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Community giveaway helps many at Macedonia UMC, Ridgeville. Page 18.



Meet Maybeline, our Precious Pet of the Month. Page 5.

Visit our new website:



In mission together

United Methodists to unite at AC2026 in Rise Against Hunger

By Jessica Brodie

GREENVILLE—For the first time in years, South Carolina United Methodists will come together as one in collective, hands-on ministry at Annual Conference. And it's all designed to put a dent in hunger—one meal at a time.

Clergy and laity at Annual Conference will gather Tuesday, June 9, to pack roughly 125,000 meals for the nonprofit

Rise Against Hunger. Formerly called Stop Hunger Now, Rise Against Hunger works to help underserved people worldwide achieve food security and resilience through nutrition, education and economic empowerment. Founded by United Methodist Rev. Ray Buchanan in 1998, the organization has packaged 68.9 million meals through its volunteers and impacted more than 7.3 million lives.

See "Rise Against Hunger," Page 10



Photo by Lindy Croxton

Youth sing during worship at Revolution, held March 27-29 in Columbia. The annual event fosters spiritual growth.

Seek First: New Revolution venue fosters more intimate, meaningful experience for youth

By Jessica Brodie

Dressed in T-shirts instead of bundled up in winter clothing, roughly 650 youth headed to Columbia March 27-29 for the annual Revolution spiritual event. It was a weekend filled with worship, wisdom and plenty of opportunities for Christian connection.

"It was a new level of energy in a

new space and much more intimate," said Chris Lynch, congregational specialist for the Anderson and Greenville Districts as well as South Carolina Ministries With Young People, calling the event a genuine success.

The March event was a rescheduled one; originally slated for late January, heavy snowfall across the state forced organizers to shift plans last-minute to

spring, instead.

Lynch said though some who'd planned to go to the first event couldn't attend, others were able to go who wouldn't have been able to attend in January.

This year's event featured a significant venue change. Instead of the Township Auditorium, this year's

See "Revolution," Page 24

NFL drafts, pop culture and the Bible: Sunday Scripture Podcast evolves

By Jessica Brodie

One popular Christian podcast has been going strong even after a hiatus, and now it's shifted to a video format in the hopes of broadening its audience and reaching even more people with open—and important—discussions about God's word.

South Carolina United Methodist pastor the Rev. Joe Cate started Sunday Scripture Podcast more than a decade ago when he served as an associate pastor at the former Buncombe Street United Methodist Church, Greenville. He envisioned the weekly podcast would serve

See "Sunday Scripture Podcast," Page 13

Young clergy find family, renewed purpose in 'Clergy Connexion'

By Rachel Headden

What began as a simple idea in the Columbia District has grown into something far more meaningful than anyone could have imagined. Now renamed "Clergy Connexion," the group embraces both the group's deep relationships and their shared calling within the wider church through two distinct but connected paths.

The Young Clergy Cohort has expanded from just a handful of participants to 21 active clergy this year, with many more alumni spread across the South Carolina Annual Conference. While it started as a gathering, the cohort

See "Young Clergy," Page 11

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Back Issues

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

Deadlines

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

Letters and Op-Eds Policy

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

Obituaries

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

Photographs

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

Submissions

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

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New grant opportunity to help churches grow

By Jessica Brodie

What if instead of jumping into the “how” of doing a thing, we took a moment to look more closely at the “who” and the “what”?

That's the idea behind new programming called Asset-Based Community Development, and it's at the heart of a new grant opportunity coming available this fall for some South Carolina United Methodist churches.

The idea was shared with a cohort of clergy gathered at Journey UMC, Columbia, April 14 by a team from the North Carolina Rural Center. Dr. Darren Crotts, senior program manager for their Faith in Rural Communities program, shared how the best actions churches can take usually evolve out of what already exists at a community's core.

“We want to jump into the next step so quickly,” Crotts said. “But instead of all the ideas of what we could do, let's look at what we already have, the gifts and assets already there, and build on that.”

The concept is at the heart of the Asset-Based Community Development programming that the South Carolina Conference of the UMC is embracing. Connectional Ministries Director the Rev. Millie Nelson Smith said the conference received a \$375,000 rural church



Pastors do an exercise to help them understand the importance of prioritizing foundational aspects of communities.

grant that will ultimately fund efforts of 25 churches over a three-year period. The grant will start with five churches this fall, then another 10 next year and a final 10 the year after. Smith said it will fall under the Office of Innovation and Strategy within the newly formed Office of Congregational Excellence, which takes effect July 1. The Rev. George Ashford will be the Innovation and Strategy director giving oversight to this work.

More information on how to apply will be released soon, and for now, leaders focused on helping pastors understand the concept behind the grant and why Asset-Based Community Development is

so helpful.

Crotts explained that Asset-Based Community Development begins with assets rather than needs, with time spent building intentional relationships so all are able to gain a clear understanding of the purpose and passions involved within the community.

After this, they develop what he called a “collaborative mindset,” practicing upstream thinking—a proactive, systemic approach to problem-solving that focuses on addressing the root causes of issues before they occur, rather than merely reacting to symptoms.

Ultimately, they develop a strategic plan, creating a transformational ministry that involves being in ministry with (not to) people.

As Crotts explained, it's multiplication, not addition. He gave an example of gathering a group of people together and soon finding out most of them have a shared passion about gardening and growing things. Out of this, the church might launch a community garden to address hunger issues locally.

The cohort of pastors has been gathering since the conference's Lights, Camera, Action leadership convocation in September to learn new ways to grow again.

For more on the grant opportunity, check out future editions of the *Advocate*.

Advocate wins three more journalism excellence awards

The *Advocate* newspaper has been honored with three more journalism excellence awards, these latest from the Religion Communicators Council.

The 189-year-old newspaper received the awards at the DeRose-Hinkhouse Memorial Awards Banquet, held April 16 during the RCC's 2026 Annual Convention in Cincinnati.

The *Advocate* was the category winner in Periodicals, Newspapers (Series), for the overall publication.

As well, *Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie won two Writing for Periodicals awards: Brodie was the Category Winner in the Newspaper Cover or Feature Item, Single Work, for “Holy

Grounds” (September 2025 *Advocate*) and received the Award of Merit in the same category for “Clothes for the Taking” (February 2025 *Advocate*).

The DeRose-Hinkhouse Memorial Awards began in 1967 and are given annually to active members of the Religion Communicators Council who demonstrate excellence in religious communications and public relations. The awards are named to honor the late Victor DeRose and the late Paul M. Hinkhouse, leading lithographers in New York City and longtime friends of the RCC. Both men shared a strong interest in, and concern for, excellence in communications.

SpiritShore designed to help clergy, laity embrace renewal

United Methodist clergy and laity across the Carolinas will gather this month for SpiritShore, a five-day retreat at Kingston Plantation & Resort in North Myrtle Beach.

Formerly known as the Carolina Black Clergy Leadership Retreat, the new name reflects the deep and abiding power of gathering at the shore. Organizers said the shoreline is a sacred place, a meeting point between what is and what is becoming, where we are invited to pause, to breathe deeply, to listen for God and to be renewed in spirit for the work ahead.

Set for May 18-22 and drawing from Habakkuk 2:2-3, SpiritShore is a space

for mutual learning and leading, where wisdom is shared across generations and contexts. South Carolina Resident Bishop Leonard E. Fairley will serve as the event host, and attendees will gather around the vision of The United Methodist Church: love boldly, serve joyfully and lead courageously.

Bishop Tracy S. Malone, president of the Council of Bishops, will guide attendees in a masterclass conversation as attendees explore what it means to embody this vision.

Throughout the week, dynamic presenters and preachers will offer intentional learning that equips and empow-

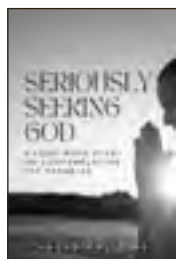
ers. Dynamic worship is also a big part of the event.

Leaders and presenters also include the Rev. Dawn M. Hand, the Rev. William H. Lamar IV, the Rev. G. Kevin Baker, Dr. Wylin D. Wilson, Dr. George A. Ashford, Dr. Joseph W. Daniels Jr., the Rev. Tiffany Knowlin Boykin, the Rev. Antoinette Gaboton-Moss, the Rev. Nelson B. Rivers III and the Rev. Prince R. Rivers.

Thanks to the generous support of The Duke Endowment, limited lodging scholarships are available for those who live and serve in the Carolinas.

Learn more and register at <https://www.umcsc.org/spiritshoreregistration>.

Advocate's May Virtual Book Club to discuss 'Seriously Seeking God'



The May *Advocate* Virtual Book Club will discuss “Seriously Seeking God,” by Suzan Phillips.

Book club dates are May 5, 6:30 p.m., or May 7, 11 a.m.

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

The gatherings are held the first Tuesday evening and second Thursday morning of each month and hosted by *Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie.

The June book club will discuss “Loving Hands: A Caregivers' Devotional,” by Stephon Void. Dates are June 2, 6:30 p.m., or June 4, 11 a.m.

Sign up to receive a Zoom link at https://www.advocatesc.org/about/virtual_book_club. To get the books, visit <https://advocatepress.org>.

Bishop Fairley to speak on his memoir May 4

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

All are invited to the event, set for Monday, May 4, at 6 p.m. at the church.

Fairley will speak about the book, as well as answer questions and sign copies. Books will be available for purchase.

“Silver Linings” is the inspiring coming-of-age account of South Carolina's bishop. Buy the book at <https://advocatepress.org>.

Features.

The Wonder Summit to help churches reimagine worship with kids

The Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church has an opportunity to come together this fall to think about ways to reimagine worship that is engaging for all, but specifically focusing on children.

Called The Wonder Summit, the event will be held Nov. 4-6 at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina.

This summit was created by the WNC UMC Cultivate Grant.

Their hope is that this will be a space for clergy,

worship leaders and children's ministers to come together and think creatively about congregational worship and prayer.

The event will feature worship, speakers and lots of workshops, including:

- The Sacraments: Helping Children Live Into God's Gift, with Melanie C. Gordon
- Let The Little Children Come: Engaging Children In Contemporary Worship, with Dr. Debbie Wong
- The Intergenerational Audit: Aligning Your Wor-

ship Reality With Intergenerational Goals, with Dr. Nelson Cowan

- One Body, Many Ways: Intentionally Including Neurodivergent Children In God's Family, with Elizabeth Christie
- Play, On Purpose: Reimagining Your Sermon With Play, with Dr. Lakisha R. Lockhart

Registration is open at <https://www.thewonder-summit.org>.

Advocate Press Book Signing set for Tuesday at Annual Conference

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

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

A number of authors whose books are available from the Advocate Press will be available to sign books, plus all Advocate Press books will be available for purchase. Bishop Leonard Fairley is hoping to be able to come by during the event as well and sign copies of his books.

The Advocate Press is the publishing arm of the *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate* newspaper. Founded in 2017, the mission of the *Advocate* Press is to produce books of interest to South Carolina United Methodists on matters of faith and to amplify regional voices and those that advocate for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

To date it has produced 38 books, available on its website, <https://advocatepress.org>, as well as from Amazon and other major book retailers.

Authors planning to be in attendance are Mark Barnette, the Rev. Meg Cook, the Rev. John Culp, Cindy Curtis, the Rev. Ted Goshorn, Dr. Roger Gramling, Kathy Hart, Dr. Daniel Hembree, the Rev. Arthur Holt, the Rev. Amiri Hooker, the Rev. Cathy Joens, the Rev. Lyn Pace, Suzan Phillips, Dr. Phillip Stone, the Rev. Tyler Strange, the Rev. Kim Strong, Dr. Amenti Sujai and Stephon Void.

All are welcome.



Miller is Lay Servant Emeritus

On March 29, Greenville District Lay Leader Kenneth Moore presented Mrs. Willie Mae Miller of Minus Chapel UMC, Greenville, the Lay Servant Emeritus honorary retirement award. From left are Miller, Moore and Pastor Brenda Washington.

Conference welcomes Kate Ritchey as digital communicator

The South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church has named Kate Ritchey as its new digital communicator, a full-time role focused on strengthening the conference's digital presence and equipping local churches to share the story of God's work across South Carolina.



Ritchey

Divinity degree from Candler School of Theology at Emory University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in communications from Florida Southern College. Her work reflects a passion for telling meaningful stories and building community through clear and creative communication.

As part of the Conference Communications Team, Ritchey will help to engage, equip and empower local churches through digital tools and storytelling that support our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

"As our digital communicator, Kate will help amplify the voices and stories of United Methodists across South Carolina," said Dan O'Mara, conference director of communications. "Her work will highlight ministries, encourage collaboration and help churches use digital platforms to reach their communities more effectively.

"Through thoughtful storytelling, strategic communication and a deep understanding of both ministry and media, Kate will help the South Carolina Conference continue expanding its digital engagement, strengthening its connective mission in the years ahead."

Conference Connectional Ministries' decision to create the digital communicator position aligns with the work of the four Jeremiah Teams, all of which identified communications as playing a critical role as the conference moves into a new future.

Ritchey brings a strong background in ministry, communications and digital engagement. She holds a Master of

"I love storytelling, most especially telling stories about how God is working in the world and our communities," Ritchey said. "I'm very excited to be a part of telling the story of God's hand in the work of the South Carolina Conference across our digital platforms."

Most recently, Ritchey served as Minister of Families and Faith Formation at Prince George Winyah Parish Church in Georgetown. In that role she led multichannel communications efforts, producing digital newsletters and managing ministry social media platforms to help connect families and youth with the life of the church and strengthen engagement among members and newcomers.

Her previous experience includes serving with Wellroot Family Services, formerly the United Methodist Children's Home of Georgia, and In Spiritus Refugee Services in Clarkston, Georgia.

In her new role with the conference, Ritchey will help oversee the conference's social media channels, assist with maintaining and improving the conference website, and contribute to storytelling efforts that highlight ministries across the connection. The position also includes working with conference leaders and local churches

to share news, produce digital content and develop communications strategies that connect people across the conference.

She will also help research emerging digital trends and advise the communications team on tools and strategies that can strengthen the conference's ability to communicate effectively in an

evolving media landscape.

Ritchey is married to the Rev. J. T. Brown, pastor of Fairlawn United Methodist Church in Columbia. They have a 1-year-old daughter, Margaret, and they enjoy spending time with family, trying new restaurants in the Columbia area and getting outside whenever they can.

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Editorial by Jessica Brodie



Bishop's Column by Bishop Leonard Fairley

A family purpose

I remember it like yesterday—Grammy in the kitchen, bent over the oven, a roast wrapped in foil sending delicious aromas throughout the house. Cousin Vikki was getting the water glasses out, while my sister, Sara, was setting the table and I was helping with whatever needed to go on the platters. Everyone else was gathering, making their way toward the table. Finally, we all sat down together, a beautiful dance of family and those like family, repeated almost weekly throughout my entire childhood.

We all had a job to do, a goal in mind—dinner on the table—and everyone pitched in to help. It was part of our identity, our family, this common goal. Even now, with relatives long passed and my own dear Grammy laid to rest now 13 years ago, these days feel like yesterday. I try to re-create them at my own table today, an echo of what once was.

In a way, that is what this year's Rise Against Hunger and Campfire and Campus Notes projects at Annual Conference are all about (see articles, Page 1 and 10). They're something we can all do together, a common goal, a job that helps remind us of our identity as we work together for a unified purpose.

We human beings need that—a task to do together, something good we can fulfill in the name of our Lord. Whether it's a family dinner, a potluck or a fish fry at a local church, collecting baby items for mothers-to-be or gathering to stitch clothes for kids in Haiti, when we come together in service and fellowship, it reminds us that we have God's good work to do. It reminds us we operate best as one glorious body, all our different parts working together.

In this, we honor God.

I'm excited that South Carolina United Methodists are going to be doing mission projects again this year at Annual Conference. It's been far too long since we've done something like this. After the pandemic, war in Iran, church separations and rampant violence and dissension worldwide, we need to be reminded in a tangible and active way that we are a family.

Together we can do so much more than on our own.

I urge you to get involved in the Annual Conference mission projects. If you can't be there physically, send money to support these efforts or do what you can from home. Pray. Encourage others to join in.

We are stronger when we stand together and work together.

Topic for June *Advocate*

Does your church have a congregation-wide mission you do together?

How does it help your identity as a church family and as a community?

How do you think something similar might impact the Annual Conference?

Share at news@advocatesc.org
(include church name/city).

Love boldly

"Love boldly, serve joyfully, lead courageously!"

These are what I like to call the three key pillars of our United Methodist Church's vision statement. I believe these three pillars will help guide us into the future God has promised.

I would like to explore these three pillars in my next *Advocate* articles as to what this vision statement means in our everyday lives and the lives of our congregations. If these three elements do not become incarnational in practical ways that we live out, they will become like most vision and mission statements—just eloquent high-sounding words on paper, routinely repeated and remembered without impact or power.

They do sound so beautiful and meaningful when read aloud. The statement reads, "The United Methodist Church is to form disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections." This vision aims to complement the church's longstanding mission "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

I would like to begin our exploration of our vision statement with loving boldly. Love boldly. What does it look like not only to love, but to love boldly? Loving boldly should always be centered in Jesus Christ. It is a selfless, unconditional and sacrificial love that "embraces people of every age, nation, race, gender and

walk of life" (United Methodist New Vision).

Loving boldly in its purest form is agape. It is a deliberate choice to act in love, regardless of the circumstances. It is love that asks nothing in return. If we really want to see what loving boldly looks like, all we need to do is look at the type love God, in Jesus Christ, has for all humanity. It is this kind of love we are called to model in our walk as passionate, spiritual disciples.

Real love is ultimately empowered by the Holy Spirit, allowing followers of Jesus to love beyond our natural ability and finding its full spiritual expression through the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ reconciling us, the world and one another to God.

I think love finds its truest human form in the words of 1 Corinthians 13:4: "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude, it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Here are few questions that I would like to leave you with: What would life look like if we loved boldly? How would we see others if we loved boldly? How would we see the world if we loved boldly? What would our churches look like if they truly and passionately loved boldly?

Please join me next time as we explore what it means to serve joyfully.

Letters to the Editor.

On children and defibrillators

This month I share about two issues on my heart.

The first is children. The church of Jesus Christ has a great challenge. How does the church reach the children and youth of this generation? Many of our churches have no children or youth, and the classrooms are empty. Sports have taken the children of this generation from the churches.

As a child, I personally enjoyed Bible school every summer. Now is the time to plan activities for children this summer. Encourage your children and youth to go to a Christian camp.

The United Methodist Church has a beautiful camp, Asbury Hills. A child can see the beautiful creation of God. Salkehatchie Summer Service gives teenagers an opportunity to do mission work. Youth need to understand poverty and love their neighbor. Both of these experiences show the love of Christ. It is time for parents and grandparents to encourage their children to attend a Christian camp.

I remember the story told by the evangelist Billy Graham about a young person dying. The child told

their parents, "You taught me everything, but I did not understand and know the love of Christ and how our lives are in his care."

Where do children and youth learn today about Jesus' love, his teachings and eternal life? There is a real void of knowledge about Jesus Christ. As Christian adults, are we thankful for the teachings of Jesus we received as children? This love is an eternal gift to us. Let us share and give this love to our children.

In Matthew 19:14, Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (NIV).

Love a child in Christ.

Second, I want to share about a recent miracle at Mount Hebron United Methodist Church in West Columbia (I share this story with the Rev. Joe Alley's permission.)

The Rev. Joe Alley, a retired United Methodist minister, was attending Mount Hebron UMC's worship service and lost consciousness as the minister started her sermon.

The church had a defibrillator, an apparatus used to control heart fibrillation. A doctor, Dr. Trey

Cassells, was sitting two pews behind Joe. He was able to bring Joe back to consciousness. When Joe opened his eyes, he saw the doctor—who was once one of his children at Trinity United Methodist when Joe was his pastor years ago.

Joe was taken to ICU and discovered there was an 80 percent blockage of one of his arteries.

Joe is now home planting his garden. Praise God!

Every church needs a heart defibrillator. All schools have one for sports.

This was truly a miracle, and many angels responded.

*Rev. John Culp, retired
West Columbia*

Post Easter thoughts

What if we have gotten the Easter story all wrong? Or maybe we have misunderstood, misrepresented and missed the message.

After all is said and done, there are many different interpretations. Like how long was the gospel whispered (through the grapevine) before it was written down? And when it was written down, perhaps by the hands of sleepy monks, did

See "Letters," Page 5



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99 Sheep



by Ricky Howell



Precious Pet of the Month.

Precious Pet of the Month: Maybeline

Maybeline is my 8-year-old standard poodle, and I truly believe God has used her to touch more lives than I ever could on my own. Becoming a therapy dog team with her is one of the best decisions I've ever made. We visit nursing homes, children's homes, hospice patients, the library and more.



Maybeline

Through her, I've seen the kind of joy and healing that stays with you. In memory care, residents who struggle to remember will suddenly light up and begin to sing, "Oh, Maybeline, why can't you be true?" Young people at the children's home think she's "so fancy," and children at the library love reading to her. She sits so still, watching them or resting her head gently on their lap as they read. It's amazing to see their confidence grow.

One visit still brings tears to my eyes. There was a woman in a nursing home sitting in a wheelchair, her head down, withdrawn. I spoke to her, but she didn't respond. A nurse told me she rarely interacted or spoke, but I tried again, gently asking if she would like to pet my dog. She didn't move ... except for one thing. Her hand slowly lifted and hovered in the air just in front of the armrest.

I guided Maybeline closer, and without hesitation, she lowered her head under that hand. Then, little by little, the woman's

fingers began to move. She was petting her!

After a moment, she lifted her head just enough to look at Maybeline ... and then at me, and she smiled. It was truly amazing.

A hospice patient once said it was kind of me to visit. I told her I was the one receiving the blessing. She looked at me and said, "Just keep being kind. I'll tell you some-

thing true. When you can count down your time in weeks and months, you'll never look back and wish you hadn't been kind." She said you might wish you had been more kind, but never less.

Moments like that stay with you.

Maybeline may just be a dog, but through her, I've seen joy return, walls come down and hearts open in the quietest, most powerful ways. She has helped me, and she has helped me help others. And for that, I will always be grateful.

—Submitted by Sandy Thrasher, member South Main Chapel & Mercy Center, Anderson

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

Advocate announces Young Voices kids writing contest

South Carolina United Methodist children of all ages (elementary through high school) are invited to participate in the *Advocate's* Young Voices Writing Contest.

The deadline is May 15. The winner will be announced in the June edition, and the *Advocate* will run a collection of the submitted material in a future edition of the newspaper, as well as online.

Any youth up to age 18 who attends a UMC in South Carolina is eligible to participate. Writing can be anything from a poem or song to an essay or short story, but it should address a matter of faith in some way. There is no word count minimum, but there is a maximum of 1,500 words. The work must be completely original and not created through the use of artificial intelligence.

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

Participants should email their writing submission to jbrodie@advocatesc.org either as a Word document, text file, or typed into the body of the email. Include your name, age, church name and city. If handwritten, a photo of the entry is acceptable.

Youth submissions wanted for the Advocate

Are you a child, youth or young adult United Methodist with writing or artistic talent?

We would love to feature young people's contributions on an ongoing, monthly basis in the *Advocate*.

Whether it's a church- or faith-related photograph, drawing, painting, essay, poem or story, share your efforts with the *Advocate*, along with your name, age and church name and city. Email to jbrodie@advocatesc.org or mail to Editor Jessica Brodie, *Advocate*, 4908 Colonial Dr., Columbia, SC 29203. If you're mailing it and would like your submission returned to you when we're finished, let us know and we can do so.

LETTERS

From Page 4

they get it right? How many iterations and interpretations did the Bible go through after the invention of the Gutenberg Press? And how many versions of the Bible have been written since the King James Version? And how does one explain the inexplicable inconsistencies in Scripture? So maybe we have not seen the stories and myths yet for the first time.

Maybe Jesus was not divine but only human. Maybe we can still claim a Christian identity without believing in the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection or that Jesus will come again, or that Jesus literally will sit at the right hand of God.

Maybe there is no viable evidence of the church's interpretation of Easter: common sense, critical thinking, the fact of evolution and uncommon myths and stories and quantum physics and artificial intelligence do not support the myths and stories of the Bible literally.

What seems more plausible is that we too often project on God whom we create in our own image. Yet God is more than the ground of all being, the unseen mystery. God is seen—in our

neighbors. Red, yellow, black and white, all are precious in God's sight. God's first language is silence. Perhaps God's first name is welcome!

Maybe what I have written is foolishness or playful folly; don't take my thoughts about post Easter comments too seriously or literally.

Post Script: I can't help but feel a twinge of schadenfreude toward the president as he spins his web of lies and failed attempts to justify his war or explains why it is necessary to kill people. Nor has he expressed any remorse or compassion for those whom he continues to put in harm's way.

Inspired sources:

- Trisha Pasrich, "What We Got All Wrong About Poo"
- Marcus Borg, "Awe and Wonder"
- Ester Sternberg, "The Balance Within"
- Dan Brown, "The Secret of Secrets"
- Jemar Tisby, "The Spirit of Justice"
- Brian McLauren, "Life after Doom"
- Allen Levi, "Theo of Golden"
- Mariann E. Budde, "How We Learn to be Brave"
- Will Wilmon, "The Church We Carry"
- Rachel Held Evans, "Inspired"
- 2 Corinthians 12:9

Dr. John Dickey Evans, retired
Columbia

Lessons worth remembering

Professor Charles A. Beard (1874-1948) was an influential American historian of the first half of the 20th century. A graduate of DePauw and Oxford universities, he taught political science at Columbia University in New York from 1904 to 1917. He attracted controversy because of his stress on the role of economic interests in governmental policy and governmental institutions, including the development of the U.S. Constitution.

Beard became critical of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's foreign policy in his last books, written shortly before his death, and fell from favor as a result. However controversial, he is still considered by some an influential American historian.

However, I would suggest that he is perhaps best remembered by non-academics for his response to a question reportedly asked by Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick as to what Beard considered the most important lessons he had learned from his lifelong study of history.

Though not necessarily original, the following four statements were his response:

- Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad with power.

- The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly small.
- The bee fertilizes the flower it robs.
- When it is dark enough, you can see the stars.

For years, Beard's "Lessons from History" were quoted time and again from the pulpits of America's churches thanks to Fosdick's inclusion of them in his sermon, "What Keeps Religion Going?" I first heard them in a sermon from Dr. Pierce E. Cook Sr. in 1972.

They are worth remembering.

Dr. Roger M. Gramling, retired
Columbia

A poem: 'His Sheep'

The savior comes softly here
To care for his flock abiding near
For we are his little sheep
So lovingly and dear he keeps

Each one of us stays in his sight
That even in the darkest night
Assuredly we are not lost
To earthly dangers heed the cost

Take care of us, our Savior Son
Our faith relays that you have won
The battle for our godly souls
And none can change our faithful goals

Dr. Linda Hodgin, member
Ashland UMC, Columbia



Humanity Behind Bars
by the Rev. Nichole Middleton

When we come to

There is a moment in the story of the prodigal son that is easy to overlook, yet it is where everything begins to change. It does not happen when the father runs to meet him, when the robe is placed on his shoulders or when the feast is prepared.

It happens earlier.

Scripture says, “He came to himself” (Luke 15:17 ESV).

Before the return, before restoration, there is a quiet awakening—a recognition that the life he is living does not reflect who he truly is. He is slopping pigs, trapped not behind physical bars, but by choices, lifestyle and greed. Transformation begins there.

Paul writes in Colossians that in Christ, the fullness of God dwells—and that in him, we are made complete. This is not merely a future promise; it is a present reality. Yet many live disconnected from that truth, unaware of their worth, their identity and their belonging.

To come to oneself is to awaken to that reality. For some, that awareness was nurtured early. Faith and love shaped a foundation they could recall even after wandering. Coming to themselves was a return home they recognized.

For others, the story is different. Their lives have been shaped by absence rather than affirmation, instability rather than safety, trauma rather than trust. Poverty, violence, substance use and fractured homes obscure identity. The “prison” is not just walls but circumstance, isolation and the message that they are defined by mistakes or by what the world says about them.

This is where the Church is called to be intentional. We are called to the least and the last—not only with charity, but with clarity—to ignite a spiritual imagination that can see beyond circumstance.

To speak truth that may never have been spoken: You are more than your past. You are more than your failures. Your history does not dictate your future.

In ministry, I have witnessed this moment. Sometimes it comes quietly—in a conversation, a pause or a question long enough for truth to break through. A person begins to see themselves not as a number, not as a record, but as someone created with purpose and possibility.

That moment is sacred. It is the seed of transformation. And like any seed, it requires nurturing: community, consistency and care. It requires people willing to walk alongside someone as they grow into a truth that may feel unfamiliar.

The prodigal son came to himself in desperation. Awareness led to movement. Movement led to return. And return was met with grace.

We cannot control when someone comes to themselves. But we can create the conditions for awakening. We can be present, speak life and embody the love that reminds someone of who they are before the world told them otherwise.

Transformation does not begin when everything is fixed. Transformation begins in that quiet, powerful moment—when someone finally sees themselves clearly.

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

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Commentary
by Anna S. Bright

When Momma prays

A little boy was once asked by his Sunday school teacher, “Why do you think your mother is so special?”

He thought for a moment and replied, “Because every time something goes wrong in our house, Mama talks to Jesus before she talks to us.”

That little answer is funny, but it is also powerful. In many homes, mothers are the quiet strength behind the family. They may not always wear a crown, but they carry a weight. They may not always stand in a spotlight, but they hold things together when life starts pulling apart. A godly mother is often the glue, prayer warrior, encourager, nurse, counselor, cook, referee and sometimes the detective. Half the time, she already knows who did it before anybody opens his or her mouth!

Motherhood, according to God’s design, is far more than giving birth. It is a sacred calling. It is the God-given responsibility to nurture, teach, love, correct and point children toward him. Scripture reminds us in Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” A mother’s assignment is not only to feed a child’s body, but to feed that child’s spirit. She is called to plant seeds of truth, prayer, discipline and faith that can last a lifetime.

We see this beautifully in the life of Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:5: “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice.”

Before Timothy became known for faith, that faith lived in the women who raised him. That means a mother’s influence can travel farther than she may ever know. A mother may think nobody notices her daily prayers, her constant guidance or her tears over her children, but heaven notices. Often, years later, the child will remember.

God’s meaning for motherhood also includes strength and dignity. Proverbs 31:25-28 declares, “Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue ... her children rise up and call her blessed.”

What a picture of a godly mother! She is not weak because she is gentle. She is not powerless because she is kind. She speaks with wisdom, lives with courage and gives with love. Sometimes a mother can say one sentence, give one look and the whole room straightens up! That is not just motherhood; that is an anointing!

A mother’s responsibility is also to love sacrificially. Love is at the center of her calling. Whether she is rocking a baby, praying for a rebellious teenager or checking on grown children who still “don’t know how to rest,” a mother keeps loving. She gives even when tired, keeps showing up even when unappreciated and keeps praying even when answers seem delayed. Her love reflects the steadfast love of God.

Mothers must also remember this: You cannot pour from an empty cup. Even Jesus pulled away to pray. A mother must stay connected to God if she is going to lead her family well. She needs his wisdom for hard decisions, his peace for anxious nights and his strength for weary days.

On this Mother’s Day, let us honor mothers not just for what they do, but also for who they are in the eyes of God. They are builders of lives, shapers of hearts and guardians of generations. Never underestimate a praying, teaching, loving or godly mother. Long after flowers fade and cards are put away, her influence can still stand.

The true wonder of motherhood is when a mother gives her heart to God, he uses her heart to help shape the world.

Bright is a member of Isaiah United Methodist Church, Waltherboro.



Photo by Ernestine McCaskill

Junior worship leaders at Sandy Grove

Sandy Grove UMC, Jefferson, values and supports its youth community. In February, the church recently had two youth members—Payton Wilson and Niyah Stover—assist in leading the worship service, held on the fourth Sunday of each month. They served as our junior worship leaders, assisted by a Certified Lay Leader. Sandy Grove also had other youth volunteering during the worship service. The church thanks Pat Collins, youth chairperson, for encouragement and training of these youth to become leaders for tomorrow.

More than a meal: Church shapes next generation through Monday Meals

By Hope Wells

Reprinted with permission of Star Gospel Mission

When Courtney Kraus, director of children and student ministries at First United Methodist Church, Isle of Palms, first heard about Star Gospel Mission through a church connection, she didn’t expect it to become such a meaningful part of her life.

But everything shifted after one visit.

“I went for a tour and fell in love right away,” she said.

What started as curiosity quickly turned into commitment. After connecting with SGM’s volunteer coordinator, Kraus began looking for a way to involve her students. That idea took shape in something simple but powerful: Monday Meals.

Now, each week begins with preparation during Sunday night youth group and continues Monday after school. Students and parents cook together, learning not just how to serve, but how to care. They ask guests what they enjoy, and over time, small details like hamburgers and fries have become meaningful ways to show that care.

But somewhere between the meals and the moments, something deeper began to happen.

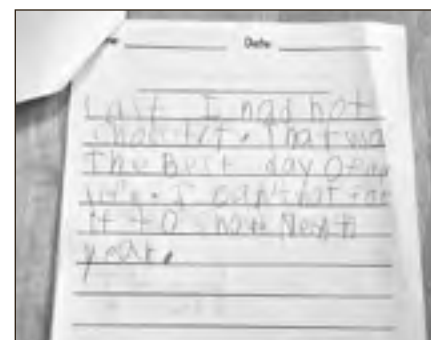
“The best experiences are when we get to talk with the mission guests,” Kraus said. “The stories we hear and the life advice they give our youth is unmatched.”

Those conversations changed everything. What began as service became connection. Students started building real relationships, learning from the very people they came to serve. For Kraus, that’s the heart of it.

It’s not just about showing up or checking a box. It’s about shaping the next generation to understand what it truly means to serve, to listen, and to see people fully. The kind of lesson that doesn’t come from a classroom, but from sitting across a table and sharing a meal.

What started small has grown beyond what Kraus expected. More people from the church have stepped in, different age groups are getting involved and support continues to expand in ways that feel lasting.

And if there’s one thing Kraus would tell someone who hasn’t experienced the mission yet, it’s simple: “Come and see.”



Appreciating God’s creation (and hot chocolate!)

This reflection was penned by Jimmy T, son of Rev. Meg Lindsey Sweeney Cook, who pastors Grace UMC, Columbia.

Young Methodists.

Winthrop Wesley House: A home in several ways

By the Rev. Laurel Capesius

The Winthrop Wesley Foundation has a longstanding history as a major Methodist presence at the campus of Winthrop University. From its beginnings as the Epworth League for young women of the then-all-female campus to its present-day space that serves students of all genders across all disciplines, the Wesley Foundation has provided a safe and nurturing presence to young people seeking a place of belonging and spiritual food.

But for some students, it hasn't just been a metaphorical home but an actu-

al place of living. Winthrop Wesley has a house that, since the fall of 2007, has been used to provide a group of student leaders with affordable housing. For the 2025-2026 school year, the rent for the Winthrop Wesley House was 40-50 percent lower than that of on-campus housing. This has meant that students can prioritize their studies and campus involvement (such as with the Wesley Foundation) without having to overburden themselves with jobs. It also takes a small step toward alleviating the housing crisis at Winthrop, which has been the result of not being able to rebuild student housing at the increasing rate

of admission.

Students who live in the house commit to being leaders for the Wesley community.

One student didn't stop being a leader when he graduated. Paul Cooper (class of 2017) now serves as a Winthrop Wesley board member and lived at the Wesley House when he was an undergraduate at Winthrop.

"In a world and time of financial difficulty, the Wesley house gave me an opportunity to finish my degree, get the ground under my feet and learn to exercise better tolerance for people who live differently from myself," Cooper

said. "These things have allowed me to grow and prosper to feel confident in where I am today on multiple levels."

Over the years, issues from major storms, deferred maintenance and natural wear led the board to commit to a major renovation this summer. We need help with repairs, landscaping and painting. We also need to furnish each room with six beds, desks and dressers. If you or your church might be able to help, please reach email laurel@winwes.org.

Capesius is director of Winthrop Wesley.

St. James recognizes children and youth during Black History Month



Students were awarded a certificate and small monetary gift.

By Dr. Tonya F. Mack

SUMTER—St. James United Methodist Church's Christian Education Ministry recognized children and youth Feb. 15 during Black History Month.

This was a perfect time for students to make the connection between past and present lives of our leaders, activists and inventors, understanding that these individuals started the same way, excelling in school, being resilient, showing creativity and staying the course.

Students were adorned in their Black History Month scarves as they sang with uplifting voices in the Children and Youth Choir, coordinated by Jenni-

fer Adams and Jean Perry.

Students were awarded a certificate of achievement and small monetary gift.

Christian Education is chaired by Geneva Bowman.

On hand to help celebrate the students were School Superintendent John Willis, Pastor Allen Nesmith and committee members Celeste Butler (chair, Black History Month Program), Valarie Jones and Sheibra James.

The congregation offered the students congratulations and urged them to keep up the good work.

Mack is with the church's Outreach Ministry.

Epworth News.

A legacy that lives on

Amid the perennial joys of springtime and the happiness here at Epworth as we are about to officially celebrate our 130th anniversary, we are also experiencing profound sadness. We recently lost a significant member of the Epworth family who had served and advocated for South Carolina's most vulnerable for decades.

The Rev. John Holler died in late March, and we remember him not only as a man who served The United Methodist Church his entire career but especially as one who served as the president of Epworth for nearly 15 years. He not only changed the lives of the children and families Epworth serves, but also worked to improve the welfare of children and families all across South Carolina.

John's gentle smile, his sweet sense of humor, his inherent compassion for those less fortunate and his keen insight about how to bring about sustainable change for abused and neglected children and their families guided his work. He understood the challenges but was unafraid to push at the local, state and even national levels for better programs and services to address the needs of children and families. His efforts were not only apparent at Epworth in the development of new centers for service but also in his influence in professional organizations to help create and legislate policies to improve the lives of underserved families and children everywhere.

Ordained as a Methodist minister shortly after graduating from divini-

ty school, John spent his life serving churches in South Carolina in several significant roles. From the pulpit, counseling centers, advocacy roles in state-wide organizations promoting child and family welfare, and finally as Epworth's president, John recognized his calling by God to serve and support those among us who needed his wisdom and compassion most profoundly. From his quiet walks and talks shaping the lives of Epworth's children and youth, to his advocacy in our state legislature for better laws to protect children and families, John used his quiet strength to help and counsel others.

I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn from John before I was selected to become Epworth's president after John's retirement. I

understood and agreed with his vision for how Epworth could create more services and programming to help those who need them most. The legacy that John leaves behind will continue to remind us of the work we need to carry on to serve children and families.

As Jesus says in John 12:24, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, its seeds in the ground bear much fruit."

John is no longer with us on earth, but like the grain of wheat that germinates and lives on, John's wisdom, his love for God and God's children and his fervent wish to help create better lives for those most vulnerable among us will live long in those of us who were fortunate and blessed to have known him.

—Beth Williams

Connecting Children.

Going deeper together: Cohort churches reimagine prayer and worship with children

By Toni Taylor

Over the past year, the South Carolina Conference's Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer initiative has laid a strong foundation for intergenerational worship in 23 congregations. Now the next two years will focus on going deeper and widening the circle.

One of the clearest lessons so far is that working together over time in a truly collaborative way is both stretching and deeply rewarding. It pushes us out of our comfort zones, yet the ideas that emerge from shared learning are far richer than anything we could create alone. As one grant team leader put it, "Churches get out of it what they put in."

A recent book study, "Pray With Me," by Erica Renaud, offers a glimpse of what this can look like.

Through thoughtful conversation and shared reflection, participants generated several new ideas for helping families grow in prayer. One emerging plan is a three-session, hands-on family workshop designed to help families learn to pray with their children—whether those children are young or grown.

The workshop will invite families to create their own prayer journals, practice praying for and with others and make prayer beads to use in daily prayer life. Another idea is to encourage worshipers to bring prayer journals to church each Sunday, using them to pray for others, jot down names and needs and take notes or draw connections from the sermon. In this way, the whole congregation participates in prayer in a more intentional, connectional way.

These kinds of ideas surface when we collaborate with one another and allow God to use our varied

gifts for the good of the whole church. During Annual Conference, applications will open for Cohort 3, inviting additional South Carolina United Methodist congregations to join this journey. Churches that long to keep children in the sanctuary, see them reading Scripture and leading prayer and strengthen relationships across generations will find in the cohort model a supportive community, practical tools and sustained coaching to help them move from good ideas to lived, weekly and daily practice.

Do you and your congregation want to work collaboratively with other churches, share ideas and more for the sake of children and families? If so, Cohort 3 may be your next faithful step. For more information: ttaylor@umcsc.org or <http://umcsc.org/children>.

Taylor is the Connecting Children in Worship grant leader.

The uniqueness of multi-church charges

By Dr. Anthony Hodge

Anyone who has ever served a multichurch charge is well aware of how unique that pastoral appointment is. Reflecting back on almost 35 years of pastoral ministry—which began for me in 1991 as a student local pastor in the North Georgia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church—I learned very early that no two or perhaps three churches on a charge are ever the same. For almost eight years, I saw firsthand in North Georgia and South Carolina annual conferences how two or three churches on the same charge having the same pastoral leader can be similar but also quite different.

Those similarities and differences pushed me to make sure that I was not attempting to do the same thing with each church because of their uniqueness. Fast forwarding to 2026 in a supervisory role with four specific multichurch charges, I am grateful to help facilitate a pilot program in the Rock Hill District with 10 churches consisting of two two-point charges) and two three-point charges).

With this initiative, we are blessed to have Dr. Marvin Moss, pastor of St. Mark UMC in North, to help facilitate a yearlong cohort that is designed to do the following with the 10 churches:

Through collaboration, training, honest dialogue and implementation of best practices, the cohort will attempt to address the following:

- Celebrate what is working well
- Identify challenges impacting the congregations
- Develop sustainable ministry strategies for each congregation
- Strengthen leadership capacity within each congregation
- Build practices that can be replicated and sustained within each congregation



Moss

Even before Dr. Moss agreed to work with the 10 churches in the Rock Hill District in this pilot program, I envisioned a process where participating clergy and committed lay persons would do the following:

- Review and discuss the state or status of each church as it relates to current levels of contextual relevancy and effectiveness to lay the foundation for next level ministry
- Review which ministries serve to inspire people to engage in the life of the church and define which ministries need to be re-identified as program/activities using this information to state or restate the mission and vision statements as well as established core values
- Discuss and design a sustainable and impactful disciple-making process that would guide the church and strengthen the core membership in connecting with the un-churched who live in their respective mission field to include all age levels
- Discuss and design a solid stewardship program to sustain ministry initiatives to include but not limited to community outreach programs, acquisition of technological and social media assets, as well as



The cohort learns about growth.

attendance at ministry training events/conferences

All about health

Moss has put together an excellent plan of action for the churches centered around my hopes for the churches along with what he brings to this initiative by way of his vast experiences leading and working with churches throughout the connection in the UMC.

“As a facilitator for the Rock Hill cohort, I’m excited about the passion and enthusiasm demonstrated by the laity and clergy. They are 110 percent committed to enhancing the worship experience and ministry offerings for the communities they serve,” Moss said.

“Additionally, they are paused and ready to enlarge their footprint in their respective communities and reach people for Christ in a time when hopelessness, helplessness and darkness have captured the hearts of so many. The churches in this cohort are already offering tremendous ministry opportunities and fully representing the hope of Christ!” he added.

He said he hopes and prays the churches who make up this cohort will recognize and embrace the importance of a healthy clergy and lay partnership.

“It is in this healthy partnership that the church is able to provide a healthy environment, or fruitful ministry, and create a sustainable future,” Moss said. “Furthermore, my hope is that they will consistently use the tools they’re receiving to set and evaluate their mission, their vision and their core values and continue to serve even more persons than they already are.

“Finally, I pray that the laity will engage more deeply in concretizing an accurate church profile so that the cabinet will be better able to more appropriately match pastoral leadership that will continue forward movement of the respective churches ministries.”

Pastors are excited, eager

Rock Hill pastor Dr. Thomas Bowman said he thinks this initiative is long overdue.

“It’s a great opportunity for us to be exposed to a number of things that are helping to challenge our understanding of what ministry ought to be in our context,” Bowman said. “Dr. Moss’ presentations are very exciting and are motivating us to continue to take seriously the call to expand the kingdom of God in our

sphere of influence.”

Bowman further commented that he hopes that all participants will grow in knowledge and creativity as others share collectively in the monthly learning labs.

Dr. Fred Moore stated that he was ecstatic about being in the yearlong cohort training with the African American churches in the Rock Hill District. He added that the training is needed to strengthen the churches who are participating in the cohort.

“My members appreciate participating in this yearlong training,” Moore said. “They have shared that this training was needed a long time ago. They are eager to implement some of the best practices that Dr. Moss is sharing and explaining.”

The Rev. Dexter Williams also enjoys being a part of the yearlong cohort. He says that he feels both honored and excited about participating in the cohort with Moss.

“This opportunity is not just another program; it is a space for intentional growth, sharpening skill sets and transformation,” Williams said. “To be in a learning environment alongside others who are also committed to ministry excellence creates an atmosphere where iron can truly sharpen iron. I see this cohort as a divine investment into both my personal development and the broader vision of the ministry contexts I am attempting to serve.”

Williams further stated that he believes Moss brings not only wisdom and experience, but also a prophetic insight that will challenge us to rethink how we lead, serve and engage our communities. He said he is hopeful the cohort will help he and his parishioners be more intentional in discipleship, more innovative in outreach and more unified in mission.

The Rev. Athena Dickey-Cathcart shared that the cohort has been refreshing and much needed for many who may have lost their drive in ministry. She pointed out that Moss emphasizes that change is a necessary part of growth.

She further elaborated that she hopes as a result of participating in this cohort, she and her parishioners will become more willing and intentional in participating in evangelism, working closely with the pastor to build a strong unified ministry team.

She said she desires to see a culture shift in the churches she is appointed to serve where every member understands their role in ministry, takes ownership of the mission and contributes to both the spiritual and numerical growth of the churches they are a part of.

Positive outcomes ahead

Along with Moss and each of the clergy leading the churches participating in the yearlong cohort, I am looking forward to seeing positive outcomes from this experience. I also anticipate offering other churches in the Rock Hill District an opportunity to engage in a similar process as well.

Yes, it is true that multichurch charges are unique. On second thought, all churches are unique. That is, whether the church is on a multichurch charge or a station appointment, all churches can benefit from a process the churches in this pilot program are experiencing.

Wofford College trustees elect Jay Dowd as 12th president

SPARTANBURG—The Wofford College Board of Trustees has unanimously elected John Paul “Jay” Dowd III, Ph.D., as the college’s 12th president. His tenure begins July 1.

Dowd currently serves as president and chief executive officer of The Citadel Foundation, a position he’s held since 2013. He is a graduate of Winthrop University in Rock Hill, where he earned a B.A. in history. He holds an M.Ed., with a focus on student personnel services, and a Ph.D. in educational administration from the University of South Carolina. He has more than 30 years of experience in higher educa-



Dowd

tion strategy, fundraising, institutional advancement and executive leadership.

In his current role, Dowd leads a team of 38 people who work to ensure that The Citadel has the resources to fund its strategic priorities. He has been an advisor to the institution’s president and has worked with other

senior leaders in academics, operations, finances, enrollment, marketing, student services and athletics. He was on the committee that developed The Citadel’s most recent strategic plans and comprehensive campaigns, which yielded operational support of at least

\$50 million annually since 2021. The campaigns also increased endowment assets by more than \$300 million and established a real estate holdings initiative to secure the future of the foundation and military college.

Previously, Dowd served as vice president for development and executive director at the Francis Marion University Education Foundation, where he was a member of the senior staff and the college’s chief fundraiser. He also has served as vice president for advancement at Columbia College, assistant vice chancellor for university advancement at University of North Carolina at Wilmington and vice president for institutional advancement at

Methodist College.

Dowd, a native of Bennettsville, lives in Bradley with his wife, Kim. They have two adult children.

“It is an honor to be selected to serve as the 12th president of Wofford College,” Dowd said. “I have so much appreciation for the power of a Wofford College education and am grateful for the college’s commitment to student success and the impact the Wofford experience made on our son. This is an opportunity to work with distinguished faculty, committed staff, loyal alumni, exceptional students and a passionate board of trustees to pay that appreciation forward.”

Carteret Street presents new vehicle to Epworth

By John R. Brooks

BEAUFORT—The congregation of Carteret Street UMC presented the keys to a 2026 Honda Odyssey to Epworth Children's Home, Columbia, the result of its second fundraising campaign in as many years to assist with the home's transportation needs.

Operation Jesus Birthday Present II—dubbed OJBP II—raised more than \$40,000 in just more than three months to meet the campaign's goal.

The congregation presented the eight-passenger vehicle, provided at low cost by a local Honda dealership, to senior Epworth staff during worship March 22. Almost one year earlier, in April 2025, the congregation provided two new golf carts to the Epworth home after a fundraising campaign, the first "Operation Jesus Birthday Present" campaign. The goal for OJBP II was double the previous campaign.

Epworth residents will be overjoyed when they see the new vehicle, said Beth Williams, CEO, Epworth Children's Home. She explained to the congregation that the idea to acquire a new vehicle for routine transportation came about through roundtable discussions with young residents. At the time, Epworth residents were taken to school and to their workplaces in an Epworth-marked blue-and-white bus, she explained.

Riding on that bus was frustrating to residents, she said. "Anybody knows that when you show up in that blue-and-white bus, you're a foster kid," Williams said.



Photo by Laura Williams

Carteret Street UMC's OJBP II Committee presented a 2026 Honda Odyssey to Epworth Children's Home. Committee members, from left, are Wade Keyserling, Owen Pettit, Henry Pettit, Todd Keyserling, Senior Pastor Bryson Williams and Chris Pettit. Representing Epworth Children's Home were, from left front row, Lisa Fusco, senior director of development and communication, and Beth Williams, CEO.

"They talked about how hard it was to go to their jobs in a bus and to go to school in a bus."

"I told them that there's some things I could change quickly but the van wasn't one of them. That was something we were going to have work on."

The Rev. Bryson Williams, Carteret Street UMC senior pastor and chair of the Epworth Children's

Home board, shared this story with the congregation in late 2025. As a result, the same fundraising committee from 2024 was reassembled, and OJBP II began. OJBP II acknowledged that Christmas is about Jesus, and one way to make Jesus part of Christmas was to present a gift to the Lord by providing a vehicle for Epworth, said Williams.

"We wanted to give our best to Jesus," he added.

"Last year, we raised funds for golf carts they needed onsite," said Chris Pettit, committee co-chair. "This year, this story touched our hearts more, and we wanted to try and help. We're so honored. (We) thank everyone that contributed."

The story of Epworth Children's Home is a story of hope, said Todd Keyserling, congregation council president and committee co-chair.

"This project that started two years ago is all about hope," he said. "I couldn't be more proud to be part of this church. We see a need, and it just happens. It's a good example not just for me, but for my son and the children we have here at our church."

"As pastor of this church, you make me very proud," Williams said. "It's a beautiful thing we've done today. I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

OJBP II Committee members were Keyserling, Wade Keyserling, Pettit, Henry Pettit, Owen Pettit and Williams.

The vehicle keys were presented to Beth Williams, CEO and Lisa Fusco, senior director of development and communication, Epworth Children's Home.

European Methodist deacons gather for the first time

By the Rev. Elizabeth Murray

In March, deacons from around the Methodist Church in Europe gathered for a week of learning, fellowship and support.

United Methodists in Europe face different challenges from those in the United States. In Italy, for example, Protestantism is a minority in a Catholic-majority country, while Germany and Denmark Methodists live in countries with an official Protestant "state church." Methodists in these regions must be clear about their theology, their work and their mission while also trying to be collaborative with other churches and organizations for God's mission in the world.

The group consisted of ordained United Methodist deacons from France, Switzerland, Denmark and Germany; two deacon candidates for ministry from Hungary and Poland; and two deacons from the Chiesa Valdese, which is the union of Methodist and Waldensian churches in Italy. We were



This year is the 30th anniversary of the creation of the Order of the Deacon.

joined by Amie Stewart (full deacon, Western North Carolina) who works at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, and two global missionaries who are appointed to United Methodist ministries in Rome.

This gathering was the first of its kind to date.

This year is the 30th anniversary of the creation of the Order of the Deacon, which occurred at the 1996 General Conference of the United Methodist Church. In that time, deacons have made great strides in articulating their call, finding their place in and outside

of the local church, and bridging the church and the world. However, there is still work to be done.

The conversations were like the ones that annual conferences in the United States were having in the early to mid 2000s. Some annual conferences in Europe do not ordain deacons, which is permissible because of regionalization. Additionally, many of the deacons in attendance are trailblazers, having been or will be the first deacons ordained in their annual conference. Many of them feel lonely in our work here in Europe because they feel misunderstood in their calling. Others feel coerced onto the elder track, either because of lack of local church pastors or misunderstanding of the call of the deacon.

Deacons in the United States certainly can understand this sentiment.

I remember this feeling so well during my candidacy and provisional membership, as I experienced uncertainty in my appointments over the years. I, too, was persuaded to become

an elder so that I would be considered a "real pastor." Similarly, the fear of not being able to find an appointment challenged me in moments when I feared God would not provide.

However, my deep vocation to Word, service, compassion and justice was so deep in my soul that being a deacon was the way to live out my calling in The United Methodist Church. Thankfully, other deacons, elders and local churches saw God's calling in my life and encouraged me to continue on this path (through words and employment).

Many of the deacons in Europe now are facing the same issues that I once faced; the local church cannot afford to hire a deacon.

We live in a hurt world where the church strives to faithfully live out the Gospel, reach new people in new places, share the Good News in creative ways and repair a broken world through service and justice. My question is the same now as it was a decade ago: "How can you not afford a deacon?"

Healing Guatemala's Hospital Bethesda gets 3D renderings for expansion

By Jessica Brodie

Healing Guatemala's Hospital Bethesda has entered a new phase.

After lengthy discussions and revisions, they now have floor plans and three-dimensional rendering images of their planned expansion.

A ministry founded by South Carolina elder Dr. Luke Rhyee and supported by the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, Hospital Bethesda plans to add a concrete metal building spanning 27,000 square feet and consisting of six stories, each measuring 4,500 square feet.

Currently, Bethesda serves about 150 outpatients daily and performs around 70 to 80 surgeries each month, with a staff of about 50 employees. With the expansion, the first floor will house an emergency department and three surgical rooms. The second floor will contain a neonatal intensive care unit and an ICU and three operating rooms for OB/GYN. The third floor will house specialty and subspecialty outpatient clinics. The fourth floor will feature a



The total budget for this project is \$1.8 million, with approximately \$1 million allocated for the first stage.

hemodialysis center, a physical therapy room and additional outpatient clinics. The fifth and sixth floors will include inpatient wards.

They hope to break ground in early April.

Currently, they are working to complete mechanical, electrical and plumbing installation drawings, then requesting a construction permit.

The construction will be divided into two stages. In the first stage, they hope to finish the foundation and the structure of the complete building, finishing the first and second floors, including the installation of elevators.

In the second stage, they plan to finish the remaining four floors and the basement.

The total budget for this project is \$1.8 million, with approximately \$1 million allocated for the first stage.

"We need your prayers and support," Rhyee said.

For information on how to help, email Rhyee at rhyeemt@gmail.com; write Healing Guatemala, P.O. Box 1835, Duluth, GA 30096; or visit <https://healingguatemala.org>.

If sending a check, write "Bethesda extension" in the memo line so they can allocate the funds properly.

Campfire and Campus Notes: A second AC mission project

By the Rev. Karen Jones

Annual Conference will get a second missional opportunity to serve as the hands and feet of Christ while all are gathered as one body.

A simple but powerful ministry called “Campfire and Campus Notes” will be offered throughout the week.

Annual Conference participants will be invited to write brief, heartfelt messages to college students at South Carolina Wesley Foundations and to summer camp staff at Asbury Hills Retreat Center, all using cards designed by Epworth Children’s Home students.

It will be a beautiful way of connecting participants at Annual Conference to important United Methodist ministries that serve our young people.

These notes become tangible reminders to Wesley Foundation students and Asbury Hills staff that they are valued and connected in Christ.

“This project embodies the heart of the United Methodist connectionalism,” said the Rev. Emily Kirby, director of the Coastal Carolina University Wesley Foundation. “By linking local churches, conference members and these ministries, it reinforces the truth that we are not separate communities but one connected body in ministry together. These cards become a visible expression of shared mission, bridging generations, congregations and campuses, reminding everyone involved that we are part of something bigger than ourselves, working together to make disciples and support one another on our faith journey.”

How it works

Notecards and writing supplies will be provided at an Annual Conference, and participants can use those quiet moments of waiting that punctuate our business and worship to write these notes. Everyone is invited to share simple expressions of kindness, encouragement and faith with the recipient. And those people who have personal experience with campus or retreat ministry are encouraged to share a brief story or words of wisdom. You can also include your return address or email and invite the recipient to connect further with you.

The cards will be collected throughout the week of Annual Conference and distributed to the camp counselors at Asbury Hills and to the students at the nine South Carolina Wesley Foundations in the fall semester.

With just a few words on a notecard, you can lift up someone stepping into a new and sometimes challenging season. These notes are more than paper and ink; they are a witness to the grace of God when you show love and kindness to someone you don’t know.

God’s grace through encouragement

This project reflects our unique connectional identity as United Methodists

while offering a powerful witness to God’s grace through simple words of encouragement. This mission project is sacramental in nature in that it shows God’s love and grace through the physical means of note cards.

What I have found by talking to different people who serve in Camps and Retreats Ministries and campus ministries is there is a common feeling of loneliness and loss of connection as they relocate to new environments.

“When these students leave their known community, it can be isolating and disorienting,” said the Rev. Laurel Fraser, Winthrop Wesley director. “By making new community through UMC campus ministries, and through the support of UMC congregations, hundreds of students find grounding and belonging centered in Christ’s love.”

Chris Hulme, director of programs and operations at Asbury Hills, says, “We are a little unique from Wesley foundation groups in that our staff are there to intentionally pour into the campers. Not only are they in a new environment, from different states and countries, but they are also pouring into these campers all summer long, and it’s hard to pour from an empty cup. A note of encouragement will help them refill their cup to sustain this important ministry but it will also help them feel connected beyond just Asbury Hills.”

An encouraging idea

This ministry was an idea that came from Jana Clack, a certified candidate for ordained ministry serving at Open Hearts UMC who has a rich past with Asbury Hills.

“As a former Asbury Hills staffer myself, I can say confidently that being able to receive encouragement throughout the summer in the form of cards like these will make such a difference in staff morale,” Clack said. “I also believe it could lead to spiritual growth in camp staff. Having clergy and laypersons across the conference cheering you on and sharing uplifting words makes such an impact as counselors are providing engaging discipleship opportunities to campers!”

While the primary goals of the notes are to encourage students and camp staff, to strengthen our connection as a conference and to witness God’s grace through written words, a secondary goal is to deepen our relationship with and inspire ongoing support for these life-shaping ministries among young people. As financial pressures increase and apportionment funding is reduced, these ministries and the young people they serve can also feel that strain.

My hope is those who write a note will be moved to make a monetary contribution as well.

Jones is first assistant conference secretary and pastor of Open Hearts UMC, Greenville.



A volunteer takes a smile break during the Rise Against Hunger packing event at Central UMC, Spartanburg, in February.

RISE AGAINST HUNGER

From Page 1

The Rev. Bryan Pigford is organizing the Annual Conference event after his church—Central UMC, Spartanburg—did a successful Rise Against Hunger event in February. That day, more than 70 volunteers packed more than 10,000 meals in two hours, and Pigford was staggered by the impact it had on his congregation.

“It’s amazing, and the feeling of camaraderie and mission and purpose and community was just fantastic,” Pigford said. “We had a ton of people say, ‘We want to do this again! We want to do this again!’”

Pigford said he’s excited to see what the effort will do for Annual Conference as a whole.

The ministry is one of two the Annual Conference will do when they gather. The second, “Campfire and Campus Notes” will be offered throughout the week, with participants invited to write brief, heartfelt messages to United Methodist college students and summer camp staff (see article, this page).

550 volunteers needed

The Rise Against Hunger meal packing effort will be held the Tuesday of Annual Conference at the Greenville Convention Center starting at 4 p.m. Pigford said conference business will end early that day intentionally so clergy, lay members and any others across the conference can come together to volunteer.

They need 550 volunteers, as well as about \$54,000 to fund the effort.

“Bishop Fairley is asking each local church to contribute \$100 to this missional effort, and individuals can give as well,” Pigford said.

The 125,000 meals will go wherever hunger is occurring at the time of the packing, from Burundi and Cameroon to Haiti to Singapore. As of press time, Rise Against Hunger was working with nearly 30 nations worldwide.

Pigford said he has high hopes for the mission effort, not only for the impact it will make on those in need of food but on the people of the South Carolina Conference.

“I think after the stormy season we’ve been through, between the pandemic and church separation, we’re feeling tired and isolated, and some of us are also feeling like, ‘What difference can I make?’” Pigford said. “I think an event like this, when we’re gathered together at a single place in the state, can remind us of the strength of our connection and our community. We’re not alone, and we’re capable of doing world-changing things together through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Pigford said hunger ministry efforts are so important, and certainly Jesus

did feeding miracles during his time on earth.

“You cannot help someone with their higher-order needs if you’re not addressing their basic needs first,” he said, noting hunger is a basic need, and even in South Carolina, a lot of people go hungry every single day.

“It is a solvable issue—the world produces enough food that not a single person should go hungry any day,” Pigford said.

Together, South Carolina United Methodists can help be part of the solution.

‘We can make a real difference’

The Rev. Faye J. Jones, associate pastor at Union UMC, Irmo, thinks the conference coming together as a whole to help Rise Against Hunger will be a meaningful way to gather as the body of Christ in active, hands-on work.

Union UMC also did a church-wide Rise Against Hunger event, packing 10,000 meals in less than two hours with approximately 150–175 participants, including both church members and members of the community.

“It was a wonderful project that gave us the opportunity, as a large church, to spend meaningful time together and build stronger connections,” Jones said. “Packing that many meals—and more as an annual conference—is an incredible way to serve in international missions in a hands-on, impactful way.”

Jones said they learned the cost per meal is less than a pack of ramen noodles, around \$0.39, while the labor to package them is significantly higher.

“That makes our participation even more meaningful,” she said. “If we can do our part by supporting the mission with our hands, feet and prayers, we can make a real difference.”

How to get involved

Volunteers are needed to pack meals, as well as to set up and tear down the event. Donations from individuals and churches are also needed.

Conference Treasurer Beth Westbury said churches can contribute as they do when they pay apportionments—if mailing a check, write “Rise Against Hunger #4602” on the check. If paying through Vanco, enter the amount in the line labeled “4602-AC 2026 Rise Up Against Hunger.”

Individuals can give at <https://www.umcsc.org/donate>; click the individual giving button, then enter the amount in the line labeled “AC 2026 Rise Up Against Hunger.”

Volunteers can sign up at <https://www.umcsc.org/ac2026>; click the Rise Against Hunger Box. Or go to <https://go.advocatesc.org/riseagainsthunger>.

Leave A Legacy To Change Lives

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scumf@bellsouth.net

YOUNG CLERGY

From Page 1

has become a place where clergy are known by name, embraced authentically and can feel like they are home.

At its heart, the Young Clergy Cohort has created a space where clergy younger than 40 can truly belong, a place where real life meets real ministry. Conversations range from how to navigate dating as a pastor, to understanding parental leave (or how to muster energy to preach despite your child not sleeping all night), to being a community where people can wrestle honestly with theological ideas.

This has taken what were once casual connections, with colleagues exchanging quick greetings at district events, into something sacred: a family that walks alongside one another in both the joys and challenges of ministry and life.

What is the Young Clergy Cohort?

In its earlier years, the cohort was guided by Pinnacle Leadership. However, as the group grew in both size and depth, there was a shared sense that God was calling them into something new. With courage and trust, the cohort stepped out in faith to become self-led.

Now recognized as a covenant group within the conference, it is sustained not only by the leadership within its own members, but also by the wisdom of those across the conference who graciously pour into it through their gifts and graces.

Showing up fully

Each year begins at Asbury Hills, in that thin space where heaven feels just a little closer to earth. There, the cohort gathers for rest, renewal and relationship-building.

This year, they began by remembering their baptisms. Grounding themselves in the sacred waters—and remembering whose child they are and who called them to ministry—set the tone for the rest of the retreat. Together, they named their hopes for the group, explored what it means to advocate faithfully in their communities and got to know each other on a deeper level. Before returning to their local churches, the group gathered at Christ's holy table sharing in Communion.

Throughout the year, they gather on the second Monday of each month at Trenholm Road United Methodist Church, Columbia, for a rhythm of worship, learning, fellowship and small group covenants that gives space to troubleshoot situations in their churches or lives, encouraging leaning on colleagues as support and not competition.

These gatherings are more than another meeting on the calendar, but rather a time when clergy can show up fully, bringing both their confidence and expertise as well as their doubts and questions.

Enriched by many voices

This season they have been deeply enriched by a wide range of voices from across the conference both within the group and outside.

The Rev. Katherine Crimm started the gatherings with an informative session on the conference's standing rules. This helped the cohort not only understand the structure of the Annual Conference, but also how to actively and faithfully participate before, during and after. Through this time, the cohort was empowered to see themselves



The clergy engage in group prayer.

as vital contributors to the life of the church and conference.

Next, the Rev. Matthew Alexander guided the group in exploring how to better equip and empower the laity in their congregations. It was a good reminder that ministry is never meant to be carried alone but shared with the whole body of Christ.

In January, the Rev. Walter Strawther stepped in as a neutral third-party leader, combining the group's didactic and visioning time. It was through this conversation that the cohort was able to define and develop a structure for the future of the covenant group—see below.

In February, a panel of district superintendents (the Revs. Fran Elrod, Ken Nelson and Terry Fleming) offered both wisdom and vulnerability, graciously answering questions that ranged from their personal journeys in ministry to their hopes for the future of the church, particularly around itineracy and inclusivity. Their presence created space for honest dialogue and deeper understanding of the shared connectional system.

In March, the Rev. Mel Arrant shared his call story and gave insight into his role in Clergy Services. This offered not only clarity about the process but also heartfelt, no-nonsense advice about what it means to be a faithful and effective pastor, both for yourself and for your church. His words grounded the group in reality and encouragement.

They continued these meaningful conversations with Bishop Leonard Fairley in April and will hear from Bishop Kenneth Carder in May, exploring topics such as dementia care and ministry.

Each of these moments, shaped by wisdom, honesty and shared experience, creates space for authentic conversation, brave questions and the kind of growth that can only happen in a community rooted in trust and grace.

A new chapter: Clergy Connexion

Through it all this year, the cohort has dedicated time each month to visioning. During this time, honest conversations happened alongside continued listening, praying, discerning and asking what God might be calling them into next. Out of that discernment, a new vision has emerged.

Rooted in John Wesley's tradition of bands, the Young Clergy Cohort is becoming the Clergy Connexion (spelled with an "x" as Wesley spelled it). This new name reflects both the group's deep relationships and their shared calling within the wider church.

Their next chapter will include two



The group seeks to be a place where clergy younger than 40 can truly belong.

distinct but connected paths.

The first track continues to be their flagship group, as protecting a safe space for young clergy is paramount to the future of shared life and future. It is a place where those navigating the realities that seminary and licensing school couldn't fully prepare anyone for. It will be a space to learn the practical, day-to-day rhythms of ministry, guided by leaders who can offer wisdom, tools, and encouragement for the journey. This track is exclusively for clergy younger than 40.

The second track, called The Second Mile, is for those who bring more experience into the room and continue to seek the genuine connection with their colleagues. Here, the focus will shift toward leadership development: cultivating healthy staff dynamics, balancing conference and local church responsibilities and continuing to grow into the leaders God is shaping them to be.

What began as an idea has become a movement of connection, growth and grace. And at its core, it remains what it has always been: a reminder that no one is called to ministry alone.

'Like family'

Members of the young clergy group said they have been greatly blessed by their time together.

The Rev. Maggie Cantey said that after residency ended, she found herself missing what residency offered: intentional time for clergy to gather and grow together, opportunities to glean wisdom and inspiration from gifted clergy on topics they are passionate about and space where competition and comparison are set aside in favor of connectionalism.

"This young clergy group has given me all of that, as well as deeper friendships, a place where I belong as I am and a profound appreciation for the countless stories of faithfulness found in the local churches across our conference that are shared when we gather," Cantey said. "It is a source of joy and hope for us all, and we look forward to welcoming new members in the fall!"

Crimm said when she began in ministry, she was the only clergy younger than age 40 in her district, and while she built community, it was at times isolating.

"To see this covenant group grow and become a landing place for young pastors eager to learn to do this work—who are curious about the inner workings of church, always dreaming about the future, and committed to fostering collaboration instead of competition in the church—is like getting a glimpse

of the Kingdom of God," Crimm said. "This group has become family, and I am excited as the family continues to grow with every passing year."

The Rev. Faye Jones said she appreciates the conference leadership seeing a need to help young and rising pastors become more equipped for a life in ministry.

"I joined the Young Clergy Cohort back in 2022, ready to learn best practices to serve God by serving God's people," Jones said. "From the didactic time, addressing real life issues and the time connecting with others as we share real life concerns in covenant groups, I have gotten to know the hearts of many colleagues, which have turned into real friends and of course family."

Alexander said the young clergy cohort has been one of the most significant ways he has found connection through the South Carolina Conference and through the UMC.

"It has been a place of healing, a source of hope and a blessing to my life and ministry," Alexander said. "Without the young clergy cohort, I'm sure my ministry would be lesser; I know my life would be."

The Rev. Mason Cantey said he has learned so much from this group, through guest lecturers and simply from their time together.

"Our meetings each month give me time to come up from the depths of everyday ministry for air," Cantey said. It's also hard to explain how nice it feels to be a part of a group where I can let my guard down, and truly be myself.

"The young clergy cohort had provided a much needed space where loving support, joyful fellowship, and authentic relationship building take priority, and all of the other ministry expectations that pastors deal with on a day to day basis get to take the back seat for a moment."

The Rev. J. T. Brown said that in a role where clergy always feel the expectation to justify their fitness for ministry, it's powerful to step away once a month for cohort meetings and simply be seen and heard.

"The unique experience we share as young clergy brings us together, but the cohort structure and relationships built through it send us out healthier, more hopeful and more grounded than we would've been without this special and holy system of support," Brown said.

Members said they look forward to having new faces join this upcoming year. Find all the information for both tracks of Clergy Connexion at <https://linktr.ee/clergyconnexion>.

Mount Prospect Black history program honors local legacy

LUGOFF—Mount Prospect United Methodist Church held its annual Black history program Feb. 28, celebrating the rich heritage and enduring contributions of African-American heroes from Lugoff and Camden.

The program was led by lay leader and program director Florie Richardson and reflected the church's ongoing commitment to preserving and uplifting Black history.

"Mount Prospect honors Black history year-round through weekly programming, including brief educational videos during worship services that highlight both local and global African American achievements," Richardson said.

She underscored the importance of actively preserving history in the face of efforts to diminish or erase it.

The program opened with the congregation standing in unity to sing "Lift Every Voice and Sing," often called the Black National Anthem, fostering a spirit of reflection and collective pride.

Barbara White delivered Scripture, and Henry Belton offered a prayer of gratitude honoring the struggles and triumphs of ancestors. Sharon Campbell extended a warm welcome to all in attendance.

A central theme of the program was education and community advancement. Linda Cunningham presented on the historical lack of educational access for Black children in the rural South during the early 1900s. She highlighted the partnership between Booker T. Washington and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, whose matching-funds ini-



Children sing during Mount Prospect UMC's Black History Program. Pictured are Noah Chestnut, Darren Chestnut, Kylie Fleming, Eliza Chester, Serenity Chestnut, Laylah Chestnut, Skylah Chestnut.

tiative led to the construction of more than 5,000 Rosenwald Schools across 15 Southern states between 1912 and 1932, including approximately 500 in South Carolina. Kershaw County alone was home to 13 of these schools, four of which were located in the Lugoff area. These institutions provided critical educational opportunities for thousands of Black children during segregation.

By the late 1950s, Wateree was actively involved in the community. For example, Virginia Wiley, a 1950 graduate of Jackson High School, an institution serving Black students, volunteered there as a health room attendant. The school's principal was Dr. Clarence Watkins.

The program also honored local and national figures who have made lasting contributions, including baseball pioneer Larry Doby, Congressman Jim Clyburn, actor Samuel E. Wright and former Camden Mayor Alfred Mae Drakeford. Presentations highlighted their achievements and enduring impact on society.

A special segment introduced a video series on Camden's historic Campbell Street, a once-thriving center of African-American life. The video explored its significance in education, business, faith and culture, featuring landmarks such as Cedar Cemetery (dating back to the 1840s), Boylan-Haven-Mather Academy, Mount Moriah Baptist Church and other historic institutions that have shaped the community.

The program featured a variety of cultural expressions, including poetry, music and youth participation. Betty Chestnut presented a moving tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., followed by a children's a cappella rendition of "We Shall Overcome." The children also performed "Stand Up" from the Harriet

Tubman film, honoring her courage and legacy.

Special musical guests Brook Benton Grant, Nigel Quincy Grant and guitarist Kenneth Inabinate paid tribute to the legendary Brook Benton with performances of "The Boll Weevil Song" and "Rainy Night in Georgia."

The program concluded with a prayer for justice and equality, followed by a benediction and an invitation to fellowship over a community meal featuring traditional "old-time cooking."

Mount Prospect UMC and the Rev. Jeffery Belton remain dedicated to preserving African-American history through education, storytelling and community engagement.

The full program is available for viewing online at <https://go.advocatesc.org/mtprospect-black-history2026>.

Mount Prospect UMC is located at 1644 Hwy. 601 S. and has proudly served the Lugoff area for 158 years, offering spiritual guidance, impactful community outreach and family-friendly events. Their mission is "People helping people to share the life of Christ." Their vision is "A place where faith and real life intersect."



Florie Richardson speaks during Mount Prospect UMC's Black History Program, emphasizing the importance of preserving history.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE PODCAST

From Page 1

as a great way to generate much-needed dialogue about the Scripture used in worship each Sunday. Partnering with clergy friends and colleagues throughout the state, the podcast quickly gained popularity, with one friend, the Rev. Jonathan Tompkins, calling it “an electronic version of a coffeehouse conversation.”

The podcast went on hiatus when Cate took a break from the ministry because of, as he puts it, “the escalating conflict in the UMC and looming college tuition for my children.” But now he’s back, currently serving part-time as the pastor of Simpsonville UMC, Simpsonville, and the podcast has been running since 2023 with a steady and growing audience.

The podcast is well-liked for a reason—Cate, along with a variety of pastor friends, discusses Scripture in a relevant manner, often comparing questions, themes and similarities to pop culture, literature, sports and other

regular-life connections.

“Essentially, it’s our pursuit to making the reading and discussing of Scripture less toxic,” Cate said.

He saw firsthand how toxic those discussions could be before his ministry hiatus, and he’s convinced talking about Scripture candidly can help people understand it better and ultimately deepen their faith.

“It can be really aggressive, confusing and upsetting sometimes, especially when we pick out certain parts of it and weaponize it on both sides,” Cate said.

By actively reading Scripture as it is, then openly and honestly discussing its meaning, he hopes people will engage with God’s word in a healthier, truer way that fosters deeper faith and helps them grow.

“I wanted to reclaim the interesting and engaging nature of reading Scripture,” Cate explained.

Weekly episodes are released on

Wednesday, and these preview the Bible text for the coming Sunday. He also posts sermons. Recently, he’s also releasing what he calls “evergreen episodes” about the themes of the Bible.

“My favorite episode so far was an NFL-style draft of the books of the Bible with three other ministers—Will Malambri, Brad Gray and Thomas Smith,” Cate said. “We pretended as if the texts we chose from the major categories of the Bible were the only texts we would

have for the next three years. If you could only pick one gospel, letter and psalm, what would you pick and why?”

Other episodes dive into the anger of Jonah, Daniel’s life under King Nebuchadnezzar and the suffering of Job.

“The Bible is a complex document, so the idea is how can we raise up themes to help it make more sense and connect it more to what people are going through in life today,” he said.

Sunday Scripture Podcast is available on Spotify (search “Sunday Scripture Podcast”) and on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/@sunday-scripturepodcastSUMC>.



Cate said his favorite episode so far was an NFL-style draft of the books of the Bible with three other ministers—the Revs. Will Malambri, Brad Gray and Thomas Smith (pictured).

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Dementia care: A waiting opportunity for the church in South Carolina

By Bishop Kenneth L. Carder

Last month's *Advocate* included an article by Tori Anderson, dementia care specialist program manager with the South Carolina Department on Aging, highlighting sobering realities. The statistics alone should command our attention: At least 125,538 South Carolinians are currently living with some form of dementia—and that number does not include those who remain undiagnosed. Beyond those individuals, more than 224,000 people in our state are providing care for loved ones navigating these conditions.

But numbers, as significant as they are, only begin to tell the story.

When I speak in local congregations, I often ask, "How many of you have a family member or close friend living with dementia?" Typically, three out of four hands go up. Dementia is not a distant issue affecting "others." It is present in our pews, our choirs, our Sunday school classes and our homes.

Consider also the demographic reality. The median age of South Carolinians is around 38 to 40, while the median age of United Methodists nationwide is closer to 58 to 60. Our congregations are, on average, 20 years older than the general population. Add to this that approximately 1 in 9 persons over the age of 65 is living with dementia, and the implications become clear: The church is already deeply connected to this reality, whether we name it or not.

Moreover, this is one of the fastest-growing populations in our state. With the aging of our society, the number of those affected by dementia is expected to double within the next three decades. This is not simply a looming challenge—it is a present and expanding mission field. Yet within this challenge lies a profound opportunity.

Faith communities are uniquely

positioned to offer what is often most needed but least available: a community of belonging grounded in grace. In a culture that frequently defines people by memory, productivity or cognitive ability, the church proclaims a different truth—that every person is created in the image of God and held in steadfast love, regardless of diagnosis or decline.

People living with dementia, and those who care for them, need more than medical support; they need to be seen, known and valued. Congregations can offer this through simple but transformative practices: cultivating patience, learning new ways of communication, adapting worship to be more accessible and providing respite and encouragement for caregivers.

At the same time, those affected by dementia bring gifts to the church. They invite us to rediscover the heart of the gospel—not as a set of ideas to be believed, but as a relationship of love to be lived. They call us to deeper compassion, attentiveness and humility. They help us experience and grow in the "fruit of the Spirit"—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Ministry with people living with dementia is not an optional or specialized calling for a few; it is a vital expression of Christian discipleship. As we participate in this ministry, we join in the ongoing movement of God's grace—expanding the circle of love, embodying Christ's compassion and becoming more fully the beloved community we are called to be.

The opportunity is before us. The question is whether we will recognize it—and respond.

For more information about the South Carolina Cognitive Connection Ministry, email cognitive@umcsc.org.



Ready to respond

South Carolina disaster recovery and response staff and volunteers were among the large group that attended the 2026 UMC Southeastern Jurisdiction Disaster Academy. Held Feb. 25-27 at the Scarritt Bennett Center in Nashville, Tennessee, the event provided training for volunteers and leaders interested in disaster ministry, offering an opportunity to connect with others across the jurisdiction. Attendees from South Carolina were the Rev. Adrienne Stokes, the Rev. Cynthia Taylor, the Rev. James P. Smith, Ward Smith, Joseph Patton, Kevin Minton, Rocky Gethers, the Rev. Shay Long and the Rev. LaTonya Dash.

Disaster Recovery.

Q&A with Felix Truett

UMCSC disaster recovery case manager

Felix Truett is a case manager with South Carolina United Methodist Disaster Recovery serving in the Lakelands area, which includes Greenwood and the six counties around Greenwood County. Here, he answers a few questions about the ministry.

How does Disaster Recovery help those affected by Helene?

The disaster case managers are a vital asset to any disaster recovery. DCMs help guide any client that has gone through any disaster, no matter how severe. Any disaster recovery plan can always help affected clients find the help, as long as the disaster recovery team has the proper resources and the DCMs are kept updated. This allows the DCMs to always know what is available for the clients.

Why did you want to work in this position?

This position is very rewarding. I have been working as a DCM for the last 11 years with FEMA and five months with the UMC. This position allows me to build a relationship with all my assigned clients. The more you are face to face or via phone, the more you build a reliable trust. With this trust, you can accomplish anything. I also build a relationship with staff members from other agencies. I truly love and enjoy this position, especially when you meet new friends.

How do the tasks you are responsible for help the homeowner get the help they need?

The help for the client all begins the first day of introduction. This is when you build the rapport and trust. Once you determine the damage to the home, this is when you start discussing the resources you have and to help guide the client to recovery.

How does your position contribute to the success of the program?

As a DCM, we are always trying to find the proper resource for the proper repair. My position, with the client and the other agencies, all make the success of the program possible.

Alston Wilkes Society.

Rebuilding lives, one step at a time: a look at Q1 impact

In every community, there are individuals working quietly to rebuild their lives—seeking stability, purpose and a path forward. At the Alston Wilkes Society, that work happens every day.

And in the first quarter of 2026 alone, that work reached 1,072 individuals across South Carolina.

Each number represents more than a service provided—it represents a life moving forward.

Honoring those who served

For many veterans, the transition from military service to civilian life can come with unexpected challenges. Through comprehensive housing, case management and supportive services, Alston Wilkes Society's Veteran Services programs provided support to 422 veterans in Q1.

These are men and women who have

served our country and are now working to secure stable housing, employment and independence. With the right support systems in place, they are not just finding footing—they are building futures.

Second chances in action

Reentry after incarceration is one of the most critical—and often most difficult—transitions a person can face. Without structure, accountability and support, the path forward can feel uncertain.

Through its Residential Reentry programs, Alston Wilkes Society served 337 individuals in Q1, providing a structured environment focused on employment, stability and long-term success.

These programs are not just about supervision—they are about transformation. Every resident represents a

second chance being put into motion.

Meeting people where they are

Challenges don't always come with a single solution. That's why Community Services programs are designed to meet individuals where they are—whether that means assistance with housing, employment, transportation or other critical needs.

In Q1, these programs served 299 individuals, offering the support needed to stabilize lives and prevent crisis situations from becoming long-term setbacks.

This work often happens behind the scenes, but its impact is anything but small.

Building stronger futures

At the Youth Home, the focus shifts to the next generation.

Serving 14 young individuals in Q1, this program provides structure, guidance and a safe environment for youth navigating difficult circumstances. It's an investment not just in today—but in what tomorrow can become.

Because when a young person is given the right support, the trajectory of their life can change entirely.

A collective impact

Across all programs, one truth remains clear: 1,072 lives were impacted in three months. This impact is made possible through partnerships, community support and a shared belief that people deserve the opportunity to rebuild. At Alston Wilkes Society, the mission is simple but powerful: "Rebuilding Lives for a Stronger Community." And every life served brings that vision closer to reality.

Ministries.

Union to host Shower of Hope Resource Expo and Baby Shower

IRMO—More than two years ago, a young single mother visited Union United Methodist Church to inquire about a placement for her infant at the church's day school. She was experiencing significant challenges at the time, and it became clear that God had brought her to Union for a purpose.

The church was able to offer support, and while that was a meaningful step, God had a broader plan. He placed this young woman on the hearts of many women who surrounded her in love and support and inspired the associate pastor, the Rev. Faye Jones, with an idea.

This inspiration grew into Union's first Shower of Hope Community Baby Shower and Resource Expo, held at Union last May. The successful event served caregivers of children from birth to four years, kinship care families and expecting families.

This year, Union will repeat their efforts, hosting a second Shower of Hope Resource Expo and Baby Shower on May 2 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

As is often the case with new initiatives, a dedicated committee was formed when the event began. Women from Union's United Women in Faith circles volunteered alongside other church members, and preparations quickly took shape. Within a few months, they collected donations, coordinated with vendors and distributed flyers advertising the event.

Each of Union's UWF circles contributed 100 items,



Organizers pray they are to be able to help more families find resources to be able to help them grow and flourish.

including children's books, baby washcloths, towels, Dreft detergent, bibs, pacifiers, bottles, wipes and baby blankets. Church members and Sunday school classes also donated diapers and additional supplies. Kroger generously donated pallets of diapers and wipes, formula and Pedialyte.

The first year's event welcomed 25 vendors, including a Kroger pharmacist who provided vaccinations during the event. Representatives from the Irmo Police, Prisma Health, SGL, doulas, Epworth and the Union Day School were present. Kona Ice brought their truck to serve shaved ice and smoothies, and the Irmo Fire Department had a fire truck for children.

Beyond the logistical and material contributions, members said the most meaningful aspect was the arrival of 112 individuals, representing approximately 50 families. They were visibly excited and engaged, as Union was to welcome them. The United Women in Faith hosted activities for children while caregivers visited vendors and collected the donated items. The event also featured door prizes, which generated enthusiastic responses and delighted squeals from winners.

One expectant mother, in tears, expressed her relief at receiving support to prepare for her upcoming arrival that summer. It was a day filled with joy and connection, reflecting the love and compassion of our community.

"We understand the challenges that come with parenting, especially for expecting moms and kinship caregivers," Jones said. "This expo was a wonderful opportunity for families to connect with vital resources and build a support network within our community."

"We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to making this event possible. And above all, we praise God for guiding us to serve in this way," Union UWF President Beth Sawyer said.

For questions about donations and participation, reach out to Jones at faye@unionirmo.org or 803-781-3013.

St. Stephen donates pillows to support Paths To Wholeness residents

ORANGEBURG—Acts of kindness continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of women served by Paths To Wholeness Transitional Home.

Recently, St. Stephen United Methodist Church, under the leadership of the Rev. Kenneth Middleton, donated a collection of pillows to enhance the comfort and well-being of the residents.

The donation, presented during the church's fall festival, reflects St. Stephen's ongoing commitment to community outreach and support for local programs that uplift and empow-



Pillows will help the women living there.

er individuals on their journey toward stability and success. For the women

residing at Paths To Wholeness, these simple yet thoughtful contributions help transform the house into a place of rest, dignity and renewed hope.

Middleton shared, "We extend our sincere gratitude to Janelle Mitchell, our administrative council chair, for her leadership in sustaining our partnership with Paths To Wholeness. Our donation during the fall festival was a modest token of support for the vital work led by Rev. Minnie Anderson and her team. We look forward to exploring further opportunities for collaboration in the near future."

Anderson, executive director of Paths To Wholeness, acknowledged the ongoing collaboration with the church and emphasized that sustained community involvement is essential in ensuring a secure and supportive environment for women moving toward independent living.

This partnership between St. Stephen UMC and Paths To Wholeness stands as a shining example of how faith-based organizations and community programs can work together to restore lives and build stronger communities.



Photos courtesy of the Rev. Nick Lyerly



Kentucky grad students help in Marion

Marion First UMC, Marion, hosted seven graduate students from the University of Kentucky the week of March 29 to April 3. The first-year medical students arrived on Sunday, March 29, and were given a delicious welcome dinner of Southern fried chicken and barbeque. The request came from Habitat for Humanity to host a student group during collegiate challenge week. During this week the students were engaged in meaningful ministry work with Habitat for Humanity building a home in Lake View.

Killingsworth recognized as top nonprofit by BusinessRate

Killingsworth has been officially recognized as a TOP 10 of 2026 Midtown-Downtown Award Winner in the nonprofit organization category, an honor based on verified data from Google Reviews, as analyzed and certified by BusinessRate.

This recognition is part of the BusinessRate TOP 10 of 2026 Awards, which identify local leaders in customer satisfaction, brand reputation and service excellence.

Killingsworth Home is a United Methodist ministry quietly nurturing women, helping them grow in faith and love so they can one day transform the world around them. While initially a boarding house for Christian women seeking higher education, today Killingsworth houses women who are emerging from crisis situations, whether addiction, incarceration, abuse or trauma, helping them learn needed skills in a safe, Christian environment before fully entering the community.

Learn more about Killingsworth Home at <https://www.killingsworth.org>.



Macedonia helps alleviate hunger

On April 1, the women of Macedonia UMC, Ridgeville, visited the Lowcountry Food Bank in North Charleston. They dedicated their time to packing food for the food bank and had the opportunity to meet fellow disciples from other churches. At Macedonia UMC, members remain committed to their mission statement, which emphasizes cultivating a vibrant atmosphere rooted in faith, love and service to our community. To truly become disciples of Jesus Christ, they must first embrace the role of servants. "I would like to thank Earth Pinckney, Angela Garret, Jackie Haynes, Francis, and Maxine Garland for their dedicated volunteer work," said the Rev. Kendrick Williams.



Photos by the Rev. Kendrick Williams

Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry to meet May 14 at Union UMC

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

Founded in 2003, Aldersgate is a United Methodist ministry that provides homes for adults with developmental disabilities. Residents enjoy living in a Christian environment and are encouraged to be as independent as possible with the support of trained staff.

Aldersgate operates six homes for adults with special needs.

The meeting will be held Union United Methodist Church, Irmo, May 14 in the Joy Classroom from 10 a.m. to noon.

The ministry plans to showcase the residents of all their homes. For more information, visit <https://aldersgatesnm.org>.



Photo courtesy of Angela Harris

New FLC at Sandy Grove

On April 19, the Rev. Telley Lynnette Gadson was the special guest speaker at the groundbreaking for the Family Life Center at Sandy Grove UMC, Jefferson. The Rev. Marion Loretta Cooper serves as the pastor. The congregation gathered for a great celebration for something the church has worked to accomplish for years.



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Melissa Williams

Live cross in Williston

The Williston Garden Club places a live cross in town on the historic old South Carolina Canal and Railroad bank in honor of Easter. The evening of April 4 featured devotion and prayer by Rev. Melissa Williams of Williston UMC, Williston, along with garden club members adorning the cross.



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Annie R. Crocker

Eggstravaganza!

What a great day of fun that was had by all! Beaumont UMC, Spartanburg, held its annual Easter Egg Hunt for the Beaumont community. All said it was a great success. The children had fun finding several hundred pieces of candy, toys and even some money-filled eggs. Then they settled inside to hear a Bible story and enjoy some snacks and something cool to drink. "We thank the children and parents for making this day a fun-filled event to remember," said the Rev. Annie R. Crocker.



Photo courtesy of Kathy Hart

'Give Up Something Bad for Lent'

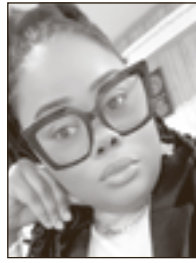
During the Lenten season, Windsor UMC, Columbia, members met on Wednesdays for lunch, a hymn fest and to explore the Bible Study by James Moore, "Give Up Something Bad for Lent," led by Kathy Hart. Hart serves as a certified Lay Servant. The bad stuff—from "judging based on rumors" to "bitterness" and "envy"—hung like dirty laundry as the season progressed. Eating chocolate was not included.

Prayer breakfast urges women to stay diligent

SMOAKS—During Women's History Month, Hickory Hill UMC hosted a prayer breakfast lifting up the inspiring theme, "Women on the Move."

Attendees said it was a beautiful time of fellowship, encouragement and spiritual renewal as women gathered together in faith and unity.

Courtney Brown Banks, one of



Banks

the church's young adult members, brought a powerful message. Banks encouraged every woman present to remain obedient, prayerful and diligent workers for God's Kingdom. She highlighted the lives of Esther, Ruth and Mary Magdalene as examples of faithful women who moved with courage, purpose and devotion to God.

Her message reminded attendees that God still calls women today to rise, serve and walk boldly in his purpose. As we continue forward, may we stay committed to prayer, faith and action, she urged.

Hickory Hill UMC extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped make this event a success and to all who attended. They pray the group will continue to support and uplift one another as women of faith—always moving forward in Christ.

St. Stephen experiences transformative Lenten journey

ORANGEBURG—This year's Lenten season became a powerful time of renewal, reflection and growth for the St. Stephen United Methodist Church family. With an emphasis on deepening their faith, members committed to a 40-day journey of prayer, fasting, hydration and physical activity—walking together in both spirit and purpose.

To inspire participation and fellowship, the church introduced a "Walk 40 Miles to Easter" challenge. The response was uplifting, with multiple generations joining in. Each participant embraced the challenge in their own way, with some walking 40 miles or more and others offering encouragement and support. Even friends and community members joined along the way, strengthening the sense of unity beyond the church walls.

Participants committed to meaningful goals: walking regularly, avoiding sugary drinks and sweets, drinking at least 64 ounces of water daily, and dedicating time each day to Bible reading and prayer. These practices nurtured both spiritual and physical well-being, creating a holistic Lenten experience.

Under the leadership of the Rev. Kenneth Middleton and First Lady Jenny Middleton, the congregation was guided toward a closer walk with Christ and with one another. Their leadership set the tone for a season grounded in discipline, encouragement and love.

The journey was also shared with the broader community through the dedicated efforts of Sister Angela Williams, First Lady Jenny Middleton and Sister Lorraine Muhammad, who captured moments through photos, video blogs and Facebook Live. Their work allowed others to witness the growth, joy and commitment that defined this season.

Participants of all ages reflected on the impact of the challenge.

Kenya Johnson, age 8, said, "I loved walking with church members, especially the other kids. I also loved that we had Gatorade when we were thirsty."

Muhammad shared, "The 40-day challenge pushed me beyond my comfort zone in ways I didn't expect—mentally, physically and emotionally. There were moments of doubt, but those same moments became the foundation for my growth. By the end, I didn't just



Photo by Angela Williams

Pictured from left are Cynthia Green (church secretary), Lamont Green (trustee chairman), Janice Harrison (finance), Larry Harrison (member), Nolton Green (PPRC chairman), Tracey Green (worship chairman), Lorraine Muhammad (adult ministry chairman), the Rev. Kenneth Middleton (pastor), First Lady Jenny Middleton and Quinn Anthony Walls (musician).

complete a challenge—I built discipline, resilience and a deeper understanding of myself with the Lord. I was also blessed that my best friend joined us, even though she is not a member of our church."

The Rev. Shirley S. Nichols reflected, "During my Lenten fast, I embraced both physical and spiritual devotion, creating a meaningful balance between body and soul. As I walked, ate more intentionally and reduced portions, I experienced not only weight loss but also a renewed sense of strength and vitality. My time in prayer and meditation deepened my connection with God's Word, bringing clarity and purpose to my daily life. This season cultivated a sharper focus, greater energy and a calming sense of peace within me. Overall, my fast became a transformative journey that nurtured both my spiritual growth and personal well-being.

Nichols also shared this impactful season contributed to the spirit of growth and reflection experienced throughout the congregation.

As the church celebrates the resurrection of Christ, St. Stephen also celebrates the transformation that took place within each participant. This Lenten journey reminded members that when they walk together in faith, they grow stronger together—in body, mind and spirit.

Easter egg hunt brings much joy to senior ministry

CAMDEN—Members of the Golden Girls and Guys senior adult ministry at St. Paul United Methodist Church gathered March 31 at 10 a.m. for a delightful Easter egg hunt filled with laughter, fellowship and fun.

Participants eagerly searched the grounds for colorful Easter eggs, with excitement building around the hunt for the prized golden egg—which was eventually found to the delight of all. The morning was filled with walking, laughing and even a bit of playful chasing, creating joyful moments for everyone involved.

Following the hunt, the group



The group gathers for a smile.

shared a delicious light lunch and enjoyed meaningful fellowship together.

The event reflected the spirit of community and unity of this group



Photos courtesy of Harriett Brevard

The morning was filled with laughter.

that meets every Tuesday morning at 10 for exercise class and monthly business meetings. The Rev. Leatha Brown is the pastor and Gladys Williams serves as president of the

District News.

Columbia District

Brookland UMC, West Columbia, hosted Corrie ten Boom's "The Hiding Place." The play ran from April 9-19 and was presented by Soda City Theatre Company.

Orangeburg District

The Orangeburg District Office is moving May 1 to 1709 Village Park Drive, Orangeburg. Their post office box, phone number and email will remain the same.

Rock Hill District United Methodists unite for Lent

Something special happened in Rock Hill this Lent—six United Methodist congregations came together as one body of believers for a powerful six-week journey toward the cross.

Every Wednesday at noon, between 50 and 60 worshippers gathered for a shared Lenten service and luncheon, rotating through six host churches across the city. Each service opened with greetings and liturgy from the host pastor, followed by Scripture and a homily delivered by a pastor from one of the partner churches—bringing fresh voices and perspectives to the Lenten experience each week. After a closing hymn, benediction and prayer, the host congregation welcomed everyone to a warm lunch of soups, salads and sandwiches.

The result? Six weeks of meaningful worship, deepened faith and brand-new friendships formed across congregation lines. Many participants stated they had never had the opportunity to visit churches that



Plans are already under way for another multichurch worship series this fall.



were only a few miles away.

The collaboration of worship and fellowship also helped individuals to get to know one another and for the pastors of the churches to connect

and worship together. Some were so moved by the experience that they attended all six services.

Midday timing allowed several worshippers to slip away from near-by workplaces to join in during their lunch hour. The pastors collaborated closely to weave together intentional themes and messages that made each week's gathering richer than the last.

The six congregations and their pastors who made this happen were Aldersgate UMC (the Rev. Renee Garrison), Cornerstone UMC (the Rev. Cindy Rumsey), New Hope UMC (the Rev. Athena Dickey-Cathcart), St. John's UMC (the Rev. Cameron Treece), Woodland UMC (the Rev. Robin Griffeth) and Bethel UMC (the Rev. Emily Sutton).

And the good news? This is just the beginning. Plans are already under way for another multichurch worship series this fall, and the six congregations are eagerly looking ahead to doing it all again next Lenten season.



This training came in response to recent incidents in the area, where eight churches were burglarized.



The church security training session was led by Captain Darrin Yarborough.

Cumberland hosts vital church security training

FLORENCE—In a proactive initiative to enhance safety within the community, Cumberland United Methodist Church hosted a church security training session March 19 led by Captain Darrin Yarborough, a respected figure in local law enforcement.

This training came in response to recent incidents in the area, where eight churches were burglarized, underscoring the urgent need for improved security measures.

The event brought together representatives from various churches across the Florence area, emphasizing the importance of preparedness in today's unpredictable environment.

The training, attended by 35 participants, focused on practical tips and procedures that can help safeguard church facilities and congregants. Yarborough shared insights on recognizing potential threats, implementing emergency response plans and fostering a culture of awareness among church members.

Key highlights from the session included:

- Threat Assessment: Participants learned how to identify vulnerabilities within their church premises and develop strategies to mitigate risks.
- Emergency Protocols: Yarborough outlined crucial steps to take during emergencies, including evacuation procedures and communication strategies with

local authorities.

- Community Engagement: Emphasizing the role of congregants in maintaining safety, the training encouraged participants to foster open lines of communication and collaboration within their communities.

The event was well-received, with attendees expressing gratitude for the knowledge shared. Many participants noted that the training not only equipped them with essential skills but also strengthened their commitment to ensuring a safe worship environment for all.

"This training is a vital step in protecting our places of worship," said one participant. "It's reassuring to know that we have the tools and knowledge to respond effectively in case of an emergency."

Cumberland's initiative highlights a growing recognition of the need for security in places of worship, particularly in light of recent burglaries. The goal is to empower community members and foster a safer environment for everyone.

As churches continue to navigate the complexities of modern-day security challenges, collaborative efforts like this training are crucial in building resilience and ensuring the safety of congregants across the Florence area.



Photo by Kelly Gottheiner

Sunrise celebration

Like many other churches across South Carolina, Manning UMC, Manning, celebrated Easter with a sunrise service. The packed event drew many for a sermon and breakfast. Sunrise services honor the gospel account of how the women went to the tomb "very early in the morning on the first day of the week" only to find Jesus gone (Luke 24:1).



Women in the Pulpit at Mount Zion

Mount Zion UMC, Kingstree, celebrated Women in the Pulpit Sunday recently. With the theme "Firm Foundation," speaker Dr. Alice Parson Wright of Jerusalem AME Church brought a powerful word.



Photos courtesy of Kathleen Tisdale



Photo courtesy of Anthony Simpson

Orangeburg men gather

Orangeburg District United Methodist Men held their quarterly district meeting April 11 at St. Mark United Methodist Church, North. District President Anthony Simpson was joined by District Superintendent the Rev. Ken Nelson and church pastor Dr. Marvin A. Miss for breakfast and a meeting that included a speaker, Minister Jamal Wilkerson. Here, the group gathers for a smile.



Photo courtesy of Tamara Davis



Releasing, Restoring, Reaching

On March 15, Silver Hill Memorial UMC, Spartanburg, hosted a special United Women in Faith Women's Day Program. Under the inspiring theme, "Releasing, Restoring, Reaching: Woman to Woman," the atmosphere was filled with joy, strength and sisterhood. Attendees were blessed by the dynamic message from guest speaker the Rev. Cathy Mitchell, who poured into every heart in the room.



Photo courtesy of Deidre Harley



Celebrating the king

On Passion/Palm Sunday, Wesley UMC, Florence, was blessed with the presence of approximately 150 members of the Prince Hall Order of Eastern Stars and Masons who also graciously donated to the youth ministry of the church. Then, Resurrection Sunday morning worship began with joint fellowship for a sunrise service with their sister church, where Rev. James Peterson serves as pastor. Following sunrise service at Wesley, children and youth celebrated the risen savior with speeches, songs and inspiring instrumental performances.



Photos courtesy of the Rev. Meg Cook



He is risen!

At Grace UMC in Columbia's Messy Easter and Egg Hunt on March 28, families experienced the joy of the resurrection together through creative activities, shared storytelling and an egg hunt that celebrated the good—and sweet—news that Christ is alive!

Resource Center.

It's time to plan your 2026 vacation Bible school! The Resource Center has many VBS kits available. A few are listed below. Check our website for more titles.

VBS 2026 Snowball Mountain Challenge Ultimate Starter Kit (K994VB) Get ready to turn your next summer VBS into an unforgettable adventure with Snowball Mountain Challenge VBS 2026! This program invites kids to an exciting winter sports event, where they become challengers gearing up for frosty games, snowy surprises and hands-on lessons about resilience and faith. With a unique winter theme and solid theology at its core, this VBS delivers joy and meaning, teaching kids that "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13 NRSV). Age: PeE.

VBS 2025 Road Trip: On the Go with God Ultimate Starter Kit (K993VB) Help children discover God's presence everywhere. Embark on an exciting journey with Road Trip VBS is based on Joshua 1:9: "The Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Discover God's presence everywhere as we explore new places, make new friends and experience God's goodness together. Join us in a fun-filled adventure on the open road, taking all the kids (travelers) on thrill-

ing journeys to exciting destinations. Travelers will delve into timeless tales of faith from the Old and New testaments. Age: Pe.

VBS 2024 Camp Firelight Ultimate Starter Kit (K990VB) Invite kids to put their trust in God. During vacation Bible school, join first-time camp counselor Sam and Lumen, "Lu," the lightning bug puppet, for a summer adventure at Camp Firelight. Campers accompany Counselor Sam and Lu during each assembly session and learn to face their fears while trusting in God. Each day, campers see Counselor Sam face new challenges, from as simple as leading campers on a hike to as intimidating as meeting a new and wise nature expert. With the help of Lu the Lightning Bug and the Camp Counselor Guidebook, Counselor Sam and the Campers explore timeless Bible stories showing how Old and New Testament campers trusted God, faced their fears and went on to do great things in God's name. Camp Callout (Theme Verse): "Whenever I'm afraid, I put my trust in you." (Psalm 56:3). Age: PeE.

The SC Conference Resource Center is your connection to DVDs and seasonal musicals. To reserve resources, call 803-735-8798 or visit <https://www.umcsc.org/resourcecenter>.



Happenings at Hopewell

Big things are happening at Hopewell UMC, Simpsonville. The church is expanding with a brand new sanctuary. Its brick building was built in the mid 1990s. The church is also continuing its ministry efforts beyond their walls to foster families, plus they are engaged with medical missions overseas. They just had a group return from a medical mission to Guatemala. They also recently celebrated four men and four women who participated in Walk to Emmaus.



Photos by Eugenia Vicars



Easter—Messy Church style

St. Paul UMC, located in the west end of Greenville, celebrated the Lenten season with an Easter Messy Church event. Each station told a part of the Easter story, and families completed an activity to go with the part of the story they heard. Stations included making a prayer bottle, creating crown of thorn cookies, washing shaving cream off poster-size feet with water blasters and more. The evening ended with families and volunteers sharing a dinner of hamburgers, chips and baked beans together.



Photos courtesy of the Rev. Kendrick Williams

Blessed to be a blessing

On March 23, Macedonia UMC, Ridgeville, hosted a community giveaway to serve and bless families in our area. Items distributed included towels, appliances, chairs, silverware, notebooks and other essential household goods. Members of the McDaniel Town Road community came out to receive these items, and members thanked God for the opportunity to be a blessing. Macedonia UMC extends sincere appreciation to those who helped make this event possible: Eartha Pinckney, Harriett Elmore, Brenda Smith, Angela Garrett, Sheila Rice, Diana Weston, Heaven Weston, Kensley William, William Richburg and Pete Tomlin.



1,072

Lives Impacted in Q1 2026

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

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

Hope starts here.

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ALSTON WILKES SOCIETY

Rebuilding Lives for a Stronger Community

Free youth lectionary available

WASHINGTON—A free updated youth lectionary curriculum is available, offering a way to engage junior and senior high school students about the intersection of faith and justice. The resource was created by a diverse team of pastors, educators, emerging leaders and laypersons from across the connection. Each one-hour lesson includes a centering moment, Scripture study, group activity and closing reflection.

Jun named as worship director for GC 2028

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The Commission on the General Conference has elected YoungKwang “YK” Jun of the Greater New Jersey Conference as worship and music director for the 2028 General Conference. Jun will lead worship planning and implementation for the global gathering of the denomination’s top policy-making body, which convenes in May 2028.

Church leaders chart new future for bishops

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—As they wait for a big decision by The United Methodist Church’s top court, church leaders say they are already collaborating like never before to strengthen the episcopacy. The denomination’s finance agency has asked the Judicial Council how to interpret changes made by the 2024 General Conference to the allotment of U.S. bishops.

Rev. Stephanie York Arnold is Theologian-in-Residence for Assembly

INDIANAPOLIS —United Women in Faith is honored to announce that the Rev. Stephanie York Arnold will serve as theologian in residence for Assembly 2026, taking place May 15–17 in Indianapolis, Indiana. Assembly is the organization’s signature quadrennial gathering, bringing together thousands of women of faith from across the world under the theme “Dream it! Believe it! Do it!”

Agency starts new fund to support higher education

NAIROBI, Kenya—At its April 8-10 meeting, the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry approved a one-time \$4 million allocation to create a Regional Conference Higher Education Fund, with potential distributions of \$1 million annually for four years. The fund is intended to provide grants to strengthen United Methodist-related colleges and universities in the church’s regional conferences in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. This fund is separate from the theological education endowment supported by Miracle Sunday.

Church high school launches uniform factory

MUREWA, Zimbabwe—The United Methodist Church’s Murewa High School has launched a uniform factory that combines education and entrepreneurship to create opportunities for students, teachers and communities in Zimbabwe. Headmaster Sydney Mapisaunga projects that by 2027, the factory will be fully operational, with annual profits expected to reach up to \$50,000.

Worship music conference set for fall

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—A workshop on worship music for worship leaders and planners, pastors, music directors, singers and others is set for Sept. 24-26 at Belmont United Methodist Church. Fusion 2026 will offer guidance in integrating modern and traditional worship styles within The United Methodist Church context. Workshops will include arranging hymns to bridge across styles, cultural fusion in worship and designing worship for lasting impact.

Bishop Berlin releases new book, study

LAKELAND, Fla.—The Florida Conference’s Bishop Tom Berlin is a prolific author. His latest book, “Jesus Is Lord: Living in the Lordship of Christ,” is scheduled to be released April 21. It’s a six-part study available in paperback and e-book from Abingdon Press and Cokesbury as well as other online booksellers. There is also a leader’s guide and a video available on DVD and Amplify Media.

In prison, expectant mothers encounter grace

HARARE, Zimbabwe—United Methodists in Zimbabwe are living out the command in Matthew 25 to visit, clothe and feed those who are imprisoned. The church’s Chitungwiza Marondera District provided baby welcome packs for expectant mothers housed at Chikurubi Female Prison. The prison outreach also included supplies for men incarcerated at Zimbabwe’s largest maximum-security correctional facility.

Celebrating 70 years of women’s clergy rights

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Discipleship Ministries and the United Methodist Commission on the Status and Role of Women have collaborated to produce worship and liturgical resources to mark the 70th anniversary of the Methodist Church granting ordained women full clergy rights. Resources include preaching notes, a liturgical overview and hymn suggestions.

United Methodists’ court win in Nigeria faces appeal

JALINGO, Nigeria—The Global Methodist Church, the theologically conservative denomination that broke away from The United Methodist Church, announced that it is appealing a Nigerian court decision returning assets and property to The United Methodist Church. In a press conference, Global Methodist Church Bishop John Pena Auta also called for church members to remain peaceful and stressed the new denomination’s commitment to the rule of law. Immediately after the March 30 judgment, United Methodist Bishop Ande Emmanuel also called for peace and healing.

Groups decry US Supreme Court ruling

WASHINGTON—The Native American Inter-Tribal Caucus and United Methodist Alliance for Transgender Inclusion have each released statements decrying the U.S. Supreme Court decision to allow challenges to bans on conversion therapy for children. Both the American Psychological Association and American Medical Association have denounced the therapy.

Courtesy UMNews

Planners shorten GC2028, discuss Minneapolis

By Heather Hahn

Excerpted and reprinted with permission of UM News

General Conference organizers voted April 18 to shorten The United Methodist Church’s next legislative assembly by two days.

That means the international gathering is now scheduled May 8-16, 2028.

At the same time, the Commission on the General Conference moved forward with Minneapolis as the host city while exploring adding a possible second site in Canada for delegates unable to secure a visa to the U.S.

Following the recent surge of federal immigration enforcement in Minnesota that led to the deaths of two U.S. citizens, the commission also is discussing ways to safeguard all delegates and visitors to General Conference.

“We want every United Methodist to know that we are actively working to ensure that the General Conference experience will support the mental and physical well-being of participants to do the work of the Church,” the Rev. Aleze Fulbright, the General Conference secretary, said in a press statement.

During the commission’s April 17-18 online meeting, Fulbright and Sarah Dass, the General Conference business manager, outlined the steps their office is taking to enable as many of the 708 elected clergy and lay delegates as possible to meet safely and comfortably in Minneapolis. Elections of delegates are just beginning at United Methodist annual conferences around the world.

Both the decision to shorten General Conference and stick with Minneapolis result in part from financial considerations.

The commission is working within a \$10 million budget for an event that typically costs between \$12 million and \$14 million. The organizers are also working to make up for a \$1.8 million budget deficit inherited from multiple earlier General Conference sessions.

Shorter schedule

General Conference typically meets over a two-week period. The commission, at this point, has approved a framework for a schedule that spans nine days with more detailed programming decisions to come later.

The framework calls for opening worship at 3 p.m. U.S. Central time Monday, May 8, followed by adoption of the rules. The next three days will include orientation for delegates from Africa, Europe and the Philippines as well as meetings by the Standing Committee on Regional Conference Matters outside the U.S.A., and a new General Conference legislative committee that will deal solely with U.S. matters. The U.S. legislative committee will only be meeting at this General Conference. It will go away after the formation of the new U.S. Regional Conference.

Plenaries and other legislative sessions begin on Friday, May 12. As has been the pattern for recent General Conference sessions, Sunday, May 14 will be a day of worship and rest, and General Conference is set to complete its work at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 16.

Read full article at <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/planners-shorten-gc2028-discuss-minneapolis>.

Four church agencies propose unifying

By Heather Hahn

Excerpted and reprinted with permission of UM News

Four United Methodist general agencies announced April 17 that they plan to unify into a single organization.

At their individual spring meetings, the boards of Discipleship Ministries, Global Ministries, Higher Education and Ministry and United Methodist Communications each unanimously supported a framework to combine their ministries under one structure. United Methodist News is part of United Methodist Communications.

“The unification of these four agencies will allow us to better coordinate our mission and ministry for all levels of The United Methodist Church—from the local church to conferences and general church bodies,” said Dan Krause, the top executive of United Methodist Communications. “It also allows us to meet the changing needs of the denomination by being more nimble and aligned.”

To go forward, such a union will need the approval of the next General Conference, scheduled May 8-18, 2028, in Minneapolis. If approved, the unification would go into effect on Jan. 1, 2029.

With the four boards’ approval, the agencies can now begin drafting legislation that will go before the denomination’s top lawmaking assembly.

Read full article at <https://go.advocatesc.org/4agencies1>

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Obituaries.

Eloise McMeekin Clyburn

LEXINGTON—Eloise McMeekin Clyburn, wife of the Rev. David Clyburn Jr., died March 21, 2026. Rev. Clyburn is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held March 26 at Central UMC, Spartanburg.

Memorials may be made to the David A. Clyburn Sr. Memorial Scholarship, the Franklin and Mary McMeekin Memorial Scholarship, or the Louis Clyburn Scholarship, Spartanburg Methodist College, 1750 Powell Mill Road, Spartanburg, SC 29301.

Mrs. Clyburn is survived by her husband, daughter and two sons.

Hal Holland Crosswell Jr.

COLUMBIA—Dr. Hal Holland Crosswell Jr. died April 17, 2026.

For more than 50 years, Dr. Crosswell served as the Caribbean Coordinator for Medical and Ophthalmological Services for United Methodist Volunteers in Mission. He received the Michael C. Watson Award in 2001, and his work was chronicled in his book, “Eyes for Haiti” in 2024.

Funeral services were held April 24 at Shandon United Methodist Church.

Memorials may be made to Shandon UMC, 3407 Devine St., Columbia, SC 29205; or to the Haiti Eye Program of UVMIM-SC, c/o Conference Treasurer South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203.

Dr. Crosswell is survived by his wife, Kathryn Dorman Crosswell, daughter, three sons and stepdaughter.

Rev. James Ray Davis Sr.



Davis Sr.

GREENWOOD—The Rev. James Ray Davis Sr., a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died April 12, 2026.

Prior to his retirement in 2011, Rev. Davis served the Lebanon-Mount Bethel, Union Grove, Orrville, Westminster, Bells, Great Falls, Duncan Memorial-St. Mark,

Jackson-Bethel, Bogansville, Ebenezer-Old Johnsonville and Rehoboth charges. He served the Bethlehem (Greenwood) charge as a retired elder.

Funeral services were held April 15 at Blyth Funeral Home Chapel with burial in Oakbrook Memorial Park with military honors.

Memorials may be made to the Disabled American Veterans, 2194 Columbia Hwy. N., Aiken, SC 29805.

Rev. Davis is survived by his wife, Judith Davis, son and three daughters.

Rev. Roger Russell Dodds



Dodds

BLYTHEWOOD—The Rev. Roger Russell Dodds, a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died April 2, 2026.

Prior to his retirement in 2017, Dr. Dodds served the Columbia-Mount Pleasant, Smoaks Circuit, Bethel, Bethel-Dalzell, Beulah, Hickory Grove, Shiloh-Zoar, Union-McBee and Pine Grove-Epworth

charges.

A memorial service was held April 11 at Cedar Creek Baptist Church.

Memorials may be made to Cedar Creek Baptist Church, 1920 Cedar Creek Road, Blythewood, SC

29016.

Dr. Dodds is survived by his wife, Barbara Dodds, and three sons.

Sherman Francis Drummond

GREENVILLE—Sherman Francis Drummond, grandfather of Candace McClam, died March 26, 2026. Mrs. McClam is the wife of the Rev. Darren McClam, pastor of St. James United Methodist Church, Darlington.

Funeral services were held April 3 at Queen Street Baptist Church.

Mr. Drummond is survived by his wife, Maryann Drummond, three sons and two daughters.

Rev. Melvin Wilber Flail Jr.



Flail Jr.

LAMAR—The Rev. Melvin Wilbur Flail Jr., a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died April 15, 2026.

Prior to his retirement in 2015, Rev. Flail served the Main Street-Pleasant Hill, Quinby, Emma Gray Memorial, Ebenezer-Old Johnsonville and Lamar charges. He

served the West Darlington Charge as a retired elder.

Funeral services were held April 19 at Lamar UMC with a private burial.

Memorials may be made to Lamar UMC, P.O. Box 555, Lamar, SC 29069.

Rev. Flail is survived by his wife, Joan Stauffer Flail, and two daughters.

Rev. Carlos Owen Gardner Jr.



Gardner Jr.

ROCK HILL—The Rev. Carlos Owen Gardner Jr., a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died March 25, 2026.

Prior to his retirement in 2002, Rev. Gardner served the Murrells Inlet, Limestone Street, Hemingway-First, Winnsboro, Orangeburg-St. Andrews, Manning, Main

Street, John Wesley, Socastee, First-Bennettsville and St. Luke (Rock Hill) charges.

A memorial service was held April 1 at Westminster Presbyterian Chapel, Rock Hill.

Memorials may be made to Westminster Towers, 1330 India Hook Road, Rock Hill, SC 29732.

Rev. Gardner is survived by his wife, Janice Gardner, two sons and daughter.

Rev. John Emory Holler Jr.



Holler Jr.

COLUMBIA—The Rev. John Emory Holler Jr., a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died March 27, 2026.

Prior to his retirement in 2013, Rev. Holler served the Main Street Associate (Columbia), Norway Charge, Latimer Memorial, Trenholm Road Associate, Shady

Grove, Trenholm Road Associate and Minister of Counseling-Trenholm Road charges. He served as president and CEO of Epworth Children's Home from 2006-2020.

Funeral services were held April 2 at Trenholm Road UMC with burial in the Lynchburg Presbyterian Church Cemetery, Lynchburg.

Memorials may be made to Epworth Children's Home, P.O. Box 50466, Columbia, SC 29205; or to Trenholm Road UMC, 3401 Trenholm Road, Columbia,

SC 29204.

Rev. Holler is survived by his daughter and son.

Kermit Mack Long

LEXINGTON—Kermit Mack Long, husband of the Rev. Sharon “Shay” Long, died March 15, 2026. Rev. Long is the pastor of Mill Creek United Methodist Church, Columbia.

A memorial service was held April 4 at Cayce UMC, Cayce.

Memorials may be made to Mill Creek UMC, 1041 Old Garners Ferry Road, Columbia, SC 29209-9406.

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

Rev. James Douglas Marchant



Marchant

HARLEYVILLE—The Rev. James Douglas Marchant, a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died April 7, 2026.

Prior to his retirement in 2018, Rev. Marchant served the Smoaks Circuit, Cades-Cameron, Kingstreet Circuit and Rowesville charges. He served the Walterboro

Charge as a retired local pastor.

Funeral services were held April 10 at Indian Field Methodist Church, St. George, with burial with Masonic Rites in the church cemetery.

Memorials may be made to Indian Field Methodist Church, 2030 Highway 15 N., St. George, SC 29477.

Rev. Marchant is survived by his wife, Shirley Marchant, and three daughters.

Rev. John Allen Sellers



Sellers

FLORENCE—The Rev. John Allen Sellers, a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died April 7, 2026.

Prior to his retirement in 2003, Rev. Sellers served the Mars Bluff, St. Paul-St. Michael and Lynchburg Parish charges.

Funeral services were held April 14 at Cumberland UMC with burial in Florence National Cemetery.

Rev. Sellers is survived by his wife, Carina Bradley Sellers, and two daughters.

Anna Yelton Sistare

INMAN—Anna Yelton Sistare, wife of the Rev. Bart Sistare, died April 16, 2026. Rev. Sistare is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Services will be held at a later date.

Memorials may be made to Inman UMC, 27 Bishop St., Inman, SC 29349.

Mrs. Sistare is survived by her husband, son and daughter.

John Brandon Brantwood Trussell III

HOPKINS—John Brandon Brantwood Trussell III, father of Allison Trussell, died April 7, 2026. Ms. Trussell is the assistant editor of the *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate*.

A private graveside service was held April 10 followed by a memorial service at the chapel of Thompson Funeral Home.

Memorials may be made to Mill Creek UMC, 1041 Old Garners Ferry Road, Columbia, SC 29209-9406.

Mr. Trussell is survived by his wife, Kathleen Duffy Trussell, daughter and two sons.

‘Punching holes in the darkness’: Remembering John Holler

By Dan O'Mara (excerpted)

In the life of the church, there are servants whose ministry quietly shapes generations.

The Rev. John Emory Holler Jr. was one of those rare leaders—pastor, mentor, advocate and friend—whose life bore witness to the love of Christ in ways that will continue to echo across the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church and far

beyond.

Holler—who pastored local churches for three decades before his 15-year tenure as president and CEO of Epworth Children's Home—died March 27. He was 78.

Those who knew him best describe a man whose presence carried both warmth and conviction: a pastor who listened deeply, expected the best of others and never lost sight of God's

grace at work in every person.

The Rev. Ken Nelson, superintendent of the Orangeburg District, has a unique perspective on Epworth Children's Home, having been a resident there during a difficult time in his youth and now as a member of the Epworth Board of Trustees.

He remembers Holler as someone whose faith was lived out in action.

“John Holler was a man who

punched holes in the darkness of every space that he entered so that light and joy flooded the space,” Nelson said. “Whether he was advocating for the well-being of children in South Carolina or Africa, or tending the spiritual well-being of thousands of folks across this state, his was a life that made a difference.

Read full article at <https://go.advocatesc.org/john-holler>.

History.



Historical Society by the Rev. Joseph D. Kovas

Epworth League

Congregations throughout our connection and in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church support ministries for youth and young people. An organization in our tradition that focuses on youth ministry is the United Methodist Youth Fellowship, or UMYF for short.

The history of the UMYF comes from a combination of histories and mergers. Long before there was even an MYF (the pre-1968 organization), there was the Epworth League. The Epworth League was formed in 1906 as the merger of five separate youth organizations. The mission of the Epworth League was “to promote an earnest, intelligent, practical and loyal spiritual life in the young people of our church, to aid them in constant growth in grace and in the attainment of purity of heart.” Both the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South had mirroring organizations of the Epworth League. One of the main focuses of the Epworth League and their local chapters was to cultivate a spirit of missions among youth people. Epworth League members supported the work of raising literacy in Appalachia and focused on the work of places such as the Bethlehem Centers and Wesley Houses.

The Epworth League was dissolved with the creation of the Methodist Youth Fellowship in 1939 with the merger of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Episcopal Church, South and the Methodist Protestant Church. Older Youth (18-24) in the MYF were eligible to participate in

both at home mission and international mission experiences. Among these experiences, young people could participate in I3's (India), J3's (Japan) and A3's (Africa). These experiences were the predecessors of our Global Mission Fellows. Programs such as the Peace Corp were modeled after the MYF's international and home mission programs. Before 1968, young adults were considered a part of the MYF. In 1968, the new United Methodist Youth Fellowship revised its age requirements to separate young adults from youth under 18.

Today we continue to invite youth and young people into mission and ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ through different ministry opportunities. The April edition of our *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate* highlighted and celebrated the different opportunities churches and pastors are creating across the state for youth and young people to be in mission and ministry today. Among these opportunities included a trip to Emory University's Candler School of Theology to help young adults explore their vocational callings and the planning for an intergenerational worship service for this year's annual conference.

Praise be to God for all in South Carolina who are equipping our youth and young people to be the hands and feet of Jesus today for the transformation of the world for Christ.

Kovas is president of the Conference Historical Society and pastors First United Methodist Church, Cheraw.



From the Archives by Dr. Phillip Stone

Bishop Paul B. Kern

Often in the early 20th century, bishops served shorter tenures with conference, and also served more than one conference. Some of these bishops actually had a profound influence on the denomination, and among those was Bishop Paul Kern, who was in South Carolina from 1934 to 1938.

Paul Bentley Kern was born in Alexandria, Virginia, and studied for a year at Randolph-Macon College, where his father was a professor. Transferring to Vanderbilt, he earned his bachelor's and divinity degrees at the university and joined the Tennessee Conference. Kern served churches in Nashville, Bell-buckle and Murfreesboro before taking a position as a member of the founding faculty of Southern Methodist University. In 1920, he became dean of the school of theology at SMU, a position he held for six years. He returned to the pastorate in 1926, serving the Travis Park church in San Antonio, a church that Edwin Mouzon, another bishop with South Carolina connections, had served.

In 1930, the General Conference elected Kern to the episcopacy, and he was assigned to the denomination's missionary work in East Asia. The new bishop was 48 years old. In 1934, he was assigned to the 10th episcopal district, which included four conferences in North and South Carolina. The *Advocate* published words of welcome to the new bishop, noting they were certain he was the leader we needed at this time. The *Advocate* also pleaded with the new bishop to make his episcopal residence in Columbia, noting that the conference had not had a resident bishop in over 25 years. The plea didn't quite land.

Bishop Kern met his first conference in South Carolina in November, when he presided over the Upper South Carolina Conference at Bethel, Spartanburg. Two weeks later, he met the South Carolina Conference in Kingstree. The conference celebrated the sesquicentennial of Methodism in America with an address by Wofford President Henry Nelson Snyder. The *Advocate* later wrote that Bishop Kern was the highlight of the conference, that the conference appreciated the impact of his personality and spirit. Everyone, according to the *Advocate*, was delighted with his “fine and delicate humor.”

He challenged the conference, however, with these words: “The strength of Methodism is not in its polity or doctrine, but in the power and reality of Christian experience. ... There's no telling what might happen if every preacher went back with a new heart warmed. But many have a complacent satisfaction with a very mediocre experience.”

Bishop Kern left the Carolinas in 1938 for Tennessee, and he also superintended the Florida and Cuba conferences. He was one of the leaders in Methodist reunification, and given his experience as an educator, he helped in some of the necessary work of creating new general church agencies from the existing ones, in particular with the Board of Education and the Epworth League. He served as president of the Council of Bishops, was a delegate to the World Methodist Council in 1948 and gave the episcopal address at the 1952 General Conference.

Bishop Kern served as an active bishop for 22 years, retiring in 1952 at age 70. He died only a year later, in Nashville. His obituary in the New York Times noted that he had served on most of the denomination's general boards.

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

A look back.



A look back

Here's a copy of the front page of the May 1926 *Advocate* with a Mother's Day poem.

Clipping courtesy of Dr. Phillip Stone



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New Media Kit



Adult Lessons by the Rev. Arthur Holt

Acts of the Spirit

May 3
Connecting Justice and Peace
Lesson Scripture: Psalm 85:1-13
Background text: Psalm 85
Key Verse: Psalm 85:10, "Faithful love and truth have met; righteousness and peace have kissed."

This psalm was probably written in its current form in the years after the exiles had returned from their Babylonian captivity. Therefore, there was much to be happy about! God had once again been kind to the Promised Land people by changing Israel's circumstances for the better. God had forgiven them and covered all their sins.

But all around them, the people saw that there was still so much to do. The Temple was destroyed and needed to be rebuilt. But even more important, the sins of the people still needed to be addressed—especially their neglect of the poor and their failure to be faithful to their Covenant with God. What the people said they believed needed to be more closely reflected in how they lived each day so that God's glory would again live in their land. The psalmist said, "Don't let the people return to foolish ways."

We often talk about how justice and mercy must go hand in hand. The psalmist was encouraged that this process had started. Love and truth had already met! Righteousness and peace had even kissed! These facts encouraged the writer.

We United Methodists often talk about salvation and sanctification. We are saved, but we are still in the process of being saved to where we are more Christlike, especially becoming able to love others unconditionally as we have been loved by God in Christ. God has, indeed, been kind to us by changing our circumstances for the better. God has forgiven us and covered all our sins. But we still have so much to do. Our beliefs and our actions need to live in harmony. Love and truth must meet. We must not return to our foolish hateful ways. Righteous-

ness and peace must kiss. Let us move on toward sanctification!

May 10
Letting God Be God
Lesson Scripture: Psalm 89:1-4, 15-28, 38-41, 49
Background Text: Psalm 89
Key Verse: Psalm 89:2, "Your loyal love is rightly built—forever!"

When interpreted in the light of Christ's coming, Psalm 89 is one of the most wonderful Messianic songs in the Hebrew Testament. It begins with God saying that God has made a covenant with King David, "I will establish your offspring forever. He will cry out to me: 'You are my father, my God, the rock of my salvation.'" It then says that God will make him the one born first and that God's covenant with that offspring will last forever. I was reminded immediately of Colossians 1:18 where Paul called Jesus the firstborn to rise from the dead, marking a new era of resurrection for all of humanity. Calling God "father" reminds us that this was Jesus' favorite name for God, and it echoes what we confess in the Apostles' Creed that God and Jesus, with the Holy Spirit, are one Trinitarian God.

I also see something about the nature of God's love for us. God does not love us because we deserve it but because God has this eternal love for us already. God love for us is "rightly built" to last forever. God's faithful love is established—not on earth where sin and decay might ruin it—but in heaven for all eternity. Righteousness, being in right-standing with God, uplifts us because we are put right by God. Daily we can walk in the light of God's presence!

To complete the Messianic picture so that we know to whom the psalmist is referring, he says in verse 38, "But you, God, have rejected and despised him," echoing the suffering servant passages in Isaiah 53. The psalmist even wonders if God could have cancelled God's covenant with King David. But God assures us that "I will always

guard my loyal love toward him. My covenant with him will last forever."

May 17
How Do You Receive the Holy Spirit?
Lesson Scripture: Acts 1:1-11
Background Text: Acts 1:1-26
Key Verse: Acts 1:4, "While they were eating together, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised."

A Presbyterian missionary who was one of my early mentors often talked about "waiting upon the Lord." By this he meant I was to spend time in prayer, study, worship and Christian fellowship, preparing myself for the task that God was calling me to. Sometimes there was a battle on the inside that needed to be won before I ventured outside to face the actual problem. I learned to appreciate this spiritual discipline.

Jesus told the Apostles to wait in Jerusalem for God to send a Holy Spirit baptism upon them, and I am sure that Jesus intended for them to "wait upon the Lord" using those spiritual disciplines. During their fellowship time, they decided to replace Judas with someone who had been with them the entire time they had followed Jesus. Two men were nominated; Matthias was elected. The team, thus reorganized, went to work preparing their hearts for the task of going to all the world to tell people the good news about Jesus. Then they waited for power to be given to them to do that task, but none of them really knew exactly what to expect.

This lesson asks us "How do you receive the Holy Spirit?" The first part of the answer is that we are to expect God to give us the Holy Spirit, to flood our souls with love and power. The second part of the answer is that we are to wait upon God, to give ourselves to prayer, study, worship and Christian fellowship so that we are preparing ourselves for the Spirit's coming upon us. Sometimes the gift comes to us in a flood, as it did to the Apostles in Acts 2. Other times, that gift comes to us gradually as we walk daily with Christ. The Spirit comes to those who wait!

May 24
An Unexpected Invitation
Lesson Scripture: Acts 2:1-13
Background Text: Acts 2
Key Verse: Acts 2:12, "Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?'"

"People in Jerusalem from all over the world, you are all invited to a meeting here on the Day of Pentecost at nine o'clock in the morning to learn all that God has done for you through Jesus of Nazareth."

In essence, this was the invitation God was giving to everyone in Jerusalem 50 days after the first Easter when God poured out the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, turning them from timid followers into bold preachers who

About the Author

Holt is a retired South Carolina United Methodist pastor living in Boiling Springs. He is also the author of three books from the Advocate Press. Find them all at <https://www.advocatepress.com>.

could proclaim the good news about Jesus in languages they had never learned. "What does this mean?" they wondered. This gave Simon Peter a starting place for this first ever Christian sermon.

What was being seen on the street that morning was what the prophet Joel had predicted. God's Spirit had been poured out upon everybody as evidence that God had made Jesus both Lord and Messiah. And since the Spirit could not be given before our sins had been fully atoned for, the coming of the Spirit also meant that all of our sins had been forgiven. Now everyone who repented and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins would also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. That promise was for everybody—and also for their children and for all who were far off—all whom the Lord our God would call.

Many people—3,000 we are told—responded to what they had witnessed and to Peter's explanation of those things that day, and the church was born.

These people wanted the apostles to teach them all about Jesus. They willingly pooled all of their resources so that all needy people were taken care of and so that others would come to believe in Christ.

And more did come to believe—every day!

May 31
Repentance: A Lifelong Discipline
Lesson Scripture: Acts 2:29-41
Background text: Acts 2
Key Verse: Acts 2:38a, "Peter replied, 'Change your hearts and lives.'"

We tend to make the idea of repentance much easier than it really is. To some of us, it means to feel sorry about something only after we get caught! To others it means that our conscience makes us feel so bad and we feel so sorry that we have to ask God to forgive us before we can feel better. Rarely does our conscience drive us to make a plan to do better, to seek help to actually change our feelings and our attitudes, and to make our actions better in the future. That last description is much closer to what Peter was saying when he encouraged the people to repent.

A friend of mine describes himself during his young adult years as one who was racially prejudiced, anti-Semitic and a misogynist. Since he is totally different today, I expected that he has worked diligently over time to change his attitudes. But he told me that we all have the power within ourselves to choose what our attitudes and our behaviors are going to be. Therefore, one day when he had decided to be a more faithful follower of Jesus and Jesus' way of living, he made the choice to be loving and to act more lovingly toward the people he had previously hated.

That is true repentance, if I have ever heard it.

Martin Luther said that Christians are "Simul Justus et Peccator." That Latin phrase means that we are both "righteous and a sinner at the same time." We are always right with God (justified) because of what God has done for us in Christ while at the same time we are still sinful human beings who are always in need of constant repentance.

We are "born again," but we still have a lot of growing up to do.

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Happenings.

Event Calendar.

April

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

May

Asian Pacific Heritage Month Christian Home Month

May 2—Shower of Hope Community Baby Shower and Resource Expo, Union UMC, Irmo, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Contact Rev. Faye Jones, faye@unionirmo.org or 803-781-3013.

May 2—LSM School (Greenville District), Memorial UMC, Greer, 1-4:30 p.m., \$35.

May 4—Bishop Leonard Fairley's Lowcountry Book Signing, New Life UMC, Walterboro, 6 p.m.

May 7—Midlands Gives

May 7—National Day of Prayer

May 9—LSM School (Greenville District), Memorial UMC, Greer, 1-4:30 p.m., \$35.

May 10—Mother's Day

May 10—Festival of the Christian Home

May 10—Epworth Mother's Day Offering

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

May 14—Ascension of the Lord

May 14—Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry Annual Meet-

ing, Joy Classroom, Union UMC, Irmo, 10 a.m.-Noon.

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

May 16—LSM School (Greenville District), Memorial UMC, Greer, 1-4:30 p.m., \$35.

May 17—Ascension Sunday

May 18-22—SpiritShore, Kingston Plantation and Resort, North Myrtle Beach. <https://www.umcsc.org/spiritshoreregistration>

May 24—Pentecost, Heritage Sunday, Aldersgate Day

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

May 25—Memorial Day (United Methodist Center closed)

May 30—LSM Advanced Class (Greenwood District), Central UMC, Newberry, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Greenwood-District-Special-LSM-Opportunity.pdf>

June

June 6—LSM Advanced Class (Greenwood District), Central UMC, Newberry, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Greenwood-District-Special-LSM-Opportunity.pdf>

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

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



Children's Sermon by the Rev. Meg Cook

See the Rev. Meg Cook's video at <https://go.advocatesc.org/ascension-video> for a visual of how it's done.

What we believe

Date: Sunday, May 17 (Ascension of the Lord)

Scripture: Luke 24:44-53

Time frame: 3-5 minutes

Supplies:

- Foam core board (or sturdy cardstock)
- Printed or drawn picture of Jesus (full body)
- Scissors and tape or glue
- Two drinking straws
- String or thin rope (about 6-8 feet), NOT yarn. I used clothesline rope.
- Tape
- A high anchor point (balcony, railing, or tall doorway)

Before you do the sermon: How to Make "Climbing Jesus" (Leader Prep)

(See video at <https://go.advocatesc.org/ascension-video> for a visual of how it's done.)

1) Create the figure: Draw or print a simple full-body image of Jesus and glue it onto foam core. Cut it out.

2) Attach the straws: Tape two straws diagonally across the back in slight "V" shape (like arms reaching upward). These act like guides.

3) Thread the rope: Run the rope through both straws so the figure can slide upward when the rope is pulled alternately. The loop end should be at the top of

Jesus and the strings hang below.

4) Anchor the rope: Secure the top of the rope, the loop, to a high place (balcony railing, loft, or doorway frame).

5) Test the motion: Pull one side of the rope, then the other, alternating hands. The figure should "climb" upward in a jerky, step-like motion. (If you've ever seen a classic climbing bear toy, this works the same way—simple mechanics, big impact. I made mine oversized; Jesus is about 2 feet tall and 1.5 feet wide.)

Children's Sermon Script:

Do: Welcome the children and gather them where they can see both you and the rope set-up.

Say: Good morning, friends! Today we are talking about something amazing that happened after Jesus rose from the dead: the resurrection. Does anyone remember what we celebrated a few weeks ago? (Pause.) Yes—Easter! Jesus is alive! But the story doesn't stop at Easter.

Jesus spent time with his friends, teaching them and reminding them about God's love.

(Start slowly pulling one side and then the other of the ropes.) And then, one day, something surprising happened. (Begin slowly pulling the rope so Jesus starts to rise.) The Bible says Jesus led his disciples to Bethany,

lifted up his hands and blessed them ... (continue raising Jesus steadily) ... and while he was blessing the disciples, Jesus was lifted up. (Pause slightly for effect.) Up and up and up he went! (Let the children react. Keep climbing.) Can you imagine watching your friend, your teacher Jesus, going up into the sky?

When Jesus ascended, he wasn't leaving his friends all alone. (Stop climbing once Jesus is high/near the top.) He had already promised them something very important: that God's Spirit would be with them. And even though they couldn't see Jesus the same way anymore, Jesus was still with them.

Scripture says the disciples didn't stay in Bethany sad. They went back to Jerusalem with great joy! Because they knew Jesus was still with them and that God had given them a job: to share love, hope and good news with the world. We'll hear more about that next week on Pentecost! So when we think about Jesus going up, up, up (look up toward the figure), we remember that Jesus isn't gone. Jesus is with us everywhere.

Prayer: Dear God (echo), we love you (echo). Jesus is always with us (echo). Help us share your love (echo) everywhere we go (echo). Amen (echo)."

Cook, pastor of Grace UMC, Columbia, has two children's books from the Advocate Press: <https://advocatesc.org/books>.

Reconciling Ministries AC breakfast set for June 9

By popular demand, the South Carolina Reconciling Ministries Network will hold its Annual Conference Breakfast again this year.

SCRMN will hold their breakfast on Tuesday, June 9, at Open Hearts UMC, located at 2703 Augusta St. in Greenville. The meal will begin at 7:15 a.m., and the program will include a panel discussion about inclusion ministries.

The cost is \$20. Seating is limited at this venue, so register early at <https://www.scrmn.org>.

SCRMN will also have a table in the exhibition area where people can stop by and pick up a "Love Like Jesus" pin.

They are also planning to host a silent auction. Items include a beautiful quilt, golf lessons and more. The Advocate will have more information soon.

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Jobs

Campus Minister

Orangeburg Wesley Foundation seeks a full-time campus minister to lead a collaborative, inclusive, and missional United Methodist ministry at Claflin University and South Carolina State University, as well as young adults from other local institutions of higher education.

Ideal candidate will be Christian (United Methodist preferred), hold a Master of Divinity or equivalent, and preferably a local Pastor, Provisional Elder, or Ordained Elder (Deacons and Deacon-track also considered).

Interested candidates should provide the following credentials in a PDF by email to sywhite@umcsc.org or by calling Rev. Larry McCutcheon at 803-536-5385 before Friday, May 1, 2026:

- A list of 2-3 references: academic, personal, pastoral, and/or professional (at least one professional). Please provide Name, Title, Phone, E-mail, and Relationship to the applicant.
- Resume and Cover Letter
- Your response to the two prompts (500 words or less each): 1) Your vision for campus ministry with young adults, and 2) why do you feel you might be called to be the campus minister of The Wesley of Orangeburg?

A review of applications will begin in May.

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REVOLUTION

From Page 1

Revolution gathered at The DoubleTree Conference Center. That meant, for the first time, youth groups participating in Revolution could stay on-site.

The Rev. Jason Cook, senior pastor of Fellowship Bible Church in Roswell, Georgia, was the featured speaker each session, and Mary-Michael Brenner, creative director at Home Church in Roswell, Georgia, led worship. Both lifted up the year's theme, "Seek First," centered on Matthew 6:33.

Lynch said this year's Revolution reflected great spiritual teaching and worship. He said the pinnacle was the moment when the kid had the chance to respond to a call to ministry and discipleship.

"Those moments have the opportunity to change a life, and it's so important to remember how critical that is," Lynch said, noting the success of the event was in no small part thanks to the Revolution Design Team, along with volunteers and advisory members.

Design Team members include Rev. Maggie Cantey (Shandon UMC, Columbia), the Rev. Edward McCutcheon (Furman Wesley), Thomas Walsh (Union UMC, Irmo), the Rev. Heather Humphries (United Methodist

See all 180 photos from Revolution!
Visit <https://go.advocatesc.org/revolution-photos-2026>

Church of the Covenant, Boiling Springs), Samantha Williams (Wesley UMC, Columbia), the Rev. Rebecca Rowell (Moncks Corner UMC, Moncks Corner) and Renee Patton (Francis Burns UMC, Columbia).

Revolution began in 2010 to provide a place for young people in South Carolina to have a powerful, life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ. For more on Revolution: <http://scmyp.org/revolution>.



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



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