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Mill Creek turns 225

Bishop Fairley brings a word on courage as small church marks more than 200 years of faithful service to community. See Page 2.



Connecting Children

More than 60 people from 12 churches across the state gathered for the launch of the Connecting Children initiative. See Page 6.



Keep on trucking

Children and adults alike enjoy Lawrence Chapel UMC's annual Touch-a-Truck outreach event. See Page 14.

Visit our new website:



Preaching with power



Photo by Jessica Brodie

Attendees blow bubbles as they embrace self-care through play, led by Minister Christal Heyward.

Retreat helps leaders grow, restore, reconnect

By Jessica Brodie

MYRTLE BEACH—Church leaders from South and North Carolina gathered at Kingston Plantation last month for five days devoted to the power of the preached word.

The Carolina Black Clergy Leadership Retreat brought together pastors hungry to learn new ways to fulfill their calling in a

way that creates engaged, empowered and informed disciples.

Convener Regina Moore opened with a heartfelt prayer, acknowledging that many in the room were tired and beaten down from the ways of the world. She asked God to restore all gathered for the retreat, “That we might ascend and go higher and higher and higher through the power of

the preached word.”

And that’s exactly what happened May 18-23 as church leaders gathered day after day to hear wisdom from a host of men and women eager to help others understand new ways to tap into the power of God Almighty as they ignite hearts and lives for Christ directly in their communities.

For it is through preaching that we can take our role

as proclaimers and offer peace and justice to a world in need.

In his opening remarks, South Carolina Resident Bishop Leonard Fairley recalled how the late Bishop Joseph B. Bethea would ask one critical question without fail: “Can they preach?”

“We’re in desperate need in this world of moral

See “Retreat,” Page 6

Churches sue to leave UMC yet retain property

By Jessica Brodie

Ten churches have filed a lawsuit in the South Carolina Supreme Court, seeking to break away from The United Methodist Church yet keep their church property.

The lawsuit, The Methodist Church of Simpsonville, et al. v. The South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, et al., was filed April 14 by The Methodist Church of Simpsonville, its pastor the Rev. Michael Smith, its church council chair

Heidi Meek Medlin and nine other churches, all having removed the “United” from their name.

Those churches are Jackson Grove Methodist Church, Calhoun Falls Methodist Church, Good Shepherd Methodist Church, Trinity Methodist Church of Lancaster, Aldersgate Methodist Church, Boiling Springs Methodist Church, Fort Lawn Methodist Church, Panola Methodist Church and Dickson Methodist Church.

See “Churches,” Page 7

S.C. readies for Annual Conference

By Jessica Brodie

GREENVILLE—South Carolina United Methodists will head to the Greenville Center June 8-11 to pray, worship and conduct the business of the church.

“I pray each of you will come to Greenville with a new sense of hope and a willingness to plant spiritual gardens, and see what new things God has in store for the People called United Methodist in the South Carolina Annual Conference,” South Carolina’s Resident Bishop Leonard Fairley wrote in his Annual Conference welcome letter, urging attendees to receive and give witness to God’s presence through holy conferencing.

See “Annual Conference,” Page 7



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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.

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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.

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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.

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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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Bishop brings word on courage as Mill Creek marks 225 years

By Allison Trussell

COLUMBIA—Mill Creek United Methodist Church gathered May 18 to celebrate 225 years of faithful service to the Lykesland and surrounding community.

Friends and family greeted each other with joy and welcomed visitors to the morning service.

“You have something I hope you never lose,” said Bishop Leonard Fairley. “A sweet, sweet spirit!”

He noticed that spirit when he entered the church and as he watched people greet one another. He asked the congregation to stand and sing the hymn with him.

When Fairley visits churches, he said he looks at the church’s web site. The welcome statement on Mill Creek’s site echoes the sweet spirit that he witnessed prior to the service, he said, encouraging the congregation to continue having it.

Fairley took his sermon from Joshua 1:9: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your



The Rev. Shay Long with Bishop Fairley.

God will be with you wherever you go.” Calling the celebration an amazing testament to the people who started this faith community, Fairley noted, “You don’t get to 225 years without being strong and courageous. You have a deep trust that God is with you wherever you go.”

Because of that trust, the congregation has followed its shepherd and has shepherded its people through times of joy and times of tribulation. Mill Creek, he said, has learned that lesson and mod-

eled it for 225 years. He then recalled a story about trapeze artists. While the audience oohs and aahs over the flyers, the real star is the catcher. The secret is that the flyer must trust his catcher and wait to be caught, while the catcher is the one doing all the work. The worst thing for a flyer to do is to try and catch the catcher.

“For 225 years, somebody has trusted that we can fly with the catcher being Jesus Christ. It doesn’t matter the ups or the downs, somebody believes in the divine catcher.

“Trust the catcher,” the bishop said. “That’s what I came by to tell you.”

On May 18, members, friends and guests celebrated the stories of the people who believed that God is the divine catcher.

“For 225 years, somebody has trusted, somebody has believed,” he said.

Lunch followed in the fellowship hall, where everyone was encouraged to take home a coaster tile with the church image and a sunflower seed pod.

The Rev. Shay Long is pastor.

New kids’ book tells story of Salkehatchie through a child’s eyes

COLUMBIA—A new book by South Carolina United Methodist Kathy Hart tells the story of Salkehatchie Summer Service through the eyes of a child.

Hart is a member of Windsor United Methodist Church.

In “Can Lizzy Help?” sometimes, being too young is no fair. Lizzy isn’t old enough to go with her big brother, Billy, and the rest of the church youth to Salkehatchie Summer Service, and she’s mad. All the



big kids will get to spend a whole week repairing people’s houses and having lots of fun, and Lizzy feels left out.

Then her dad teaches her how to use a hammer, measuring tape, paint, and much more as they do a special building project of their own that helps their neighborhood.

Even though Lizzy is too young for Salkehatchie, she’s not too little to help people.

This story shares two of Kathy Hart’s passion projects: Salkehatchie Summer Service and the Little Free Library. For more than 30 years, Kathy and her husband, Ivey, and family have participated in Salkehatchie Summer Service camps. She knows from personal experience with her family how miserable it is for siblings younger than 14 to wait their turn to attend a Salkehatchie camp.

With its beginnings in the summer of 1978, Salkehatchie Summer Service LLC, a work mission project connected with the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, offers a weeklong opportunity for teenagers and adults to travel to small towns in South Carolina to repair the homes of the elderly, the disabled, and financially struggling families. Campers pay for the privilege of being God’s hands and feet as they repair roofs, plumbing, floors, ceilings, decks, and stairs. For more information, visit https://www.salkehatchie.org.

During COVID-19, Kathy and her husband built small carpentry projects to stay busy. One project was building a chartered Little Free Library for their neighborhood. For more information, visit https://littlefreelibrary.org.

The book is available as a paperback (\$20) and ebook (\$7.99) from the Advocate Press at https://advocatesc.org/store/books/can-lizzy-help.

Advocate honored with three additional journalism awards

The *Advocate* has been honored with three more journalism awards this spring, these from the Religion Communicators Council in their 2025 DeRose-Hinkhouse Memorial Awards.

At the RCC annual meeting in April in Salt Lake City, Utah, the 189-year-old newspaper was honored as a category winner, Article or Story—Single Work, for “What Happened at General Conference” (June 2024), by Jessica Brodie and a category winner, Cover or Feature Item—Single

Work, for “A Church and Then Some” (March 2024), by Brodie.

The *Advocate* also received a certificate of appreciation in Periodicals—Newspapers, Single Work, for the overall publication.

The DeRose-Hinkhouse Memorial Awards are given annually to active members of the media who demonstrate excellence in religious communications and public relations.

The *Advocate* has won more than 150 journalism excellence awards during its tenure.

Churches in prayer after teen shot in police encounter

By Jessica Brodie

BERKELEY COUNTY—Prayers and mourning continue this month after the death of a teenager at the hands of police.

Tyren Jerome Kinloch, 17, was the grandson of the Rev. Stephanie Stafford, pastor of Bluff Road United Methodist Church, Columbia, and grandnephew of the Rev. Geneva Stafford, pastor of Francis Burns UMC, Columbia.

According to the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, their team is investigating the officer-involved shooting, which occurred April 22 in Berkeley County. The Berkeley County Sheriff’s Office requested the SLED investigation. SLED reported that during a traffic stop, a teenager got out of a stopped vehicle and ran. During a chase, the deputy fired. The teen, Tyren, was shot and transported to the hospital, where he was pronounced deceased.

SLED said the incident is the 15th officer-involved shooting in South Carolina this year and the second this year for the Berkeley County Sheriff’s Office.

In his obituary, Tyren was described as having a smile “like the sun breaking into the day, a grin that could chase every shadow away.”

He leaves behind his mother, Kylie Kinloch; sisters Ky’Asia, Brianna, Mahogany, Taniyah, Erica, Venetia and Tiemeisha; brothers Cedric and Sharona; grandparents, nephews, aunts, uncles, grandaunts and host of cousins, others relatives and friends.

“We pray for peace, justice, understanding, and God’s grace and mercy as the Stafford family journeys through this most difficult time,” said the Rev. Fran M. Elrod, Columbia District superintendent.

The SLED investigation continues.



Tyren J. Kinloch

A legacy of inclusivity and faith

Columbia College celebrates grand opening of historic College Place

COLUMBIA—Columbia College and the Midlands community came together March 21 to celebrate the grand opening of College Place, formerly College Place United Methodist Church.

The site is a historic landmark that has been repurposed to serve as the new home for the college’s Division of Education and as a gathering hub for students, faculty and local residents.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony, held in front of the newly renovated building, marked a new chapter in its history—one that honors its rich legacy of faith, diversity and service while embracing its future as a hub for education and community engagement.

“For more than a century, College Place United Methodist Church has been a beacon of faith and inclusivity in Columbia,” said Dr. John H. Dozier, president of Columbia College. “Its transformation into an educational and community space reflects the very spirit of this institution—a commitment to service, learning and creating opportunities for all.”

Following the ribbon-cutting, guests gathered inside the chapel for a brief program featuring remarks from Dozier, City Councilwoman Tina Herbert and Board of Trustees Chair Ben Rex, who reflected on the building’s legacy



UMC leaders gathered with the college and community for the opening of College Place.

and its new role in shaping future generations of educators and leaders. A reception provided an opportunity to connect, explore the space and celebrate the meaningful transition of this historic landmark.

Founded in 1854, Columbia College is one of four S.C. UMC colleges.

A legacy of inclusivity and faith

Originally established more than a century ago, College Place UMC became known for its welcoming and diverse congregation, which embraced members from all walks of life. The

church fostered outreach programs such as childcare for homeless children, a mediation center and support groups for domestic violence survivors and individuals in recovery.

The church has also long been a cherished symbol for many alumni of Columbia College, who recall its significant role in the college’s history with fondness. It served as a gathering space after the devastating campus fire of 1964. It later became a beloved venue for weddings, baptisms and other special milestones celebrated by students, alumni and the greater community.

Through the years, the church remained a steadfast presence in the Midlands until it closed in 2022.

“The spirit of College Place Church has always been about bringing people together,” said the Rev. Fadetra Boyd, chaplain and director of spiritual life at Columbia College. “This space will continue that mission, serving as a place where education, dialogue and community engagement thrive.”

A bright future

The building’s transition to Columbia College ownership will continue the tradition of inclusivity and service. The renovated space will serve as the home for the college’s Division of Education, providing classrooms, offices, collaborative spaces and resources for students pursuing careers in teaching and leadership. Additionally, the space will be open for community use, ensuring it remains a welcoming place for engagement and dialogue.

“As we look ahead, we honor the legacy of the place and the countless lives it has touched,” said Dr. Tracy West, dean of the Division of Education at the college. “This is more than a building—it is a symbol of transformation, opportunity and the enduring power of education and community.”

Belin Memorial UMC embraces prayer, community service and showing God’s presence through the beauty of nature

MURRELLS INLET—The year 2025 has been a very special one for Belin Memorial United Methodist Church.

It started with the Centennial Celebration Jan. 19, where the 1925 sanctuary location was marked with potted live oaks. These trees were donated by congregation members and have been planted throughout the Belin Memorial UMC campus to commemorate the centennial and as a living acknowledgement of the persons to be remembered or honored.

In February, a large group of Belin Memorial UMC members traveled half an hour to Carolina Forest near Myrtle Beach for a special communion service at Joseph B. Bethea UMC. The sanctuary of Joseph B. Bethea UMC was the sanctuary of Belin Memorial UMC until it was moved to its new location via flatbed truck in 1994, so it was much



The Huff Prayer Walking Path was dedicated March 12.

like a homecoming.

As a symbolic link between the two churches, the brass altar cross that once stood in the sanctuary was brought from Belin Memorial UMC and placed on the communion table for the service.

Pastors Rev. Will Malambri of Belin Memorial UMC and Dr. Kim Strong of Joseph B. Bethea UMC conducted the service and spoke of the connected history and present community service of the two congregations. It was a day of great joy for all, especially

those who once worshiped in that same sanctuary when it was looking out over Murrells Inlet more than 30 years ago.

In March, the focus shifted to the Belin Memorial Garden for meditation and remembrance. The garden was established in 2001 by several members of the congregation, including Henrietta Huff, and in 2023 a project was started to have the campus camellia collection designated as an American Camellia Society Camellia Trail Garden. In less than one year, the camellia

collection was expanded from 69 to 135 plants and those identified cultivars went from two to 96.

This was truly a community project as many plants were donated by church neighbors as well as Belin Memorial UMC members, camellia cultivars were identified by a member of the local Grand Strand Camellia Society, and planting new camellias was assisted by members of the local Daughters of the American Revolution.

In June 2024, Belin Memorial UMC received notification that the Henrietta Huff Camellia Walk at Belin Garden was now an ACS Camellia Trail Garden, one of nine gardens in South Carolina and one of only two churches in the country to receive such an honor. The official ACS Camellia Trail sign was received in February, and on March 12 the camellia trail was dedicated by Malambri

to honor Mrs. Huff, who today remains the leader of the Belin Gardeners.

On that same day, the Garden Prayer Walk was dedicated. This Prayer Walk is made up of bronze plaques with the 10 beatitudes and two bronze plaques with The Lord’s Prayer and a benediction, Jude 1:24. The Prayer Walk follows a figure eight, or infinity, mulched pathway through the tall pines, live oaks and camellias of the garden with an early feature of the garden, a boxwood cross, within the figure eight. To one side of the garden is the historic Belin Memorial Cemetery where the grave of the Rev. James Lynch Belin (1788-1859) can be found.

Today, Belin Memorial UMC continues the legacy of the Rev. Belin through community service, prayer and showing God’s presence through the beauty of nature.

Around the Districts.

Columbia District

The Columbia District United Women in Faith held an event, “The Racial Justice—Looking at Mass Incarceration,” May 24 at Epworth Children’s Home. The Rev. Nichole Middleton, a prison chaplain in the conference, was the keynote speaker.

I. DeQuincey Newman UMC, Columbia, will celebrate with a Joy Night Worship Service June 27 at 6:30 p.m. The theme is “Thanks Be to God, We Made It.” Guest artist is Evan B. Garriss from Raleigh, North Carolina, who will be singing songs from his recently released CD. Admission is free, and a love offering will be taken.



Tea and wisdom

Manning UMC, Manning, held a Mother’s Day tea party at the church. Drawing 110 attendees, the event featured a word from retired pastor the Rev. Greta Parker.

Photo by Kelly Gottheiner



Editorial
by Jessica Brodie

Cultivating hope

I have a confession: I’m an awful gardener. I’ve tried a few times to plant a vegetable garden, and I just don’t know what I’m doing. The first time, a few years ago at my first home in Lexington, my efforts produced exactly one tomato. The second time, I managed to grow some flowers, but that was it. Last year, my husband and I worked so hard and spent way too much money building raised garden beds in the backyard of our current home, and all that work got us one skinny, mottled-looking bell pepper. It’s abysmal.

The irony is I recently published my first novel, which happens to be titled “The Memory Garden,” and garden references are woven throughout. As you can guess, I want so badly to be a gardener, or at least the kind of woman who knows how to cultivate the land and produce good things from God’s creation, but it’s not a natural gift. It doesn’t just magically happen.

The truth is you usually have to invest time and skill into something for it to come to fruition. You have to work hard, pay attention and genuinely invest time and heart into a dream to make it a reality.

And I know that’s where I go wrong with gardening. I haven’t taken the necessary steps to do it right, to tend the soil and care properly and diligently for my garden in order for it to thrive.

But I’m nothing if not an optimist, and the next time I attempt to start a garden, I’m convinced it’ll be far more successful. That’s because I’ll be taking advice from people who actually know what they’re doing, not to mention putting in real time—not lackluster half-attention—to help it thrive.

It reminds me of the things we strive to accomplish here on earth, and I think it ties in perfectly with the theme of this year’s Annual Conference: See the Possibilities, the Promise of a Seed, from Jeremiah 29:5-7. In this passage, God is urging the Israelites to live with purpose and hope within their current circumstances, contributing to the well-being of their new home while maintaining their faith and waiting for God’s future plan.

It’s certainly what I must do with my garden—work hard with purpose and hope to cultivate what God has provided, trusting that my hard work and dedication will eventually pay off.

And isn’t that what we must do as a denomination? As a universal, united, worldwide church?

We must sow seeds of love and healing as we share the Gospel, knowing we’ll reap a harvest that brings glory to God Almighty.

Let’s all embrace the promise of a seed together, trusting that God’s good purpose will prevail.



Bishop’s Column
by Bishop Leonard Fairley

Thin places

Last month, I wrote about the importance of stillness in our ever-busy lives. I have often wondered, especially as of late, if that is even possible in our world of constant distractions where the “tyranny of the urgent” runs wild and unchecked. I wonder if we have lost the ability to see the sacredness in things that appear at first glance to be mundane.

In her book “An Altar in the World,” Barbara Brown Taylor writes about how we relegate spiritually to confined spaces like churches or formal rituals. She challenges us to find the sacred in every facet of our lives. Taylor offers a rich and refreshing perspective on seeking connection with the divine, with God, through embodied experiences and mindful attentiveness to our surroundings.

Where have we missed the presence of God? Moses saw God’s presence in a burning bush while keeping the flock of his father-in-law.

“There the angels of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush Then Moses said, ‘I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the bush is not burned up’ (Exodus 3:1-3).

Where have we missed God because we refused to turn aside and see this thing?

In Celtic spirituality, “thin places” are locations or moments where the space between earthly and spiritual realms seems particularly thin, allowing a heightened sense of being in the presence of the divine. We could use a few thin places in this world, thin places that help us reconnect to the presence and sacredness in all things and in all people.

Where are your thin places? My grandma Gladys called it her secret closet.

I encourage you to discover those places where nothing comes between you and the presence of God before any word is spoken. Discover your thin place!

Before Any Word is Spoken

Before any word is spoken,
may it be my joy
to hear the first bird song of
morning’s dawn.

Before any word is spoken,
may it be my blessing
to hear the first breath of wind
blow through leaves
still wet with morning’s dew.

Before any word is spoken,
may it be my joy
to hear each drop of spring’s rain
touch the earth.

Before any word is spoken,
words that
would profane this
sacred thin place,
may I be blessed.

May I be blessed before the voice
of the creator
becomes lost
in meaningless chatter.

—By Leonard Fairley

Corrections.

In the May *Advocate*, we mistakenly worded an upcoming event in the past tense, implying it had already occurred. In the obituary for Harriet H. Daniels, it should have stated that a Celebration of Life Service “will be held” at 3 p.m. on Saturday, May 24, at Central United Methodist Church in Asheville.

Also in the May *Advocate*, in the article “UMC-SC Taps 12 Churches to Launch Children’s Initiative,” the article incorrectly named one of the churches in the ecumenical partnership receiving one of the grants; it should have stated Virginia Wingard Memorial UMC, Columbia, as one of the three churches in that partnership (the word “Memorial” was omitted).

We apologize for these errors and, as always, strive to set the record straight.

Letters to the Editor.

A missing book of the Bible

Maybe I was dreaming or just browsing along on Facebook, or was it TikTok, but anyway, some group was all excited about finding a missing book of the Bible that was excluded at the Council of Nicaea. As I recall the article, the name of the book was Menuonomy and it outlined the laws Moses listed for the people of Israel to follow.

What I found most interesting was this seems to be exactly the spiritual guide The United Methodist Church has prescribed as what the church of today must accept in seeking out and making disciples for Jesus Christ. This has made living a spiritual life very popular; every special group finds them completely acceptable and easy to follow. The Book of Menuonomy allows you to pick and choose which of the laws prescribed by Moses you feel are appropriate for you to feel comfortable with and to observe.

I have selected to not be guilty of violating any of the laws found in the Book of Menuonomy, except I will own up to not returning my neighbor’s straying donkey until I have finished plowing up my garden spot. Shucks, I might follow one or two of the laws of The Book of Menuonomy but certainly will not admit to being guilty of any of them. See you on the highways and in the streets trying to show the

world the love and caring Jesus Christ has for all souls by being an example of the changes he made in my life.

David L. Busby, member
Platt Springs UMC, West
Columbia

Call to action

In the 1960s and 1970s, The United Methodist Church took strong positions in society on the Civil Rights Movement. Many of the UMC ministers and laity were on the front lines, especially the Black church. Action was taken.

Many of these freedoms and rights are being challenged today.

See “Letters,” Page 5

Advocate
SERVING SOUTH CAROLINA UNITED METHODISTS SINCE 1837

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Humanity Behind Bars
by Rev. Nichole Middleton

Courage to dream differently

Prison ministry is not for the faint of heart. It is a calling that draws one into the deep—a well of human suffering, spiritual wrestling and sacred mystery. This ministry demands presence, patience, courage and compassion. It is not for those with unclear boundaries or uncertain calling. If you have not heard the voice of God sending you into this space, do not go knocking on the gate.

This pastoral context places ministers in relationship with the least, the last and the often forgotten—especially in times of crisis for those deemed unfit to live freely among society. But crisis is complex. Sometimes it’s a quiet disruption of hope, a moment of grief over fractured identity. Sometimes it’s the realization that life cannot continue on the same path. It may be the consequence of violence, addiction, abandonment or desperation. And sometimes, the crisis is not an event at all—it’s a lingering presence, reminding someone daily of past mistakes, societal prejudice and deep wounds rooted in systemic inequity that convince them they are no more than the worst thing they have ever done.

There are days when spiritual discernment becomes the only lifeline. Evil is not abstract here. It lives in choices, systems and hardened hearts. Scripture reminds us: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against powers and principalities, against the rulers of the darkness of this world” (Ephesians 6:12). Prison ministry demands entering these battlegrounds not with judgment, but with grace and the armor of God.

It is also a ministry of trust—trust that God is working even in the bleakest cells. It requires patience, because transformation rarely arrives on our timeline. And it is a ministry of bearing witness: sometimes to redemption and sometimes to heartbreaking resistance.

I once sat with three generations of men—grandfather, father and son—linked by blood and the heavy chain of generational incarceration and addiction. We met in the prison chapel after the death of the family matriarch—the one who had faithfully prayed for them all. As they gathered in mourning, something deeper stirred.

The grandfather, usually silent, suddenly wept. Looking at his grandson, he said, “I was your age when I got locked up the first time. I never wanted this for you.”

For a moment, time seemed to bend. The weight of grief, guilt and longing filled the room. The father—caught in the middle—bowed his head.

“We don’t know another way,” he whispered.

That was when the Spirit moved. Not through a sermon or song, but in raw honesty and overlapping lament.

I looked at the elder and asked gently, “Have

you thought about the kingdom work God has in store for you?”

He hesitated. Then nodded slowly. “What? ... God done long since gave up on me. Maybe my boy here. Or, my grandbaby. If anything, I can tell him he don’t have to come back here no mo like I done.”

In that sacred moment, we were no longer in prison. The chapel became holy ground, and three generations dared to believe that cycles could be broken—not by force, but by love, humility, grace and the courage to dream differently.

Fights happen. Contraband circulates. People attempt to breach secure perimeters, threatening both the institution and the surrounding community. These physical dangers mirror the spiritual and emotional turmoil—traumas, regrets and survival instincts—that can erupt at any time. This work stretches your soul, demands presence and requires discernment few understand.

Yet, even in the face of all this, there is hope. Hope here is not passive or naïve—it is radical, active and rooted in the belief that no one is beyond God’s reach. Even if this is not your call, there is still a role for you in this work.

The prison wall may seem frightening—but it is no match for the prayers of a faithful intercessor. Your prayers reach beyond every gate and barbed wire into the hardest of hearts. Pray for those who live and work behind the fence—those incarcerated, those who guard, teach, feed, care and minister.

Build a relationship with a nearby facility. Contact the chaplain and ask how you or your church might offer support. Advocate for policies that promote restoration over punishment. Support reentry programs and organizations that walk with people after release. And when you see someone struggling, consider how you can help your sibling in Christ bear a burden you’ve been blessed not to carry.

As we covenant in the UMC baptismal liturgy: “With God’s help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround this person with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God.”

There is no small role in this ministry—only the faithful offering of love where it is needed most.

Middleton is an elder in the South Carolina Annual 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, dedicating her work to providing spiritual care, advocating for justice and supporting the transformation and reintegration of incarcerated individuals.

LETTERS:

From Page 4

Many religious voices are silent.

This letter is to call for the voice of the church to address what is happening. In the past, there have been pastoral letters from the Council of Bishops. There have been resolutions at our annual conferences. Will the 2025 South Carolina UMC Annual Conference address and know the pains of our society today, or will it be a business meeting only?

Thousands of lives have been affected by the cuts in federal funding and staff. The tariffs will affect household goods, school supplies, medicine, automobiles and farmers. The stock market decline has affected thousands of pensions and life savings. Head Start, autism research, cancer research, dementia research and grants for universities are being cut. There is no compassion or care for the vulnerable.

In an editorial letter to the Post and Courier, Zebulon Green said, “I write this letter with a feeling of deep despair and utter broken heart. I keep seeing images of the brutal conditions of the El Salvadoran prison, people packed in, dehumanized and abused. I can’t image how this country can be so cruel. I’m guided by the words of Jesus—whatever we do to the least of these, we do to God.”

“He has shown you, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

“Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord! Let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven: We have transgressed and rebelled, and thou has not forgiven” (Lamentations 3:40-42).

Let the actions of Christ be seen in The United Methodist Church. Forgive us.

Rev. John Culp, retired
West Columbia

Pondering events

On the day I wrote this, we learned that Pope Francis died. I happen to be Methodist but I have come to value the Pope, not for his role as head of the world’s Catholics, but for his humanity. His election by the College of Cardinals was a compromise. It followed days of balloting that produced no winner.

There was great jubilation following his election. At least some of the jubilation was not that he was elected, but that the election process had finally reached a result. Before his election, he was just a humble priest whom the world did not know. On the day of his death, he is much loved and respected the world over. Even nonbelievers know and respect his genuine humility and caring spirit.

One does not have to abandon critical thinking to acknowledge that the process that gave us Pope Francis was beyond what human decision alone could produce. Here was a man who did not seek power and authority upon whom it was bestowed to the great benefit of the human family. His choice of the name “Francis” signaled his intent to follow the pattern of St. Francis of Assisi. Let us pray that those gathered to cast ballots for the next pope will be sensitive to the spirit and example of Pope Francis. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Rev. Mickey Fisher, retired
Spartanburg

Reflection topic for July Advocate

Your turn: What is your church doing to love your neighbor? Why is it important for us to do so? Share with the Advocate at oped@advocatesc.org (include your church name and city).

RETREAT:

From Page 1

voices,” Fairley proclaimed to a chorus of amens. “We need your voices, your leadership, your preaching—not only in word but in deed.”

Read the full story on the retreat at <https://advocatesc.org>, or check next month’s *Advocate*.

Here are photos from the week; more are available at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/advocatesc>.



The Rev. Athena Dickey-Cathcart and other attendees offer praise through song.



The Revs. Connie Barnes and Walter Strawther applaud a powerful word.



The Rev. Regina Moore welcomes all to the retreat.



Bishop Leonard Fairley speaks on a panel about “The Pulpit & Boots on the Ground.”



Christal Heyward talks about the need for self-care.

Recipe Swap.

Joy’s Excellent Cucumber Dip

From the kitchen of Lexie Chatham, Mount Hebron UMC, West Columbia

Ingredients:

- 3 large cucumbers
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 2 T. garlic salt (divided)
- 8 oz. cream cheese
- 1 cup mayonnaise

Directions:

Finely grate the cucumbers and add 1 T. garlic salt. Soak overnight in the refrigerator. The next day drain the cucumber mixture well. Then add the remaining 1 T. garlic salt, cream cheese and mayonnaise. Mix thoroughly and refrigerate overnight. It will be ready to serve the next day.

In addition to being a wonderful dip, this also makes a terrific sandwich and goes great on a baked potato.

Have a favorite recipe? Share it with the Advocate: news@advocatesc.org.

Twelve churches gather for Connecting Children launch

By Toni Taylor

Laughter and conversation echoed through Shandon United Methodist Church as more than 60 pastors and laity from across South Carolina gathered, united by a single goal: to transform worship for every generation.

Twelve diverse congregations gathered for a groundbreaking event—the launch of the Lilly Endowment Grant Initiative, “Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer.” This initiative, a first for the South Carolina Conference of the UMC, aims to transform the way churches approach worship by intentionally connecting generations through shared experiences, storytelling and the arts.

Toni Taylor, grant leader, welcomed everyone and introduced the Grant Leadership Team who attended. The gathering brought together churches from across the state—large and small, urban and rural, African American, White and multicultural congregations. Participants came eager to pray, learn and share ideas, embodying the connection that defines the Methodist tradition.

This collaborative atmosphere set the stage for meaningful conversations on how churches can become more than just multigenerational communities; they can become truly intergenerational.

What is intergenerational worship?

Intergenerational worship moves beyond simply having people of all ages in the same room. It is about fostering intentional relationships, where every generation is valued, heard and engaged in the life of the church. During the event, participants explored the unique perspectives and values each generation brings to worship. The group reflected on which voices might be missing and discussed ways to ensure all ages feel a true sense of belonging.

Learning from the early church

The Rev. Nona Woodle led a session examining how the early church natu-

rally embraced intergenerational community and what factors led to the rise of age-specific ministries in the 20th century. Influences such as developmental psychology and cultural trends gradually shifted churches toward separating age groups, sometimes at the expense of communal discipleship. The initiative encourages churches to reclaim the wisdom of intergenerational ministry, emphasizing the importance of learning, praying and serving as one body.

Sharing stories and meals

A highlight of the day was the “Gather Around the Table” intergenerational meal, facilitated by Sonja Stetzler, a TEDx speaker and communication coach. Inspired by Acts 2:46-47, participants shared stories and engaged in meaningful conversation across generations, concluding with expressions of appreciation for one another. Each church left equipped to adapt this model, bringing generations together around the table for faith, prayer, and love.

The event also introduced Portico, a learning management system that will support training and resource sharing among the churches. Attendees completed assessments to establish baseline data on children’s involvement and intergenerational worship, setting the stage for goal setting in three key areas: belonging, intergenerational worship and children’s ministry.

Looking ahead, churches will continue their journey with quarterly in-person trainings and monthly Zoom sessions, focusing on SMART goals to create cultures of belonging, expand intergenerational worship opportunities and increase children’s participation in church life.

Through the Lilly Endowment Grant Initiative, South Carolina United Methodists are leading the way in reimagining what it means to be the church—one where every generation is welcomed, valued, and empowered to grow in faith together.

Resource Center.

New adult Bible studies

Belief that Behaves:

The Book of Ephesians Vol. 1 and 2 (DVD2937B= and DVD2947B=) Author: Jeremiah, David. 10 sessions, 29-35 min/study guide/bk/2024. Find answers to your questions about God’s love and how to live in it. Be equipped with practical ways to honor Christ with your life every day and help your family do the same. This insightful and thorough study will guide you through Ephesians. Age: YAS.

Everywhere Is Jerusalem:

Experiencing the Holy Then and Now (DVD2957CL=) Author: Howell, James C. 6 sessions, 12-16 min./leader’s guide/bk/2024. Location matters. Christianity isn’t a batch of spiritual thoughts or metaphysical truths. It’s a journey of real people with their feet on the ground in real places. Howell takes you on a spiritual pilgrimage to significant places in the ongoing story of the Christian faith. Along the way, you’ll discover the

connections between biblical stories and the places they happened. CC. Age: YAS.

Saved: Experiencing the Promise of the Book of Acts

(DVD2964B=) Author: Guthrie, Nancy. 3 DVDs, 18 sessions, 30-39 min/leader’s guide, participant’s bk/bk/2024. Bestselling author Guthrie presents an accessible, theologically sound guide to the Book of Acts. Through 18 engaging lessons, she invites readers to peer into the lives of the apostles in the days following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus as they experienced new power from the indwelling Holy Spirit and a new understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures. Age: YAS.

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

CHURCHES:

From Page 1

The churches are suing the South Carolina Conference of the UMC along with its bishop and 10 district superintendents, asking the court to allow them to break ties with the denomination and still retain their property. However, the conference holds individual church properties in trust for the UMC, and those churches remain the property of the UMC if a congregation decides to break ties with the denomination.

Represented by David Gibbs of the National Center for Life & Liberty and two South Carolina attorneys, Miles E. Coleman and James Bannister, the churches allege the conference promised them they would be able to separate from the denomination by a process that involved a legal closure and transfer of assets, accomplished through Para. 2549 of the UMC *Book of Discipline*. But “the UMC and the conference reneged on their promises,” the lawsuit alleges.

The S.C. Supreme Court granted an extension to June 4 for the conference to respond to the lawsuit.

“Connectionalism is an integral part of the foundation of The United Methodist Church and *The Book of Discipline* by which the church is governed,” Conference Communications Director Dan O’Mara

said. “As a connectional church, the South Carolina Conference and all of its local churches are bound by the decisions of the UMC Judicial Council, which has determined that the process the conference had used to allow churches to separate from the denomination was in violation of *The Book of Discipline*.”

O’Mara added that the conference remains focused “exclusively on its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

How did all of this come about?

The root of the issue stems from some churches wishing to leave the UMC over theological differences surrounding human sexuality. In 2024, the UMC General Conference voted to change its stance on homosexuality, removing language from the *Discipline* that previously stated “the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.” It also voted to lift longstanding bans on the ordination of LGBTQ+ clergy and the celebration of same-sex marriages.

In advance of this, in 2023, 113 local South Carolina congregations disaffiliated from the UMC under Para. 2549, and in 2024, 112 did so. But in October 2024, the UMC Judicial Council declared disaffiliation through Para. 2549 was no longer permissible.

The Methodist Church of Simpsonville did not participate in the Para. 2549 process, instead announcing in June 2024 the church had disaffiliated from the

UMC and amending its corporate filings, changing the name of the church from Simpsonville UMC to The Methodist Church of Simpsonville.

The South Carolina Conference then sued The Methodist Church of Simpsonville and Smith in a lawsuit filed Nov. 5, 2024, in Greenville County Common Pleas Courts, alleging fraudulent deed filing and unlawful occupation of the church parsonage and property owned by the UMC, among other things.

On March 5, the conference asked the South Carolina Supreme Court to assign all cases regarding the conference and separating churches to a single trial judge, noting it had received Notices of Separation from 40 local UMCs across South Carolina since November and that additional lawsuits were “imminent” (see <https://advocatesc.org/articles/single-judge>). A single trial judge, the conference said, would conserve and streamline the responses of the parties and counsel, particularly as the conference and the vast majority of the churches in these cases are represented by the same people.

Not long after, the 10 churches filed suit, taking the conference to the Supreme Court.

South Carolina is not the only conference or state to experience lawsuits surrounding disaffiliation. A number of states have seen similar lawsuits.

The *Advocate* will run updates as soon as more information is available.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE:

From Page 1

Here is what to expect that week:

Sunday’s celebration

Annual Conference kicks off Sunday, June 8, at the Florence Center with packet pick-ups, clergy session, lay member orientation and other matters before one of the more anticipated services of the multiday session—the Commissioning, Ordination and Retirement Recognition Service. Presided and preached by Fairley, the evening expects to ordain three full elders, ordain one full deacon, commission eight as provisional elders and commission two as provisional deacons. As well, it will recognize the orders of one who was previously ordained in another Methodist denomination and will now be a full member of the South Carolina Annual Conference, and recognize one who was previously ordained in another Methodist denomination and is now being received as a local pastor of the South Carolina Annual Conference.

It also will recognize 32 retiring clergy.

Business starts Monday

The business of Annual Conference begins Monday, June 9. After an opening worship led by Fairley, business will start around 10:15 a.m. with the official call to order, greetings, organizational motions and consent calendar.

The theme of this 54th session of Annual Conference is “See the Possibilities, the Promise of a Seed,” drawing from Jeremiah 29:5-7. Fairley said the theme calls us to appreciate the ways United Methodists in South Carolina come together in connection despite the difficulties the church experiences.

“We have seen firsthand the beautiful seeds of hope, healing and love being sown in so many areas of our life together as South Carolina United Methodists,” Fairley said. “It is our prayer that even in this season of conflict, grief and uncertainty, we will continue to plant gardens that bring glory to God. It is and will always be God’s plan to give us a future with hope.”

Various committees will present reports, including the committees on Standing Rules, Nominations, and Resolutions and Appeals.

This year, the body considers five resolutions (read full text in Section 5 at <https://www.umcsc.org/ac2025>): LGBTQIA+ Inclusion in Ministry; Our Responsibility for Personal Health; Upholding the Dignity of All Mothers; Supporting South Carolinians Living with Dementia; and Recommit to Collegiate Ministry as a Priority of the Church.

Also on Monday, the conference Council on Finance and Administration will introduce the first reading of its recommendation of a proposed \$10.3 million budget for 2026. That amount is down 11.8 percent from the \$11.7 million budget for 2025.

The recommended budget for 2025 is reduced by almost \$1.4 million and is estimated to be 11.76 percent of average net funds.

“This significant reduction is to reflect the apportionments estimated to be sustainable by the conference’s remaining churches,” CF&A said in their written report to annual conference.

Tuesday: Amendments and more

The biggest event Tuesday is slated for after lunch, when the body will join conferences around the world to vote on regionalization and three other amendments to the UMC constitution.

The amendments were all passed by the required two-thirds vote at the 2024 General Conference. But because they will change the United Methodist constitution, they require ratification by at least two-thirds of the total voting members of all the annual conferences combined. To clarify, that does not mean a two-thirds vote at each annual conference is needed but rather two-thirds of all 127 annual conferences around the world. The results won’t be known until after all annual conferences—in the United States as well as in Europe, Africa and the Philippines—have held a vote.

Votes are expected to be finished by October. Then, in November, the Council of Bishops is expected to tally all votes and certify any ratifications.

The four amendments are worldwide regionalization; expanding gender and disability inclusion in church membership; standing against racism and colonialism; and clarifying requirements

for clergy-delegate elections. (See <https://advocatesc.org/articles/amendments2025> for a full breakdown.)

The language of the amendments cannot be changed. Votes will be simple “yes” or “no” votes on four ballots.

Also Tuesday, the body will hear a report from the Ministry Advisory Team, which has been working since November through the bishop’s four Jeremiah Teams to assess and then transform how the conference is structured, how it operates and how it aligns with its stated priorities. The four teams are Missional Priorities, Strategy for the Black Church and Ethnic Ministries, District Alignment, and Conference Staff Alignment.

Also on the agenda Tuesday is a report from the Commission on Equitable Compensation, which is proposing a cost-of-living increase of 2.5 percent to clergy members’ minimum salary in 2025, as well as a report from the Board of Pension & Health Benefits, Conference Connectional Ministries and Committee on Nominations elections.

Tuesday evening will feature a memorial service preached by the Rev. William F. Malambri, pastor of Belin

Memorial UMC, Murrells Inlet. That service will celebrate the lives of clergy and spouses who died over the year.

Wednesday’s finale

Wednesday is the last day of Annual Conference.

Business will include voting on the 2026 conference budget, adoption of the consent calendar, resolutions for church closings and charge line changes, and the announcement of the date and location of the 2026 session of annual conference.


Fairley will preach the sending-forth closing service before the fixing of the appointments.

See a full list of special events, reports and details at <https://www.umcsc.org/ac2025>. Among those special events is the Advocate Press’s Meet the Author/Book Signing, slated for 12-2 p.m. Tuesday in the Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry Hospitality Room (202C).

Also on that website are hotels with special rates, restaurants, kids camp information, volunteer opportunities, how to change an elected lay member, journal preorders and more.

Contemporary Christian novel by

Advocate Editor **Jessica Brodie**





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Sometimes hope blooms in the most unexpected places.

Retiring Ministers.

32 to retire in June

The *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate* congratulates this year's class of retiring pastors. Together, they have served more than 637 years in local churches, universities, agencies and the conference. We wish them well in their future ministries and their time away from the pulpit.

This year's class of retiring pastors was asked to respond to the following questions.

1. Think of one ministry or occasion that makes you smile.
2. What do you plan to do June 30 or slightly after that?
3. How are you planning to continue your ministry after retirement?
4. What's one thing you're glad to leave behind?

Morgan David Arant Jr.



Arant

Journal Entry: HL: OT 1976, FE 1979, HL 1998. SC: 1976 In School, 1978 Mllins-Tranquil-Centenary, 1980 Spar-tanburg-Arcadia, 1985 Spartanburg-St. Mark, 1986 SC Advocate Associate Editor, 1988 In School, 1998 Honorable Location.

1. As city kid who had just left seminary in Atlanta for my first ministry in the rural Center and Tranquil farming communities east and west of Mullins, I knew I was a bit out of step when on my first Sunday as I got out of my old Chevrolet Vega, a 6-year-old parishioner greeted me with, "Where's your truck." Although I never got that truck, I always smile remembering the generous love and acceptance that always greeted me. In all my ministries, I found that our shared Christian love and respect bridged over countless differences.
2. Having just completed nearly 45 years of work, first as a church pastor, then church communicator and more recently a university professor and administrator, I look forward to a slower pace, more time for family and friends, and travel whenever I get the urge.
3. Without the ceaseless demands of administrative work, I plan to spend more time volunteering with groups offering food, housing and medical assistance to the increasing numbers left behind.
4. Having to be available 24/7 via email, phone and messaging. Let the inboxes fill.

Years of Service: 10 years

Christopher Edward Arries



Arries

Journal Entry: FE: FL 2000, SP 2002, PL 2003, PE 2005, FE 2008. SC: 1999 Cameron,

2002 South Anderson, 2006 Cokesbury-Hodges, 2009 Hopewell (Simpsonville), 2014 Mountain View, 2018 Union (Conway), 2022 Trinity (Honea Path), 2023 Trinity-Donalds.

Years of Service: 25 years

Graham Miller Bennett



Bennett

Journal Entry: FL: FL 2017. SC: 2017 Livingston-Pine Hill, 2021 Langley.

1. Seeing a blind 50-year-old member

touching a live donkey at an Easter egg hunt. She cried as she said this is what Jesus rode into Jerusalem. She had only wondered what a donkey felt like before.

2. SLEEP ... Go see others preach instead of me.
3. Fill in for those on vacation.
4. Religious Política

Years of Service: 8.5 years

Robert Arthur Brawn

Journal Entry: Cert/License Approved: PL 2017, NA 2024. SC: 2017 Bethel Associate (Pelion) (1/4), 2018 Bethel (Peachtree Rock) (1/2), 2024 Not Appointed.

Years of Service: 7.5 years

Harry Lee Brown



Brown

Journal Entry: PL: LP20 2012, PL 2015. SC: 2012 Not Appointed, 2015 Cedar Grove-For-est Chapel (1/2).

1. The Youth/Children Bible study on Zoom has been a source of joy and inspiration.

I plan to continue spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.

3. I hope to continue serving as a local pastor.
4. God has been good to me. He has guided me this far, and I trust he will continue leading me into great things. At this time, I can't think of anything I want to leave behind.

Years of Service: 10 years

Dennis Jay Devorick



Devorick

Journal Entry: PL: PL 3/13/2013. SC: 3/13/2013 Centenary (Conway).

1. My first year as a Student Pastor at

Chestnut Ridge UMC in East Ohio in 1991 we only had six members in the church. The bar down the street was full. Over the next few years we started an AA group to sober up the community. We thought the church might close, but the bar closed and now the church is still open.

This past year I was able to baptize my 1-year-old son, Josiah Devorick. On the day of his baptism several members from Chestnut Ridge were at Centenary UMC here in Conway on vacation.

2. I will spend time with my wife, Kurusumu, and son, Josiah. We just built a new home, no more parsonage life so we are busy settling into our new home.
3. I am going to be ordained with the Global Methodist Church on June 25th and hope to serve another church in the future. My wife is from Uganda, and I have been on several mission trips to Uganda and South Sudan. We are looking forward to supporting missions in Africa. I will also continue as the Principal of Carolina Forest Elementary in Myrtle Beach.
4. Church council meetings.

Jimmie Will Duncan



Duncan

Journal Entry: PL: PL 1988. SC: 1988 St. Luke (Timmons-ville) (1/4), 2014 Mount Zion (Timmons-ville) (1/2).

Years of

Service: 21.5 years

Edward Herbert Franklin Jr.

Journal Entry: FE: SP 1996, PM 1997, FE 2000. SC: 1997



Franklin

Friend-ship-Rock Springs, 1998 Wal-nut Grove, 2/12/2002 Chaplain, U.S. Army.

1. On a number of occasions

while deployed to Afghanistan, I received cards or packages from South Carolina churches expressing prayers and love for our soldiers.

2. I am working part-time for Upstate Warrior Solution, a veteran and first responder nonprofit as their Spiritual Support Program manager.
3. See above.
4. I hope I have left behind a legacy of caring for soldiers and families, but I am glad to also leave behind the moving worldwide every couple of years.

Years of Service: 28.75 years

Curtis Davon Harrelson



Harrelson

Journal Entry: FL: FL 2010. SC: 2010 Liberty Hill-Woods Chapel, 2017 Northside (Greenville), 2018 Berea-Friendship.

Years of

Service: 15 years

Bette Ann Hedden



Hedden

Journal Entry: FE: FL 2013, PE 2016, FE 2024. SC: 2013 Montgomery Memorial, 2014 Alders-gate (Green-wood), 2020

Cokesbury (Charleston), 2022 St. Paul (Florence).

1. My first baptism was a 60-year-old woman. She and her husband were the first African Americans to join my little church in the upstate. My second baptism was an older man in the Hospice House, who passed four days later and I smile thinking of where he resides now.

2. I am moving to New Jersey to be near my family. I plan on working part time as a Hospice Chaplain.
3. I plan on focusing on pastoral care and teaching.
4. Charge Conference

Years of Service: 12 years

William Allen Hightower



Hightower

Journal Entry: PL: PL 2003. SC: 2003 Hopewell-Sharon Charge, Ki-nards, 2006 Vaocluse-Pentecost, 2008

Bethlehem-Gassaway, 2015 Epting Memorial-Lebanon Charge.

Years of Service: 22 years

Mary Benton "Carol" Holladay

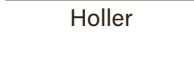
Journal Entry: OF: OF 2019 (1346.2). SC: 2019 Fairfax (1/2).

1. There are many joys in serving God's people. One is God allowing me to be at the bedside when God calls home one of his saints. Another great joy is watching children come to understand that "Jesus Loves Me" is more than a song.
2. Enjoy retirement with my husband and continue to recover from some health issues.
3. I plan to continue to use every opportunity to serve the Lord that I'm given.
4. Numerous church meetings

Years of Service: 5.5 years

Adlai Stephen Holler

Journal Entry: FE: OT 1982, FE 1984. SC: 1981 In School, 1982 Poplar-Antioch-Salem, 1985 Division of Chaplains, 1993 Armenia, 1997 Francis



Holler

Asbury, 2000 Wayne, 2004 Grace (Pickens), 2009 Trinity (Spartanburg), 2014 Trinity (Sumter), 2017 Alders-gate (Rock Hill).

Years of Service: 44 years

Continued on next page

.Retiring Ministers.

George Palmer Hudson



Hudson

Journal Entry: FL: SY 2015, PL 2016, FL 2023. SC: 2015 Allendale (SY), 2016 Allendale (1/2), 2020 Dorchester

Circuit (1/2), 2023 Goose Creek.

1. There are so many. Celebrations of life come to mind, but I would have to say watching an unsure leader step up in ministry, grow and thrive.
2. Get a little rest, reconnect with friends and family, and take some time to organize all those things I have collected over the past few years.
3. I will have to see where I am led, but I naturally gravitate toward teaching and service—so I know I'll be doing something.
4. The challenges of dealing with aging buildings and their maintenance and upkeep, insurance requirements and all that goes with that.

Years of Service: 9 years

Cassandra Pasley Jackson



Jackson

Journal Entry: FE: OT 1982, FE 1984. SC: 1982 St. Mark-Mount Zion, 1985 LOA, 1986 Hartsville-Alcot, 1990 Cowpens

Parish, 1991 Pleasant View-Silver Hill, 1995 Camden First, 2000 Wesley-Pinopolis, 2002 Rock Hill Central Charge, 2007 South Greenville, 2016 New Light, 10/01/2019 Medical Leave.

1. I was serving in Camden when Macedonia and Trinity churches merged to become Camden First UMC. Our sons along with other youth participated in the confirmation class therefore become the first individuals to join the newly named Camden First UMC.
2. My plans are to spend more time with family, especially our grandchildren, of course, and friends.
3. I am part of the kitchen committee at my home church, Green Pond, Clover. On occasion I have spoken when the pastor was out of town. If my health allows, I will serve when asked.
4. Charge conference reports.

Years of Service: 42.5 years

Emma Roderick Jones

Journal Entry: PL: SY 01/29/16, PL 2017. SC: 01/29/2016 Associate Oswego Circuit (1/4) (SY), 2017 Associate Oswego Circuit (1/4) (PL), 2018 West Camden (1/2), 2019 Zion-Newman Swamp (Lamar Circuit) Associate (1/2),

2022 Zion-Newman Swamp (Lamar Circuit) (1/2).

1. Several occasions have made me smile. Seeing our very young children helping with the offerings, being greeters at the front door, giving handshakes, singing special songs for worship and being Scripture leaders. The roles they play in the family of God makes me smile.
2. My prayer is to continue preaching the gospel at special events: revivals, anniversaries and other special events.
3. Following my retirement, I will be available to serve as a supply pastor. As a spiritual guide, I have so much knowledge and wisdom that will be a gift to God's people.
4. Charge conference forms, other administration duties (just kidding).

Years of Service: 7 years

Marvin Wilbur Karn Jr.

Journal Entry: Cert/Licensed Approved: PL 2020. SC: 2020 Zoan (Aynor) (1/4), 2021 Bethel-Ebenezer (1/2), 2023 Ebenezer (1/4) & New Hope (1/4), 2024 Ebenezer (1/4).

Years of Service: 5 years

Steven Paul Keck



Keck

Journal Entry: FE: SP 2001, PE 2008, FE 2010. SC: 2001 Gray Court-Trinity, 11/01/2002 Green Pond, 2010

Johnston-Harmony, 2016 Broad Street, 2022 Main Street (Greenwood).

1. Most of the memorable moments that have made me smile have had to do with the children. In my first full-time church there were several times that a little one named John would come up front and want me to hold him while I preached. Great memories.
2. Take a deep breath. This last few months has been a roller coaster. Family, family, family needs to be where I spend my time. Maybe some day trips and preparing for a trip to Greece. Me time.
3. I plan to be active in any church I attend by being an example of what a member does. I am pretty sure some volunteer opportunities will present themselves.
4. I have been blessed with some of the greatest churches in the conference and certainly with some of the greatest members. God has blessed me much more than I deserved. If there is one thing I would leave behind it would be charge conference. Let the paperwork be sent in electronically so you can free up the

District Superintendent to listen to the people.

Years of Service: 24 years

Joseph Gregory Martin



Martin

Journal Entry: FL: PL 2021, FL 2023. SC: 2021 Bethel-Ruhamah (1/2), 2023 Lawrence Chapel.

Years of Service: 5.25

years

Mark Douglas Mitchell



Mitchell

Journal Entry: FE: PL 1997, PE 2014, FE 2019. SC: 1994 Mount Pleasant, 1997 Piedmont Park, 1998 Dorches-

ter Parish, 2016 Cheraw Parish, 2019 Mount Zion (Kingstree), 2021 Lake City Circuit.

1. I went to distribute the Sacrament to my parishioners one day. He was so happy to see me. The first thing he asked me was "Do I have his juice?" Holy communion was sacred to him. The Sacrament was the juice that gave him the strength to carry on. The blood and the body of Christ is certainly our juice. It is the lifeline to Christ.
2. My wife and I plan to take a two-week vacation.
3. I am available to supply.
4. The uncertainty of the next appointment or hearing those three wonderful words: "I'm moving you."

Years of Service: 26.5 years

Dwight Arnold Nelson Sr.



Nelson

Journal Entry: FE: PL 1997, SP 1998, PL 2004, PE 2008, FE 2011. SC: 1997 Chesterfield Parish, 1998 Mount Zion,

2004 Spartanburg Cooperative Parish, 2009 New Life (Walterboro), 2015 North Orangeburg, 2018 Wesley (Hollywood).

1. Christian Education—Teaching God's word through proclamation and bible study. To see God's people grow in their faith striving for spiritual maturity. I discovered that many are "born again" but do not grow beyond spiritual infancy. In the great commission our Lord commanded not only that we win others to Christ, but that we also teach them to observe all that he commanded. Seeing spiritual growth in myself and others brings me joy.
2. Spending time with my wife

traveling and spending time with our grandchildren, before I'm called to supply a local church.

3. My immediate plans are to attend my home church and support my pastor in any way that I am needed.
4. Conflict resolution, administrative oversight and reporting.

Years of Service: 27 years

Irvin Vincent Plowden Jr.

Journal Entry: FL: FL 2002.



Plowden

SC: 2002 First UMC Associate (Clover), 09/01/2007 Chester Circuit, 2011 Cornerstone-Epworth.

1. About 15 years ago I was at a Salkehatchie Camp and the camp director received a request to add another house to the project list. We were already stretched thin with the projects we had and no money to support another project (\$000s). Without further discussion, the director humbly looked upward and said, "Lord it's in your hands." That made me smile. Within six hours we had the money. I also smile when I see the light of God's love come on in a person's heart, including mine, through some small, unexpected act of kindness in or through the church.

2. June 30th I plan to sleep in, wake up and say, "Lord, thank you for giving me this day to do something new I haven't allowed time for these past 20 years." Then get busy unpacking the rest of the boxes.
3. Become involved in a local Methodist Church. Maybe assist in some form of teaching ministry at some point down the road.
4. Meetings and meeting prep, particularly charge conference paperwork. Done with that, at least for the time being. Yay!

Years of Service: 23 years

Rodney Keith Powell

Journal Entry: FE: OT 1983, FE 1985. SC: 1982 Glenwood-Beulah Charge, 1983 Anderson-Bethel, 1985 Townville, 1991 Hopewell-Rock Hill, 1999 Trinity

(Aiken), 2012 First (Easley), 2018 St. John's (Rock Hill), 2020 Medical Leave.

1. I served a two-point charge in the early 1980s. Time was close between the two services on Sundays, but the choir at the second church refused to enter the sanctuary until I'd prayed with them. I would rush in

the back door, look to the director for a nod that we were ready, and I'd invite the choir to pray.

On one particular Sunday, the time was a couple of minutes past the hour, so I ran in, noticed the choir had already assumed the position—circled up, most with their heads bowed. I looked to the director, she nodded, and I said, "Let us pray ..."

Mrs. Bertha Better-than-you, not her real name, interrupted and said, "Rev. Powell, before you pray, I'd like to request that you include me in your prayer ... " and, as she continued, she pointed to her ear and said, "I have an infection in my fallopian tubes. I'm supposed to sing a solo this morning and I'm having trouble hearing!"

I looked around the circle and wondered, "Am I the only one who heard that Mrs. Bertha thinks her "fallopian tubes" are in her ear?" No one said a word, not even a giggle. I had to pray, including Mrs. Bertha in my prayers, without exploding in laughter! Later, her eustachian tubes cooperated for a lovely musical selection.

2. We're not planning anything special on June 30. I had a major back surgery in 2021 and I've been on medical leave since. June 30 and after will probably include "Murder She Wrote" reruns and online genealogical research like most days before.
3. Angela and I are involved in a church we love, who loves us well, and we participate in their ministry and mission as time and ability allows.
4. Almost daily conflict management.

Years of Service: 45 years

Henry Lee Ravenel Sr.

Journal Entry: FE: SP 2005, FL 2008, PE 2012, FE 2019. SC: 2005 Thompson-Centennial-Bethlehem, 2014 Walterboro Parish, 2022 St.



Ravenel

James (Darlington).

Years of Service: 20 years

Dewey Lee Shaffer

Journal Entry: OF: OF 2014 (¶1346.2). SC: 2014 Estill-Black Swamp (3/4).

1. Every aspect of my 41 years of pastoring five churches has made my heart smile. Probably the most humbling thing was at our last charge conference when they made it clear that I was staying with their family "till I die."

Continued on next page

Retiring Ministers.

- 2. Same as always. Be ready for God's voice 365 days, 24 hours, every moment to hear him say, "Go where I want you to go, dear child!"
- 3. Yes.
- 4. The age of 72. Looking forward to some days off to see our great granddaughter, Sophia Lee, in Oklahoma.

Years of Service: 7.5 years

James Ronald Singleton



Singleton

Journal Entry: FE: PM 1991, FE 1993. SC: 1991 North Easley Charge, 1993 Clemson-Wesley Foundation, 2001

Inman, 2004 Limestone Street, 07/01/05 Limestone Street (3/4) and Limestone College (1/4), 01/01/2007 Limestone Street (1/2) and Limestone College (1/4), 2021 Gaffney Charge (1/2), 2024 Limestone Street.

Years of Service: 34 years

James Moses Smith



Smith

Journal Entry: PL: PL 2022. SC: 2022 Oswego Circuit Associate (1/4), 2023 Emmanuel (Sumter) (1/4).

- 1. The ministry that makes me smile is our church's Children's and Youth ministry. Last year, our Children's and Youth ministry performed a praise dance at Festival on Main Street in Sumter, and they did a fantastic job. I am so proud of their spiritual and intellectual growth.
- 2. I plan to continue preaching and pastoring as a retired supply local pastor.

- 3. As a retired supply local pastor, I can continue my work for the Lord.
- 4. As a retired supply local pastor, I will not leave anything behind. I will still be involved in ministry.

Years of Service: 3 years

Cynthia Cooke Taylor



Taylor

Journal Entry: FE: SP 11/15/2002, PE 2003, FE 2006. SC: 11/15/2002 Fairview-St. Paul, 2003 Timmons-ville-Salem, 2008 Beth-

el, Oswego, 2010 Central, Florence, 2012 St. Andrew, Easley, 2016 Asbury Memorial, 2022 Mount Hebron.

- 1. Most recently, a ministry that made me smile was leading and participating in Hospitality Boot Camp at Mount Hebron.
- 2. I plan to immediately travel to spend time with our grandchildren.
- 3. Post-retirement, I plan to continue my ministry as I continue my involvement with UMMV (United Methodist Volunteers in Mission) and Kairos Ministries. I hope to get back to providing spiritual direction in the near future.
- 4. I believe what I will most like to leave behind is the anxiety that comes with the itinerancy—a requirement for United Methodist ministers, for the most part.

Years of Service: 22 years

David Carroll Taylor



Taylor

Journal Entry: FE: PM 1992, FE 1995. SC: 1992 Marshall Memorial, 1993 St. Luke-Zion, 1996

Friendship (Rock Hill), 2003 Main Street (Dillon), 2005 Travelers Rest, 2007 Trinity (Fountain Inn), 2012 Zion (Prosperity), 2017 Grace (Pickens), 2021 Philadelphia (Fort Mill).

- 1. Just one? Watching the lives of our youth change after participating in Salkehatchie.
- 2. I hope to spend time with family and enjoy new adventures.
- 3. I'd like to serve as retired supply, work in missions and support the UMC, pastors and annual conference.
- 4. The meetings, the charge conference reports, stressors.

Years of Service: 33 years

Palma Duncan Thomas



Thomas

Journal Entry: PL: LP20 2011, PL 2014. SC: 2011 Not Appointed, 2014 St. Luke (Timmons-ville) (1/4), 2021 Mount Zion

(Florence) (1/2).

- 1. Although many ministries or occasions have made me smile, my most exciting one is the unconditional love of Jesus. His passion has made me smile because it gives me strength, courage and empowerment to face challenges beyond my control. I read Scripture daily and see how Jesus practices forgiveness, compassion and unconditional love for everyone. I can apply his unconditional love in my life and experience joy and a smile.
- I fully realize the depth and beauty of Jesus' unconditional love for me, regardless of my imperfection. Knowing how much Jesus loves me unconditionally brings me the biggest smile, comforting and uplifting.

- 2. I plan to continue being the humble servant God has called me to be by serving God and others when needed.
- 3. I chose to remain in my former calling as a local pastor if possible so that I could continue to share my gift with others and empower them.
- 4. There is nothing I would like to leave behind in the ministry. Everything I have learned has helped me grow into the person I have become for Jesus Christ. I thank God for every experience and circumstance I have had. They have really helped me see the goodness of the Lord and others in my life.

Years of Service: 11 years

Michael Cunningham Walker



Walker

Journal Entry: RE: PM 1987, FE 1990, RE 9/30/2024. SC: 1987 Bethune, 1991 Rock Hill-Cornerstone, 1997 Wind-

sor, 2005 First (Clover), 2011 Bethany (Charleston), 12/01/2015 Medical Leave, 2016 Kelton Charge, 01/01/2018 Medical Leave, 2019 First (Harleyville), 2020 India Hook, 02/30/2024 Ad-interim retirement.

- 1. I smiled the day Cornerstone UMC in the Rock Hill District held its first worship service. It had taken us approximately three years from the day the Main Street congregation in downtown Rock Hill had voted to relocate and change its name before we held that first service. It was definitely a group effort, made more challenging for me because of the birth of our triplet boys in the

- middle of everything.
- 2. Tracey and I have planned a family vacation with our four children and their spouses/significant other at the Isle of Palms. It will be the first such vacation that we have taken in more than 10 years.
- 3. I hope to do some retired supply work, preach when asked and volunteer with groups like Salkehatchie that help people in need.
- 4. Filling out reports.

Years of Service: 37.25 years

Wade Anthony Wyatt



Wyatt

Journal Entry: FE: PL 2010, PE 2018, FE 2022. SC: 2010 Anderson Circuit, 2014 Branch Hill-Martha's Chapel,

2017 Asbury-Clio (1/2), 2018 Bennettsville-Clio Circuit, 2019 Bethel-St. Paul (Greer) (1/2), 2022 Clover Parish.

- 1. The greatest joy I have received during my tenure as a clergy member with The United Methodist Church is leading individuals to accept Christ as their savior. Then, I realized that my service in the United Methodist Church has not been in vain. Getting to know and love the members has also been a blessing.
- 2. My initial plan is to assist my wife (Elder LaShelia Mack Wyatt) in her ministry at her two-point charge in the Greenville District.
- 3. I will continue to teach and preach at the East Greenville Charge and where other opportunities present themselves.
- 4. I am glad to leave the travel and separation from my wife behind.

Years of Service: 15 years

Across SC.



Photo courtesy of JoTavia McPherson

Coming together for Lent

New Hope Cooperative Ministries Community—Cokesbury, Enoch Chapel, St. Andrews Parish, North Charleston and New Francis Brown UMCs—all worshipped together during Lent for one hour over five Wednesdays. New Francis Brown hosted April 2. After each service, lunch was served. Some members were able to attend every Wednesday and raved about much they enjoyed each speaker and the fellowship time with other churches.

Advocate district listening sessions help ministry gauge ways to improve

June session to be held in Greenville

The *Advocate* continues its listening sessions this month, which are being held monthly to gauge the needs and interests of its readers.

The listening sessions began in February and will run through December in every district in South Carolina.

Free pizza will be served at every session, and the meeting will be a townhall-style event where people can learn about the *Advocate* and share ways the newspaper can improve. All are welcome.

The listening sessions are part of a wider effort combining surveying, focus groups, interviews and events so the *Advocate* can deliver relevant and reliable news and information so people can make important decisions and participate fully in making disciples of Jesus Christ.

"We're asking questions such as, How can

we improve? What do you like and dislike about the *Advocate*? What would you like to see more or less of? What can we add? We truly want to hear from people," said *Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie.

Future sessions are as follows (all from 6:30-8:30 p.m.):

- June 24: Greenville, Open Hearts UMC, Greenville
- July 15: Florence, Lake City UMC, Lake City
- Aug. 26: Hartsville (location TBA)
- Sept. 30: Marion, First UMC, 1001 5th Ave., Conway
- Oct. 28: Orangeburg (location TBA)
- Nov. 17: Charleston, Stallville UMC, 255 Stallville Loop, Summerville
- Dec. 1: Walterboro (location TBA)

To RSVP or for more information, email krenfroe@advocatesc.org.

St. Paul men host Pre-Mother’s Day Breakfast

CAMDEN—The United Methodist Men of St. Paul United Methodist Church celebrated the women of the church and community with a special Pre-Mother’s Day Breakfast Saturday, May 3, at 9 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall of the church.

More than 65 women gathered to enjoy a warm and welcoming atmosphere along with a delicious breakfast spread featuring grits, eggs, sausage, bacon, hot fish, muffins, coffee, juice and more.

In a display of unity and service, the men partnered with the children and youth ministries, with the children lending a helping hand as hosts and servers. Their involvement added a joyful and heartfelt touch to the event.

The Rev. Leatha Brown, pastor of St. Paul UMC, expressed heartfelt gratitude on behalf of the entire church, thanking the men, children and youth for their thoughtful gesture and the meaningful fellowship shared during the morning.



About 65 women gathered for the celebration.



Men cooked and children served the women.



Bonnell L. Williams Jr. shares a smile with the Rev. Darlene Richardson.

Murray stays busy with service for Lord

By Jamelah Youmans

SUMMERVILLE—Murray United Methodist Church started March with our Eliza Wynn Women’s Circle hosting “Paint with a Twist” in the Fellowship Hall March 1. We enjoyed painting, refreshments and great fellowship. This first-time event was so much fun.

Our LH Cuttino Ensemble Choir celebrated their 71st choir anniversary during worship service on March 9. Led by Choir President Mary Greene and Director Clara Tucker, songs included “Trust in God” and “Bless the Lord, O My Soul.” We are blessed that this choir has been able to glorify God through song for many decades.

We also had our big church fundraiser, an Oyster Roast and Fish Fry. Large crowds of friends, families and community members came to support us. The event was led by Tony Black of the Stewardship Committee with help from our men, women and trustees. Bundles of clustered oysters and fried fish sandwiches were available for everyone to enjoy.

We ended the month with Brother Bonnell L. Williams Jr. giving his very first sermon during our Parish Unity Service March 30. Williams, who is on his way to becoming a minister, grew up in Murray, so it was wonderful to see him grow into his ministry. His sermon was “The Danger of Distractions.”

April was spent gearing up for Resurrection Sunday and working with our children and youth for their Easter speeches. We give God the glory for the great things he has done and is doing for our church.

Youmans is communications chair for Murray UMC, Summerville.

Lenten Reflection Board becomes communion table at Lee Road UMC

By the Rev. Rusty Godfrey

TAYLORS—Inspired by their weekly “Moments of Art,” the people of Lee Road United Methodist Church created a collective collage during the six Sundays in Lent.

A series of six prompts was given to the people by the Rev. Rusty Godfrey during each Sunday in Lent. During the service, people got up and taped either a word or an image to the board. Blank index cards and a choice of images were provided for those who did not bring a prepared response.

Questions included: What do you need to give up for Lent in order to draw closer to Christ? Where have you seen people acting as the hands and feet of Christ this week? What word drains you of spiritual energy? What do you think of when you consider the lordship of Jesus?

Local artist and “Moment of Art” coordinator Denise Wilson arranged the images and words into a collage and sealed it with Mod Podge. Church usher and Finance Committee Chair Gene Turner played a big role by preparing the canvas with gesso and placing a wooden frame around the completed artwork.

For Maundy Thursday, April 17, during a joint service between Lee Road UMC and St. Matthew UMC, Taylors, people sat in groups of 10 around the artwork as a table and were



The completed collage was an accumulation of six weeks of responses.

served communion by Godfrey and Dr. Amenti Sujai. Thus, the collage became a living work of art.

Godfrey received this idea from attending a webinar sponsored by ClergyEducation.com called “Small Church III: Even More Lessons Learned from Small Churches” with author Teresa Stewart.

“The whole experience was hands-on, and it made our Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday so powerful and meaningful,” Godfrey said. “Art is a God-given, inspirational tool that can bring us closer to the divine.”



Close call
On May 12, a tremendous oak tree fell across the street and into the church yard at Main Street UMC, Greenwood, barely missing the Easter cross. The whole intersection was covered. There were no injuries.

Photo courtesy of Glenn Williams

Wesley Chapel observes Black History Month, ‘Taste of Africa’



Children offered a history performance.

LAKE CITY—Wesley Chapel’s Black History Month observance culminated with presentations from the children’s department and “A Taste of Africa” Feb. 23.

During the worship service, historical figures and their contributions to Black and American history were presented by the children. This engaging performance was a reminder of rich heritage.

Following the morning worship, “A Taste of Africa,” was hosted by the United Women in Faith. The event was well attended by church members and the community. Attendees voiced positive comments as they took part in the fellowship and special dishes prepared by the congregation.

The purpose, shared at the beginning of the event, noted that soul food is a Southern tradition that provides a look into ancestral history and insight as to why we eat the foods that we do. The hard

work of slavery meant that oftentimes, our ancestors had to modify foods.

The appreciation of “A Taste of Africa” was evident by such comments as “It should take place more than once a year,” “It features food from our heritage” and “It is a great event that is needed for church and community both culturally and spiritually.”

The variety of foods included old-fashioned collard greens, squash casserole, jerk chicken, pig’s feet, Jamaican rice and peas and Ethiopian green beans. Desserts—including cakes, pies, and sweet potato pone—added a sweet touch to the delicious main dishes.

The Rev. Louis R. Ashley and UWF President Betsy Graham, along with members of the congregation and community, said they look forward to continuing Black History observances at Wesley Chapel UMC.

Features.

'Waves of Grace' beach ministry engages neighbors

HILTON HEAD ISLAND—Every Thursday this summer at 5 p.m. on Coligny Beach, Wayne “Wayner” Dickert will be welcoming area residents and visitors alike for an informal gathering called Waves of Grace.

The weekly service starts May 29 and run through Aug. 28.

Waves of Grace, like the River of Life ministry Dickert led elsewhere, will be a “fresh expression ministry,” a form of gathering that engages those who might not attend a traditional church.

Dickert, a member of St. Andrew By-The-Sea United Methodist Church, led the River of Life ministry for outdoor enthusiasts in the Smoky Mountains from 2007 through 2024.

Dickert wanted to bring this open form of spiritual gathering to the beach community, and the idea of Waves of Grace was born.

“The general population is moving away from traditional settings, and we want to continue to engage people in ways of hope and restoration while sharing a little bit of God’s love,” said Dickert.

According to Dickert, one of the most meaningful parts of the service on the river is a time of sitting by the water for five minutes to reflect and

pray, and this will also be an integral part of the service on the beach.

“Being near the water is such a restorative time,” added Dickert.

According to Dickert, people are to bring their own beach chair or towel and meet on Thursdays at 5pm at Coligny Beach (near the entrance on the beach) for fellowship, songs, prayers and a short message focused on open and respectful group discussions.

“The informal service will include God sightings, what people have seen and experienced that week or in their life, because we all need to remember the glimpses of goodness in our lives,” said Dickert. “It is a great way to connect with God and nature in the sanctuary of the outdoors.”

Water is the theme for any donations received at the gatherings, too. Wells in Haiti will be supported by this ministry.

“This ministry was born out of the water, and we will use any money that comes in to help improve water resources around the world to give people life and hope,” said Dickert. “We hope people find that Waves of Grace is good for the soul.”

Dickert and his wife moved to Hilton Head Island July 1 of last year, upon retirement from his church in Western North Carolina. Dickert spent over three decades as a guide and paddling instructor in N.C. and worked several years for USA Canoe & Kayak. He enjoyed racing canoes and kayaking around the world and competed in the 1996 Olympics in Georgia. Currently Dickert is also an Outside Hilton Head eco kayak guide.

For more information, email wavesofgracehhi@gmail.com or visit <https://standrewbytheseaumc.org/>





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Features.

AU golf tourney is Sept. 29

Golfers will have the chance to enjoy a day on the green for a good cause Sept. 29. That day, the Wespeth-Bishop Leonard Fairley Golf Invitational benefitting Africa University will be held at Orangeburg Country Club, Orangeburg. The event is held to enable the Africa University Fund to reach 100 percent. More information coming soon. For questions, 615-340-7438 or email audevoffice@africau.org.



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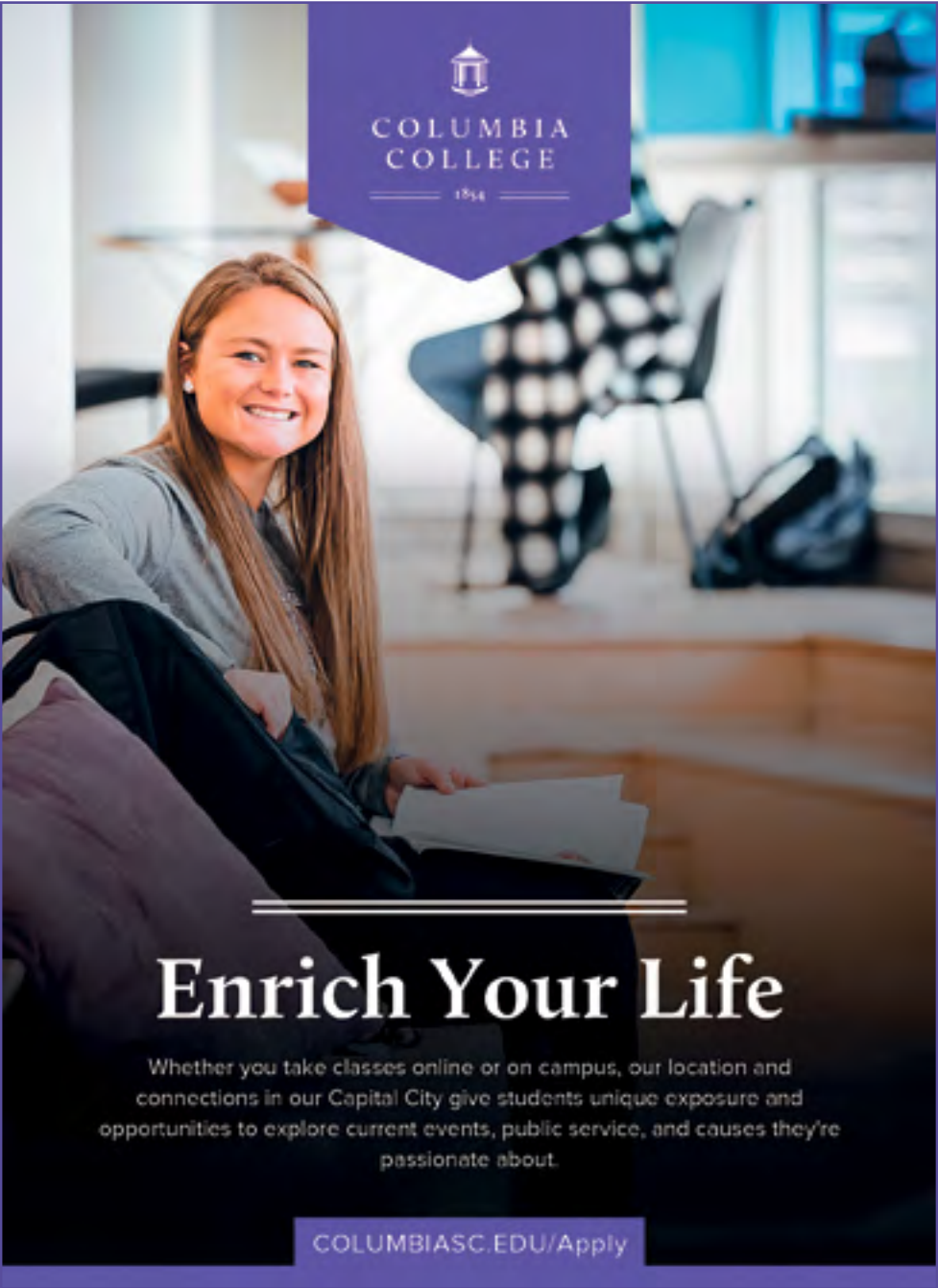
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United Women of Faith president Dana Salley with her mother, Sister Dessie Salley, one of Springtown UMC's Golden Saints who are age 90 and older.



Springtown UMC holds Mother's Day celebration

By Vasilisa C. Hamilton

SMOAKS—The theme for Mother's Day at Springtown United Methodist Church was "A Mother's Love," featuring guest speaker Paige Roper, of the Canaan-Sand Hill Charge.

Roper is a full-time certified registered nurse anesthesiologist, wife of Brother Mark Roper and the mother of Skai and Micah.

She delivered a soul-stirring message from the Book of Jeremiah: "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

Every woman aged 80 and older received a monetary gift from Springtown United Methodist Men. Each woman in attendance received a red rose with baby's breath when she entered the sanctuary, also from the United Methodist Men.

United Women in Faith President Sister Dana Salley and vice president Sister Margalene Irvin presented a monetary token to the sick and shut-in during Mother's Day worship.



Prayer warriors

Members of the Public Prayer Class at Columbia District Lay Servant Ministry's Winter School gather for a smile. The class members were among others that met Jan. 17-18 at Trinity UMC, Blythewood. The school is held for lay servants to recertify to remain lay servants, lay speakers or lay ministers. Chuck Sovick led the class.

Lent in Lamar brings healing after history

By the Rev. Rusty Crimm

On March 3, 1970, the small town of Lamar made history. The school system had just integrated and, in response, a group of White people turned over two school buses carrying Black students to their new schools.

Armed with axe handles, bricks and other implements, the rioters' actions prompted a response from not just local law enforcement, but from SLED, the National Guard and even U.S. Vice President Spiro Agnew. It remains, to this day, a stain on the town's history—a town that, as of the 2020 census, has a population of 862.

Fifty-five years later, March 3 happened to be Shrove Tuesday. And on that evening the members the United Methodist churches local to Lamar—Black and White—sat down to a pancake supper to mark the beginning of the Lenten season and had so many folks show up, we nearly ran out of food. Children ran and played in the Newman Swamp UMC sanctuary and colored Alleluia posters in the schoolhouse for their Easter services. Adults from four different charges sat around tables and talked, laughed and reconnected. Pancakes were eaten, stories were shared and the Kingdom of God—if only for a moment—descended in Lamar.

The following day, Ash Wednesday, members from at least five local United Methodist churches worshiped at two different services: a noon service at Lamar UMC presided over by myself and Rev. Emma Jones, and an evening service at John Wesley UMC presided over by all the Lamar area United Methodist pastors: Dr. J. Elbert Williams, Dr. Reginald Lee, the Rev. Emma Jones, the Rev. Lyndon B. Alexander II and me. Community and congregation members came together to remember our need for repentance and forgiveness and joined together, again, for a time of refreshment around the table.

As Lent continued, we met again for Maundy Thursday at St. John UMC in Oates for a service presided over by Lee and myself and, for a final time during the Lenten season, came around the



From left are the Rev. Marion Cooper (Mount Elon and Sandy Grove UMCs), Dr. Reginald Lee (Hartsville Cooperative Parish), the Rev. Emma Jones (Zion and Newman Swamp UMCs) and the Rev. Rusty Crimm (Lamar UMC).

table to celebrate the Lord's Supper and wash one another clean. It was a powerful way to end the journey to the cross as we were reminded of Christ's redeeming work and the way in which that final meal was extended to all people across all of time.

As Lee (of the Hartsville Cooperative Parish) noted on Shrove Tuesday, healing happens around the table. We are under no delusions that pancakes and bacon erase the stain of racism and violence but, to borrow the words of Michael Twitty from his book "Koshersoul," "It hit me that this is why we cook for one another, share food and talk and food and beyond—we just want to be family to one another. That desire is almost destiny, even when we disagree and put one another in various states of pain. There is some redemption in coming to peace over a moment of comfort and satisfaction, and sometimes the comfort and satisfaction are precisely what we need to sustain that peace."

May the peace we sustain not be an absence of tension but represent the presence of justice. May Christ redeem us from the sins of our past as we continue to come around the table in remembrance of his mighty acts of salvation. And may we all continue on to perfection with God's help.



Easter at Asbury

Asbury UMC, Clio, had a beautiful Easter Sunday. The family of the Rev. Sandra Stubbs came from out of town to visit Asbury that day. Many children came and lifted the service with their Easter speeches, coming together to conduct the entire service. Asbury members said they are proud of their children and thank them for the excitement they bring to the church.



Photo courtesy of Jodie Plyler

Rest, renewal and rejoicing

United Women in Faith of Tabernacle UMC, Lancaster, took a trip to Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, recently for a retreat. The Rev. Meg Wilkes facilitated their weekend program, focusing on rest, renewal and rejoicing.

Lawrence Chapel keeps on trucking

CENTRAL—On a spring morning in March, Lawrence Chapel United Methodist Church hosted 280 community neighbors at their annual Touch A Truck.

This year's event included an antique weapons carrier and a Humvee, the first time to have military trucks. Children's Director Deanna Phifer created a unique scavenger hunt map with clues hidden on each vehicle. Once completed, the children took home a prize Easter egg containing a slap bracelet inscribed with spiritual messages. They also spent time in the

sanctuary singing and moving to children's songs.

Local first responders and businesses, including city agencies, brought a fleet of trucks from fire trucks to cement mixers and unique camping truck set ups.

"We would not be able to host this fun event without our community members participation. Many of them have joined us from our first Touch A Truck event," said organizer Sandra Magee. "Our congregation is so supportive, and they love volunteering to help host this fun day."



Kids had fun checking out the vehicles.



Photo courtesy of JoTavia McPherson

A packed house

New Francis Brown, Charleston, hosted a Pack the Pew Rally Nov. 17. Members of the congregation were captains and were encouraged to invite family and friends to attend worship for a dress down occasion. Chair Tatum Hamilton, her committee and members worked together to make the program a huge success. With some friendly competition, they were able to raise more than \$10,000 from donations, and more than 100 visitors were in attendance.

Ministries.

Bethel aids Helping Children Worldwide with shortfall

CHARLESTON—For more than a decade, Bethel United Methodist Church, Charleston, has partnered in mission with Helping Children Worldwide, a nongovernmental U.S. organization affiliated with the UMC dedicated to supporting the Child Reintegration Centre and Mercy UMC Hospital in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

The Child Reintegration Centre is dedicated to reuniting children in kinship care and strengthening vulnerable families. Mercy Hospital is the heartbeat of the mission, providing critical care for families and pre-and postnatal care for young mothers. Work-



Photo courtesy of Sue Bennett

On April 27, the Rev. Susan Leonard presented a check to Dr. Laura Horvath of Helping Children Worldwide.

ing together with HCW, these organizations are making a demonstrative difference in Africa, particularly in the lives of young children. With the recent withdrawal

of U.S. foreign aid and the realignment of UMCs supporting HCW, Mercy Hospital faced a \$50,000 budget shortfall. Bethel, Charleston, used Lent and Easter and second-mile giving to collect nearly \$45,000 of that shortfall to send to Mercy Hospital.

Unlike other hospitals in Sierra Leone, Mercy’s mission is to care for patients despite their ability to pay.

Without these essential funds, many people in medical need will be turned away, with nowhere else to turn. Mercy Hospital’s village outreach clinics offer prenatal care to pregnant women, babies and

children younger than the age of five who receive malnourishment supplements, vaccinations and malaria medications. Without these services, the situation is life-threatening.

Dr. Laura Horvath from HCW presented a program during the Sunday school hour explaining how Bethel’s funds are helping. Then she was presented with a check on behalf of Bethel UMC by the Rev. Susan Leonard, senior pastor.

A follow-up check for remaining gifts will be sent in May, and a second-mile gift from Lenten contributions will be sent to Africa University.



James Monroe Mission House celebrates 20 years

The James Monroe Mission House marked its 20th anniversary April 14 with cupcakes for its clients and an informal lunch for its volunteers. Started by Trinity UMC, Fountain Inn, the mission house distributes food and clothing every Monday morning from the former parsonage next to the church. They help about 200 families each week. About 30 volunteers help each week, sorting, sizing and hanging clothing; packing and distributing the food; helping clients to their cars; and driving, loading and unloading trucks.

Camps & Retreat Ministry.

When faith meets fire

What does a week at Asbury Hills look like for a 13-year-old in today’s world?

For teenage camper Layci, it meant more than just fun and adventure. For Layci, camp at Asbury Hills wasn’t just a getaway—it was a sacred space where her faith was nurtured, her sense of community was strengthened and her heart became attuned to something greater than herself.

When Lacey heard through social media that wildfires were threatening her beloved camp and that staff had been evacu-

ated, her first response wasn’t panic—it was prayer.

That response came from being part of a camp culture that emphasizes prayer, connection and faith in God. Without hesitation, Layci asked her mom if she could start a prayer chain with her friends.

Her mom said, “That sounds like a great idea!”

What Layci didn’t know was that the fire was just a mile away, threatening all 2,000 acres of Asbury Hills. But hours—and countless prayers—later, the wind shifted. The

flames changed direction, sparing every building and program area. Only a few acres on the far side of the camp were touched.

We at South Carolina Camps and Retreat Ministries were left asking: What kind of experience impacts a teen so deeply that she turns to faith first? The answer: A week at Asbury Hills.

Layci’s story shows that even in a chaotic and fast-paced world, young people can still find quiet strength and clarity when given the space and guidance to grow in their faith.

—Kate Nobles



Photo by Kelly Gottheiner

Showing some love

Members of the Myrtle Strange Circle at Manning UMC, Manning, help gather Valentine’s Day gift bags their circle created for the children at Turville Children’s Home.

SCADP protests execution

The South Carolina Supreme Court has issued an execution warrant for Stephen Stanko. He is scheduled to be executed June 13.

South Carolinians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, which includes a number of United Methodists, are speaking out against this execution and calling on the governor to change Stanko’s sentence. SCADP Executive Director the Rev. Hillary Taylor said Stanko’s case demonstrates the death penalty’s well-documented use against people with brain damage.

“The problems resulting from his brain damage are well controlled in the structured environment of prison. Mr. Stanko has not been a danger to prison staff or other inmates while on the row. He has productively used his incarceration to repent of his crimes, seek God’s forgiveness, help other inmates and write about his experiences,” Taylor said.

The mission of SCADP is to abolish the death penalty and catalyze criminal justice reform in South Carolina.



Photo by Annie R. Crocker

Caring for women and children

The Spartanburg District United Women in Faith held their Spring into Mission Event April 26 at Beaumont UMC. Units made generous donations to UWF’s four mission projects: Bethlehem Centers in Spartanburg and Columbia, Killingsworth and Wallace Family Life Center. “Thank you, Spartanburg, for all you do in sharing love, support and caring of women and children and youth,” the Rev. Annie Crocker said.

Clovis’ Cupboard helps local kids in honor of late obstetrician



Members assemble food bags.

By the Rev. Darlene L. Kelley

CLINTON—Hungry children live in every county and every community in South Carolina. According to Feeding America, one in six children experience hunger and food insecurity in South Carolina.

But the people of Hopewell United Methodist Church are doing something to combat the pain of childhood hunger, providing nutritious, nonperishable food to students at Joanna Elementary School.

Inspired by the memory of a beloved

United Methodist, Clovis’ Cupboard began as a way to honor Dr. Clovis Pierce, an obstetrician in the community and devoted member of Hopewell. When Dr. Pierce died in 2024, Rhonda Moore wanted to honor the doctor’s memory with a mission program. Since Dr. Pierce loved children and Moore knew the children in the local elementary school were underserved, a perfect mission match was made.

Now once a month, Pastor Kathy Cinnamon and members of the Hopewell UMC gather after church to have lunch and

pack pantry bags for the children. They pack the items they have collected all month, mindful of the students’ nutritional needs and the necessity of providing food for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Then Moore contacts the school and makes arrangements to deliver the much-needed donations.

Not only do the people at Hopewell enjoy the fellowship of working together but also the knowledge that they are honoring Dr. Pierce and serving God by helping children. And it doesn’t get better than that.

Cognitive Connection.

African-American rural adults with memory issues sought for USC study

Do you know an African-American adult living in a rural area of South Carolina with memory issues or an early-stage diagnosis of Alzheimer’s or dementia?

United Methodists who meet these criteria, and who have a care partner also willing to participate, are being invited to participate in a research project through the University of South Carolina to help create an In-Home Health Monitoring System for African Americans with Dementia.

Faculty at the University of South Carolina are hoping to learn more about the feasibility, acceptability, and usability of a technology system that monitors a person’s activity and health in their home environment using simple devices such as smartwatches, electronic pill boxes, and bed mats.

Participants who qualify will complete a questionnaire about their health and their experience using technology, then participate in a 45-minute Interview about their challenges with aging at home and thoughts about remote health monitoring technology. They will receive a \$100 gift card for their time and help.

The research is funded by the National Institutes for Health.

Anyone interested in participating should contact Dr. Shaun Owens at 803-777-0384 or owenso@mailbox.sc.edu.



United Women in Faith by Jacquelyn Session

Mission u: Practicing Hope Together

Interested in deepening your faith in community? Gaining experience interpreting Scripture? Working toward healing for yourself, your community and all of creation? Mission u is for you! The South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith Mission u 2025 prepares for faithful living and action by engaging in transformative educational experiences.

Mission u is scheduled for Thursday, July 17, through Saturday, July 19, on the beautiful campus of Spartanburg Methodist College. Join us at Mission u 2025 as we explore the theme “Practicing Hope Together.”

The studies will be held for adults and youth ages 12 to 18. Mission u participants will study the resurrection appearances of Jesus and the example of early Christian communities to explore what it means to practice hope in God even when things seem to be falling apart. This event is centered around a curriculum designed to motivate, inform and enrich our commitment to global ministry.

The Adult Study’s theme of “Practicing Hope,” by Tabatha Holley, is a biblical curriculum that invites us to explore hope particularly when hope seems hard to find, asking questions such as: How does Christ teach us to embody hope when our backs are against the wall? Participants will find ways to allow all our communities to cultivate hope that is honest about our current conditions (refugia), restorative when everything feels urgent (rest) and possible even when we transgress (repair).

The Youth Study’s theme, “Communities of the Spirit: Living into Hope as Resurrection People,” by Regina Heater, examines the hope we find in early post-resurrection Christian communities and how they kept hope alive even in seemingly hopeless times. The author names these “Communities of the Spirit” and asks how we can

create such communities today by examining common themes found in the post-resurrection stories: bravery, miracles, diversity and more.

Mission u offers a unique opportunity for faith communities to create powerful intergenerational learning experiences. We have five adult study leaders and two youth study leaders who will be teaching the classes. Please come learn together for the transformation of the world.

The cost to attend is \$200 (adult residents), \$135 (day student) and \$130 (youth residents). The Bess Dowling Ware Mission u Scholarship is available for consideration:

- Two scholarships in the amount of \$100 each for two individuals who meet one of the following criteria: an adult younger than the age of 40 or adult first time to Mission u.
- Two scholarships in the amount of \$200 each for a youth attendee and her chaperone are available. Each \$200 scholarship will be shared with \$100 to youth registration cost and \$100 to the chaperone registration cost. The youth makes the application and names her chaperone.

The Mission u registration, youth covenant and Bess Dowling Ware Scholarships are available at <https://www.umcsc.org/women> and in the Mission Echo Newsletter. The application deadline is July 1.

Please order your booklet at <https://uwfaith.org/events/mission-u>, where digital copies are also available to begin preparation. There will be no booklets for purchase at Mission u.

Save the date and make plans to join us at Mission u as we explore the good news and what it means for our lives! For questions, contact me at 803-883-6070 or email at Jacquelyn.session@outlook.com. We hope to see you there!

Session is the dean of Mission u.

LSM Academy set for Aug. 2 in Columbia

COLUMBIA—South Carolina Conference Lay Servant Ministries will sponsor their annual LSM Academy (Train the Trainer) Aug. 2.

Held at Washington Street United Methodist Church, the training will run from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. with lunch included.

Check in will begin at 9:30 a.m. There will be light breakfast snacks with juice and coffee available. Pre-registration is required and will be made only through each LSM district director. Any Certified Lay Servant who would like to receive training to teach a lay servant class should contact your district director. District directors will determine participants from each district.

The morning session, which emphasizes teaching techniques for adults, will be facilitated by Toni Taylor. Taylor is an instructional coach, professional life coach and consultant. She holds a Master of Education in educational/instructional technology from Lesley University, as well as an educational specialist degree in leadership from Clemson University.

Organizers said Taylor is a dynamic leader and that all will leave with new ideas and ready to facilitate the 2025-2026 district lay servant schools.

The afternoon sessions will be breakout sessions: Basic/Youth Basic, facilitated by Pamela Goodwine-Glover; Polity, facilitated by Sha’Rome Henry; Ministry with the Forgotten, facilitated by Sandy Shaffer and Bishop Kenneth Carder, the author of both the text and leader’s guide, and his wife, Norma; Leading in Lay Pastoral Care, facilitated by the Rev. Michael Walker; and Leading in Worship, facilitated by the Rev. Kenneth Nelson.

The Lay Servant Planning Team is hard at work planning the academy. Complete information will be given to all district directors as soon as it becomes available.

UMVIM offers resources for summer missions

Summer is fast approaching, which means many churches and team leaders are preparing for mission journeys.

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission offers many resources—many of them free—for team leaders who want to make sure their journey is a success:

- Downloadable form templates to help teams plan and organize for their mission effort;
- Videos for mission team planning sessions to get conversations started about mission theology, why missions are critical in faith development, and best practices for teams;
- Team leader checklist to make sure those leading teams don’t forget any crucial details;
- Insurance to cover teams in case a journey takes an unexpected detour; and
- UMVIM staff who are always ready to help with random questions and concerns, or available to help make important connections for your journey.

To access all of these, visit <https://umvim.org/blog/preparing-for-summer-mission-journeys>.



Lunch Bag Giveaway a success

Midland Park UMC, North Charleston, held what members hope will be the first of many Lunch Bag Giveaways. The church is located on a busy street, so members thought they would try to see if they could help our community by giving away a free lunch. The ladies of the church packed each bag full of goodies. “We had a successful first attempt and will do so again next month,” Violet Legette said. Clockwise from top left: The Rev. Cooper Stonestreet fills the first bag. Violet Legette, Claudia Thomas and Mary Hutto get ready to distribute the filled lunch bags. Residents of the community head to the lunch. And Violet Legette, Emma Smith, Sylvia Tomberlin, Michele Gray, Mary Hutto, Beth Hairfield and Doris Freeman gather for a smile.

Young Methodists.

Registration continues for Salkehatchie

Registration concludes this month for Salkehatchie Summer Service.

This year, Salkehatchie features 32 weeklong mission camps, which offer youth and adults the opportunity to engage in meaningful home-repair ministry across South Carolina.

Founded in 1978 by the Rev. John Culp, Salkehatchie brings youth, young adult and adult volunteers together to repair and rebuild homes for people in need, many of them living in poverty situations without the ability to fund the work on their own.

Volunteers must be at least 14 years old, and all adult volunteers must do a background

check.

Cost is \$250 per volunteer and covers the cost of shingles, building supplies and other materials. Lodging and meals are included.

Registration is open now for the camps, which go directly into communities of chronic poverty and repair the homes of local families there.

Over the years, hundreds of homes received new roofs, ramps, flooring, ceilings, bathrooms, kitchens and improvements in accessibility through the hands of youth at Salkehatchie.

To register: <https://www.salkehatchie.org>.



Stepping up

Trinity UMC, Sumter, celebrated Graduation Sunday, May 18, but with a special addition to the recognition of the congregation's celebration of high school, college and cosmetology school graduates. During Children's Time, Interim Pastor the Rev. Paul Frey noted another graduation—the graduation of two children from sitting in congregation during worship to serving God in worship leadership as ushers. Phillip Merkel, 9, and Wren Kelly, 7, greeted worshippers, distributed bulletins and received and presented the morning's offerings and tithes.

Sunshine Class still thriving after 46 years

By the Rev. Meg Jiunnies

FLORENCE—In 1979, Central United Methodist Church's then-director of Christian education, Olene Civils, was inspired with an idea for a new ministry involving Christians with special needs. In the decades since, the ministry has grown and thrived.

As it is whenever we partner with the Holy Spirit, the ministry has been much more than the simple group it started out to be; it has brought together people with many different spiritual gifts to be blessed to participate in a multitude of creative ways.

Civils' idea inspired Kathy Brown, a special needs teacher at Briggs Elementary, to arrange for a small group of her students to come to Central on Wednesday afternoons for Christian fellowship. A group of ladies and youth volunteers met with them. Together they enjoyed singing songs, eating snacks, reading Bible stories, making crafts, playing games and forming relationships. As these first young students grew, so did Central's program. Wednesday afternoons

expanded into a week of summer day camp at Camp Sexton for even more children with special needs.

Soon, these children and families were so familiar with our church that a regular Sunday School Class was established especially for them. The class adopted its name, the Sunshine Class, under the leadership of Ann Ayres Orr in the 1990s.

Many Central members have worked with the class as teachers, music leaders and helpers over the years, and members of the class have become more and more integrated into the church. Some of the participants have been confirmed, and the class has always been very active in missions. Barbara Deas, who taught the Sunshine Class for more than 20 years, reminds us that this is a class of love.

In past years, a designated place under the side balcony, which allows for easy wheelchair access and entrance to worship, became the seats for the Sunshine Class and their families. Often leading each other to the altar rail and helping each other with various needs during communion, these friends continue

to demonstrate what loving your neighbor looks like. Now, The Well at Central, the casual worship service, has now become a favorite of the group.

Today, Central's Sunshine Class comprises about 20 regular adult members who continue the traditions of worshiping and serving together. Instead of one primary teacher and a small group of helpers, the teaching team now has a group of leaders, including youth, who share in the joy and fun of this wonderful class. The class itself is a combination of church members and community members as well as some family and caregivers.

This March, Central took the time to celebrate this ministry that means so much to all of us with a reception, an open house tour, handmade sunshine pins and prayer beads for guests. In addition to the handmade gifts, the classroom boasts a beautiful artwork by artist Allison Slice as their symbol.

To learn more about creating this type of ministry in your own congregation, contact mbjiunnies@umcsc.org for more information, or come visit us.



Art of the Athlete

Michael Henson, Wofford College class of 2025, gave a gallery talk for "Art of the Athlete" April 17 at The Johnson Collection Gallery. Henson, the grandson of UMC elder the Rev. Mike Vandiver, is an art history major and a background in athletics and curated the exhibition, which is on display at The Johnson Collection Gallery in Spartanburg through June 21.



Belin Youth help shelter through fashion show

Youth at Belin Memorial UMC, Murrells Inlet, participated again this year in the "Compassion through Fashion" fashion show to help New Directions Shelter in Myrtle Beach. All dresses worn in the show are made out of recycled material. This year's theme was "The Power of Unity." Belin Youth member Lauren Steele (pictured) modeled in the show for the third year, and her dress represents the many different ministries of Belin Memorial UMC uniting together as followers of Christ, with the underlying theme of love holding us together. Chasity Keefer was the lead designer along with Steele and a few other youth members. Materials used to show this included household items from mission trips, curtains, lace, mission T-shirts and leftover supplies from youth group activities. The incorporation of leopard print and the KF initials displayed was a tribute to honor Kim Frederick, who passed away. The youth won "Best Themed" dress in the show.

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GLOBAL MINISTRIES

The United Methodist Church

Young Methodists.



Jesus' hands and feet
The youth at Mount Zion UMC, Sumter, under the leadership of the Rev. Troy Cato, began Holy Week with a mission project at Christian Charities, where they sorted, packed and distributed food to those in need. Clark Hill, along with Ahbram Thompson (above left), assisted with loading food into vehicles. Cameron Boyce (above right) packs items for a family, while Cortney Livingston (right) works to sort eggs. During Spring Break, youth embraced the opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus, serving their community and spreading his love. This experience not only allowed them to make a meaningful impact but also contributed to their personal and spiritual growth. Youth Advisor Denai Livingston shared, "It is great to see our young people take time to think of others, especially during Holy Week, where we witness our savior, Jesus Christ, at work and on a mission."



SMC confers more than 300 degrees
Nearly 350 students graduated from Spartanburg Methodist College this year, most of whom received their diplomas at the college's 114th commencement ceremony May 3 at Spartanburg High School. Thousands of family and friends filled Viking Arena to recognize the new graduates. The college recognized its largest class of bachelor's degree graduates since introducing the four-year degrees in 2019 with 76 degrees conferred. More than 270 students received their associate degree.



Shandon UMC confirms 37
On April 27, Shandon UMC, Columbia, celebrated the confirmation of 37 students who professed their faith in Jesus Christ and committed to support the ministries of Shandon through their prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.



Wesley Foundations by the Rev. John Sterling Poole

Foot washing and college students

Every Maundy Thursday, we at the Charleston Wesley Foundation wash feet. It has become one of my absolute favorite services that we do as a group, and it is a really special moment. I make it clear to every student that they do not have to wash feet, nor do they have to have their feet washed, but I encourage them to come and witness this service.

Location, though, is an issue. We meet on The Citadel's campus on Thursday nights because cadets cannot leave campus. Foot washing can be messy, and we want to be good stewards of the campus property. The solution: we go out on the Parade Deck and wash feet.

If you have never been to The Citadel, the Parade Deck is this massive field in the middle of campus that is used by the students for all sorts of things: parades, military training, intermural sports, helicopter landing pad and more. It lies in between the barracks and the library, chapel and the all-hallowed Starbucks and Chick-Fil-A in Mark Clark Hall. While there are some trees on the edge, it is more or less a very open space, and everyone can see what you are doing from any angle of the Deck.

This is where we wash feet, and I have grown to love it. In the wide open under God's blue skies and the warmth of the sun, we set up two chairs, two basins and a folding table for Communion. We read the Scripture from the Gospel of John, and I simply invite them as they feel called. I kneel at one chair, and I make it clear to the students that I am willing to wash anyone's feet.

However, the other chair is for them to do the washing, and I love what happens there. Friends wash each other's feet, upperclassmen and freshmen wash each other's feet, boyfriends and girlfriends wash each other's feet, ex-boyfriends and ex-girlfriends wash



Because it's messy, the foot washing is done outside at The Citadel, and is therefore quite visible to all.

each other's feet, College of Charleston students and Citadel students—they wash. There are the expected uncomfortable laughs, and there are several students who simply just witness. It is holy, and to do it in the open is really special.

After the washing, we then pivot to the Lord's Supper after many, many, many doses of hand sanitizer. We partake in the sunlight, and then we enjoy pizza together on the patio outside of the Starbucks. There is a lot of laughter and joy.

It is the closest to the Last Supper that I have experienced.

One of the joys of working with college students is how much they will teach you about Jesus. I am always surprised at which students ask to wash my feet, and I am humbled to be asked. Their way of going to their friends to ask if they could wash their feet will move you to tears. Their humility in coming to the Communion table with their head down and their hands outstretched, and their joy with partaking in a meal with friends.

I love Maundy Thursdays with college students.

Poole is director of the Charleston Wesley Foundation. To learn more about each Wesley Foundation and how to support, go to <https://linktr.ee/UMCSC-Wesley>.

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Historical Society
by the Rev. Meredith M. Dark

A look inside ‘From the Vault’

There is a saying, “You don’t know where you’re going if you don’t know where you’ve been,” and as United Methodists, this cannot be more true.

Dr. Phillip Stone’s new book, “From the Vault: Stories You Probably Never Knew About South Carolina Methodism,” details an enormous amount of information on our conference, the history of Methodism in South Carolina and many of its movers and shakers.

In this book you will learn about six main areas: 1) advice for the church historian; 2) people; 3) institutions; 4) history; 5) communities; and 6) resources. This book is a must-read for all Methodists. Rest assured that you will come away invigorated with a sense of duty and responsibility to understand more about history and, hopefully, a fire will be lit within you to continue or begin your church’s history.

My hope for you is that the history bug bites you, figuratively, and you are left thirsting for more knowledge and understanding of our church and its people and what you can do as a modern Christian.

In “Section 1: Advice for the Church Historian,” Stone paints a picture of how to function as the church historian well and effectively. Some of his advice includes citations from *The Book of Discipline*, Para. 247.5, and he hones in on the importance of what records to keep. I hope you come away from Chapter 3 ready to put together your own history room and a committee of dedicated laity who can effectively deal with church records.

“Section 2: People” focuses on bishops, college presidents and missionaries. You will meet superheroes of the faith, those whose personal achievements are astounding. Take for example Bishop James S. Thomas. Stone writes that while Bishop Thomas was a professor at Gammon Seminary, “He earned his Ph.D. in sociology and anthropology at Cornell University. During part of his time at Gammon, he served as acting president of the seminary.”

The biographies demonstrate what excellent leadership skills these people had and how they used their gifts for the greater world around them. President Henry Nelson Snyder served as president of Wofford College and as



an ambassador for education in general. He served on the state Board of Education and “built networks in South Carolina’s fledgling public schools in the 1910s and 1920s and was on good terms with many school superintendents and principals.” Reading these passages gives one a sense of awe and inspiration for the road your life can take and what influence you can have as a Christian in your community and for

the greater society. “Section 3: Institutions” covers institutions and agencies of our conference. One article that may jump out at the reader is “Methodism and Textiles.” Here, Stone recalls the 1910 Annual Conference, where two resolutions were passed regarding mill owners and child labor. Two resolutions are spelled out and may help one consider how we can band together in response to children’s lives and the spiritual lives of leaders in industry. “Section 4: History” is an excellent section highly recommended for any Methodist and especially anyone in South Carolina. Stone has included information of the historical merger, as well as the beginning of the denomination surrounding John, Charles and their mother, Susanna. Chapter 31 details “The Sancho Letter,” written by enslaved Carolinian Sancho Cooper, who was converted to Methodism by Bishop Francis Asbury sometime around 1800. The attention to detail and the view Stone has toward giving the reader the full picture of Methodist history cannot be denied.

“Section 5: Communities” and “Section 6: Resources” are the ending two chapters. I cannot impress upon you how wonderful a work this is and how much ground Stone covers in a mere 146 pages. His work is extraordinary, and one gets a sense of his attention to detail and love for the church in this publication. Stone will be attending Annual Conference in Greenville this year as a lay delegate from Bethel UMC, Spartanburg. His book will be for sale there, or you order it online at <https://advocate.sc.org/store/books/from-the-vault>

Dark pastors North Charleston UMC, North Charleston, and is president of the Conference Historical Society.



From the Archives
by Dr. Phillip Stone

Bishop Holland McTyeire

Holland Nimmons McTyeire is most remembered for his efforts in education, but as a bishop, this South Carolina native played a significant role in leading the post-Civil War Methodist Church.

Born in 1824 in Barnwell County, McTyeire’s parents were both Methodists. McTyeire was educated at the Cokesbury Conference School, which was a Methodist-related institution in the Methodist town of Cokesbury, and then at Methodist-related Randolph-Macon College in Virginia. He graduated in 1844 and taught there for another year before joining the Virginia Conference in 1845. He served two years in Williamsburg, Virginia, before going to Mobile for two years. In 1849 he was sent to New Orleans, and in 1851 founded the New Orleans Christian Advocate.

In 1858, he transferred to Nashville to become editor of the Nashville Christian Advocate, which had become the central newspaper of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. As editor for some four years, the 34-year-old minister took a firm pro-slavery stance, attacking abolitionists and Republicans. One writer later noted that McTyeire’s satire could be blistering but that he was a keen observer of events.

The Union Army’s capture of Nashville infuriated him, forcing him to flee to South Alabama as a refugee. Again appointed to a church in Montgomery, McTyeire served there until the 1866 General Conference. He was one of the leading delegates to that General Conference, the first in eight years, and helped maintain the denomination’s separate and independent status. The delegates elected the 42-year-old minister as one of their new bishops, along with William Wightman, who was also a South Carolina native and former editor.

The new bishops had their work cut out for them to try to rebuild the church amid substantial change and physical destruction. McTyeire made his home in Nashville. He advocated for lay representation at General

Conference and also supported plans to organize the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, which later became the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. One biography noted that he presided over around 125 Annual Conference sessions in his life. It took a few years before he got to South Carolina, but it appears he presided over the 1873, 1882, 1884 and 1887 sessions of the South Carolina Conference.

McTyeire was a strong advocate of creating a central Methodist university for the southern conferences. He wanted to combine a liberal arts college with a group of professional schools and wanted a theology school that would be distinct from the biblical departments of the existing conference colleges.

Critics did not necessarily approve of theological training for clergy, sometimes thinking it elitist. At first, even with a charter for a Central University, the plan wasn’t going anywhere.

For health reasons, McTyeire had to travel to New York, where he was able to make a connection with his wife’s cousin, Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, one of the wealthiest men in the country, and solicit what became a million-dollar gift. Part of the terms of the gift made McTyeire the permanent president of the board of what became Vanderbilt University, with a veto over actions of the board. In essence, McTyeire became the university’s dictator!

It is for his work in bringing the university into being, which later left its connection with the Methodist Church, that McTyeire is probably best remembered.

McTyeire also wrote a history of Methodism, published in 1884, and a manual on the *Book of Discipline*. He died in Nashville Feb. 15, 1889, just shy of his 65th birthday.

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

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Obituaries.

Ruby Kate Brown
McDONOUGH, Ga.—Ruby Kate Brown, mother of Felecia Holston, died May 10, 2025. Mrs. Holston is the wife of Bishop Jonathan Holston, former bishop of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held May 16 at Wesley Chapel UMC with burial in McDonough Memorial Cemetery.
Mrs. Brown is survived by her husband, James.

Rev. Robert Brown Claytor
DURHAM, N.C.—The Rev. Robert Brown Claytor, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died April 17, 2025.

Prior to his retirement in 1998, Rev. Claytor served the Spartanburg General Hospital, as Dean Men-Berea College, Kentucky, as Director Scholar-Leader Program University of Oklahoma, as Dean Students-St. Andrews Presbyterian College and director of pastoral service at Anderson Area Medical Center.
Rev. Claytor is survived by his wife, Joann.

Ronnie Lee Connor
COWPENS—Ronnie Lee Connor, brother of Gail Varner, died May 3, 2025. Ms. Varner is the administrative assistant for the Spartanburg District.
A memorial service was held May 8 in the chapel of Harris-Nadeau Mortuary, Chesnee.
Mr. Connor is survived by his wife, Brenda White Connor, daughter, son, two stepsons, stepdaughter and mother.

Mary Amick Funderburk
SUMMERVILLE—Mary Amick Funderburk, widow of the Rev. Donald Funderburk, died March 28, 2025.
Mrs. Funderburk is survived by her daughter and son.

Rev. Foster Dean Gentry Sr.
PICKENS—The Rev. Foster Dean Gentry Sr., father of Dean Gentry, died April 22, 2025. Mr. Gentry is the husband of the Rev. Deanna Gentry, minister of children, youth and family ministries at First United Methodist Church, Easley.
Funeral services were held April 26 at Pickens View Wesleyan Church with burial in Hillcrest Memorial Park.
Memorials may be made to Foster Gentry Memorial Southern Wesleyan College Gentry Scholarship Fund, 907 Wesleyan Drive, Central, SC 29630; or to Pickens View Wesleyan Church Building Fund, 744 Bethlehem Ridge Road, Pickens, SC 29671.
Rev. Gentry is survived by his two sons.

Sherman Griffin
SUMTER—Sherman Griffin, brother of the Rev. Lorenzo Moses, died April 29, 2025. Rev. Moses is the pastor of Centenary United Methodist Church, Charleston.

Linda Mumford Hall
CLIO—Linda Mumford Hall, wife of the Rev. Daniel M. “Sonny” Hall, died April 20, 2025. Rev. Hall is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.
Funeral services were held April 24 at Burroughs Funeral Home Chapel with burial in the Hebron Cemetery.
Mrs. Hall is survived by her husband and son.


Frankie Hymes Jr.
CHARLESTON—Frankie Hymes Jr.,

brother of the Rev. Lillian Washington, died May 9, 2025. Rev. Washington is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church currently serving Bethel UMC, St. Stephen.
Funeral services were held May 17 at Wesley UMC, Johns Island with burial in the church cemetery.

Tyren Jerome Kinloch
WANDO—Tyren Jerome Kinloch, grandson of the Rev. Stephanie and Jack Stafford, died April 22, 2025. Rev. Stafford is the pastor of Bluff Road United Methodist Church, Columbia.
Funeral services were held May 2 at New Greater St. John AME Church.
Mr. Kinloch is survived by his mother, six sisters and two brothers.

Martha Dora McLeod Davis McBride
COVINGTON, Ga.—Martha Dora McLeod Davis McBride, sister of the Rev. Jacob McLeod, died May 8, 2025. Rev. McLeod is the pastor of New Hope United Methodist Church, Hartsville.
Funeral services were held May 15 at Palmer Memorial Chapel, Sumter, with burial in the Mayesville Cemetery.

Alice Betty Smith
COLUMBIA—Alice Betty Smith, widow of the Rev. Woodrow Smith, died April 28, 2025.
Mrs. Smith is survived by her two daughters.

Rev. Louise Brown Wright
EUTAWVILLE—The Rev. Louise Brown Wright, a local pastor of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died May 12, 2025.
Rev. Wright served the Mount Zion (Timmonsville), Orange Grove and Claflin (Bamberg) charges, but was not currently under appointment.
Funeral services were held May 18 at Silas UMC with burial in the church cemetery.
Rev. Wright is survived by her husband, Larry Wright, and four children.

Woodland UMC builds prayer labyrinth with a purpose

ROCK HILL—Woodland United Methodist Church recently constructed a prayer labyrinth to mark Holy Week. Under the guidance of Director of Christian Education Juliette Phillpot, the church’s Christian Education Team designed the labyrinth using non-perishable food items, combining spiritual reflection with community care.
The labyrinth invited participants to walk a sacred path, meditating on the events of Holy Week while also confronting the pressing issue of food insecurity in the Rock Hill area. Each step offered an opportunity not only for personal prayer but also for awareness of the physical needs of neighbors who struggle with hunger.
“This project gave us a chance to reflect deeply on Christ’s journey to the cross while also stepping into solidarity with those experiencing food insecurity,” Phillpot said. “It was a powerful way to connect our faith with action.”
Following Easter, the food items used in the labyrinth were gathered and stored for future use in Woodland UMC’s Blessing Box, a community ministry that provides free food and essentials to those in need, and for Pilgrim’s Inn, which delivers supportive services, food and shelter to the persons experiencing homelessness.



The labyrinth enabled people to meditate on the events of Holy Week while also confronting the issue of food insecurity.

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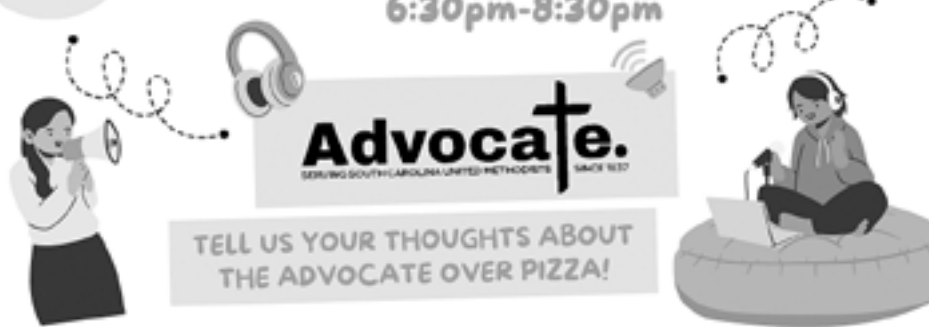
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Minneapolis chosen for 2028 General Conference

By Heather Hahn
Excerpted from UMNews

United Methodist General Conference organizers are hoping the second time is the charm for heading to Minneapolis.

During an online meeting, the Commission on the General Conference chose to hold the next session of The United Methodist Church’s top law-making assembly on May 8-18, 2028, in the Minneapolis Convention Center.

Organizers originally had set the 2020 General Conference to be in Minneapolis until the COVID pandemic forced the event’s postponement and eventual move of last year’s General Conference to Charlotte, North Carolina.

Now the current commission, elected at last year’s General Conference, hopes to make good on a plan that dates back to 2013 for the Minnesota city to host.

“There was a significant investment of time by the former host committee and members, planning, along with financial investments that required the

commission to give strong consideration to naming Minneapolis for 2028,” the Rev. Aleze Fulbright, secretary of the General Conference, said in a statement.

She, too, was elected last year to her role.

General Conference, which typically meets every four years, brings together elected delegates from around the globe to make decisions that affect some 10 million United Methodists, who live in more than 100 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and North America.

In choosing Minneapolis, the commission also hopes to reduce costs and help make up for a \$1.8 million budget deficit inherited from multiple earlier General Conference sessions.

Contributing to the deficit was the 2019 special General Conference in St. Louis. The costs of that gathering were not included in the denominational budget passed by the 2016 General Conference. Also, the previous commission needed to pay \$974,000 to gain release from the previous Minneapolis contract.



Honored member
Odell Moss, of Emmanuel UMC, Anderson Distract, is honored at Richard Campbell Veterans Home for his years of service in U.S. Army. Moss comes to church when he is able and continues to sing in the choir. He also blesses those in the facility by singing hymns.

Photo courtesy of the Rev. Annie Jackson

Bishops unveil UMC vision

By Heather Hahn
Excerpted from UMNews

Taking inspiration from Scripture, bishops and other denominational leaders have developed a new vision statement for The United Methodist Church.

The vision states: “The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.”

The bishops and the Connectional Table jointly unveiled the statement May 1, a year after a momentous General Conference set the denomination on a new path after years of infighting. The Council of Bishops and Connectional Table – a leadership body of lay and clergy who coordinate the denomination’s mission, ministry and resources – each unanimously adopted the statement.

The hope is this new vision makes clear both who United Methodists are and where God is leading them.

“The vision is about seeing – what we see ourselves doing as a denomination,” said Bishop Delores “Dee” J. Williamston, co-chair of the group’s Visioning Task Force. She also leads the Louisiana Conference. “As we’re making disciples of Jesus Christ, we will all live into this vision together.”

The new vision statement aims to complement the denomination’s nearly 30-year-old mission statement, based on Matthew 28:18-20, “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

Nordic-Baltic-Ukraine Area Bishop Christian Alsted chaired the Connectional Table when the visioning work began.

“As a church, the vision is where we go,” he said. “So the vision, from my perspective, would paint the picture of the future in a way that is compelling and engaging, that stirs passion and involvement.”

Council of Bishops President Tracy S. Malone sees the vision statement as a catalyst for transformation that will help guide future work.

Global Briefs.

Church members among dead in Congo floods
FIZI, Congo—More than 110 people, including five United Methodists, have been killed by floods and mudslides in eastern Congo. The region already was struggling with the effects of war nearby. In the face of this humanitarian crisis, Bishop Gabriel Unda calls for an urgent mobilization to help the victims.

Refugee agency responds to Afrikaners’ arrival
WASHINGTON—As white Afrikaners arrive in the U.S., Church World Service is urging the Trump administration to comply with court orders to resettle all eligible refugees. The ecumenical nonprofit is The United Methodist Church’s partner in refugee resettlement. The nonprofit remains committed to serving all eligible refugees, including Afrikaners, said Rick Santos, the nonprofit’s top executive. The nonprofit released its statement before the announcement that Episcopal Migration Ministries, as part of its commitment to racial justice, would not work with the fast-tracked Afrikaners coming to the U.S. and would end its refugee resettlement work with the U.S. federal government.

LGBTQ-welcoming church faces bomb threats
OMAHA, Neb.—Urban Abbey is a bookstore, coffee shop and United Methodist church located in Nebraska’s largest city. The church has experienced bomb threats, protests outside the building, verbal harassment during store hours and online hate for having an LGBTQ-inclusive space. In this profile, the Rev. Debrah McKnight and church members reflect on their continuing commitment to be welcoming.

Information on educational-standards amendment
NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry explains why it backs an amendment to Paragraph 35 in the denomination’s constitution. The amendment aims to standardize and clarify who is eligible to vote for clergy delegates to General Conference. The amendment is the fourth ballot going before annual conference voters. Without ratification, the agency says, educational and voting standards would remain adaptable and inconsistent.


Planning more help for Haiti
LANSING, Mich.—A proposal to raise \$215,000 in the coming year to help ministries in Haiti will be headed for a vote at the Michigan Annual Conference meeting May 30 to June 1. Fifty percent of the funding would be earmarked to support health care, housing and education initiatives through Michigan’s three EngageMI ministry partners, with the other half supporting work by a new partner, Grassroots Community Voices Foundation. The foundation focuses on livelihood sustainability through microfinance and savings programs.

Bishop Wilke remembered at celebration of life
WINFIELD, Kan.—The family of Bishop Richard Byrd Wilke painted a portrait of him as a loving, Christ-believing father and grandfather during celebration of life services May 6. The retired bishop and co-creator of the popular Disciple Bible Study died Easter Sunday morning at age 94.

Leaders support membership amendment
CHICAGO—Eight United Methodist leaders, representing a variety of denominational ministries, have signed a statement in support of an amendment to the denomination’s constitution that would add “gender” and “ability” to the list of characteristics that do not bar people from church membership. The amendment to Paragraph 4, Article IV is the second ballot going before annual conference voters this year.

New church flourishes in senior living center
MOULTRIE, Ga.—What began as a few faithful friends seeking connection has blossomed into a Spirit-led gathering planted within the heart of a senior living facility. This is Pathfinders United Methodist Church, a new church forming with help from Vineville United Methodist and the South Georgia Conference’s Congregational Development.

United Methodist bishops welcome new pope
WASHINGTON—The United Methodist Council of Bishops extends its warmest congratulations to Pope Leo XIV (previously Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost) on his election as the 267th pope of the Roman Catholic Church.
—Courtesy United Methodist News Service



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Adult Lessons

by the Rev. Mary L. Johnson

Living faith

June 1
Reading Other People’s Mail
Focal Passages: 1 Cor. 1:1-3;
16:13-24
Background Texts: Same
Key Verse: 1 Cor. 1:2
Purpose: To consider how
our faith community is
interconnected with the
body of Christ worldwide.

In the United States of America, it is a considered a crime to open mail that is not addressed to you. Ironically, it would seem a crime if we did not intentionally open the letters contained in the Holy Bible. Not only should we read them, we must also incorporate the principles into our daily living. When Paul wrote his letters to the churches in the first century, it is unlikely that he thought they would be read by churches in the 21st century! Yet here we are, reading mail addressed to other people. At the same time, we sense we are reading letters that are addressed to us, for we, too, need encouragement to persevere in faith and reminders that we are one in Christ with all believers.

In the opening verses of the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul reminded believers in Corinth that they were not alone. They had a connection “with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place—he’s their Lord and ours!” (v. 2).

The church in Corinth had a diverse membership including wealthy and poor: people of power and influence and slaves and former slaves. This included believers all around the world. We have opportunities to experience this connection in more tangible ways than the first-century church.

The United Methodist Church is a connectional church, and the General Conference includes delegates from all over the world. The internet and email allow us to connect with believers in other countries almost instantly, and modern transportation makes it possible to visit remote congregations. It is important for us to remember “he’s their Lord and ours!” These include partnering with churches, community outreach, mission trips and collaborating on global technology projects.

In the closing verses of 1 Corinthians, Paul encouraged the church to “stay awake, stand firm in their faith, be brave, be strong.” Then he wrote, “Everything should be done in love” (16:13-14). Today,

the church must also “stay awake.” Why?

Perhaps it is so that we will remain consciously aware and alert to issues that need our attention: social injustices, racial injustice in our communities and the cries for help from people suffering from poverty, illness, abuse, natural disasters and war. It is a call to action and reminder to actively engage with and critically examine the world around us. We are called to respond in love and serve with compassion.

June 8
Establishing a Base
Focal Passage: Acts 18:1-11
Background: Acts 18:1-23
Key Verse: Acts 18:8
Purpose: To identify the obstacles and opposition we encounter as we continue making disciples for Jesus Christ.

This week’s lesson focuses on Paul’s experiences in Corinth as recorded in Acts. When Paul proclaimed the gospel in Athens (a city known for philosophy and learning), he faced opposition from people who worshiped pagan gods and held non-Christian viewpoints. When he proclaimed the gospel in Corinth (a city known for materialism and immorality), he faced opposition from Jews who would not accept Jesus as the promised Messiah and Christ. As we endeavor to share the gospel, what similarities exist between the churches in Athens and Corinth and the church today? What obstacles and challenges does your church encounter as it serves within the congregation and the local community?

We could understand if Paul decided to give up at this point. However, he did not give up “because the Lord said to Paul in a vision, ‘Don’t be afraid. Continue speaking. Don’t be silent. I’m with you’” (v. 9-10). We can learn some insight from Paul as we continue his work of making disciples. No doubt, we will encounter people unwilling to listen who refuse to open their hearts to the good news. When we find ourselves living in the turmoil of opposition, like Paul, we will be encouraged by the Lord. And like Paul, there may come a time that we may have to shake the dust from our clothes and continue the journey.

As we examine Paul’s journeys, we see that Paul was careful to pay attention to the Holy Spirit present in his life. He followed the guidance of

the Holy Spirit, which led him to proclaim the gospel in some areas and prevented him from teaching in other areas. We are unique human beings and will not all agree on all issues. However, we can experience unity amidst diversity because through the church, Jesus Christ makes diverse people one body under one Lord contributing unique gifts for the benefit of others.

The Lord has called us to love God and our neighbor in spite of obstacles and opposition. Therefore, let us commit to be guided by the Holy Spirit as we “form disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections” (UMC Council of Bishops).

June 15
Baptized with the Holy Spirit
Focal Passages: 1 Cor. 1:4-17
Background Text: Acts 18:24-19:7
Key Verse: Acts 19:4
Purpose: To explore what it means to be united in Christ through one baptism.

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to participate in a tour of the Holy Land. We sailed on the Sea of Galilee, waded in the Dead Sea and dipped our feet in the waters of the Jordan River, where John the Baptist baptized Jesus. At the Jordon River, we had the opportunity to remember our baptismal covenant and recommit to the promises made to live a faithful Christian life. On the tour, we visited Yardenit, one of the traditional sites of Jesus’ baptism. There we saw a wall called “Wall of New Life,” where the story of Jesus’ baptism is written in different languages. The wall symbolizes our unity in Christ. The baptismal covenant for the UMC proclaims, “We are all one in Christ Jesus.”

In his first letter to the church in Corinth, Paul identified divisions among believers related to which apostle had baptized them. Paul wanted his readers to focus on the meaning of their baptism and not the apostle who conducted the baptism. This behavior was not acceptable for brothers and sisters who were called to live and serve in partnership (v. 9) with Jesus Christ. He especially did not want anyone to pledge allegiance to him. He knew that believers needed to make a commitment to follow Christ and offer Christ their undivided devotion.

The experience of baptism is designed to draw us closer to other believers and helps us understand that we are members together of one body in Christ. The baptismal covenant for the UMC begins by recognizing that we are a family, “Brothers and sisters.” It reminds us that God

is the focus of the sacrament. Baptism is God’s free gift. God gives us salvation, new birth and a place in the body of Christ—Christ’s holy church.

We will conclude this week’s lesson with the same sense of urgency that Paul expresses in this passage, the call for unity. Paul did not want divisive groups to form in the church, and neither should we. We must get along with each other. We must see ourselves as a family that includes all believers. We must learn to be considerate of one another, cultivating a life in common. We must live a life worthy of our baptism. Ask yourself, what does it mean to be united in Christ through one baptism?

June 22
God’s Power and Wisdom
Focal Passage: 1 Cor. 1:18-31
Background Text: Same
Key Verses: 1 Cor. 1:24-25
Purpose: To affirm “Christ is God’s power and God’s wisdom” (v. 1:24).

The gospel is countercultural and counterintuitive. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul says “Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God. Along with the hymn writer Lewis E. Jones, we declare “There is power in the blood!” Yet, there are many today as in Paul’s day who believe the message of the cross is a stumbling block, foolishness and even scandalous. But to those on the way of salvation, it makes perfect sense. The Holy Spirit revealed that the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

At some point in our lives, we realize we cannot save ourselves from our sins; we cannot find our way through grief, loss and fear by ourselves. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit and the witness of faithful believers, we come to know, as foolish as it may seem, that Christ Jesus did indeed die for us, and through faith in him we do indeed receive God’s compassionate gifts of righteousness, sanctification, salvation and reconciliation.

The idea that the Savior of the world would subject himself to a demeaning death on a cross does not make sense according to the wisdom of the world. What is your witness about the ways the Lord is present and working in your life? In other words, what is your story when you “talk about the wisdom and power of God through Jesus Christ?”

Paul challenges us to think about which wisdom we will choose to live by: the world’s wisdom or God’s wisdom. Ordinary human wisdom tells us to look out for ourselves and encourages us to be self-centered and self-serving. However, we know that God’s

About the Author

Johnson is a retired elder and the chair of the Order of Elders for the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

standards are not at all like our ordinary human standards. When have you experienced “the foolishness of God” being “wiser than human wisdom?”

This week, compare God’s wisdom with the world’s wisdom and reflect on which one influences the way you view yourself and the world around you. What does God’s wisdom tell you about who you are and how you are called to live? How have you experienced the Holy Spirit helping you understand spiritual things?

June 29
Which Wisdom?
Focal Passage: 1 Cor. 2:1-16
Background Text: Same
Key Verse: 1 Cor. 2:12
Purpose: To discern how the Holy Spirit works in our lives so that we have the mind of Christ.

This lesson continues Paul’s teaching about wisdom. The title for this lesson asks, “Which Wisdom?” Which wisdom influences the way you view the world? Which wisdom provides the lens through which you view yourself and other people? The world’s wisdom promotes a “me first,” self-centered attitude. When we walk through a department store or browse online shopping sites, for example, we see advertisements telling us what we need to do or buy is essential to have value and be happy. However, the world’s wisdom does not address the question of how much is enough. We eventually discover chasing after what the world says is wise does not bring lasting joy!

Paul goes on to say, “We haven’t received the world’s spirit but God’s Spirit so that we can know the things given to us by God” (v. 12). We must also remember who God created us to be. We are the bearers of “God’s own image” in the world.

When we view ourselves through that lens, we know we are valued and loved, regardless of what the world may tell us. When we view other people through the lens of God’s wisdom, we see them as Christ sees them, as beloved and redeemed children of God. We have the mind of Christ when we exemplify sacrificial love and service, when we reach out to others with grace and compassion and choose to live according to God’s wisdom. Ask yourself: What does God’s wisdom tell us about who we are and how we are called to live? What does the world’s wisdom tell us about who we are and how we are to live?

Happenings.

Event Calendar.

May Asian Pacific Heritage Month and Christian Home Month	Lake City, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
May 29—Ascension Day	July 17-19—UWF Mission u, Spartanburg Methodist College, Spartanburg
June	August
June 1—Ascension Sunday	Aug. 2—Lay Servant Academy (Train the Trainer), Washington Street UMC, Columbia, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
June 8—Pentecost	Aug. 5—UMVIM, Grace UMC, Columbia, 6-7 p.m.
June 8-11—Annual Conference, Greenville Convention Center, Greenville	Aug. 10—Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry Sunday
June 10—UMVIM luncheon, Dr. Luke Rhyee, speaker, Disciples UMC, Greenville, \$15.	Aug. 22-24—"Journey to Joy: Lessons from the Letters" Women's Weekend, Lake Junaluska, N.C. More information: lakejunaluska.com/joy or call 800-222-4930.
June 11—District Youth Gym Night, Mount Hebron UMC, West Columbia. More info: Ben Treaster, btreaster@mth-ebrnumc.com	Aug. 26—Advocate Community Listening Session (Hartsville), 6:30-8:30 p.m.
June 14—Flag Day	September Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15-Oct. 15) UWF Killingsworth Special Emphasis Month
June 15—Trinity Sunday	Sept. 1—Labor Day (Conference Center closed)
June 15—Peace with Justice Sunday	Sept. 1—Registration opens for UWF Assembly 2026. http://uwfaith.org/assembly
June 15—Father's Day	Sept. 2—UMVIM meeting, Grace UMC, Columbia, 6-7 p.m.
June 19—Juneteenth (United Methodist Conference Center closed)	Sept. 8—Orangeburg District Connectional Ministries, St. Mark UMC, North, 6:30-8 p.m.
June 20—Summer Solstice	Sept. 13—Connectional Ministries, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
June 21—UWF Charter for Racial Justice Event, Zoom, 10 a.m.	Sept. 14—Epworth Children's Home Work Day Offering
June 24—Advocate Community Listening Session (Greenville), Open Hearts UMC, Greenville, 6:30-8:30 p.m.	Sept. 14—Grandparent's Day
June 27—Joy Night Worship Service, I. DeQuincey Newman UMC, Columbia, 6:30 p.m.	Sept. 21—Youth Service Fund Sunday
July	Sept. 22—Autumnal Equinox
July 4—Independence Day (United Methodist Conference Center closed)	Sept. 28—Wespath-Bishop Leonard Fairley Golf Invitation benefiting Africa University, Orangeburg Country Club.
July 5—UWF Limitless Event, 10 a.m.	
July 14—Orangeburg District Connectional Ministries Meeting, St. Mark UMC, North, 6:30-8 p.m.	
July 15—Advocate Community Listening Session (Florence), Lake City UMC,	



Children's Sermon

by the Rev. Meg Cook

Pentecost Sunday

Date: Pentecost Sunday, June 8
Scripture: Acts 2:1-21
Time Frame: Three minutes (The average attention span of a child is about one year per minute of life. In our setting the youngest at children's sermon are 3, so we aim for three or maybe five minutes at the most.)
Supplies: A pinwheel and a hair-dryer with a cool or cold setting, and an extension cord so you can operate the hairdryer. Label the hairdryer "The Holy Spirit."
Safety Note: Use the cool or cold setting on the hairdryer so you don't hurt the children's sensitive skin. You also might demonstrate the wind on yourself first, so the kids know what to expect.
Children's Sermon:
Do: Welcome the children, settle them and then sit down and start blowing on the pinwheel to spin it.
Say: This is a pinwheel. Have you ever played with a pinwheel? They're fun, kind of mesmerizing (blow it again and pause). Can you tell what is making the pinwheel spin? (Pause for answers.) You're right, it moves when I blow on it!
Today's Scripture story is about the disciples and many others receiving the breath of God, the Holy Spirit. Can you stand up? OK, now can you put your arms up in the air? OK, now I want you to pretend to be pinwheels (demonstrate this by rolling your arms up and down in front of you from waist height to face height. Note to leader: Think like the game of patty-cake when we demonstrate "roll it as fast as you can"
After the kids try it, compliment the kids on their "pinwheels." Now, I want you to wait until the Holy Spirit blows on you (hold up the hairdryer), and when you feel the air on you, go ahead and roll your pinwheel arms!
(Play a few rounds; laugh and say what a great job the kids did responding

to the Holy Spirit. Invite the kids to sit back down.)
Now, in our Bible story, the disciples were locked in a room when suddenly the Holy Spirit came upon them like a great rushing wind, way more than our little hairdryer! Can you imagine? The Holy Spirit spread through the room and the people began speaking in different languages! Because they were speaking in many languages, everyone in the city understood. Wonder what they were saying? The Bible says they were telling about how mighty God is! That is amazing.
One of the biggest lessons of Pentecost is to go into the world and tell others about God's mighty works and God's great love for everyone. I think that's pretty powerful. Will you pray with me?
Dear God (echo), we love you (echo). Fill us (echo) with your Holy Spirit (echo). Help us (echo) to share about you (echo). Amen (echo).
Modifications: First, if you have a kid who is afraid of a hairdryer, you can modify the game to just be wiggly fingers pointing at the kids, so you wiggle your fingers like wind at a particular kid to activate their "pinwheel," repeat for each kid at random a few rounds.
Second, while I advocate for movement, if you wish to modify the game for all abilities you could just give each child a pinwheel. Then use the hairdryer air to spin each pinwheel.
However, in my setting, pinwheels for each child would become swords or pokers, so know your church and your kids.

Cook, the pastor of Grace United Methodist Church, Columbia, is also the author of two children's books from the Advocate Press: "Herbert the Hippo" and "Herbert the Hippo In the Moment." Find them at <https://advocatesc.org/books>.

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