

South Carolina United Methodist Advocate

CONNECTING METHODISTS IN SOUTH CAROLINA SINCE 1837



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April 2024

Changes in district supervision

UMCSC losing two superintendents, launching collaborative leadership plan for Greenville, Hartsville

By Jessica Brodie

A new leadership model is rolling out in two districts of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church this summer.

Called “a prayerful response to our evolving reality” by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston,

the conference will realign supervision of its 12 districts beginning June 26.

Four of the current district superintendents are transitioning out of their current appointments at the conclusion of this conference year. But instead of bringing on four more people to replace them, the conference

is bringing on two, meaning the conference will have 10 superintendents instead of 12.

Two of the districts—Greenville and Hartsville—will each pilot a shared coverage model, with superintendents from the surrounding geographic regions offering collaborative leadership. The others will have

a traditional district superintendent.

The district offices in the Greenville and Hartsville districts will remain in operation, and the staff in those offices and members of district boards and committees will continue to serve.

See “District Supervision,” Page 12

AC2024: On the Leading Edge of Ministry

By Dan O’Mara

Lay and clergy members of the 2024 South Carolina Annual Conference will gather June 9-12 in Greenville—the first time in eight years the Annual Conference has met following a General Conference session.

More than 2,100 members from across the state—half laity and half clergy—will descend on the Greenville Convention Center to conduct business at the 53rd Session of the Annual Conference under the theme “Seeking a More Excellent Way: On The Leading Edge of Ministry.”

The Greenville District, with the Rev. Jim Dennis as superintendent, and St. Matthew United Methodist Church in Greenville, with the Rev. Kurt McPherson as pastor, will serve as hosts for AC2024.

“While Annual Conference is a time to conduct the business of the church, it is also a time to celebrate what God is doing in the lives of people and congregations,” said the Rev. Ken Nelson, the superintendent of the Orangeburg District who, as conference secretary, oversees the planning and implementation of Annual Conference.

See “AC 2024,” Page 8



Photo by Jessica Brodie

Bishop Holston washes the feet of Rock Hill Superintendent Anthony Hodge at the close of the men’s spiritual retreat.

‘Act Like a Man’ draws crowd for new venue, new teaching

By Jessica Brodie

COLUMBIA—More than 200 men headed to Journey United Methodist Church Feb. 23-24 ready to learn new ways to act like a

man in the eyes of the Lord.

Drawing from 1 Corinthians 13:11, “Act Like a Man” was the theme of the event, featuring powerful teaching and testimony

from a host of ministry leaders on what authentic spiritual maturity requires.

See “Act Like a Man,” Page 7

Trustees: 10% tithe from 2023 separating churches disbursed

The trustees of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church have released information on the disbursement of tithes from churches that separated from the denomination in 2023.

After 113 local churches in the South Carolina Confer-

ence separated from the UMC at Annual Conference 2023, the trustees were entrusted with determining how best to use what they call “the seed that God has provided” through the tithes of these departing congregations.

The trustees are responsible for overseeing the Local

Church Discernment Process, the procedure through which these congregations reached their decision to separate from the denomination. As part of this separation process, each church agreed to certain financial obligations:

See “Trustees,” Page 8

Dementia 101 workshop to help UMCs develop care ministry

By Jessica Brodie

Ministry with people living with dementia is a growing need. Now a pilot workshop from the newly formed South Carolina Cognitive Connection Ministry is holding a Dementia 101 Workshop to mobilize and educate churches and individuals about this.

Slated for Tuesday, May 28, from 9:30 a.m.

to noon on the campus of Cokesbury United Methodist Church in North Charleston, Dementia 101 will feature wisdom from retired United Methodist Bishop Ken Carder and the South Carolina Department on Aging’s Tori Anderson.

Carder and Anderson will share information and resources about dementia and how

churches can be in ministry with their brothers and sisters living with dementia.

Carder’s late wife, Linda, developed frontotemporal dementia while he was teaching at Duke Divinity School, and he moved back to South Carolina to care for her.

See “Dementia 101,” Page 13

Advocate wins three first-place journalism awards

The *Advocate* has been honored with three first-place awards for journalistic excellence from the South Carolina Press Association.

At the SCPA’s annual meeting March 15 in Columbia, the 188-year-old newspaper was awarded first place in its associate/individual member division for overall newspaper publications.

As well, *Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie won first place in faith report-

ing for an article titled “A Move from God” (September 2023 *Advocate*) and first place for in-depth reporting for her series of articles on the 2023 discernment and disaffiliation process.

About the *Advocate* overall, judges called it a good mix of news, feature stories and opinion, lifting up “exhaustive coverage of the state’s

See “Journalism Awards,” Page 13



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Contacting Us

Telephone: 803-786-9486, 803-726-6743 or 803-807-0018
E-mail: advocate@umcsc.org
Website: www.advocatesc.org

Submissions

The *Advocate* encourages readers to submit for publication items of interest to South Carolina United Methodists. There is no charge for running items involving activities or announcements. Items should be submitted as far as possible in advance of the event's date or the date of requested publication. Since there is no charge for these items, they appear in the newspaper on a space-available basis. Deadlines are the 10th of each month for the following month's paper.

Advertising

Display ads, classifieds and inserts can be ordered by contacting us at 888-678-6272 or 803-786-9486, ext. 338, or advocate@umcsc.org. Deadlines are the 10th of each month for the following month's paper.

Subscriptions

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

Photographs

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

Accuracy Policy

The *Advocate* strives to produce error-free news reports. When mistakes occur, it is our policy to correct them as soon as they are brought to our attention. To request a correction, call Jessica Brodie at 803-786-9486, ext. 338 or 803-807-0018, or email jbrodie@umcsc.org. In the event of errors in advertisements, the *Advocate* will be responsible only for the space occupied by the actual error. The publisher assumes no financial responsibility for omissions.

Back Issues

The *Advocate* maintains copies of back issues for sale for up to one year, as long as the supply lasts. When requesting by mail, back copies are \$2 each, to cover postage and handling. To research or review articles published more than one year ago, bound copies of the newspaper are available for review at the Advocate office, Wofford College in Spartanburg and the South Caroliniana Library in Columbia.

Advocate Press releases books by Suzan Phillips, Dr. Kim Strong

Two more books have been released this month, adding to the growing collection of Advocate Press publications.

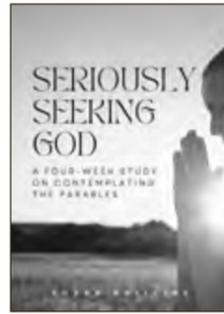
"Seriously Seeking God: A Four-Week Study on Contemplating the Parables," by Suzan Phillips, and "Laughing All the Way to Heaven," by United Methodist elder Dr. Kim Strong, are the latest titles.

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

In "Seriously Seeking God," theologian, poet and former English professor Phillips takes readers deep into the parables in order to hear



Phillips



Strong

what new thing Jesus is saying through the parables of the sower, the wedding banquet, the tenants and the lost (prodigal) son. Readers spend a week on an individual parable, listening to it and wrestling with it.

Phillips is the wife of United Methodist elder the Rev. Charles Phillips, who is appointed to First United Methodist Church on the Isle of Palms.

In "Laughing All the Way to Heaven," Strong offers a book filled with humorous stories from the longtime pastor's life, from his first years finding his footing in a small rural church set-

ting to his retirement years, often spent on his Harley-Davidson with, as he puts it, "his gray hair flowing in the wind and bugs bouncing off his teeth." Interspersed with the humor are tales of love amid loss, of joy amid grief and of hope amid disaster.

As Strong notes, "Job wrote that 'God will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy.' If Job could find something to laugh about, surely we can find some humor in our own situations in life."

All Advocate Press books are available at <https://advocatesc.org/books>. "Seriously Seeking God" is available as a paperback or ebook at <https://advocatesc.org/store/books/seriously-seeking-god> or on Amazon. "Laughing All the Way to Heaven" is available as a paperback or ebook at <https://advocatesc.org/store/books/laughing> or on Amazon.

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary to move to North Carolina

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary will move from Columbia to the main campus of Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory, North Carolina, early next year pending approval of the university's trustees in March.

"The reasons for this decision are clear: The budget deficits that we face at the seminary are insurmountable considering current enrollment and broad national trends in theological vocations," the Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer, LTSS's rector and dean, wrote in a letter announcing the plan to the seminary's alumni. "While many have faithfully and valiantly guided our seminary through difficult years, including the psychosocial and financial pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic, the time has come to realize that without bold action, the mission of the seminary is simply not sustainable."

By moving the seminary, the university will save about \$2.1 million per year in operating costs and eliminate significant deferred maintenance costs on the Columbia campus, which is far larger than LTSS's current program requires.

While the seminary plans to relocate, its mission to prepare leaders for the church's public ministry will remain unchanged.

"Embedded on a campus with a long and rich history of Lutheran higher education, we will be more able to fulfill the seminary's strategic plan that guides the way in which we nurture, educate and form leaders for public ministry in today's world," Rimmer said.

The United Methodist Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are in a full communion relationship with each other, and many UMC pastors have attended or are currently attending seminary

at LTSS. LTSS is the only UMC Senate-approved seminary in South Carolina.

All current full-time teaching and library faculty as well as full-time LTSS staff will be offered jobs in Hickory, and university and seminary leaders have pledged to work with faculty and alumni to find thoughtful ways of relocating meaningful artifacts from the seminary's Columbia chapel and campus to its new space in Hickory.

The seminary's theological library will also move to Hickory.

"In the last several years, we have invested heavily in LTSS by adding admissions personnel, a Lutheran studies chair, new support staff, a lifelong learning director and, most recently, hiring Chad Rimmer as rector and dean," Lenoir-Rhyne President Fred Whitt said. "We want to continue to invest in the seminary's program and curriculum, and moving the seminary to the Hickory campus will mean that we can be good stewards of the resources we have. This will resolve the seminary's operating deficit, reduce the cost of deferred maintenance and allow us to continue to invest in LTSS's program and mission. We are committed to faithful stewardship and to the seminary's long-term sustainability."

When the seminary moves to Lenoir-Rhyne's Hickory campus, students preparing for ministry will be able to take courses in fields related to ministry, including Spanish language; business; counseling; environmental and health sciences, and will also be able to take advantage of campus amenities for recreation and arts and culture.

More information about the seminary's planned move to the Hickory campus, including answers to frequently asked questions, is available on the university's website at <https://www.lr.edu/ltss-future>.

Bishop visits Vatican, meets Pope Francis

Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, resident bishop of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, visited the Vatican in March and had the honor of being seated in the inner court to participate in the weekly general audience with Pope Francis at St. Peter's Square in Rome.

Bishop Holston and nine other Pan-Methodist bishops from the United States were greeted individually by Pope Francis and had a few moments to speak with him following his weekly general audience.

The papal visit was part of a four-day ecumenical study pilgrimage in Italy, during which the bishops met with leaders from various departments of the Vatican to learn about dialogue, theologies of Christian unity and Methodist-Catholic relations. The encounter was marked by listening, mutual learning and sharing about how Methodists and Catholics seek to be listening churches.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to have shared a moment with Pope Francis, a man of grace and humility," Holston said. "Throughout



Photo courtesy of the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome
Pope Francis greets Bishop Holston.

our pilgrimage, we talked with a lot of people doing the same things in ministry that we are doing—dealing with diversity and giving respect to those whom we have differences with.

"Something that I take away from our time together is this: How we can disagree, but respect each other in unity and do the work that is before us. It's the lesson John Wesley taught us: 'Though we cannot think alike, may we not

love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may.'"

The study pilgrimage was coordinated by the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome, which represents the World Methodist Council in the Eternal City. The Magee Christian Education Foundation provided generous financial support for the experience.

Other United Methodist bishops who participated in the pilgrimage were Bishop Tracy Smith Malone of the Ohio East Episcopal Area, incoming president of the Council of Bishops; Bishop Sally Dyck, ecumenical officer of the Council of Bishops; Bishop Frank Beard of the Illinois Episcopal Area; and Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi of the Harrisburg and Pittsburgh episcopal areas in Pennsylvania. Bishops from the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church also participated.

Information provided in part by the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome.

Washington Street's The WELL caters to diverse faiths and abilities

COLUMBIA—Washington Street United Methodist Church has started an innovative new monthly service, "The WELL."

The first installment was held Jan. 18 and continues to grow. Upcoming dates are April 18, May 23, June 20 and July 18 with more planned during the summer and fall.

"The WELL" is the pioneering initiative of WSUMC, encapsulating a distinctive fusion of Worship, Encouragement, Laughter and Love (WELL). Rooted in the belief that places of worship should serve as communities where individuals of all faiths and denominations can experience the presence of God, the goal is that attendees feel assured of

divine care and recognize their intrinsic worth. The service goes beyond traditional norms.

The WELL is designed to be a haven for those who may otherwise feel isolated in traditional worship settings. This unique 30-minute service was crafted to be welcoming and affirming for individuals living with dementia and other cognitive and/or physical challenges, as well as their dedicated care partners.

The service is held every third Thursday in Christ Chapel from 11-11:30 a.m. WSUMC is located at 1401 Washington St. in downtown Columbia. For more information: <https://wsmethodist.org>

Bishop continues 'district days' with stops in Columbia, Anderson, Marion

By Allison Trussell

LEXINGTON—Laity and pastors from the Columbia District gathered March 2 at Lexington United Methodist Church for Bishop L. Jonathan Holston's Columbia District visit.

The district visit was part of the conference's ongoing bishop's "District Days," held since November to strengthen and foster effective leadership in the UMC.

The visit highlighted the conference's four priorities: developing leaders, engaging our communities, connecting with and growing disciples, and measuring and evaluating current realities and missional possibilities.

Holston recognized that the UMC is in a time of transition, but even in transition, we have hope that God is at work.

"Church was never created to be our pleasure. The church was created for God's purpose, ... to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," he said.

Don't lose sight of who God has called you to be, he added. We are people of faith, people of hope, people of God. We may not think alike, but can we love alike?

He recalled the story of Apollo 13 and noted that sometimes people need a tragedy or near-tragedy to bring things into focus.



Photo by Dan O'Mara

The bishop's visits have centered on Ruth Haley Barton's book, "Strengthening the Soul of Leadership."

The lesson learned from the mission is you use what you have to solve the problem.

"My friends, we are at that point in our denomination and our annual conference," Holston said. "What I want you to know is that you are capable of doing far more than what you think because we serve a God who is abundant in nature." He encouraged the leaders to embrace the unchanged mission of creating disciples. "We're going to have to use

what we have."

The bishop's visits have centered around Ruth Haley Barton's book, "Strengthening the Soul of Leadership." Barton defines soul as the part of you that longs for more of God than you have right now. When leaders lose their souls, Holston said, so do the churches and organizations they lead. "When we allow the stuff of the world to get into our way, we stop inviting people to make a decision for Christ. We stop inviting them to be a people of God because we have ceased to be a person of God."

He concluded with two questions for the group: Who is in your community? and How are you engaging your community?

The Rev. Fran Elrod, Columbia District superintendent, discussed developing leaders among the clergy and the laity, noting that both sides need nurturing and recruitment to succeed. "Strong congregations start with strong leadership," she said. Leadership should involve creating and implementing partnerships outside the church walls to engage the community.

Engaging the community requires continually evaluating who we are and how we can serve better, said the Rev. Walter Strawther,

congregational specialist for the Columbia and Hartsville districts. Authentic engagement should begin and end with benefit to the community and meet the community where it is. Engaging is listening, not telling.

The Rev. Millie Nelson Smith, director of Connectional Ministries, agreed, noting engaging leads to relationships, then to discipleship journeys. "Individually, we can't change the world," she said, "but when we become better, the world becomes better. A good man leaves the world a better place."

The Rev. James Friday, director of Congregational Development, offered some tools to evaluate current realities and possibilities. Each church has two mission fields, he said. One is inside the congregation. "If they are lost, how can they go out?" he asked. The second field is outside the congregation. His office can help churches find local demographics and community characteristics.

The Anderson District's visit was held March 16 at St. John's UMC, Anderson, and the Marion District held their day March 23.

The Spartanburg District event is April 6, the Orangeburg District event is April 13, and Sand Hill UMC, Ridgeville, will host the Walterboro District event May 18.



Photos courtesy of Enid McClam

Celebration at St. Mark

St. Mark UMC, Taylors, kicked off an in-person Sunday school celebration as part of the Lenten season. It is under the leadership of Dr. Carlton McClam, pastor, and lay servants Ernest Jefferson and Faurtina Mills.

Cayce 'Project Heart Attack' loves on elderly

CAYCE—Cayce United Methodist Church has a cherished annual tradition of celebrating and honoring its esteemed elderly members by distributing Valentine's Day greetings known as Project Heart Attack.

This remarkable initiative, conceived by dedicated pastoral assistant Debbie McDonald, has been successfully executed for the past three years, resulting in the creation and distribution of thousands of heartfelt valentines. McDonald efficiently manages the entire process, from coordination to compilation, ensuring the smooth delivery of these tokens of love.

This year was particularly remarkable as members of the wider community, even those unrelated to the church, became aware of this project and contributed their own valentines. A neighbor aptly described it as a simple yet impactful request. Even a local preschool participated in the act of kindness



The project showcases the profound impact a simple gesture can have on others.

by producing watercolor valentines.

The church said the initiative demonstrates how easy it is to express God's love.

Bethel, Old Bethel in Charleston observe Lent together

An event called Lunch & Learn has become a tradition for United Methodists in Charleston during Lent. For the past three years, the Rev. Susan Leonard, pastor of Bethel United Methodist Church, and the Rev. David Washington, pastor of Old Bethel UMC, have shared a lunch hour every Wednesday during Lent with 30 parishioners.

Members of the two congregations (whose churches share common origin) also find other ways to come together during the year through worship, praying, singing, learning, listening, eating and talking together to celebrate commonalities while valuing their diversity.

In February, both churches celebrated their 227th anniversaries. During Lent, every Wednesday at noon they gathered at round tables and enjoyed bowls of homemade soup and baskets of sourdough bread prepared by church family members. The

pastors discussed the upcoming Sunday's lectionary, then encouraged conversations based on the Scriptures around each table. Sweet talk and laughter almost made up for the "no dessert during Lent" observance. The two congregations learned more about Sunday's sermon, learned a few new recipes and learned more names and faces of those who worship most Sundays across the street.

Founded in 1797 by Bishop Francis Asbury, Bethel and Old Bethel UMCs share a common history and their Feb. 14 founding date. The first wooden church building was finished in 1808 and served Bethel until their new building was completed in 1853. The wooden structure was moved to the rear for use as an educational building until it was relocated across the street in the 1880s to become the home church of Old Bethel (the third oldest church edifice in the city of Charleston).

Both churches see the need to continue finding opportunities to cross the street, grasp hands, mesh hearts and say no to the status quo that seeks to point out differences. Bethel, the Hebrew word for House of God, stands true to its name in Charle-

ton as both congregations seek to honor the house of the Lord with open hearts, open minds and open doors.

Their next joint endeavor is a Red Cross blood drive slated for a Sunday in late summer.



The two Bethel Charleston congregations come together for lunch every Wednesday during Lent (the Revs. Susan Leonard and David Washington pictured in rear).

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Viewpoints



Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

Thankful for the information

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.”—Ephesians 5:8-13 (NIV)

We genuinely appreciate the openness of the conference trustees in providing the dollar amount and breakdown of the funds received from the 113 churches that separated from the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church in June 2023 (see article, “Trustees: 10 Percent Tithe from 2023 Separating Churches Disbursed,” Page 1).

The *Advocate* has long felt our church and our world are best served with transparency and full disclosure of information. Many Scriptures lift up the importance of making information known to all.

We understand that in sensitive personnel matters, for the privacy of families who are grieving or because of other delicate situations, sometimes things need to be kept private. But knowing the conference has another \$17.5 million to work with, as well as the plans for spending those funds, is helpful information—particularly with so many uncertainties right now. At the very least, it quiets rumors and dispels suspicions among those who fear ulterior motives.

Recently, we attended the awards luncheon for the South Carolina Press Association (see article, “Advocate Wins Three First-Place Journalism Awards,” Page 1). There, we heard a number of longtime and well-respected journalists, good and reputable individuals, speak about the importance of shining light into darkness. Even though it was a secular event, the notions expressed about light conquering darkness, good conquering evil, are familiar concepts in many a church service. As one of the speakers, Ken Campbell with AdCellerant, said, “Corruption thrives in darkness,” adding, “We cannot be a functional democracy without the publications in this room.”

I believe the same is true for our church. Without transparency and openness, without the light of truth and goodness, evil gets a foothold. Its sneaky tendrils begin to choke and tear down.

Thank you, trustees.

Letters Policy

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



4908 Colonial Drive, Suite 207, Columbia, SC 29203
803-786-9486 or 803-726-6743
advocate@umcsc.org | www.advocatesc.org

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Bishop's Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

A spirit of hope

“Come, behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. ‘Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations; I am exalted in the earth.’ The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”—Psalm 46:8-11 (NRSV)

Anticipation abounds in times of uncertainty. We want to know what to expect, what the prognosis will be—and we want to know now. In the face of the unknown, we can find ourselves overcome with fear and helplessness. We begin catastrophizing, overestimating the potential for danger and underestimating our ability to cope.

But what if the waiting provides an opportunity for us to learn and grow? What if we choose to live like we truly believe God is certain of our future even when we are not?

Theologian Oswald Chambers names the tension between certainty and uncertainty succinctly, writing, “To be certain of God means that we are uncertain in all our ways, not knowing what tomorrow may bring. This is generally expressed with a sigh of sadness, but it should be an expression of breathless expectation. We are uncertain of the next step, but we are certain of God. As soon as we abandon ourselves to God and do the task he has placed closest to us, he begins to fill our lives with surprises.”

To remain focused on following God’s plan for our lives rather than our own plans requires discipline, dedication and a commitment to prayer. This shift in focus only comes from a deep well of faith. God promises to direct our steps, not to provide us a detailed map in advance. And so we move forward in faith, finding strength and refuge in God’s grace, hope, mercy and love.

In a few weeks, delegates and church leaders from around the world will convene in Charlotte, North Carolina, for the long delayed 2020 General Conference. Much has gone into the preparations for this global gathering, and significant work is before this body when they meet April 23-May 3.

I invite you to join me in a season of focused prayer leading up to General Conference. Together with the members of our South Carolina Delegation, we are leading the “24 for ’24” time of prayer: 24 days of prayers leading up to the 2024 United Methodist gathering. Each evening, beginning March 30, a prayer will be shared online. As has been the case for four years now, you are also invited to join me in prayer each morning online, via email or on social media.

When we join together in prayer each day, we remember who we are and whose we are as disciples of Jesus Christ. Each day we have the opportunity to be for someone the Gospel that they may never otherwise hear. As United Methodist sisters and brothers, we will continue our kingdom work to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, sustained by hope and our faith in God’s promises. We cannot avoid uncertainty, but we can respond with faith rather than fear.

Friends, prayer is powerful. When our hearts and minds are engaged in a prayerful focus, we begin to see situations from the perspective of hope. There is not magic that erases our uncertainty, but in the midst of it all, a life of prayer shifts our perspective from a spirit of despair toward a spirit of hope. We truly trust in God’s promises.

May our focus turn from anxiety in the face of uncertainty and turn toward trusting God—our rock, our hope and our refuge.

My prayer for you is that this season of focused prayer will instill in your hearts a spirit of hope.

Letters to the Editor

Support climate justice

One of the United Women in Faith’s Legislative Advocacy Day programs, held Feb. 8, was on climate justice.

Legislative Advocacy Days are recorded and will be available when all three are completed and have been uploaded to the conference website for United Women in Faith at <https://www.umcsc.org/women>.

This program was packed full of incentives to get money back into consumers’ pockets by eliminating our carbon footprint. We need everyone to help make much-needed changes to save Mother Earth.

The Citizens’ Climate Lobby website can help you find your local CCL group to get more involved. Remember, “Action is the antidote to despair.”

Want to help push climate justice changes in our state? Check out CCL. Here is a link to get involved by writing a letter to our elected officials in our state. It takes less than five minutes: <https://cclusa.org/action>.

Help save our world for future generations. The time to take action is now!

Other websites you might want to check out are: <https://www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees>, <https://citizensclimate.org/get-loud-take-action> and <https://citizensclimate.org/about.ccl/chapters>.

Please save our planet earth for our children, grandchildren and, for those of us lucky enough to be alive, our great-grandchildren.

*Crystal Barrs, member
Church of the Good Shepherd UMC, Lancaster*

Say a blessing

Do we realize how beautiful it is to walk into a grocery store? We see all types of food: fresh vegetables, fruits and many sweets. We complain about the prices, yet food is available to us.

When visiting a Third World country, there are few grocery stores if any. On the news are scenes of children and adults begging for food in Gaza. Many churches have food distribution centers.

Why did the governor of South Carolina not accept the free food program for children? Scripture says, “Feed the hungry.” American people are blessed with food. How many meals have you missed or your children?

Just say a blessing at the next meal.

*Rev. John Culp, retired
West Columbia*



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Mark Thompson

United Methodist mushrooms

United Methodist mushrooms! Covered in dung and kept in the dark.

Honestly, that is how I currently feel regarding our conference's stance on disaffiliation—or, to use the latest term the conference is using for churches leaving The United Methodist Church fold, “separation.”

I am doing my best to guide my church through this process, but I am frustrated by the lack of information provided by the conference. My members and I have been depending on the *Advocate* for updated information, but according to my sources, our conference no longer trusts the *Advocate*, despite the fact that we assist in its financial support—to the tune of \$110,000 last year alone. It is hard to know what or who to believe.

We started with conversations about Disaffiliation Para. 2553 (The added option to the *Book of Discipline* in 2019), but now we are using Para. 2549. Para. 2553, Disaffiliation of a Local Church Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality, allows the church to make some payments and keep their property. I am told by my district superintendent that South Carolina has never used Para. 2553 but only Para. 2549. I did not know this. I am confused because clearly Para. 2549 says that churches will turn over their property to the UMC conference.

According to Para. 2549.4b, “If the annual conference closes a local church, title to all the real and personal, tangible and intangible property of the local church shall immediately vest in the annual conference board of trustees, who shall hold said property in trust for the benefit of the conference.”

I was told by my district superintendent that there is a document explaining how we are using Para. 2549 to allow churches to separate, but I have yet to see it. This raises the question: How are we getting around the above Para. 2549.4b? Again, I don't know.

In the *Advocate's* July 2023 article, “A Post-Separation UMCSC: Now What?,” the Rev. Mike Woods, then chair of the Conference Board of Trustees, said, “We're not trying to keep anything a secret. We just want to be sure we're correct.” If this is the case, please clearly explain where we are in the separation process and how the process works under Para. 2549.4b. Rumor has it another 200-plus churches may leave in 2024. This does not include the churches waiting for General Conference to make a decision whether to drop or change the language around the LGTBQ question, who would then consider leaving in 2025.

Up until this publication of the *Advocate*, we had no idea about the funds collected before the June 2023 deadline and how they would be used. As the trustees have decided how those funds will be distributed, those choosing to stay did not have any say in the distribution of those funds. I am glad that the conference has released the information but we have been kept in the dark for months.

According to the *Advocate*, in August 2023, the Council on Finance and Administration requested \$2.4 million from the Exit Fund, which is managed by the trustees. So, that is what they are calling it? The Exit Fund? Again, no one told us. If they were requesting \$2.4 million from the Exit Fund in August, they probably had a clear idea of how much money was in that account. According to a conversation I had with the pastor of Mount Horeb Methodist Church several months ago, their church paid several million dollars in assets to separate. This is just one of the 113 churches that separated. So “we're not trying to keep anything a se-

cret” is a problematic statement. If they were requesting dollar amounts from the trustees, they had to know in August what they had in the Exit fund. And to their credit, we now know. The time for timely transparency is way overdue.

The conference has also failed to reveal the process by which church properties are appraised. I am told, that since churches are not assessed for taxes and don't have commercial comparisons in the real estate market, there is limited means by which to get an accurate real estate value for the property. However, to separate, the churches had to pay 10 percent of their property value. How are they coming up with a number? I have tried to get information on the type of appraisal used for property value but have had little luck. For example, as I presently understand, a church with an insurance appraisal value of \$20 million, might for the sake of separation, appraise at only \$5 million in property value. Furthermore, I am told, once that number is set the outstanding debt of the church is subtracted from that amount. Just exactly how much is the conference giving away to the churches who wish to leave? Again, we don't know. And I understand that this is not simple especially for churches with cemeteries. That is single source information on the appraisal process so if what I said is wrong, please let us know what is right.

Names aren't necessary, but how many pastors have turned in their credentials? Which churches are leaving? Which are staying? Each month UMCs in South Carolina have been voting whether to stay or go. Rumors regarding the numbers leaving are all over the place.

These rumors would cease if the conference would simply provide the *Advocate* with a monthly list of those churches choosing to separate, as well as the churches that have decided to stay UM. This is not confidential information. We should be informed.

Members just want to know what is happening to our church and where the money we give to support our ministry is being channeled. And we would like to know in a timely manner. Please remember conference leadership, you work for us. The money belongs to the church, and we have a right to know what you are doing with it.

I was told that the conference leadership has a clear and concise point-by-point explanation of what has occurred and where we are headed, complete with a timeline and milestones for church separation. As I said, other than the short explanation just released by the conference, I have seen nothing about the plan.

I have been an ordained United Methodist minister for 40 years and served 27 of those years as a US Army Chaplain. Full disclosure: I do not agree with the language in the *Book of Discipline* on homosexuality, nor do I agree with the process of separation, but I follow the rules because I am an ordained United Methodist pastor.

I hope and pray that my church chooses to stay United Methodist, but that is their decision. I will respect their decision, but I would not be a competent leader of my church through this process if I am unable to provide them with the accurate and timely information necessary to make a prayerful and informed decision.

Therefore, I ask you: From now on, please, how about some transparency and honest answers in a timely manner? Monthly updates in the *Advocate* on the separation process and finance would be a great start. I believe that we need and deserve to know what you know.

Thompson pastors Gilbert UMC, Gilbert.

Coming next month: Details about the long-awaited General Conference

Next month, the *Advocate* plans a full spread on all things General Conference, from South Carolina delegate committee assignments to an overview of the major things happening during the nearly two-week global gathering.

Officially called the “postponed 2020 General Conference,” the event will be April 23-May 3 at the Charlotte Convention Center.

More details can be found at <https://www.umcgc.org>, including a helpful comprehensive guide with information on how it works, the schedule and key legislation.

Also, beginning March 30, all are invited to join Bishop L Jonathan Holston and the S.C. Delegation each evening for “24 for 24,” focused, daily prayer for the 24 days leading up to the General Conference. Learn more at <https://www.umcsc.org/24for24>.



Life Together in the UMCSC

by the Rev. Gene Aiken

‘In the UMC, we’re about the people’

Editor's note: Through “Life Together in the UMCSC,” South Carolina United Methodists share what The United Methodist Church has meant in their lives.

The United Methodist Church, for me, is home. It's where I grew up, at St. John's in Aiken. It's been part of my life forever.

I spent some years in college, and right after college, working in full-time youth ministry while I attended other churches—but I always was drawn back to The United Methodist Church.

It has always been a place where I have felt God calling me, where I felt at home, where I felt loved, where I have been able to challenge myself. It's a place where I've been allowed to try to figure out what God is calling me to—to ask questions, to struggle with difficulties in life. It's a place where I've been welcomed.

I'm not always the same pastor at every church. I change and adapt to the congregation, and I think that's one of the beautiful things about The United Methodist Church.

I'm not always in love with the itinerant system, but I see the beauty and the value behind it. We match churches with ministers and allow them to work together to figure out how to do ministry together, and it's never based upon one single person.

In The United Methodist Church, we're about the people. We're not about any single person or any one particular document. We're about the people that we love and do ministry with. It's never “ministry to” as much as it is “ministry with.”

And I am blessed here at Trinity that I have so many people who are involved in ministry, doing missions and care and everything else, and it is a gift that you get to be in ministry with people.

Aiken is the pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church in North Myrtle Beach. Watch his “Life Together” video and others by South Carolina United Methodists at <https://www.umcsc.org/together>.

LETTERS: Readers speak up

From Page 4

Questions of identity, purpose

What is our relationship to the power that created us? Why are we here? What is our calling? Do we have a purpose larger than that of ants and roaches? Are we capable of a rational and trusting relationship with the source of our existence, being and destiny?

That we ask such questions distinguishes us from lower forms of life. Without the capacity to make such inquiries we have no purpose greater than that of an amoeba or a dinosaur, creatures that share two purposes: to survive and to multiply.

Our Christian faith provides a loud “yes” to questions of our uniqueness and our ability to relate to our creator and Lord. The faith declares that human life is more than mere existence, more than survival, more than a span of years however brief or extended those years may be.

Each human life has its own unique and intrinsic value in addition to its identity as a member of the human family. Within that family there are innumerable individuals, but no two are alike in every way. Even twins have differences.

The chief ability we share with all other human beings is the ability to relate in a trusting way with God, from whom we come and unto whom we shall return when our time here on earth is ended.

To those who say that such an understanding is irrational, we believers say that it is only irrational to those who live in a one-story world. The secular view of life has some

very positive and desirable benefits, which we can and do claim, but that does not require that we deny the spiritual realities.

There are many types of conflict and contradictions in life. Our world incorporates many contradictory realities: heat and cold, wet and dry, smooth and rough, truth and falsehood, the wise and the not so wise, the lamb and the wolf, joy and sorrow, sickness and health. We live in the midst of polarities: pluses and minuses, positives and negatives, the good and the bad, but we are defined by that which transcends the earthbound.

*Rev. Mickey Fisher, retired
Greer*

Greatly missed

I wish to respond to a letter from Ralph Johnson in your January *Advocate* in which he stated that my relationship with him “most probably hastened [my] decision” to retire in 2012. That was not the case at all! Ralph and I agreed on many issues and disagreed on a few others, but we worked well with one another during my eight years as his pastor.

On Sunday, March 3, I joined a packed Memorial UMC in Greer to celebrate the life and to mourn the death of my friend Ralph. He was someone who faithfully carried many heavy loads for our church over his entire lifetime, and he will be missed by his many friends in Greer and by me, his retired former pastor who was thankful to call him my friend.

*Rev. Arthur H. Holt
Boiling Springs*



Guest Commentary

by Dow Ritter

Ready for an adventure: Asbury Hills needs your help

Imagine yourself waking up in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains of South Carolina with a full day of outdoor activities ahead of you. Stepping out onto the porch of your cabin, you feel the mix of crisp mountain breeze and warm summer air on your face. You have a fun day of activities ahead. You're going on a creek hike, you're going canoeing and you're going to have the best dance party ever.

That's what every day is like when you work at Asbury Hills. This is the way I started each of my days as camp counselor at Asbury Hills for the past two years.

My first experience at Asbury hills came in 2014 when I spent a week as a camper. That first week was amazing. I participated in a camp called Drenched, which was based around water activities, and I loved it. We rode water slides, we went kayaking and we even got to tube behind a boat. At the beginning of the week, I was shy and didn't know many people, but as the week went on, I made friends with my fellow campers, and we grew closer to each other and God.

My favorite thing about camp, though, was my counselors. My counselors were kind and caring and wanted the best for me. The moment I stepped foot on camp, I felt accepted by the people around me; it felt like a family. For the next seven years, I've ventured up to Asbury Hills every summer, and every year was different, but they were all amazing. Each summer, I learned a different thing about myself and God.

In 2019, I got to experience my first summer as a counselor in training, which is where I got to help lead a group of campers and help them experience God through nature. After that experience, I knew I had to return to be on the summer staff and help lead campers in their walk with Christ. This summer, I'm heading back up to the Asbury Hills as a counselor, and I'm ready for the many adventures that lie ahead.

But there is a big problem. Asbury Hills does not have the staff to increase their capacity, which means several campers are being placed on the waiting list. Not all campers who want to experience Asbury Hills will have that opportunity.

Asbury Hills Summer Camp is in the midst of a staff shortage and is desperately looking for counselors, recreation staff and food service staff.

"When faced with the choice of an internship in their major and a job at a summer camp, college students are being pressured to laser focus on their field of study," Summer Camp Director Sarah Moseley said. "While work-specific internships are valuable in the short term, the life skills cultivated at summer camps cannot be underestimated in the long term."

She added, "Communication, critical thinking, teamwork, time management, creativity, interpersonal and leadership skills are

all skills gained and fostered by working in a summer camp environment."

It's evident that the experience a staffer receives from Asbury Hills is a great one, but let's hear it from former staff members.

The Rev. Michael Ritter, pastor at Bethany United Methodist Church, Summerville, says, "Asbury Hills is about relationships: with nature, with one another, and with God. As a camp counselor back in the early 1990s, I formed godly relationships that continued to remain today. As a pastor, I see Asbury Hills as being a place where godly foundations occur. I think that Asbury Hills and camps similar to Asbury Hills remove you from the distractions of everyday life that allows you to be more focused on your relationship with God. I think anytime you get people away from their regular setting it gives them an opportunity to grow."

Former rec staff Madelyn White says, "As a middle and high school student, spending a week at Asbury Hills was the highlight of my summer. I spent six summers at Asbury; I was a camper for four years and a counselor-in-training for two years. After my freshman year at Charleston Southern University, God had called me to work for him at Asbury Hills. Working at Asbury Hills was truly an eye opening and life changing experience. It allowed me to be a role model for younger children that the counselors were for me during my summers. It also allowed me to step out of my comfort zone and worship the Lord while having fun. This is your sign to work at a summer camp—let Asbury Hills be your home away from home."

Former counselor Drew Hanson says, "My time working at Asbury Hills was easily the greatest full summer experience of my life. Constantly challenged in unique and exciting ways, I was able to serve others in a Christian environment while effectively being a kid and having fun with all my friends for three months. Sometimes, the daily grind was tough, but looking back at it as a whole, all I have are fantastic memories."

Another former counselor, Jessica Mason, says, "Asbury is a special place that was my first time feeling the presence of God. Being able to foster the growth of children in the Christian community has been amazing. The environment of staff, spirit and fun is one unlike any other."

And finally, former counselor Carolyn Carpenter says, "Asbury Hills changed my life. Never had I felt the love and support of other Christians my age before. All of the staff at Asbury cared for each other and wanted to help each other in whatever way possible. My time at Asbury has been one of my favorite experiences ever. Work at Asbury Hills. Trust me, it's worth it."

To learn more about Asbury Hills and what a summer job there would look like: <https://asburyhills.org/summer-staff>

Ritter is a junior at Lander University.

Are you a church communicator?

Are you a communicator in a local United Methodist church? Whether you help as paid staff or a volunteer, the *Advocate* invites you to reach out. We are gathering a list of names and email addresses of those who do communications in local churches. Email or text *Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie at jbrodie@umcsc.org or 803-807-0018.



Guest Commentary

by Tom Moore

The church and homosexuality

Growing up in Methodist parsonages in North Alabama during the 1950s and 1960s, I became accustomed to Christians using biblical passages to support things they favored and condemn things they did not like. White supremacy (or African-American inferiority) was the most common issue where such was employed.

Clearly, attitudes on these issues have changed over time for most Americans, and most White Christians, including United Methodists, decry White supremacy and support civil rights for all. As far as I know, no biblical passages have changed since the 1950s.

Currently, The United Methodist Church remains in controversy about issues related to homosexuality. Paragraphs in the *2016 Book of Discipline* most directly addressing the issues are these:

Para. 161G: We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others and with self. The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God's grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends.

Para. 161C: We support laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

Para. 304.3: The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.

There is no question that biblical passages can be used to justify the position: "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching." Persons who defend this statement and the resulting policies on marriage and ordination most frequently refer to a biblical basis found in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. Both passages refer to a man lying with a man as an abomination, and the Chapter 20 passage says of those who do so, "They shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them." New Testament passages, especially Romans 1:26-27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, are also used to condemn homosexuality.

As a lifelong United Methodist (actually I lived into adolescence as just a Methodist), the Wesleyan quadrilateral has long been important in my religious life. How the combination of Scripture, tradition, experience and reason reveals theological truth varies among Christians, but Scripture has priority especially when it supports positions with which one agrees.

As noted above, the priority of Scripture becomes problematic when used to justify things such as slavery and White supremacy, a practice firmly embedded in some Chris-

tian traditions. When such happens, experience and reason become more important. Because certain Scripture passages agree with and support prejudices against LGBTQ+ individuals, experience and reason seem to take a back seat on these issues, but the same does not happen when Scriptures disagree with prejudices.

As far as I know, no churches or pastors have left the UMC because of the ordination of women and/or divorced people. New Testament passages clearly state the unfitness of women and divorced people to be leaders in the church. In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 Paul writes, "Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is something they want to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church." In Matthew 19:8-9, Jesus says to the Pharisees, "It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

Clearly, Scriptures about homosexuality have priority over experience and reason, but something different happens with women and divorced people. Apparently experience and reason make some writings of Paul and some words of Jesus less authoritative than Leviticus.

The question I have struggled with for years is when and where to grant authority to biblical Scripture and how much authority is warranted. The tendency of some Christians to grant Scripture absolute authority in some instances and to ignore Scripture in other circumstances has always bothered me. The passage from Matthew 19 above occurs only five verses before Jesus says, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God." Why do verses 8 and 9 have so much less authority than verse 14 when all are words of Jesus in the same chapter of Matthew?

From my perspective, the most common misuse of scriptural authority is using Scripture to condemn or discredit others because they differ from a person or people in power in significant ways—race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. Such xenophobia seems absolutely antithetical to the Gospel, especially the example of Jesus, as presented in the New Testament. Who believes God loves African Americans, or women, or gay people less than God loves straight White males? No one I know believes that.

Then why would some claim that God cannot call gay people, men and women, into Christian ministry and church leadership? Why would anyone have the audacity to place such limits on Almighty God? For the life of me, I cannot understand that.

As for me, I would much rather be a member of a church that allows LGBTQ+ people to be ordained and participate in church leadership however they are called and respond than of a church that puts limits on God's power and ability to call individuals into Christian ministry.

Moore is a member of Trinity UMC, Spartanburg.



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ACT LIKE A MAN: Men's retreat draws 200 to Journey Church

From Page 1

"I was pleased at attendance with the change of churches," said Men N Ministry president Kenny Bingham. "Journey embraced us and did a fantastic job supporting our Men N Ministry event."

The two-day retreat kicked off with a golf tournament Friday morning at The Spur at Northwoods Golf Course, then a Cigars and Scriptures men's fellowship event at Journey that evening. While they enjoyed shrimp and grits and specialty cigars, the men shared sometimes humorous, sometimes poignant answers to the question of the night: If you were stranded on a deserted island and could only bring three items, what would those items be?

Saturday morning started right at 8:30 with a welcome from Journey's senior pastor, the Rev. George Ashford. Ashford noted that spiritual maturity is, ultimately, about liberation and emancipation—lifting up ourselves and our brothers in Christ from the shackles of sin, the world and all its trappings.

While the event was officially a United Methodist Men's Men N Ministry event, men of all denominations were welcomed and featured in the gathering, which was meant to reflect a spirit of unity in Christ both in attendees and speakers.

Ty Williams of Journey served as emcee with the Rev. Trevor Miller of Mount Horeb Church in Lexington. Both shared how even though they are men, they, too, struggle with maturity, as do most men.

Miller cited pride as an issue he works to overcome, while Williams noted, "I'm 42, almost 43, but I've still got some childish ways pouring out when I'm all alone or when I'm mad."

Both lifted up 1 Corinthians 13:11 as important for men of Jesus to embrace as they journey toward full holiness in the Lord.

Speakers for the day included the Rev. Rosario "Roz" Picardo, co-pastor at the multigenerational, multiethnic Mosaic Church in Beavercreek, Ohio; the Rev. Percy Reeves, senior pastor of the multicultural Sanctuary Charlotte Church in Charlotte; the Rev. Steven Brown, superintendent of the Marion District of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church; and Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, who closed the event with a Spirit-filled foot-washing to model what Jesus did for the disciples in John 13:1-9.

Marks of maturity

Picardo was the first speaker, lifting up practical steps to end childish ways and offered seven marks of maturity. A first-generation Sicilian-American who grew up in western New York, Picardo holds a Master of Divinity from Asbury Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry from United Theological Seminary and spent time as a military chaplain, serving four years in the Marine Reserves and five years in the Navy Reserves. Today in addition to pastoring Mosaic, he is an author and national speaker.

He shared how in America, we often have very few real rites of passage to mark when a boy becomes a man, unlike how it is in other cultures around the world. Therefore, today's men get confused about what it means to be a man, sometimes thinking it's about being a "disciplined jerk," he said. Men often have little direction or teaching about this.

"Asserting power and lording it over others not manhood," he said.

Instead, he offered seven marks of maturity for men to aspire to reach. As he said, real men:

- Seek inner healing rather than perpetuating hurts;
- Show vulnerability rather than hiding their feelings;
- Ask for help rather than ignoring their limitations;
- Lift others up rather than putting them down;
- Live to serve rather than to be served;



Ashford



Picardo



Brown



Reeves



Men N Ministry President Kenny Bingham (left) enjoys some fellowship time at the Cigars and Scripture Friday night event.



Men pray during the Saturday morning retreat.



Marvin Horton (foreground, left, shaking Bishop Holston's hand) gets emotional as he's surprised as the recipient of the United Methodist Men's John Wesley Award.

- Are teachable rather than prideful; and
- Love rather than hate.

He invited men to make 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 personal, inserting their own name into the passage to help them understand what to aim for with maturity when it comes to love. For instance: "Roz is patient, Roz is kind. Roz does not envy, Roz does not boast, Roz is not proud. Roz does not dishonor others, Roz is not self-seeking, Roz is not easily angered, Roz keeps no record of wrongs. Roz does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Roz always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Roz never fails."

Faithfulness and trust

After a time for roundtable discussion, Brown served as the event's next speaker. Brown spent a decade as a construction project manager, high school teacher, coach and youth ministry director before seeking ordination as a pastor. He holds a Master of Divinity from Duke Divinity School and pastored a number of churches before his appointment as Marion District superintendent.

Brown talked about how trusting with all our heart is evidenced in the choices we make.

"To follow Jesus and let him be the shepherd we have to act and make choices,"

Brown said.

He called a volunteer onstage and used the encounter to illuminate how trust works with men—often, men will trust if they can understand they are getting a good deal or there is an ironclad promise behind something—a truth in writing.

Brown shared how we make trades every day, some wise and some not so wise. For instance, he said, we might trade checking our email versus quiet time with God or scanning our social media feed over reading the Bible. But as Jesus asked in Mark 8:36, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (NKJV).

We have to make trades—to choose to serve rather than be served, to set time apart to be with God.

"God can be trusted, but you have to find that out for yourself," Brown said.

Navigating Life's Obstacles

Reeves spoke next. A former college football player for the University of South Carolina, Reeves started Sanctuary Charlotte Church in 2007 with a goal to establish a church that was truly welcoming to everyone regardless of personal history, family background, ethnicity or gender. He shared how when he was 13, his mom passed away, and his life entered a tailspin.

"I lost my way," Reeves said, noting how

he got kicked off the football team and was failing in school by his senior year when he realized he needed to turn his life around.

One day, watching George Rogers play football for the South Carolina Gamecocks, he was inspired to pray: "God, if you give me the ability to play, I'll honor you wherever I am, no matter the circumstances."

Two years later, he said, Rogers was his roommate. His life transformed. He eventually went from a walk-on who served as a tackling dummy at football practice to a full educational ride, and he knew the Lord was at the root of all of this.

"The Lord is able. I don't care how old you are," Reeves told the crowd.

He said the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those being saved, who are called, it is the power of God, and there is something in the cross that still speaks to us despite the world around us.

"When God breathes life into you, you become the man who God wants you to be and you discover and discern who God wants you to be," Reeves said. "We mirror on outside what God is doing inside"

He pointed to the men before him, noting he knows some of them have had dreams shattered, marriages shattered, even relationships with their kids shattered. Yet God is still king.

"He's able to put you back together again," Reeves said. "I encourage you—whatever stage of life you're in, God's going to build something right where you are."

A sending out

After lunch from Charlie's Grill, South Carolina Resident Bishop Holston empowered the men, reminding them God has called them to be men of faith, men of valor, men of hope, men of grace and men of mercy. And without effective, godly men in the church, community and workplace, the world cannot become better.

"With you the world will be better, for God makes the difference through you," Holston said.

Holston called all four of the UMC district superintendents there—the Revs. Anthony Hodge, Telley Gadson, Stephen Love and Steve Brown—onto the stage, asking them to sit in chairs and remove their shoes. Then, he knelt before each one and washed their feet in a reflection of what Jesus did in John 13:1-9.

He reminded the crowd that Jesus washed their feet to purify them before sending them out to do his work. Today, we can do the same.

"We must be An example," Holston said. "My friends, in these moments we decide: We're going to make the difference that needs to be made."

The event also featured a host of vendors, sponsors and other supporters who helped make the day possible. Bingham lifted up corporate sponsors Southern Mutual Church Insurance, Church Visuals Twelve:Thirty Media, the South Carolina United Methodist Advocate and the South Carolina Conference Lay Leadership Area, as well as ministry vendors Salkehatchie, United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Early Response Team, Men N Ministry Scouting, Asbury Hills Camp and the conference's Campus Ministries.

He also expressed appreciation to the major sponsoring churches and local sponsoring churches for the event. Major sponsoring churches were Ashland, Journey, Union and Windsor UMCs (Columbia District); Surfside UMC (Marion District); and Good Samaritan and Woodland UMCs (Rock Hill).

Local sponsoring churches were Bethesda UMC (Anderson); Dacusville, Lee Road and St. Mark UMCs (Greenville); St. Mark UMC (Greenwood); Aldersgate and Lytleton Street UMCs (Hartsville); and New Light UMC (Orangeburg).

Next year's event will be Feb. 22. For more on UMM Men N Ministry: <https://mennministysc.org>.

Photos by Jessica Brodie

AC 2024: This year's Greenville event to include elections

From Page 1

“Our theme, ‘A More Excellent Way: On the Leading Edge of Ministry,’ reminds us that God is still actively working in the world and inviting us into new adventures of faith. Being on the leading edge of ministry is an exhilarating place to be. It means constantly pushing boundaries, trying new approaches, and being open to innovative ideas in order to reach and impact more people for God’s kingdom. It requires a deep passion for serving others and a willingness to step out of our comfort zone.”

Highlights of the gathering include:

- Clergy Session: Scheduled for 2:30 p.m. Sunday, June 9, this session will be conducted in person for the first time since 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic forced clergy to meet online beginning in 2020. Among other formal business, clergy members vote each year on whether to accept ordinands into membership of the Annual Conference, a decision that must take place before the Service for Commissioning, Ordination and Retirement;
- Service for Commissioning, Ordination

and Retirement Recognition: This service is scheduled for the opening of Annual Conference at 7 p.m. Sunday, June 9. As with last year, the conference determined holding this service on a weekend night rather than during the week will make attendance easier for family and friends of retirees, ordinands and those being commissioned. Bishop Frank J. Beard, resident bishop of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, will deliver the sermon;

- Opening Worship: This worship is scheduled for 9 a.m. on the first full day of Annual Conference, Monday, June 10. Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, resident bishop of the South Carolina Conference, will deliver the sermon;

- Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving: This service is scheduled for 5 p.m. Tuesday, June 11. Dr. Sandra Stevens Poirel, superintendent of the Charleston District, will deliver the sermon during the memorial service, which honors clergy and spouses who have died over the previous year; and
- Election of conference officers who hold quadrennial positions (see below).

All lay and clergy members must register online by May 27 at <https://www.umcsc.org/>

ac2024-reg. Name badges will be mailed to members once they register. Upon arrival at the Greenville Convention Center, those who register online will be able to simply check in and pick up their conference packet and badge-holder.

Meals will be offered at the convention center for those who wish. When conference attendees register, they will have the opportunity to purchase tickets for meals onsite. These optional meals will be available for dinner Sunday and lunch Monday through Wednesday. Some groups and agencies have scheduled special gatherings that will include meals. If your group usually meets during one of the above meal times, you should check before ordering your meals.

All documentation members will need—along with key video reports—will be available at <https://www.umcsc.org/ac2024> before the Annual Conference convenes to provide as much opportunity for preparation as possible.

For the first time since 2016, Annual Conference members will elect conference officers who hold quadrennial positions:

- The conference chancellor, upon nomi-

nation by the bishop;

- The conference parliamentarian, upon nomination by the bishop;
- The conference secretary, upon nomination by the bishop and the Cabinet, or upon nomination from the floor;

- Assistant conference secretaries as required, upon nomination by the conference secretary;

- The conference treasurer-statistician, upon nomination of the Council on Finance and Administration;
- The conference lay leader, upon nomination by a committee composed of leaders of lay ministries from across the conference;

- The conference historian, upon nomination by the Conference Commission on Archives and History; and

- The conference archivist, upon nomination by the Conference Commission on Archives and History.

Persons elected to each of these positions will begin their service Jan. 1, 2025, which is the beginning of the next quadrennium. This allows for a time of transition from incumbent office-holders to their newly elected successors.

TRUSTEES: Tithe amount received is roughly \$17.5 million

From Page 1

- A tithe equal to 10 percent of the appraised value of all church property and liquid assets;
- All unpaid apportionment giving for the prior year, as well as for the year of closure up to the date of the Annual Conference vote to close the church;
- An additional 12 months of apportionment giving;
- All unpaid salary and benefits due to clergy appointed to the church;
- A withdrawal liability equal to the church’s proportional share of any unfunded pension obligations; and
- Other financial considerations and legal liabilities of the local church—such as the disposition of any debts, loans, leases, endowments, foundations and cemeteries—must be satisfied or transferred to a new entity.

In a March 21 statement, the trustees announced the total amount received from the churches that departed in 2023 is a little more than \$17.5 million.

Most of that money already has been distributed or set aside for a specific purpose, the trustees stated:

- \$7.48 million “Hope Fund”—direct ministry grants that will be shared through the districts;

- \$3.8 million in apportionment funds for 2023 and half of 2024 have been disbursed to conference ministries as part of the current year’s budget;

- \$2.4 million to the Conference Council on Finance and Administration to ease the financial impact on local churches in coming years’ budgets;

- \$1 million to Conference Congregational Development to help support local churches, new ministries and new church plants and communities where poverty is significant;

- \$299,000 to cover unfunded pension liabilities; and
- \$31,000 in direct billing for pastors’ pension and health benefits.

The trustees are holding \$2.5 million to cover their operations and legal expenses. Trustees may release some or all of these funds for ministry after certain legal deadlines have expired.

“We are called by a generous and loving God to be faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms—this has always been so within our connection,” said the Rev. Shannon Bullion, chair of the trustees of the Annual Conference. “Being entrusted with the care of the tithes of separating churches, the trustees have diligently and collaboratively discerned what we pray is the best use of what God has provided.”

South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston and the Cabinet have prayerfully considered how to effectively support and empower the mission and ministries of the local church and encourage revitalization and leadership development.

They have established the “Hope Fund”—available to local churches through their district offices—to provide financial support to assist congregations in achieving the conference’s “Our 4 Priorities” as they make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

“We celebrate mission and ministry at multiple levels in the local church,” said Dr. Stephen Love, the Greenwood District superintendent and dean of the Cabinet. “We are grateful that we can sow the seeds of hope, walking with congregations as they dream God-sized dreams and realize that hope for the future.”

On June 6, 2023, members of the 2023 South Carolina Annual Conference approved the closure of the 113 local churches, whose members had voted to separate from the denomination.

The process for closing these churches—all of which planned to continue in ministry as new entities—is found in Para. 2549 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*.

These churches, having completed the

Tithes from Separating Churches

- Total amount received: \$17,574,285
- Assumed specific allocations:
 - Apportionments (2023 and half of 2024): \$3,816,747
 - Direct billing: \$30,978
 - Unfunded pension liability: \$298,986
- Retained by Trustees of the Annual Conference
 - Legal reserve: \$1,342,757
 - Operating reserve: \$1,208,482
- Conference Council on Finance and Administration: \$2,400,000
- Conference Congregational Development: \$1,000,000
- Districts, via The Cabinet (Hope Fund): \$7,476,335

conference’s Local Church Discernment Process, determined they can no longer function as a United Methodist church because they firmly believe the denomination has not consistently upheld its stated doctrine on issues of human sexuality. Each church held a church conference during which at least two-thirds of professing members supported declaring formally that the church can no longer continue to function as a United Methodist church.

Mechanicsville UMC celebrates first HBCU and Greek Sunday

In a celebration of heritage, faith and academic achievement, Mechanicsville United Methodist Church, Bishopville, hosted its first Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Greek Sunday on Jan. 28 in honor of United Methodist Student Day.

Mechanicsville pastor the Rev. Kenneth Middleton delivered a powerful message that highlighted the importance of education, culture and unity within the community. He emphasized the pivotal role that HBCUs and Greek organizations play in shaping the future of young minds and fostering a sense of identity and belonging. The goal is to celebrate the achievements of these institutions and inspire the next generation of leaders.

During this celebration, Mechanicsville awarded a scholarship to Asad Frierson for his outstanding achievement both in and out of the classroom.

Frierson is currently attending the University of South Carolina.

One highlight of the event was a special recognition ceremony where Mechanicsville UMC honored local HBCU alumni for their outstanding contributions in various fields. The church also took a moment to acknowledge the importance of historically Black sororities and fraternities, collectively known as the Divine Nine, in promoting community



Above are the Divine Nine.

service, scholarship and leadership.

United Methodist Student Day was the original Special Sunday founded by United Methodist Church Sunday schools who collected offerings to help advance education for their children.

The fund was originally established in 1872 as the Children’s Fund.

Today, United Methodist Student Day Sunday has the same purpose, calling upon the denomination to support their students as they prepare for life by adding knowledge to their faith.



Kappa gathers in fellowship.



MUMC awards a scholarship to Asad Frierson.



Joy was evident during the morning worship service.

This Lenten Season, join us. . .

Pancake Supper February 13th 5:00-7:00 p.m.
 Ash Wednesday February 14th 6:00 p.m.

Holy Week Services

March 24th Palm Sunday
 11:00 a.m. Service

March 28th Maundy Thursday
 6:00 p.m. Service

March 29th GOOD FRIDAY
 Open for Prayers 3:00-5:00 p.m.

March 31st Easter Sunday
 Breakfast 10:00 a.m.
 Worship 11:00 a.m.

ST. MARK
 United Methodist Church
 3200 Lyles Street 29201

Postal outreach

St. Mark UMC, Columbia, got creative this year, designing and mailing 200 postcards to neighbors inviting them to come to Lenten and Easter Services. Freddie Vaughn designed it.



Loving their neighbors

The Myrtle Strange Circle at Manning UMC, Manning, provided a Valentine's Day party Feb. 12 for the residents of Mannington Place.



The Rev. Darlene Moore Richardson blessed the marker after it was unveiled.



Murray's LH Cuttino Ensemble Choir celebrated their 70th anniversary.

Murray receives historical marker, celebrates Black history and choir anniversary

SUMMERVILLE—Murray United Methodist Church has hosted a few exciting events so far this year.

On Jan. 28, Murray celebrated receiving its historical marker, an effort that started two years prior. The marker initiative was spearheaded by Murray's former pastor, the Rev. Lillie K. Davis, as well as church historian Sam Tucker and member Leddie Robinson.

Murray's current pastor, the Rev. Darlene Moore Richardson, blessed the marker after it was unveiled after morning worship.

"This was so exciting since we will be celebrating our 160th church anniversary this July," said Jamelah Lemon, communications chair for the church.

In February for Black History Month, Murray hosted a special Black history program featuring their children and youth. They selected Black history figures and presented them in their own special, from Bobbi Humphrey and Johnathan Green to James Weldon Johnson and The Harlem Renaissance. The children were adorned in their African attire and some dressed up as their Black history figures.

Lastly, in March, Murray's LH Cuttino Ensemble Choir celebrated their 70th anniversary. They led a glorious service with beautiful singing, with selections such as "Let Us All Go Back," "Lord I Want to Be a Christian" and "Jesus Will Work It Out." The choir was led by the director, Clara Tucker, and the president, Mary Green, who gave closing remarks and expressions of thanks to all who have supported them during their decades of service.

Around the Districts

Charleston District

Knightsville UMC, Summerville, held a number of events recently. On March 10, they held a cornhole tournament plus a spaghetti lunch. Cost was \$30/team, \$40/team with lunch and \$10 lunch only, and proceeds benefitted the church's EPH 6 Youth Group. First and second place cash prizes were awarded. On March 16, 9-11 a.m., they held their annual Bunny Brunch, featuring photos with the Easter bunny, brunch, the Palm Sunday and Easter story and an egg hunt. Families were asked to bring a basket for their child's eggs and a nonperishable food item for the food pantry. Also March 16, 5-8 p.m., they held a Paint and Praise event to benefit their Hope in Honduras Mission. Cost was \$40, and proceeds benefit the trip. And on March 22-23, they held their Tea Room and Silent Auction from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., featuring soups, salads, sandwiches, wraps, quiche, desserts, tea and more.

Greenville District

St. Mark UMC, Taylors, celebrated Holy week with special services. The Palm Sunday service was held March 24. Maundy Thursday service is March 28; a joint Good Friday service will be held at Lee Road UMC March 29; Easter Sunrise and Easter Sunday services are March 31. The celebrations allow participants to reflect on their faith, rejoice in the hope and new life Easter represents and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.

Rock Hill District

Trinity UMC, York, will celebrate "200 Years of Grace" April 21 at 10:30 a.m. A meal will follow the service.

Spartanburg District

Silver Hill Memorial UMC, Spartanburg, hosted a community sing presentation by Dr. Eileen Guenther. "In Their Own Words: Songs of Freedom and Hope the Power of Negro Spirituals" was presented Feb. 25 at the church.

Wofford College, Spartanburg, has announced the new director of athletics. Scott Kull will begin duties April 1. Kull comes from the University of North Carolina Charlotte where he was the deputy athletics director of external affairs and executive director of the athletics foundation.

Walterboro District

Bethel UMC, Ruffin, one of the oldest churches in Colleton County, will celebrate its 200th anniversary April 14. Church historians note that during his travels in South Carolina, Bishop Francis Asbury preached under a brush arbor near the church cemetery.

The church is currently located on property acquired in 1824. The church will be open for fellowship at 10:00 a.m. followed by a worship service and celebration at 10:45 a.m. For more information, please contact 843-866-7181.

'Some repetition is good': Toni Taylor speaks to Rock Hill on resilience

By Dr. Anthony Hodge

Repetition, repetition, repetition. Oh no, not this topic again! We all have heard sermons preached that we have heard before. We sing songs today that we sang years earlier. We have even prayed or pray prayers today that we have prayed in earlier years.

So even if that was the attitude of some prior to the most recent Rock Hill District clergy meeting, Feb. 1, Toni Taylor's presentation to district clergy was well received and helped to address any issues of the thought of repetition (or not this subject again).

Topics district clergy had privy to during the presentation consisted of spiritual resilience, wheel of life exercises, circle of control and spiritual practices that build resilience. We appreciated her presentation in the Rock Hill District.

Anyone interested in having a well-organized and practical presentation that can be used for years to come are encouraged to confer with her. A professional certified coach/leadership care coach, Taylor can be reached via email at tonirtaylor@coaching-



Taylor covered spiritual resilience, wheel of life exercises, circle of control and spiritual practices that build resilience.

pathway.com or 864-420-4606.

Some repetition is good. Hearing about and getting an opportunity to revisit the resources we were exposed during our district clergy meeting was very beneficial and well worth the effort of everyone in attendance.



Photos courtesy of the Rev. Sammy Pazi

Celebrating Black history in Cheraw

Cheraw Parish congregations celebrated Black History Month in February with reflections of their ancestors and motivational leaders each Sunday during morning worship. The fourth Sunday in February was "African Attire Sunday," and members proudly represented African heritage with beautiful outfits. Cheraw Parish is a three-point charge and includes Wesley, Mount Zion and Bethel UMCs. Each church has been serving in the community and beyond for more than 150 years making disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world through services of outreach and Evangelism in Cheraw. They are under the leadership of the Rev. Sammy Pazi, pastor; the Rev. Telley Lynnette Gadson, Hartsville District superintendent; and Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston. "All are welcome to join us in ministries of Christ our Lord," Pazi said. "We keep our doors and our hearts open." At top left, Mount Zion UMC members gather for a smile. At top right, Wesley UMC members are pictured, including their oldest member, William J. Reed (far left), who is 104 years old and still drives to church every Sunday morning. At bottom are Bethel UMC members.



From left are O'Donnell Fortune, USC student athlete who introduced the speaker; the speaker's mother, Dr. Tonya Mack; Erius Rogers; chair Celeste Butler; and Pastor Allen Nesmith.

'The Power of Visual Communication' presented at St. James to showcase Black history

Black History Month at St. James United Methodist Church, Sumter, featured its very own artist and visual communicator Erius Rogers recently. Rogers spoke on "The Power of Visual Communication."

Rogers is graduate of University of South Carolina-Aiken with an educational background in communication and digital arts.

In his message, Rogers demonstrated how he believed Jesus to be a visual communicator through his wonders and miracles. These miracles provided proof for the people that Jesus was the Yehovah God.

Rogers made it plain by referencing the scriptures for Jesus's miracles, which he believed made Jesus the master visual communicator. Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana; parted the Red Sea for the people of Israel to cross; walked on water; fed 5,000 plus women and children with a

few loaves of bread and fish; healed a man who was unable to speak; healed a Gentile woman's demon-possessed daughter; healed a woman who had been crippled for 18 years; and healed two blind men.

In Rogers's opinion, these visually communicated miracles are what made people believe in and follow Jesus. These miracles inspired change and evoked emotion across the land.

The program was orchestrated by Celeste Butler, chair of the Black History Month Celebration, along with her committee members. Organizers issued a special thank you to the St. James Male Chorus, Praise Team and Purpose Driven Dance Team for inspiring the congregation through song and dance.

Rogers is the son of Dr. Tonya Mack and resides in Warrenton with his three-year old daughter, Campbell Eden.

Outreach going strong at Bethel UMC

By Ruth Hodges

SMOAKS—Five youth, community and diversity-related programs were held at Bethel United Methodist Church recently.

On Sunday, Feb. 18, worship services were led by church youth. Erica Bryant served as youth speaker and Michael Davis as liturgist. Erica spoke on the origin of Black History Month, its significance and the importance of Carter G. Woodson. Other youth presented excerpts from speeches by notable African Americans and a "Who Am I" presentation. Adults joined the children in making reminiscent statements from deceased or living elders in the local church and having the audience guess who the person was.

Following the Black History program, Pastor Walter Harley and First Lady Elaine Harley donated Bibles to the youth members to ensure all had their own Bibles for worship services, Bible study, personal study and to enhance their own spiritual growth.

In January, Bethel was blessed with a mini grant to fund its afterschool program. Children ages pre-kindergarten to 10 attend the program, which is held on Saturdays at the church. Children are tutored and participate in various interactive activities to promote their academic success.

Also in January, Bethel sponsored an elder



Diane Washington, Pastor Walter Harley and First Lady Elaine Harley join other angel tree participants.

financial abuse in the dementia community workshop.

Held Jan. 28 in the fellowship hall, the workshop featured Abdalla Straker of Columbia who clarified and described 11 types of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. Some members were surprised to learn Alzheimer's and dementia are not synonymous.

In December, Bethel held its annual angel tree ministry, where members pulled cards from the angel tree containing names of children in the Hampton County area. Members purchased gifts for children based on the name and age group listed on the cards. Diane Washington of Varnville Housing Authority was presented gifts for more than 40 children in her community.

Orangeburg UWF gears up for mission

By Barbara Simpson

Orangeburg District United Women in Faith is acclimating to worship in new ways, enduring hardships and most importantly, putting our trust in God while moving forward in faith.

Here are a few reflections of several local unit Orangeburg District United Women in Faith presidents from area cluster churches.

Lecia G. Bonaparte of North Orangeburg UMC is the newly elected UWF unit president of the Orangeburg District Cluster. The cluster is led by Patricia Walker of Livingston.

"The North Orangeburg UMC UWFaith distributed 120 clear book bags filled with school supplies to the students within the church and the community during their Back-to-School Bash in August," Bonaparte said.

Robin Chinnors of Providence UMC is UWF unit president of the Bowman Cluster, led by Clary Robinson of Rowesville. She shared, "The Providence UWFaith sponsored a very successful clothing drive for the South Carolina Mental Health Department, Columbia SC, during the Christmas season. She added, "It took two vans to carry all of the donated clothes."

Mikaela Johnson of Pine Hill UMC is UWF unit president of the Springfield Cluster, led by Ann Fairey of North. "At the end of every year our group empties what is left in our bank account. It is sent for the purchasing of chickens, goats, honeybees, medical care and clean drinking water for the needy through the Samaritan's Purse and Helper Project," Johnson said.

The Orangeburg District United Women in Faith remains true to the mission of serving children, youth and women locally and globally; the year ended with a job well done.

Orangeburg District is off to a great start, and the executive team is overjoyed about the time spent with local unit officers during the Orangeburg District Officers' Training Jan. 20.

Mount Zion UMC of Bamberg served as the host church, where the Rev. Arthur Rose Jr. is the pastor. Eva Manigault, Mount Zion unit president and district nomination member offered a warm welcome. The theme was "A Compass for the Journey."

The key focus for the training served as a reminder that, when accepting and preparing for leadership, one must not lean on their own understanding. The conference UWF, the district executive UWF committee and the UWF website supplies references and resources that serves as a compass for the journey of effective leadership: <https://uwfaiith.org/resources>.

Sonya Benjamin, New Covenant UMC unit president and conference racial justice member, was the speaker for the training. Benjamin emphasized the need to be prepared for leadership and responsibilities: "For God's word says that he has equipped us for every task assigned to us. We have to study and show ourselves. He will never leave us or forsake us. Know your job for your position. Be prepared and do that job to the very best of your ability, for in doing so, one day you will hear the Lord say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.'"

Orangeburg District UWF also held a "Diaper Drive for Young Mothers and Dads," sponsored by Edisto Fork UMC in partnership with South Carolina State University's HERT C Program and Family Solutions of Orangeburg.

The love offering collected will be divided equally and presented to South Carolina's four UWF mission projects (Wallace Family Life Center, Columbia Bethlehem Community Center, Killingsworth, Inc., and Bethlehem Center, Spartanburg) during our upcoming Day Apart and Spring into Mission program.

Trinity members help Sager Brown during winter mission trip

By Renee Barker

On Feb. 10-17, members of Trinity United Methodist Church, York, headed to United Methodist Committee on Relief's Sager Brown.

Based in Baldwin, Louisiana, Sager Brown provides opportunities for short- and long-term volunteers to do hands-on mission work. Usually, there are around 3,500 volunteers who participate there every year. Sager Brown not only houses their volunteers for a small fee, but they also feed everyone extremely well.

A mission team of volunteers from Trinity started out in the church bus at 6 a.m. on Feb. 10 to work at the Sager Brown warehouse and do outside work. There were two small groups of people sharing the responsibilities that week, but they were going to be at full capacity the following week.

Some of the men helped to build a much-needed wheelchair ramp for a home, and the rest worked in the warehouse checking and making hygiene kits. They also took turns at each meal helping the kitchen staff with clean-up.

They started with prayer every meal and had an Ash Wednesday evening service with anointing of the ash cross on foreheads. On Thursday night, they had a Vesper service with communion. They also were blessed to be able to visit many of the small towns and restaurants after work and during their afternoon off.

Forest City United Methodist Church in Forest City, North Carolina, made and donated more than 50 kits for Trinity members to take. Along with what Trinity assembled and donated, they took more than 200 kits to the warehouse. They also collected and brought backpacks and handbags filled with emergency supplies for men and women. Items included gloves, toothbrushes, tooth-



Photo by Suzanne Jones

Trinity volunteers at Sager Brown display supply-filled handbags and backpacks. In front from left are Suzanne Jones, Jan Swigert and Joyce Halverson. In back from left are David Wilson, Renee Barker, Diane Wine, Johnny Wine, Bud Jones, Sallie Wilson, Dick Sweigart, Debbie Black, Terri Versen and George Bostic.

paste, lotion, feminine items, socks and other personal items someone might need but not afford to buy.

This was a first for Sager Brown, and the volunteer coordinators welcomed them in the hopes that other churches might start donating these items regularly.

UMCOR Sager Brown has affiliate warehouses in Alabama, Illinois, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Texas. Supply kit donations may be dropped off or sent not only to Sager Brown, but to an affiliate warehouse.

Trinity members arrived back home worn out but blessed beyond measure, not only to have been of service to brothers and sisters who may be in need across the country, but to have met and worked with other short- and long-term volunteers in fellowship, fun and service.

Anyone who has not had a chance to visit Sager Brown should put it on their to do list. It is a wonderful God-filled experience.

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MSN missionaries work in service with people of Ecuador

By Tom Wall

Henry is the owner of one of the shops in Misahualli, where the Methodist Student Network (Wesley Foundation at University of South Carolina) was based on its recent mission trip to Ecuador over spring break.

Misahualli lies in the Amazon region at the convergence of the Misahualli and Napo rivers. Several years ago, when we first went to Misahualli, some of our students entered Henry's store and Henry proceeded to berate them.

Henry, who does not identify as a Christian but is known for his social conscience, told the students that Christian mission teams (particularly from the U.S.) who come to the area don't really care about the people. They are abusing them by just trying to convert them. They have a colonialist agenda. He had a whole list of complaints. Henry told our students they should just go back to the U.S. Our students were shaken, questioning their own purpose being in Ecuador. It was a discussion point throughout the week.

We went on with our service with the local United Methodist Evangelical Church in Misahualli that had invited us. Our main activity was the offering of free medical and optometry clinics to the underserved.



Check in and triage run are managed by Hayden and Kat.

Optometry services are basically nonexistent and certainly unaffordable for the poor who live in the rural areas. Medical care with treatment is challenging. We worked with local health professionals and the church members. We saw some 1,300 people in the clinics by week's end.

As we were packing up all of our equipment on the last day to prepare to depart the following morning, there was a knock on the door of the hostel where we were staying. We opened the door and there was Henry.

He said he came to apologize to our team and to thank us for our help for his community. He saw that we were caring and really making a difference and not spiritually abus-



Carlynn checks a patient's vision to get a prescription for her distance glasses.

ing people. And he handed us a gift from his shop, apologizing and thanking us again.

Then he asked us if we would please check his eyes as he could not see very well. The student who was particularly berated got up and started unpacking and setting up the equipment to test his eyes. Henry's eyes were bad, and we gave him both reading and distance glasses. He thanked us again and left the hostel. We were speechless and gratified for his visit.

We've learned a few things over the years of doing these mission-service trips: Go at the invitation of the local people and church. Be guided by their needs and what they ask for. Work together. It is service with, not



What a difference being able to see makes for a 6-year-old.

service to. Love people. Don't go trying to convert people but be open to your own conversion. Leave the savior complex behind. In every person you meet and attend and serve, look for the blessing or gift that they have for you. Service is reciprocal. Service leads to solidarity and solidarity to service. Remember that you are a guest.

On this our third trip to Misahualli, we attended to 1,970 people in the clinics, played with children, worshipped with our Ecuadorian friends and visited in homes with the local pastor.

And we saw Henry again. He came and got new glasses. And he thanked us and said how glad he was that we had returned.

Men's basketball added to Columbia College athletics

COLUMBIA—Following the successful integration of male students into the residential experience at Columbia College, men's basketball will also join their athletic program to begin as early as this fall.

"The addition of men's basketball is a tremendous opportunity for Koala Athletics and Columbia College to enhance the student and fan experiences as we continue to look toward our future," said Director of Athletics Glen Crawford. "Our athletics staff and facilities are ready for new opportunities, and men's basketball is a great place to start."

Columbia College Athletics began in the early 1970s with tennis and swim; the basketball program soon followed in the 1974-1975 academic year. Since the founding of Columbia College Athletics, many teams have seen substantial success; recently, the Koalas have risen to a place of national prominence within the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. It is the college's hope that the student experience as a whole will also be enriched.

"Columbia College continues to grow and change before our eyes," said President of Columbia College Dr. John

Dozier. "To be even a small part of this campus's transformation is an honor, but to work alongside the leaders who make it happen is a dream come true. Our community has proven time and time again that it is ready for more—more growth, more opportunity, more impact. A men's basketball program has the potential to unite our campus in new and exciting ways, and I, for one, look forward to the impact this group of young men will bring with them."

Columbia College has started the process of securing a head coach.



Surrounded by Scouts, family and friends, James (above) earned his rank of Eagle Scout and was recognized at a Troop 201 ceremony



Eagle Scout helps Carteret Street UMC by designing and building blessing box

A thriving United Methodist congregation in Beaufort now has a blessing box so it can further help its neighbors.

The initiative started when James Fabian IV needed a project to complete his Eagle Scout requirement. James, a member of Carteret Street United Methodist Church in Beaufort, wanted to do something to help the community. He came up with the idea to place a blessing box on the church campus.

Almost every day, someone from the church refills items in the blessing box. Needy members of the community are encouraged to stop by and take any of the supplies in the box. The blessing box contains non-perishable food items, water and health items such as bandages, toothpaste and brushes. Gloves, hats and blankets are also available during cold months.

"This box really keeps me going," said one of the frequent visitors to the box. "I do not always have money to buy food."

The box is most always completely emptied every night, as there is great need for the food insecure in the community.

James designed, built and installed the blessing box along with some help from

other Scouts and Carteret Street UMC members. His younger brother, Bradley, and his mother, Ellen, also helped.

James presented the design and plan to the church trustees for approval. After installation, James visited neighbors, businesses and friends to solicit assistance in filling the box. The library, tourism board and several additional local business have contributed food, supplies and money to assist in filling the box.

"The blessing box is a great addition to the ministry of Carteret Street," said the Rev. Bryson Williams, Carteret Street UMC pastor. "The box serves a lot of folks in need in our community. I am proud of James—he is a fine man. What he has done and is doing makes a big difference in the lives of members of our community."

Surrounded by Scouts, family and friends, James earned his rank of Eagle Scout and was recognized at a Troop 201 ceremony Nov. 20, 2023. Scout Master Coley Hebrard presented James with his Eagle Scout rank, the highest honor in Scouting.

James was also recognized on Scouting Sunday at Carteret Street UMC Feb. 4.



Need a Children's Sermon?

by the Rev. Meghan Lindsey Sweeney Cook

Good Shepherd Sunday

Author's note: The following are sermon ideas developed as a resource to help churches reach young ones in their congregations. Everyone is free to use these and to modify as needed.

Date: Sunday, April 21 (Good Shepherd Sunday)

Scripture: John 10:11-18 and Psalm 23

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: No props are necessary, but I like to have a sheep stuffie to hold and pet while I chat with the children.

Children's Sermon:

Say: Today is a special day in our liturgical calendar. Today is Good Shepherd Sunday! Today we are reminded that we are God's sheep and Jesus is our shepherd.

Ask: Does anyone know what a shepherd does? (Pause for answers and affirm the children's responses. If no one answers, keep going)

Say: A shepherd is someone who takes care of sheep. Sheep need someone to show them where to eat and drink. Sheep need to be protected from wildlife and falling in holes. Sheep really need a shepherd. (Pause for a beat.)

Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep" (John 10:11 NRSV). The Old Testament refers to the shepherd to designate not only persons who herded sheep but also kings and leaders (2 Samuel 5:2) and to God too, like in Psalm 23. And according to SermonCentral.com, there are 118 verses about shepherds in the Bible. That's a lot of times the Bible teaches us about shepherds.

Ask: Did everyone bring their fingers today? (Hold up your hands and wiggle your fingers.)

Say: I have a finger play for us today to help us remember Jesus is our shepherd. Will you do it with me? I'll start and you repeat and then maybe we can try it together. (You can also invite the big people to participate in their pews as well.)

"Little Sheep" (author unknown)

Jesus is the shepherd (hold up index finger, right hand)

I am his little sheep (hold up thumb, left hand)

He is always near me (bring finger close to thumb)

When I'm awake or asleep (eyes wide open, then lay head on hands)

Do: Repeat the finger play a few times. Then compliment the children (and congregation) for doing a good job.

Say: Would you pray with me? Dear God (pause for the children to repeat), we love you (pause). Help us to be your sheep (pause). Help us listen (pause) and follow your voice (pause). You are our shepherd (pause). Amen.

Cook, the pastor of Cayce United Methodist Church, Cayce, 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 on Amazon or at <https://advocatesc.org/books>.

DISTRICT SUPERVISION: Two shift to collaborative model

From Page 1

In a public statement, Holston said this is “a prayerful response to our evolving reality” and cited the “ongoing reset that is taking place within our denomination, our conference and our local churches.”

“Two things are certain as this resetting continues to unfold in the coming months: God is leading us where God wants us to go, and we will follow,” Holston said.

What are the assignments?

The two new district superintendents will be the Rev. Jeffrey Salley, who has served as senior pastor of the Canaan-Sand Hill Charge in Ridgeville since 2016, and the Rev. Chris Lollis, who has served as the conference benefits officer since 2018.

The four superintendents transitioning out of their appointments are as follows:

Dr. Sandra Stevens Poirer (Charleston), who will receive a new appointment at Annual Conference;

Dr. Stephen Love (Greenwood), who will receive a new appointment at Annual Conference;

The Rev. Jim Dennis (Greenville), who is

retiring; and

The Rev. Joey McDonald (Walterboro), who has requested not to be considered for appointment at Annual Conference.

The traditional assignments slated to begin June 26 are as follows:

The Anderson District will remain under the supervision of the Rev. Steve Patterson.

The Charleston District will be supervised by the Rev. Jeffrey Salley.

The Columbia District will remain under the Rev. Fran Elrod.

The Florence District will remain under the Rev. Terry Fleming.

The Greenwood District will be supervised by the Rev. Chris Lollis.

The Marion District will remain under the Rev. Steve Brown.

The Orangeburg District will remain under the Rev. Ken Nelson.

The Rock Hill District will remain under the Rev. Anthony Hodge.

The Spartanburg District will remain under the Rev. Cathy Mitchell.

The Walterboro District will shift to the supervision of the Rev. Telley Gadson, current superintendent of the Hartsville District.

For the collaborative models:

The Greenville District will be supervised by Patterson (Anderson), Lollis (Greenwood) and Mitchell (Spartanburg).

The Hartsville District will be supervised by Elrod (Columbia), Fleming (Florence) and Hodge (Rock Hill).

“I am grateful for the creativity and collaboration of those working toward smooth transitions into this new leadership model—the clergy and laity serving in district leadership, current superintendents, and those newly assigned superintendents,” Holston said. “Conversations with lay and clergy leaders within the districts where these changes will take place have revealed enthusiasm and hopefulness for the future possibilities that will spring forth in response to our faithful stewardship.”

New reality for the UMCSC

The number of churches within the South Carolina Conference has decreased.

Last year’s Annual Conference approved the separation of 113 churches across South Carolina from The United Methodist Church over sexuality and other concerns. That number comprises almost 12 percent of the 958 total churches that were in the South Carolina Conference and represent every one of the 12 districts in the conference. Four of the nine largest-membership churches in the conference (those with more than 2,000 members) left: Mount Horeb, Lexington; Chapin, Chapin; Buncombe Street, Greenville; and Covenant, Greer.

This year, additional churches are expected to go before Annual Conference to separate from the UMC.

But the conference is not releasing that information in advance. Instead, as with last year’s separating churches, the names of the churches seeking to leave the UMC will be presented for a vote at Annual Conference, set for June 9-12.

“As they did in 2023, to protect the integrity of the Local Church Discernment Process, the trustees of the Annual Conference will continue to treat information about local churches that participate in that process as confidential until it is complete,” said Dan O’Mara, conference communications director. “When the 2024 Annual Conference convenes in June 9-12, lay and clergy members are scheduled to vote on resolutions formally closing churches under the terms of the Separation Agreement and the resolution before Annual Conference.”

Similar to what is going on in SEJ

The collaborative model is similar to but not quite the same as what the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the UMC has done with many of its annual conferences.

Currently, 11 resident bishops are assigned within the SEJ to handle its annual conferences; Bishop David Graves supervises the Alabama-West Florida and South Georgia conferences, and Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett supervises the North Alabama and Holston conferences.

At this year’s SEJ Conference, July 10-12, delegates will vote on a further change that would reduce the number of episcopal areas within the jurisdiction to 10 from the current 13, which will involve combining three formerly separate episcopal areas—Alabama-West Florida, North Alabama and South Georgia—into one big episcopal area, as well as combining the Holston Conference into the same episcopal area as the Central Appalachian Missionary and Kentucky Conference.

The recommendation not to have episcopal elections in 2024 “is a prayerful response to the impact of disaffiliations in our areas,” the committee said in a letter to SEJ delegates dated Jan. 8. (Read the full letter at <http://tinyurl.com/sej-letter>.)



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DEMENTIA 101: 'We want to remove the stigma, educate, advocate'

From Page 1

The South Carolina Cognitive Connection Ministry is a team of South Carolina lay and clergy developing a dementia care support network within the South Carolina Conference of the UMC. The Rev. Bryan

Pigford, who chairs the ministry, said currently one in nine Americans aged 65 and older are living with dementia, and by the time the population gets to age 85, it impacts 50 percent of the population.

"It's not a question of 'if' it gets to our congregations," Pigford said. "It's already

there in every congregation. We want to remove the stigma, educate, advocate and encourage individuals and local churches to be in ministry with those folks living with dementia, whether that's respite care, dementia-friendly worship or support groups for caregivers."

The May 28 workshop is free and open to all who register, though it's especially being pitched to United Methodist churches in the Charleston, Orangeburg and Walterboro districts. The group hopes to take the workshops across the state.

Pigford said there is a groundswell of

support for dementia-care ministry, and he and others on the committee think it can be a great opportunity for churches to engage in a relevant missional focus, particularly during a time of denominational transition.

He said people living with dementia are still children of God, and this ministry is critically important.

"Those living with cognitive impairment can be just as much as a disciple even if they can't remember their own name," he added.

To register for the workshop, visit <https://tinyurl.com/yts3dec8>. To learn more about the ministry, email bwpigford@umcsc.org.

JOURNALISM AWARDS: Cont'd

From Page 1

Methodist churches and the matters important to them" and "inclusive coverage with a range of perspectives."

They also noted they enjoyed the Advocate's features on local philanthropic efforts and were "especially impressed by reporting on disaffiliation."

This brings the total to 124 awards the Advocate has won since 2010 from the SCPA, the United Methodist Association of

Communicators and the Religion Communicators Council.

Advocate Board Chair Enid McClam applauded what she calls these outstanding accomplishments in journalism.

"The Advocate continues to be a voice in our spiritual community, and these award-winning accomplishments are confirmation we are living up to our standard of excellence in journalism," McClam said.

View the articles online at <https://advocatesc.org>.

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2023 South Carolina United Methodist Record of Giving

NOTE: Churches giving 100 percent are in bold.

Churches who increased their giving over 2022 are marked with a +.
(CL) indicates a church that was closed during 2023.

Anderson District

**50 out of 71 Churches Contributed 100%
79.38% of District Apportionment Contributed**

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Ann Hope	9,744.00	—	0.00%
Arial	3,763.00	3,763.00	100.00%
Bells	11,570.00	11,570.00	100.00%
Bethel/Iva	6,270.00	6,270.00	100.00%
Bethel/Pendleton	6,568.00	6,568.00	100.00%
Bethesda	63,957.00	37,308.25	58.33%
Calhoun Falls	6,457.00	6,457.00	100.00%
Central	6,198.00	6,198.00	100.00%
Chicopee	2,057.00	2,057.00	100.00%
Chiquola	5,437.00	5,437.00	100.00% +
Clemson	104,187.00	104,187.00	100.00%
Dickson Memorial	23,043.00	23,043.00	100.00%
Donalds	1,818.00	597.00	32.84%
Double Springs	1,586.00	1,586.00	100.00%
Easley Chapel	8,718.00	8,718.00	100.00%
Ebenezer	3,598.00	203.00	5.64%
Emmanuel	4,488.00	4,488.00	100.00%
Fairfield	4,925.00	4,925.00	100.00%
Fairview	6,239.00	6,239.00	100.00%
First/Easley	56,437.00	19,629.95	34.78%
Friendship	5,500.00	5,500.00	100.00%
Gilgal	4,202.00	4,202.00	100.00%
Golden Grove	2,291.00	—	0.00%
Grace/Abbeville	33,307.00	19,429.13	58.33%
Grace/Pickens	34,738.00	34,738.00	100.00%
Grace/Williamston	9,054.00	9,054.00	100.00%
Hebron	2,905.00	—	0.00%
Homeland Park	3,192.00	1,097.00	34.37%
Hopewell	4,499.00	4,499.00	100.00%
John Wesley/Anderson	3,455.00	3,455.00	100.00%
John Wesley/Easley	5,596.00	1,500.00	26.80%
Latimer Memorial	12,692.00	1,300.00	10.24%
Lawrence Chapel	22,647.00	22,647.00	100.00%
Liberty	8,781.00	8,781.00	100.00%
Main Street/Abbeville	28,974.00	28,974.00	100.00%
Marshall Memorial	4,152.00	4,152.00	100.00%
Moores Chapel	1,875.00	—	0.00%
Mount Bethel	6,043.00	6,043.00	100.00%
Mount Pleasant	3,194.00	3,194.00	100.00%
Mount Sinai	3,445.00	3,445.00	100.00%
Mount Zion	15,391.00	15,391.00	100.00%
New Harmony	4,300.00	4,300.00	100.00%
New Hope UMC	3,577.00	3,577.00	100.00%
Pelzer UMC	3,564.00	3,564.00	100.00% +
Pendleton	36,527.00	36,527.00	100.00%
Porter Chapel	7,724.00	6,159.00	79.74%
Robinson Chapel	9,458.00	3,000.00	31.72%
Rock Springs	1,644.00	—	0.00%
Ruhamah	6,824.00	6,824.00	100.00%
Salem	10,118.00	10,118.00	100.00%
Sandy Springs	1,982.00	1,333.00	67.26%
Sharon/Abbeville	6,057.00	6,057.00	100.00% +
Shiloh/Abbeville	4,415.00	—	0.00%
Shiloh/Piedmont	20,423.00	20,423.00	100.00%
Smyrna	8,999.00	8,999.00	100.00%
St. Andrew	35,158.00	35,158.00	100.00%
St. James/Belton	575.00	—	0.00%
St. John's	81,833.00	60,279.75	73.66%
St. Luke / Walhalla	29,382.00	29,382.00	100.00%
St. Mark	97,206.00	97,206.00	100.00%
St. Paul	5,984.00	5,984.00	100.00%
Starr	3,031.00	3,031.00	100.00%
Tabor	6,147.00	6,147.00	100.00%
Thompson Centennial	4,673.00	4,673.00	100.00%
Toxaway	3,174.00	3,174.00	100.00%
Trinity/Anderson	76,916.00	7,471.70	9.71%
Trinity/Honea Path	18,249.00	16,424.40	90.00%
Union Grove	14,812.00	14,812.00	100.00%
Westminster	5,042.00	5,042.00	100.00%
Zion/Anderson	24,230.00	24,230.00	100.00%
Zion/Easley	3,581.00	3,581.00	100.00%
Anderson District Total	1,088,598	864,122	79.38%

Charleston District

**63 out of 74 Churches Contributed 100%
93.83% of District Apportionment Contributed**

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Aldersgate	33,719.00	33,719.00	100.00%
Asbury-St. James	21,566.00	21,566.00	100.00%
Bethany/Charleston	19,136.00	19,136.00	100.00%
Bethany/Summerville	186,967.00	186,967.00	100.00%
Bethel/Charleston	94,752.00	94,752.00	100.00%
Bethel/St. Stephen	10,456.00	10,456.00	100.00%
Bethlehem-St. James	7,888.00	7,888.00	100.00%
Boone Hill	23,530.00	1,788.02	7.60%
Centenary/Charleston	5,572.00	5,572.00	100.00%
Centenary/Moncks Corner	5,043.00	5,043.00	100.00%
Charleston Korean	20,229.00	20,229.00	100.00%
Cokesbury	29,477.00	13,369.29	45.35%
Cordesville	3,231.00	3,231.00	100.00%
Ebenezer	3,562.00	3,562.00	100.00%
Eccles	2,868.00	2,868.00	100.00%

Edisto Island	13,485.00	13,485.00	100.00%
Enoch Chapel	2,584.00	2,584.00	100.00%
Epworth	15,717.00	15,717.00	100.00% +
First/Isle of Palms	75,477.00	75,477.00	100.00%
Folly Beach	16,727.00	16,727.00	100.00%
Friendship	6,608.00	6,608.00	100.00% +
Goose Creek	20,049.00	20,049.00	100.00%
Grace	69,123.00	69,123.00	100.00%
Greater St. Paul	8,409.00	8,409.00	100.00%
Grove Hall	2,799.00	2,799.00	100.00%
Hibben	81,672.00	81,672.00	100.00%
Hood's Chapel	4,678.00	—	0.00%
Jehovah	5,355.00	5,355.00	100.00%
Jerusalem	7,381.00	7,381.00	100.00%
John Wesley	108,498.00	108,498.00	100.00%
Joshua	21,331.00	21,331.00	100.00%
Knightsville	31,417.00	31,417.00	100.00% +
Lebanon	6,108.00	6,108.00	100.00%
McClellanville	4,356.00	4,356.00	100.00%
Midland Park	15,945.00	15,945.00	100.00%
Moncks Corner	44,257.00	44,257.00	100.00%
Mount Carmel	15,767.00	15,767.00	100.00%
Mount Nebo	4,937.00	4,937.00	100.00%
Mount Zion	2,146.00	2,146.00	100.00% +
Murray	6,913.00	6,913.00	100.00%
New Francis Brown	16,987.00	9,003.11	53.00%
New Hope/Jamestown	2,459.00	2,459.00	100.00%
New Hope/St. Thomas	9,989.00	9,989.00	100.00%
New Hope/Summerville	7,987.00	7,987.00	100.00%
New Light	3,941.00	3,941.00	100.00%
New Webster	8,692.00	8,692.00	100.00%
North Charleston	36,502.00	36,502.00	100.00%
Ocean Grove	6,754.00	—	0.00%
Old Bethel	11,696.00	11,696.00	100.00%
Pinopolis	21,939.00	21,939.00	100.00% +
Point Hope	34,919.00	34,919.00	100.00%
Ravenel	2,772.00	2,772.00	100.00%
Rehoboth	2,203.00	2,203.00	100.00%
Smyrna	8,346.00	8,346.00	100.00%
Spring Hill	3,284.00	2,463.06	75.00%
St. Andrews Parish	38,619.00	38,619.00	100.00%
St. James/Goose Creek	24,797.00	18,101.36	73.00%
St. James/Jamestown	3,221.00	3,221.00	100.00% +
St. Mark	29,575.00	29,575.00	100.00%
St. Stephen	4,197.00	2,020.97	48.15%
Stallville	20,230.00	20,230.00	100.00%
Steward Chapel	12,171.00	12,171.00	100.00%
Trinity	23,304.00	17,230.54	73.94%
Washington	8,786.00	8,786.00	100.00%
Wesley Memorial	16,630.00	329.00	1.98%
Wesley/Charleston	18,082.00	18,082.00	100.00%
Wesley/Johns Island	23,285.00	23,285.00	100.00%
Wesley/Ladson	19,746.00	19,746.00	100.00%
Wesley/Pinopolis	14,448.00	14,448.00	100.00%
Wesley/Summerville	6,461.00	1,100.00	17.03%
Wesley/Yonges Island	18,461.00	18,461.00	100.00%
Wren's Chapel	856.00	856.00	100.00%
Zion/Cross	5,793.00	5,793.00	100.00%
Zion/St. Thomas	6,935.00	6,935.00	100.00%
Charleston District Total	1,533,802	1,439,108	93.83%

Columbia District

**46 out of 62 Churches Contributed 100%
93.1% of District Apportionment Contributed**

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Asbury Memorial	35,437.00	22,093.45	62.35%
Ashland	67,367.00	67,367.00	100.00%
Bethel/Columbia	34,825.00	2,000.00	5.74%
Bethel/Winnsboro	7,338.00	7,338.00	100.00%
Beulah/Blythewood	6,695.00	6,695.00	100.00%
Beulah/Gilbert	37,709.00	37,709.00	100.00%
Bluff Road	11,180.00	1,118.00	10.00%
Boiling Springs	18,946.00	18,946.00	100.00%
Brookland	13,411.00	—	0.00%
Cayce	42,474.00	42,474.00	100.00%
Chapin	230,271.00	230,271.00	100.00%
Columbia Korean	10,164.00	10,164.00	100.00%
Ebenezer	2,080.00	2,080.00	100.00%
Epworth Memorial	384.00	384.00	100.00%
Fair Lawn	20,564.00	20,564.00	100.00%
Faith	12,045.00	12,045.00	100.00%
First/Winnsboro	18,280.00	18,280.00	100.00%
Francis Burns	59,260.00	59,260.00	100.00%
Gilbert	18,071.00	17,931.78	99.23%
Gordon Memorial	10,278.00	10,278.00	100.00%
Grace	33,020.00	33,020.00	100.00%
Greenbrier	4,570.00	4,570.00	100.00%
Greene Street	10,198.00	3,399.33	33.33%
Heyward Street	13,789.00	13,789.00	100.00%
I. DeQuincey Newman	14,290.00	14,290.00	100.00%
Journey	82,844.00	82,844.00	100.00%
Lebanon	20,239.00	20,239.00	100.00%
Lexington	71,187.00	71,187.00	100.00%
Main Street	24,614.00	24,614.00	100.00%
McLeod	2,889.00	2,889.00	100.00%
Mill Creek	6,725.00	6,725.00	100.00%
Monticello	5,107.00	5,107.00	100.00%
Mount Hebron	99,082.00	99,082.00	100.00%
Mount Horeb	498,138.00	498,138.00	100.00% </

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St. Luke/Timmonsville	3,735.00	3,735.00	100.00%
St. Mary	5,674.00	5,674.00	100.00%
St. Michael	9,890.00	9,890.00	100.00%
St. Paul/Coward	3,101.00	3,101.00	100.00%
St. Paul/Elliott	6,955.00	6,955.00	100.00%
St. Paul/Florence	53,957.00	9,637.59	17.86%
St. Paul/Kingstree	23,932.00	23,932.00	100.00%
St. Paul/Morrisville	3,997.00	3,997.00	100.00%
St. Paul/Wisacky	4,316.00	4,316.00	100.00%
Summerton	13,647.00	8,002.00	58.64%
Suttons	3,780.00	3,780.00	100.00%
Tabernacle	11,024.00	11,024.00	100.00%
Trinity/Lynchburg	3,231.00	—	0.00%
Trinity/New Zion	6,052.00	6,052.00	100.00%
Trio	2,750.00	2,750.00	100.00%
Union/Hemingway	9,688.00	9,688.00	100.00%
Union/Manning	4,796.00	4,796.00	100.00%
Vox Memorial	2,629.00	1,314.50	50.00%
Warren Chapel	2,835.00	2,835.00	100.00%
Wesley Chapel/Lake City	20,936.00	20,936.00	100.00%
Wesley/Florence	8,095.00	8,095.00	100.00%
Wilson Chapel	4,300.00	4,300.00	100.00%
Florence District Total	1,153,318	973,021	84.37%

Capers Chapel/Langley	2,034.00	1,021.82	50.24%
Capers Chapel/Pomaria	3,622.00	3,622.00	100.00%
Central/Laurens	3,579.00	3,579.00	100.00%
Central/Newberry	48,224.00	48,224.00	100.00%
Crossroads (fka Branch Hill)	1,875.00	250.52	13.36%
Ebenezer/Greenwood	2,557.00	2,557.00	100.00%
Ebenezer/Newberry	4,251.00	4,251.00	100.00%
Edgefield	18,869.00	18,869.00	100.00%
Emory	7,568.00	7,568.00	100.00%
Epting Memorial	9,183.00	9,183.00	100.00%
Epworth	3,453.00	3,453.00	100.00%
First/Laurens	31,629.00	15,814.50	50.00%
Grace	124,741.00	81,184.00	65.08%
Harmony/Johnston	18,045.00	18,045.00	100.00%
Harmony/Ware Shoals	3,306.00	3,306.00	100.00%
Harris	6,076.00	6,076.00	100.00%
Hodges	12,172.00	12,172.00	100.00%
Hopewell	2,168.00	2,168.00	100.00%
Johnston	13,722.00	13,722.00	100.00%
Kinards	4,647.00	4,647.00	100.00%
Kings Chapel	2,022.00	2,022.00	100.00%
Langley	13,152.00	2,526.86	19.21%
Lebanon	2,337.00	2,337.00	100.00%
Leesville	36,739.00	36,739.00	100.00%
Lewis Memorial	8,958.00	8,958.00	100.00%
Lowell Street	12,240.00	10,024.61	81.90%
Lupo Memorial	7,064.00	7,064.00	100.00%
Main Street/Greenwood	81,813.00	81,813.00	100.00%
Martha Chapel	1,686.00	950.00	56.35%
Mathews	8,790.00	964.00	10.97%
Mays	5,060.00	3,809.00	75.28%
McCormick	25,814.00	25,814.00	100.00%
McKendree	4,702.00	4,702.00	100.00%
Mount Bethel	7,353.00	7,353.00	100.00%
Mount Carmel/Greenwood	2,466.00	1,603.19	65.01%
Mount Lebanon	11,580.00	11,580.00	100.00%
Mount Pleasant	10,080.00	10,080.00	100.00%
Nazareth	10,752.00	10,752.00	100.00%
New Chapel	2,830.00	2,830.00	100.00%
New Hope	8,345.00	8,345.00	100.00%
O'Neal Street	4,238.00	4,238.00	100.00%
Panola	5,424.00	5,424.00	100.00%
Pentecost	4,750.00	4,750.00	100.00%
Rehoboth	10,630.00	10,630.00	100.00%
Republican	7,239.00	7,239.00	100.00%
Ridge Spring	1,884.00	1,884.00	100.00%
Sharon/Kinards	1,814.00	1,814.00	100.00%
Shiloh	4,879.00	4,879.00	100.00%
Soule Chapel	7,435.00	7,435.00	100.00%
Spann	2,059.00	2,059.00	100.00%
Springdale	3,102.00	1,765.49	56.91%
St. James	16,202.00	16,202.00	100.00%
St. John/Graniteville	17,144.00	17,144.00	100.00%
St. John's/Batesburg	16,239.00	16,239.00	100.00%
St. Mark	108,370.00	108,370.00	100.00%
St. Paul/Ninety Six	20,476.00	20,476.00	100.00%
St. Paul/Plum Branch	2,709.00	2,709.00	100.00%
St. Paul/Saluda	30,331.00	30,331.00	100.00%
Tranquil	22,588.00	22,588.00	100.00%
Trenton	5,048.00	5,048.00	100.00%
Trinity/Greenwood	6,446.00	6,446.00	100.00%
Trinity/Laurens	5,353.00	5,353.00	100.00%
Trinity/Newberry	14,764.00	14,764.00	100.00%
Troy	7,703.00	7,703.00	100.00%
Vaucluse	4,006.00	4,006.00	100.00%
Ware Shoals	3,193.00	3,193.00	100.00%
Warrenville	4,030.00	4,030.00	100.00%
Waterloo	8,249.00	8,249.00	100.00%
Wightman	46,418.00	46,418.00	100.00%
Zion	24,260.00	24,260.00	100.00%
Zoar	4,699.00	4,699.00	100.00%
Greenwood District Total	1,100,062	998,798	90.79%

Hopewell	5,009.00	3,287.33	65.63%
Indian Branch	6,293.00	6,293.00	100.00%
Jefferson	8,578.00	8,578.00	100.00%
John Wesley	5,757.00	5,757.00	100.00%
Kellybell	3,654.00	3,654.00	100.00%
Kingsville	5,025.00	5,025.00	100.00%
Lamar	15,960.00	15,960.00	100.00%
Lewis Chapel	14,630.00	14,630.00	100.00%
Lyttleton Street	106,135.00	106,135.00	100.00%
McBee	2,840.00	2,840.00	100.00%
McLeod Chapel	3,106.00	3,106.00	100.00%
Mechanicsville	17,416.00	5,500.00	31.58%
Mount Beulah	4,307.00	4,307.00	100.00%
Mount Croghan	1,251.00	1,251.00	100.00%
Mount Elon	2,723.00	2,723.00	100.00%
Mount Joshua	1,540.00	1,540.00	100.00%
Mount Moriah	4,341.00	4,341.00	100.00%
Mount Olivet	4,830.00	4,830.00	100.00%
Mount Prospect	2,050.00	—	0.00%
Mount Zion/Bishopville	7,565.00	7,565.00	100.00%
Mount Zion/Cheraw	2,911.00	2,911.00	100.00%
Mount Zion/Sumter	11,432.00	11,432.00	100.00%
New Haven	6,309.00	6,309.00	100.00%
New Hope	2,635.00	2,635.00	100.00%
New Market	10,419.00	10,419.00	100.00%
New Providence	8,792.00	8,792.00	100.00%
Newman Swamp	3,680.00	3,547.00	96.39%
Pageland	5,372.00	5,372.00	100.00%
Pleasant Grove	5,312.00	5,312.00	100.00%
Prospect	6,681.00	6,681.00	100.00%
Rock Spring	1,649.00	1,649.00	100.00%
Salem/Pageland	7,549.00	7,549.00	100.00%
Sandy Bluff	3,442.00	3,442.00	100.00%
Sandy Grove/Bethune	2,456.00	2,456.00	100.00%
Sandy Grove/Jefferson	3,475.00	3,475.00	100.00%
Sandy Grove/Lamar	6,502.00	6,268.67	96.41%
Shepherd	4,056.00	4,056.00	100.00%
Shiloh/ Lugoff	2,184.00	2,184.00	100.00%
Shiloh/Chesterfield	15,990.00	15,990.00	100.00%
Shiloh/Darlington	11,935.00	11,935.00	100.00%
Springhill	8,425.00	8,275.00	98.22%
St. James/Darlington	11,539.00	6,748.52	58.48%
St. James/Sumter	17,726.00	17,726.00	100.00%
St. John/Darlington	7,808.00	7,808.00	100.00%
St. John/Rembert	4,891.00	4,891.00	100.00%
St. John/Sumter	9,813.00	9,813.00	100.00%
St. John's/Lugoff	39,671.00	39,671.00	100.00%
St. Luke	77,915.00	77,915.00	100.00%
St. Mark/Sumter (Salterstown)	18,598.00	18,598.00	100.00%
St. Mark/Oswego	2,505.00	—	0.00%
St. Mark's/Sumter (Broad Street)	14,841.00	14,841.00	100.00%
St. Matthew/Bishopville	8,643.00	8,643.00	100.00%
St. Matthews/E. Camden	10,126.00	10,126.00	100.00%
St. Paul/Camden	17,002.00	16,539.71	97.28%
St. Paul/Chesterfield	18,463.00	18,463.00	100.00%
St. Peter	979.00	979.00	100.00%
Tabernacle	4,817.00	4,817.00	100.00%
Trinity/Darlington	24,224.00	18,168.00	75.00%
Trinity/Sumter	84,008.00	84,008.00	100.00%
Union	10,914.00	10,914.00	100.00%
Unity	10,505.00	10,505.00	100.00%
Wesley Chapel/Darlington	7,547.00	7,547.00	100.00%
Wesley Chapel/Lydia	13,236.00	13,236.00	100.00%
Wesley Chp/Chesterfld	3,351.00	3,351.00	100.00%
Wesley Chp/Jefferson	2,874.00	2,874.00	100.00%
Wesley Memorial	3,476.00	3,476.00	100.00%
Wesley/Cheraw	5,489.00	5,489.00	100.00%
Wesley/Hartsville	43,982.00	43,982.00	100.00%
Zion/Lamar Circuit	2,359.00	2,359.00	100.00%
Zion/Pageland	8,005.00	8,005.00	100.00%
Zoar/Chesterfield	13,354.00	13,354.00	100.00%
Zoar/Pageland	3,016.00	3,016.00	100.00%
Hartsville District Total	1,157,523	1,074,197	92.80%

Greenville District

36 out of 62 Churches Contributed 100%
81.69% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Advent	197,291.00	197,291.00	100.00%
Aldersgate	79,398.00	71,165.30	89.63%
Allen View	4,280.00	4,280.00	100.00%
Antioch	4,182.00	3,277.07	78.36%
Augusta Road	22,413.00	—	0.00%
Berea Friendship	30,279.00	5,444.14	17.98%
Bethel/Greer	5,449.00	5,449.00	100.00%
Bethel/Simpsonville	8,389.00	4,194.50	50.00%
Bethlehem	4,563.00	4,563.00	100.00%
Bramlett	14,478.00	14,478.00	100.00%
Buncombe Street	365,405.00	365,405.00	100.00%
Christ	6,400.00	3,068.37	47.94%
Covenant	213,897.00	213,897.00	100.00%
Dacusville	9,333.00	5,443.34	58.32%
Dials	6,623.00	6,623.00	100.00%
Disciples	30,258.00	30,258.00	100.00%
Ebenezer	9,494.00	9,494.00	100.00%
Emma Gray Memorial	11,988.00	—	0.00%
Faith	4,522.00	4,522.00	100.00%
Fews Chapel	6,311.00	6,311.00	100.00%
Francis Asbury	10,886.00	680.00	6.25%
Grace/Greer	16,646.00	1,727.20	10.38%
Gray Court	2,678.00	—	0.00%
Green Pond	12,576.00	12,576.00	100.00%
Hopewell	19,342.00	19,342.00	100.00%
Jackson Grove	4,943.00	4,943.00	100.00%
John Wesley	18,624.00	18,624.00	100.00%
Laurel Creek	7,155.00	6,941.50	97.02%
Laurens Road	9,766.00	—	0.00%
Lebanon	3,395.00	3,395.00	100.00%
Lee Road	43,855.00	28,506.00	65.00%
Liberty Hill	9,020.00	9,020.00	100.00%
Mauldin	146,018.00	146,018.00	100.00%
McBee Chapel	1,593.00	1,593.00	100.00%
Memorial	64,812.00	—	0.00%
Minus Chapel	1,557.00	1,557.00	100.00%
Monaghan	7,588.00	6,955.63	91.67%
Mountain View	14,874.00	14,874.00	100.00%
New Saint Luke	5,647.00	5,647.00	100.00%
Northside	18,440.00	4,000.00	21.69%
Oak Hill	7,321.00	7,321.00	100.00%
Owings	1,411.00	—	0.00%
Piedmont	14,588.00	1,368.00	9.38%
Pisgah/Fork Shoals	5,352.00	5,352.00	100.00%
Salem	13,030.00	9,772.47	75.00%
Sharon/Greer	33,256.00	33,256.00	100.00%
Shiloh	3,228.00	3,228.00	100.00%
Simpsonville	97,423.00	—	0.00%
Slater	5,612.00	5,612.00	100.00%
St. John/Greenville	2,688.00	2,118.00	78.79%
St. Mark/Greenville	11,530.00	6,341.73	55.00%
St. Mark/Taylors	43,349.00	43,349.00	100.00%
St. Matthew/Greenville	71,710.00	71,710.00	100.00%
St. Matthew/Taylors	13,383.00	10,000.00	74.72%
St. Paul/Greenville	22,667.00	22,667.00	100.00%
St. Paul/Greer	2,429.00	2,429.00	100.00%
Travelers Rest	48,157.00	48,157.00	100.00%
Trinity/Fountain Inn	50,164.00	50,164.00	100.00%
Victor	9,302.00	—	0.00%
Wesley Chapel	7,614.00	7,614.00	100.00%
Wood's Chapel	7,470.00	—	0.00%
Zoar	6,986.00	6,986.00	100.00%
Greenville District Total	1,933,038	1,579,008	81.69%

Greenwood District

65 out of 78 Churches Contributed 100%
90.79% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Aldersgate	12,749.00	12,749.00	100.00%
Belvedere	8,912.00	—	0.00%
Bethany	10,983.00	5,4	

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First/Conway	68,353.00	6,290.07	9.20%
First/Loris	14,215.00	14,215.00	100.00% +
First/Marion	35,127.00	17,517.14	49.87% +
First/Myrtle Beach	177,869.00	177,869.00	100.00%
Hebron/Tatum Charge	2,444.00	2,444.00	100.00%
Herbert Memorial	23,986.00	23,986.00	100.00%
Hopewell/Mullins	1,796.00	1,796.00	100.00%
Joseph B. Bethea	5,321.00	5,321.00	100.00%
Lake View	5,332.00	2,500.00	46.89%
Latta	25,349.00	25,349.00	100.00% +
Level Green	3,805.00	3,805.00	100.00%
Little River	66,905.00	66,905.00	100.00%
Macedonia	30,825.00	30,825.00	100.00%
Main Street/Dillon	38,732.00	38,732.00	100.00%
Main Street/McColl	11,268.00	11,268.00	100.00%
Manning Chapel	2,353.00	235.00	9.99% +
McCoy Chapel	3,751.00	3,751.00	100.00%
Mount Andrew	3,215.00	3,215.00	100.00%
New El Bethel	3,737.00	3,737.00	100.00%
New Holly	2,453.00	2,453.00	100.00%
New Hope	1,760.00	1,760.00	100.00%
Nichols	4,124.00	—	0.00%
Oak Grove/Georgetown	1,803.00	—	0.00%
Oak Grove/Wallace	2,846.00	2,846.00	100.00%
Oakland	3,010.00	—	0.00%
Old Clio	1,491.00	1,426.51	95.67%
Parnassus	4,545.00	3,123.00	68.71%
Pine Grove	4,261.00	4,261.00	100.00% +
Pisgah	15,157.00	15,157.00	100.00%
Pleasant Grove	1,824.00	1,443.81	79.16%
Pleasant Hill/Mullins	2,703.00	2,703.00	100.00%
Pleasant Hill/Wallace	2,388.00	2,388.00	100.00%
Poplar	2,955.00	—	0.00%
Rehoboth	8,466.00	8,466.00	100.00% +
Salem	7,047.00	300.00	4.26% +
Sampit	2,268.00	2,268.00	100.00%
Shiloh/Bennettsville P	3,277.00	3,277.00	100.00%
Shiloh/Bennettsville	3,627.00	3,627.00	100.00% +
Shiloh/Marion	10,717.00	10,717.00	100.00%
Shiloh/Mullins Charge	2,194.00	1,097.00	50.00%
Smyrna/Bennettsville C	3,793.00	3,793.00	100.00% +
Smyrna/Bennettsville P	3,575.00	3,575.00	100.00%
Socastee	61,744.00	61,744.00	100.00%
Springville	795.00	795.00	100.00%
St. Luke	1,838.00	1,838.00	100.00%
St. Michael	2,598.00	—	0.00%
St. Paul's Waccamaw	39,154.00	39,154.00	100.00%
St. Phillip	6,311.00	6,311.00	100.00%
St. Stephen	6,214.00	2,000.00	32.19%
Surfside	80,318.00	80,318.00	100.00% +
The Brook	11,272.00	11,896.13	105.54% +
Tranquil	3,713.00	3,713.00	100.00%
Trinity/Bennettsville	10,384.00	5,669.00	54.59%
Trinity/Andrews	27,570.00	27,570.00	100.00%
Trinity/Clio	10,758.00	10,758.00	100.00% +
Trinity/Conway	65,124.00	3,000.00	4.61%
Trinity/N. Myrtle Bch	58,526.00	58,526.00	100.00%
Union/Conway	21,052.00	—	0.00%
Union/Lake View	1,373.00	—	0.00%
Wampee	3,980.00	3,980.00	100.00%
Wayne	13,330.00	13,330.00	100.00% +
Zoan	3,937.00	3,937.00	100.00%
Marion District Total	1,538,771	1,320,782	85.83%

Orangeburg District

87 out of 89 Churches Contributed 100%
98.93% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Andrew Chapel	8,828.00	8,828.00	100.00% +
Barnwell	14,255.00	14,255.00	100.00%
Bethel at Peachtree Rock	8,624.00	8,624.00	100.00%
Bethel Park	13,715.00	13,715.00	100.00%
Bethel/Bamberg	4,709.00	4,709.00	100.00%
Bethel/Jackson	10,948.00	10,948.00	100.00%
Bethel/Rowesville	2,528.00	2,528.00	100.00%
Bethlehem	4,330.00	4,330.00	100.00%
Beulah/ Sandy Run	21,061.00	21,061.00	100.00%
Blackville	1,769.00	1,769.00	100.00%
Branchville	8,787.00	8,787.00	100.00%
Calvary/Swansea	7,171.00	7,171.00	100.00%
Canaan/Cope	5,254.00	5,254.00	100.00%
Cattle Creek	1,770.00	1,770.00	100.00%
Cedar Grove	4,175.00	4,175.00	100.00%
Clafin	2,919.00	5.00	0.17%
Clinton	9,387.00	9,387.00	100.00%
East Bethel	2,127.00	2,127.00	100.00%
Ebenezer/Bowman	7,619.00	7,619.00	100.00%
Ebenezer/Orange Cir	5,742.00	5,742.00	100.00%
Edisto Fork	17,635.00	17,635.00	100.00%
Ellore	9,020.00	9,020.00	100.00%
Eutawville	4,232.00	4,232.00	100.00%
Forest Chapel	3,580.00	3,580.00	100.00%
Franklin	11,579.00	11,579.00	100.00%
Gerizim	2,242.00	2,242.00	100.00%
Holly Hill	22,971.00	22,971.00	100.00%
Jericho	6,901.00	6,901.00	100.00%
Jerusalem	8,730.00	8,730.00	100.00%
Kearse	750.00	750.00	100.00%
Lebanon	9,914.00	9,914.00	100.00%
Limestone	4,084.00	4,084.00	100.00% +
Livingston	7,303.00	7,303.00	100.00%
Main Street/Bamberg	4,063.00	4,063.00	100.00%
Mayes Chapel	2,670.00	2,670.00	100.00%
Mizpah	1,915.00	1,915.00	100.00%
Mount Carmel	7,798.00	7,798.00	100.00%

Mount Nebo	2,969.00	2,969.00	100.00%
Mount Zion/Bamberg Cir	5,478.00	5,478.00	100.00%
Mount Zion/Sandy Run	5,203.00	5,203.00	100.00%
Neeses	3,073.00	3,073.00	100.00%
New Covenant	16,755.00	9,000.00	53.72%
New Hope	3,840.00	3,840.00	100.00%
New Light	19,801.00	19,801.00	100.00%
North	8,701.00	8,701.00	100.00%
North Orangeburg	23,867.00	23,867.00	100.00%
Norway New Beginning	5,394.00	5,394.00	100.00%
Oak Grove	1,667.00	1,667.00	100.00%
Orange Grove	8,895.00	8,895.00	100.00%
Pelion	5,845.00	5,845.00	100.00%
Pine Hill	6,189.00	6,189.00	100.00%
Pineville	5,238.00	5,238.00	100.00%
Pleasant Hill	5,377.00	5,377.00	100.00%
Prospect	3,299.00	3,299.00	100.00%
Providence/Providence	18,277.00	18,277.00	100.00%
Salem	882.00	882.00	100.00%
Salley	1,971.00	1,971.00	100.00%
Shady Grove	5,316.00	5,316.00	100.00%
Sharon/Pelion	5,512.00	5,512.00	100.00%
Silas	6,249.00	6,249.00	100.00%
Siloam	1,239.00	1,239.00	100.00%
Springfield	4,170.00	4,170.00	100.00%
St. Andrews	38,078.00	38,078.00	100.00%
St. John/Aiken	228,367.00	228,367.00	100.00%
St. John/Norway	9,505.00	9,505.00	100.00%
St. John/Orangeburg	4,698.00	4,698.00	100.00%
St. John/Orangeburg Cr	3,260.00	3,260.00	100.00%
St. Mark	17,674.00	17,674.00	100.00%
St. Paul/New Ellenton	14,599.00	14,599.00	100.00%
St. Paul/Orangeburg	29,707.00	29,707.00	100.00%
St. Paul/St. Matthews	12,764.00	12,764.00	100.00% +
St. Stephen/Bowman	6,744.00	6,744.00	100.00%
St. Stephen/Orangeburg	19,926.00	19,926.00	100.00%
Swansea	7,688.00	7,688.00	100.00%
Target	6,601.00	6,601.00	100.00%
Trinity/Aiken	36,610.00	36,610.00	100.00%
Trinity/Bamberg	29,308.00	29,308.00	100.00%
Trinity/North	1,546.00	1,546.00	100.00%
Trinity/Orangeburg	24,047.00	24,047.00	100.00%
Union	5,882.00	5,882.00	100.00%
Wagener	6,859.00	6,859.00	100.00%
Wesley	5,215.00	5,215.00	100.00%
Wesley Chapel/Calhoun	6,326.00	6,326.00	100.00%
Wesley Chapel/Jackson	6,528.00	6,528.00	100.00%
Wesley Grove	5,363.00	5,363.00	100.00%
West Bethel	4,232.00	4,232.00	100.00%
White House	5,535.00	5,535.00	100.00%
Wightman	6,657.00	6,657.00	100.00%
Williston	6,151.00	6,151.00	100.00%
Orangeburg District Total	996,182	985,513	98.93%

Rock Hill District

56 out of 68 Churches Contributed 100%
83.67% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Adnah	21,271.00	19,125.00	89.91%
Aldersgate	25,484.00	25,484.00	100.00%
Antioch	13,983.00	13,983.00	100.00%
Armenia	5,452.00	5,452.00	100.00%
Belair	15,336.00	15,336.00	100.00%
Bethel/Chester	18,787.00	18,787.00	100.00%
Bethel/Lancaster	2,574.00	2,574.00	100.00%
Bethel/Rock Hill	15,001.00	15,001.00	100.00%
Bethel/Rock Hill South	4,610.00	4,610.00	100.00%
Bethesda	3,686.00	3,686.00	100.00%
Camp Creek	13,333.00	7,821.00	58.66%
Canaan	4,066.00	3,001.43	73.82%
Capers Chapel	7,055.00	7,055.00	100.00%
Catawba	4,842.00	4,842.00	100.00%
Church of Good Shepherd	10,229.00	10,229.00	100.00%
Clover Chapel	4,862.00	4,862.00	100.00%
Cornerstone	16,049.00	16,049.00	100.00%
Damascus	2,863.00	2,863.00	100.00%
Ebenezer	2,560.00	2,560.00	100.00%
El Bethel	6,396.00	3,198.00	50.00%
Epworth	7,373.00	7,373.00	100.00%
First/Clover	55,180.00	55,180.00	100.00%
First/Lancaster	36,499.00	36,499.00	100.00%
Fort Lawn	2,786.00	2,786.00	100.00%
Friendship	16,112.00	16,112.00	100.00%
Good Samaritan	19,855.00	3,529.96	17.78% +
Grace	13,676.00	13,676.00	100.00%
Grace Community	32,678.00	32,678.00	100.00%
Green Pond	5,096.00	5,096.00	100.00%
Hanging Rock	4,305.00	4,305.00	100.00%
Harmony			

Walterboro District
75 out of 94 Churches Contributed 100%
88.44% of District Apportionment Contributed

Church Name	Apportionment	Contributed	% Paid
Adnah	4,323.00	4,323.00	100.00%
Bellinger Chapel	3,621.00	1,438.00	39.71%
Bethel/Green Pond	1,134.00	1,134.00	100.00%
Bethel/Harleyville	4,826.00	4,826.00	100.00%
Bethel/Ruffin	12,585.00	12,585.00	100.00%
Bethel/Smoaks	8,056.00	8,056.00	100.00%
Bethel/Walterboro	48,683.00	48,683.00	100.00%
Bluffton	58,306.00	58,306.00	100.00%
Brunson	3,544.00	—	0.00%
Buckhead	5,166.00	5,166.00	100.00%
Canaan	15,528.00	15,528.00	100.00%
Carteret Street	63,840.00	63,840.00	100.00%
Church of the Palms	48,396.00	48,396.00	100.00%
Cottageville	5,850.00	5,850.00	100.00%
Cumberland	4,329.00	4,329.00	100.00%
Cypress	6,187.00	6,187.00	100.00%
Duncan Chapel	3,634.00	3,634.00	100.00%
Ebenezer/Ehrhardt	3,312.00	3,312.00	100.00%
Ebenezer/Ritter	3,476.00	3,476.00	100.00%
Ebenezer/Yemassee	3,230.00	3,230.00	100.00%
Estill	2,707.00	—	0.00%
First/Harleyville	14,157.00	14,157.00	100.00%
Fisher Chapel	6,413.00	6,413.00	100.00%
Friendship	4,495.00	4,495.00	100.00%
Furman	1,934.00	—	0.00%
Gillette	921.00	921.00	100.00%
Green Pond	2,114.00	2,114.00	100.00%
Grover	7,609.00	7,609.00	100.00%
Hampton	15,799.00	15,799.00	100.00%
Hardeeville	5,287.00	5,287.00	100.00%
Heaven Gate	917.00	917.00	100.00%
Hickory Hill	2,659.00	2,659.00	100.00%
Holy Trinity	2,524.00	1,250.00	49.52%
Indian Field	21,859.00	6,358.00	29.09%
Isaiah	4,485.00	—	0.00%
Jericho	7,839.00	7,839.00	100.00%
Little Swamp	3,783.00	3,783.00	100.00%
Lodge	1,769.00	1,769.00	100.00%
Macedonia	5,158.00	—	0.00%
Morris Chapel	3,868.00	3,868.00	100.00%
Mount Carmel/Estill	2,655.00	1,377.50	51.88%
Mount Carmel/Walterboro	2,923.00	—	0.00%
Mount Nebo	3,558.00	3,558.00	100.00%
Mount Pleasant	814.00	814.00	100.00%
Mount Tabor	3,575.00	3,575.00	100.00%
New Grace	11,212.00	11,212.00	100.00%
New Hope/Allendale	4,121.00	4,121.00	100.00%
New Hope/Ridgeville	4,495.00	4,495.00	100.00%
New Life	16,594.00	16,594.00	100.00%
Oak Grove/Ridgeville	4,042.00	4,042.00	100.00%
Peniel	1,539.00	—	0.00%
Port Royal	16,401.00	16,401.00	100.00%
Providence	1,228.00	1,228.00	100.00%
Red Bank	2,973.00	2,973.00	100.00%
Red Root	4,605.00	4,605.00	100.00%
Rehoboth	7,046.00	7,046.00	100.00%
Rizers Chapel	3,350.00	3,350.00	100.00%
Salem/Dorchester	4,897.00	4,897.00	100.00%
Salem/Hendersonville	4,702.00	4,702.00	100.00%
Sand Hill	14,118.00	14,118.00	100.00%
Sandy Dam	2,300.00	—	0.00%
Shady Grove	12,672.00	12,672.00	100.00%
Simpson	5,619.00	5,619.00	100.00%
Springtown	8,939.00	8,939.00	100.00%
St. Andrew By-the-Sea	129,304.00	129,304.00	100.00%
St. Andrew By-the-Sea, Bluffton Campus	46,130.00	—	0.00%
St. Daniel	4,055.00	4,055.00	100.00%
St. George	28,864.00	28,864.00	100.00%
St. James	558.00	—	0.00%
St. John/Dorchester	5,751.00	—	0.00%
St. Johns/Ruffin	3,531.00	3,531.00	100.00%
St. Luke/Ehrhardt	3,438.00	3,438.00	100.00%
St. Luke/Okatie	13,013.00	13,013.00	100.00%
St. Mark	5,054.00	5,054.00	100.00%
St. Paul/Ridgeville	5,295.00	5,295.00	100.00%
St. Paul/Ridgeland	18,146.00	18,146.00	100.00%
St. Stephen	1,415.00	—	0.00%
Swallow Savannah	4,801.00	2,250.00	46.87%
Sykes Savannah	2,548.00	2,548.00	100.00%
Tabor	3,391.00	3,391.00	100.00%
Tillman	4,214.00	4,214.00	100.00%
Tobys Bluff	2,240.00	2,240.00	100.00%
Trinity/Greenpond	721.00	721.00	100.00%
Trinity/Ridgeville	7,800.00	7,800.00	100.00%
Trinity/Smoaks	273.00	—	0.00%
Trinity/St. George	3,307.00	3,307.00	100.00%
Union	4,634.00	4,634.00	100.00%
Varnville	4,592.00	4,592.00	100.00%
Wesley Chapel	2,052.00	2,052.00	100.00%
Wesley Grove	3,738.00	1,550.00	41.47%
Wesley/Beaufort	10,898.00	10,898.00	100.00%
Williams	3,510.00	3,510.00	100.00%
Zion/Dorchester	4,769.00	4,769.00	100.00%
Zion/Ehrhardt	418.00	418.00	100.00%
Walterboro District Total	897,161	793,470	88.44%
Conference Total	16,392,383	14,560,530	88.82%

CHURCHES PAYING 100% OF ALL APPORTIONED FUNDS
SOUTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE - 2021 through 2023

DISTRICT	2021			2022			2023		
	Paying 100%	Total Churches	Percent	Paying 100%	Total Churches	Percent	Paying 100%	Total Churches	Percent
Anderson	55	72	76%	55	71	77%	50	71	70%
Charleston	62	75	83%	63	75	84%	63	74	85%
Columbia	55	63	87%	55	63	87%	46	62	74%
Florence	77	93	83%	78	93	84%	76	93	82%
Greenville	41	62	66%	38	62	61%	36	62	58%
Greenwood	62	78	79%	63	78	81%	65	78	83%
Hartsville	75	101	74%	82	100	82%	82	100	82%
Marion	63	91	69%	59	89	66%	65	89	73%
Orangeburg	85	90	94%	86	90	96%	87	89	98%
Rock Hill	63	69	91%	61	69	88%	56	68	82%
Spartanburg	60	74	81%	59	74	80%	59	73	81%
Walterboro	83	93	89%	74	94	79%	75	94	80%
TOTALS	781	961	81%	773	958	81%	760	953	80%

2023 Budget
Receipts on Apportioned Funds

Conference apportionments	2023 Budgeted	2023 Paid	% Paid
Conference Benevolences	2,339,964.00	2,076,355.00	88.73
Retiree Health	800,000.00	716,526.00	89.57
District Superintendent's Salary	1,292,176.00	1,156,293.00	89.48
Equitable Compensation	565,000.00	505,266.00	89.43
District Administration	821,822.00	736,240.00	89.59
Conference Administration	1,647,514.00	1,453,412.00	88.22
Congregational Development	955,708.00	850,180.00	88.96
Campus Ministry	672,729.00	598,463.00	88.96
Senior College Scholarship Fund	950,000.00	842,377.00	88.67
Spartanburg Methodist College	588,018.00	521,524.00	88.69
Methodist Homes Residents' Assistance	400,000.00	353,843.00	88.46
Camps & Retreat Ministries	319,800.00	282,906.00	88.46
District Parsonage/Office	780,000.00	688,331.00	88.25
Subtotal on Conference apportionments	12,132,731.00	10,781,715.00	88.86
General & Jurisdictional apportionments			
World Service	2,176,172.00	1,923,487.12	88.39
Episcopal Fund	644,453.00	572,843.92	88.89
General Conference Administration	258,403.00	228,108.10	88.28
Ministerial Education	735,010.00	650,694.44	88.53
Interdenominational Cooperation	57,483.00	51,568.91	89.71
Black College Fund	293,189.00	261,366.95	89.15
Africa University Fund	65,614.00	64,564.98	98.40
Jurisdictional Mission & Ministry	29,328.00	26,178.49	89.26
Subtotal on General & Jurisdictional	4,259,652.00	3,778,813.00	88.71
APPORTIONMENT TOTAL	16,392,383.00	14,560,528.00	88.82
Extra Mile for Colleges/Homes	625,000.00	203,037.00	32.49
APPORTIONMENT + EXTRA MILE	17,017,383.00	14,763,565.00	86.76

2023 Budget
Receipts on Funds by District

District	Total Apportioned	Total Paid	Percent Paid	Special Giving
Anderson	1,088,598	864,122	79.38%	83,144
Charleston	1,533,802	1,439,108	93.83%	95,635
Columbia	2,764,300	2,573,549	93.10%	119,313
Florence	1,153,318	973,021	84.37%	22,558
Greenville	1,933,038	1,579,008	81.69%	30,570
Greenwood	1,100,062	998,798	90.79%	110,146
Hartsville	1,157,523	1,074,197	92.80%	39,237
Marion	1,538,771	1,320,782	85.83%	87,929
Orangeburg	996,182	985,513	98.93%	93,602
Rock Hill	1,070,600	895,800	83.67%	56,364
Spartanburg	1,159,028	1,063,160	91.73%	54,648
Walterboro	897,161	793,470	88.44%	111,541
Totals	16,392,383	14,560,528	88.82%	904,687

How Apportionments are Calculated

The Conference formula is designed to set apportionments using a method comparing relative financial strength to calculate each church's fair share of the total Conference budget. It uses the same criteria for every church.

$$\frac{\text{LOCAL CHURCH AVERAGE NET FUNDS}}{\text{CONFERENCE AVERAGE NET FUNDS}} = \frac{\text{LOCAL CHURCH APPORTIONMENT}}{\text{CONFERENCE BUDGET}}$$

Local Church Average Net Funds is a two-year average of the total of: pastor compensation; associate pastor compensation; housing allowances and amounts paid for the pastor(s) for housing; pastor and associate(s) accountable reimbursements; pastor and associate(s) other cash allowances; salary and benefits for Deacons, Diaconal Ministers, other church staff; local church programming expenses; and local church operating expenses. These are reported in Table II of the year end Local Church Report to the Annual Conference in lines lines 41-47. **Conference Average Net Funds** is the total of the average net funds figures for all churches in the Conference, excluding new church starts and mission churches.

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From left are Michael Ann Crenshaw, Sandra Dawkins, Cherie Hulse (secretary and historian), Ellen Edwards (president), Clara Steele (vice president), Linda Matthews (treasurer), Jan Cunningham, Amanda Stegall and Linda Stegall. All are part of Camp Creek UMC, United Women in Faith or the Happy Hookers.



Crochet care items provide comfort in the midst of tragedy

By Crystal Barrs

It is a tragedy to lose a child. The void from such a loss stays with you forever.

To help alleviate some of this pain, Camp Creek United Methodist Church, United Women in Faith, Happy Hookers and Church of the Good Shepherd United Women in Faith in Lancaster are providing small crochet cocoons, hats, hearts and crosses, as well as pocket prayer quilts.

Michael Ann Crenshaw, a 35-year dedicated nurse from the maternity floor at the Medical University of South Carolina in Lancaster, spoke to the Camp Creek United Women in Faith circle plus a few of their Happy Hookers on Feb. 13. Crenshaw thanked the Happy Hookers for their crocheted items.

"The staff will gently wrap the child in an appropriately sized, beautiful cocoon, with

hat, allowing the mother to hold their precious baby and take pictures for the family, or taking pictures of the baby's tiny hand on the pocket prayer quilt, heart or cross to be placed in the memory box they take home with them," Crenshaw shared. "In doing this small loving gift, the families have a lasting memory of their child as well as acknowledgment of their child's brief but important existence."

The pocket prayer quilt, heart or cross is for the families to keep as a constant reminder that others care about their loss. These items were made out of love, and they are making a difference in the grieving process.

Having a tangible item to hold onto and knowing that others care and are praying for their loss and healing makes a difference.

Barrs is Rock Hill District UWF nominations chair.

Port Royal launches food pantry ministry

By Bill Farrar and the Rev. Ann Bridgers

In fall 2012, at the request of Port Royal United Methodist Church's pastor the Rev. Ann Bridgers, a committee met with the Beaufort County Coordinator for Second Helpings to discuss the possibility of opening a food pantry.

After much discussion and prayer, the group voted to move ahead with this project as a growing need for such a ministry in this community had become apparent.

The doors opened in October 2012 to provide food for approximately people in a week. Over the years, the Port Royal UMC Food Ministry has grown significantly as more and more families come seeking help with their weekly food needs.

With the help of Second Helpings, we are able to meet these needs through the truck deliveries from food donated by local grocery stores and farms throughout the Beaufort County Lowcountry.

In 2023, through our partnership with Second Helpings, we were able to provide food for approximately 34,500 individuals; 25 percent of this number are children.

The year 2024 has seen a steady increase in the families who have requested food as they struggle with the high cost of groceries and inflation. At this time, our food ministry is meeting the needs of 900 to more than 1,000 people each week.

Our ministry could not operate without the devoted volunteers who give of their time and energy to help those who come each week. The work is physical and tiring, but at the end of a long day, we know we have been blessed because of this ministry, which touches so many lives.

While food boxes are being prepared for pick up, Pastor Ann greets each individual by checking each one in for the day's pick up. On many occasions as an individual is greeted, he/she has shared a problem or family situation with her and then asked for prayer. Ministry takes place in the parking lot every week as individuals and families are lifted in prayer. So often our recipients need to be fed spiritually as well as physically. We strive to be Christ's hands and feet as we serve others.

Every day that food is distributed begins with prayer. Our God knows the needs before we even ask. He always provides.

As Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15). To God be the glory!



Photo by Sadie Moss

Honoring Black history

Under the direction of Matthew Bratton, the children and youth of Green Pond UMC, Clover, were taught how to play djembes and dununs, which are instruments native to West Africa, as part of February Black History Awareness Month. They also learned two songs in the Malinke language. On Sunday, Feb. 11, the children and youth played instruments and sang during morning worship service in celebration of Black History Month. Bratton is a member of Green Pond and a teacher at Cherry Park Elementary School of Language Immersion in Rock Hill.



Photos courtesy of Midas Touch Photography (Terrence McCants) and Ruth McCants

A Heart of Remembrance

Mechanicsville United Women In Faith, Bishopville, held their retreat Saturday, March 9, with Hartsville District United Women In Faith President Dr. Tonya Mack as their guest speaker. Their theme was "A Heart of Remembrance." On Sunday, March 10, they concluded the retreat with lay servant Terrilyon James delivering the proclaimed word. Her message was "Faith That Moves Mountains." Mary L. Yates is their unit president. At left, Mack (left) stands with Yates.

Epworth Children's Home

Child Abuse Prevention Month

With the month of April comes the emergence of spring, and every year we anticipate the bright sunshine spotlighting colorful flowers, highlighting the vibrant green of newly sprouting grass and warming us after the winter weather. April is also a month that offers us the opportunity to shine a different kind of spotlight on a serious issue that affects our society: Child Abuse Prevention Month.

This is a time to spread awareness of the realities of child abuse, which affect our communities across South Carolina every day.

In communities and counties all over our state, there are nonprofit organizations and local agencies that welcome assistance and awareness on the part of the public, and these groups will all be publicizing the issue of child abuse prevention this month.

In our work at Epworth, child abuse is a topic we encounter daily. The great majority of children who come to live at Epworth, or who are in the foster and kinship homes Epworth supports, have experienced some type of abuse or neglect in their young lives. They are removed from their birth families by the South Carolina Department of Social Services and come to Epworth to live, or to foster families Epworth serves. Every month for us is child abuse prevention month, as we provide those we serve with programs, services and lots of caring staff members to help them heal and lead happy, safe, secure lives.

When we think of child abuse, we often think of children who are physically harmed by their parents or other adults, and while this is certainly a primary result of child abuse, there are also other parameters that define the issue. Child abuse encompasses not only physical harm, but also the effects of neglect that many children sadly experience daily in their lives. This neglect can be physical neglect, in cases where children are not living in safe homes and are not being given enough to eat or a warm place to sleep. Neglect can be emotional in cases where children are ignored and shown no love or affection in the home. Educational neglect is another form of child abuse where parents show no interest in teaching their children nor in having them attend school. And finally, medical neglect affects children when their medical needs are ignored and they are allowed to experience illness or chronic conditions without receiving medical assistance.

Another aspect of child abuse that we often don't consider is its long-term effects. Most studies indicate that the repercussions of child abuse can last for many years after the actual abuse or neglect have ended. While children are resilient, the effects of childhood

trauma can follow them throughout their childhoods, adolescence and into adulthood in some cases. Child abuse and neglect cause trauma, which can impair brain development and is linked to physical, emotional and behavioral issues later in life. Many of our programs at Epworth address this.

According to recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control, last year more than 600,000 children in America were abused or neglected, a number that translates into one in every seven children in our country experiencing some type of abuse or neglect; last year in South Carolina, there were more than 15,000 cases substantiated by the state Department of Social Services.

At Epworth, we have what is called a continuum of care, a system through which we offer our services and programs to the children and families we serve from the beginning of their situations of abuse and neglect throughout the healing process. The children who live on Epworth's campus are referred by the Department of Social Services soon after abuse and neglect are discovered. Epworth also operates an Emergency Intake Center where children are removed from danger and brought immediately to Epworth for care and safety. Immediately upon arrival, children receive not only a safe, secure and loving place to live, but also professional services such as counseling, tutoring, educational support, health services and other resources to help them heal and begin to thrive.

In its continuum of care, Epworth offers programs and services to help children and families as they progress to healing and confidence in their lives. Among the programs provided are the Center for Counseling; the Education Intervention Center to help preschoolers with developmental difficulties reach school readiness; the Family Care Center where mothers who have experienced substance use can come to learn parenting and job skills and reunite with their children after rehabilitation; and the Center for Independent Living, where older youth who might otherwise be homeless can learn life skills, job skills, or attend college, providing them with opportunities to succeed in life.

One of Epworth's newest programs is its Foster Care Program, which operates recruitment, training and support for foster parents across South Carolina. Many of the children who will live in the homes of these foster parents have been victims of abuse and neglect at some point during their young lives.

Epworth's services support these foster families as they offer loving homes to children and youth who have suffered trauma in their lives but now have safe havens.



Photos courtesy of Cynthia Boulware

Painting honors history

The United Women in Faith at St. James UMC, Darlington, celebrated women in the month of March with a splash of color. The United Women in Faith held the event, "A Brush with History" March 9 in the church's Fellowship Hall. The event focused on painting famous African-American women in history, such as Rosa Parks, Mary McLeod Bethune and Madam C.J. Walker, to name a few. The women were led in the painting experience by Timothy Green, a local art teacher. The art pieces will adorn the sanctuary until the end of March.



A big blessing

Dacusville UMC, Easley, has installed and dedicated a blessing box to help those in need in the Dacusville community. The box was installed Feb. 26 and dedicated March 3. Pastor Brian Underwood said they are already seeing a steady traffic of families utilizing the items available. He said they are also blessed that the Dacusville Community Center has come on board to help keep the box stocked. Above, trustees Wes Bolding and John McCain stand with Pastor Brian and the box.

St. Andrew By-The-Sea UMC hosts free four-week addiction series

HILTON HEAD ISLAND—St. Andrew By-The-Sea United Methodist Church will host a four-week series, "Helping from the Sidelines," about understanding loved one's substance abuse disorders, with facilitator Dr. Gerard Love.

The series will begin Thursday, April 25, at 7 p.m. and take place on the following three Thursdays at the church at 20 Pope Ave.: May 2, May 9 and May 16.

Love is an addiction science and recovery specialist who

has worked in the field for more than 35 years.

"The idea for the series began when two elderly (grandparents) came to me talking about their worries about their grandchildren's addiction problems. Many of us came through life ahead of the drug culture and lack an education about addiction, yet our children and grandchildren face it every day," said Michael Tucker, a member of the outreach team at St. Andrew By-The-Sea UMC.

The free four-week sessions will be about an hour in length and cover a range of essential topics from understanding addiction and its effects to building healthier relationships and finding emotional balance. This series is for families, friends and loved ones who want to better understand, support and heal together.

No registration is required. For more information about this event: standrewbythesea@gmail.com or 843-785-4711.

Native American Ministries

The sweat lodge ceremony

By Catherine Nelson

The sweat lodge is one of the traditional ceremonies shared by Native American nations. While ceremonies vary from one tribal community to the next, the sweat lodge tradition is a ceremony of prayer for purification, healing and renewal.

Full disclosure: While traditionalists do not name Christ Jesus in the ceremony, since the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Native American Christians have explored how our spiritual traditions have a close relationship with the Creator of the Universe (God) and all within Mother Earth. Keepers of the Word includes the expression of Christ in our sweat lodge ceremonies.

The traditional lodge is a dome-shaped structure made from willow saplings. The shape resembles a dome-style tent with horizontal saplings that support the covering, usually made of canvas or blankets. In historic times, lodges were covered in hides. Building the lodge includes prayer with preparation and orientation. The door to enter the lodge faces east. In the center of the lodge is a pit to hold the heated stones that are brought in from the outside sacred fire. Many Natives say it is an indigenous sauna designed for prayer and personal purification.

The sacred fire is located about ten paces east and directly in front of the door. The fire keeper builds and monitors the stone-filled fire. When well heated, the participants humble themselves in prayer to the Great Spirit (God) and crawl into the sweat lodge. The fire keeper brings the heated rocks to the lodge to slide into the pit in the center. When the stones are in place, the lodge leader closes the flap (door), and rounds of prayers begin.

Using the four elements of fire, earth, water and air, the leader with the participants sing prayer songs and spoken prayers. The four elements—fire, earth, water and air—contribute to the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical purification of the participants as they focus on their time dedicated to renewal and a closer, personal relationship with the Great Spirit (God).

The sacred fire represents the living God, the fire power of the Great Spirit that heats the rocks. Within the dark lodge, the water represents the living water (Christ), which the leader pours on the rocks to generate

steam, which becomes the "breath of life."

The lodge represents the universe, and the heated rocks represent the core of the universe where Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit are central to all and in all of his creation.

The ancient ones (the rocks) are the ones that have known the Trinity the longest. With this steamy environment, the participants sweat and pray. The prayers recall that Christ is the center of creation, the central reality of God's plan for all. We pray that we may walk the good road and paths set before us. We pray that we, too, may be purified and be in agreement with the bringer of peace, Christ Jesus. Time for silent prayers and listening to the Great Spirit for all participants is included with each prayer focus.

Scriptural support is found in Luke 19:38-40. On Palm Sunday, congregations celebrate the crowds who shout, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (v. 39), and some of the pharisees called to him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples" (v. 40). But he answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out" (NKJV).

Another supportive Scripture for sweat lodge traditions is in Colossians 1:15-17: "He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things and in him all things consist."

This ceremony takes physical work and personal involvement of both leaders and participants. All involved help with the gathering of firewood and rocks for the ceremony, the covering of the lodge and items needed inside the lodge. After the sweat, there is a feast, so a meal is also prepared.

The sweat lodge is an ancient practice that encourages a deep personal spiritual relationship with God with an active prayer life. From one who has experienced many "sweats," I testify that it is a time well spent and refreshing both spiritually and physically.

Nelson is vice chair of the Native American Committee and director of Keepers of the Word.



by Janice Cockfield Eaddy

United Women in Faith

Turning financial gifts into miracles

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Justice isn't just about us. We must be concerned with others and how they are treated. As Christians, we are expected to care about all of God's people and be willing to stand for what is right in his sight. For God is a God of justice. He loves the poor and hears the cry of the oppressed.

God desires that all people share in this world of plenty. As Micah 6:8 says, "He has told 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" (ESV).

As United Women in Faith we are a powerful, fearless force driven by God's love and united in sisterhood. With a focus on women, children and youth, we act for justice and transform communities. These are often the poorest of our population. Mission Giving allows us to share out of our abundance with them. It doesn't matter that we will never know or meet any of them in our lifetime. This is what Micah 6:8 is referring to when we are instructed to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.

Many of you have heard me say that my mother taught me "agape love" by example. Growing up in a very modest home, it was not unusual to see her share with others in our community from our limited resources. As a child, I didn't always understand her generosity; however, as an adult, I fully understand. She was simply living out God's mandates found in the Scriptures.

Being a member of United Women in Faith for more than 30 years has helped me further understand generosity. The opportunity to be a member of a community of women whose purpose is to know God, experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ, develop a creative and supportive fellowship and expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church is truly a blessing.

As Mother's Day approaches, I challenge each of you to honor your mother in sharing with those in need—the women, children and youth that at this time in their lives may not have necessities needed to enjoy life. As Luke 6:38 says, when you give from a heart for Jesus, your goal isn't to get a blessing. But the truth is that God will bless you. You can't out-give God. When you learn to be generous like God is generous, he promises that you will end up with more.

Fulfilling our purpose of United Women in Faith is a task that brings many blessings to the givers and receivers. Thanks for your commitment to our purpose and dedication to helping women, children and youth around the globe. Please join me in blessing them with your donation to Mission Giving through United Women in Faith.

Eaddy is South Carolina Conference UWFaith interim treasurer.

Leave A Legacy To Change Lives

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

Ellen J. Andrews

ELYRIA, Ohio—Ellen J. Andrews, sister of the Rev. Richard Andrews, died Feb. 25, 2024. Rev. Andrews is the pastor of the Blacksburg Charge, Blacksburg.

A memorial service was held April 13 at Sunset Memorial Chapel, North Olmstead, Ohio.

Ms. Andrews is survived by her husband, William Jordan.

Alfonso Conyers

SUMMERVILLE—Alfonso Conyers, father of the Rev. Lisa Hawkins, died March 18, 2024. Rev. Hawkins is the pastor of Pineville-St. Stephen Charge, Bowman.

Funeral services were held April 13 at Centenary UMC, Charleston.

Mr. Conyers is survived by his son and three daughters.

William Thomas Crews Jr.

WEST COLUMBIA—William Thomas Crews Jr., father of Jim Crews, died March 11, 2024. Mr. Jim Crews is the director of Information Technology for the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held March 17 at

Brookland UMC.

Mr. Crews is survived by his wife, Judy, two daughters and three sons.

Martha Ann Seymour Marlowe

SUMTER—Martha Ann Seymour Marlowe, widow of the Rev. Reuben Marlowe, died March 4, 2024.

A memorial service was held March 15 at Trinity United Methodist Church. Burial was in Twin City Memorial Gardens, Loris, on March 16.

Memorials may be made to Trinity UMC, 226 W. Liberty St., Sumter, SC 29150; or to the Reuben B. and Marsha S. Marlowe Endowment for Scholarships to Emory University's Candler School of Theology, 1531 Dickey Drive, Atlanta, GA 30322.

Mrs. Marlowe is survived by her three sons and daughter.

Edwin Davis Ott Jr.

CHARLESTON—Edwin Davis Ott Jr., brother of the Rev. Burton Ott, died March 7, 2024. Rev. Ott is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held March 9 at

Obituary Policy

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

Daniel Point Retirement Community.

Memorials may be made to the Lowcountry Food Bank, 2864 Azalea Drive, North Charleston, SC 29405.

Mr. Ott is survived by his daughter.

Hawa Pazi

TANZANIA, East Africa—Hawa Pazi, mother of the Rev. Sammy O. Pazi, died March 14, 2024. Rev. Pazi is the pastor of the Cheraw Parish, Cheraw.

Funeral arrangements had not been published at the time of printing.

Martha Cole Ransom

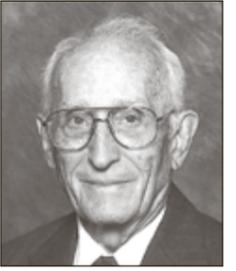
ST. STEPHEN—Martha Cole Ransom, widow of the Rev. Norman Ransom, died Feb. 27, 2024.

Funeral services were held March 3 at New Light United Methodist Church with burial in Tri-Churches Cemetery.

Mrs. Ransom is survived by daughter and two sons.

Robert Garfield Strother

SPARTANBURG—The Rev. Robert Garfield Strother, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Feb. 21, 2024.



Strother

Prior to his retirement in 1990, Rev. Strother served the Cottageville, Panola-Bethlehem, Drayton, Union-Green Street, Cowpens, Inman, Emma Gray, Duncan, Pendleton and Epworth (Rock Hill) charges.

Funeral services were held Feb. 24 at Bethel UMC with burial in Greenlawn Memorial Gardens.

Memorials may be made to Bethel UMC, 235 S. Church St., Spartanburg, SC 29306; to Roebuck Baptist Church (Kingdom Investment Strategy), P.O. Box 490, Roebuck, SC 29376; or to Spartanburg Regional Hospice, P.O. Box 2624, Spartanburg, SC 29304.

Rev. Strother is survived by his daughter.

IDQ Newman to mark 40 years

COLUMBIA—I. DeQuincey Newman United Methodist Church will celebrate its 40th church anniversary Sunday, April 21, at 10 a.m.

The membership and church administration say they are thankful to have reached such a momentous milestone in the life of their church. This event be a special homecoming celebration for the membership as well as the communities the church has served for the past 40



Miller

years. Featured choirs will be composed of former members of their youth and children's choirs who are now adults and have formed affiliations with faith organizations all over the world.

The Rev. Anna Miller, Orangeburg, will bring the message.

I. DeQuincey Newman UMC

is located at 7801 Wilson Blvd., Columbia, SC. All are invited to attend. The Rev. Frank V. James is senior pastor.

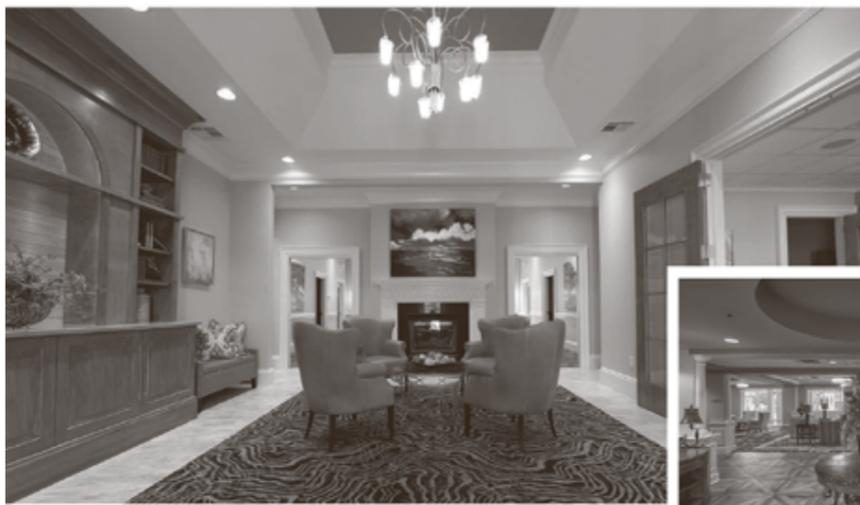


A child-led worship service

Union UMC, Cope, celebrated Children's Sabbath on Sunday, March 10. All children participated and conducted the entire worship service. Everyone enjoyed pizza and dessert after worship. This special service was sponsored by Union's United Women in Faith.

Photo courtesy of Carole Harrison

Picture yourself enjoying a worry-free retirement lifestyle ...

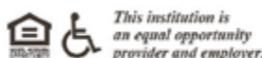


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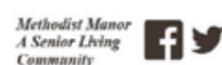
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From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

Who was James Belin?

In our conference, we hear about the James L. Belin Trust occasionally, and we hear about Belin Memorial Church as well. We might even speculate about how we should pronounce the name. But why are we talking about a minister who served in the antebellum era and died in 1859?

The Rev. James Lynch Belin was born in All Saints Parish on the Waccamaw Neck of Georgetown District in 1788. His ancestry was French Huguenot, though like many Lowcountry Carolinians of that background, his family members were Episcopalians. His family was wealthy, and thus he had better educational opportunities than most.

We know very little of his life before he joined the South Carolina Annual Conference in December 1811. We know he had four sisters and no brothers, and that generally in his family and social class, when they were converted to the faith, even if by Methodist ministers, they were more likely to join the Presbyterian or Episcopal church. Methodism was looked down upon as a religion for the humble. That didn't seem to bother Belin, who was later ordained deacon and elder. From 1812 to 1818, he served several Lowcountry circuits as well as one in Georgia. But his health started to fail by 1818, and that and the death of his father forced him to leave the itinerant ministry.

Belin married Elizabeth Laval, who was the sister of his sister's husband. While a biography of Belin and his record of appointments don't completely line up on the dates, it does appear that James and Elizabeth Belin moved to Mandarin, Florida, for a few years for his health. They stayed three years, acquiring a house, farm and orange grove. He returned to South Carolina on account of difficulties that White settlers in Florida had with Native Americans. The Florida property eventually became the property of the Florida Conference, according to family histories. It was not part of his estate at his death. Elizabeth Belin died in 1821, and 10 years later, he married Charlotte Withers, who was 11 years younger than him. Neither marriage produced any children.

Belin at a young age began the work he is best known for: mission work to the enslaved persons on the Waccamaw Neck. He preached in the 1810s at Brookgreen and Springfield plantations with the consent of the plantation owner. He remained a local pastor until 1837, when he rejoined the South Carolina Conference and was appointed to the mission to the slaves on Waccamaw Neck. He served the Waccamaw Mission for five years, retiring again in 1842. No doubt he continued his missionary work for his remaining years.

James and Charlotte Belin spent their winters at Wachesaw Plantation and their summers on Pawleys Island. When he died in a fall from his carriage in May 1859 caused by a runaway horse, he left nearly his entire estate for mission work in the South Carolina Conference in general and the Waccamaw Neck in particular. It was a substantial estate, including lands from a rice plantation, bank and railroad stock, as well as some enslaved persons.

The Belin Trust continues to provide funding for missions in South Carolina.

What are we to make of James Belin? His tombstone says he was "called and chosen and faithful." He carried on a ministry to a group of people that others weren't interested in serving. However, he was also a slave owner himself. His will instructed his executors and trustees to care for his "servants" in the same manner he had. Manumission was just about impossible in South Carolina by the 1850s, so freeing his enslaved persons before or at his death was not practical.

Scholars disagree on what sort of gospel the ministers to the slaves preached, and how much of the gospel the planters wanted them to hear. However, it appears Belin had a long-term vision for these men and women he worked with, and that vision still bears fruit today.

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



Conference Historical Society

by the Rev. Joseph D. Kovas

A rich history of civil rights

I recently had the wonderful opportunity to travel to Orangeburg and tour The Cecil Williams South Carolina Civil Rights Museum. Over the past decades, Williams has served as an advocate for civil rights and has documented the civil rights movement through his photography. In 2019, Cecil and his wife, Barbara, and sister Brenda felt called to create and open the first and only museum dedicated to civil rights history in the Palmetto State. Later this year, Orangeburg County will open a brand-new museum to house the exhibits for all the world to see.

As I passed through the exhibits and learned about the many individuals who struggled, fought and sacrificed for the Civil Right movement, I paid attention to the testimonies that referred to their faith. Many of the individuals who were on display were also faithful Methodists.

One of the most prominent Methodist minister's stories on display was that of the Rev. Joseph A. Delaine. Delaine was an African Methodist Episcopal minister who was prominent in organizing parents and students in Clarendon County to sue the school district and government for equal educational opportunities. The lawsuit of *Briggs v. Elliott* would travel through the courts and become one of the five lawsuits to overturn *Plessy v. Ferguson* in *Brown v. Board of Education* of 1954, thus ending legally the position of separate but equal.

In addition to Delaine, there are also faithful Methodists from our own tradition on display in the museum. Trinity United Methodist Church in Orangeburg served as a central hub for civil rights activities during the 1960s.

In one of the exhibits, there is a prominent photo of the Rev. John Curry, who served as the pastor of Trinity and was a voice for civils right during this period. Esau Jenkins, a member of Wesley United Methodist Church in the Charleston District, was the founder of the Progressive Club, an organization dedicated to promoting political education and voter registration for African Americans on Johns Island and on the Sea

Islands surrounding Charleston. Jenkins was well known for his Volkswagen van that he used to transport people to the City of Charleston from the islands for jobs. A door of his Volkswagen van is at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. Jenkins was also the founder of the C.O. Federal Credit Union, which gave African Americans in the community low-interest rates on loans they could use to purchase a home.

The Rev. Isaiah DeQuincey Newman is also on display in the civil rights museum. Newman served in many Methodist churches across the state and was instrumental in planting two churches in the Columbia district. Newman served as the field director for the state chapter of the NAACP. Toward the end of his life, Newman worked closely with South Carolina governors from Fritz Hollings to Dick Riley to address social issues that impacted people across the state. He was also elected to the State Senate in 1983.

In an interview she gave with the Rev. Marvin Lare, Anne Newman, Newman's wife, stated he was one who had a "Christian social concern" for South Carolina.

These are only a few of the many hundreds of Methodists and Christians on display in the civil rights museum who advocated for civil rights in the Palmetto State. Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Williams and the museum board have created a masterpiece that tells the story of the many South Carolinians who sacrificed to make life better for all.

The museum tells our story and helps us to remember the saying, "Lest we forget." It is truly a beautiful place.

If you have not gone, take the time next weekend to go and see for yourself a place that embodies the words of our state motto, Dum Spiro Spero—While I breathe, I hope. You will be filled with hope after walking among the stories and giants of the Cecil Williams South Carolina Civil Rights Museum.

Kovas pastors St. Paul United Methodist Church, New Ellenton.

A historical marker for a historic church in Murrells Inlet

By Casey Jones

Excerpted with permission from My Horry News

The Belin Memorial United Methodist Church made Murrells Inlet history on Sunday, Jan. 21.

Congregants unveiled the first South Carolina Historical Marker along the historic salt marsh, as the church celebrated its 99th anniversary.

Belin Memorial Senior Pastor the Rev. Will Malambri said the church was founded through the initiative of a prominent local woman, "Miss Oliver of Oliver's Lodge," who had tired of traveling to attend church.

Malambri said Oliver, whose family opened and operated the first restaurant in the Inlet, found a vacant church on an old plantation in Pawleys Island. "It was out of use," he said, explaining how Oliver had it disassembled, moved to the Inlet, and reconstructed.

The congregation officially organized in 1925. It's named after the Rev. James L. Belin, a plantation owner and pioneering Methodist pastor in these parts. When he died in 1859, "he willed most of his property to the Methodist Church, including his Cedar Hill Plantation, where Belin Memorial was founded," the historical marker reads.

Belin Memorial, like the Inlet, has grown exponentially over the years. The church now has about 2,700 members, and about 1,700 attend Sunday worship services either in-person or online. And it has a variety of ministries, two associate pastors and two types of services. Each Sunday at 8:45 a.m. and 11 a.m., traditional worship services are held in the sanctuary and modern services in the Belin Family Life Center across the street.

"We continue to grow. We have a good, strong, faithful congregation," Malambri said.



Photo by David Garcia

Belin Memorial UMC members Corinne Hoch, right, and Henrietta Huff unveil the South Carolina Historical Marker outside the historic church on the waterfront in Murrells Inlet during a ceremony Jan. 21.

The sanctuary at 4183 Highway 17 Business has also grown. Belin UMC built a new church on the creek-side campus in 1992. The original church was moved again, this time to Myrtle Beach, and is now the home of Joseph B. Bethea United Methodist Church.

Sunday's event began with the unveiling of the marker by Corinne Hoch and Henrietta Huff, members of the church's centennial planning team.

The metal marker has a silver surface trimmed in black with raised black text. It's mounted between two pillars suspended over a garden box. Hoch told the gathered crowd

that the pillars are appropriate because Belin Memorial "is a pillar of the community."

Hoch decided to pursue the sign after she noticed them outside other churches, commemorating a century of service.

It's an arduous process that required rigorous documentation, proof of historic significance, approval by the church and the state, and even a pull-off spot along the road where the marker is placed so people can stop and read it. Hoch hoped to have it approved and erected by 2025 for Belin Memorial's centennial, but got the job done in time for the 99th anniversary.

The annual observance and festival for the church anniversary has been held since 2013. There's a different theme each year, and the 2024 observance was titled "Through the Years."

In a tent outside the sanctuary, tables held hundreds of mementos — children's toys, newspapers and magazines, church photo albums. Each table represented a 15-year slice of time, and they were manned by docents knowledgeable in Inlet and Belin Memorial history.

In the parking lot, a variety of vehicles lined up old-to-new, giving attendees a glimpse of what parishioners drove to church through the years. There was a 1929 Model A Ford on one end, and a 2022 Ford Mustang muscle car on the other. Attendees could also pose for photos behind cutouts of outfits parishioners would have worn to worship services over the life of the church.

Even the food took attendees through the years. The theme continued inside with a Reader's Theater. Storytellers Lee Brockington and John Scoggins told Inlet tales. Musicians led guests on a journey through the years.

March

Women's History Month

- March 28—Maundy Thursday
- March 29—Good Friday (United Methodist Center closed)
- March 31—Easter Sunday
- March 31—Easter Sunrise Service, St. Mark UMC, Taylors, 6:30 a.m.
- March 31—Easter Sunday Program, St. Mark UMC, Taylors, 9:11 a.m.

April

UWF Columbia Bethlehem Community Center Special Emphasis Month

- April 6—"Strengthening the Soul of Our Leadership," Bishop's Day in the Spartanburg District, location TBD.
- April 6—UWF Spiritual Growth Event hosted by Anderson District, virtual, 10 a.m.
- April 6-7—LSM School Greenwood District, Edgefield UMC, Edgefield, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. (Sat.); 2-5 p.m. (Sun.) <https://www.umcsc.org/event/lsm-school-greenwood-district-4/2024-04-06/>
- April 7—LSM School Spartanburg District I, Beaumont UMC, Spartanburg, 2-5:30 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/event/lsm-school-spartanburg-district-9/2024-04-07/>
- April 7—Orangeburg Parish Nursing Ministry's Wellness Sunday, Bethlehem UMC, St. Matthews, 10 a.m.
- April 13—"Strengthening the Soul of Our Leadership," Bishop's Day in the Orangeburg District, location TBD.
- April 13—Kites at the Star, Columbia Bethlehem Community Center, Columbia, 12-4 p.m. For more information: Facebook @CBCCServes.
- April 13—Collaborative Ministry Think Tank gathering, Trinity UMC, Blythewood, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Register: <https://tinyurl.com/n5nwc2uz>



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Annie R. Crocker

Ministry With the Forgotten

Dedicated lay servants gave up two of their Saturday mornings recently, March 2 and March 9, for a class at Beaumont UMC, Spartanburg. They received certifications upon completing a 10-hour study on Ministry With the Forgotten. Sue Owens led the class, and attendees said the session taught them much and purged their hearts as they remembered family and friends who are patients or caregivers dealing with this illness. Annie Crocker is Spartanburg District Lay Servant Ministries Director.

- April 13—Mother and Son Fling spaghetti dinner, Knightsville UMC, Summerville, 6-9 p.m. \$40/couple. 843-875-2117 or <https://www.knightsvilleumc.org>
- April 14—LSM School Spartanburg District II, Beaumont UMC, Spartanburg, 2-5:30 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/event/lsm-school-spartanburg-district-9/2024-04-14/>
- April 14—Native American Ministries Sunday
- April 14—200th anniversary celebration, Bethel UMC, Ruffin, 10:45 a.m.
- April 19—Alienated grandparents prayer group (meets first Thursday monthly), Knightsville UMC, Summerville, 7-8:30 p.m. 843-875-2117 or <https://www.knightsvilleumc.org>
- April 19-21—UWF SEJ Quadrennial Meeting, held in Chattanooga, Tennessee.
- April 21—Festival of God's Creation
- April 21—"200 Years of Grace" celebration, Trinity UMC, York, 10:30 a.m. Lunch to follow.
- April 21—40th anniversary celebration, I. DeQuincey Newman UMC, Columbia, 10 a.m.
- April 21—LSM School Spartanburg District III, Beaumont UMC, Spartanburg, 2-5:30 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/event/lsm-school-spartanburg-district-9/2024-04-21/>
- April 22—Earth Day
- April 23-May 3—General Conference, Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, North Carolina
- April 25—World Malaria Day
- April 25—"Helping from the Sidelines" Session 1, facilitated by Dr. Gerard Love,

St. Andrew By-The-Sea UMC, Hilton Head Island, 7 p.m. standrewbythesea@gmail.com

May

*Asian Pacific Heritage Month
Christian Home Month*

- May 2—National Day of Prayer
- May 2—"Helping from the Sidelines" Session 2, facilitated by Dr. Gerard Love, St. Andrew By-The-Sea UMC, Hilton Head Island, 7 p.m. standrewbythesea@gmail.com
- May 3—Parents Night Out, Knightsville UMC, Summerville, 6-9 p.m. 843-875-2117 or <https://www.knightsvilleumc.org>
- May 5—Cinco de Mayo
- May 5-9—May Salkehatchie, St. Mark UMC River Street campus, Greenwood. salkehatchie@umcsc.org
- May 9—Ascension Day
- May 9—"Helping from the Sidelines" Session 3, facilitated by Dr. Gerard Love, St. Andrew By-The-Sea UMC, Hilton Head Island, 7 p.m. standrewbythesea@gmail.com
- May 11—Mommies Day at the Movies, Columbia Bethlehem Community Center, Columbia, 12-4 p.m. For more information: Facebook @CBCCServes.
- May 12—Ascension Sunday
- May 12—Mother's Day
- May 12—Festival of the Christian Home
- May 13—Orangeburg District Connectional Ministries meeting, St. Mark UMC, North, 6:30-8 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/event/district-connectional-ministries-meeting/2024-05-13/>
- May 16—"Helping from the Sidelines" Session 4, facilitated by Dr. Gerard Love, St. Andrew By-The-Sea UMC, Hilton Head Island, 7 p.m.

College-gear'd May Salkehatchie set for May 5-9

Salkehatchie Summer Service is launching another mid-year mission experience: May Salkehatchie. Designed for college students, as their semesters have typically just ended, May Salkehatchie is slated for Sunday, May 5, through Thursday, May 9, at St. Mark's River Street campus in Greenwood. In addition to college students, older adults are also needed to help. For information, email salkehatchie@umcsc.org

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Backpack program thriving at St. Paul in Ninety Six

A Forward Focus initiative a few years ago has blossomed today into a thriving and successful mission at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Ninety Six: a backpack program. C. Raymond Gilbert said two things motivated St. Paul to do the program—hungry kids and a food bank that could not supply enough to meet the area's need. St. Paul communicated with Ninety Six Primary School to

determine their needs and discovered they had many more hungry students than the food bank could supply. "We applied for and received a grant, and conquered to supplement it with donations from our members," Gilbert said. "A group of us went shopping and came up with a plan to use large Ziplock bags filled with cereal, canned pasta, microwaveable meals, crackers, pop tarts, fruit cups, boxed

milk and juice." Though food item donations are accepted, they found it more efficient to accept financial contributions and take a shopping trip about once a month. This method keeps the items consistent in brand as well as size and shape. As of press time, St. Paul is supporting 20 hungry students with weekly food packs.



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Empowering Spirit

by the Rev. Michael Henderson

April 7

Power to Witness

Lesson Scripture: Luke 24:36-53

Background Scripture: Luke 24:1-53

Key Verse: Luke 24:46-47, "He said to them, 'This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'"

It is the evening of the day of the resurrection, and the followers of Jesus are gathered in a closed room, having heard wild stories of a Jesus raised from the dead, and at the same time afraid of what might happen to them. Jesus appears suddenly in this closed room and scares the people just by showing up. They think he's a ghost, so he demonstrates his still being one of them by showing them his wounded hands and feet, and then asking for some fish and eating it in front of them. By the way, that is how you recognize Jesus in the world today—by the wounds on his body and by his hunger for the basic things of life. Whenever you see those in another person, be aware that you may just be looking at Christ in our midst.

Jesus then teaches them from the Hebrew Scriptures that all that happened to him was foretold. He gave them a new understanding of old things they had heard many times in their lives. And he concludes with a directive—a changed heart, which leads to a changed life, will lead to the forgiveness of sins and must be proclaimed to all. Of course, we know from John and others that we are forgiven by God and then our hearts are changed. (See 1 John 4:19.)

Perhaps Jesus is telling us that from our side of the divine ledger, we do not fully realize the love of God until our hearts and lives are changed.

April 14

The Golden Rule for All

Lesson Scripture: Mark 12:28-34

Background Scriptures: Matthew 7:12; 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 6:31; 10:25-37

Key Verse: John 20:28-29, "Jesus replied, 'The most important one is Israel, listen! Our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your

strength. The second is this, You will love your neighbor as yourself. No other commandment is greater than these.'"

As a child and into my teen years I used to play a game with my friends and UMYF group called Geiger Counter. In it we would hide an object or designate an object or person as the "radioactive" thing in our midst. One person, who was out of the room, did not know what it was, and when they returned the group became the Geiger counter, making clicking noises louder and faster as the person got near the object, until they discovered what it was. The closer you got, the louder the "Geiger counter" made noise.

This lawyer was so close the noise was almost deafening. He has studied the law. He knows it by heart. He knows all the intricacies, the loopholes, the hidden traps, and the results from now following it. But which, out of all of them, more than 600, was the most important? Inquiring minds wanted to know! And Jesus does an odd thing. Usually he answered a question with a question ("What do you think? How do you read it?"). But here he answers directly. He does not tell him anything new. He merely quotes Deuteronomy 6:5, and Leviticus 19:18. But he puts then two together and makes them one. We read the word "second" and think of it as second in line, not the first. But in the context of Luke, the word means equal. You cannot love God and not your neighbor, and to love your neighbor is to love God. Dorothy Day said, "I really only love God as much as the person I love the least."

Is it any wonder that no one asked Jesus any questions after that?

April 21

A Gentile Woman's Great Faith

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 15:21-28

Background Scriptures: Matthew 15:1-39; Mark 7:24-30

Key Verse: Matthew 15:28, "Jesus answered, 'Woman, you have great faith. It will be just as you wish.' And right then her daughter was healed."

This is a passage of Scripture I struggled with for years. It seemed so out of context for Jesus to act that way. He had healed lepers who were Samaritans, the slave of a Roman centurion, and countless other people who were not of "the lost sheep of

Israel." So why not this woman who was asking not for herself, but for her daughter who was horribly ill. Some told me it was because he wanted to test her faith. But Jesus never did that with anyone else. Some said it was not as harsh as it seems, that the word "dog" could be translated as "puppy." That's still not a good answer, especially when it's your daughter who is sick. And Jesus never, never did that to anyone else. So why now?

Then something dawned on me. Jesus was God becoming fully human. Fully human. And that meant that he was born into a particular time and place (Israel in the first century) and among a particular people (Jewish people), and in a particular culture (Jewish laws concerning other people and cultures). So what he first said was correct in the time, place, people, and culture he was in. But the needs of the world, the real world, through this woman, would not let go. And when the needs of the world confronted the rules of the culture, we should always listen to the voice of God's love for all.

The good news is this—if Jesus can change his mind, then maybe we can, too.

April 28

Samaritans Encounter the Messiah

Lesson Scripture: John 4:21-42

Background Scripture: John 4

Key Verse: John 4:22-23, "You and your people worship what you don't know; we worship what we know because salvation is from the Jews. But the time is coming—and is here!—when true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth. The Father looks for those who worship him this way."

I have lived through many wars. I'm not

referring to the geopolitical ones where we are always involved. The wars I am referring to (and every pastor you know can tell you of their own particular battles in these wars) is ... worship wars.

Time, place, style of music, hymnals or screens, videos or not, liturgical dance and other art, even style of dress and who can participate ('babies should be taken out and put in the nursery') are all battles fought in this both-sides-lose war.

There's bigger battles going on with this woman. She's a Samaritan, rejected by Jewish people. She's been married five times and now lives with someone who is not her husband. She's rejected by the other Samaritan women in the village. She goes to the well at midday because they do not want her around them. And now this strange Jewish rabbi is talking with her, asking for her help in getting some water. She's used to being defensive, so she turns the conversation to the worship war. "Up on the mountain here or down at your temple?"

Jesus recognizes this for what it is, another wall put up to isolate yourself. Walls may protect you (at least a for a while, but not for long), but they also isolate you. Keep you from being in touch with people, with nature, with God. Jesus, a carpenter who may have torn down a wall or two himself, said, "None of that matters. What matters is what's inside. Your spirit, your heart. And are you being true?"

And as he takes a sip of water, you can just begin to hear a wall beginning to fall.

Henderson, a retired elder, serves as supply pastor to the Johnsonville Circuit in the Florence District. He is also a member of the Advocate's Board of Trustees.

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WOFFORD COLLEGE

In spring 2022, Taylor Fuller '24 recognized the need for a space uniting minority STEM students at Wofford. Discussions with Dr. Lisa Cantwell evolved into a vision for Minorities in STEM, an organization dedicated to fostering opportunities and building a supportive network.

"My goal is to empower students, help them realize their potential and make lasting contributions to the campus and Spartanburg communities."

Dr. Lisa Cantwell



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**NADIA
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