerships and projects in the Zimbabwe episcopal area. He worked with many annual conferences, churches and general agencies of the UMC supporting several projects, including South Carolina.

He was tasked to develop a model for community development within the UMC in Zimbabwe in 2012. With funding from the Norway Conference, he became the first Director of Chabadza Community Development Program while working with many communities to fund and implement sustainable projects. He has passion for justice and ecumenical relationships. He has written several articles and has also published a book titled, “Religious Leadership in National Political Conflicts. He was appointed to Canada in September 2015.

Nyarota is married to Tazvionepi, and they are blessed with two children, Lloyd Jr. Tinotenda Nyasha (24) and Lorraine Tinovimba Chiratidzo (18).



From left are Ricky Linder (standing for his wife, Shatonya Linder), Marvin Brown, First Lady Elaine Harley, Pastor Walter Harley, Catherine Warren, James Mixon, Olga Bryant, Robert Jenkins and James Bryant. Certificates given to the pastor and lay servants Oct. 9.

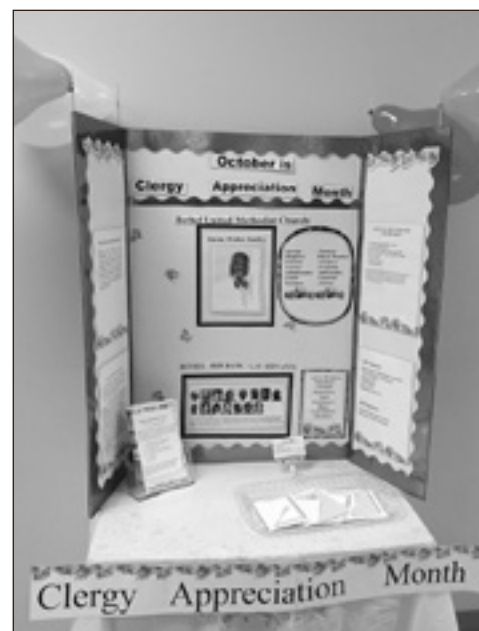
Bethel UMC shows appreciation for clergy, lay servants during October appreciation month

In recognition of the outstanding work of the clergy staff on the Bethel-Red Bank Charge, Bethel UMC’s Higher Education Committee celebrated Clergy Appreciation Month. Certificates of appreciation, gift bags, and related tokens of appreciation were given to pastor Walter Harley, First Lady Elaine Harley and all lay speakers at Bethel UMC, Smoaks, each Sunday during October.

Throughout the month of October, an exhibit was displayed in the lobby of the church showing the purpose of Clergy Appreciation Month, as well as photos of the pastor, first lady and lay speakers of the charge.

Both churches’ lay servants were given a framed copy of the exhibit.

Bethel’s Higher Education Committee members include Shirley H. Bryant, chair; James E. Bryant; Susan W. Fryar; Ruth A. Hodges; and Catherine G. Warren.



Display board of the pastor and lay servants during clergy appreciation month.

**THANK YOU to Betty Stalnaker,
Fair Lawn UMC Organist**

We appreciate you!



Seventeen ministries were on display.



Free barbecue made the day a hit for many.



Bishop Jonathan Holston shares with the crowd.

'Open Doors for A New Day' Spartanburg District ministry fair showcases creative ministries

On Saturday, Sept. 24, the Spartanburg District sponsored the "Open Doors for A New Day" ministry fair at Spartanburg Methodist College.

The ministry fair showcased churches with new and creative ministries to share ways congregations can meet the changing needs of communities. Seventeen ministries presented the purpose of their ministry; if the ministry was in partnership with another church, community group or agency; how the ministry is resourced; and how the community receives and benefits from the ministry.

After the presentations, laity and clergy were given the opportunity to peruse the ministry booths to learn more about the ministries presented.

Unity and Bethel Spartanburg's Mobile VBS (Vacation Bible School) was one of the ministries showcased. With the Mobile VBS, Bethel Spartanburg's Youth Ministry traveled to Union and walked the neighborhood to invite children in the community to Unity's VBS. Unity is an elderly congregation that does not have any children in the congregation, and the turnout was great.

For another ministry, St. James created a Pickle Ball Court in their gymnasium and created a community garden. Both ministries are open to the community, which in turn has opened the door for St. James to build relationships with its surrounding community and has encouraged many of the

new people to join St. James in other areas of ministry.

Silver Hill Memorial UMC, St. James, Central and the Church of the Covenant have come together to share youth ministry activities, which allows churches with fewer youth to have a larger group of youth and reduces the responsibility on just one or two youth leaders. Joel Humphries, the high school-age son of the Revs. Heather and Brian Humphries, shared that it was fun to join with other church youth and not to be the only youth participating in an event.

The full list of ministries showcased appears on the Spartanburg District webpage at <https://www.umcsc.org/spartanburg-district>.

The events of the day also featured a time of sharing from South Carolina's Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, free barbecue and fun and games for the entire family, which included an inflatable obstacle course enjoyed by the kids and attracted some of Spartanburg Methodist College's students who were invited to also enjoy the barbecue.

Spartanburg Methodist College partnered with the Spartanburg District in this fruitful day, and the Spartanburg District Connectional Ministries team coordinated the event. Organizers hope both laity and clergy were inspired to launch out into the deep as God's people face the challenge of engaging and ministering to an ever-changing community.



The event also featured free barbecue and games, which included an inflatable obstacle course enjoyed by the kids and attracted some SMC students



Photo courtesy of Chris Goodman

Retreating in nature

Bethel UMC, on the Jackson Charge, Jackson, spent a weekend at Asbury Hills Sept. 16-18. The weekend was filled with worship and devotion services as well as other activities such as hiking, canoeing, archery, fishing, creek hiking and a cookout. On Sunday morning, Pastor Matt Turner delivered a sermon and served communion at the mountain chapel.

New Grace United Methodist Church launches Grow-In-Grace Campaign

Bishop L. Jonathan Holston will be the guest preacher and District Superintendent Rev. Joseph "Joey" McDonald will introduce the Bishop at the Thanksgiving Rally Worship Celebration and Luncheon for New Grace United Methodist Church, St. George. The event is set for Sunday, November 20, 12 noon at the Lovely Hill Baptist Convention Center, 5905 W. Jim Bilton Blvd, Saint George, SC 29477.

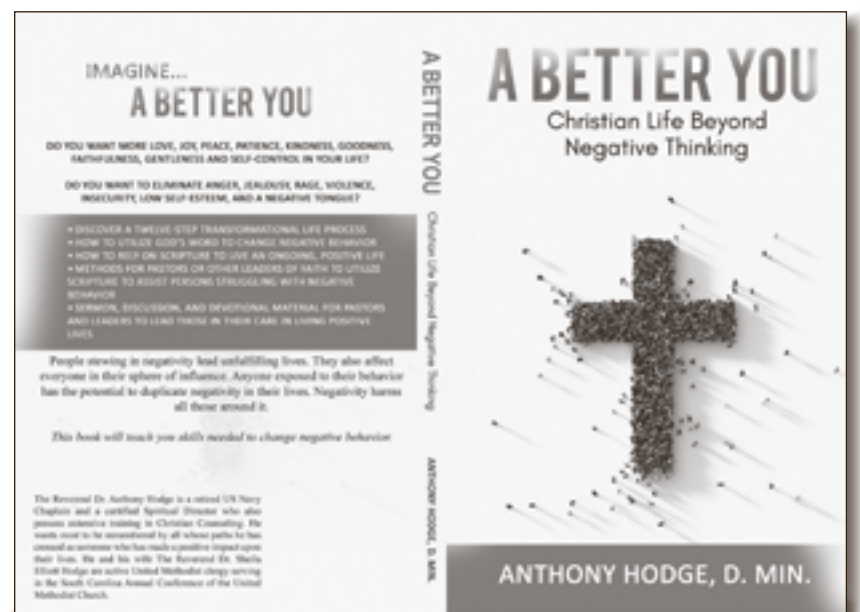


The Grow-In-Grace Campaign is a fundraising effort to secure resources for its construction project. The title of the campaign originates from 2 Peter 3:18.

For sponsorship information, please contact Rev. Dr. Constance Nelson Barnes, host pastor at 843-902-7900 or email 231newgrace@gmail.com.

Imagine a better you

*Do you want more love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in your life?
Do you want to eliminate anger, jealousy, rage, violence, insecurity, low self-esteem and a negative tongue?*



Authored by

**Rock Hill District Superintendent
Dr. Anthony Hodge,**

the book will teach you skills to change negative behavior, including a 12-step transformational life process and how to rely on Scripture to live an ongoing, positive life.

Releases Sept. 3. Available on Amazon



Ronnie Sheriff's 1938 Plymouth Coup, pictured here.

Car show, animal blessing show ministry in rural church

By the Rev. Jamie McDowell

WESTMINSTER—Ministry: What is it, and what does it look like?

This is a question often posed to first-year seminary students as they attempt to figure out how to be the hands and feet of Christ. We often hear many different answers, such as feeding the homeless, visiting the sick or some other such noble answer.

For Hopewell United Methodist Church, the answer was just a little bit different on Oct. 1. The answer that day was ministry as a car show.

Just that week, Hurricane Ian was bearing down on the East Coast. The idea of canceling the fifth annual car show was already being considered by Tuesday morning. Pastor Jamie was not ready to call it off just yet. As the week went by, several people stopped into the store Jamie works at and mentioned how much they looked forward to this show every year. This was a surprise as the show is held out in the country and is relatively small compared to many of the car shows. As Thursday rolled around, the administration chair, Jackie Ballard, sent a text wanting to know if she should go pick up hot dog buns for the show.

The word was go: We are on, rain or shine.

When Saturday morning came, there was no rain in sight. The storms had moved further east, and it was shaping up to be a beautiful day. The show was scheduled from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. The first car pulled in about 9 a.m. Over the next hour, more than 20 classic cars would come rolling in to fill the parking lot. It was a great day with music from the 1950s to the 1970s playing across the church's sound system and reaching out into the farming community. Throughout the day, kids ran and played, adults talked and everyone enjoyed good music, hot dogs and Moon Pies. This was ministry.

People who only go to one show a year



Nova, the Yorkie

joined with others who travel the country attending shows, all brought together in this small rural church parking lot. Church member Ronnie Sheriff won the trophy for Best In Show with his 1938 Plymouth Coup.

All of this was fantastic to see for Pastor Jamie and the congregation, but the best was yet to come. You see, Stan and Esther Summerfield came that day. They attend the car show every year. About the first year they came, Hopewell held a Blessing of the Animals service the next day. They came back for that service and brought their baby, a beautiful Yorkie.

This year they had a new puppy, Nova. When they pulled in, Esther stopped Pastor Jamie and asked when the blessing service would be this year. It was important to her for Nova to be blessed. However, a Blessing of the Animals service had not yet been planned for this year.

As the show wound down, after the trophies were handed out and the cars were starting to leave, Pastor Jamie, Stan, Esther, Nova and a small group of members and visitors made their way to the sanctuary. There, an impromptu service was held. Several different scriptures were read to remind those gathered of the importance of all creation to God. Pastor Jamie lovingly took Nova and cradled her in his arms as he asked for God's blessing on her life, and the life of her family.

It was a great—no, it was a blessed—day.

Epworth Children's Home

A legacy of care

Charles Hutchins had a most interesting and productive life. He was raised in Oconee County, South Carolina, and served his country in combat during the Korean War in the U.S. Army. He was awarded a Bronze Star for heroic service and a Purple Heart among other commendations.

Licensed to preach in 1956, Hutchins earned a B.A. from Furman University and then a Master of Social Work from Florida State University. He was then employed as a social worker at the Holston United Methodist Home for Children in Greenville, Tennessee.

In 1973, Hutchins accepted a position as associate executive director at Epworth Children's Home. He became executive director (title later changed to president/CEO) in 1978. Epworth, under Hutchins' leadership, began the transformation from an orphanage to a children's home that provided an array of services based on the latest research and child and family care methodology.

After 22 excellent years of service to Epworth, Hutchins and his wife, Eva "Gay" Grey Hutchins, returned to the Holston Home where he served on the staff in several positions, including director of development, until his death at 90 years of age.

Hutchins left an amazing legacy of care. He was a tireless worker for children and families. He was a pioneer in his field and was an exemplary churchman. He consulted with dozens of other institutions that provided child care services, and he was highly respected by the other professionals in his field. Hutchins, with the loving support of his wife, Gay, lived life as an ambassador of Christ in the best possible way.

He also enjoyed speaking to groups about opportunities to contribute to God's work through family ministries. He loved church meetings, even annual conference gatherings. Most people endure annual conference;

Hutchins treated it like an exciting vacation.

He was a fundraiser beyond compare. He didn't raise funds for children by manipulation or guilt. He was authentic, and he appealed to the best part of human nature. It is estimated that he raised more than \$100 million for the institutions he led and cared for. During his 70 years of ministry, he served thousands of children, youth and families and placed hundreds of children in adoption. Hutchins, when speaking to a group of potential donors, would sometimes say, "We all have at least one thing in common. We are all going to die." He would pause and then say, "And we can't take anything with us, so make out a will. In that will, make sure to take care of your family, leave something to your church and leave something to the little children at Epworth."

He practiced what he preached. He left a legacy of care everywhere he went. He also left a financial legacy to Epworth. Some years ago, he purchased a life insurance policy with Epworth as the beneficiary. Each quarter, a check would arrive at Epworth from Hutchins to pay the premium on the policy. The proceeds from that policy will now become part of the Epworth Endowment Fund as a permanent legacy of care from a person who continues to help children, youth and families, even in his absence. He is now listed as a member of the Society of 1896 that honors those who have remembered Epworth in their wills or estate plans with a gift of \$25,000 or above.

Thank you, Charles Hutchins, for a lifetime of compassion and service and for "remembering the children of Epworth."

For information about the Epworth Society of 1896, contact Lisa Fusco at lfusco@epworthsc.org or John Holler at jholler@epworthsc.org.

—Submitted by John Holler

UMCSC's Cila named board chair for Orangeburg Christian Academy

ORANGEBURG—Orangeburg Christian Academy's Board of Directors voted to approve the nomination of pastor Jeffrey P. Cila as the new chair of the board.

Cila shepherds three churches in the Walterboro District of The United Methodist Church as lay support pastor as of June 29. Cila pastors the Smoaks Circuit, which includes Little Swamp, Trinity and Green Pond UMCs.

Cila received a Master of Science in health informatics from the University of Illinois-Chicago, is a two-time graduate of



Cila

the University of South Carolina and taught for several semesters at both institutions. His professional career includes being a naval intelligence officer (retired) and then working 22 years for the USC School of Medicine and Lexington Medical Center as a system manager and clinical business intelligence analyst.

"The school's steady growth and longevity in the community is a testament to the quality of their faith-based education model coupled with a solid academic foundation provided by a passionate faculty year after year," Cila said.

Retirement/Birthday Celebration Rev. Frank V. James (rescheduled)



The new date and venue for The Rev. Frank V. James, pastor of I. DeQuincy Newman United Methodist Church, is Sunday, Nov. 13 from 4-7 p.m. at the Orangeburg County Conference Center. The center is located at 1643 Russell St., Orangeburg, SC 29115.

The Rev. Edward McDowell, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church will be the guest speaker. Mrs. Helen Miller, recording artist, will be there to join and perform as well.

Pastors, you and your congregations are invited to join us.

Please RSVP at 803-786-9894 or idnewmanumc@gmail.com to guarantee seating. You are welcome to come without an RSVP, but seating will be on a first-come, first-serve basis until capacity is reached. If you RSVP'ed to the previous date, there is no need to respond again unless you are unable to attend.

We are asking all churches to send all RSVPs as a group list via email to idnewmanumc@gmail.com with the following information by Monday, Nov. 7: Church's contact person's name and telephone number; and all persons attending full names/spouse and/or guest's name(s).

You are invited to the

Trinity United Methodist Church - York
Fall Craft Fair - Saturday, November 12, 2022

SHOPPING BEGINS AT 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Handmade Crafts
Seasonal Decorations, Unique Gifts, and much more!

Homemade Baked Goods
Pies, Cakes, Cookies, Breads, Jellies, etc.

Frozen Casseroles
Mac & Cheese, Broccoli, Chicken Yum, Cornbread Dressing, Breakfast Casserole, Meatloaf, & More

All Proceeds Go To Missions

Trinity United Methodist Church
22 East Liberty Street
York, SC 29745



Pastor Lisa Way was the facilitator and joined Lt. Eric Kirkland, Cheryl Murdock and Hilary Hindman with presentations.



Vapes and edibles are made in brightly colored packaging and look like candy; often these items are made to target young users.

Safe Sanctuaries training at Central Circuit spreads awareness

By Cheryl Banks-Murdock

KLINE—Central Circuit Charge (Simpson, New Hope and Union United Methodist churches) hosted a Safe Sanctuary Training in the Walterboro District on Saturday, Sept. 17, at Union UMC.

Pastor Lisa Way was the facilitator of this event, and Way joined Lt. Eric Kirkland, Cheryl Murdock and Hilary Hindman with presentations at the event.

Kirkland is employed with the Barnwell County Sheriff's Office, and his main job is to speak to faith-based institutions. He provided the charge with active shooter training and information on best practices for protecting themselves and each other, what persons counting money should do to protect themselves, the importance of having a plan in place, what to do in a hostage situation and what the sheriff's office will do when they enter the scene to ensure they protect and serve all.

Kirkland will return at a later date to do the second part of this training.

Murdock, from the Axis 1 Center in Barnwell County, was the Darkness to Light facilitator. She began her presentation with an impactful and eye-opening short video on people sharing their stories of molestation and rape while growing up and how it affected their lives. The video showed the congregation how children could be affected by such events without their knowledge because we sometimes do not communicate. These survivors detailed how they attempted to share their stories but never felt heard by

those they attempted to share them with. The survivors were of diverse ages, gender and ethnicity. Murdock discussed the importance of keeping the lines of communication open with children. She also shared the current data on child abuse cases in Barnwell County.

Hindman, from the Axis 1 Center in Barnwell, gave an insightful presentation on vaping, edibles, alcohol and drugs. Her presentation highlighted the effects of alcohol and drugs on the brain and the damage it causes to the body. She showed different vapes and edibles to the participants and how these items are made in brightly colored packaging and look like everyday candy we buy for our children. She showed how these items are made to target our children. The vapes look like jump drives or pens, and the edibles come in packaging like popular children's candy. Many participants said they had little to no knowledge of vapes or edibles, and if they saw them in their children's room, they would not suspect anything.

Way is a Safe Sanctuary trainer in the Walterboro District and conducted the training requirements outlined by the South Carolina Annual Conference for best practices in keeping a sanctuary safe when working with youth and vulnerable adults. She expressed the importance of having policies to prevent the abuse of children and vulnerable adults and having a plan in place when an allegation occurs to handle the incident without further harm safely.



Sale helps many

Manning UMC, Manning, held a yard sale Oct 8. Originally scheduled for Oct. 1, the event had to be rescheduled because of Hurricane Ian. More than 400 people attended, and the sale made more than \$6,000 for the youth program. Leftover items were donated to a group that helps veterans, with clothing given to a thrift shop that helps the animal shelter, Christmas ornaments to Turbeville Children's Home, bedding to Friendship House and home improvement supplies to Salkehatchie Summer Service.

2022 Carolina-Clemson Challenge to help campus ministries

At a critical time of life, The United Methodist Church is on-campus reaching out to college students with the good news of Jesus Christ. Through worship, Bible studies, mission trips, retreats and much more, Wesley Foundations are able to offer God's love and support to a new generation of Christians.

As one way to help support this work, the 2022 Carolina-Clemson football rivalry returns and will be an opportunity for a friendly competition in local churches sponsored by the Wesley Foundations at Clemson University and the University of South Carolina.

Fans of each school are invited to drop in their support in either a USC/garnet bucket or a Clemson/orange bucket as they leave/enter worship on Nov. 20 (Nov. 27 is the alternate date). The money donated will support the students and United Methodist campus ministries at USC and Clemson. Checks can be made out to Clemson Wesley Foundation, and contributions should be sent to the Clemson Wesley Foundation at P.O. Box 1703, Clemson, SC 29633 with "Carolina/Clemson Challenge" as a notation with the amounts for each school.

For more information contact Tom Wall at USC at 803-799-7363 or WallBrodie@aol.com; or Steve Simoeaux at Clemson at 864-654-5547 or steve.simoneaux@gmail.com; or visit <https://clemsoncarolinachallenge.weebly.com>.



A sporting good time

Young people at Manning UMC, Manning, helped sell seating at a recent University of South Carolina game against University of Georgia. Almost \$1,000 was raised to go toward campus ministry, and students got to stay and watch the game.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Vivia Lawton Fowler

High honors

On Aug. 5, three Eagle Scout awards were bestowed on members of the Boy Scout troop at Epworth UMC, Charleston. Pictured are Nick Cook, Joey Sykes and Lucas Gilbert.

St. Paul (Camden) United Methodist Church
511 Knights Hill Rd., Camden SC 29020
Rev. Dr. James P. Smith, Pastor

"Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre." — Psalm 33:2

WE DEEPLY APPRECIATE OUR AMAZING MUSICIANS!!!

Thank you, Vance Alexander (Keyboard/Piano) and Gloria Hayward (Percussions), for enhancing our services with your musical and spiritual gifts as well as your dedication and involvement in numerous other activities at St. Paul.

The St. Paul (Camden) UM Church Family

Thank you!

We are grateful to those who support Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry and donated during our ministry recognition Sunday on Aug. 14.

"On behalf of the Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the generosity shown by so many on Aldersgate Sunday," said Board Chair W.C. Hammett. "Your support allows us to enhance our program offerings to those for whom we are privileged to minister."



ASNМ operates homes in Columbia, Florence and Orangeburg and hopes to open two more homes next year.

For more information on the ministry, visit aldersgatespecialneedsministry.org.

EMBRACING CHANGE: S.C. United Women in Faith turn 50

From Page 1

name, shifting from United Methodist Women to the more inclusive United Women in Faith and enabling them to reach new audiences and spread their mission efforts even farther.

Sally Vonner, United Women in Faith transformation officer for the national office, served as keynote speaker for the event, bringing a powerful word on change and inclusion. The Rev. Judith Knox, pastor of Trinity UMC, Bennettsville, led the Bible study.

By the close of the event Saturday afternoon, the women had approved a \$76,000 budget and elected a new slate of officers, including a new president (Clarice Blakeney), vice president (Kathy Roys) and secretary (Ann Alexander), among others.

Cathy Ford, outgoing president who had served since 2019 and throughout the pandemic, applauded the hard work of the women in spite of what she called “two years of separation, isolation and conducting business and meetings virtually.”

“We have been embracing change, sharing grace and moving forward led by our Lord and Savior,” Ford said to applause as she opened the meeting Friday, Oct. 21, praising the strong mission efforts achieved during the past 50 years. “Let us keep United Women in Faith strong, alive and ready for the next 50 years.”

‘Continuous, purposeful celebration’

The golden anniversary celebration began Friday afternoon with music from Roselle Williamson, musician, and Janet Daniels Lawrence, song leader, then the processional hymn, “We’re Marching to Zion,” as members of the UWF Executive Committee entered and took their seats.

Ford began with a welcome, noting they were finally all able to gather together in person, “Forever fixed in this moment and in this place on this important milestone of 50 years of continuous, purposeful celebration of our program of mission work in South Carolina and around the world.”

Secretary Dr. Renee Ritter presented the program book, which was dedicated to the memory of Rubielee Lawrence Addison, past president of SCCUWF from 1997-2000.

Next came a video greeting from South Carolina Resident Bishop Jonathan Holston applauding the UWF for reaching their “big 5-0,” then warm greetings from Hartsville District Superintendent the Rev. Telley Gadson, First UMC pastor the Rev. Joel McMakin, Myrtle Beach Police Chief Amy Prock, Marion District President Sarah Woods and Local Unit President Janice Myers.

Barb Brooks and Eunice White led a prayer of confession, then Kathy Roys gave the report of the Nominating Committee, introducing the slate of officers to be voted on at the meeting, asking each to stand.

After the women together sang “The Church’s One Foundation,” Jacquelyn Session introduced Knox, who led Bible study on Mark 2:22 (on new wine for new wineskins).

‘Must embrace change’

Knox began by lifting up the Scripture spoken by Jesus as he taught during his earthly ministry: “No one pours new wine into old leather wineskins; otherwise, the wine would burst the wineskins and the wine would be lost and the wineskins destroyed. But new wine is for new wineskins” (Mark 2:22 CEB).

Knox shared how Jesus often used something common as an example so the people of that time could relate. Back then, people used animal skins to store liquid. Water was one thing to place inside an animal skin, but wine was fermented, and putting new fermented wine into an old, dried out animal skin would be a catastrophe, causing the skin to burst and the wine to spill out everywhere. Instead, they needed to use new, supple animal skins to store the wine so as the liquid



Women sing during the processional.



The Rev. Judith Knox shares about new wineskins.

expanded, the new skins could stretch to accommodate it. As Knox said, the old skins are not useless; they simply cannot be used for the new wine. New wine—like new ways and new programs—needs something new.

“This parable is challenging us to think about what is new in our life and how we don’t need to try to contain it in old things. For if we’re not careful, both the new and the old will become useless,” Knox said.

For example, she said, the organization is now called United Women in Faith. As great as United Methodist Women was, we must embrace something new.

“It’s a new day,” she said. “When new worshippers come to church, we can’t just pour new people into the old way that we’ve always done it. We have to look for new wineskins so new worshippers can expand and grow in their faith ... otherwise the new worshippers will spill out and not stay in, and we will fail at making disciples for Jesus Christ.”

Setting sights on the future

In late afternoon, women had their choice of eight workshops: on human trafficking prevention, Limitless group for young women, missions around the world, the guardian ad litem program, a study on the 50-year name history of the organization, the Charter for Racial Justice, a mini Mission u and the Children’s Recovery Center.

After dinner, Session Two started with a word from historian Judy Roumillat, who shared a time of remembrance of the rich history of United Women in Faith since the start of the conference United Methodist Women in 1972 to today. She remembered presidents over the years, including the first president, Connie Byrneside, as well as joys and favorite moments throughout the years.

Next came a service of communion with a word from the Rev. Michelle Louk, First UMC associate pastor, who lifted up Isaiah 43, reminding women they are precious and loved by God, who said we should not fear, for God is with us. In Isaiah 43:18-19, she said, God called us to “not remember the former things, or consider the things of old,” for God was “about to do a new thing” (NRSV).

Lifting up the theme of this year’s annual meeting, “Embracing Change, Sharing Grace,” Louk urged women to not forget the past, but to set their sights on the future, which will be even better. As Louk said, the path is through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, “our savior, light in the darkness, advocate, deliverer and shepherd who will



Sally Vonner brings a word on bold change.



A memorial service honored the women who died this year.

take us through those tough times.”

Gadson offered a word on the transparency offered in the change of “new wine,” as opposed to the shame of the past, then all shared in Holy Communion. The evening ended with a time of afterglow fellowship in the parlor hosted by the Marion District.

‘Making a difference’

Session Three began Saturday at 9 a.m. as Ford reconvened the meeting, then presented a video with a message from Harriett Jane Olson, UWF General Secretary/CEO.

Olson lifted up the vision and reality of United Women in Faith, who she called “fierce and passionate engaged women making a difference in the world.”

Ford gave gifts to every past president there, plus asked various people to stand, from district directors to women younger than age 40.

Sue Owens, president of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of United Women in Faith, lifted up the next Jurisdiction Conference, “Get Together,” set for April 26-28, 2024, in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Samoria Session, UWF Program Advisory Group member spoke about the importance of their work, and Linda Eichenbaum led a litany, “God is Not Neutral Toward Injustice.” Debra Schooler lifted up the Limitless group (younger than 40) and encouraged women to find young women in their church and introduce them to Limitless, also announcing plans for an in-person Christmas Party in December.

Maureen Thomas spoke next about the Legacy Fund, noting they had a goal of \$1/person/unit and reached this goal; the fund helps perpetuate the organization for the next 150 years. She asked women to consider contributing \$2/person/unit this year.

Next Ruby Hannah introduced the Presidential Scholarship recipients. One, Ashley Downs, was there and shared her appreciation for the scholarship. An elementary education major at Charleston Southern University, Downs plans to teach second grade when she graduates. Other recipients this year are Paige Barnes, TaSheea Franklin and Kara Gommer.

Various people lifted up 2023 upcoming events, including the virtual Legislative Advocacy Event (Feb. 1, 7, 16 and 25); a mission trip (March 27-30); the virtual Spiritual Growth Event (April 22); the virtual Come Together Be Together (May 20); an in-person Mission u at Spartanburg Methodist College

For more photos, see [Flickr.com/advocatesc](https://www.flickr.com/photos/advocatesc)

(July 20-22); the annual meeting at St. John’s UMC, Aiken (Oct. 20-21); and District Officers Training (Nov. 11).

Next came a memorial service led by Vickie Harvey lifting up the hundreds of United Women in Faith members in South Carolina who died over the past year.

After a presentation of pledges totaling \$271,000, the women adopted a \$75,880 budget for 2023. A love offering was collected and divided among the four S.C. mission projects (Wallace Family Life Center, Killingsworth, Columbia Bethlehem Community Center and Bethlehem Center Spartanburg).

A call to be bold

Next came Vonner, who brought a keynote message on the fresh start the new name and logo are offering the organization.

Vonner shared updates about the organization, noting that Olson has announced she is retiring in 2023, and they are now searching for a new general secretary/CEO. She reminded the crowd the organization has been around for 153 years, and there is so much to celebrate.

“It’s a fresh start,” she said. “We are refreshing our story but not our mission focus.”

Sometimes it’s hard to embrace change. For example, her older sister resisted smartphones for a long time, but eventually she got on board with the idea. It’s the same thing with the wineskins concept from Mark 2:22.

“We must refresh to welcome the future,” Vonner said, noting that’s what UWF is doing with the name change. “We are still part of the UMC, but we’re more inclusive for women whose churches have left the UMC. Think of it as creating new wineskins for women coming in.”

While some hearts may be troubled about all the changes happening, we must remember that our ancestors throughout the 153-year history of UWF also lived through pandemics, wars and more.

“God is calling us to be bold,” Vonner said. “Everyone has had to make difficult decisions in our past. Let’s celebrate that we make an impact in the world. Don’t let weariness, fear or brittleness weigh us down. We must lean into each other knowing with confidence God is with us.”

New officers elected

After a lunch break, Ford called Session Four to order. After a video on racial justice, it was announced that a total of 196 women were present at the meeting representing every district; the Marion District had the largest number present, with 55 women. Of the 196, 45 were first-time attendees, four were past conference presidents and two were younger than age 40.

Retiring officers were recognized, then came the presentation of the 2023 slate of officers: President Clarice Blakeney; Vice President Kathy Roys; Secretary Ann Alexander; Communications Coordinator Wanda Chandler-Flowers; Social Action Coordinator Patricia Armstrong; Education and Interpretation Coordinator Beth Addis; Committee on Nominations Chair Azilee Dickey; Spiritual Growth Coordinator Vickie Harvey; Secretary of Program Resources Shirley Crosby; and Kim Neal, member of Committee on Nominations.

The officers were elected unanimously, then officially installed.

The meeting closed with the singing of “Here I Am, Lord,” as the women headed out into the sunny afternoon, ready to make a difference in the world once more.

For more about South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith, visit <https://www.umsc.org/women>.

Photos by Jessica Brodie

GADSON HEALTH: 'Your purpose comes from your pain'

From Page 1

time for a major lifestyle overhaul. She began embracing healthy eating and exercise, and over time she has gone from a size 6X and needing a seat belt extender in the car and on an airplane to a 2X and no extender, with more strides to go.

Her transformation has inspired many, and this fall she has been a key part of a four-city health, wellness and education tour organized by Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century titled "Build a Better You: Old School Day-Party and Brunch." Joined by Dr. Michael L. Bowie Jr., national executive director of SBC21, Rita Tolbert of United Healthcare and other health advocates, Gadson has been sharing her story so others can understand the importance of taking charge of their own health in order for God to use them as God needs.

"I stand before you to proclaim: Don't wait to handle your weight," Gadson told the crowd gathered Oct. 15 at Covenant UMC in Greer, South Carolina. "Today is the perfect day for a miracle. Your purpose comes from pain, and obstacles are the birthing suite of possibilities."

Most of our weight issues come from our "wait," issues, Gadson said to a chorus of ams and applause.

"We don't want to wait on God, so we do stuff on own and develop weight in our lives. We spend money we don't have to impress people we don't even know. We marry the wrong person because we can't wait on God! We rush," Gadson said.

But there is truth and whole truth—God's truth—in each one of us, she said. She realized many of her weight problems had to do with improper boundaries in her life, whether that's the weight of past shame or something else.

"You can't pour from an empty pitcher."

It hasn't all been easy. Partway through the pandemic, she hit a wall of depression, anxiety and people-pleasing, and spent almost two months with daily migraines.

"Everything was becoming unglued. I

spent so much energy trying to do everything just right, and my brain got sick," Gadson said. "It took time to heal."

She's come back from the time of self-recovery even more empowered and enthusiastic about encouraging others to prioritize their health—and not only their physical health but their mental, emotional and spiritual health, as well.

"I stand before you today as an anointed vessel of God," Gadson said to cheers. "We have got to stop the wait to handle the weight."

She shared how her family experienced what she calls "the full spectrum of dysfunction." While her mother was a missionary and her father the first Black mayor of Hollywood, South Carolina, they were all a jumble of mental illness, depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, all levels of post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol and drug addiction and poor life choices.

"I had to lose the weight (of the past) to drop the pounds," she said.

She closed her testimony by shared that, like God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, God gave her the "Ten Commitments." These are as follows:

1. Level the playing field in your mind—we all broken.
2. Name the brokenness.
3. Pray, and pray a lot.
4. Stop blaming others for the foolishness you participate in.
5. Practice air traffic control—that is, who is in your air space, your life.
6. Never say what you believe you'll "never" do.
7. Drink your water.
8. Treat yourself well.
9. Boundaries are so important.
10. Stop hurting and start your healing.

"Seek the help that you need," Gadson said. "If I had a heart condition, I would go to the greatest cardiologist. If I had a lung condition I'd go to the top pulmonologist. But when it's mental health, we don't see the brain as an organ, and that's where we are susceptible."



Photo by Jessica Brodie

Hartsville District Superintendent the Rev. Telley Gadson shares her health transformation journey at "Build a Better You," held at Covent UMC, Greer, Oct. 15.

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BBQ for a good cause

Mount Hebron UMC United Methodist Men held their 50th annual barbecue Oct. 8. The event offered pork, chicken, hash and fixings to the entire community, with both carry out sales and a buffet. United Women in Faith held a bake sale, and the men provided 700 barbecued chickens and 3,800 pounds of barbecue pork. The money is raised for missions and scholarships.

Photos courtesy of the Rev. John Culp



Lugoff Parish pastor the Rev. William DuBose with Mrs. DuBose and members of the Lugoff Parish gather at Epworth Children's Home for the shoe donation.

Lugoff Parish donates shoes to Epworth kids

On Sept. 23, the Lugoff Parish family donated shoes to Epworth Children's Home to help the youth of their program.

Members collected shoes over a period of time and donated them on behalf of the Lugoff family with the hope of being able to make a difference in the life of the children being served at that facility.

In doing the effort, the churches said they hope to be obedient to God. As they said, this world is filled with many things that distract people from the love of God—things such as wars, violence in the community, disruptions in the schools and many other distractions. People allow the things of this world to keep them from seeing and hearing God when he speaks. The Lugoff Parish has taken time to be intentional and seek ways to see the presence of God; they have decided to allow God to order our steps and do mission work outside of the sanctuary.

Some ministries of the Lugoff Parish include their grab-and-grow ministry, family rally and shoe drive. As they said, they have "a mission inside of a mission to serve others and impact the people we come in contact with positively."

The three churches of the Lugoff Parish are Mount Joshua, Mount Prospect and Shiloh United Methodist churches.



Deacon's Corner

Rev. Meg Jiunnies

Getting to know Meg

Welcome to the Deacon Corner of the Advocate. We are excited to share with you about the ministry and movement of the Holy Spirit happening in and through the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church's Order of Deacons.

This month, take a moment to learn about the ministry of the Rev. Meg Jiunnies, chair of the UMCSC Order of Deacons.

What prompted you to become a deacon? Was there anyone or experience in particular that influenced your decision?

Jiunnies: Many people were part of my call to ordained ministry, but having the opportunity to participate in eCollege many years ago probably pointed me in the right direction. Reading "The Christian as Minister" helped clarify my particular call, and learning about some of the different ministries of deacons inspired me. The Rev. Cathy Joens mentored me early on and shared with me. I found many similarities in my spiritual gifts and call with other deacons. And having the opportunity to work as a team with many wonderful elders in the local church helped me understand the joy of working with a clergy team. I appreciate the opportunity to serve my community and connect those ministries of our church as well as help to engage our congregation in ministry and spiritual disciplines.

What are your main responsibilities as a deacon? How do your duties differ from those of an elder or licensed local pastor?

Jiunnies: I often say (probably simplistically) I take our senior pastor's vision as well as that of our lay leadership, and try to assist in practical ways to work toward the vision. Even though many of my responsibilities overlap with the other two clergy, who are elders, I have my particular areas of concentration. In this season of life, my primary areas are teaching and preaching, pastoral care, age-level ministries, spiritual gifts engagement and stewardship. I love to participate in worship and worship design also.

What words of advice would you give others who might be interested in becoming a deacon and what do you find to be most rewarding about being a deacon?

Jiunnies: I advise that each person spend time discerning their specific call by learning about the ministries of ordained clergy, deacon and elder, inside and outside of the local church. Interview others to envision what your days and ministry will look like. Pray, discern your spiritual gifts and get the best education you can, both in terms of experience and academics. And, as always when you follow God's call on your life, prepare for the kind of joy that is unimaginable.

In a format replicating Dr. Brenè Brown's Unlocking Us "Rapid Fire Questions," let's get to know a bit more about Rev. Nix.

- Q. Fill in the blank: Vulnerability is:
A. Necessary to being open to the Holy Spirit.
- Q. You're called to do something brave, but your fear is real and stuck in your throat. What's the first thing you do?
A. Breathe, listen to God and pray.
- Q. What is something that people often get wrong about you?
A. They might be surprised to find that I'm tougher than I look.
- Q. What's the last show that you binged and loved?
A. Madam Secretary.
- Q. What is a film that you really love?
A. Little Women (all versions)
- Q. What is a concert you will never forget?
A. Billy Joel, of course.
- Q. What's your favorite meal?
A. Salmon and asparagus
- Q. What's on your nightstand right now?
A. My book, lotion, and a carafe of water. Probably a pair of earrings that shouldn't be.
- Q. Give us a snapshot of an ordinary moment in your life that brings you great joy.
A. Sitting in bed, reading, knowing that my whole family, including all of the dogs, are there throughout the house.
- Q. What is the one thing you are deeply grateful for right now?
A. My family's happiness



United Women in Faith

by Cathy Ford

Asheville to Nashville Adventure

Do you have a bucket list? Our South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith are offering a 2023 spring time Mission Trip designed to complete several bucket-list items. Our March 27-30, 2023, "Asheville to Nashville Adventure" will leave South Carolina by bus and travel to three Southern destinations.

Riders will board Monday morning, March 27, in Charleston, Columbia or Spartanburg and travel to Brooks Howell Home in Asheville, North Carolina. This nonprofit faith-based continuing care retirement facility is home to many deaconesses and missionaries found in our Daily Prayer Guide. Lunch will be enjoyed in their dining room followed by a tour of the facility. We will share prayer in their beautiful chapel, view resident missionary artifacts and displays from across the globe in curios, stroll the Memorial Rose Garden and enjoy fun shopping at the residents' gift shop of handmade treasures.

From there we travel to Lake Junaluska for a one-night stay at the Terrace Hotel. Lake Junaluska's mission is "to be a place of Christian hospitality where lives are transformed through renewal of soul, mind and body." Our Monday night buffet dinner at the Terrace Restaurant will be followed by a quiet evening strolling the Rose Walk beside the lake, rocking in chairs on balconies and viewing the lighted hilltop cross. Tuesday morning will include a Terrace breakfast and a short program in the chapel followed by a prayer labyrinth self-guided walk.

Tuesday's late-morning departure will put us in Nashville before dinner. Our March 28-29 hotel is the Best Western Plus Music Row. The morning of March 29th, we visit Bethlehem Centers Nashville, a national mission institution of United Women in Faith. This active historic center was founded by Estelle Haskins and Sallie Sawyer who broke racial and gender barriers of their time to form a ministry to serve those

in need. Established in 1894 as a day school and rescue mission, this ministry continues to serve the people of Nashville today. They will be open, be operating and provide an informative tour.

We depart late morning for a short ride to Scarritt Bennett Center. Owned by United Women in Faith, this nonprofit retreat and education center is "where individuals and groups engage each other to achieve a more just world." Lunch will be served in their majestic dining hall. We will tour the property and spend quiet reflection in the chapel. The facility hosts many events throughout the year that fight for "women's empowerment, racial justice and dignity for all."

Our one-day travel home Thursday, March 30, will return all riders to their pickup location. We anticipate lasting memories and an enhanced connection to our United Women in Faith organization. Visiting the places they own and provide where others reside, retire, rest, rejuvenate, work, study and grow spiritually will leave lasting images on our hearts. We care more as we share more. We learn and grow by experiencing together. We will check off several bucket list items.

Mission collections and donation opportunities for Brooks Howell Home and the Bethlehem Centers of Nashville will be coordinated prior to departure from South Carolina.

Trip coordinator Ann Alexander (704-616-1133 or MHAALL5@bellsouth.net) needs your \$100 deposit check by Dec. 2. Balance payment of \$65 is due Feb. 3, 2023 which includes transportation and four meals. Travelers must make their own room reservations.

Find the registration form and hotel contact numbers in the September Mission Echo at umcsc.org/women. Join us! Let's check things off our bucket lists.

Ford was South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith president 2019-2022.



Photo courtesy of Midas Touch Photography

A golden celebration

United Women In Faith celebrated their anniversary at Mechanicsville UMC, Bishopville, on Sunday, Sept. 25. The theme was “The Anchor Holds” and was organized by Mae Ruth Cooke, president, and the Rev. Kenneth Middleton, pastor. Guest speaker the Rev. Tolley L. Gadson, Hartsville District superintendent, and Jacquelyn Session, president of Hartsville District United Women In Faith, recognized several of the ladies who were members during the 50-year period.



Guest Commentary

by Deborah Len

Stan

Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday, dear Stanley ...”

It had been several months since that party. Stan was still trying to get some sense of how he is now an adult. He gets up at 6 every morning and eats breakfast and packs his lunch and off to work he goes. He does his job with much zeal, and then he comes home. Five days of every week for the past several years. Was there more to this life?

Today he made one small change. When he turned off his alarm clock, he said a little silent prayer. He had never really asked God for anything, nor had he thanked God for anything. He just went day to day in his “keep on keeping on” sort of way. Today he was struck with this idea of intention. He asked God to firmly place his feet on God’s solid ground.

Now, you have to understand this about Stan. He had always done things exactly by the book. He always did as his parents told him and now his wife. This is a good thing—please do not misunderstand. The issue was he did as he was told. He never allowed God’s will for his life to manifest itself in him. Stan always thought it was better to do as he was told and not “rock the boat.”

Stan left work and took a different route than usual that afternoon. He was getting a little nervous as he never changed anything in his life before. He saw a garden center, and he knew what he was going to do. He stopped in and bought plants and seeds and a shovel and, well, you get the picture. It was Friday, and he had all day Saturday to plant a vegetable and flower garden.

Stan had always wanted to have a garden. He just never did it as it would take away from what his parents had planned for him and now his wife. His wife was furious when he came home later than usual. He had texted her to let her know he would be late. He was, after all, polite. He did not allow her anger to steal his newfound joy. He actually prayed for her to have peace in her heart about this new idea. For the first time in Stan’s 25 years he felt alive. Truly alive.

Some of you are wondering if this was a selfish act on his part. Could they afford to spend the extra money? Was there a place for the garden? Did he neglect his other duties to

his family in order to have this garden? Stan only spent his birthday money he had saved for five years, and there was a beautiful spot that got the right amount of morning sun and afternoon shade. He would still be able to help his parents and his wife as he always had done. He seemed to have acquired extra energy today. Here is where I place a “wink, wink”—we know God gave Stan what he needed. God, after all, always has the perfect plan!

Saturday dawned, and the newer Stan woke before the alarm and said another prayer. This one was full of thank yous and humbled heartfelt remorse for wasting time. God quickly told Stan he had not wasted time, for he was growing into who God needed him to be. Stan smiled, and off to planting he did go.

Time has passed and that garden grew and flourished and produced beautiful blooms that graced the altar of the church Stan had started to attend. Oh, yes, and his wife goes with him. She is learning to let her God-loving husband lead her. He had so many vegetables that he was able to share with his coworkers. Stan had always been polite and nice; he just never thought he had anything else to give to the world. He had always done as he was told, never bothering to ask God for more.

God knew what was needed. God gave Stan what Stan needed when Stan was ready to humble his heart and seek God’s will and not the will of others.

Today is Stan’s 26th birthday, and he is having a special celebration today. He has accepted Jesus into his heart and is becoming a member of the wonderful church God sent him to several months ago. One small change in the routine that was Stanley Goodman’s life made a huge impact on all around him. This is how God works. It is not mysterious as some might think. It is part of the plan we as humans cannot see.

We must trust and obey, as there is no other way.

(This piece draws from Proverbs 16:9, Isaiah 26:3, Romans 8:28, Ephesians 3:20, Philippians 3:13-14 and Psalm 46:10.)

Len is a member of Church of the Good Shepherd United Methodist Church, Lancaster.



Musings

by the Rev. Michael Jarrell

Stuck

Let’s imagine you are a writer. Let’s say you create suspense novels, stuff that really keeps people on edge. You are a master of writing thrillers with an air of tension and mystery.

You’re working on your latest tale, a story about a woman caught up a circumstance of mistaken identity. You’ve gotten the story off and running. The woman is having to escape shadowy figures who seem intent on killing her for reasons she doesn’t yet understand. As you craft the story, creating more and more elaborate situations for her and more dangerous hoops to jump through, you begin to realize something: Not only does she not know where her story is going, but you don’t either. You never really planned things out and, as a result, you don’t know where the story is going or why.

Sometimes churches find themselves in a similar place. They have some basic ideas about what church life looks like. They develop some practices and some ministries that seem to go well for a while but then begin to fall off. The congregation gets excited for a while, but then the excitement wears off.

We seem to be good as people, and for that matter churches, at getting started but then we inevitably find out we don’t know where to go from where we are. So what can we do to get over this hump?

1. Develop ministry around ability

Everyone has particular skills and abilities given to them by Holy Spirit and honed by life experience. Identify yours and be willing to work on it. Even if you know your skills well, they need to be sharpened and especially within the context of ministry. When you know your skills and know them well, look for ways that those abilities can become ministries or ways to support other ministries. My own experience of becoming a minister arose out of my willingness to serve in audio-visual ministry, an extension of my profession at the time (graphic design).

2. Develop a clear vision

Churches can get themselves into trouble with this one. The visions they come up with are either too broad (we’re going to save the city of X) or too narrow (we’re going to help the widow who lives at 123 Main Street between the hours of 12 and 12:30 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every other month). Make the vision something attainable, but attainable with God’s help. It’s not just your vision; it’s God’s vision for you, and it’s God working through you to fulfill the vision. Be clear. Be bold. Be willing to walk where God leads.

3. Develop steps to reach the goal

Like our novel situation above, a clear plan is a necessary part of any work we do together. Without it, people don’t have a focused direction and they begin wandering off to their own things, sometimes at odds with one another. Once the vision is in place, map it. Define the steps—one, two, three—to live into the vision so everyone knows where they are and what the next step is.

4. Develop new visions as you accomplish current visions

Once a vision is fulfilled (at least to a degree), the next step is another vision. There is no retirement plan for disciples. We work until we move from life to afterlife, but we do not stop working. Once the vision comes to fruition, begin again, developing a new vision and walking through the steps to facilitate the new work.

Like many things in life, this isn’t easy. It will take time, effort and cooperation and will come with its own trials and triumphs, but it is what we are called as disciples to do.


So live into it.

Jarrell pastors Adnah United Methodist Church, Rock Hill.


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Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Joseph Abram Jr.

Saying it, or believing it, does not make it so

These days have clearly shown, in my opinion, how connected and dependent upon each other we are. Instantly, we can find ourselves in an untenable state. It does not matter whether we own a stately manor in a plush neighborhood or live in a lowly shanty in a ghetto. We can reside on the tropical islands of Haiti, Barbados or Puerto Rico, or live on the beaches of California, South Carolina or Florida or the foothills and farmlands of Alabama, Georgia or Mississippi—what matters is we need each other.

Even though our common throes remind us, we too quickly forget that fact in our own little worlds. Sadly, our joys, purposes and identities seem to be wrapped up in our differences, i.e., economic status, ethnicity, pigmentation, gender, nationality, political affiliations and religious persuasions. The latter's legitimacy should be contingent on how we deal with the others.

I have had limited exposure to the various faiths, except independent reading and studies, plus a course in "Religious Options in America" in my undergraduate pursuit. However, I was reared in a Christian home, tutored and nurtured in Christian churches and heard powerful thought-provoking sermons in the day that folks said Scriptures forbade women to preach. Most of my earlier experiences and religious training came from my mom, who never took it upon herself to teach me Scriptures (maybe because she didn't read well, and at that time, The King James Version, a translation like other versions, was considered the only "real" Bible with its old English).

My mom taught me instead what she knew, which was the God who had come in the person of Jesus and with whom she had a personal relationship to save everyone, which she assured me included a wretch like me. She warned of days that I would feel strong and others that I may feel weak, but I would have help for the journey, a God whose love from which nothing or nobody could separate me. She didn't have an arsenal of words to use, but she did remind me that God expected me to love my fellow man, as he has loved me, unconditionally. Then she, in turn, showed me what that looked like, as she became the unofficial nurse for anyone who needed care, while others said they "don't have a stomach for sick rooms" and by giving our new clothes to children of a drunken father who didn't provide, spoiling our claim and boast that we, alone, would be the best dressed boys at school the first day.

In the effort to fulfill God's calling and the Methodist Church's mandate, I headed off to Duke Divinity School for ordained ministry studies, and when the nine years of studies were over, I departed with answers to some of the questions I poised when I entered. I wondered why there was a need to go. After all, God had called me, and that ought to be adequate. But we must "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

So, in addition to all I was taught, there was still the need for self-study. The school didn't discourage that, but encouraged it by teaching me to realize that not everything we believe was reality, but often what we have

been fed or have ingested. We are to come to Scripture with an open mind, but if truth was to be told, we all come with various-colored glasses that determine what we see. No one comes, hardly ever, without preconceived notions and understandings. We are to empty ourselves the best we can and attempt to be open, even to new or different understandings. God's ways are higher, more just and more loving. Some things are best left for God. He doesn't condemn or misjudge.

Most seem to agree that God created everything and everybody and said that it was good. I believe that Psalm 100:3 says that as well. Yet we spend a lot of time trying to re-classify what God created as good to the devil's doing. And that causes me to wonder how many angels we may have refused to entertain or little children we have not suffered to come, but rather forbade them to come to Jesus, and thinking God is proud of us for trying to protect him from folks like you and me. Of course, if our understanding of Scriptures is always literal, we may think "little children" means only those younger than 12 years of age.

I often wondered: If we have such a problem with what God has done, why don't we take it up with God? And before we run off to the parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13:24-30), remember that the owner of the crop said, "Leave them alone before you destroy both, the good and the bad. I got this!"

Folks are injured physically, emotionally and spiritually by our words, and those who trust our words. Some have resorted to ending their own lives to escape the stigma of their birth and the condemnation we have shown, while we keep on praying, shouting, yelling and thinking we had nothing to do with it and it's all pleasing to God.

When I was a lad at my mom's church, a minister preached a sermon that resonated and has remained with me over the years, titled, "What Manner of Man Is This?" Several days later, it was circulated that he was stopped on the street while walking and arrested for intoxication. In our school, we had a principal who was well admired and did a jam-up job, making sure we were prepared to face the uncertain future that we could expect from a world in which the deck was stacked against us. After graduation, someone flippantly, said, "Did you know that he was funny?"

I retorted, "He always seemed serious to me!"

For me this didn't and still doesn't seem anything like the God I serve, but even if justification is found in Scripture for that attitude, I'm not buying. I do not worship Scriptures, but rather the God of love of whom they speak (John 5:39).

Folks have used Scriptures to keep my foreparents in slavery, women and minorities from equal rights, to promote so many forms of separations and divisions. But what is the most disappointing is that those of us who have been oppressed have now become the oppressors, using the same device that was used on us, and calling it God's will (John 16:2).

And now to the division and separation of this great church, but it and God will prevail.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Tony Rowell

Life (mere existence or tantalizing tale?)

What in heaven's name is that?" I was hiking the Finley Cane trail up in the Smokies between Townsend, Tennessee, and Cades Cove when those words, or a close facsimile thereof, came to my mind.

I was working my way up to the West Prong Trail so I could jump over to Schoolhouse Gap and then head back down to the parking lot, where Mary was set to pick me up in four or five hours, give or take. As I went along, I was quietly talking to myself, and having a fine conversation, when my eyes went one way and my nose went another.

I was several miles up the trail and deep in the woods when my eyes noticed a perfect 90-degree angle at the end of a straight line 30 yards or so to my left. It was sitting down the hill a-ways on the forest floor hiding amongst the flora and fauna. Now I know Mother Nature, and perfect 90-degree angles way back in the woods just ain't her style. She tends to lean toward the Salvador Dali way of doing things more than she does toward Picasso's Cubism. So my mind whispered in my ear that something wasn't right. My ear, finding nothing amiss, asked my nose to take a look, and my nose quickly noticed the air had gone from pristine to primordial.

There was musk on the air, and not the good kind. This musk was mixed with untold other odors that urged lesser creatures than myself to decamp and decamp quickly. As for me, I got curious and followed the foul-smelling odor with my eyes up the mountain to where it ended, or rather started.

A big, old, full-grown black bear was about a hundred yards over to my right and heading my way. To my relief, I noticed he wasn't focused on me, rather he was focused on the aforementioned 90-degree angle and the bear bait nesting within to my left.

You see, that darn thing was a bear trap, and one of these days I would like to meet the mind that thought putting a bear trap 30 yards from a hiking trail was a sensible notion. Then again, maybe not; it might be better that he or she remains anonymous, for neither the bear nor I thought it a good idea.

I will give that old bear this much: He had finely tuned his focusing ability. You see, he failed to notice me until he was at about the 40- or 50-yard mark where, after a judicious clearing of my throat, he stopped dead in his tracks and regarded me curiously. As it turned out, he didn't know me from Adam and had no desire to make my acquaintance. Sensing that the feeling was mutual, he proceeded to turn tail and casually walk back to his original position on the ridge up above me. From that vantage point, he could assess the situation calmly.

As I stood there listening to my heart pound, gathering my thoughts and renewing any vow I had made to the Lord that I could remember, it came to me that the bear's assessment might lead to an unhealthy forecast; one that wouldn't bode well for my wellbeing.

With that in mind, I proceeded to calmly continue on my way up the mountain. I am afraid I may have left a scent trail for a little while there, but thank God that old bear didn't want anything to do with this old man.

Hiking is like life that way. You never know what's around the next corner. On this particular hike, the bear and the bear trap story was just the opening salvo of a hike that held much adventure, several curiosities and a lesson or two for me.

Just like life.

I don't have the space in this article to do justice to the lost and thirsty exchange students or the bikini-clad travelers or even the soggy surgeon and his family that I met that day. Those are for other essays. (Kinda tickles the curiosity, though, doesn't it?)

All I know is that if I had not ventured down the trail that day, I would have never experienced the exhilaration, the surprise, the laughter, nor the refreshing shower with which I was blessed.

I suppose the lesson in this, for me at least, is that life is a gift from God above. What I do with that gift is left up to me. I can fritter my life away in fear and timidity, or I can venture out for Christ, relying upon his strength and guidance to support me.

I vote for adventure. How about you?

Rowell pastors Beulah United Methodist Church in Gilbert. He is also the author of "What Would Granny Say? And Other Somewhat Embellished Memories," an essay and photography collection published by the Advocate Press (you can buy it at <https://advocatepress.org/store/books/what-would-granny-say>).



Confirming a commitment

The Rev. Walter Harley, recently appointed pastor to the Bethel-Red Bank Charge, confirmed new and returning certified lay speakers in a ceremony on Sept. 25. During the ceremony, lay servants confirmed their commitments to serve the local church and beyond. Recently certified lay servants were Shatonya Linder (new lay speaker) and James E. Bryant, Olga Bryant, and Devon Simmons. Other lay speakers include First Lady Elaine Harley, Marvin Brown, Robert Jenkins, James Jordan, James Mixon, Rosalee Simmons, Catherine Warren and Melinda White. From left are Rev. Harley, Ricky Linder (standing in for wife Shatonya), Olga and James Bryant and Devon Simmons.

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View from the Pews

by Bill Barnier

The end plan

As I approach my 70th year, foremost in my mind is my upcoming retirement from a job and a company I've grown to love and appreciate. I've worked for a paycheck for 58 years, and I'm coming to terms with collecting the dividends for so many years of labor. My working career has been filled with unique experiences, in incredible places, meeting memorable people so unique in the vastness of God's creation.

Before I open fully a new door to that which awaits me in my twilight years, there are a multitude of details that will ensure the needs of my wife and I are adequately filled and protected. The minions of evil are quick to prey upon those who don't prepare. I hear stories directly from people who have lost a large sum of life savings to thieves who prey upon the less mindful or ill prepared. I give thanks daily for the blessings I've been given and pray that Spirit will guide me to those who will protect us.

The laws of men now require a seasoned expert in making sure hard-earned assets, large or small, are secure in retirement and the remaining blessings are properly distributed when God calls us home. The selection of proper legal expertise and financial assistance are of equal importance to the choice of a friend or relative who accepts the responsibility of carrying out final wishes. If you have one or two friends or family who are trusted to make life-ending decisions for you, you have indeed been blessed beyond words. The security and peace of such arrangements is priceless. Leaving these things to chance, or the cumbersome and cold rules of law, is of little tribute to a life given by our Creator.

The same is true of our spiritual plan.

For those who have spent a lifetime learning and living under an umbrella of biblical and spiritual law, there is the satisfaction of knowing that God's love and grace will see us through the end of our earth time. Being aware and warned of those who would rob us of our final security in Spirit gives courage and strength to travel on.

But waiting until the last minute to make peace with the highest of power is simply foolish. Millions of God's children perish in the blink of an eye. No chance to repent, to ask for forgiveness, or to create a deep relationship with the Holy Spirit. No effort to share the love and power of divine energy with those who seek answers. Father Sky reclaims the Spirit, and Mother Earth claims the rest.

Now that retirement is on the calendar, I'm often asked what I plan to do with my time. My answer is that I'll continue to do what I've always done. For the last 50 years I've come to use the phrase, "I live to serve," and that won't change. I'll tell special people in my life I love them a little more often. I'll help someone achieve a dream and help heal and nurture with the grace and power of God. I hope to keep writing of the wonders and wisdom of a blessed life, and I hope to grow in Spirit for the tools to carry me to my next life assignment.

The plan is coming together to make the most of the blessings we've been given. A lot of work still remains so those dear friends won't have regrets for caring for us in our end time. I think tomorrow, when my cat and I meditate and pray with the rising sun, I'll simply give thanks for being loved.

Aho!

Barnier is a member of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Ridgeland.

Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Mickey Fisher (retired)

A flame of goodness in everyone

Many who read this were probably way ahead of this writer in discovering Trevor Noah. Trevor was born in South Africa to a white mother and a black father. Today he is the world's highest paid comedian!

He showed up on my screen while I was searching for something interesting to watch on early evening television. Most of his television program is humorous commentary about what's happening now. It is not The Three Stooges type of humor, but more like the Johnny Carson humor. That is: taking today's major happenings and giving them a humorous twist. He is much more than a humorist. For instance, he writes about 'gentle tenderness.' What does that mean? He gives us three meanings:

First: Gentle tenderness is to see the humanity in those with whom we disagree.

Second: To practice gentle tenderness is to believe that there is a flame of goodness in everyone.

Third: He asks, "Do we live in a culture of contempt?" He answers, "Yes, but we can choose to live above contempt."

Keep in mind that these statements came from a man who was born and raised in South Africa, until recently the world's chief bastion of racism. Marriage between people of different races was a violation of South Africa's law! In his childhood and youth, Noah paid a price. Being neither black nor white in a racist society he was rejected by both blacks and whites. How did he survive? He learned to fight! The school yard and the public park were often the scene of physical combat between Noah and his tormentors.

That he survived with his caring spirit and good humor in tact is the mark of his manhood.

A while back, in celebrating the bicentennial of Methodism in America, one of our bishops asked, "What is God calling us to be and do as we embrace the future?" The good bishop went on to suggest, among other things, that our calling is to demonstrate that God still makes saints. That's a little surprising. Have you noticed how reluctant we are to call living, breathing men and women saints? That may be because we have known too many who were saints only in their own mind. Or, it may be because we have known too many who at one stage of life were genu-

inely saintly persons but whose halos later became tarnished.

In the 12th chapter of Romans, the apostle Paul gives us a picture of a saint. In verse two he says: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." In what follows he admonishes us to pattern our lives after the saints and gives us a catalogue of virtues for saintly living. He says: "Let love be genuine, hold fast to what is good, serve the Lord, rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation and constant in prayer; practice hospitality, bless those who persecute you, rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep; do not be haughty, in so far as it depends upon you live peaceably with all."

It boils down to this: a saintly person is one who, without making a big deal of it, seeks to honor God and God's children. A saint is one who has tasted of God's grace and is therefore free to relate in graceful ways to others. Saints are those who are honest and caring in dealings with those about them.

During my time as a pastor, I recognized numbers of such saints, each of whom would laugh at the idea of someone calling them a saint. In preparation for this article my problem was not to find saints, but to choose representatives. I chickened out by choosing not to name particular saints but to list saintly qualities.

Here goes: Saints hold themselves and others to high standards. Saints are classy human being in ways that have nothing to do with social or economic status. Saints live in the real world with a clear vision of the world's problems and problem people. Saints are people of faith who do not let their religion become a strait-jacket.

Saints have something deep within that defines who they are and how they live their lives.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Robert Cox

Deciding on scouting options

Many United Methodist churches in the South Carolina Conference have scouting as part of their children's and youth ministries. Scouting is an excellent program for training young people for life. It provides a moral background that correlates to Christian teaching and is an excellent outreach tool to the community.

Unfortunately, with the recent Boy Scouts of America bankruptcy caused by past incidences of abuse, the historical relationship with the BSA and the UMC is changing. This change is creating new paperwork and documents that the church needs to keep.

This excerpt from South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston's letter explains it quite well:

"Moving forward, local churches are strongly encouraged to define their relationship with Scouting units using one of two legal agreements—both of which were tailored carefully to comply with and conform to liability insurance coverages that now exist. The Boy Scouts of America was part of the team that drafted these options:

"Affiliation Agreement: With this type of relationship, the church agrees to support the Scouting program through prayer, financial gifts and volunteer service. It will host a Scout Sunday, advertise the Scouting program and volunteer needs, welcome Scouts and provide opportunities for Scouts to participate in the church's youth programs, and promote religious awards. What makes this different from being a "chartered organization": All scouting assets will be transferred to the local Boy Scouts of America council, which would own the unit.

"Facilities Use Agreement: With this type of relationship, the church simply hosts the Scouting program. The church can still support the ministry of Scouting by providing space, storage, communication, membership growth, faith opportunities and opportunities to raise money. Again, what makes this different from being a "chartered organization": The local Boy Scouts of America council (or another group) would own the unit, which would have its own tax identification number, bank accounts, equipment, etc."

There are several places you can download these forms and make the decision as to which form of support of the Scouting ministry the church wishes to take:

- Conference Resource Page, Community Outreach Youth Ministries: <https://methodist-scouter.org/conference-resource-page>
 - Trustees Forms, Basic Church Administration: <https://church-admin.org/trustees-forms>
- If you have any questions, you can contact Rolland Fitch, conference scouting coordinator, at scouting@umcsc.org; me at rlcox@umcsc.org or your district superintendent at <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/District-Directory-9-20-22-map.pdf>.



The members of the Bethlehem United Methodist Church would like to recognize, honor and show appreciation to our Pastor, **Reverend Dr. Redonia McKnight Thomas**. As recorded in 1st Timothy 5:17, "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching."

Rev. Dr. Redonia McKnight Thomas' humble beginnings started on a farm in Kingstree, SC. She has been married to James Thomas for 37 years plus. From the age of 10, Rev. Thomas has been serving the Lord, through the ministry of music, women's ministry, and now full-time ministry. Rev. Thomas has felt a call of the spirit of God most of her life, but in 2009, she answered the call to full-time ministry. In June 2014 she was awarded Full Elder with the United Methodist Conference of SC. A woman that has experienced first-hand God's miracle working power. As a 4-month-old infant, God had his hand on her life when the doctors could do no more and sent her home to die. As a young wife, the doctors said that she could not get pregnant. Refusing surgery and trusting God, she later gave birth to two babies.

Thank you, Rev. Thomas, for answering the call and "Walking in the Way of the Lord."



Photo by Mary Ann Crews, board member

The Rev. Paul M. "Mac" Kinnett (center) displays the certificate of appreciation presented to him at the October meeting of the Board of Directors of the South Carolina United Methodist Foundation. The Revs. Wayne Horne (left), chairperson of the board, and Robert Vincent (right), president of the foundation, made the presentation on behalf of Kinnett's colleagues with whom he had served since 1992 as institutional representative of The Methodist Oaks, Orangeburg.

South Carolina United Methodist Foundation recognizes Kinnett's three decades of service

By Dr. Ted Morton

Mac Kinnett's service as a member of the board of directors of the South Carolina United Methodist Foundation almost matches his service as a member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

The Rev. Paul "Mac" Kinnett began his ministry in 1979, was ordained in 1986 and retired in 2019. He served churches from the South Carolina mountains to its coast and points in between.

Recently, the foundation recognized Kinnett's three decades of service by presenting him with a certificate of appreciation presented to him at the October meeting of the foundation's board. The Revs. Wayne Horne, chairperson of the board, and Robert Vincent, president of the foundation, made the presentation on behalf of Kinnett's colleagues with whom he had served since 1992 as institutional representative of The Methodist Oaks, Orangeburg.

The Board of The Methodist Oaks approved appointment of Kinnett as their representative on The Foundation Board in 1992. The Rev. C. Burt Sheffield, late member of the South Carolina Conference, was president/CEO of The Methodist Oaks when the Oaks' board nominated Kinnett to serve as a member of The Foundation Board. Dr. Roger Gramling, president/CEO of the foundation, received the nomination at that time, reported it to the board and Kinnett was duly elected. The board's minutes recorded June 4, 1992 as the beginning date for Kinnett's service.

During the past several years, The Methodist Oaks became a proprietary facility when financial difficulties made it impossible to continue operation. Sale to a proprietary entity proved to be an avenue to save the property and continue serving the residents. As a for-profit entity, The Oaks could no longer hold membership in the South Carolina United Methodist Foundation, a nonprofit foundation, which The Oaks had helped to organize and charter with the late Dr. W. Harry Chandler as the first executive director.

The Methodist Oaks (originally "The Methodist Home") had its beginning not

long after the end of World War II. The late Rev. J.F.M. Hoffmeyer, of the South Carolina Conference, led the effort to enlist conference sponsorship of its first "home for the aging." Hoffmeyer was successful, and the conference acquired the properties of the Hawthorne Flying School near Orangeburg. Hawthorne, a private flying school, was acquired by the U.S. Army Air Corps near the beginning of World War II to train pilots for military service. When the war ended, the Hawthorne property and facilities were conveyed to Orangeburg County by the federal government. Among those trained at the facility were "Free French" pilots who escaped their homeland when German forces overran France. The Rev. Burt Sheffield proposed the name "The French Quarter" for a section of the home's newly developed independent living area.

Organized in 1977, The South Carolina United Methodist Foundation Inc. exists to cultivate, develop and administer current and deferred gifts for endowment to support United Methodist institutions, agencies and local churches, as well as other church-related ministries and charitable purposes and to encourage planned giving among United Methodists in South Carolina. The business, property and affairs of the foundation are managed by a board of directors.

Foundation board of directors serve as institutional members of the board, or as at-large members. Institutional members constitute the majority of the board's membership. With Kinnett's retirement from the board and The Oaks no longer a member, participants are the four South Carolina Conference colleges (Claflin University, Columbia College, Spartanburg Methodist College and Wofford College) and three South Carolina homes (Epworth Children's Home, Methodist Manor and Wesley Commons).

The foundation also serves local churches that have permanent funds requiring financial management (agency members), as well individuals through charitable remainder trusts. For additional information, contact Vincent at P.O. Box 5087, Columbia, SC 29250-5087 or call the foundation office at 803-771-9125.

Global Briefs

Slovakian churches leave to join Global Methodist Church

ZURICH—Bishop Patrick Streiff, who leads the Central and Southern Europe Area, announced with sadness that the 12 churches of the Slovakia District have left The United Methodist Church to join the breakaway theologically conservative Global Methodist Church. He said the district took its actions without any reference or authorization from the *United Methodist Book of Discipline*. The district had four ordained elders, four local pastors and 233 members.

Los Angeles church plans urban farm

LOS ANGELES—In a part of the city where liquor stores outnumber grocery stores, St. Mark United Methodist Church is hoping to plant seeds of change. The church already maintains the Prayer and Produce garden. Now with land from the California-Pacific Conference, the church has plans to build an urban farm and community gathering place.

Top executive plans to retire this year

WASHINGTON—The United Methodist Board of Church and Society, the denomination's public advocacy arm, announced Oct. 19 that the Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe plans to retire at the end of 2022. Henry-Crowe has served as the agency's top executive for eight years.

Email still relevant for church outreach

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—With myriad ways for people to connect, email remains a tried-and-true means of communication. Aaron Crisler shares advice from United Methodist Communications staff on how churches can put together effective email campaigns.

Men's Ministries director named

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The Rev. Sterling L. Eaton will begin work Oct. 31 as the new director of the Center for Men's Ministries, United Methodist Men announced. "His depth of vocational experience, pastoral experience and leadership ability is in complete alignment with our new ministry direction," said Greg Arnold, top executive of United Methodist Men. Eaton is a Navy veteran serving as a UMC pastor in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

Jurisdictions advised to elect 14 US bishops

NEPTUNE, N.J.—Faced with uncertainties around the denomination's finances and future membership, jurisdictional leaders are recommending United Methodists elect fewer U.S. bishops than there will be vacancies. But after the Northeastern Jurisdiction met for a special session Oct. 15, it's clear all five U.S. jurisdictions will be holding episcopal elections.

Native American leader discusses threatened cultures

KARLSRUHE, Germany—The Rev. Glen "Chebon" Kernell, executive director of the United Methodist Native American Comprehensive Plan, discussed the realities for Native peoples and the need to promote climate justice. Kernell was among the 3,000 participants at the 11th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

South Africans march against gender-based violence

CAPE TOWN, South Africa—United Methodists joined with the South Africa government's Department of Sports, Arts and Culture to organize a march to raise awareness about gender-based violence. Participants marched under the "Thursdays in Black" banner as part of the World Council of Churches campaign "that resists attitudes and practices that permit rape and violence."

Women's agency head plans to retire in 2023

NEW YORK—Harriett Jane Olson, top executive of United Women in Faith, has announced plans to retire in spring 2023. Olson took the helm of what was then the Women's Division of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries in 2007. Under her leadership, the women's mission organization became an autonomous United Methodist agency in 2012 and recently rebranded as United Women in Faith.

Solar power helped in Florida

ATLANTA—Volunteers from North Carolina who were already planning to meet in Florida to learn about solar generators ended up getting some real-world experience, courtesy of Hurricane Ian. The volunteers helped set up solar microgrids in the Fort Myers, Florida, area that were used to assist EMTs with triage. Another provided light, charging and cooling at night.

Megachurch takes unusual disaffiliation route

PLANO, Texas—St. Andrew United Methodist Church, the second-largest church in the North Texas Conference, has announced it is leaving the denomination. But the decision was made by the church's executive committee, not the full congregation, triggering an objection from North Texas Conference Bishop Michael McKee.

Seminaries plan virtual recruiting fair

ATLANTA—All 13 United Methodist Theological Schools in the U.S. plan to hold a virtual recruiting fair at 1 p.m. U.S. Eastern time Nov. 4. The online fair is for those interested in vocational ministry or further study in theology. Candler School of Theology is the host.

10 free services for local churches

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—United Methodist Communications has a menu of services and tools. Greg Petree has assembled a list of the top-10 services United Methodist Communications offers for free to help local congregations reach out to their communities.

Bishop Muyombo to chair Connectional Table

CHICAGO—North Katanga Area Bishop Mande Muyombo will transition to the role as the chair of the Connectional Table on Dec. 1. He will chair a leadership body of lay and clergy with responsibility of coordinating The United Methodist Church's mission and ministry, including general agency work. Muyombo will succeed Nordic-Baltic Area Bishop Christian Alsted, who has served as chair since 2016.

West Ohio bishop calls special session

WORTHINGTON, Ohio—Bishop Gregory V. Palmer has called a special session of the West Ohio Annual Conference at 9 a.m. U.S. Eastern time Nov. 19. The online session will act on requests of churches to disaffiliate and changes in clergy status since July 1.

—Courtesy of United Methodist News Service

Leave A Legacy To Change Lives

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

Dorothy Ann Bean

DeWITT, IOWA—Dorothy Ann Bean, mother of Terry Lupo, died Sept. 25, 2022. Mrs. Lupo is the wife of honorably located the Rev. David Lupo.

A memorial service was held Oct. 22 at Schultz Funeral Home.

Memorials may be made to Trinity Health Foundation, 2701 17th St., Rock Island, IL 61201.

Mrs. Bean is survived by her son and two daughters.

Rev. Frank Bundy Bynum Jr.

WINNSBORO—The Rev. Frank Bundy Bynum Jr., a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Oct. 3, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 1999, Rev. Bynum served the Mount Olivet-Pleasant Grove, Chesterfield-St. Paul, Charleston-St. Mark, St. George, Spartanburg-St. Paul, Gilbert-Beulah and Winnsboro-First charges. Rev. Bynum also served as the superintendent of the Orangeburg District from 1982-1985.

A memorial service was held Oct. 20 at First UMC.

Memorials may be made to the Building Fund of First UMC, 109 W. College St., Winnsboro, SC 29180.

Rev. Bynum is survived by his wife, Betty Mobley Bynum, son and daughter.



Bynum Jr.

John William Click

ROCK HILL—Dr. John William Click, a former chair of the Board of Trustees, *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate*, died Sept. 14, 2022.

A memorial service was held Oct. 22 at Aldersgate UMC.

Memorials may be made to the Mike Culp Cancer Fund, Aldersgate UMC, 2115 Celanese Road, Rock Hill, SC 29732; or to the J. William Click Mass Communication Endowed Scholarship at Winthrop University, 701 Oakland Ave., Rock Hill, SC 29733.

Dr. Click is survived by his wife, Dixie D. Brown Click, and two sons.

Rev. Joseph Lynn Curtis

SIMPSONVILLE—The Rev. Joseph Lynn Curtis, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church and husband of the Rev. Brenda Curtis, died Sept. 25, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 2015, Rev. Curtis served Piedmont Park, First Hemingway, Rehoboth-Bethel, Aldersgate, First Lancaster and Memorial charges. Following his retirement he served Few's Chapel charge.

A private graveside service was held Oct. 3 at Hillcrest Cemetery, Valdese, North



Curtis

Carolina. A memorial service will be held Oct. 22 at Advent UMC, Simpsonville.

Memorials may be made to First UMC, 217 St. Germain Ave. SE, Valdese, NC 28690; or to Spartanburg Regional Health-care System/Hospice, 101 E. Wood St., Spartanburg, SC 29303.

Rev. Curtis is survived by his wife, two daughters and son.

Eugene Harold Luntey

SHELTER ISLAND, N.Y.—Eugene "Gene" Harold Luntey, grandfather of Matt Brodie, died Sept. 8, 2022. Mr. Brodie is the Disaster Response and Communications Production coordinator of the South Carolina Conference. His wife, Jessica, is the editor of the *Advocate*.

A memorial service was held Oct. 7 at Union Chapel in the Grove, Shelter Island Heights, New York.

Memorials may be made to the Eugene H. and Beverly W. Luntey Scholarship Fund, Long Island University, 700 Northern Boulevard, Brookville, NY 11548 or Union Chapel in the Grove, P.O. Box 326, Shelter Island Heights, NY 11965.

Mr. Luntey is survived by his son and four stepchildren.

Valery McCray

LYNCHBURG—Valery McCray, sister of the Rev. Larry McCray, died Sept. 23, 2022. Rev. McCray is the pastor of the Elijah-St. Luke Charge, Kingstree.

Funeral services were held Oct. 3 at New Haven United Methodist Church, Timmonsville, with burial in Hawkins Cemetery.

Ms. McCray is survived by her two sisters and nine brothers.

Darien Doughty George Pickens

GREENVILLE—Darien Doughty George Pickens, a longtime member of the South Carolina Conference Historical Society Board, died Feb. 27, 2022.

Funeral services were held March 4 at Aldersgate UMC with burial in Woodlawn Memorial Park.

Memorials may be made to Aldersgate UMC, 7 Shannon Drive, Greenville, SC 29615; or to Epworth Children's Home, P.O. Box 50466, Columbia, SC 29250.

Mrs. Pickens is survived by her husband, Robert Pickens, and two daughters.

Rev. John Russell Rumford

FORT LAWN—The Rev. John Russell Rumford, a retired local pastor of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Oct. 6, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 2004, Rev. Rumford served the Richburg-Mount Prospect, Asbury and Mount Prospect charges. He served the Mount Prospect Charge following his retirement.



Rumford

Obituary Policy

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 S.C. Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Oct. 12 at the chapel of Burgess Funeral Home with burial in Elmwood Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to Elmwood Cemetery, P.O. Box 54, Fort Lawn, SC 29714.

Rev. Rumford is survived by his wife, Sara Rumford, and son.

Rev. John Terrell Rush

GREER—The Rev. John Terrell Rush, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Oct. 15, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 2002, Rev. Rush served churches in the California-Pacific Conference and the Rocky Mount Charge, Columbia-St. John-Shady Grove, Monaghan-Poe, Loris-First, Batesburg and Memorial charges. Following his retirement, he served the Jackson Grove, Apache-Jackson Grove and Jackson Grove charges.

Funeral services were held Oct. 23 at Memorial UMC.

Memorials may be made to Memorial UMC Building Fund, 201 N. Main St., Greer, SC 29650.

Rev. Rush is survived by his wife, Elaine Rush, and three daughters.



Rush

Jack Eugene Shaw

CHARLESTON—Jack Eugene Shaw, father of the Rev. Tim Shaw, died Sept. 25, 2022. Rev. Shaw is the pastor of Asbury-St. James United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Sept. 29 at Asbury-St. James UMC with burial in River-view Memorial Park.

Memorials may be made to St. Mark

UMC, 413 Geddes Ave., Charleston, SC 29407; or to Asbury-St. James UMC, 754 Rutledge Ave., Charleston, SC 29403.

Mr. Shaw is survived by his wife, Barbara Lipe Shaw, and three sons.

Alma Virginia Bundrick Stalnaker

COLUMBIA—Alma Virginia Bundrick Stalnaker, mother of Tommy Stalnaker, died Oct. 9, 2022. Mr. Stalnaker is the husband of Betty Stalnaker, coordinator of the Resource Center of the South Carolina Conference.

Graveside services were held Oct. 14 at Southland Memorial Gardens.

Mrs. Stalnaker is survived by her son and three daughters.

Kathleen R. Thompson

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.—Kathleen R. Thompson, mother of the Rev. Christopher Thompson, died Oct. 4, 2022. Rev. Thompson is the pastor of St. Luke United Methodist Church, Bluffton.

Mrs. Thompson will be buried in the East Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery, Newport, Tennessee.

Grady Lee Whitten

COLUMBIANA, Ala.—Grady Lee Whitten, brother of Pat Mack, died Oct. 10, 2022. Mrs. Mack is the administrative assistant to the secretary of the South Carolina Conference.

Funeral services were held Oct. 14 at Fourmile Baptist Church with burial in the adjacent cemetery.

Memorials may be made to the American Cancer Society, P.O. Box 6704, Hagerstown, MD 21741.

Mr. Whitten is survived by his wife, Catherine, and three sons.

Frank E. Williams Jr.

SUMTER—Frank E. Williams Jr., brother of the Rev. J. Elbert Williams, died Oct. 12, 2022. Rev. Williams is the pastor of the Lamar-Ebenezer Charge, Lamar.

Funeral services were held Oct. 16 at Morris College Auditorium with burial in Unity Memorial Garden, Camden.

Mr. Williams is survived by his wife, Thoma Lewis Williams, three sons and daughter.

Did You Know?



The *Advocate* offers a free one-year subscription to anyone who joins a United Methodist Church in South Carolina. Send us your new members' names and addresses and the name of your church and we'll get them started on becoming more informed about our conference and our church:

atrussell@umcsc.org

Trinity UMC - York, has been blessed by these faithful servants:

- T. J. Williams - Music Director
- Carol Forsythe - Organist/Pianist
- Alice Smith - Handbells



They sow seeds of Christs' redeeming love through the gifts our Lord has given – Thanks Be to God!

*Trinity United Methodist Church
22 East Liberty Street
York, SC 29745*



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From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

Who was Bishop Collins Denny?

Bishop Collins Denny was one of the leading bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, but so strongly opposed reunification that he never recognized the legitimacy of the Methodist Church.

Born in 1854 in Winchester, Virginia, he studied at Princeton, then attended law school at the University of Virginia. After a few years of practicing law in Baltimore, he decided to enter the ministry. He joined the old Baltimore Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1880.

He served appointments in Virginia, Maryland and West Virginia until 1891. From 1889-1891 he was the chaplain of the University of Virginia. In 1891, he accepted a position teaching mental and moral philosophy at Vanderbilt. He remained there for the next 19 years. As a scholar, he contributed to the Methodist Quarterly Review, the Library of Southern Literature and other publications. Later in life, Douglas Southall Freeman, the author of the extensive biography of Robert E. Lee, asked Denny to proofread and fact-check the entire manuscript before it was published.

He was a delegate to five General Conferences, from 1894 to 1910 and was the secretary of the 1894 General Conference. No doubt his scholarly activities led him to serve on the church's book committee, which he chaired from 1898 until he became a bishop.

In 1910, the General Conference elected him to the episcopacy, where he served for the next 24 years. From 1913-1915, and again from 1922-1925, he presided over the South Carolina and Upper South Carolina conferences. His precision both as a scholar and a presiding officer, however, gave him a reputation as being chilly. He was exacting about the rules and would often correct clergy from the chair when they made an error of grammar or fact. That probably did not endear him to the ministers in the annual conferences where he presided.

When he was elected a bishop, he left Vanderbilt, though that was the time when Vanderbilt was in the process of leaving the denomination. He lived in Richmond for the rest of his life, traveling to meet the various annual conferences where he was assigned to preside.

Some observers claimed Denny was the best parliamentarian the denomination ever had. One biography noted that he spent much of his time answering questions about church law and procedure. He was the secretary of the College of Bishops for 17 years and edited six editions of the *Book of Discipline* of the Southern church. No doubt his legal training influenced his work in the church.

He used his knowledge of law and history in his later years to oppose the reunification of the church. He retired in 1934, around his 80th birthday, and after reunification in 1939, refused to accept his pension as a retired bishop from the Methodist Church. He and his son, who was also an attorney, sued for the right to use the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. They lost. His son continued to represent opponents of desegregation in Virginia after Bishop Denny's death in 1943.

Stone is archivist for the South Carolina Conference and Wofford College. Read his blog at blogs.wofford.edu/from_the_archives.



Conference Historical Society

by the Rev. Meredith M. Dark

The backbone of the Wesley family

Susanna Annesley Wesley, the mother of John and Charles Wesley, is said to have lived from Jan. 20, 1669 to July 23, 1742; she was 73 years old upon her death.

Susanna was the youngest of 25 children and birthed 19 children of her own (some sources say 20), including two sets of twins, and only 10 children lived to adulthood. When we look at the success of the Methodist Movement, many practices can be traced back and credited to Susanna.

It is comical that classmates of John and Charles at Oxford gave such unflattering names to their club, but the diligence required of its members may have originated with the early practices of their mother and the self-discipline she instilled in all of her children.

Many people who write about leadership and how to gain success in life and finance could take lessons from Susanna Wesley and her diligence. As a mother, Susanna ordered the life of her house in such a way that time was scheduled, never fettered away, and her children were constantly occupied and educated. Albert C. Outler describes Susanna as "both matriarch and saint, who presided with equal grace and firmness over the affairs of a large, impoverished family—mother, teacher, lodestar."

Susanna was certainly the backbone of the Wesley family, as she provided strength, stability, education and boundaries for her children.

In *The Mother's Heart* magazine, Susanna's 16 rules for her household are listed:

1. Eating between meals not allowed.
2. As children they are to be in bed by 8 p.m.
3. They are required to take medicine without complaining.
4. Subdue self-will in a child and those working together with God to save the child's soul.
5. Teach a child to pray as soon as he can speak.
6. Require all to be still during family worship.
7. Give them nothing that they cry for,

and only that when asked for politely.

8. To prevent lying, punish no fault which is first confessed and repented of.

9. Never allow a sinful act to go unpunished.

10. Never punish a child twice for a single offense.

11. Comment and reward good behavior.

12. Any attempt to please, even if poorly performed, should be commended.

13. Preserve property rights, even in smallest matters.

14. Strictly observe all promises.

15. Require no daughter to work before she can read well.

16. Teach children to fear the rod.

It is said that Susanna expected her children to learn the alphabet in one day; only two of her girls took a day and a half to fully master the lesson before moving forward.

At the end of a day, Susanna would review the day's lesson in its entirety to ensure the children gained comprehension.

Like many mothers, Susanna put the needs of her family first. She also took the faith formation of her children very seriously. Each week Susanna would spend one hour with each child, instructing them with spiritual direction.

Susanna's passionate faith has a great deal to say to adults and parents. The lasting impression Susanna leaves with many is her unwavering commitment to dutiful parenting. It is hard to imagine running a household with so many children and the discipline and order it would require of a mother. Her lessons on child rearing and spiritual direction are helpful, especially in this day and age with so many distractions.

What if parents today spent an hour each week instructing each of their children in spiritual direction? Perhaps we would have a leader of another evangelical revival and a hymn writer who would lead us in the "more excellent way."

Dark is president of the Conference Historical Society. To learn more about their work or how to get involved, email her at mmdark@umcsc.org.

Yongue speaks at Midland Park's 101st anniversary celebration

By Violet Legette

NORTH CHARLESTON—Midland Park United Methodist Church celebrated their 101st anniversary Oct. 16 with the Rev. Neil Malone Yongue Jr. as the guest speaker.

Yongue and his wife, Imogene Gaddy, grew up at Midland Park and were married at Midland Park.

Members said they were so excited they were able to join in celebrating this special anniversary.

Midland Park's pastor the Rev. Millard Cooper Stonestreet, along with Choir Director Denton Matthews and Homecoming Chairperson Mary Hutto, planned an exciting couple of days for everyone.

A spaghetti dinner was enjoyed by all on Saturday, Oct. 15, then came a big luncheon after the worship service on Sunday, Oct. 16. On Sunday, the choir sang several beautiful hymns, and Heather Freeman Lawter, a former member, performed a solo.

Many former members, friends and the current congregation celebrated with worship, food and fellowship. Several displays showcased photos of the church and its



Yongue

members throughout the years. Some of the older members were able to point out photos of them as children in some of the displays.

According to a brief history of the church, Midland Park started in April 1921 when several families came together and formed Union Church with members from four different congrega-

tions. The property was donated by H.L. Fuller in July 1921. They met in homes until the church was constructed.

In 1926, they voted to become a member of the South Carolina Conference and became Midland Park Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

In 1939, five Sunday school rooms were constructed and annexed to the building. In 1947, they purchased a war surplus of army barracks and turned them into an education building. In 1952, the new sanctuary was constructed and first parsonage purchased. In 1976 and 1977, the family center was built.

Over the years, many mission efforts started and are part of the church's identity today.



A huge milestone

St. John's UMC, Fort Mill, celebrated their 150th anniversary Sept. 25 with guest pastor the Rev. John Warren Jr. preaching at both services to a combined crowd of 276 people. Everyone joined for a hospitality time in the fellowship hall for refreshments, a video, photos, displays, and a group photograph of the large crowd. S.C. State Representative Raye Felder presented a proclamation to pastor the Rev. Karen Radcliffe during the 11 a.m. service.

Photos courtesy of Elaine Cryderman



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Rev. William Hammett: Trinity's blessing from a hurricane

By Chip Sturgis

Trinity United Methodist Church, the oldest Methodist congregation in Charleston, has survived being battered by many storms. The congregation thanks God that the church sustained little additional damage as they continue to repair and improve the buildings from the visitations of hurricanes past.

Of the many joyful outcomes of surviving hurricanes throughout the Holy City's long history is the reconciliation that we are all one family, and we survive or not together. We gather as the winds subside and the waters retreat to reclaim what is left as building blocks for the future. Metaphorically, this is the origin of Trinity's founder and most ardent supporter, the Rev. William Hammett.

Beginning in 1736, the Revs. John and Charles Wesley, founders of Methodism, visited Charleston several times from their ministry in Savannah. Noted evangelist the Rev. George Whitefield followed the brothers three years later to bring salvation to the American colonists. He preached in the open air or, when banned from the Episcopal Church in 1740, he continued to preach in the Congregational and Huguenot churches in Charleston.

Immediately following the liberation of Charleston from the British, the multicultural gathering of Methodists erected their own house of worship on Cumberland Street between Meeting and Church streets. Bishop Francis Asbury took a special interest in the black Christians of Charleston anchored among the Methodists. He led a full-scale revival to make the world their parish and not the parish their world. Bishop Asbury helped Charleston become a regular appointment during the 1785 Methodist Conference in Baltimore, Maryland.

Other residents of the city did not like the inclusive congregation and attacked the church with stones and bricks during their second Annual Convention of 1788.

Into this maelstrom, Bishops Asbury and Bishop Thomas Coke sought a strong guiding force. During the 1791 Conference, Bishop Asbury and Bishop Coke brought a guest: an extremely eloquent Irish Methodist preacher named Rev. William Hammett. Hammett had been doing missionary work on St. Kitts in the West Indies and was the first missionary to Jamaica in 1789. He had sought to recover from the tropical heat and disease with a posting to Newfoundland; however, he was shipwrecked by a hurricane off



The Rev. William Hammett, founder of Trinity UMC.

Edisto Island, near Charleston, arriving there Feb. 23, 1791. Unfortunately, Bishop Asbury had already finished making that year's appointments when Coke and Hammett arrived.

Considerably recuperated, despite the shipwreck, and considered a near-martyr to the Jamaican mob, Hammett was asked to preach. His brilliant oratory captured the people, who clamored for his appointment to the city. But the appointment having already been made, Bishop Asbury refused to make a change, so Hammett organized what he called the "Primitive Methodist Church" and began preaching in the City Market in Charleston on Christmas Day 1791.

Hammett railed against Asbury's rigid episcopacy and "high church" in this new post-revolutionary republican age. His fiery orations drew larger and large audiences in the Market. The Hammettites, or Primitive Methodists, were considered by Asbury as secessionists from the church because they did not wear gowns and powder and because they did not pay sufficient respect to Mr. Wesley. Soon, Hammett's popularity was so great that he was soon able to buy a large lot at the corner of Hasell Street and Maiden

Lane, upon which he erected Trinity Methodist Church in 1792.

Almost a century later, following the Civil War and the destruction of both Cumberland and Trinity's churches, the two congregations united under the Trinity banner. On August 25, 1885, a deadly hurricane of unusual violence swept over Charleston and damaged many buildings. Trinity Church was one of those, which suffered most. Much of the roof was torn off, and the heavy rains, which poured down for a week, further damaged the building. Following the Charleston Earthquake of 1886, the weakened church had to be bolted back together, as were many of the surviving public buildings and stately homes.

In 1926, the Trinity Methodist congregation purchased their current home when Westminster Presbyterian Church moved to Sam Rittenberg Boulevard in West Ashley. The Meeting St. church was built in 1850 in the Classic Revival style and modeled after the Church of the Madeleine in Paris. The Trinity congregation brought with them a large Tiffany window donated in memory of George Walton Williams, builder of the Calhoun Mansion, installing it in an existing chapel at the southwest end of the church.

Since then, the state and city have gone through many memorable hurricanes such as Hazel, Gracie and Hugo. The history of Trinity is punctuated by recovery from life's storms, which occasionally change Charleston in surprising ways.

In some cases, God's benevolence brings us through the storms with unanticipated blessings. We thank God for all those keeping Trinity strong and welcome all those visiting and looking for a home.

(Sources: Historic Charleston Foundation, Archive Record 275 Meeting Street, Trinity Methodist Church, <https://charleston.pastperfectonline.com/archive/F2C9B411-5292-4CD0-83AF-387483187770>; D.A. Reily, "William Hammett, Missionary and Founder of the Primitive Methodist Connection," *Methodist History*, pp. 30-43; John Saillant, "Before 1822: Anti-Black Attacks on Charleston Methodist Churches from 1786 to Denmark Vesey's Execution," *Common-Place, The Journal of Early American Life*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Winter 2016; Rev. John O. Willson, "Sketch of the Methodist Church in Charleston, S.C., 1785-1887," Charleston, SC, Lucas, Richardson & Co., 1888.)

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October

*Bethlehem Center, Spartanburg
Special Emphasis Month (UWF)*

- Oct. 1-31—Pumpkin Patch, Disciples UMC, Greenville, Monday to Saturday: 9 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sun: 12-7 p.m.
- Oct. 29—Church Bazaar, Zion UMC, Prosperity, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Oct. 29—ERT Basic/Renewal Training, Highland Park UMC, Florence, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration>

November

- Nov. 1—All Saints Day
- Nov. 1—UMVIM, Grace UMC, Columbia, 7:30-8:30 p.m.
- Nov. 1—LSM School, Charleston District, Zoom, 6:30-9 p.m.
- Nov. 2-17—HealthFlex Annual Enrollment
- Nov. 3—LSM School, Charleston District, Zoom, 6:30-9 p.m.
- Nov. 4-6—Immerse, Asbury Hills Camp and Retreat Center. <http://scmyp.org/immerse>
- Nov. 5—ERT Basic/Renewal Training, Cornerstone UMC, Rock Hill, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration>
- Nov. 6—Daylight Savings Time ends



Journey through time

Seniors from Manning UMC, Manning, visited Hobcaw Barony Oct. 18. Hobcaw Barony is a privately owned research reserve located on the coast near Georgetown. Its 16,000 acres encompass a rich diversity of every common ecosystem found on the South Carolina coast, making this an unparalleled site for research in the environmental sciences. More than 70 cultural sites on the plantation including cemeteries, slave cabins and homes all provide a time capsule for educators.

- Nov. 6—All Saints Sunday Combined Choirs Concert, Shandon UMC, Columbia, 4 p.m.
- Nov. 8—Election Day
- Nov. 10—Killingsworth Stay at Home Virtual Gala, 7 p.m. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/75th-anniversary-virtual-gala-tickets-441376457867>
- Nov. 11—Veterans Day
- Nov. 12—UMW District Officers Training, 8:30 a.m.
- Nov. 13—SC63 Presentation and Exhibit, Washington Street UMC, 5-7 p.m. Nancy Whittle, ncwhittle@aol.com.
- Nov. 19—First Fall Festival, Bethlehem UMC, Hartsville, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Nov. 19 or 21—weather dependent; Thanksgiving giveaway, Good Samaritans

for All People, Old Bishopville High School Field, 10 a.m.

- Nov. 20—Guest preacher the Rev. Lloyd Nyarota from Zimbabwe at Union UMC, Irmo, 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. services.
- Nov. 24—Thanksgiving Day
- Nov. 24-25—United Methodist Center closed for Thanksgiving
- Nov. 25—Native American Heritage Day

December

- Dec. 3—Limitless gathering, 10 a.m.
- Dec. 6—UMVIM, Grace UMC, Columbia, 7:30-8:30 p.m.
- Dec. 17 or 21—Good Samaritans for All People Christmas giveaway, Old Bishopville High School gymnasium, 8:30 a.m.
- Dec. 23-27—United Methodist Center closed for Christmas
- Dec. 24—Christmas Eve
- Dec. 25—Christmas Day
- Dec. 31—New Year's Eve

January

- Jan. 1—New Year's Day
- Jan. 2—United Methodist Center closed



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Open Positions

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- Ability to work well as part of a team
- Punctual and reliable

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Wise ears lead to fruitful conversations

by the Rev. Kelly G. Snelgrove

Nov. 6 Showing Respect for Other Faith Traditions

Lesson Scripture and Background Text: Acts 17:16-34

Key Verse: “God made the nations so they would seek him, perhaps even reach out to him and find him. In fact, God isn’t far away from us” (Acts 17:27).

In biblical times, Athens was considered to be the center for intellectual discussion. In an effort to show religious tolerance, the Athenians erected an altar to an unknown god. Paul knew he needed to establish common ground in order to create a space where his audience would have a better chance of receiving the Gospel.

Paul was educated in Greek philosophy and taught in a school where he would have been familiar with stoic teachings. God will use what we know and the skills we have to reach others with the message of the gospel. Paul used their unknown god to introduce them to God as creator and lord. He did this, all the while weaving Hebrew scriptures throughout his speech. He used their own techniques to open their eyes and expose the foolishness of their idol worship.

Paul was able to gain an audience with the residents of Athens by showing them he understood and respected their religion. He met them where they were. People are more apt to listen to us if we show them respect. In verse 32 we learn that Paul was rejected. The Scriptures tell us that some scoffed when they heard about Jesus’s resurrection, but others were open to hearing more.

In a Peanuts comic strip, Sally says to Linus, “I would have made a good evangelist. You know that kid that sits behind me at school? I convinced him that my religion is better than his religion.”

Linus said, “How’d you do that?”

Sally replied, “I hit him with my lunch box.”

Let me go on the record and say, “Sally, this is a prime example of how not to evangelize!”

There is a world filled with Dionysiuses and Damarises just waiting to hear the Gospel. Are we willing to take it to them and witness to God’s glory?

Nov. 13 Working for Abiding Peace

Lesson Scripture: 2 Kings 5:1-19

Background Text: 2 Kings 5

Key Verse: “Elisha said to him, Go in peace” (2 Kings 5:19).

Naaman, a general in King Aram’s army, battled a skin disease many translations define as leprosy. A young Israelite captive came to serve his wife and told her there is a prophet in Samaria who could cure him. When Naaman arrived, he was greeted by a messenger who told him to wash seven times in the Jordan River. This angered Naaman because he thought the rivers where he lived were far superior to that of Israel.

One of his servants was brave enough to ask the question, “If the prophet had asked you do something difficult, wouldn’t you have done it?” Naaman does it and receives healing, which in turn makes a believer out of him. He realized his newfound faith would be tested because in his official capacity he would be expected to worship the Syrian gods.

He asked Elisha for forgiveness in advance and was told to go in peace.

God worked in the lives of at least four people to bring Naaman to a place where he was not only healed but came to faith. Are we willing to put our enemies in a position to meet God like the young Israelite girl, the servant and Elisha?

Who are the quiet people in our lives or

those whom we may discount? What messages of healing and peace do they have for us or others?

The reason why Christian life is to be lived out in community is because God is calling us to find ways to position people to meet him. Our world today is crying out for God. They just don’t know it. People are looking for anyone and anywhere that can provide comfort. Now is the time to help put people in positions to meet God so they may know the peace only God can provide.

Nov. 20 Lessons From Other Faith Traditions

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 18:1, 13-27

Background Text: Exodus 18

Key Verse: “Moses listened to his father-in-law’s suggestions and did everything he had said” (Exodus 18:24).

Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and found himself back in Midian. God used Jethro, a Midianite priest who just happened to be his father-in-law, to offer wisdom. Jethro witnessed Moses sit from morning until evening judging over the people of Israel. He asked, “Why are you doing this all alone?”

Moses answered, “Because the people come to inquire about God. And when they enter into conflict, I judge between them and I also teach them about God’s law.”

Jethro told Moses what he was doing wasn’t good. He would end up not only wearing himself out but the people as well. He suggested Moses find capable leaders to judge the people and handle the small issues, bringing the bigger issues before him. This would free up Moses to instruct people in God’s law. Moses took his advice.

How often do we try to do too much on our own? When we don’t ask others for help, we rob them of the joy of serving. Too often we get caught up in the busyness of the church and lose sight of why we do what we do.

A man who was not an Israelite was guiding Moses on how he could teach the people God’s word. What would have happened if Moses had not taken Jethro’s advice? The stress and strain could have caused him physical or emotional harm. Many people would not have received instruction in God’s law.

Other leaders would have been deprived the chance to lead.

For this and many other reasons, we need to cultivate our listening skills. Just because someone thinks differently doesn’t mean God won’t use them to bring about good in our lives. This person may just bring the solution of affirmation we’ve been praying for.

Nov. 27 Sensitivity Training

Lesson Scripture: Romans 14:13-19

Background Text: Romans 14

Key Verse: “See let’s strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up” (Romans 14:19).

Paul wrote to a group of believers in the Roman church that were arguing over food. He did not take sides in the debate. Paul was more concerned about how the disagreements were affecting the community of faith. He told the Roman church those who eat meat must respect those who abstain because both decisions are rooted in their faith in God.

Mature believers bear the responsibility to those who are new to faith. In verse 14 Paul said, “I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.”

The issue was not meat. When we are not

working to build up the body of Christ, we are creating stumbling blocks for those who are new or immature in their faith.

We are called to a higher standard, but we are also called to be agents of peace. A wise word can de-escalate any argument. Gossip can be stopped by refusing to repeat what we’ve heard. Most arguments or disagreements are over small things. They are often products of misunderstanding, misinformation or both.

Agents of peace take the high road, even when they are right. Agents of peace pray in the midst of difficult, heated conversations. In a world filled with chaos and hurting people, God calls us to walk in his love and

peace.

He calls us to build others up, not tear them down.

The sensitivity training we need comes in the form of deepening our relationship with God. Agents of peace seek to listen to others while simultaneously listening for God to speak.

The Lord is always communicating with us through his word and the people around us.

Will we take the time to open our spiritual ears and listen?

Snelgrove is the pastor of Aynor United Methodist Church, Aynor.

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HURRICANE IAN: ERTs planning to help in Florida this month

From Page 1

“Compared to previous hurricanes, we got very lucky and received only minor damage,” said Matt Brodie, disaster response coordinator for the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. “We had a few smaller Early Response Team projects, but for the most part, things were able to be handled by the communities and the homeowners fairly quickly. However, we are still anticipating we will find individuals or small pockets who need help over the next month or so as people start to search for outside help and seek other resources.”

Early Response Team Coordinator Billy Robinson said 25 ERT volunteers put in 252 volunteer hours using ERT trailers, tractors, chainsaws and tarping in the aftermath of the storm, working primarily in Holly Hill, Vance, Charleston, North Charleston, Summerville and McClellanville.

“We placed tarps on three homes, worked at 10 sites doing chainsaw and debris removal, used sump pumps to pump out a flooded basement at Holly Hill UMC and provided four homes with individual tarps to cover their belongings,” Robinson said.

In addition, conference volunteers on Oct. 1 delivered 280 cleaning buckets and hundreds of hygiene kits to churches in the Marion District, where much of Ian’s impact occurred.

Volunteers from Little River UMC, Little River, and St. Paul’s Waccamaw UMC, Pawleys Island, helped unload the relief supplies, which were distributed to people in nearby communities.

Now, ERT members and other disaster response volunteers are turning their sights on a response in Florida, where more than 100 people were killed by the storm. It is thought to be the deadliest hurricane to hit that state since 1935 and has caused billions of dollars in damage.

South Carolina ERT volunteers are planning at least two trips to help, one Nov. 7-11 and another Nov. 14-18, taking ERT trailers, skid steers and tractors and possibly staying in a church located between Port Charlotte and Fort Myers.

As for South Carolina, if you know of a community in need of assistance, including cleaning buckets or help with downed trees or damaged roofs, contact UMCSA Disaster Response at 803-200-2082 or disasterresponse@umcsc.org.



Photos by Billy and Trudy Robinson

Above, setting up a FRED device at a storm-damaged home in Vance are Kathy Beatty, Billy Robinson, the Rev. Fred Buchanan and Michael Hughes with Don Beatty looking on. The device was named for Buchanan, who invented it. Below, Hurricane Ian caused a big oak tree to fall on a roof at this home in Vance, and ERT members removed the tree and tarped the roof.



Photo by Trudy Robinson

Fred Buchanan, Felix Vazquez and Billy Robinson work on a damaged roof in Vance.




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