



\$2 copy or by subscription

October 2022

Scouts and the UMCSC: A new future

Churches to review Safe Sanctuaries policies, shift from charters to 'agreements'

By Jessica Brodie

Scouting ministries have been part of Methodism for more than a century, and thanks to a new plan that puts emphasis on righting wrongs and ensuring protection of the vulnerable, it appears it will continue.

In February 2020, Boy Scouts of America filed for

bankruptcy after more than 82,000 sex abuse claims that go back decades, many involving chartering or sponsoring organizations of scout troops, including local United Methodist churches. Some 6,600 scouting units were chartered by UMCs as of May, making the denomination the largest partner of BSA programs.

After news broke, United Methodist leaders formed a committee to represent the denomination in the bankruptcy negotiations, working hard to craft a plan that would both help sex abuse survivors and carry on the scouting mission.

See "Scouts and UMCSC," Page 12

Delegates consider new bishops for SEJ

By Jessica Brodie

Next month, 32 lay and clergy delegates from South Carolina will head to Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, for the first in-person Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference of The United Methodist Church since 2016.

There, they will join delegates from the other conferences in the SEJ to elect UMC bishops and set the scope of missions and ministries for the jurisdiction.

Slated for Nov. 2-4, the meeting will also determine how many bishops will be elected in the SEJ this year, a number that is currently unknown. Of the 14 annual conferences within the SEJ, there are currently only nine active bishops. Because of the postponement of the 2020 SEJ from COVID-19, four bishops retired with no new bishops elected to take their place, so three bishops have been serving two annual conferences instead of just one, and one bishop has been serving three. A fifth bishop, James Swanson, plans to retire at the end of December. Delegates will decide how many bishops the SEJ can afford—five or fewer—before voting on the nominees begins.

See "Bishops at SEJ," Page 13

SC helps in Kentucky after homes swept away by devastating floods



Photos by Billy Robinson

At top left, a lonely bicycle stands where a mobile home once stood, the remains of which are seen in the background. At top right, Elaine Turner carries debris as the Rev. Scott Turner cuts out water- and mold- damaged sheetrock in a Jackson, Kentucky, home. At bottom, debris piles up in the aftermath of the giant flood where a suspension bridge once led to a family's home on the other side. A makeshift bridge now provides temporary access to the home.

By Billy Robinson

On July 28 through the first part of August, large amounts of heavy rain fell, in some areas up to 11 inches in a day's time. This was a "perfect storm" of adverse conditions leading to a deadly crisis in Eastern Kentucky.

Flash flooding caused rivers and creeks to turn into torrents of violent raging water that decimated everything in their path—including vehicles, homes, animals and at least 39 lives. At least two people are still unaccounted for as of this writing.

To make matters worse, this area is known as among the poorest counties in the United States. What little some people had was literally swept away, and they have no means of replacing such precious items as homes, clothes and transportation. Many are still seeking places of refuge.

Into this situation came the South Carolina's United Methodist Early Response Team, which responded to a plea for help from Kentucky in the aftermath.

Our team of 21 volunteers were led by the Rev. Mike Evans

and Chuck Marshall. We came with big, caring and loving hearts along with two ERT trailers filled with disaster relief work tools and supplies. This was the first response for ERT Trailer SC10, which was one of three new trailers that was recently completed and stocked. It was purchased through many donations from volunteers across the South Carolina Conference of the UMC.

We were sent to Jackson, Kentucky, and stayed at Hampton UMC, who were wonderful hosts. Jill Evans of our team headed up our base camp operations.

We also had a mission within a mission, as Lamar United Methodist Church, Lamar, had collected a large number of supplies for Kentucky. Connectional Ministries Director Rev. Millie Smith asked if we could deliver the needed supplies, and we agreed. We off-loaded them at the Methodist Mountain Mission in Jackson to a grateful mission group who were striving hard to help so many devastated people (see related story, Page 11).

See "Kentucky Floods," Page 11



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Open Monday through Friday
8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
S.C. United Methodist Conference
Center
4908 Colonial Drive, Suite 207
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Deadlines: 10th of each month.

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Subscriptions

The *Advocate* is delivered to mailboxes via U.S. mail every month prior to the first Sunday of the month. Subscriptions are \$20/year for the print and online version, and \$10/year for the online-only edition. Church plans are available for as low as \$1/member (online version) or \$10/member (print version with 6+ subscribers per church). To start your subscription, visit www.advocatesc.org, call with credit card 803-726-6743 or 803-786-9486, ext. 335, or send a check to Advocate, 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203.

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Three CLMs complete congregational care specialization

By Jessica Brodie

Three of South Carolina's Certified Lay Ministers—Donald Black, Annie Crocker and Wanda Shulick—have completed a specialization course in congregational care.

They are the first three Certified Lay Ministers in the South Carolina Conference to complete specialization.

All three met the requirements for CLM specialization for congregational care ministry through The Caring Congregation. The certificates were awarded this summer by Discipleship Ministries.

Black, who serves in the Greenwood District, said his specialization came about because he has been seeking new ways to further his education and understanding of what ministry is and how to go about it differently.

"There's a lot more to it than preaching on Sunday morning, and being new to ministry as I am, I felt like it would benefit me in learning how to counsel and get others involved in the church," Black said. "A minister can't do it all."



Black



Crocker



Shulick

Black said he serves a small church, and he's also hoping the new wisdom will help him get his congregation more involved outside the walls of the church.

Crocker, who serves in the Spartanburg District, said she has been pastoring a church for four years now, and she's eager to learn anything she can that will help.

"I've got an elderly congregation, a homebound congregation and a very caring congregation, and I thought it would be a good opportunity to learn a little bit more about congregational care and get more acclimated with what I needed to do," Crocker said.

She said she learned a lot in the course, and

she's hoping she can share what she learned in her district, too.

David Salter, co-director of South Carolina Conference Lay Servant Ministries, said the achievements are worthy of recognition, as it indicates they have gone beyond the basics of their ministry.

Salter said that once a lay servant has completed all requirements to be recognized as a Certified

Lay Minister, they may take courses from Discipleship Ministries to "specialize" in particular fields of service.

While Black, Crocker and Shulick specialized in congregational care, there are other specializations available to CLMs as well. These include specialization as parish nurse (must be a CLM and a nurse), for work with Hispanic/Latino ministries, as a lay missionary/church planter, in children's faith formation and in men's ministry.

For more information, visit <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/certified-lay-minister>

Repentance & healing

Washington Street UMC to hold service of repentance, healing for the harm inflicted on LGBTQIA+

COLUMBIA—Washington Street United Methodist Church will be holding a Service of Repentance and Healing For the Harm Inflicted on LGBTQIA+ persons this month.

The service will be Thursday, Oct. 13, at 6 p.m. in WSUMC's sanctuary. The service will coincide with Pride Festival weekend, which will be taking place in downtown Columbia on Oct. 14-15. Individuals from Reformation Lutheran Church will be participating in the service with testimonials on the topic.

The service will include elements of confession and repentance and the repudiation of the times when churches have been silent in the face of the harm caused by the church to LGBTQIA+ persons.

Recently, as a response to issues of safety and welcome raised by members of the LGBTQIA+ community through dialogues at WSUMC, the church created a new location for a Sunday morning fellowship: the SAFE Space. Open from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. and hosted by

LGBTQIA+ members of WSUMC and other allies, the SAFE Space is located just inside of the Bull Street entrance of the church.

There is access to view the 11 a.m. service from the room if anyone is interested.

Washington Street was established in 1803 and was the first Christian house of worship in Columbia. In January 2016, WSUMC updated its identity statement to reflect the vision of the church and its congregation: "The congregation of WSUMC praises and serves God from the heart of the city in ways which reach our neighbors near and far. We welcome 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."

Healing Guatemala dental mission provides needed help

Healing Guatemala's Bethesda site hosted a dental mission team recently.

Healing Guatemala is a medical mission and clinic that offers ophthalmology, dental care and basic medical needs, both at the clinic and in rural communities in the Chuisajcaba, Guatemala, region. It is led by South Carolina United Methodist pastor Dr. Luke Rhyee.

The team, whose leader was Dr. T.J. Ahn, consisted of dentists and dental students from the U.S. and from South America. The team stayed at Bethesda for the first week of July, serving the people in poverty-stricken areas of Guatemala.

In those communities, the people live from hand to mouth. It would be almost impossible for them to take care of their teeth on their own in these living situations.

Although most of them had been suffering in pain, they just lived with it. Simply,

they could not afford to pay for the treatment. However, the medical team reached out to them and treated them to high quality dental service.

During their visit, they also upgraded Bethesda's dental clinic. The team prepared and utilized many instruments and equipment, including four portable units and a portable digital dental X-ray, which enables the team to provide not only extraction, but also dental scaling, filling and root canal treatments.

The team also provided the staff with a dental conference via Zoom while there. The speakers were two professors from Harvard Dental School and a dentist who had many years of experience in his own practice.

For more information: healingguatemala.org or Healing Guatemala, P.O. Box 1835, Duluth, GA 30096.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Luke Rhyee

The team not only did extraction, but also dental scaling, filling and root canal treatments for the people of the region.

Faith and Mount Hebron team up to repair Batesburg-Leesville home

This summer, Faith United Methodist Church, Lexington, and Mount Hebron UMC, West Columbia, got together to complete a promise made to a homeowner in Batesburg-Leesville.

This home was to be one of the worksites for the last Salkehatchie camp before COVID-19 stopped all the camps. When the camp could not meet, the site leader, Jim New of Mount Hebron, continued to stay in touch with the homeowner.

New arranged a team to get the repairs done this July.

The Batesburg-Leesville Salkehatchie camp is sponsored by Faith UMC, so it was a natural fit to get the work crew from these two churches.

Over two weekends, a group of more than 20 volunteers met to repair damaged floors, seal windows, repair rotten soffit and provide new flooring, ceiling fans, storm door and appliances.

This family had waited two years to see these repairs done. They were very grateful to have the work done but said they felt the true blessing was their fellowship with Christian brothers and sisters.



Photos courtesy of Kathy Beatty

Over two weekends, a group of more than 20 volunteers met to repair the home.

Open House showcases Camps & Retreat Ministries' new Sea Islands Camp

JOHNS ISLAND—South Carolina Camps & Retreat Ministries' new Sea Islands Camp Open House, held Sept. 16, was a great success.

People from all over the state headed to the site to explore how they might be a part of this new ministry opportunity.

Camp staff put on a blitz showing guests all this new property and surrounding area has to offer. Sea Islands offers guests the opportunity to see God's beautiful coastal waters from the dock, by the fire pit or in a boat down the Bohicket heading toward the ocean escorted by dolphins. The beach is just a quick bicycle ride away.

Guests of the open house event were treated to a Lowcountry boil with freshly caught shrimp and fresh Blue Crab caught right off the dock at camp.

Sea Islands Camp and Retreat Center is now open and able to host groups of up to 68 in bunkrooms onsite.

For more information: <https://sccarm.org/>



The newly opened camp is run by the South Carolina Conference's Camp and Retreat Ministries.

Trinity United Methodist reaches out to African children

By Ken Mufuka

GREENWOOD—Because of its proximity to Lander University, Trinity United Methodist Church has been the home for many students from Africa. More than 100 students from Zimbabwe have attended Lander University.

This summer, a short letter and a photograph of five children and their teacher became the subject of Trinity's Church Council meeting. The letter and the sad faces of the kids said it all. Their mothers had failed to raise the equivalent of U.S. \$10 per child, and as a result, the kids had been sent home from preschool.

Zimbabwe has the highest rate of literacy in Africa (95 percent) thanks to a century of missionary efforts. Zimbabweans take education seriously, and even though the kids involved (ages 3 to 5 years old) were very young, they understood the importance of an education.

They refused to go home. Whenever the school authorities were not looking, the five kids found their way and hid among the 73 other kids at school.

When the Rev. Thessa Smith heard the story, she was filled with the Holy Spirit.

"Why take just five kids?" she asked. "Why not the whole group? How many are they?"

The Holy Spirit moved among us, and each one of us, without consulting each other, pledged to take up one child,



Zimbabwean preschoolers can smile again because of the members of Trinity UMC, Greenwood.

thereby assuming responsibility for the 73 children.

I was sent with a princely sum of \$1,000 to the school.

Arlene Walmsley, a member of the church and a fashionista was the real heroine. If the mothers could not afford the small sum of \$10, she reasoned, surely they would need some clothes as well. So she rolled a few clothes.

It was not so much the money that impressed the tribal el-

ders and the chief as much as the extra effort of this unknown sister.

"She has a kind heart," I heard them say, and the women shed tears. "Is this Ms. Arlene a mother like us? How does she know the pain and sacrifice a mother makes so her children can go to school?"

I had invited a Methodist pastor to bear witness. He burst into a song from the psalmist: "God does not want us to perish."

The real surprise was the petition to the chief that if "Ms. Arlene" could be found, a title of "Supreme Sister" (princess, one who cares for others) should be bestowed upon her.

I reminded myself of the memoirs of German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer. While attending seminary in New York, Bonhoeffer attended a Black church several times. It is through the eyes of those who have suffered greatly that we can experience grace.

I, too, was shaken by their appreciation that Arlene's gift came—not because she had a kind heart, but that God had given her a kind heart to serve others.

Mufuka, a native of Zimbabwe, is a graduate of St. Andrews University, Scotland. He serves as chairperson of church council at Trinity UMC, Greenwood. Anyone interested in a two-week missionary trip can contact him at mufukaken@gmail.com.

SMC reports record enrollment as students return to campus

The start of fall classes brought a record number of students to Spartanburg Methodist College, topping the previous mark set by the college last year.

"It's always exciting to start a new school year and welcome both familiar and new faces," said SMC President Scott Cochran. "Knowing that more students than ever will be getting the benefit of an SMC education makes it even more exciting."

The college enrolled 1,072 students for the new year, topping its previous enrollment record of 1,044 in 2021. There will be 913 students on campus and 159 online for the year. The growth is partly because of increased enrollment in the college's bachelor's degree and SMC online programs.

SMC has enhanced its degree offerings in the past several years, adding two bachelor's degrees in nine subjects. The school

also launched online degree programs for students with non-traditional schedules. Students may also choose a mix of on-campus and online courses.

"We've seen a significant increase in students remaining at SMC to complete their four-year degree," said Curt Laird, provost and vice president for academic affairs. "Our bachelor's degree program enrollment increased by 25 percent. And our online programs enrolled 50 percent more students this year, exceeding enrollment projections for the second straight year."

SMC's record enrollment started with the arrival of first-year resident students moving into their residence halls earlier this month.

In keeping with campus tradition, the first-year students were met with a welcoming committee of the faculty, staff and student ambassadors. The group provides not

only a hearty welcome to SMC, but also lends a hand to new students and their families in unloading their belongings and even helping them move them into their rooms.

The group worked throughout the first

day to help make the transition for new students, and their parents, much easier.

SMC welcomed approximately 350 new students to the residence halls on move-in day and 520 resident students overall.

Clafin School of Education recognized for leadership in continuous improvement

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation has announced that Clafin University's School of Education is one of 26 providers from 17 states and the United Arab Emirates to receive recognition for leadership and commitment to continuous improvement.

The recipients of the 2021 Frank Murray Leadership Recognition for Continuous Improvement provided evidence and data

trends to achieve accreditation with no stipulations or areas for improvement.

Recipients of the 2021 Frank Murray Leadership Recognition for Continuous Improvement are selected from the educator preparation providers that were granted accreditation by CAEP at the initial level from the previous year, who provided a full complement of evidence with demonstrated data trends and no plans.

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Viewpoints



Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

It's up to us

As we read in the *Advocate's* front-page article, "Scouting and the UMCSC: A New Future," Boy Scouts of America was forced to file bankruptcy after tens of thousands of sexual abuse claims were filed against their organization ... some of the situations occurring within our own United Methodist churches.

Scouting has contributed so much good in communities across the nation, from helping boys and girls learn valuable skills to launching community service projects. Yet out of this good place, some evil happened. People were hurt, abused—and silenced.

As a longtime scouting partner organization, the UMC will not only be contributing damages toward the abuse survivors, but also reevaluating our Safe Sanctuaries policy to make sure it is strong and able to help the church protect children, youth and other vulnerable people.

The *Advocate* applauds this review and encourages all churches to step up and get involved when the time comes.

Churches should be safe spaces. When we enter a church, just like when we enter a school, most of us feel a reasonable expectation that we are entering a place where no harm is supposed to occur. A lot of that assumption has to do with the inherent trust we place in such institutions.

But sometimes that trust is violated. That's why establishing systems and policies where children and other vulnerable individuals are not alone with an adult is important. Screening those adults allowed within their midst is also important. And creating a culture of awareness and attention to this is critical.

We can't always assume that when churches have policies, they're enacted. Sometimes churches have policies and yet they sit on the shelf, forgotten, just another box checked. Sometimes churches do the training but halfheartedly, or our policies are so outdated they don't go far enough.

Not every church in the UMC is big enough to have an entire committee or staff member dedicated to this. Some of our local churches have 10 people in worship. Others have 50.

But even those churches that have 100 or 1,000 or more members cannot assume someone else is going to take responsibility for this. The protection of our vulnerable individuals is a responsibility we all need to share. It's not just the pastor, the church council chair or the children's minister. It's all of us.

We need to ask questions: What is our Safe Sanctuary policy? Is it still effective? Do we need to update it? Has everyone been trained?

Evil happens even in the best circumstances. But when we take steps to minimize it through Safe Sanctuary policies and an emphasis on talking about abuse and awareness, things change. Good happens.

Trust can be restored.

It cannot change the trauma of sexual abuse. But it can establish a better culture of trust and accountability in a place that should be the safest of all: God's church.



Bishop's Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

Grounded

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Psalm 103:1 (NRSV)

"On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand; all other ground is sinking sand." My Hope is Built on Nothing Less (1834)

Dr. Robert Franklin, former president of Morehouse College, tells a story of a Renaissance artist who made the world's most prized vases. A foreign visiting apprentice came to observe his method. After laboring for many weeks with one piece of clay—firing it, painting it, baking it—he placed it upon a pedestal for inspection. The apprentice sat in awe at this thing of unspeakable beauty. But it appeared that the artist was not yet finished. In a shocking and dramatic moment, the artist lifted the vase above his head and dashed it against the floor, breaking it into 1,000 shards. And then, quietly, he reconnected the pieces by painting them with a paint of pure gold. Each crack reflected in this valuable gold. In the end, this magnificent, but imperfect piece became the most valued piece in the collection.

Life has the capacity to break all of us, yet we draw comfort in knowing that we are stronger at the broken places. The artist created by his own standard, not by the expectations of others. He was keenly aware, grounded, in his own goals, even if they were not understood by those around him. His trusting of the process and his instincts led to even more beauty, even when others saw the seemingly perfect vase and thought it was enough.

Being grounded. Being present in mind, body and soul, allows us to feel centered and balanced no matter what is going on around us. If you're not grounded, you're like a leaf in the wind, vulnerable and thrown off balance very quickly.

As the hymns and children's songs teach us, the wise man built his house upon a sturdy rock rather than a shifting sandy surface. The rock is solid, but the sand is sinking. The foundation supports all that is built upon it, so it must be strong enough to sustain the winds and the storms of life that inevitably come.

Being grounded and mindful gives us the ability to be completely aware and

conscious during the present moment. Practicing spiritual disciplines helps us become aware of our own emotions and simultaneously help us notice the inner world of those around us. This awareness is the kind that can deepen relationships—a heightened sense of self coupled with an intentional focus on God and others. Understanding that our lives are all connected within God's larger story—where there is always more than meets the eye—is an amazing gift.

Being grounded, centered, means you have a reference point or place to come back to in the midst of life's challenges and emotions that push you off balance. This is the importance of balancing your mind, body and spirit—shifting from only self-care to the deeper need of soul-care.

Think of the pearl. Others simply see an oyster, yet inside is a precious surprise. It has been said that, "All art is autobiographical; the pearl is the oyster's autobiography." Even if the oyster is all that is visible on the outside, the pearl is the oyster's telling of its own beautiful story.

As people of faith, we understand the great depth of blessing and privilege it is to serve God. We know it is a joy to roll up our sleeves and sacrifice for something greater than ourselves, sharing in a mission that makes the world a better place. And we also know that we must be willing to take that next faithful step into mission without knowledge of the beauty that can be found under the surface or in the broken places.

We cannot control the surrounding circumstances of our lives, but we can choose intentionally to ground ourselves in relationship with Jesus Christ, our Sustainer and caretaker of our souls. We can bless the Lord with our souls—with the hidden pearls of beauty that are within each of us.

When we ground our lives in Christ, God works within us to make us the people we need and ought to be.

And now, as children of the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—let us pray: "Father, help my unbelief when I question whether I can make it to the end of the week, much less the end of the year. Lift us up when we are weak, feel alone, are conflicted and under attack from the enemy. I pray that I am armed with Your strength and that You make our way clear today. Amen."

Letters to the Editor

On The Trojan Horse and rural heritage

We remember the story of the Trojan Horse that was a gift yet inside was harm. It is disturbing to see a letter sent to lay leaders of churches saying they represent The United Methodist Church, but really they represent the future Global Methodist Church and want followers. This is a violation to use the mailing list of lay leaders of the UMC to gain followers.

I am a traditional United Methodist and love Jesus Christ and the church, but I do not want to separate from The United Methodist Church over the fear of loving people different from

See "Letters," Page 5

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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The S.C. United Methodist Advocate (ISSN 1078-8166) continues the Southern Christian Advocate, authorized by the General Conference of 1836. Publication began Annual Conference-July 24, 1837. The paper is published monthly by the S.C. United Methodist Advocate Trustees. We cannot be responsible for unsolicited manuscripts. Please direct all inquiries regarding commentary submissions to the editor, 4908 Colonial Drive, Suite 207, Columbia, SC 29203-6070. 803-786-9486. Periodicals postage paid at Columbia, S.C.

Postmaster: Send address changes to: S.C. United Methodist Advocate, 4908 Colonial Drive, Suite 207, Columbia, SC 29203.



Guest Commentary

by Bryan A. Baker

Following The Way

Christians have been referred to as followers of “The Way.” A natural question from such a title is, “The way to what?” Is this a roadmap? Is this a philosophy? Is it an association of people bonded by common belief?

Yes, it is all those things. In this reflection, I emphasize the state of mind that “The Way” draws out from those who follow Jesus.

I use the phrase “draws out” because it is a dynamic interaction between a follower of Jesus who is attempting to live as Jesus teaches and who also simultaneously is being shaped and developed by the process of following. The Way implies a code of conduct to guide our behaviors. Indeed, there are statements of wisdom, commands and directions in the Bible that serve the purpose to establish the preference of certain behaviors over others as expectations for a follower of Jesus.

But there is a dynamic that goes beyond this, a discovery that obedience makes available to the follower. Not only are we guided in our actions, but also our way of thinking is being altered. Obedience opens the door to perceive with more clarity, though not necessarily perfect clarity, that the point of following Jesus is to be changed in the journey. The Way is seeing life and the world with the mentality of Christ.

The Way, beyond actions and rules, is recognizing others as fellow sojourners and that their (as well as our) circumstances may be real, but not final. In some sense, our circumstances are not even the point. Followers of Jesus can be both rich and poor, sick and well. The Way does not preach either prosperity or wellness or the lack thereof. It does, however, caution against the over-interest in circumstances.

This is not to say God does not care for or provide in our circumstances. There are too many instances to say otherwise. But The Way of following Jesus is beyond circumstances. Rather, circumstances are a backdrop in which the formation of character, fellowship with God and community happens. The Way does not offer a blueprint to success, though some in its fold are successful as the world may see it. The Way offers an awareness of who we are, how vulnerable that is and yet how much potential we have. The Way calls us to see that potential in others, guided by the compassion of our own vulnerability.

Ultimately, it is an awareness of our need for God.

Followers of Christ then take this awareness and live out our day-to-day life being shaped by its knowledge and, in turn, shaping our world with that knowledge. The Way changes and develops us, and we in turn impact others guiding them to Jesus.

This process has vagueness appropriate for mystery that can at times feel uncomfortable. In these times we may run to rules or behavioral mandates because they are more defined. But the law was not the completion of Christ; rather, Christ was the completion of the law. We are wise to follow the law, the guidance, the instruction of Christ, but we are also expected to grow from it. We are not chained by the law as a set of dictums, but rather are trained by the law to embody its principles.

This is how the greatest commandments can be summed into two phrases: Love God above all else and love your neighbor as yourself.

This Way becomes a method of propagating these two commandments through our lives by expressing our uniqueness, gifts and passions for God’s glory. We step forward from adherence to rules into proactively shaping and creating the world around us in God’s love. In connection to God we have our being, expressing our truest selves for good and his glory. The observance of rules alone does not produce this state.

What The Way is not is a blank check from God. We are not entitled to our way or our desires for ourselves in The Way. God does provide, but if we see The Way as a means to our ends absent the presence of God, we are wrong. Our status and comfort are not the ends that The Way is guiding us toward. In fact, there are times when these things block our vision of the truth.

The Way at any given time supersedes these circumstances.

We are not entitled to certain outcomes because we are Christ’s followers, though take heart, for he is generous.

The Way is freedom, it is joy, it is fellowship of purpose with God and his people to bear his image and will into this world.

Baker is a member of Bethesda United Methodist Church, Easley.

Appreciation ads available to thank church music ministers, choir

In November, you have the opportunity to recognize your church’s music ministry with appreciation ads.

Celebrate your music director, choir or praise band with a special ad in the *Advocate*. The opportunity comes just as they are gearing up for the Christmas season and all their musical plans.

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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, contact us today and let us know of your interest: advocate@umcsc.org.

LETTERS: Readers sound off

From Page 4

us. Jesus loves everyone.

No decision can be made until 2024 General Conference. To the writers of the letter: Just be honest and identify the real reason for the letter. Pray for our church of Jesus that has loved us for many years

On a different topic, one of the holy views in traveling the rural areas of South Carolina is seeing the historic United Methodist churches. These small, rural churches with the cross on the steeple represent the history of Methodism in South Carolina. Bishop Asbury traveled these roads. It is peaceful, and the church looks serene. There is always a cemetery filled with loyal saints who kept the faith and served the Christ.

The storm of division is coming because the Global Methodists want to divide and disrespect the heritage of United Methodism and create suffering in all the churches.

Who is going to maintain the cemeteries? Who is the leadership? Who is going to really care about the small, rural churches?

It is hard to believe that this is happening and the love of all neighbors is ignored. Christ will always be present in these rural churches. The cross reaches to God and the arms to neighbors.

*Rev. John Wesley Culp, retired
West Columbia*

During the wait

Traditionalists are suffering under ineffective episcopal leadership and the continually postponed General Conferences. South Carolina’s only instruction is to wait: Wait for General Conference 2024, where our future might be revealed? The liberal and progressive conferences have made it clear they no longer support the protocol, which offered traditional Methodists a solution to the denomination’s dysfunction.

There is no uniform or equitable process across the annual conferences to solve our issues. The majority of bishops are imposing restrictions and prohibitive costs forcing churches to buy back facilities they built. A few bishops have offered favorable conditions for churches desiring to exit the denomination. Our bishop will not allow any churches to exit our conference via *Discipline* Para. 2553, keeping us trapped in that uncertain future of a GC2024.

Traditional congregations question the future our bishop offers and are becoming more concerned, needing to understand their paths forward. We only want to worship God in the facilities we built as we spread the Gospel through mission and witness to our communities.

In our conference, the South Carolina Traditional United Methodist Lay Leadership Group serves as a forum via <https://www.standingonscripture.org> to assist laity seeking information, resources and links to prepare themselves and their congregations for the uncertain times ahead as we wait.

*Phillip Deal, member
Mountain View UMC, Greer*

Buffalo and Lukesville

Today there is no Buffalo mill, but the village remains. It has fewer residents than it had before the mill closed. But it remains a healthy community. So does Lukesville, the village for black workers that is located half way between Buffalo and Union on the Buffalo Union Carolina rail line.

This writer has driven through numerous mill villages in the Upstate and found many to be in very poor condition: houses in need of repair, streets with deep potholes, shirtless men working on automobiles in the front yard. The fact that Buffalo and Lukesville remain desirable places to live and raise a family speaks loudly of the quality of their residents. It also speaks of the important influence of strong churches. Today both Buffalo and Lukesville have desirable living conditions and quality workers.

In 1948, with the mills running three shifts six days a week, no one could have imagined that the mill, warehouse and machine shop would one day be abandoned and each become a dangerous “attractive nuisance.” Still, it happened. Market forces led to closing the mill and actions to eliminate the possibility of liability. After years of exploring options with potential buyers the stockholders had to bite the bullet and demolish everything that might be included in a costly lawsuit. They even took down the grandstand at the baseball field!

So, today there is no Buffalo mill. Yet the village remains. There are fewer residents today than before the close of the mill, but it remains a healthy community. So does Lukeville! Most workers dealt with the closing of the mill without panic.

Strange as it might seem, the workers outlasted the mill. They saw the shutdown coming and adjusted with calm resolve. Now retired, they celebrate years of tending cards, spinning frames and looms while maintaining water and street systems in company with great friends and neighbors. Except for a couple neighborhoods, the houses are well kept and the churches continue to be strong. Many who live in today’s gated communities grew up in mill houses!

This mill hill boy recalls growing up on South Street and Church Street in company with more than a few cousins who are doing very well in a wide range of occupations. Our family life and that of the cousins was centered in the church: females in the choir, teaching Sunday school and preparing church suppers and homecoming meals; males as officers and teachers in Sunday school, trustees, finance committee, security and choir. Today all committees have both male and female members. The core belief among the people: the conviction that faith matters and that church matters!

*Rev. Mickey Fisher, retired
Greer*

Check for termites ... now

I pastor three United Methodist churches, and we recently experienced some severe and dangerous termite damage. Now I hope to make other churches aware of their responsibility to check on termites and termite bonds.

At Tabor UMC, Ruffin, we are faced with a serious structural damage issue because of a termite infestation. It took us by surprise as they began to come out of the walls and into the sanctuary. The damage required an extensive evaluation combined with rehabilitation construction. In fact, the damage was so severe that actual supporting wood beams had been eaten away. Vertical 2x4s and horizontal 2x6 supporting beams were eaten and destroyed. Only small amounts of fiber were left. For some walls, it was only the Sheetrock holding them up.

It has been costly, as we found out two very important issues: 1) We did not have regular, specialized termite protection. 2) We found out (the hard way) that we also did not have a termite bond. The result is that all construction expenditures are the responsibility of our church. We immediately checked the other two congregations on the charge— St. John and Bethel UMCs, Ruffin—and investigated that we have specialized protection and the termite bond.

Regardless of what you think you have in reference to pest control, I strongly suggest you immediately have an inspection for termites and make sure you have a current termite bond in-hand. Do not just assume you do. In our case, we only found out as they began to come through the Sheetrock.

While work has been ongoing, the sanctuary has been closed for worship. We are fortunate our members have two other congregations to attend. But if we were a standalone church, it would be difficult to lose many Sundays of worship during construction.

*Rev. Lawrence “Larry” Stocker, pastor
Ruffin Circuit*



Courtesy of George Palmer Hudson

The event included food, fun and school supplies.



Photos courtesy of Trudy Barr Matthews

Brenda Lee Asbill got special visit from two surprise guests.

Dorchester Circuit hosts outreach-oriented back-to-school event

DORCHESTER—For two years, many churches weren't meeting at all because of COVID-19.

Now, the churches of the Dorchester Circuit are rediscovering what it means to be the local church in the community.

The women of Zion United Methodist Church, in cooperation with Salem UMC, offered a back-to-school event on Aug. 13 that included food, fun and school supplies. Salem UMC and Zion UMC comprise the Dorchester Circuit, which is pastored by the Rev. George Palmer Hudson.

This event was a revisioning of ministry and outreach by inviting in the whole community, children and adults. Many of the attendees had no previous connection with the churches. Post-event conversations in the church and the community indicate it was a success.

"It was nice to have a moment of togetherness at a time when the denomination seems to be consumed with the possibility of splintering and separation," Hudson said.

Planning was coordinated through Certified Lay Minister Wanda Shulick.

When You Wish Upon a Star

Mickey and Minnie Mouse visit woman battling cancer

Brenda Lee Asbill, a member of Leesville United Methodist Church, has had a wish since her cancer battle began in April 2021.

A Babcock resident and the cousin of Trudy Matthews and Frieda Wald, Asbill knows her savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. She shares Bible stories of Jesus with her housemates and has faith one day she will no longer need a wheelchair and will be walking on the streets of gold in heaven.

Recently, Asbill learned her cancer has spread to her lungs, and she is currently undergoing infusion and pill treatments. During at least three different phone conversations with her cousin Trudy, Asbill expressed her wish to go to Florida and meet Mickey and Minnie Mouse. There is no doubt the Holy Spirit was at work during

each of these conversations.

Given Asbill's disability and health struggle, God put a plan in motion in July to have Mickey and Minnie surprise and visit her right where she lives: in Batesburg-Leesville.

On Saturday, Aug. 13, with the gracious help of Mike and Paula Edwards and the support of the Challengers Sunday School Class, Mickey and Minnie came to spread joy and visit Asbill and her special friends.

As she said, "No one is going to believe this!"

Her wish came true, and their visit really made her day. Mickey and Minnie brought her Mickey and Minnie dolls to hold, cherish and forever remember this very special day.



Platinum anniversary

Betty and J.E. Riddle (center) were married 70 years Aug. 15. Inman UMC celebrated with them on Aug. 21.

Around the Districts

Anderson District

Sharon UMC, Abbeville, will celebrate a belated bicentennial Oct. 23 at the 11 a.m. service. A covered dish luncheon will follow. The church hopes anyone who has had an affiliation with it will plan to attend.

Columbia District

There will be an All Saints Sunday Concert by the combined choirs of **Shandon UMC, Washington Trenholm Road UMC, Washington Street UMC, Main Street UMC and Cayce UMC** on Nov. 6 at 4 p.m. The concert will feature Gabriel Faure's "Requiem" performed in the sanctuary of the Shandon. Nicholas Shumate will conduct the choirs and Debbie Bauer will assist at the organ. This program will be presented in memory of church members who have died since last All Saints Sunday. Everyone is invited to attend.

Alumna Dr. Ruby Fielding has been appointed the next vice president for Finance and Administration at **Columbia College, Columbia**. Fielding has served at the College of Charleston and most recently at Allen University, Columbia.

Because of the efficiency, innovation, and dynamic results observed through four years of grant-writing, fundraising, lobbying, and educating, **Columbia College's** APEC (Alternative Pathways to Education Certification) program has been named by the Department of Labor as the first registered apprenticeship program for teachers in the state of South Carolina, and it has been awarded grant funds to support the constantly growing program.

Greenville District

Disciples UMC, Greenville, will hold their Pumpkin Patch Oct. 1-31. Hours are Monday-Saturday, 9 a.m.-7 p.m.; and Sunday, noon-7 p.m. Sales benefit United Methodist Mission and the Navajo Indians of New Mexico where the pumpkins are grown. The church will also hold its Fall Festival Oct. 15 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Artisans, crafts, bake sale, lunch and the Pumpkin Patch are bazaar features. Sales from the bazaar will benefit United Methodist Missions and Ministries.

Hartsville District

Bethlehem UMC, Hartsville, will hold their first Fall Festival Nov. 19 from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Planned activities include a silent auction, a mission participation opportunity — toy drive — and kids activities. Crafts and lunch are available for purchase.

Marion District

Smyrna UMC, Bennettsville, will celebrate its 49th Homecoming service Oct. 9 at 10 a.m. The Rev. Maurice McZeke will be the speaker.

Spartanburg District

Three new trustees joined the **Spartanburg Methodist College** Board of Trustees following their election at the 2022 Annual Conference. Clinton Settle '04, Marcos Gomez and Michael Allen will join the board at the next meeting in October.

Walterboro District

Friendship UMC, Ehrhardt, will celebrate a Friends and Family Day and then the church's 150th anniversary the weekend of Oct. 8-9. The Rev. Alphonso Jones will be the speaker at the 9 a.m. worship service celebrating the anniversary.

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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.

Inaugural Linda J. Williams Memorial Scholarship presented by Calvary United Women in Faith

At the passing of Linda Williams in November 2020, she had been serving on various committees at Calvary United Methodist Church in Swansea and as president of the Calvary United Methodist Women's Unit. She was dedicated to her church and the programs of the church and always supportive of programs for children and youth.

After her death, a scholarship fund was formed by the Calvary United Methodist Women (now United Women in Faith). A committee was formed, and they immediately went into action. Within a few months, the scholarship was offered to Swansea High School Seniors of the Class of 2022.

The generosity of her family, friends and fellow Calvary UMC members made this \$1,500 scholarship possible.

Brianna Blackburn was chosen to receive the first Linda J. Williams Memorial Scholarship. Blackburn's immediate plans are to become a nurse. The scholarship was presented to Blackburn by the Calvary UWF at the Swansea High School Senior Awards Ceremony. Blackburn also attended a service at Calvary UMC where she formally thanked the group, church and Williams' family for the scholarship.



Brianna Blackburn receives the inaugural Linda J. Williams Memorial Scholarship.

Serving on the scholarship committee were Calvary UWF members Betsy Hayden, Sharon Hensley and Carol Lloyd. Donna Lollis is the pastor of Calvary UMC.



Leesville had a tremendous response from their youth on Youth Sunday. Here, they gather in a prayer circle.

Leesville youth organize Youth Sunday service

It was the first youth service held at Leesville United Methodist Church in many years, but organizers said it certainly won't be the last.

On July 31, the fifth-Sunday youth service was held. It was dedicated to the memory of Leesville's beloved Gene Berry, who saw the great value in Leesville youth for the future. He gifted the church with \$100,000 to enhance the children and youth programs and would have been so proud of their hard work.

In early 2022, the Worship Committee had a vision to have the youth participate in a youth service. The program was selected from the National Youth Sunday website, "Through My Fear, I Trust in God," and was tailored to fit the needs of the Leesville service. It was then presented to church youth to begin the recruitment process. Many volunteered to fill the roles during worship, and many volunteered to be a part of the sound/technology team and the communication team. So much goes into preparing for worship behind the scenes each Sunday and then the participation during the worship service, and many youth were involved.

On the Wednesday prior to worship, the youth enjoyed a pizza supper and rehearsal with the Praise Band that they said was a lot of fun and a time of great fellowship.

The July 31 service was well attended with 131 in attendance. It was also livestreamed with about 75 engagements through Facebook and 32 through YouTube.

Many said the message of "Fear Not" given by the youth through the children's moments, prayers and the message by Ella Sawyer was very timely for all.



Fun for all

Manning UMC, Manning, youth had a great time on their yearly trip to Carowinds. This year's trip was held July 29.

Columbia College ranked in U.S. News and World Report Best Colleges

COLUMBIA—The U.S. News and World Report Best Colleges lists are released each year to aid future college students in selecting the best school for them. To determine the 2023 rankings, the report evaluated more than 1,500 different institutions of higher education on 17 measures of academic quality to determine the ranking results.

For the 2023 academic year, Columbia College was ranked on six of those lists: Best Regional University in the South, Best Regional University for Veterans, Best Value School in the South, Top Performers on Social Mobility in the South, Best Regional University for Ethnic Diversity and Best Regional University for Economic Diversity.

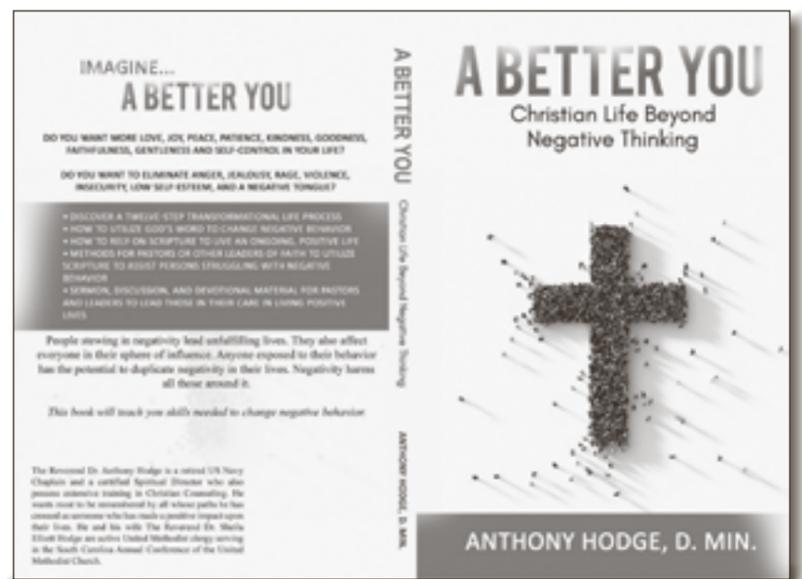
"As an institution, we are excited to see continued growth and development through the 2023 U.S. News and World Report

rankings," Columbia College President Tom Bogart said. "The good work done here by faculty, staff and students is seen so clearly on campus, so I'm especially proud that the world outside our gates sees it, too."

Columbia College ranked 26 out of 135 in the Best Regional Universities in the South category. Variables considered for ranking include categories such as retention and graduation rates, class sizes, student-to-faculty ratios and acceptance rates. Columbia College is ranked 9 in the region for Best Colleges for Veterans. The college was also ranked 17 in Best Value Schools in the southern region for 2023. Institutions that can maintain academic quality while emphasizing affordability are ranked in this category. Columbia College was one of 54 schools in the southern region that were recognized.

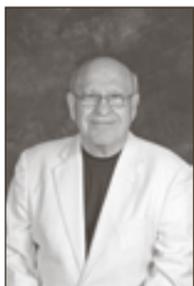
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**Rock Hill District Superintendent
 Dr. Anthony Hodge,**
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Available on Amazon



**We love you,
 Dr. Al!**



Poole shares how he's finding college students on fire for the Lord.



Here, students are baptized through a Wesley Foundation.

Finding the Good: God at work through Wesley Foundations

By John Sterling Poole

I altogether avoid any news I see on Facebook, email, TV, newspapers and more because I get so depressed and downtrodden with all the bad news in the world. I try to stay up-to-date with current events and critical world affairs, but I get exhausted quickly because I can't seem to see the good news happening in the world. A lot of folks my age, Gen Z and Millennials, probably feel the same way. We live in an age where bad news gets widely broadcast while good news gets put on the backburner.

I've decided to share some good news: the fact that college students all over the state come together to worship God, learn about Christ and live in the Spirit. I'm talking about the good news of Wesley Foundations.

Having recently been appointed as director of the Charleston Wesley Foundation, I realized quickly how folks perceive college students: as partiers, noncommittal, confused, broke (this part is true), entitled and the list goes on.

But I'm seeing a different side of it. I'm seeing Dylan at Charleston Southern having questions about Scripture and wanting a study Bible. I'm seeing Will, Jack, Jesse and Clayton at The Citadel coming together to figure out what worship songs will speak to knobs struggling through their first year. I'm seeing Ella at College of Charleston wanting to become a leader so she can bring others to Wednesday Night Bible Study.

I'm seeing Christ on the move and at work in these young folks. And I'm only seeing what's happening in Charleston.

The really good news is this is happening at Clemson University, Furman University, Winthrop University, Coastal Carolina University, University of South Carolina, Newberry College, Claflin University, South Carolina State University, Wofford College, Francis Marion University, Lander University, Piedmont Technical College, Southern Wesleyan University, Tri-County Technical College and all the other campuses I'm forgetting (there are a lot!). God is moving

through the Wesley Foundations around the state, and he's moving through all of the supporters of this ministry.

I know the work that God is doing through the Wesley Foundations because I'm an alumnus. I found my calling in ministry, my passion for outreach, my joy in worship and my peace in friendship at Wesley. I met my best friends; I met my wife. I found my home church, and I found a retreat from the craziness of college life.

College is tough. It always has been, and it always will be. These students have been through a lot these past three years. I, for one, am glad about the work that happens at Wesley Foundations.

So if you are like me and are tired of all the bad news in the world, reach out to the nearest Wesley Foundation. You'll see the good news of college students learning and living the Gospel of Christ.

Poole is director of the Charleston Wesley Foundation.

Bluffton raises funds and awareness about water crisis

BLUFFTON—In August, Bluffton United Methodist Church celebrated God's glorious creation of water and helped the church members learn about the ongoing water supply crisis in the world.

After each service the congregation was served brunch compliments of the Mission Committee, played games with water-related prizes and donated funds to raise money for Water Mission International.

Church members were encouraged to sign-up for the annual Walk for Water and to "vote" through their donations for a church staffer to "kiss the pig." More than \$1,000 was collected in the "walking shoes" of the church staff to assist with the mission to "design, build, and implement safe water, sanitation and hygiene solutions."

Bart, the pig, went home happy because he now has new girlfriends.



The church got creative with fundraising.

Happy Pastor Appreciation Month, Dr. Carlton J. McClam, Sr.!

Mis for being the **Minister** appointed to lead God's people.

C is for your **Commitment** to your call of making disciples for the transformation of the world.

C is for the **Compassion** you show with a loving mindset that encourages, strengthens and corrects members who need guidance and spiritual counsel.

L is for your **Loyalty** that looks beyond self-serving goals and seeks to serve others with pure intentions.

A is for the **Anointing** gifted to you to minister with His leading
Mis for being the **Man of God** He called you to be.

Thank you for being our pastor.
Wesley United Methodist Church Ladson



Native American Ministries

Native American storytelling

Native American storytelling was and continues to be a vital part of American Indian culture. Many tribes used symbols and some form of a written communication. However, Sequoyah of the Cherokee is credited with the first formal written American Indian language in the early 1800s.

Thus, storytelling was a vital means of a communication with a limited written language. Passing down traditions orally is customary. In fact, placing the traditional stories in writing is strongly discouraged.

Storytelling provided explanations for each tribe's religious beliefs, sacred rituals and sites and their relationship between God (Creator) and the people. Storytelling was used to explain how things came to be and how to get along with each other often using our relatives, the animals and plants, as main characters. Most involved an interaction with the Creator.

Storytelling was a means to emphasize morals and values that can be based down from generation to generation. Thus, storytellers were and are important members of the tribe.

When a story is told, each individual is expected to listen and assign meaning as it impacts his/her life. The impact can vary over time, so the same story can be told numerous times. There are stories for children, stories for women, stories for men, stories for couples and stories for the tribe (family). They can last from a few minutes to hours, and some even told over several days. At the end of the story, traditionally, one will not

hear "the morale of the story is," since meaning is assigned by each person.

For most tribes, especially in the north and west, storytelling is only done during the winter. Some tribes only tell stories when there is snow on the ground. Prior to winter, tribal focus was on growing and gathering food and hunting in preparation for the winter. Storytelling time is when the extreme cold kept people inside and provided a means of learning, entertainment and building relationships. Some stories were even scary.

Additionally, this was done during the winter to give respect and privacy to some of the animal relatives, such as lizards, snakes and frogs, since this is time when they are resting or sleeping. It is said these animals are always trying to listen to human conversation when awake. These animals sometimes represent "bad things," so it was done at time not to offend them.

In the South, storytelling can be done throughout the entire year. If southern tribes waited on winter or snow on the ground, it might never come, so no stories would be told. Yet most stories are told after the fall harvest and gathering was completed.

Storytelling is one of the messages I offer for Native American Ministries Sunday. The entire message is filled with traditional American Indian stories. The worship service can also include a children's message as well.

If interested, contact Zan Tracy Pender at tracypender@hotmail.com or 803-905-5672.

Pastor Michael Walker

Thank you for being a dedicated disciple to all the people of IHUMC! We love you!

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Deacon's Corner

Rev. Soon Nix

Getting to know Soon

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. Soon Nix, one of our newest ordained deacons.

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

Nix: I wanted to serve those who are troubled or confused spiritually with their language difference. My brother, who is ordained in the Presbyterian denomination, also served as a chaplain in the U.S. Army.

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

Nix: My responsibility in the church is to minister to the senior community for their spiritual and educational wellbeing; I also provide pastoral care. As an associate pastor, I'm assisting the senior pastor's ministry.

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?

Nix: As a deacon, you can concentrate on specific ministry, instead of overseeing the whole church congregation and administrative areas. It is most rewarding to share with people in growing their spiritual well-being and in seeing their spiritual growth.

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. Be able to recognize or resist any harmful occurrence.
- 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. I'll pray to get a wisdom and words of guidance from God.
- Q. What is something that people often get wrong about you?
 - A. They assume I'm strong, both physically and mentally.
- Q. What's the last show that you binged and loved?
 - A. I still love the movie "The Sound of Music" even though it was long time ago.
- Q. What is a film that you really love?
 - A. I love comedy films that provide positive influence.
- Q. What is a concert you will never forget?
 - A. Chris Tomlin concert for our Youth Retreat.
- Q. What's your favorite meal?
 - A. Authentic Korean dinner dishes.
- Q. What's on your nightstand right now?
 - A. Lamp and artificial flowerpot
- Q. Give us a snapshot of an ordinary moment in your life that brings you great joy.
 - A. I have great joy while singing with the praising worship moment.
- Q. What is the one thing you are deeply grateful for right now?
 - A. My health and ability to do ministry.



United Women in Faith

by Janice Cockfield Eaddy

Newness in the air

"Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new. It's bursting out! Don't you see it?" (Isaiah 43:19 MSG)

Greetings, God's people! Turning faith, hope and love into action on behalf of women, children and youth around the world is our vision. For this reason we are United Women in Faith seeking to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship and education so that they can inspire, influence and impact local and global communities.

We are a community of women whose purpose is to know God; to experience freedom as whole women through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

As officers of this wonderful organization known as the South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith, we are called to be in mission work all around the world. We are all committed to doing God's work in fulfilling the purpose of our organization. In order to do his work, and do it well, we must be trained to lead others to be mission-minded United Women in Faith.

The SCCUWF officers are in the process of gathering written and verbal information to share with the 11 district officers, district historians and district cluster leaders. This information will be beneficial for your district as you plan training workshops for local unit officers. District presidents are asked to communicate with your 11 elected officers, historians and cluster leaders to gain their commitment to attend our 2022 District Officers' Training.

We will meet at Washington United Methodist Church, 1401 Washington St., Columbia, with Wesley United Women in Faith serving as our host. Wesley UWF President Betty Void and the ladies of her local unit are planning in a special way to host this event. The meeting date will be Saturday, Nov. 12, starting at 10 a.m. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m. and last until 9:45 a.m.

District presidents should encourage their officers to be in attendance. No prior registration is required this year to attend. District presidents are asked to report to the conference vice president the number of ladies from her district that plan to attend; this should be done no later than Tuesday, Oct. 25. This will allow our host to have a count for lunch.

It is my prayer that each of our 12 districts will have representatives in every workshop being planned. The conference officers are committed to planning a training session that will be informative and beneficial. They will be ready to answer questions and provide packages for each of their district counterparts.

Don't forget the annual meeting this month

United Women in Faith will celebrate their 50th South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith Annual Meeting. This meeting will be held as an in-person event Oct. 21-22 at First United Methodist Church in Myrtle Beach.

The hotel listing and registration form can be found at umcsc.org/women/ and in the September Mission Echo. Blessings to each of you. Stay safe and prayed up.

Eaddy is the SCCUWF vice president.

Epworth Children's Home

A home for innovative ministry

Editor's Note: This is the third in a series of articles about Epworth's journey toward becoming a comprehensive continuum of care and a community-based support network for families that need help maintaining a healthy structure while providing for the children in their care. The first article detailed the traditional residential program.

It started with a phone call in 2015 from Mike Smith, the senior pastor of Trenholm Road United Methodist Church, to John Holler, then-president of Epworth Children's Home. Smith said he had heard the Carolina Children's Home trustees were planning to sell their campus property that joined the Trenholm Road UMC campus. Smith asked if Epworth had any interest in discussing the possibility of joining with his church and maybe some conference representatives about future use for the property.

The next day Holler and Smith walked the property and discussed possible uses for this prime real estate in Forest Acres.

It turned out that Trenholm Road UMC, nor the annual conference, had any immediate need or use for the 19-acre campus that contained 14 buildings. The Futures Committee at Epworth and the Epworth Board of Trustees had an interest in the property, but they asked the questions that good trustees should ask, such as "How will

Epworth use the property?" and "How will Epworth pay for the campus?"

The first question was addressed by the Futures Committee chaired by the Rev. Daniel Burbage. The members of the Futures Committee had been working on the concept of enabling Epworth to move toward becoming a more comprehensive child care facility by offering a continuum of care. This would include preventive and home-based services that would focus on strengthening families to help families live together in more productive ways. These new services would include a foster family component, a counseling center and models of service that met the changing needs of children and families in South Carolina.

The second question was answered by Epworth's Board of Trustees through its Finance Committee. After a year of negotiations and some interested parties pledging to help with a portion of the cost, an agreement was made to purchase the property for \$3.6 million. The trustees also authorized a financial campaign to cover the bulk of the cost of the Carolina Children's Home campus.

In January 2016 the purchase of the second campus was completed. The State newspaper described the purchase in part by writing, "After lengthy and thorough discussions, the Board of Trustees of Epworth

Children's Home has decided to acquire the land and buildings previously owned by Carolina Children's Home. The Epworth Board and staff strongly believe the need for residential services, independent living programs and early intervention services is growing in the Midlands and in South Carolina, and our present campus will not support the expansion of these services. The property and buildings of the former Carolina Children's Home will provide superb

space to expand Epworth's programs and fulfill our mission to serve children, youth and families through a caring, accepting and safe Christian community."

At the writing of this article, Epworth's Trenholm Road campus is filled with activity and is the base for new evidence-based programs that serve children and families in every region of South Carolina.

—The Rev. John Holler

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Guest Commentary

by Charles Inglett

Pray without ceasing

Are we a prayerful people? I don't know how you feel about your prayer life, but I seem to always feel like I am impoverished when I consider mine.

Jesus taught us to pray. When I was young, I lacked understanding. I wanted God to answer my prayers of petition. I wanted an ATM god. I wanted what I wanted and, like the commercial says, I wanted it now. That kind of prayer is not how Jesus told us to pray to the Living God.

No. Christ taught us to begin, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And end, "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen."

Do we, in our prayers, substitute our will for God's? Who do our prayers glorify? Us or God?

Matthew 6:9-13 is not the only place we find Jesus modeling prayer for us. In Matthew 26:36-56 he prays, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Christ Jesus knew he was facing torture and death. He prayed to be let off the hook. He asked God to find another way.

His prayer doesn't stop with a request. He adds, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." In verse 42 he repeats his request: "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." The text says he prayed this three times. Each time he promised to submit his will to his father's will.

All of the apostles, with the exception of Judas, would learn to trust and follow God's will even to death. Only St. John would die an old man, and he endured torture almost to death. They knew there was something more valuable than this life. They learned to trust the Holy Spirit and to submit to the

will of the father and to live in Christ Jesus. This is the example to follow. Trust and obey just as the hymn says. But be prepared to go places you did not expect, to be called to do things you feel unprepared for. God loves to use unlikely clay to glorify his person and his kingdom.

John 17 gives us a record of all Jesus asks for us. He says, in this last prayer for his followers, "All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them." Is Christ glorified in us? He says, "But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in your truth; your word is truth."

How we pray and what we pray for matters. Matthew 7:21 scares me. Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my father in heaven."

If we are the body of Christ, we will submit our will to the will of the father. We will surrender and Christ's joy will be made complete in us. Jesus prayed to his father that his followers will be protected from the evil one. We are under the protection of the God of creation. We carry the shield of his protection into the world. We can be confident in victory over sin and death.

The reformation reduced salvation to the five solas: salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone, from Scriptures alone, for the glory of God alone. Let us join together and pray without ceasing. Pray for the body of Christ. Pray that we might let go of our own stubborn wills and live in and for Christ our lord and savior. Pray that his joy might be complete in us.

Amen.

Inglett is a member of North United Methodist Church, North.

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Guest Commentary

by Franklin DeWitt McCoy Sr.

Resolving divisive issues

When I was a student at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, in the mid-1970s, our professor of United Methodist Polity and Doctrine said to his class that the church is called by God to set the agenda of the world, but there will come a time when the world will set the agenda of the church. Here we are 47 years later, and it seems that time foretold by the then-retired United Methodist bishop teaching the next generation of church pastors has arrived.

God has not called disciples to be admirers of Jesus; we are called to be followers. I am afraid too many of us have set aside proven standards established by God for those of our own liking. The first appeal of the United Methodist Church is preaching of the gospel. Another of the appeals of the United Methodist Church is that we have not taken a passage of Scripture and built a doctrine around it that is peculiar to the United Methodist Church. We are a full gospel church guided by moral and ethical standards prescribed in the Scriptures.

It has been reported that church congregations are looking for moral guidance from the church, which we do not seem to be giving. We seem to be clearly redefining sin right out of existence. By failing to call sin, sin, we fail God, and we fail God's people. By failing to call sin what it is we reduce the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ to insignificance. What is the meaning of the cross of Christ, unless there is the need for redemption? What is the meaning of the cross of Christ, unless there is the need of atonement? There being no sin there is no need of a savior.

The confused state of the world and that of the church, not only the United Methodist Church, gives preachers much to preach on, things to preach for as well as things to preach against. We need to hear all sides of any issue. For the Christian church some of the things we have made issues ought to be non-issues. We ought not be having this conversation about sexual digression.

Sexual digression is no more sin than other sins, but that is hardly a defense for the practice of it. We all stand in the need of forgiveness and deliverance from powers outside the realm of God's kingdom.

However, there are some behaviors we cannot practice and serve in positions of leadership in the church. I will stand in support of all who come before God who are humbly penitent. Members of the LGBTQ

community, like us all need God's mercy and grace. They, too, need the church. They need to be related to the Christian community for learning and for hearing the gospel, but the church does not need these who practice sexual digression to be in ministry. Those of us who condone inappropriate behavior will be accountable for having been enablers. That is what we are when we pat members of the LGBTQ community on the back and say do not be concerned about it.

The Bible is not a weapon to be used against anybody. It is a moral guide to be used by everybody.

Just a word about abortion. That practice is wrong as wrong can be. I hear advocates for abortion say it is a woman's body, and she ought to be free to do with it as she pleases. She ought to be able to make the decision as to whether to carry the baby full term or to terminate the pregnancy. Well, 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, she has made her choice, and her choice is irreversible, though many shirk their responsibility to their unborn baby. How tragic.

I am appalled at who and how many well-meaning people support this inappropriate practice.

It is these issues and perhaps others that is driving a wedge deeply between the liberal and the conservative element of our church, of which I am a member from birth, nearly 85 years. My parents were members years before I was born. Unless God does a miracle within our mother church, which we love so dearly I doubt she can survive as she is. Yet, the solution to our problem seems simple. I remember what the Lord said to John about the Ephesian church when John was exiled on the island of Patmos, "I know your works, you toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first."

The first love of the church is Jesus Christ. Therefore, let our divisive issues be resolved by returning to the love of Jesus Christ.

McCoy, retired, lives in the Anderson District.



Photo by Mike DuBose, United Methodist News Service

Hungarian camp houses Ukrainian Roma refugees

The Revs. László Khaled (left) and Üllas Tankler (second from left) pray with the family of Robert, Renatta and their children in the small cabin they share at the United Methodist Dorcas church camp in Debrecen, Hungary, where they are staying after fleeing the war in Ukraine. The family is among many Roma who have found a place of welcome at the camp. Khaled is superintendent of The United Methodist Church in Hungary and Tankler is the European/Eurasian representative of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries. Learn more at umnews.org.

KENTUCKY FLOODS: Mold, heat and downed bridges

From Page 1

Horror stories

Our disaster response teams were first directed to the downtown Jackson area of Sycamore Street, where the severe flooding had literally come up into the police station and other county offices. A large number of homes were affected with flood waters that averaged 5 feet into the homes, destroying furniture and possessions. ERTs were all racing with the clock trying to muck and clean out their homes before mold and hazardous conditions took over to the extent that the homes would have to be destroyed.

Susan Spencer told about how she went door to door on the worst night of the flooding telling her neighbors to evacuate. Two of her neighbors were in their 80s and refused to leave their homes, insisting the waters had never risen that high before. In 1984 and 2021 water did come up onto the street, but only into the floor of a few homes near the creek—40 feet below them in a ravine. It would take a phenomenal amount for water to rise into their homes, they said.

Spencer persisted until the elderly homeowners finally left their homes with family persuasion. She and others saved many lives that night as the waters swiftly rose and engulfed homes.

While we were working there, a friend of Spencer's came by, Patricia Baker. Baker shared with us her own horrific story on the worst night of the flooding. A widow, Baker had been at home alone and became extremely concerned and then frightened as she watched the floodwaters rapidly overtake her home in the dark of night. To add to her level of terror was the fact that she could not swim.

As her home was swept away from its foundation, Patricia Baker found herself in the raging floodwaters, literally fighting for her life. She was able to grab a hold of the back bumper of her late husband's car and held on as it was also swept into the wildly raging torrent of water. The car hit a tree, which threw her off onto the tree. She grabbed the tree in the dark and held on for dear life until morning, when a National Guard Helicopter rescued her out of the tree.

One of her cousins and several neighbors died, Baker shared, and her whole world had turned upside down. She lost everything she owned.

Mold and heat

We split into two and sometimes three teams mucking and cleaning out the flooded homes. This encompassed tearing



South Carolina ERT volunteers were the Rev. Mike and Heather Evans, Chuck Marshall, Jill Evans, Dawn Rhodes, Curtis Burnett, Bill and Elaine Turner, Mike Luther, Phil Griswold, Worth Adams, Rev. Scott Bratton, Dr. John Gemmell, Tony and Mary Watson, Hank Edens, Mark Honeg, Jerry Pullen, Chuck Knight, Dan Dowbridge and Billy Robinson.

out waterlogged Sheetrock, flooring and fixtures. We worked with the passion of Jesus Christ to show his love to so many hurting people while also getting all the good work done possible while we were there. The hot and humid temperatures beat down on all of us, but with God's strength and determination, we were able to persevere.

Complicating the strenuous work was one of our worst enemies: mold. This forced us to take extra personal protective measures such as wearing masks, respirators and Tyvek suits. We also had to constantly monitor each other to make sure we did not get any heat-related injuries. We also sprayed the homes to kill the mold.

One home we worked on was for Cynthia Bell, a physician's assistant. She had recently finished her training and had been offered jobs in more prominent areas, but she chose to return to a poorer county where she could be most effective in helping people. We were honored to remove all the flood-damaged materials from her home.

Next door, at the home of Austin Craft, was a family that had been mucking out their home one day at a time since they were able to return without any professional help. All members had allergies and two had asthma. The active mold spores had them on antibiotics, yet they were determined to get back into their home and were doing all they could to make it happen. They stated that they were at their wit's end when God showed up through us and took over.

It was a daunting task, as in the center of their home was a huge basement with no outside access. It had completely

filled with water, mud and muck during the flooding and had not been touched. Most of the water had gradually seeped out of a drain, leaving a wet, muddy residue everywhere. Active mold was on the rafters and throughout, along with the stench and hazards left by the flooding aftermath. The slippery, muddy and hot conditions made the task much more difficult, along with the fact that we had to bring everything up a narrow set of stairs through the interior of the house to the roadside.

Shoring up bridges

According to locals, there were more than 800 suspension footbridges in the path of destruction, and the flood destroyed all but a few of them. This cut off a lot of people's access to their homes and property.

Chuck Marshall led one of our teams to help shore up one of these bridges for the family of Tim Gilbert, whose home was still standing but needed shoring for stability and a handrail added. Tim's wife had been transported to a local hospital for medical issues the night before our arrival. EMS had to hand-carry her through the waist-deep creek in the dark to get her to an awaiting ambulance.

Our team was able to stabilize the bridge and also added handrails to make it safe. As our ERTs were leaving the job site, Mrs. Gilbert crossed the bridge for the first time in three weeks to get her mail out of the mailbox.

Real healing

We are so thankful for the honor and privilege to represent Jesus to so many people in need. The physical labor was only one aspect. Listening and caring about the survivors and all others—including emergency response personnel and team members—is where the real healing begins and where all (including us) receive the most fulfillment.

We gave out Jesus' love through Scripture and care goods plus handshakes, hugs, sweat, tears, minor injuries and sore muscles, while tolerating dirty and filthy conditions. We overcame fears of mold, COVID, major injuries, vehicle wrecks, financial situations and a wide variety of concerns.

We were so blessed by our South Carolina Conference and home churches that we were able to cover everyone's expenses and leave \$2,000 in donations for the local United Methodist churches to disperse as needed.

We worked on seven homes and repaired one footbridge, putting in 580 volunteer hours. To God be the glory!

Robinson is the South Carolina UMVIM ERT coordinator.

Two ERT trainings set for this fall

Interested in serving on the UMCSC UMVIM Early Response Team that helps after disasters?

On two Saturdays, Oct. 29 and Nov. 5, the conference will host an ERT training. Both the basic and renewal classes will be offered.

On Oct. 29, there will be an ERT Basic/Renewal class at Highland Park UMC located at 1300 2nd Loop Road, Florence.

On Nov. 5, there will be an ERT Basic/Renewal class at Cornerstone UMC located at 2697 Heckle Blvd., Rock Hill.

The ERT Basic class is from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and the fees are \$40 per person, which includes a manual, shirt, cap and badge. The ERT Renewal Class is 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. with a \$20 fee.

If you have not had COVID vaccines, then please bring your personal mask and wear it as you see fit. If you feel ill after registering, then cancel and we will refund your funds.

Everyone also needs to do a background check (free) through UMCOR at <https://app.verifiedvolunteers.com/en/Candidates/Account/Register>. If asked for a code then put in 9x2r4eh. You may or may not be asked for it.

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

For more information: 803-539-8429 or brpraisejesus@aol.com.

God made a way

Rural church collects truckload of clothing for Kentucky flood survivors

By the Rev. Paula Stover

From the time I arrived at Lamar United Methodist Church, the thing that most stood out to me was the generosity of the people. They care for their brothers and sisters in this world lavishly. So when Marilyn Lawhon, chair of Lamar's Missions Committee, asked me on a Monday afternoon what I thought about collecting some gently used clothing to send to those affected by the flooding in Kentucky I said "go for it." Her son, who lives in Lexington, had participated in a mission work group in the area that was most affected, and she wanted to ask a few people to go through their closets and thin out so she could load up her car and take the things to him the next week.

Before Sunday even came around and I could put the request before the congregation in worship, we had more than we could get in her vehicle and she came back to me.

"Pastor, this is bigger than me," she said. "Now we will wait and see how God is going to make a way to get this to Kentucky."

By that Sunday evening we had so much we knew we needed to find a truck going that way or rent one and drive it up there. But where could we find one? We had hoped to get the items to her son who knew of a church going up that way, but we had way too much for them to take and they were not going as soon as we felt like it needed to move.

We prayed and asked God to get it to whoever needed these things to get back on their feet. Marilyn kicked into gear on Google and made contact with United Methodist Mountain Mission in Jackson, Kentucky, who said they desperately needed gently used clothing and housewares, and we had some that were still in boxes and with tags on them. Everything we collected we would have worn or used ourselves.

I called the Rev. Millie Smith, the director of Connectional Ministries for the South Carolina Conference of the UMC, and asked if there was a disaster relief crew headed that way that might take the items with them. There was a group going the next week, and she put us in touch with Billy Robinson.

The first response was that they did not have room in their trailers because they had to haul equipment up there, but Millie was persistent. She had the idea that perhaps one of them would drive a truck that we would rent for a one-way trip and ride back with the



Lamar's Missions Committee collected so many items to help flood survivors they had to rent a U-Haul truck to transport it to people in need. The truck was driven to Kentucky by an UMCSC ERT member headed there to help with disaster response.

group if they were going close to Jackson.

God made a way. That was the area they were headed to, and Billy agreed to do just that!

Danny Dowbridge, part of the relief team, drove from York County to Lamar UMC on Monday, and we convened a small but mighty team to pack that U-Haul trailer full. After prayers for safe travel and for all those who would receive the items and the love of God as our brothers and sisters, he pulled out with our gift to our neighbors in Kentucky.

We received confirmation on Tuesday that there was a special long-term recovery group meeting at Methodist Mountain Mission that evening, and they were touched that a small rural church in South Carolina would find a way to get them so much that the people needed so desperately.

We were obedient to the call and waited for God to make a way. God did ... through the generosity of the people. Thanks be to God. *Stover pastors Lamar UMC, Lamar.*

SCOUTING AND UMCSC: Working to reclaim confidence, trust

From Page 1

On July 29, U.S. Bankruptcy Court Judge Laurie Selber Silverstein issued a lengthy ruling approving initial settlements of about \$2.3 billion to abuse survivors. That includes a \$30 million UMC contribution to the survivors' fund, as well as a commitment to hear the experiences of survivors who participated in United Methodist-sponsored troops and a review of all UMC Safe Sanctuaries policies.

Now, United Methodist leaders and the BSA plan to continue as partners but in a new relationship that includes a new, standard affiliation agreement for local churches wanting to host a scouting group.

In South Carolina, United Methodist leaders are working actively to comply with this plan and have already begun work.

South Carolina UMC Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston said that while scouting has had a positive impact on the lives of many young people, much damage has been done as well.

"We also know that great harm has been inflicted on far too many of those youths by individuals who took advantage of the deep well of trust that our churches built up over the past century. That pain and betrayal can never be fully washed away," Holston said.

However, Holston noted, "We feel that, moving forward, the potential for good in continuing our relationship with scouting will outweigh the risk of further harm, and we look forward to the opportunity to reclaim—day-by-day, encounter-by-encounter, relationship-by-relationship—the confidence and trust that has been eroded these past decades."

On Sept. 22, Holston released a statement detailing what the South Carolina Conference is doing regarding scouting and the plan. (Read his statement in full at <https://www.umcsc.org/scouting-ministry-has-a-future-in-umcsc-churches>.)

- First, the conference has begun reviewing its Safe Sanctuaries policy. When complete, the conference will provide a process to help guide local churches in reviewing their own Safe Sanctuaries policies (more on this below);

- Second, the UMC is assembling a task force to allow victims a safe forum to share the abuse they endured. South Carolina Conference leaders will use the UMC task force's plan as a guide, adapting it as needed to ensure it is providing a safe forum for survivors in our ministry context;

- Third, conference agencies approved honoring South Carolina's share of the

UMC's \$30 million contribution to the survivor settlement fund (currently set at \$364,168); and

- Fourth, traditional charters (which is how the UMC used to organize its scouting units within the church) are no longer a viable option for local churches. The conference is now helping churches participate with scouting through two new legal options to ensure local UMCs can continue hosting and supporting scouting safely and responsibly if they wish. These options are the Affiliation Agreement and Facilities Use Agreement (more on this below).

Safe Sanctuaries reviews

In 1996, the UMC's General Conference adopted a resolution aimed at eliminating any potential for child sexual abuse in the church. Since 2007, Safe Sanctuaries has been the South Carolina Conference's policy for prevention against abuse in local churches. Safe Sanctuaries creates a culture of care and safety in churches and is an overt expression in making congregations safe places where children, youth and vulnerable adults may experience the abiding love of God and fellowship within the community of faith.

Once the conference has finished reviewing its Safe Sanctuaries policy, the conference Safe Sanctuaries Team will begin a process to "train the trainer" so that people in each district can help local churches across South Carolina evaluate their local policy and undergo training. The process is expected to begin in January.

According to the Rev. Cathy Joens, who is part of the South Carolina Annual Conference Safe Sanctuaries Team, "A Safe Sanctuaries policy gives us guidance on how to live our lives together in a healthy and safe way, helping us stay safe and be intentional about ministry."

Rather than be a document that collects dust, Joens said each church should actively be using their policy and ensuring all leadership is fully familiar with it.

"It seems redundant, but consistent train-

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**We feel that,
 moving forward,
 the potential for
 good in continuing
 our relationship
 with scouting will
 outweigh the risk
 of further harm.**

—Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

”

will include best practices in a policy, update on social media and communication, bullying, outside groups, the conference website and how to work with a church from the first phone call to the training with questions.

If you are interested in helping with this or want more information, contact Joens at cljoens@umcsc.org.

Joens said Safe Sanctuaries offers local churches, no matter their size, an opportunity to do ministry in intentional ways.

"Since 2007, we have moved from fear of losing all of our volunteers to becoming very intentional about how we go about ministering with children, youth and vulnerable adults," Joens added. "We have learned more about abuse, and we have added new prevention updates along the way."

Agreements instead of charters

Holston explained that before the BSA issue, local churches served as scouting "chartered organizations." Legally, that meant churches owned and operated their scouting units. But now, churches will not be chartered. Instead, they will select one of two new "agreements" to legally define their scouting relationship. Both of these agreements, Holston said, were tailored carefully to comply with and conform to liability insurance coverages that now exist.

1. 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

ing builds muscle memory," Joens said. "It should be used as a guide for recruitment, a guide for behavior and how we relate to one another."

Those who are interested in being part of the Safe Sanctuaries training team in South Carolina are invited to participate in a "train the trainer" Zoom event led by Joens, the Rev. Katherine Crimm and Michael Smith on Sunday, Oct. 16, from 2-4 p.m. Other trainings will also be scheduled. Training

scouts and provide opportunities for scouts to participate in the church's youth programs, and promote religious awards. However, instead of the church owning and operating the scouting unit, all scouting assets will be transferred to the local Boy Scouts of America council, which would own the unit.

2. Facilities Use Agreement: With this type of relationship, the church simply hosts the scouting program. (The church can still support the ministry of scouting if so desired by providing space, storage, communication, membership growth, faith opportunities and opportunities to raise money.)

Holston said each church must decide which relationship is appropriate for their church—Affiliation or Facilities Use—carefully considering the insurance agreement that is in place and the level of commitment they believe can be sustained. (Those who need more guidance on this point should contact their district superintendent.)

Churches are asked to make this decision by Dec. 31.

He said through the General Commission on United Methodist Men, an interim agreement is in place that extends all insurance and indemnification protections through March 2023.

Churches can download fillable agreement forms at <https://methodistscouter.org/conference-resource-page/>

Compassion and security

One UMCSC pastor, the Rev. Weston Pendergrass, pastor of Grace UMC, Greer, has long worked with Safe Sanctuaries efforts and applauds the coming process to evaluate these policies conference-wide.

"It is sad that it takes something as awful as the BSA abuse and bankruptcy mess to prompt us to conduct such a huge effort to review and strengthen our Safe Sanctuaries practices, but I am glad that we have begun the work," Pendergrass said.

As someone who has been helping congregations craft policies and train volunteers for several years now, Pendergrass said it never stops surprising him when he discovers how out of date or inadequate some congregations' policies and procedures are. He said someone in each congregation always needs to be responsible for keeping up with the policy and making sure that it works.

"Just because you have one, the work isn't done," Pendergrass added. "Gaps always exist, but demonstrating that you regularly update and examine your practices shows that you are doing your absolute best to serve and protect everyone in your ministry. Not only do these policies help congregations screen out potential abusers, they also help congregations in other ways: maintaining safe and healthy environments of trust in which ministry can take place and relationships can flourish.

"A congregation that puts in this kind of work is a congregation that the surrounding community can trust. A congregation that shrugs off this hard work or only responds after an incident is unfortunately only going to lose that trust and may never get it back from their community, forever damaging their witness of the Gospel."

Holston said the South Carolina Conference is striving to maintain compassionate support for survivors of abuse, while safeguarding the security of local UMCs affected by the BSA bankruptcy case.

"Friends, we trust, believe and know that—despite human brokenness and frailty—God continues to work through us and within us," Holston said. "Please join me in continuing prayers for all of those victimized by abuse, as well as the countless lay volunteers, and local church staff and clergy who remain committed to providing a safe space for youth to experience the love of Christ."

To read Holston's statement in full: <https://www.umcsc.org/scouting-ministry-has-a-future-in-umcsc-churches>



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BISHOPS AT SEJ: Who are the nominees, and what is the process?

From Page 1

South Carolina's the Rev. Ken Nelson is among the nine episcopal nominees up for consideration. As South Carolina's episcopal nominee, endorsed unanimously by the delegation and elected as nominee at the last annual conference session in June, Nelson serves as co-chair with Jackie Jenkins of the South Carolina delegation to SEJ, as well as conference secretary and Orangeburg District superintendent for the South Carolina Conference of the UMC.

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. Here, we explore what is a bishop, what conferences are in the SEJ, and who are the episcopal nominees:

What is a bishop?

According to Resource UMC, each bishop oversees the mission and ministry of an episcopal area based on the direction set by General Conference and the local context. Bishops are elders elected by members of a jurisdictional or central conference. Bishops in the jurisdictional conferences in the United States are elected for life. In the central conferences in Africa, Asia and Europe, the term of their service as bishops varies and may require re-election. Bishops provides spiritual leadership to the global denomination as well as for the episcopal area of one or more annual conferences to which they are assigned.

Each bishop provides day-to-day leadership for the episcopal area for a four-year term. Within their areas, bishops preside over annual conference sessions and appoint ordained and licensed clergy to local churches and other places of service, including as district superintendents.

All bishops are part of the UMC's Council of Bishops, which consists of all active and retired bishops in the United Methodist church.

What conferences are in the SEJ?

The SEJ is one of the five jurisdictional conferences; the others are the North Central Jurisdiction, Northeastern, South Central and Western.

Annual conferences in the SEJ include Alabama/West Florida, Central Appalachian Missionary, Florida, Holston, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Alabama, North Carolina, North Georgia, South Carolina, South Georgia, Tennessee-Western Kentucky, Virginia and Western North Carolina.

What bishops serve the SEJ?

In addition to Holston, who serves the South Carolina Conference, Bishop Ken Carter serves both the Florida and Western North Carolina conferences; Bishop Leonard Fairley serves the Kentucky, Central Appalachian Missionary and North Carolina conferences; Bishop David Graves serves the Alabama-West Florida and South Georgia conferences; and Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett serves the North Alabama and Holston conferences. Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson serves the North Georgia Conference, Bishop Sharma Lewis serves the Virginia Conference, Bishop Bill McAlilly serves the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference and Bishop Swanson serves the Mississippi Conference.

How are episcopal nominees determined?

People are nominated by their respective delegations or organizations to be considered for the episcopacy. For example, South Carolina's nominee, Nelson, was nominated by the South Carolina delegation and endorsed by the annual conference.

Each nominee signs a principles agreement, acknowledging he or she understands the election of bishops is primarily a spiritual undertaking and agreeing to follow certain fair election practices, including no vote-swapping.

They also submit biographies, question-answer statements, short videos and more. As of press time, all nominees have their information posted on the website for SEJ at <https://www.sejumc.org/episcopal-nominees>.

Nine episcopal nominees

In addition to Nelson, the South Carolina Conference delegation nominee, there are eight other episcopal nominees up for vote at the Nov. 2-4 conference: 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.

How can I find our more about the episcopal nominees?

Read bio, view pictures, watch videos and explore Q&As in full at the SEJ website: <https://www.sejumc.org/episcopal-nominees>

Who decides this for S.C.?

Voting on the episcopal nominees and other SEJ business will be cast by the lay and clergy delegates elected to represent their annual conference at SEJ. South Carolina elected its 16 clergy delegates and 16 lay delegates at the 2019 Annual Conference.

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).

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 Malam-bri, 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).

What COVID-19 protocols will be followed?

Masks will be required for all persons in all meetings and Lake Junaluska buildings while at the conference. This requirement includes round-robin sessions, all conference business sessions, worship and other gatherings. Heads of delegations will be responsible for ensuring that masks are worn properly by all members of their delegations (including reserves) any time they are inside a building. In addition, seating will be socially distanced within Stuart Auditorium, which might limit the number of non-delegates and reserves who can be present.

Can anyone attend the SEJ Conference?

According to the SEJ website, "Conference guests are welcomed to attend the conference but will not be issued official credentials or nametags."

What is the schedule?

Bishops and the Committee on the Episcopacy will begin arriving at Lake Junaluska for SEJ on Oct 30, with meetings and other preparation continuing until Nov. 1. Heads of delegations are scheduled as of now to meet Nov. 1 at 12:45 to receive credentials and seating information, and round robin sessions with episcopal nominees are currently scheduled to begin at 1:30 p.m. Nov. 1.

Opening worship is to begin at 9 a.m. Nov. 2 in Stuart Auditorium. Business is slated to begin at 10:30, with balloting and other business 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.

For more information on SEJ: <http://sejumc.org>.



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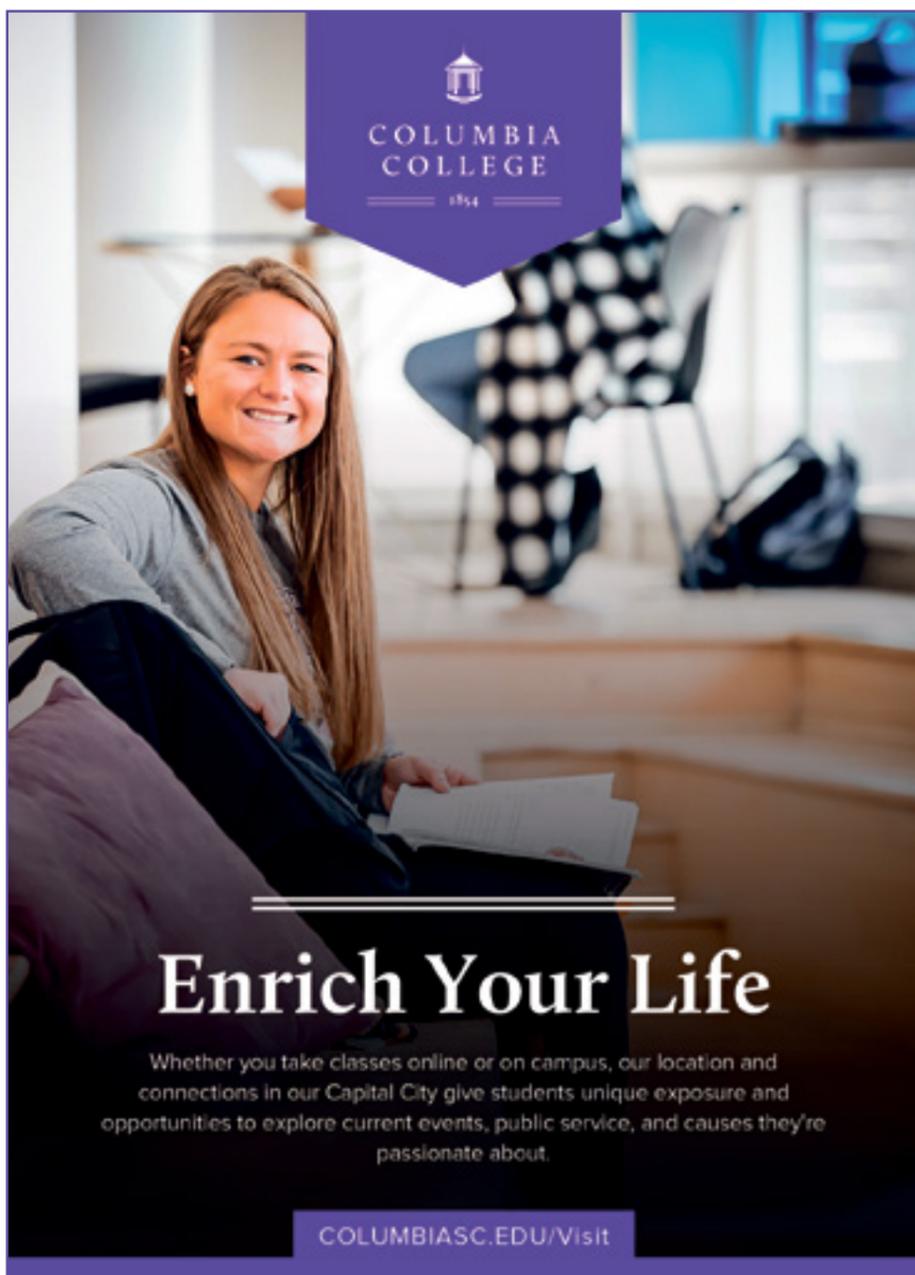
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Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Carol Rexroad Cannon

Life rebalanced: Living with a vestibular disorder

Are you practicing your skiing?" a colleague quipped at the Bishop's School of Ministry at Myrtle Beach.

"Did you hike here?" asked the server at a restaurant near my home in Hendersonville.

"What are those poles for?" wondered the stranger in a park near our daughter's home in Washington, D.C.

Those are some of the questions I have been asked in the six years that I've used hiking poles on a regular basis to help maintain my balance. I've wrestled with how to respond. Technically, they are trekking poles, since they were adapted from cross-country skis for the Nordic sport of trekking. My husband, Robert, and I have used them for hiking in state and national parks since we first learned about them in 2003.

Thus, we had hiking poles on hand when I was hospitalized with vestibular neuritis in August 2016 and came out reeling. We quickly discovered the added benefits of the poles in navigating—whether walking in the neighborhood, going to church and work, shopping or doing other normal activities. They helped me maintain my balance when all of life felt out of balance.

Soon after I left the hospital, I began vestibular rehab therapy. After 12 weeks of VRT, I regained my ability to walk in familiar places. I do not need my poles on a daily basis. However, I have developed Persistent Postural Perceptual Dizziness. I still struggle to keep my balance in unfamiliar places, especially ones that are noisy, crowded or have bright or flashing lights. I easily feel lightheaded or dizzy in those situations. So my poles have remained very handy.

Still, I have not found a straight forward answer to the question, "What are those poles for?" Few people understand the response "I have a vestibular disorder." They either look at me blankly, nod with a look that says "I don't know what you're talking about, but I'll pretend that I do," or ask "What's that?"

To bypass that, I'll sometimes answer the question by saying, "I have issues with my balance." That often elicits the responses like, "So do my parents," "I have a friend who does," or "I sometimes stumble as I get older." They sometimes add "Join me for yoga classes. They've helped me," or "Have you tried Stretch and Balance classes?"

While those exercises can help, they don't address the underlying vestibular issue.

I've concluded that my best response is "I have a vestibular disorder. It affects my balance." That names the primary issue—vestibular disorder—while also explaining its effects. Then if they ask further questions, I can explain that maintaining balance is complex. The brain has to combine three kinds of sensory information: the body's sense of location and movement through our feet, legs and muscles; vision, to give an additional sense of spatial location; and vestibular information from our inner ear.

If one of those is not functioning well, individuals can lose their balance and become lightheaded, dizzy or fall.



Cannon has a vestibular disorder that affects her balance, and hiking poles help her a great deal.

In my case, the vestibular nerve was damaged, most likely by a virus. That's the nerve that sends messages from the inner ear to the brain. Vestibular rehabilitation therapy helped my brain and vestibular nerve compensate for the harm that had been done. However, if my brain gets overwhelmed by too many stimuli, it has difficulty dealing with all the information it is receiving. I develop brain fog and can become light-headed or dizzy. At that point, the best treatment is to give my brain a chance to rest and recharge by lying down and taking a nap.

Most balance exercises focus on a person's sense of location and movement, the muscles in their legs and feet and other core muscles. Those exercises do not harm me and can indeed help me maintain my overall balance. However, since they do not deal with my vestibular system, they do not fully address the dizziness I experience.

On the other hand, the hiking poles do help me, because they mean my brain does not have to work so hard to keep me in balance. Therefore, I often use my poles in circumstances that may not require them, such as walking in the neighborhood, in order to conserve my brainpower. With the poles, I can also hike eight miles with my husband to view mountain scenery and spectacular waterfalls, navigate a crowded restaurant, attend a concert or play or visit a museum. Those are all activities that bring me joy and fulfillment.

When I use the hiking poles, I can walk in confidence without fear of stumbling or falling. That is a small price to pay for the curious looks I get.

For more information about vestibular conditions such as vertigo, dizziness, Meniere's disease and vestibular migraines, you can check out Vestibular Disorders Association (VeDA) at www.vestibular.org. I have found it to be a great source of information and support.

Cannon is a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference. She and her husband, the Rev. Robert Cannon, are active in First United Methodist Church in Hendersonville, North Carolina.

Bishops agree on ways to tackle gun violence, church disaffiliations

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church ended its summer 2022 meeting Aug. 26 with a call to act against gun violence and to create a uniform approach to the way in which bishops would deal with the process of disaffiliation in their areas.

The five-day meeting began each day with vibrant worship. Services were led by Bishop Rudy Juan of the Philippines, Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi of Northeastern Jurisdiction, retired Bishop Jane Allen Middleton and Bishop Daniel Lunge of Congo.

"We had wonderful worship experiences all centered around healing and wholeness, and spent time in covenant groups holding one another accountable and in prayer," noted COB President Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton.

During the presentation from the Justice & Reconciliation team, led by Bishop Julius Trimble, regarding the ongoing crisis of gun violence and death, the bishops voted to take several actions to fight the scourge.

The bishops also spent three days in covenant groups and spent considerable time beginning a group discernment around the future of The United Methodist Church and the "pivots" needed to get the global denomination into a posture of looking forward rather than being solely focused on the issues of the moment.

As the bishops were meeting, the Judicial Council released two rulings on the process of disaffiliation. The leaders of the church heard a detailed report from legal counsel, Bill Waddell, on those rulings. Waddell also gave updates on decisions of law that were still pending before the Judicial Council. The bishops also discussed Paragraph 2553 and its usage; and the current state of lawsuits filed against the denomination about the disaffiliation process.

The bishops then heard a report from the Disaffiliation Task Force and acted on several recommendations related to matters of disaffiliation and clergy orders to create a uniform approach to how bishops deal with the process of disaffiliation as well as the manner in which they deal with clergy withdrawals.

They also tackled the upcoming Jurisdictional and Central Conferences where 15 or more new bishops will be elected. The new bishops will begin their service in 2023.



Guest Commentary

by Deborah Len

Virginia

Stretch and yawn as a new day started for Virginia. Last night before she went to bed, she had gotten one of her old composition books out and found blank pages. She decided to make a chart. She found her ruler and a pencil with a good eraser. She knew this project was going to be a start-and-stop kind of project.

She labored for a few minutes and came up with a chart that would help her as she attempted to start her new life in the big city.

It was 1965, and Virginia was listening to the Rolling Stones go on about not getting any satisfaction. Yes, that was where she was also stuck. People telling her how to live and what to do and eat and what to use to clean her laundry. She screamed out loud one day, "This is crazy!"

That was when the plan started forming in her mind: Pack a few things and get on the bus to the big city. So off she went. She was amazed by the hustle and bustle of the city and all the noises, sights and smells. All of her senses were atingle as everything seemed new and alive. She felt like the song "Downtown" was written just for her—thank you, Petula Clark, for singing such a thought-provoking song.

But now it has been six months in the big city, and there has been no real satisfaction. Just the get up and go to her secretary job, to eat lunch with the other ladies, to go to her rented room with Miss Gertrude. As she ate her dinner with Miss Gertrude and the three other ladies living in the house, she would ponder what was missing from her life. They all had boyfriends and the hope of marriage and a 1965 future. She could not get any credit to buy a car.

The bank where she wanted to save money was a little hesitant to open an account in her name alone. Where was her husband, they asked her a few times. Virginia just stated he did not exist. The bank manager's eyebrows raised, and he somehow finally had a change of heart and let her have a saving and a checking account in her name,

alone.

In her composition book she checked off: "Manage my own money." She had already checked off "find a place to stay," "get a job" and other things of this nature. The not being satisfied was not on the list. It was what had driven her to a new start so far from home. It now needed addressing.

She needed a new chart. Virginia did love charts. But this was going to be different, as she was seeking a church home. She knew that what was truly missing was worshipping Jesus. After all, she had been going off and on to a small Baptist church since she was a little girl.

Big-city church was more of a challenge. After six months of going to churches near her boarding house and based on her coworkers' recommendations, she found nothing that felt right for her. It was 1965, and every time she would be asked, "Where is your husband or fiancé?"

She finally found a home in the church on Main Street in the center of the city. When she walked in and a teenager greeted her and said "welcome," her heart leapt in her chest.

"You are loved, and please sit anywhere," said the nice teenager. "If you have any questions, I can help you. My name is Judith."

Virginia knew she was home! This church did not care if she had a husband or that she had different colored skin from the rest of the congregation. They just loved her for her.

She grew to be a Sunday school teacher and helped with the transition to become part of The United Methodist Church in 1968. Virginia never married. She devoted her time to serving her Lord and savior in that big city church. She was satisfied by being herself... just as she was.

Inspired by Matthew 11:28, Job 6:14 and Psalm 41:1.

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

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How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"
Isaiah 52:7

It is an honor to pause and express gratefulness to our pastor, **Rev. Dr. James P. Smith**, and First Lady, **Rev. Millie N. Smith**, during **Pastor Appreciation Month**. Thank you for all that you do for our church and community.

The St. Paul (Camden) UM Church Family



Guest Commentary

by David Bryant

What if Jesus had said (a fictional fantasy)

For every covenant of the Scriptures in existence during Jesus' time on earth there were commandments. From those commandments grew the rules—the law that Jesus challenged and that was used against him as a bludgeon with which to drive the nails.

Jesus brought a new covenant, and that required a new commandment. He gave only one, and even at that, we give it only scant and superficial attention.

Today, we talk about this Scripture and that Scripture being “clobber passages,” as though they have no relevance beyond being another bludgeon in today's world, an exercise of battling “Rock 'em, sock 'em” memes that are just another variation on the “my Scripture can beat your Scripture” theme. This missed the whole point of Scripture (John 5:39).

However, Scripture—all Scripture—is relevant when understood in context of its reality and transposed into ours ... for those who are willing to hear.

But there are so many who refuse to hear. In their righteousness their minds are made up. Their belief bound in delusion, the answers are there only in black and white, no grey. With unshakable tenacity, they cling to the assertion their answers are obvious and without ambiguity.

Oh, how I so wish that were true! There would be no need for endless versions of the Bible. No need for concordances, commentaries or explanatory notes. No need for more than a thousand different branches of Christianity in the United States alone. No need for another denominational split or even denominations. Just one church—perhaps even one truly “universal.”

But Herbert Spencer was right when he said: “There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man (sic) in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation.”

Jeremiah speaks to this in the fifth chapter, but it is not our inequities that have turned us away nor sins that deprive us but the self-righteous and self-serving face value approach to Scripture that even Jesus recognized in his followers and warned against as Matthew recorded in chapter 13:13-17.

But what if Jesus was serious? And not only serious—as Skye Jethani explores in his book, “What If Jesus Was Serious?: A Visual Guide to the Teachings of Jesus We Love to Ignore”—but more specific? More clear? More direct?

What if, when he told the disciples to go and “teach them to obey everything I have commanded you,” he had given perhaps a top-10 list of summary commands from his teachings?

What if, I wonder, the following totally fictional commands might have provided a framework for us to fully open our hearts and minds to the Holy Spirit? What if they were to allow the full meaning of the new commandment to be written on our hearts, bound as a sign on our hands, as ornaments for our eyes and inscribed on our homes for us to see as we enter our private times and as we go out into the world. Given that commandment, to “love one another: as I have loved you so, too, love one another,” I wonder, “What if he had said?”...

- Seek me first in all things, in all circumstance and in all time (Matthew 6:33, 7:7; Luke 11:9);

- Obey my teachings, for I am the word and my word is to be obeyed (Luke 11:28; John 14:15; Matthew 21:28-32);

- Mere water will not cleanse sin, you must be baptized in the Spirit. Neither deny nor doubt the ability of the Holy Spirit nor demand proof in your lack of faith (Matthew 3:11, 16:1-4; Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5; John 1:27; Mark 1:7);

- Possess genuine humility in the absence of pride and self-interest, placing yourself not above others but being the servant (Luke 20:45-47; Luke 18:9-14);

- Set aside your own wants and desires until meeting the needs of others (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; Matthew 20:25-28; Luke 16:19-31);

- As your actions reflect your heart, do not seek validation of your will in Scripture but, through Scripture, seek my will in your hearts and actions (Matthew 22:13-39);

- Lay aside greed and with a willing heart spend your waking time and discretionary wealth in direct service to those I named as blessed (Matthew 6:24&33, Mark 12:41-44);

- Forgive transgressions as though they never occurred, accepting responsibility for your shortcomings and practicing mercy rather than judgement (Matthew 6:14-15, 7:1-6, 18:21-25; Luke 37-38, 23:34, 5:27-31; James 4:12);

- Entertain neither hate nor anger, neither for sin nor sinner, practicing love for one another through genuine acceptance and reconciliation (John 13:34-35; Matthew 5:21-26); and

- Embody the traits of the fruit of the spirit and characteristics of love; let these be written on your heart and displayed in all your thoughts, deeds and interactions with one another and the world (John 13: 31-35; 1 John 2:7-14; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 13:4).

What if? Would we better understand? Would we be more willing to radically extend his grace rather than rationing grace based on our own convictions and prejudices? Would we be more willing to lay down our swords and turn them into plowshares?

If Christians in the United States can claim any persecution at all, it is that persecution we so brutally place on one another. It is our dismissal of Jesus Christ in order to only appropriate him for our own selfishness and in our refusal to be servants to either him or to one another. It is our use of Scripture to bludgeon others rather than to gather them into his fold.

What if we laid down the tool of the Pharisees (bludgeon) and picked up the tools of the Shepherd (rod and staff)?

What if the church really was a hospital for sinners rather than a country club for saints? What if our sanctuaries really offered sanctuary? What if it were not such a fictional fantasy?

And ... what if Scripture revealed that Jesus really did say all this, but we just didn't hear him?

Bryant is a member of Bethesda United Methodist Church, Easley.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Tony Rowell

Free range buggies

This may sound a little simplistic, but with that being said, I declare here and now that you can determine a great deal about the character of a man simply by watching what he does or does not do with a grocery cart once he has finished with it.

I further declare that you can determine the moral health of a nation in the same way. The more grocery carts left to their own devices, the further down the de-evolutionary scale goes the country.

It is a fascinating study. I have seen men and women of high degree and other upstanding citizens act like run-of-the-mill lowlifes as they have set their grocery carts free to roam the parking lots of America in search of cars to dent, trucks to scratch and parking places to occupy. It is a shameful thing to witness.

Conversely, I have also seen men and women of lesser status rise above their societal constraints as they have diligently deposited their buggies in one of the many cart corrals scattered throughout the lot. Such folks are a tribute to their raising, and humble or not, they are worthy of imitation.

The issue at hand, as I see it, is that there is not enough imitation taking place these days.

Call me a dinosaur if you wish, and that may well be true, but I believe that there is simply not enough proper raising going on as of late.

There is far too much focus on self and not enough on teaching the young ones in our charge the way they should go and how they should be.

I mean, where are the “yes ma'am's” and the “yes sirs” of days gone by? Where is the respect for your elders, and what happened to common decency?

Where are the simple phrases of kindness hiding? You know, “Let me get that for you.” “Ladies first.” “Please excuse me.”

While I am venting, what has happened

to having concern for the others around you? I mean, walking through Walmart these days often resembles a four-letter-word cage match from which you can't escape, and I'm talking about the children's section. Dinner at a fine restaurant was once accompanied by soft music and quiet conversation. Now there are cell phones buzzing and loud one-sided conversations all around. (I will spare you my opinion on answering your cell phone during a funeral or talking full voice during a movie or concert.)

I know that I may be overstating things a bit. For there are sanctuaries of civility left, mostly down South, I dare say. Hyperbole aside, however, such places are becoming increasingly scarce every day, even in the land of gentility and decorum. Old times there have been forgotten by many, it would appear.

So what can be done about it? The horse is already out of the barn it seems.

Well, the best way I can think of to help the current situation correct itself is simply by declining to participate. Refuse to be rude. Be polite. Respect your elders. Help those in need. Don't complain, and teach others, especially the young ones following in your footsteps, to do all of the above.

At the risk of sounding like a preacher, “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.”

In other words put your buggy up when you're finished, and if some wayward clergyman has rudely set his buggy free to roam, do him a favor and put his buggy in the paddock as well, and then send a prayer his way.

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://advocatesc.org/store/books/what-would-granny-say>).

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Loads of bags

Pastor Gwendolyn T. White of Mount Zion UMC, Sumter, along with members of her Outreach Ministry Team are pictured here with various-sized bookbags that the church gifted to seven elementary schools in the Sumter County School District. A total of nearly 160 bookbags were gifted to Lemira, R.E. Davis, Rafting Creek, Manchester, Oakland, Cherryvale and Pocalla Springs schools.



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Kris Bergmann

Stepping out in faith

In an area where the closest grocery store is 30 minutes away, New Hope UMC, Shulerville, has stepped out in faith to help the community around them. Members have started a blessing box ministry at the church.



Guest Commentary

by Dr. Phil Thrailkill

A field report from Kenya

One of the challenges of retirement is finding new ways to express your calling to live out ordination promises that have no expiration date. For me it means serving and teaching in a local church, extra time for research and publishing and also setting up a circuit to offer free graduate classes in three United Methodist colleges and seminaries in Nigeria, Liberia and now Kenya, where I have worked before with AIDS orphans and seminars for indigenous pastors.

After a two-year COVID-19 hiatus, I was invited by Rev. Wilton Odongo (Nairobi District superintendent) to teach a two-week course April 4-16 at the recently formed Wesleyan United Methodist Training College that grants the three-year diploma degree required for ordination.

After three attempts and cancellations, which frustrated us both, I was eager—as Willie sings—to get back “on the road again.” I have an itinerant heart and an itch to see what God’s doing beyond our provincial bounds and predictable conflicts. “Follow me” has not been rescinded.

The teaching manuals I created and textbooks I purchased weighed nearly 300 pounds, but paying the luggage fees was much cheaper than air freight. As a one-man operation, my work is lean and nimble, and I have a new appreciation for the word logistics. My slogan is, “I pay the cost with the help of donors, and students get the learning!” Whatever small tuition students pay stays with the schools to strengthen their mission.

Here, it was \$40 for the two-week intensive, which in the afternoons included a course on crisis and disaster management and a short course on sacraments, the qualifier being that none of the clergy have United Methodist Hymnals or the Book of Worship since they are expensive to purchase and ship to Kenya.

On the three Sundays I preached at United Methodist churches in the Kibera, Kihole and Soweto slums (their word, not mine!) in Nairobi.

As an aside, I’m working on a project to translate our basic services into Swahili since that’s the heart language in which most Kenyans worship. The current liturgy

of the churches in which I preached is a classic African format of a long period of praise and dance, followed by a sermon heavy on moral exhortation, interrupted with occasional formal elements from our 1964 hymnal, which are jarring in their King James contrast.

What is needed is for the basic pattern of worship of our 1989 hymnal—based as it is on the patterns of second-century Christian worship—to be culturally adapted to Kenyan sensibilities so that worship bears the dual stamp of apostolic fidelity and cultural purchase. The Catholics and Anglicans are the best at such challenges, and they will be my guides.

Our facility was a small private school still under construction with unused classrooms turned into male and female dormitories for the two weeks. Communal meals glued us together, and my courses were three. The major class was 30 hours on Luke’s Gospel taught three hours each day from Monday through Friday for two weeks. It was supplemented by two short courses of four hours each on Saturdays, the first on the history and content of the Apostle’s Creed, the second on the Recovery of the Methodist Class Meeting. The three manuals, two on Luke and one on the short courses, totaled 600 pages. For those with few books and whose learning style is mainly oral, it was a stretch for us all to stay on the same page.

What they remembered most were the personal and humorous stories I told as commentaries on the text before us. I will read four or five Kenyan novels before I return as a way to “catch the best” of their rhetorical patterns and deep concerns. My most repeated idea was, “Don’t copy the worst of Western preaching. Stop making points. Instead, retell Luke’s stories in a Kenyan idiom with an intriguing introduction and insightful ending. Ask the story, ‘What are you about?’ and then follow the leads. Proverbs, quips and children’s stories are your best friends.”

It was a diverse class of 30 African men and women with most currently serving UMCs. The age range was mid-20 to older than 70, and some came from more than 400 miles away by bus. All were poor by our

standards, and none receive a salary from their small churches. Maybe some food or a small offering from time to time, but all are bi-vocational.

The nine superintendents of the Kenyan UMC are also not salaried because the church as a whole is a church of the poor, and often the very poor. That’s about 160 unpaid servants of the Lord, serious about their faith because they’ve been called and seeking training. Only the bishop of the East Africa Annual Conference is paid.

It’s worth noting that the families of several African bishops now live in the U.S. and this division of time and loyalty is not helping the saints back home. Perhaps it’s time for a discussion of what it means to be a “resident” bishop? Absentee landlords have never been a good idea.

Evaluations of the classes were positive, but the comment that will stay with me is this one: “Pastor Phil is social with everyone.” Visitors from afar are being carefully observed for gaps between what they teach and how they behave, as it should be. Learning includes content—and lots of it—but taking time to eat and visit and listen and pray together, as well as to answer all sorts of surprising personal questions in public, helps invest in the hearts and lives of people. And as soon as I finish grading their papers, we will continue with our coaching.

Two anecdotes end this report. Winifred (name changed) is a bright pastor, wife and mother in her late 40s who sat on the back row. I could always count on her for thoughtful questions. She was a “subsistence” farmer (translate “large garden”) and her only tool a mattock, a cross between a heavy hoe and an axe. She’s just been appointed as superintendent of her district and did not have a phone, a *Book of Discipline*, or any means of transport except by foot in a district so large it often requires air travel between cities. “I can’t do my new job,” she said to me privately over morning tea—a very serious social ritual in Kenya.

Now because I carry some “whatever the needs are” cash on these adventures, the next day she had a smart phone and, three weeks later, one of 20 *Disciplines* a friend carried to Rev. Odongo from the U.S., one for each district superintendent, one for

each chair of the district Boards of Ministry and two others for reference. And because I told this story in a recent letter, a donor came forward with \$1,200 for a motorbike she may have by July 1.

I love living at the faith-stretching intersection of raw need and divine provision, and if you’ve not found such a place, your comfort zone is too small and too well insulated. You ought to get out more often! Don’t retire; advance.

A second is more serious. The British Methodists came to the Kenyan coast starting in Mombasa in the mid-1800s. Their mission was significant up and down the coast with some presence inland. Soon enough there were churches, colleges, seminaries, hospitals, all the apparatus of a successful mission, and in the years after independence (1960) all the leaders were now Africans. One error. They did not have a plan to reach the rest of the nation, the tribes of the interior and West, but rather settled down into their paralyzing routines and obligations of being a first-class denomination. Sound familiar? The fire is gone, so let’s tend the fireplace!

But then, barely 30 years ago, one of their ministers who went to Uganda for training met some United Methodists and was converted back to the mission. The first home of the church was that of the Rev. Wilton Odongo, my host.

Soon enough the Kenyan UMC came to birth and began to spread under the radar. But when noticed, the British Methodists were none too happy with the upstarts, and so it is to this day. Very little communication or cooperation between them. The mission the one forgot, the other has found. It was cold comfort to find that this particular form of sin was transnational.

So with little oversight and almost no resources, but the people themselves as inspired by the Spirit, the new church is now training its own leaders and invited me in for a look-see. What kind of wild God do we have who will take a grizzled and sometimes cynical veteran and kick him into the middle of Africa on a great adventure?

To read the full report, send an email to PThrailkill@aol.com. Teachers are needed for substantial courses on polity. Is that you?



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Cy Rogers

Finding grace in division

This separation of the United Methodist Church is not just about the “gay” issue, or just about the interpretation of Scripture, but rather, it is also about the grace that we extend to those who are different from us.

So first, the “gay” issue. As I tell my churches, we’ve all had gay ministers; we just didn’t know they were gay and didn’t care. With gay or straight or Black or White or purple, what has mattered most to congregations has not been sexual orientation, but rather the pastor’s effectiveness and commitment. This is not about being on the right or wrong side, not about control, but about how each of us responds to Christ’s call.

And, it is not, as legalists on both sides claim, about Scripture. Scripture, though inspired, is not what we worship. Using Scripture to support our prejudgments, either way, is an arrogant manipulation of the intended purpose of God’s Word. When Paul says we are neither Jew, nor Gentile, nor Greek, nor Republican, nor Democrat, nor male, nor female, nor gay, nor straight, nor Martian, neither or all, he is saying our essence is not in the visible divisions we create and manipulate, but rather, it is in the value that God’s invisible grace puts on us. If we are citizens of God’s kingdom, then grace is the “glue” that holds us together.

So, ultimately, it comes down to grace. Not just the grace God shows toward us, but also the grace we extend to those with whom we disagree, the grace we extend to those

who are different from us. That grace still exists, it is at the heart of how our churches and conferences operate, it is the reason we became “United,” it is at the center of why today we have male and female pastors, it is at the core of why we became a global church and it is the basis of why some of our church leaders enforce the doctrinal standards of the *Discipline* while others do not. It is not about law; it is all about grace.

The point of all this? Before us lies a separation, a divorce. And as with people we know and love—good and faithful people who, after a lifetime together, could no longer get along—we, too, are about to separate.

And the choices before our leaders are simple: Do we want a contested divorce? Do we take it to the courts, to battle it out in the open, to split the children, to take it to the front page, to lambast, to expose, to blame, to grow in hate and anger for one another? Is it about the property, the pension, the goldfish and the bowl?

If so, the bitterness will divide us further, and follow us, and everyone will lose. This is not the church of Jesus Christ.

Or do we separate in grace, agreeing to disagree, celebrating our differences, taking different roads that will ultimately, and hopefully, lead us to God?

I pray our leaders will seek what they claim to follow—the path of grace!

Rogers pastors Sandy Springs and John Wesley UMCs, Anderson.



View from the Pews

by Bill Barnier

Reaching within

Pastor Al landed on an interesting topic at Bible study. He related a story of Simon (Acts 8, 9) from which he asked if Simon the Sorcerer believed. He reminded us that the apostles prayed over the believers to receive the Holy Spirit. Pastor then asked three questions: Can you believe without the Holy Spirit? Can you purchase the presence of the Holy Spirit, as Simon offered? Are there church members without the Holy Spirit in their hearts?

I suspect each of us could spend a long time asking ourselves those very questions. Just what does the presence of the Holy Spirit feel like, exactly? Many who claim to have an abiding trust in the truth of our creator describe God only by the outward signs of his existence. “We’re here,” seems to be the obvious explanation. Belief by default. Ask the question “why?” and “God only knows” comes up to cover all possibilities. Indeed.

The same can be said of the Holy Spirit. Can we describe the Holy Spirit? How do we know we’ve taken the next step of faith by allowing the Holy Spirit to be known within our souls? It might be said that describing God and the Holy Spirit is like trying to describe love, color or sound. There must be a reference to a common knowledge from which to draw a metaphor. The most common answer is simply that we “just know.”

I lived the bulk of my life in faith in the existence of God but avoided action with that knowledge. I walked away from organized religion because I felt it strayed too far from the simple love and peace of God and the actions of faith through the Holy Spirit. One can see the manipulation and control of church societies in history, which grew for purposes

away from the basic tenets of God’s will to serve men. It was easy to “talk the talk,” but not so easy to “walk the walk,” and I avoided those who did.

Then God brought us to our little Methodist church to renew my faith in what can be done when Spirit puts faith into action. Sadly, it seems the stubbornness of people may mean the split of yet another world church.

But having faith is only part of the answer to the belief equation. You can work in a library and still not learn a thing. We no longer have the luxury of biblical miracles to bring nonbelievers or skeptical believers into the Spirit. Now believers must honestly adjust their hearts to clearly look outward to see the Spirit waiting patiently to be recognized.

With acceptance of the pure light and true sight of the Spirit comes a fullness of action that cannot be denied. The priceless measure of peace, love, security and purpose fills the soul, to give greater meaning and understanding to the vast universe of God. With that light, one can no longer simply believe. Courage in Spirit and humility before God replaces the human excuses for life under the controlling and confrontational rules of men. Memories of lessons and abilities long forgotten become visible in the light of the Holy Spirit. One then comes to fully understand that anything is possible if our creator wishes it to be so.

We must first be humble and contrite in our view of ourselves before the Holy Spirit can light the miraculous power of our creator within us. Old souls understand!

Speak the words and they will learn. Live the words and they will understand.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Robert Cox

Getting ready for charge conference

This August, various districts hosted their annual setup meeting. During the meeting, new clergy were welcomed, special information was shared by guest speakers and the dates for the charge conferences were published.

Beginning in September, churches will host district superintendents who will lead the church council in the charge conference, which is the annual business meeting of the charge at which leaders for the next calendar year will be elected, the pastor’s salary for the next calendar year set and various reports submitted and approved.

To help churches and leaders prepare for charge conference, the South Carolina Conference has prepared a training video on how to complete the Minister’s Support Form. You can access the video at <https://tinyurl.com/49e24h7s>, or you can read Getting Ready for Charge Conference at <https://church-admin.org/2022/07/24/getting-ready-for-charge-conference>.

The church administration website also has videos on how to complete other forms for charge conference under the “video archives” Resources tab.

For more information, email rlcox@umcsc.org or call 864-554-2008.

Celebrating the pastors of the Anderson District

It is with profound appreciation that we recognize you this month. The Anderson District is beautifully shaped by your leadership, your sacrifices, your biblical scholarship, your steady example, and your engaging spirit. You are a gift to your churches.

Please know that you have our gratitude and admiration as we serve with you.

Steve, Medina, and Cathy

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Conference Historical Society to meet Oct. 1 at Claflin

ORANGEBURG—The South Carolina Conference Historical Society plans to meet Oct. 1 at Claflin University.

The meeting will be held in historic Ministers' Hall in order to provide space for social distancing. Ministers' Hall was built in 1913 and served for many years as the school's dining hall.

Gathering and fellowship begins at 10 a.m. The business meeting will be convened at approximately 10:30 a.m. by the society's new president, the Rev. Meredith M. Dark.

Attendees should enter the campus through the main entrance at 400 Magnolia St. You will be directed to available parking by Campus Security. Visitors are always

encouraged to join members in attending society meetings.

Following the business meeting, the Rev. Larry D. McCutcheon, interim university chaplain, will speak. A Claflin graduate, McCutcheon has had a long association with the university and its students having served as director of the Orangeburg Wesley Foundation and as pastor at Trinity United Methodist Church in Orangeburg. He is a former superintendent of the Charleston District. His topic will focus on "Leaders of the 1866 Conference."

Claflin University's current "masking policy" requires face coverings to be worn in all buildings except in residence halls.



From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

October 75 years ago

What were South Carolina Methodists talking about 75 years ago this month? Since Annual Conference met in October in the 1940s, both the South Carolina and Upper South Carolina conferences were getting ready to meet. It would be the final session of the Upper South Carolina Conference, as the Jurisdictional Conference would approve merging the two conferences back together in 1948.

The South Carolina Conference met in Charleston, at Trinity, and noted the importance of the city to Methodist history in the state. The Upper South Carolina Conference met in Spartanburg, at Central.

The start of the school year, both in the local church and in the conference's colleges, took up some space in the *Advocate*. A feature on the "Methodism on the Campus" column noted Columbia College's opening session, with a devotional presented by the Columbia District superintendent. The mayor of Columbia and the president of the Chamber of Commerce, as well as the president of the alumnae association, all spoke. Lander College President John Marvin Rast announced new faculty appointments. Wofford shared news about a new science annex with a few additional labs and classrooms to accommodate the influx of students following World War II.

In the districts, the Marion District held a meeting of all pastors, church school superintendents and children's division superintendents and teachers to promote new Sunday school literature. Attendees at the meeting were encouraged to bring their own sandwiches for lunch. The Florence-Kingstree District also had a meeting for Sunday school workers to talk about church school literature. They also encouraged attendees to bring their own light lunch. (I'm glad we are more willing to feed those attending workshops these days!)

The *Advocate* complained about laws against gambling not being enforced in some parts of South Carolina, particularly as they related to bingo games at county fairs. Several sheriffs had indicated they did not intend to stop bingo games or other games of chance, mostly because some "of the best people" take part. The *Advocate* wondered what other laws officials were not enforcing for similar reasons.

In international affairs, the recent independence of India and Pakistan, which had taken place on Aug. 15, 1947, made the pages of the *Advocate*. Readers learned about the problems that independence and partition of British India along religious lines, between Muslims and Hindus, was causing. Other territories that had been independent of British India were free to join one or the other, or remain independent. The article noted the presence of some Indian Christians in the government of India and of some regional assemblies, though Christians were a small minority in the nation.

The biggest news in the *Advocate* was a proposal relating to the three senior colleges: Wofford, Columbia and Lander. A joint committee of the two conferences was proposing a major restructuring of the colleges. Instead of a separate board and president for each college, the committee proposed creating a single president and board for all three.

Some in the conference were in favor of merging the three colleges onto a new campus, while others wanted to leave things as they were.

The subject of the wrangling over the future of the three colleges might be a good subject for a future column.

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



Easley First turns 175

First UMC, Easley, celebrated their 175th anniversary Sunday, Sept. 18. Members started the day with a time of fellowship and reunion at 10 a.m. During the 11 o'clock worship service, Anderson District Superintendent Steve Patterson (pictured) brought a message titled "Realizing Our Place in the Historical Scheme of Everything." The worship service combined different styles of music, including the church choir and the church band, and concluded with a boisterous singing of "Victory in Jesus." After worship, everyone sat down together to eat lunch in the gym, laughing over old memories, reconnecting with old friends, looking at displays from several church groups and enjoying a great day with one another.

Courtesy of the Rev. Michael Hood



Conference Historical Society

by the Rev. Meredith M. Dark

SEJ, UMC historical societies gather in Georgia

Gramling elected president of SEJ Historical Society

The Southeastern Jurisdiction Historical Society and the Historical Society of The United Methodist Church met at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simon's Island July 26-29.

The meeting was hosted by the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Anne Packard, the curator of the Arthur J. Moore Methodist Museum, organized the itinerary for the meeting on the theme, "Walking With Wesley"

On July 26, the group heard presentations on John and Charles Wesley by the Rev. Franklin B. Buie and the Rev. David Hanson. Later Buie spoke again on John Wesley's travels in South Carolina as he journeyed between Fort Frederica, Savannah and Charleston.

On July 27, the group departed by motor coach for a tour of Savannah. The first stop was Cockspur Island, also known as Peepers Island. There is a monument on Cockspur Island for John Wesley, and the inscription is the following excerpt from Wesley's Journal: "Fri. 6 - About eight in the morning I first set my foot on American ground. It was a small uninhabited island, over against Tybee, called by the English Peeper Island. Mr. Oglethorpe led us through the moorish land on the shore to a rising ground. ... We chose an open place surrounded with myrtles, bays and cedars, which sheltered us both from the sun and wind, and called our little flock together to prayers."

The site where Wesley's ship landed is largely untouched and may be seen today.

Next, the group traveled to Savannah and enjoyed a walking tour of sites in the city related to John Wesley. The first site visited was Trinity Church in downtown Savannah, the Mother Church of Methodism in Savannah. The ladies of the church graciously offered refreshments. Attendees learned that Trinity Church was a meeting house of the Methodist Society in 1779, and by 1840 it had grown to a membership of 400. Other sites included the location of Wesley's parish house and the location of the home of Thomas Causton, as well as the Oglethorpe and Wesley monuments.

After returning to Epworth By The Sea, a number of the group toured the Moore Methodist Museum guided by Packard. The Moore Methodist Museum currently houses the Upper Room's collection of nativity scenes as well as many artifacts from mis-

sionaries, bishops and churches related to Georgia Methodism and the South Georgia Conference.

On July 28, the group toured St. Simon's Island. The first stop was Christ Church for a grounds tour and then a presentation inside Christ Church. Christ Church has an interesting history. The Rev. Anson Dodge hired an architect to build Christ Church based on "overturned ship of faith" architecture. The interior is largely made out of heart pine. Some of the stained-glass windows came from England in 1885. In 1898, Dodge's mother commissioned a window of St. Peter's conversion. There is also a window depicting John and Charles Wesley preaching under live oak trees. The ladies of the congregation give lectures in the church, publish a cookbook, hold a progressive dinner at Christmastime and sold honey to fund church repairs when honeybees were found in the belfry. Christ Church has a rich history.

From there, attendees toured nearby Fort Frederica National Monument where first Charles and later John Wesley labored to enforce Anglican worship practices on a frontier settlement with little success.

Back at Epworth By The Sea, attendees heard a lecture by the Rev. Ann Burkholder of Emory University's Candler School of Theology on the life of Dorothy Rogers Tilly (1883-1970). Tilly was a pioneer in addressing issues of race and sociology in her time. She was appointed to President Harry S. Truman's Civil Rights Commission at the age of 64. Dorothy and her husband, Milton, aided many campaigns to assist children in poverty. They became agents of social justice and change. The lecture on Tilly was arranged and sponsored by the Historical Society of the UMC.

During the business session, the Rev. Roger M. Gramling was elected president of the Southeastern Jurisdiction Historical Society. Buie continues to serve as the society's membership secretary.

Next year's meeting will be hosted by the Western North Carolina Conference the third week in July at Bennett College, in Greensboro, North Carolina, and will focus on Methodism and Civil Rights. Bennett College is a historically Black college.

Anyone is welcome to join the SEJ Historical Society and attend its annual meetings. For information regarding membership, contact Buie at fbuie@hotmail.com or Gramling at gramlingrm@bellsouth.net.



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Global Briefs

Grassroots groups talk up The United Methodist Church

AUBURN, Ala.—A handful of U.S. conferences that are seeing considerable discussion and action around disaffiliation also have seen the emergence of grassroots groups advocating for churches to remain United Methodist. They go by such names as Celebrate UMC, Stay UMC, Abide South Georgia and That We May Be One.

Old Mutare Mission Hospital gets a facelift

MUTARE, Zimbabwe—Despite the country's economic crisis, good things are happening at The United Methodist Church's Old Mutare Mission Hospital. A state-of-the-art outpatient department, kitchen and 120-panel solar system are among recent additions funded by the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries' Global Health unit. "The outward appearance matches with the hearts and the welcome you receive inside," said patient Pishai Muchauraya.

New Global Mission class forming

ATLANTA—Applications will be accepted until Dec. 1 for the Global Mission Fellows program, US-2 track, which puts 20- to 30-year-olds to work in social justice ministries in the United States. Those selected for the next Global Mission Fellow cohort will begin service in August 2023.

Bishop elected to ecumenical group's top committee

KARLSRUHE, Germany—United Methodist Bishop Sally Dyck, ecumenical officer of the Council of Bishops and interim bishop of the California-Nevada Conference, has been elected to the executive committee of the World Council of Churches. The central committee elects 20 of its members to serve as the WCC executive committee.

UMCOR grant helps with flood relief

ATLANTA—The United Methodist Committee on Relief has awarded a solidarity grant of \$10,000 to the North Georgia Conference to support initial relief efforts for the damage caused by severe flooding in Chattooga and Floyd counties. The best response for now is to wait, pray, give and prepare, the conference reports.

Church court releases fall docket

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The United Methodist Judicial Council has released a 24-item docket for its fall session. Because of the pandemic, the Judicial Council has been meeting online and deliberations are not yet scheduled. Briefs are due Oct. 12 and reply briefs are due Oct. 22.

WCC assembly focuses on reconciliation

KARLSRUHE, Germany—Speakers at the World Council of Churches General Assembly connected the theme of the ecumenical gathering, "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity," to a splintering within The United Methodist Church. Bishop Harald Rückert pointed to the relationship between France and Germany after World War II as an example for the denomination that reconciliation is possible.

Women call for better climate response

NEW YORK—United Women in Faith has responded to the flooding in Jackson, Mississippi, by calling for focused action to address the climate crisis in communities burdened with systemic inequalities. "These communities must be prioritized not only in the rebuilding process but also in the transition to a green and just new economy and green and just new jobs," the women's group said in a Sept. 7 statement.

British Methodists react to Queen's passing

LONDON—Leaders of The Methodist Church in Britain have issued a statement about the death of Queen Elizabeth II. It reads in part: "The loyalty to, and love expressed, for Queen Elizabeth across the world is a testament to the life that she led, one marked by dedicated service to others."

Bishops respond to letter from MARCHA

WASHINGTON—MARCHA, the United Methodist caucus of Hispanic Methodists, issued an open letter of concern Sept. 2 to the Council of Bishops regarding the current complaint filed against Bishop Minerva Carcaño. The letter expresses concern about the handling and extension of the complaint process and requests that the Council of Bishops remove the complaints from the Western Jurisdiction College of Bishops and assume responsibility for processing them. In a written response to the caucus, the Council of Bishops acknowledged the grief and pain caused by the unresolved state of the complaint and subsequent suspension of Bishop Carcaño. The bishops also said the adjudication of the complaint process rests with the jurisdictional college of bishops and committee on episcopacy, and that the process has been delayed due to an appeal filed with the Judicial Council, the denomination's top court. That appeal is still pending. The Council of Bishops said it joins MARCHA and others in prayer for healing for Bishop Carcaño and all who have experienced harm.

Two United Methodists elected to central committee

KARLSRUHE, Germany—The World Council of Churches 11th Assembly elected two United Methodists as members of the ecumenical organization's central committee. Bishop Sally Dyck, the Council of Bishops ecumenical officer, and the Rev. Ann Jacob, a pastor in Edmonds, Washington, will serve on the 150-member committee that acts as the main decision-making body for the World Council of Churches between assemblies.

Tour to focus on Medicare education, health, wellness

ATLANTA—Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century is launching the Health, Wellness and Medicare Education Tour to help pastors, leaders, lay people and community members "build a better you." The tour will include Greenville on Oct. 15.

More relief for Kentucky after floods

ATLANTA—The recovery effort for Kentucky continues after storms in July resulted in 40 deaths and infrastructure damage. Early Response Teams from multiple United Methodist conferences are deploying to help set the stage for additional volunteers who will assist. In addition to two solidarity grants, the United Methodist Committee on Relief is undergirding the Kentucky and Central Appalachian conferences with the human resources necessary to identify and respond to survivor needs.

—Courtesy of United Methodist News Service



by Betty Stalnaker

Resource Center

More new resources

The Resource Center is holding a garage sale and weeding out some of our older resources. If you are interested, please contact us at bstalnaker@umcsc.org or 803-735-8798.

The following are new resources available for Bible studies:

Amos: An Invitation to the Good Life (DVD2778WM=) Author: Rothschild, Jennifer. 8 sessions, 24-35 min/study book/2022.

Amos is often called a prophet of doom. And when you begin to read his prophecy, it doesn't take long to realize that nickname fits. On the surface, his prophecy doesn't sound like a happy formula for the good life. However, every condemnation he gives serves as an invitation, a cry for us to "seek God and live" (Amos 5:4). You'll be invited to live assured, faithful, chosen, humble, justly, prayerful and hopeful. This kind of living will bring us and others around us peace and true prosperity. Amos is promoting the God life, and the God life is the good life. Age: YAS

Jesus Followers: Real-Life Lessons for Igniting Faith in the Next Generation (DVD2776CL=) Author: Lotz, Anne Graham/Wright, Rachel-Ruth Lotz. 5 sessions, 24-46 min/study guide/bk/2022.

In order to instill truth that leads to genuine faith, parents and grandparents must be intentional. Using the metaphor of a relay race, Lotz and her daughter, Rachel-Ruth Lotz Wright, demonstrate how the baton of faith is passed from generation to generation through our witness, our worship, our walk and our work. Within the framework of Anne's exploration of biblical characters from Genesis 5, Rachel-Ruth tells family stories that will encourage, inspire and motivate Christians to follow hard after Jesus and to develop their children and grandchildren into Jesus Followers. Age: YAS.

Resilient: Restoring Your Weary Soul in These Turbulent Times

(DVD2780CL=) Author: Eldredge, John. 5 sessions, 17-26 min/study guide with leader's guide/2022.

The longing for joy is one of the deepest yearnings of the human heart. After times of trial—including the pandemic, economic turmoil, wars and rumors of war and grief—our desire rises to the surface demanding relief. We've had to rally. Yet at some point, we have to replenish our soul's reserves or we will burn out. In this Resilient study series, Eldredge provides the awareness and skills you need to strengthen your weary soul. Drawing on wisdom from Scripture, Christian tradition and practical experiences, Resilient offers powerful supernatural graces to sustain you through these trying times as well as prepare you for future storms. Resilient leads you to the peace only God can give in a world gone mad—and helps you receive from Jesus the strength that prevails. Age: YAS.

The Big Picture: Seeing God's Dream for Your Life

(DVD2777B=) Author: Caldwell-Gross, Jevon/Caldwell-Gross, Nicole. 5 sessions, 8-9 min/leader's guide/bk/2022.

Connect the dots of triumph and trauma in your life to discover God's presence by studying the story of Joseph in Genesis. Life can often feel like a scattering of random events. The various choices, opportunities or even pain we experience seem to have no real purpose or connection. But if we pay attention to God's work, our lives tell a different story. The story of Joseph in Genesis teaches us to look for the big picture in our lives. It shows us how God weaves together events that seem random into a beautiful image of joy, survival, purpose and meaning. In "The Big Picture," take a closer look at the life of Joseph to discover God's presence in moments of triumph and trauma. Join them for this study and see God's dream for your life as you begin connecting the dots of God's grace, presence and protection. Age: YAS.

The South Carolina Conference Resource Center is your connection to DVDs and seasonal musicals. We are here to serve your church family. To reserve resources, call 803-735-8798 or visit www.umcsc.org/resource-center.

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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 1 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-plus years. 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."



African bishops call for unity, condemn advocacy groups

By Eveline Chikwanah

Excerpted and reprinted courtesy of United Methodist News Service

MUTARE, Zimbabwe—African bishops have called for unity in The United Methodist Church while condemning traditionalist advocacy groups looking to break up the denomination.

The bishops released a statement Sept. 8 denouncing the Africa Initiative and Wesleyan Covenant Association, which they say “are wrongly influencing God’s people in our areas.”

The statement was released at the close of the Africa Colleges of Bishops retreat, which was held Sept 5-8 at Africa University. The denomination’s bishops are organized by colleges, or groups, based on their regions; Africa has three such colleges.

The bishops’ statement said the Africa Initiative is working with the WCA to destroy the church in Africa through its support of the Global Methodist Church, a denomination not

yet recognized by General Conference.

“We will dissociate from any activities of the Africa Initiative and will not allow any activities of the Africa Initiative in our areas,” the bishops said, noting that “the Africa Initiative has lost its original goal of helping The United Methodist Church in Africa.”

The bishops also addressed misinformation that is being spread in the church.

“We will not tolerate anyone giving false information about The United Methodist Church,” the statement said.

All of the continent’s active bishops except Nigeria Area Bishop John Wesley Yohanna signed the statement.

Yohanna sent a brief statement by email to UM News, stating that while he respects his fellow African bishops’ views, he continues to support the Africa Initiative and WCA.

“The Africa Initiative and Wesleyan Covenant (Association) are pushing for obedience to the Bible and the *Book of Discipline*. Why should we not associate with them?” said

Yohanna, who did not attend the meeting.

Jay Therrell, the WCA’s president, said the advocacy group and sister organizations have long worked together with African leaders as equal partners, and the WCA’s Global Council has leaders from across the African continent.

“We are deeply disappointed, but not surprised, by the statement purported to come from all the African bishops,” he said. “We have been told the statement is not supported by all the bishops in Africa and lament that it insinuates that it is.”

He added that the WCA believes “strong-arm control tactics by some African bishops infringe upon the Christian freedom of their members to speak into the current and future direction of The United Methodist Church and their role in it. We remain committed to working with theologically conservative Methodists across the continent of Africa to empower their witness to the faith and their right to make informed decisions about their future in the church.”

COB welcomes court clarification of disaffiliation process

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Council of Bishops expressed gratitude for the Judicial Council’s ruling that clarified that Para. 2548.2 of *The Book of Discipline* is not a process of church disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church but is rather a supplementary procedure for the purpose of deeding church property as permitted by other paragraphs of the *Discipline* in limited situations.

In May, the bishops requested a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council on the meaning and application of Para. 2548.2.

“We are grateful that the Judicial Council has provided the clarity we need concerning a disciplinary paragraph that was believed to be ambiguous and subject to possible misinterpretation,” COB President Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton said. “Our goal was to seek clear direction concerning the processes that can be best used to facilitate appropriate, orderly and amicable disaffiliations even as we continue to pray and work for the unity of the church.”

In its ruling (Decision 1449), the church’s high court said, “The process in Para. 2548.2 may not be used as a pathway for local churches to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church.” The court also noted that

Para. 2548.2 pertains to deeding and transferring church property to another denomination but does not apply to the membership of a local church.

The Judicial Council clearly identified that action of the General Conference is necessary before a body can be acknowledged as a “denomination.” In addition, while the Judicial Council ruled that a comity agreement (referenced in Para. 2548.2) is necessary in any property transfer, the comity agreement “must already exist that has been signed by the Council of Bishops and approved and ratified by the General Conference.”

As a result, the Judicial Council affirmed that “consequently, Para. 2553 controls in matters of local church disaffiliation.”

Bickerton stated, “The clarity provided by our Judicial Council affirms that the work being done in annual conferences with Para. 2553 as the standard is correct. While we do not want any local church to leave the denomination, if they discern to do so, their departure must be guided by the provisions of Para. 2553.”

He added, “I continue to invite every United Methodist, lay and clergy alike, to join me in a prayer for peace and civility as we walk through these days of challenge and uncertainty.”



Welcome, Emmie!

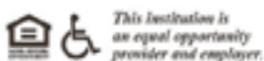
The Rev. Joseph James baptizes 8-month-old Emmie James Gould, daughter of Philip and Stephanie Gould. Emmie was baptized Aug. 21 at Trinity UMC, Sumter.

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Spencer Reid Anderson

ORANGEBURG—Spencer Reid Anderson, husband of the Rev. Minnie Anderson, died Sept. 12, 2022. Rev. Anderson is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

A memorial service was held Sept. 21 at Trinity UMC. Funeral services were held Sept. 24 at Robinson Chapel UMC, Liberty. Burial with full military honors will be in Liberty Memorial Gardens, Liberty.

Memorials may be sent to Paths to Wholeness Inc., P.O. Box 1402, Orangeburg, SC 29116.

Mr. Anderson is survived by his wife.

Dr. Leonard Hobson Buff Jr.

SPARTANBURG—The Rev. Leonard Hobson Buff Jr., a retired elder in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Sept. 9, 2022.



Buff Jr.

Prior to his retirement in 1996, Dr. Buff served the Clemson Charge, was the director of Youth Work, Board of Education and taught biology for more than 30 years at Spartanburg Methodist College.

Dr. Buff is survived by his sister and two grandchildren.

Doris McMeekin Cromartie

GEORGETOWN—Doris McMeekin Cromartie, sister of Eloise Clyburn, died Aug. 31, 2022. Mrs. Clyburn is the wife of the Rev. David Clyburn Jr., a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

A memorial service was held Sept. 4 at Screven Baptist Church.

Memorials may be made to Tideland Community Hospice, 2591 N. Fraser St., Georgetown, SC 29440; or to Screven Baptist Church, 2221 S. Island Road, Georgetown, SC 29440.

Mrs. Cromartie is survived by her three daughters.

Joyce Johnson Hanna Foxworth

WEST COLUMBIA—Joyce Johnson Hanna Foxworth, widow of the Rev. Lawrence Foxworth and mother of Barbara Hanna Herlong, died Sept. 2, 2022. Mrs. Herlong is the wife of the Rev. Ben Herlong, a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

A memorial service was held at Thompson Funeral Home, Lexington, followed by a graveside service at Memorial Park Cemetery, Orangeburg.

Memorials may be made to St. Andrews UMC, 1980 Columbia Road, Orangeburg, SC 29115; to St. Mark's UMC, 27 Broad St., Sumter, SC 29150; or to Shiloh UMC, P.O.

Box 159, Piedmont, SC 29673.

Mrs. Foxworth is survived by her two daughters.

Rev. Harry Kyle Gindhart Jr.

JOHNS ISLAND—The Rev. Harry Kyle Gindhart Jr., a retired elder in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Aug. 23, 2022.



Gindhart Jr.

Prior to his retirement in 2016, Rev. Gindhart served the Ann Hope-Friendship, Bethel-Armenia and Belair-Osceola charges. Following his retirement he served Lake View, Nichols and Midland Park charges.

Funeral services were held Sept. 1 at John Wesley UMC, Charleston.

Rev. Gindhart is survived by his wife, Marsha Gindhart, and three daughters.

Rev. Hoyt Graham Jr.

BEAUFORT—The Rev. Hoyt Graham Jr., a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Aug. 26, 2022.



Graham Jr.

Prior to his retirement in 1987, Rev. Graham served the Poe-Jackson Grove, Rehoboth-Bethel, O'Neal Street, Buford Charge, Ridgeland, Lovely Lane, Owings-Bramlett and Bethel Park charges.

A private burial was held at the National Cemetery Sept. 1 and was followed by a service at Carteret Street UMC.

Memorials may be made to the Carolina Friends of Hospice, 1110 13th St., Port Royal, SC 29935; or to Carteret Street UMC, 408 Carteret St., Beaufort, SC 29902.

Rev. Graham is survived by his son and daughter.

Rodney Johnson

HEMINGWAY—Rodney Johnson, brother of the Rev. Lee Johnson, died Aug. 27, 2022. Rev. Johnson and his wife, the Rev. Cheryl Johnson, are pastor of the St. Thomas Charge, Huger.

Funeral services were held Sept. 6 at Nesmith-Pinckney Funeral Home.

Rev. Jerold Dekover McKnight

LAKE CITY—The Rev. Jerold Dekover McKnight, pastor of Asbury United Methodist Church, Andrews, and brother of the Rev. Edward McKnight, died Sept. 2, 2022. Rev. Edward McKnight is the pastor of Faith UMC, Kingstree.

Funeral services were held Sept. 10 at the

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.

South Carolina Conference of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church with burial in the National Cemetery, Florence.

Rev. McKnight is survived by his mother.

Bishop Robert H. Spain

BRENTWOOD, Tenn.—Bishop Robert H. "Bob" Spain died Sept. 9, 2022. Bishop Spain served the South Carolina Conference as interim bishop during 1995-1996.



Spain

Funeral services were held Sept. 16 at Brentwood Methodist Church.

Memorials may be made to the Robert H. Spain Memorial Fund, Siloam Health, 828 Gale Lane, Nashville, TN 37204; or to the Robert H. Spain Memorial Fund, Harvest Hands, 155 B. Old Hermitage Ave., Nashville, TN 37210.

Bishop Spain is survived by his wife, Syble, and daughter.

Rev. Roy McMillian Stockman

SUMMERVILLE—The Rev. Roy McMillian Stockman, a retired elder in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Aug. 24, 2022.



Stockman

Prior to his retirement in 1989, Rev. Stockman served the Greenwood Circuit, Galloway Memorial, Laurens-St. James, Mauldin, Walterboro and Anderson-St. John's charges. He also served as the Charleston District superintendent from 1979-1985.

Funeral services were held Sept. 1 at Bethany UMC.

Memorials may be made to Alzheimer's Association, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Fl. 17, Chicago, IL 60601; to the American Heart Association, 7272 Greenville Ave., Dallas, Texas 75231; or to the American Diabetes Association, P.O. Box 7023, Merrifield, VA 22116-7023.

Rev. Stockman is survived by his wife, Glenn Stockman, two sons and daughter.

Carl Raymond Walker

TAVARES, Fla.—Carl Raymond Walker,

father of Carol Stoops, died Sept. 9, 2022. Mrs. Stoops is the administrative assistant to the Marion District.

A private interment will be held at Centre County Memorial Park, State College, Pennsylvania.

Memorials may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105.

Mr. Walker is survived by his three sons and daughter.

Martha Jane Whitsett Williamson

REIDSVILLE, N.C.—Martha Jane Whitsett Williamson, sister of Yvonne Garrett, died Aug. 23, 2022. Mrs. Garrett is the wife of the Rev. Franklin Garrett, pastor of West Camden Charge, Camden.

Funeral services were held Sept. 2 at the McLaurin Memorial Chapel with burial in Greenview Cemetery. Mrs. Williamson is survived by her two daughters.

Rev. Reginald Darlington Wilson Jr.

LAKE JUNA-LUKSA, N.C.—The Rev. Reginald "Rex" Darlington Wilson Jr., a retired local pastor in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Sept. 18, 2022.



Wilson Jr.

Prior to his retirement in 2019, Rev. Wilson served the Mount Pleasant-St. Luke and Whaley Street charges. He was also the president and CEO of the South Carolina Methodist Conference Credit Union from 2007-2021.

Funeral services were held Sept. 25 at Trenholm Road UMC, Columbia.

Memorials may be made to the Music Ministry at Trenholm Road UMC, 3401 Trenholm Road, Columbia, SC 29204.

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

Rev. William McClary Wrighten

MONCKS CORNER—The Rev. William McClary Wrighten, pastor of the St. George Parish, died Sept. 3, 2022.



Wrighten

Prior to his 2021 appointment to St. George Parish, Rev. Wrighten served the Washington Charge.

Funeral services were held Sept. 8 at Bethany United Methodist Church, Summerville, with burial in Tri-Church Cemetery, St. Stephen.

Rev. Wrighten is survived by his wife, Karen Wrighten, a son and two daughters.

Former UMCSC Bishop Spain dies at age 96

Bishop Robert "Bob" Hitchcock Spain, a retired bishop of The United Methodist Church who served in the South Carolina Conference, passed away on Sept. 9, 2022, at the age of 96.

Spain was elected a bishop in the UMC in 1988 during the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference. He served the Kentucky and South Carolina conferences. After his retirement, he served as chaplain for the United Methodist Publishing House in Nashville until 2016.

Spain served the Louisville Area from 1988 to 1992, which comprises the Louisville and Kentucky conferences and also the Red Bird Missionary Conference. He retired in August 1992 and began teaching clergy and laity through the Focus on Ministry seminar sponsored by The United Methodist Publishing House in Nashville. Upon the untimely death of Bishop Joseph B. Bethea in South Carolina, the SEJ College of Bishops assigned Spain to the South Carolina Conference. This assignment ended in August

1996. Spain is survived by his wife, Syble, of 74 years; daughter, Mollie Johnston (Philip); five grandchildren, Meg Stutts, Andy Johnston (Anne), Robert Spain II (Laura), David Johnston (Tayler), Julie Barnhill (Corey); and eight great-grandchildren. He is preceded in death by his son, John Philip Spain, his parents and two brothers.

Spain was born in Loretto, Tennessee. At the age of 17 he enlisted in the U.S. Navy. He served the Navy in the medical corps in the South Pacific during WWII. After the war, Spain attended the University of Tennessee (Knoxville) and graduated from the University of North Alabama. Following his graduation, he and his wife began his career as a Methodist minister and enrolled at Vanderbilt Divinity School while serving Spring Hill Methodist Church.

Upon completion of his divinity degree, he served in the Tennessee Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, serving First Methodist Church in Livingston, First Meth-

odist Church in Lebanon, Belle Meade UMC in Nashville and Brentwood UMC.

For five years, he was the district superintendent of the Nashville District. He was a reserve member of the Judicial Council.

Spain will be remembered as a loving husband, father, grandfather ("Daddy Bob"), great-grandfather, friend and devoted pastor to many. He enjoyed woodworking, gardening, music and travel over the years. Through his life he blessed so many with his care, prayers and numerous handwritten notes. He was a faithful servant to the church and everyone he met.

His service was held Sept. 16 at Brentwood UMC, led by Dr. Davis Chappell and Bishop Joe Pennel. Memorial contributions may be made to the Robert H. Spain Memorial Fund at Siloam Health, 820 Gale Lane, Nashville, TN 37204, or the Robert H. Spain Memorial Fund at Harvest Hands, 155 B Old Hermitage Avenue, Nashville, 37210.

October

Bethlehem Center, Spartanburg Special Emphasis Month (UWF)

- Oct. 1-31—Pumpkin Patch, Disciples UMC, Greenville, M-S: 9 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sun: Noon-7 p.m.
- Oct. 2—Florence District Men N Ministry, Wesley Chapel UMC, Lake City, 3 p.m.
- Oct. 4—UMVIM, Grace UMC, Columbia, 7:30-8:30 p.m.
- Oct. 6-8—Summit on the Black Church, Florence Convention Center, Florence. Scholarships are available at <https://www.umcsc.org/advocacy/elcc>
- Oct. 8—Indoor Yard Sale, Washington Street UMC, Columbia, 7 a.m.-1 p.m.
- Oct. 8—Annual Men N Ministry Business Meeting, United Methodist Conference Center, Columbia, 8:30 a.m.
- Oct. 8—Family and Friends Day, Friendship UMC, Islandton.
- Oct. 8—Yard Sale, Virginia Wingard Memorial UMC, Columbia, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

- Oct. 8-9—Florence District LSM Training via Zoom, 2-5 p.m.
- Oct. 9—150th Church Anniversary, Friendship UMC, Islandton, 8 a.m. Sunday school, 9 a.m. worship.
- Oct. 9—49th Homecoming Service, Smyrna UMC, Bennettsville, 10 a.m.
- Oct. 10—Indigenous Peoples Day
- Oct. 13—Service of Repentance and Healing for the Harm Inflicted on LGBTQ-IA+ Persons, Washington Street UMC, Columbia, 6 p.m.
- Oct. 13-15—SEJ Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Four Points by Sheraton, Richmond, Virginia. Register: <https://goo.gl/RxQpcW>
- Oct. 14-16—Choir Music Weekend, Lake Junaluska, \$105. 800-222-4930 or lakejunaluska.com/choirmusic
- Oct. 15—Fall Festival, Asbury Hills, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. 864-836-3711 or retreat@asburyhills.org.
- Oct. 15—Fall Bazaar, Disciples UMC, Greenville, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

- <https://mydisciplesumc.org>
- Oct. 15-16—Florence District LSM Training via Zoom, 2-5 p.m.
- Oct. 16—LSM School, Marion District, Macedonia UMC, Mullins, 2:30-8 p.m.
- Oct. 21-22—SCCUWF 50th Annual Meeting, First UMC, Myrtle Beach, \$40. <https://www.umcsc.org/women>
- Oct. 22—Open House, Spartanburg Methodist College, Spartanburg. <https://www.smccsc.edu/openhouse>
- Oct. 23—Bicentennial Celebration (belated), Sharon UMC, Abbeville, 11 a.m.
- Oct. 23—LSM School, Marion District, Macedonia UMC, Mullins, 2:30-8 p.m.
- Oct. 25—LSM School, Charleston District, Zoom, 6:30-9 p.m.
- Oct. 27—LSM School, Charleston District, Zoom, 6:30-9 p.m.
- Oct. 29—ERT Basic/Renewal Training, Highland Park UMC, Florence, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration>

- Oct. 29—Church Bazaar, Zion UMC, Prosperity, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

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 Period
- 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 training, Cornerstone UMC, Rock Hill, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration>
- Nov. 6—Daylight Savings Time ends
- Nov. 6—All Saints Sunday Concert, Shandon UMC, Columbia, 4 p.m.



Classified Advertisements

Announcements

YARD SALE AT VIRGINIA WINGARD MEMORIAL UMC

The Virginia Wingard Memorial UMC Youth Group is holding a Yard Sale **October 8th from 8:00am to 1:00pm**
Call the Church Office with questions or for other info. (803-772-0794)

Special Note to Churches: We are selling a set of 4 brass offering plates, 10 silver communion cup trays, a 2 to 4 foot semi circular stands for church flowers (great for poinsettias or lilies!) and a salad bar with wheels among other church specific items.

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Open Positions

Bluffton UMC seeks an **Administrative Assistant**, part time, Monday through Thursday 9:30 to 2:30 p.m. We are a vibrant, growing church in need of an administrative assistant who will have at least two (2) years of office work experience with proficiency in Microsoft Office software (Word, Excel, Publisher), be an effective communicator (written, oral, electronic) be able to adapt to interruptions and changes, think and prioritize quickly. Previous experience working for a church or other nonprofit organization would be helpful. The Administrative Assistant manages and coordinates all office and business activities and maintains day to day operations of the church.

We require excellent judgment, discretion and confidentiality, and the completion of Safe Sanctuary Training and background check. Please contact sprc@blufftonumc.org for more information.

Open Positions

Music Director Needed

Woodland United Methodist Church in Rock Hill, SC, is seeking to hire a part-time (~20 hours a week) Music Director/Accompanist. Available for weekly practice with Sanctuary choir, handbell choir, worship services, and for other special worship events. Please send all inquiries to ministry@comporium.net Attn: PPRC.

Grace United Methodist Church in Abbeville, SC is seeking a **Children's Minister** responsible for the planning, leading, supervision, coordination and development of a comprehensive children's program that promotes spiritual growth. Duties include, but are not limited to, monthly communication with stakeholders, quarterly advisory committee meetings, documentation of all children activities, meetings with parents to discuss progress and other duties assigned by Senior Pastor and/or Staff and Pastoral Relations Committee Chair. Part time (20 hours weekly) yearly contract review. Please review the attached job description for additional details. Resume and references upon request. All resumes or questions may be submitted to dclendaniel@acsdsc.org or jgwilson@umcsc.org

Bluffton UMC seeks a **Director of Christian Education**, a dynamic team member to support/enhance existing Christian educational programming relative to the United Methodist Church and/or to create/develop additional programs for children, youth and adults. The daily schedule is flexible, Sunday morning/ evening and some office hours are expected. A degree from an accredited college with a focus and experience in Christian Ministries and Education completion of Safe Sanctuary training and a background check, a current driver's license and reliable transportation are required. We expect excellent verbal and written communication skills, proficient computer skills (Google Suite, Microsoft Office, Wordpress etc.), the ability to organize, prioritize and strategize programming and goals, work with the education committee to provide opportunities for persons of all ages and stages to grow closer to Christ. For a detailed job description, please email SPRC@blufftonumc.org

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by the Rev. Tim Reeves

Through the lens of the vulnerable

Oct. 2
Sharing with the Vulnerable
Exodus 22: 21-27; James 2: 14-17

Justice=retribution/vengeance/payback/violence.

That mindset dominated the ancient world at the Exodus. It dictated if you committed some act against me and/or my family, I was justified in retaliating with an act equal to, or even worse, than your initial action. That was justice.

Into this skewed thinking, God rewrites what constitutes justice.

This redefining begins in Exodus chapters 22-23 as God lays out the “rules for living” that God wants. Much of what we moderns read in these rules seems common sense for us. For example, paying for damage done by your stray goat (22:5) is simply being a good neighbor.

But in Moses’ time, it wasn’t typical to act from the goodness of one’s heart. Payback for damages often required violent threats or reprisals, creating hatreds to last generations. Payback was justice.

As God confronts that thinking, God also redefines how we are to look at one another.

God called the Israelites to treat the most vulnerable among them (foreigners, widows, orphans) not as strangers or marginalized people to be exploited/abused, but as the child of God each of these were. God values people not by wealth, status or power, but instead values people as a child of God with a heart and a soul to be treasured.

This concept is introduced in Moses’ time. Then, with Jesus, we see the next step, which is to unite our professing faith and our actions, particularly the actions we take or do not take against the most vulnerable among us.

The Book of James is one of the best writings on how faith and good deeds (actions) are to be combined daily. James inspires readers to bring God’s concept of the peaceable kingdom to full circle, using Jesus to solidify the original guidelines shared in Exodus. James says faith in action must be demonstrated with daily charitable acts of kindness and love toward those most vulnerable among us.

The question we need to ask today is who/what among us is most vulnerable? Most defenseless? Most incapable of speaking up for him/herself? And in those acts of kindness, how do we demonstrate God’s love and re-definition of justice for all the world to see today?

Oct. 9
Gifts of the Widows
1 Kings 17; Luke 21: 1-4

An old cliché states “You can’t judge a book by its cover,” because what we see on the outside is not always the real, true picture.

I learned as a child coming down on Christmas morning to see wrapped gifts laying underneath a Christmas tree, which the night before had only bare space. Most often, the best wrapped, most attractive present was socks or underwear (ugh!) while the least attractive wrapped present was that very special toy or item I really wanted.

Both in ancient and in Jesus’ time, widows were not respected. They were essentially “poorly wrapped and unattractive” presents. Widowhood meant a living death, abandoned and oftentimes treated as a drain on the community.

That makes both Elijah’s and Jesus’ experiences with two widows so uplifting. In both instances, God says don’t judge an individual by outward appearance because the peaceable kingdom of God includes everyone, even widows.

At this point in his life, Elijah needs assurance that God is with him. So the gift of this widow to Elijah, both for safety and for sustenance, is a welcome respite. Elijah sees that even from the seemingly lowest of the low in the culture, God works wonders.

In the case of Jesus, Mark’s Gospel (12:41-44) gives us a broader picture of what transpired. Jesus has publicly criticized the hypocritical religious teachers who publicly profess faithfulness yet privately commit unfaithfulness by cheating widows. Jesus then adds fuel to the fire by using a lowly widow, one of the cheated class, to extoll her meager offering in the collection box while lambasting the large sums publicly and proudly given by the religious leaders.

In the eyes of God, Jesus says the simple but faith-motivated offering of the widow is more acceptable than the large yet faithless offering of the religious leaders. Jesus says God places little to no value on that which we give to God but which does not come from our heart.

So the questions today are: Do we give to God from the abundance of our heart and our love of God? Or do we give to God for public recognition or some other reason?

Oct. 16
Blinded by the Truth
John 9: 1-7; 35-38

Mammoth Caves in southern Kentucky is both a U.S. National Park and a UNESCO World Heritage Site with some of the world’s most unique underground settings. Visitors can see wonders only found in this spot, courtesy of electric lights strung through the caves.

At one point, a guide will turn off the lights one by one until the visitors stand in total, absolute darkness. Those who have braved this experience remark upon the emotional and physical weight, which seems to descend upon you when you stand in this total, absolute darkness.

Darkness is defined as the absence of visible light and is really not an opposite of light. Darkness is simply a state of non-lightedness.

Spiritual darkness is similar to physical darkness since it, too, is the absence of “light.”

Here, Jesus examines the critical importance of spiritual light, using the physical darkness of a blind man as his example. By healing this man’s lifelong blindness, Jesus gives this unfortunate man a new lease on a life now in the “light.”

Jesus says it isn’t one’s sinfulness that causes such issues. Instead, a loving God sees value in every single human being and isn’t interested in “rewarding” sin with physical penalties. A loving God, Jesus points out, recognizes the world is broken by sin and desires that all of us strive to alleviate the brokenness (like this man’s blindness) and make the world the kind of peaceable and loving kingdom of God, which God desires it to be.

God wants us to use the time, talents, tools, gifts and graces that God gives each of us to bring the “light” of love of Jesus into the “dark” world around us.

Our task as followers of Jesus is to ask are we bearers of his light or are we preservers of the darkness? Like the Mammoth Cave experience, do we cause others to live in an environment of heavy-weighted spiritual or even physical darkness, or do we, like God, value the precious nature of everyone as a child of God and seek to bring light into their lives and into the world around us?

Oct. 23
Justice for the Persistent
Luke 18: 1-8

There’s no disagreement that God loves

both people and justice. In the Old Testament, with God’s attention to widows, orphans and strangers among us, and the New Testament with Jesus’ very public and deliberate embracing of these same individuals, we see this truth. The issue is whether we define “people” and “justice” as God sees them and not as the world or culture around us defines these.

In God’s eyes, justice and fairness are to be applied equally to everyone, regardless of status, position, power, authority, legacy, skin color, background or any other arbitrary human delineation. God is color-blind, ethnic-blind, country-of-origin-blind, gender-blind, background-blind, education-blind, 401(k)-blind. The only thing God isn’t blind about is the need for every human being to deserve and receive love, grace, mercy and forgiveness. Those things are to be applied equally across the human board of existence.

I love dogs. I apologize to you if you’re a cat person, but my preference is dogs—all dogs, even the little yappy ones that like to run around your ankles, bark and yip at you!

My wife calls me a “dog whisperer” because I seem have a way with dogs of all kinds. I can’t explain it; it’s a gift, and for some reason, I am able to relate with nearly every dog I encounter, even dogs that have been abused and are thus naturally hesitant with a human.

I believe that’s the similar lesson God wants us to comprehend with this example of the persistent widow seeking justice and fairness.

Again, I love how Jesus uses a widow. A widow could expect no consideration by any court, so to actually receive any fairness in a public dispute was unthinkable.

Jesus says if even an incompetent judge like this one, who had no respect nor love for this widow, can serve justice and equality to an aggrieved widow, how much more can we as humans expect God, who loves every single child of God equally, to receive justice and fairness from God?

If even the “least of the least” (an incompetent judge) can provide justice/fairness, what can we expect from the “most of the most” (our loving parent in heaven)?

So are we more like the incompetent judge in arbitrarily applying justice and fairness to others, or are we more like God in applying God-like equal justice and fairness to everyone equally? What kind of people will we be?

Oct. 30
Hospitality Without Borders
Ezekiel 47: 13-23

The title of this week’s lesson is somewhat misleading. This passage from Ezekiel lays out the physical boundaries for the Hebrew tribes. Each tribe would have equal shares. The key point is one which is often overlooked. In verses 22-23, God commands each tribe to allocate land to “foreigners who have joined you and are raising their families among you. They will be like native-born Israelites to you and will receive an allotment among the tribes.”

This allotment to foreigners was a high privilege. These former foreigners/families would now be able to pass this inheritance onto children for generations to come.

The significance here (and where we moderns run into controversy) is that these resident foreigners must first have “joined” Israel as converts to the faith. Previously God has required that foreigners must become part of the Israelite religious/societal culture to receive these rights. Foreigners willing to give up their native gods/idols, become part of the Israelite/Hebrew tribes/families and worship God/Jehovah alone were welcome to receive all rights and privileges.

Those who would not make that conver-

sion would not be accorded these rights and privileges. These non-converting individuals and families could live within the borders of Israel, would be treated with respect and honor and receive justice and mercy, but they could not be “joined” to the Israelites until they converted.

Now, that’s a hard assessment to make, and some moderns argue that wasn’t what God intended, nor should we in the 21st century be held to that same standard. Both sides can argue about that until the proverbial cows come home, but the fact remains that these Old Testament passages point to this clear distinction.

Granted, Jesus came to advance that mindset to demonstrate that no one’s ethnicity or citizenship is a prequalification for redemption, salvation or God’s love and acceptance. That’s his spiritual kingdom.

But it’s clear in these Old Testament passages from Ezekiel, Exodus, etc. that the “law of the land” in post-exilic Israel was that only those who converted to the faith could own land and be a part of the tribe in which they lived. We simply can’t take this passage or even other Old Testament passages dealing with immigration, migration, foreign-born, etc., and then apply them directly to modern 21st century situations.

Now you may agree with what I’ve written here. You may also disagree with what I’ve written.

That’s OK. Open discussion on this subject, not proof-texting passages simply to substantiate or repudiate an opinion, is welcome.

But first try to discern God’s will/purpose in both in the post-exilic Israel and in today’s modern context and then we can stand on this common ground together.

It’s just a suggestion. Thanks for being a part of this month’s study. I hope and pray it has been an enlightening, challenging and spirit-filled experience. God bless.

Reeves, a retired elder in the South Carolina Conference, lives in Charleston.





Many of the gowns are created from donated wedding dresses.



The gowns are given to families whose babies have passed away.

Two Orangeburg churches join to sew gowns for babies who have passed away

Partnerships among churches are important, and the "Forget Me Not" Program is one example.

Forget Me Not is a joint effort of St. Andrews United Methodist Church and St. Paul's UMC in Orangeburg.

According to Alice French, the Garden City Stitchers of Orangeburg originally began when members with young children had an interest in sewing. They smocked handmade clothing for their children.

As their children grew, their focus

changed to community service.

Now called the Forget-Me-Not Program, today their project is sewing gowns for babies who have passed away.

"Each one of these gowns are made with love. Many are created from donated wed-

ding dresses," French explained.

Their group meets once a month at St. Andrews UMC, 1980 Columbia Road, Orangeburg. All are welcome to join.

For more information, call the church at 803-534-6636.



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<https://asburyhills.org/fall-festival>

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