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## S.C. youth leaders help launch new confirmation experience

By Jessica Brodie

For years, many South Carolina youth ministers longed for a United Methodist confirmation experience that would not only embrace Wesleyan theology, but also include

smaller congregations as well as those of all races.

Now, thanks to hard work by a jurisdictional design team, plans are coming together for a new confirmation experience for United

Methodist conferences across the Southeast.

Called Hinton Theotokos Confirmation Retreats, the experience intentionally targets small churches and churches of color, specifically in South Carolina and Western North

Carolina, which are said to be the only two annual conferences without a specific conference-sponsored confirmation experience.

See "Confirmation," Page 13

## 'Fresh Paint and Positive Changes'

Tiny St. John UMC fixes up church for what they hope God will do

By Jessica Brodie

GREENVILLE—Over the decades, the membership at St. John United Methodist Church has shrunk from 80 to 50 to 30 to a dozen on Sunday mornings. First, Donaldson Air Force Base left, then families began departing one after the other.

Now, the older, mostly Caucasian congregation sits as an anomaly in a high-crime area of the Upstate, just off Augusta Road south of I-85. Their pastor, at 61, is the second youngest person there. Their trustee chair is 100.

But before you dismiss them as a dying congregation, they want you to know what God has doing for the last 18 months—working a miracle in their midst.

It all started in 2020, when St. John's the Rev. Brian Underwood realized the church's ongoing roof deterioration had reached a critical point.

See "Fresh Paint," Page 24

## Glasses for Guatemala



Linda Durant and the Rev. Scott Efirid go through some used glasses donated for the people of Guatemala. The collection goes through Sept. 30.

Photo by Jessica Brodie

### Methodists collecting spare pairs for UMCSC medical mission

By Jessica Brodie

COLUMBIA—United Methodists in the Midlands are collecting old pairs of glasses so the people of Guatemala can see.

The mission effort, Glasses for Guatemala, is a project of

the Columbia District Outreach Committee and is going on through Sept. 30. All people are encouraged to help, not only in the Columbia District but across the state and beyond.

See "Glasses for Guatemala," Page 12

## 'More Stories of Racial Awakening' book features narratives by S.C. Methodists

In light of the ongoing racial justice issues in this state, nation and world, the Advocate Press has released a part two of its popular racial narratives anthology.

The book is titled "More Stories of Racial Awakening: Narratives of Changed Hearts and Lives from South Carolina United Methodists." It is on sale now. The book includes a foreword written by South Carolina United Methodist

Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, and it is edited with an introduction by *Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie.

"More Stories of Racial Awakening" gathers narratives from South Carolina United Methodists about how their perspective on race have changed. Sometimes raw and vulnerable, sometimes uplifting and a testimony to Christian unity and sometimes deeply painful, the 24 stories in this

collection help shine light into the darkness that is racism—and how we can all strive together for change. The book also contains discussion questions to help facilitate a talk or time of sharing about race with your church, small group or Bible study class.

See "Racial Awakening," Page 12

## 'A good neighbor': Piedmont feeds kids through summer program

By Jessica Brodie

PIEDMONT—It's a hot and sunny July afternoon in the Upstate, and the fellowship hall doors at Piedmont United Methodist Church are open to let in the slight breeze.

A van pulls up and a kid hops out, making a beeline for an inside table, where she signs her name and heads for the food spread. Her mom waves as Piedmont's pastor ambles over, leaning his head in the car to chat while her daughter collects food bags and says hi to some of the other kids. A foursome gathers around folding tables eating turkey and cheese sandwich-

es and munching on baby carrots and Tostitos.

"See you tomorrow," the Rev. Matthew Greer says as the girl climbs back into the van and it pulls away.

This is Christian love in action at Piedmont UMC, a small church in a former mill town whose residents are doing their best to stay healthy amid financial hardship, a pandemic and half a dozen other issues that could sap their spirit.

See "Piedmont Summer Feeding Program," Page 14

## Mount Carmel pastor's passion for hunger turns into monthly meal giveaways

By Jessica Brodie

CHARLESTON—What does a fisherman pastor do when he finds himself pastoring a small urban church in a poverty-stricken community?

He heads out in a boat, catches a bunch of fish and holds a free community fish fry.

And in the process, perhaps, he introduces those he serves to the life-saving love of Jesus.

The Rev. Nathan Smalls was appointed to

Mount Carmel United Methodist Church, downtown Charleston, in July 2020. Right away, he noticed the large number of homeless and impoverished people congregating outside the abandoned homes around the church property.

"It's considered an 'economic eyesore,' and the city is trying to disperse those folks, but I took it as an opportunity to do ministry," Smalls said.

At first he would count the number of people

he saw, then head to the local fast food restaurant and buy them some meals. Soon inspiration hit, and he convinced a few people at church to help him host a monthly meal giveaway, whether a drive-thru or walk-thru fish fry, grilled chicken or ribs on a barbecue, or a spaghetti dinner.

One of trustees will haul in his giant grill on a

See "Mount Carmel Hunger," Page 14



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 803-786-9486  
 E-mail: [advocate@umcsc.org](mailto:advocate@umcsc.org)  
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The *Advocate* encourages readers to submit for publication items of interest to South Carolina United Methodists. There is no charge for running items involving activities or announcements. Items should be submitted as far as possible in advance of the event's date or the date of requested publication. Since there is no charge for these items, they appear in the newspaper on a space-available basis. Deadlines are the 10th of each month for the following month's paper.

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#### Back Issues

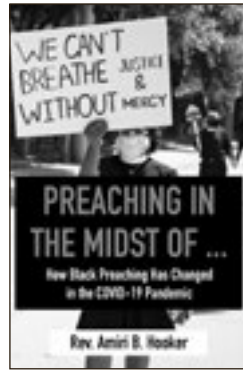
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## Hooker releases free companion discussion/study to go with his book on Black preaching in the pandemic

The Rev. Amiri B. Hooker has penned a new companion book discussion and Bible study designed to go with his recent published book, "Preaching in the Midst Of: How Black Preaching Has Changed in the COVID-19 Pandemic."

The companion discussion/study is available for free download on the *Advocate's* website at [www.advocatesc.org/preachingcompanion](http://www.advocatesc.org/preachingcompanion).

It is designed to work with the book, which was released this spring



from the Advocate Press and is on sale as a paperback (\$15) and ebook (\$5).

The book was part of this summer's Granville Hicks Leadership Academy, hosted online with book discussions led by Hooker. Hooker led discussions on "Preaching in the Midst Of," as well as three others over the course of four months. The other books were "The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together," by

Heather McGhee; "Passionate for Justice: Ida B. Wells as Prophet for our Time," by Catherine Meeks and Nibs Stroupe; and "Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope," by Esau McCaulley.

"I thought a companion book discussion and Bible study would help my church better understand the book and its concepts, and then I realized it could help all readers, so I decided to offer it for free," Hooker said.

For more on the book or to order online, visit <https://advocatesc.org/preaching-in-the-midst-of/>.

## Walter Strawther joins conference team of congregational specialists

The Rev. Walter Strawther has been appointed to serve as the congregational specialist for the Columbia and Hartsville districts, as well as the specialist for African-American ministries. He succeeds the Rev. Millie Nelson Smith, who was appointed last year as director of Connectional Ministries.

Strawther had been serving as associate pastor of Hibben United Methodist Church in Mount Pleasant since 2015.

"Rev. Strawther is a humble, principled leader with a deep, abiding faith in God and great compassion for the people of God," Nelson Smith said. "The knowledge, experience and wisdom that he brings to this work already are blessing the local churches we serve."

"In this time, when strong, adaptive leadership is crucial, I believe that God has called and prepared him for such a time as this."

Strawther was ordained as a full elder in 2017, following his graduation in 2015 from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary with a master of divinity degree. He earned a master of arts degree in teaching from the University of South Carolina in 1996 and a bachelor of arts degree in history from Winthrop University in 1992.

Before his appointment to Hibben UMC in 2015, Strawther served Wesley UMC in Aiken from 2012 to 2015.

In addition to his work in local churches, he has served on district



Strawther

and conference boards and committees, including the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry since 2019, and the Charleston District Committee on Ordained Ministry from 2018 to 2021, serving as chairperson 2020-2021.

"I am excited about the opportunity to work with the clergy and laity of the Columbia and Hartsville districts as we continue to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ," Strawther said. "I am also thrilled to join with the clergy and laity of African-American congregations throughout the South Carolina Conference to provide resources and support that meet the unique needs presented based on the history of the African-

American church in our denomination and society.

"As one who has been grafted into The United Methodist Church through marriage, I am appreciative of the focus on connection and hope to strengthen the connection in ministry as a congregational specialist."

Strawther and his spouse, Toni Strawther, have two daughters, Morgan and Maegan. Strawther is a walker and avid reader, primarily of biographies and historical fiction.

Congregational specialists work with local churches to help them fulfill their mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. They equip local churches for increased effectiveness in ministry and connect churches with resources around the conference.

## Columbia College welcomes first male residential students in 167 years

COLUMBIA—This fall, Columbia College welcomes new students to campus; but it will be far from business-as-usual for the former women's college. The 167-year-old institution is welcoming its first male residential students.

After months of preparation—including special-ordering some extra-long mattresses—Columbia College is well-equipped to house its first group of male residents.

"The addition of male residential students is certainly historic," said Columbia College President Tom Bogart. "We're excited to have these men experience and benefit from Columbia College's unique personalized education and

commitment to social justice and service."

Founded in 1854, Columbia College educates women and men to build successful careers and live lives of impact. The college's liberal arts foundation ensures that graduates learn to think critically, develop their curiosity and nurture a love for learning.

With an 11-to-1 student-to-faculty ratio, Columbia College students benefit from individualized support, engaged instruction and personal mentorship. With more than 30 undergraduate programs and 10 graduate programs, students can discover and pursue their passion and purpose.



The 167-year-old institution is welcoming its first male residential students this fall.

## Wofford issues justice, equity, diversity, inclusion recommendations

SPARTANBURG—The Wofford College community spent nine months participating in a process that involved reviewing and reflecting on the college's past, present and future.

A 16-member task force consisting of students, faculty, staff and trustees led the college's justice, equity, diversity and inclusion—or JEDI—process and made 30 recommendations to the board of trustees after the 2020-2021 academic year.

The college's administration spent the summer reviewing those recommendations while assessing the institution's status, responses to recommendations and determining Wofford's next steps. Trustees gathered earlier in August to consider and discuss the administration's review and responses to recommendations.

"The Wofford College Board of Trustees extends gratitude to the students, faculty, staff, alumni and trustees serving on the JEDI task force," said Chris Carpenter, chair of the college's board of trustees. "Each generously gave their time to listen, learn and have hard conversations about student experiences at Wofford and in the world."

According to Wofford President Nayef Samhat, "The recommendations from the JEDI task force are about student success. We also extend our appreciation to the student leaders and others who have spoken out to improve the student experience."

Regarding the first recommendation to consider a naming policy for residence halls, trustees determined it was necessary to expand the recommendation by combining it with recommendations to establish a history, memory and place committee and the creation of a campus historian position. An ad hoc committee will be formed to examine the college's history and the names of all buildings that are named honorifically. The committee will be charged with proposing a plan to trustees that will illuminate a more accurate and full history of the college as well as recommendations for using the names of buildings in ways that emphasize Wofford's common history and community.

"The board acknowledges the pain and concern caused by the past and by buildings named honorifically for the college's first three presidents, all of whom owned enslaved people," Carpenter said. "Although we are not changing the names of these three residence halls, there is an expectation that the work of this committee will begin this fall and end with the presentation of a plan to better document our complete history and the committee's recommendation of a possible naming policy for review by the conclusion of the 2021-22 academic year."

The college's JEDI task force offered compelling options for naming buildings in ways to emphasize the college's common history while building community. Trustees, however, held concerns about changing the names of buildings honoring past presidents who owned enslaved people while retaining the college's name. The college's founder, the Rev. Benjamin Wofford, was a United Methodist minister who also owned enslaved people.

"An authentic history will define both their positive impact on the college and their participation in the institution of slavery," Carpenter said. "We recognize that this is not just important for current students, but also so prospective students understand that Wofford College is wrestling with its past and is committed to ensuring that their experience on campus will be one of honesty."

The board of trustees concluded with a statement that also affirms its support of the college's administration and endorses the efforts of Wofford's President Nayef Samhat and his cabinet to make the college more accessible and welcoming for all. These efforts include a new strategic enrollment plan that builds on the college's current successes in areas of academic excellence, selectivity and diversity.

"Consistency, transparency and communication are key to our college's success in this area," Samhat said.

The college's justice, equity, diversity and inclusion action plan can be found at [Wofford.edu/strategicvision](http://Wofford.edu/strategicvision) and will be updated over the year.



# Friends since preschool, college students pool talents to help local church

By Jessica Brodie

CHARLESTON—Two college students in Charleston have been heavily involved with their congregation since their youth group days, and since the pandemic, they've turned that help into a technological ministry that brings worship right into people's homes.

Luke Shaw, a sophomore at the College of Charleston, and Lily Turner, a sophomore at Trident Technical, met in preschool at Asbury-St. James United Methodist Church. Shaw is the pastor's son, and the two grew up in the church together, active in children's ministry and later youth ministry. They both played an active role in Asbury-St. James' outreach ministry, standing on street corners on hot summer days passing out water bottles and food bags to the homeless.

And when childhood ended and they shifted to college, they didn't stop. When COVID-19 closed the church doors in spring 2020, they pooled their video, music, editing and technology talents to help take worship online, gathering early every Sunday morning to help the pastor and other worship leaders produce the service.

Turner plays the piano and Shaw, the mandolin, and Shaw would sing a bluegrass hymn at every service, which the pair recorded on their cell phones on a tripod then livestreamed so all could participate during a time when many could not gather safely indoors.

Today they still participate in the service, doing whatever is needed—still livestreaming, still providing music, still doing all they can to serve the Lord and their church with their time and their talents.

"Their presence has been vitally important in so many ways," said the Rev. Tim Shaw. "In a world where young people and church are somewhat forgotten or just not as involved as maybe they could be, these two are involved in every aspect of ministry in this church, every single Sunday."

Turner said her passion for church was ignited by her parents' passion, but it sparked into a full flame when she joined the church choir in seventh grade and began to sing.

"It's freeing, just being inside and singing and everyone having a like mind, and the environment felt really inviting and really secure," said Turner, who plans after Trident Tech to pursue her bachelor's in sports communications and broadcasting. "Whenever I stepped into the church, I felt invited, safe and secure, and at peace and at home, and I think that's what kept me in and what still draws me in. I love how much love there is."

In the spirit of that love, she does what she can to multiply



They met in preschool (below). Today, college students and friends Lily Turner and Luke Shaw are passionate about helping their local church.



it, not only singing and doing outreach but also serving as acolyte, praying over prayer requests, doing Scripture readings on Sunday mornings and more.

To those young people who feel shy about volunteering, or who maybe don't know how to get involved, Turner advises, "I would say just ask. You don't have to be involved with everybody looking at you—you can do prayer requests or other things. You don't have to have all eyes on you. I still do get nervous sometimes with the readings and like being behind the camera, but it doesn't have to be intimidating."

As for Shaw, an English major, his own church involvement started as an extension of being the pastor's son. He'd sit in the front row at church on Sunday mornings, then follow his dad down the aisle, so it was a natural part of his childhood.

But as he got older, around 14, he began to realize it wasn't just a part of his family life but something he personally wanted to continue with.

"I went through confirmation about that time, and it was interesting to go out on my own and find my own beliefs within the Christian faith. I was able to find my own personal flame of passion and able to connect that to my dad's teachings, and that continues to drive me to help out in the church today."

Now, Shaw's church involvement is a conscious choice.

"The more I found I loved it, the more driven I was to participate," he said.

He does anything needed, from serving as acolyte, usher, greeter or communion assistant to providing worship music.

Echoing Turner's advice for those who want to help but have jitters or just aren't sure how to start, he said it's OK to be afraid—but do it anyway.

"It's OK to be nervous about things and not be so sure, but that's life. The more you push yourself to try new things—attend that church service, attend Sunday school—the easier it becomes and more rewarding it becomes. There's value in trying things, and church can be the missing piece for a lot of people.

"It can be as easy as reaching out to somebody with a pure intention of making them smile or give a bright spot in their day."

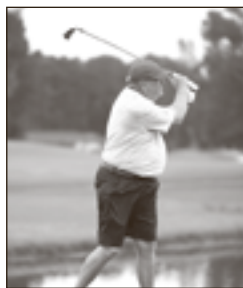
Their pastor said the pair are a true blessing both to him and to the church as a whole.

"People today say young people aren't as involved in church like they were back in the '50s, '60s and '70s," the Rev. Tim Shaw said. "But Luke and Lily have been this great mainstay of ministry in this church and a constant presence since they were tots."

"I'm so proud of both of them."

## Annual Bishop Holston Golf Invitational to celebrate contributions of late Rev. John Hipp

ORANGEBURG—Hundreds of golfers from South Carolina and across the nation are preparing to converge on the Orangeburg Country Club Sept. 27 for the eighth annual Bishop L. Jonathan Holston Golf Invitational benefiting Africa University.



Hipp takes a swing.

This year, the charity event—an initiative of South Carolina United Methodists—has a dual focus. Golfers and friends will gather as usual for a day of friendly competition and fellowship. Their gathering will raise funds to support scholarships and other needs at United Methodist-related Africa University in Zimbabwe, southern Africa.

And golfers will also use their time together this September to pay special tribute to a lifelong Methodist and dedicated fellow tournament participant. The Rev. John Wesley Hipp died Oct. 27 last year, barely one month after taking part in the 2020 tournament. He consistently supported the tournament from its launch in 2013 at the Cobblestone Golf Course in Blythewood.

### Much support

In 2020, the tournament raised more than \$35,000 to assist Africa University students and help South Carolina United Methodists meet their annual budget commitment. All 12 United Methodist districts invested and fielded teams in the tournament.

Wespath Institutional Investments, a unit of Wespath Benefits and Investments—the largest reporting faith-based pension fund in the United States—is the tournament's lead sponsor for a third consecutive year.

Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter, the ranking Democrat in the South Carolina House of Representatives, serving District 66 in Orangeburg County since 1992, is a major

sponsor of the tournament. Cobb-Hunter, a friend of Africa University, sees wide-ranging benefits to the local community.

### A legacy of relationship

The Rev. Mitch Houston of Bethany United Methodist Church, Summerville, was Hipp's college roommate and lifelong friend.

"I speak for his family and friends in saying we miss his laughter and warm smile every day," Houston said. "John loved the game of golf. We played many rounds and tournaments together. A great memory I have of the last time he and I played was at the Africa University tournament at Orangeburg Country Club. I am blessed that we will start a scholarship in his memory."

Holston, resident bishop of the South Carolina Conference, remembers Hipp's gift for connecting with people.

"From the pulpit to the conference room to the golf course, John could find common ground from which to begin meaningful and humorous dialogue that furthered God's kingdom here on earth," Holston said. "John leaves a legacy that challenges each of us to continue the work of building bridges and strengthening relationships that reflect the goodness of God's creation."

Hipp's ministry spanned four decades. It included 28 years as chaplain in the South Carolina National Guard. Hipp retired a lieutenant colonel in 2008 and held ministerial appointments in Aiken, Wagner, Charleston, Rock Hill, Saluda, Chapin and Conway.

After 32 years in the pulpit, Hipp became superintendent of the Orangeburg District in 2010. Two years later, he became superintendent of the Florence District. He retired

in 2018.

### Scholarship started

Following a visit to the Africa University campus in February 2020, Marion District Superintendent the Rev. Timothy Rogers and the Rev. J. Elbert Williams launched an effort to endow a scholarship. Now, organizers are earmarking a portion of the proceeds from the 2021 Bishop L. Jonathan Holston Golf Invitational for that effort.

"We are grateful for the help we are re-

ceiving from the Holston Golf Invitational as we establish the Marion District Scholarship Endowment for Africa University," Rogers said. "The endowment is an opportunity to invest in new leaders for Africa and extend the reach of the love of Christ on the continent."

To register for the tournament, learn about sponsorships and more, email robert@knightsvilleumc.org or visit [https://www.support-africauniversity.org/2014/news-and-media/events\\_bljhgi\\_sc\\_2021\\_overview](https://www.support-africauniversity.org/2014/news-and-media/events_bljhgi_sc_2021_overview).

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# Viewpoints



## Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

### Wearing a mask as a form of Christian love in action

I don't like masks. They're uncomfortable, they're hot, and they make it a pain to unlock my iPhone because they interfere with its facial recognition security. In crowded stores, they've made me feel a bit claustrophobic. They make it hard for me to understand what people are saying between the way they muffle sound and the fact that I can't read someone's lips (I've learned since COVID that I apparently do this far more than I thought).

Oh, yeah—and they smear my lipgloss and sometimes clash with my outfit.

All petty reasons, but all valid.

Still, I wear my mask.

Thanks to the grueling research, God-given intelligence and discoveries of doctors, scientists and others who've learned so much since late 2019 about the way COVID-19 and its variants spread, we know masks are a critical way to protect us against getting the coronavirus or spreading it. Bonus: They've also largely helped keep us from getting the flu, common colds and other infections.

This summer, we got a reprieve for a while. The vaccine became widely available for most people in the United States, COVID-19 numbers plummeted and places began to reopen. Mask mandates ended, and life started to go back to relative normal.

But the reality is that as much as we'd like everything to be normal again, we're still in a pandemic. People are still contracting the virus—and dying. Kids. Moms. Friends. Neighbors.

I'm vaccinated, and so is my family. We've all had COVID-19, too, around Thanksgiving. Today, I don't wear a mask to protect myself against the disease.

I wear a mask to help others around me.

I've come to see wearing a mask as a form of Christian love in action. Yes, it makes me uncomfortable. I don't feel like I personally "need" to wear it. But I know it helps slow the spread of COVID-19 and its variants. I know it helps make me less contagious if I do happen to be carrying around some germs, which makes me better equipped to help others if needed.

For instance: I've been in circumstances when I've had to help a stranger with physical impairment load groceries in her car. I've found myself talking with a random person in line at a store when we've suddenly ended up hugging and praying. I've even encountered someone, while hiking in the woods, who needed CPR.

While those in my inner circle are vaccinated, who's to say someone else, whom I happen to encounter in the world, is? My mask wearing protects them and the people in their circle.

COVID-19 isn't "just like the flu," as I've heard some say. We aren't making a huge fuss over nothing. It's a real problem, even if it hasn't yet impacted us personally.

As we go about our lives, I encourage all people to not only get vaccinated but wear a mask, whether or not we are in a place where masks are required.

It really does help. And it is one way we can play a role in helping reduce the impact of a deadly disease in our communities, our region and our world.



## Bishop's Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

### Taking the lead

*"God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love." Ephesians 4:15-16 (The Message)*

At the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, midshipmen must keep their rooms ready for inspection at any time and keep their uniforms in regulation condition. Demerits can be given for a room or uniform that is not in proper order.

One of the first routines of every day is formation for inspection. For my son, Karlton's, first inspection experience, he wanted everything to be perfect. He was up early. His rack was made. His clothes were pressed. His shoes were polished so bright he was able to double-check his shave just by looking down!

He was in line. He hadn't missed a single item. He stood perfectly at attention as the inspection was made. Karlton was confident the detailer would stop, look and he would hear the words, "Very good, plebe!"

The moment came. The detailer came face to face with this tall, well prepared young man. There was a moment of silence as the detailer took in Karlton's presence. Karlton didn't blink. He stood perfectly still. The detailer finally spoke.

"What's your name, plebe?"

"Holston, sir!"

"Well Holston, you just earned yourself three demerits."

Karlton was dumbfounded! He was given three demerits first thing on his first day!

Why? I'll tell you why. Because the shoes of his roommate weren't as brightly polished as his own.

Karlton embraced a valuable truth that day—to truly be at your best, you must also help others be their best.

One of the highest values taught in the Navy is caring for each other, looking after each other, working together. They know just taking care of oneself is not the path to maximum excellence. They needed Karlton to help others because the day would come when he would need the others to help him. This is a culture of shared support, accountability and reliance.

And so it is for the body of Christ. Paul writes that Christ keeps us in step with one another as we grow and mature in faith. We are not called to make the journey of faith alone, but rather to bring our brothers and sisters in Christ with us. God promises to provide what we need and to lead us in the

right direction; all we have to do is trust and follow.

We know what is happening around us. We are here. We are not beginning again; we are continuing on. The pandemic is not over – instead it is doubling down. In the midst, how can we be the people God calls us to be?

How can we be the church where we are? How can we best protect each other and be our brothers' and sisters' keeper? How do we move forward together?

Richard Bolles, in the timeless leadership book, "What Color Is Your Parachute?", describes our discerning times in this way, namely,

"It is a strange world we live in, these days. Old rules are being rewritten. Things are changing that we never thought would change. Events are happening that we thought we would never see. Things we take for granted now are vanishing. Things don't work the way they used to.

And here we are, trying to plot a new course for our life, still needing help with the essential questions of our existence: Where do we go from here with our lives?

"We may have a life that is unfolding just as we have hoped. Or our lives may have turned into a nightmare, and we have no idea how we're going to get out of our present predicament, but so long as we have hope, we'll be all right. The one thing we must not be is hopeless."

So it must be hope that we seek above and before all else. The only question is, how do we find hope?

Hope is not an elusive pipe dream. Hope is available here and now, regardless of our circumstances. All we have to do is adjust our focus and perspective. Hope depends upon us. As we take our next faithful steps, hope depends on us developing leaders, engaging our communities, connecting with and growing disciples, and measuring and evaluating current realities and missional possibilities.

Being on the cutting edge of ministry and hope and living at the edge of the unknown is the key to progress.

And if we're unsure, don't worry; that's a good thing.

Why? Because that is when we recognize we cannot make it on our own and that we are desperately in need of the Savior. It is in those moments when we learn to fully rely on Jesus Christ.

This is a time for learning, growing and shifting out of our old patterns.

May we be at our best by helping others be at their best, focusing on hope and trusting God to lead us.

Let us seek a more excellent way as we take the next faithful steps together to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.



4908 Colonial Drive, Suite 207, Columbia, SC 29203  
888-678-6272 or 803-786-9486  
advocate@umcsc.org | www.advocatesc.org

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Editor: Jessica Brodie, jbrodie@umcsc.org

Assistant Editor: Allison K. Trussell, atrussell@umcsc.org

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#### Our Mission

To inform and connect South Carolina United Methodists by independently reporting relevant news, engaging readers, providing a forum for dialogue and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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#### 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.





# Why I'm United Methodist

by Billy Robinson

## Mission-minded Methodists

*Editor's note: This is the next in a series written by United Methodist individuals across South Carolina about why they have chosen to be a United Methodist.*

By the grace of God, I was born to Christian parents who were United Methodist. Sundays and basically any time our church building was open, we were there with no questions asked. Looking back, I realize it was the pure grace of God I was raised by Christian parents in a Bible-based church.

In the mid 1970s, our church hired a youth director for the summer named Jerry Temple who was in seminary and went on to be a very influential South Carolina United Methodist pastor for more than 40 years. I saw in Jerry an awe-inspiring light of life and the true love of Jesus as I had never witnessed before. At 14 years old, I gave my life to Jesus during a combination youth retreat with our Baptist brethren. It was the first time I had experienced such a pure spiritual high—a true mountain top experience from which I have never been the same. My life was forever wonderfully changed and fulfilled with priceless gifts of God's spirit.

I grew through our church in general with such programs as Bible study groups, Disciple Bible Studies 1-4, Walk to Emmaus and other wonderful opportunities. I well remember at the end of Disciple 4 it basically stated that we were now well-equipped and it was time for us to go out into the world as disciples of Jesus Christ—to evangelize and do his good works with the tools we had learned.

Growing in Jesus Christ throughout the years has had me involved with many aspects of our United Methodist Church, including foreign and domestic missions through United Methodist Volunteers in Mission. These UMVIM missions range from building churches, clinics and schools in foreign lands to helping with local projects and desperate survivors of devastating

Why are you a United Methodist? Share your story with the *Advocate* about why you chose this denomination, whether you are a lifelong United Methodist or brand new. Email [advocate@umcsc.org](mailto:advocate@umcsc.org). Deadlines are the 10th of each month.

storms throughout the Southeast with our UMVIM Early Response Teams.

Mission-minded United Methodists are some of the “best of the best in the world”—that is how my wife, Trudy, and I describe them. They give and give with pure and willingly sacrificial hearts to help people who are in need with the agape love, care and concern of Jesus. UMVIM bonds individuals of a wide variety of backgrounds and differences into one big loving and caring family. It's family who lifts each other up and cares for one another as Christ directs us to.

I have been a part of many other Christian volunteer organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, the Jesus Video Project of South Carolina, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, chaplaincy, volunteer fire/rescue, community-based programs, etc. but I have always identified myself as a United Methodist. Our denomination has dealt with its share of unbiblically based issues from within and without, lack of faith, leadership and churches unwilling and afraid to stand for the gospel of Jesus Christ, ununited on the very basic of Christian principles, etc. At times, it seems we should take “united” out of our name.

I still strongly believe in our denomination during what seems to be an 11th hour and that God still provides miracles today. He can truly unite us as a global church who is excitedly focused on rescuing the perishing and spreading the biblically based “Good News” of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

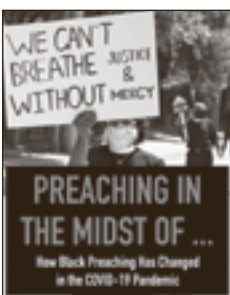
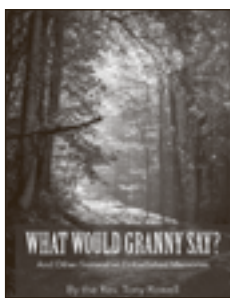
## Two Advocate Press books now on Amazon

In an effort to expand its publishing reach to a wider audience, the Advocate Press has launched two of its books on Amazon.

Started in 2017, the Advocate Press is the book publishing arm of the award-winning, 184-year-old *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate* newspaper. Its mission is to produce books of interest to South Carolina United Methodists on matters of faith and to amplify regional voices and those who advocate for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

Now available on Amazon is “What Would Granny Say? And Other Somewhat Embellished Memories,” a collection of 79 faith-based essays by South Carolina pastor the Rev. Tony Rowell. From fishing with his granny in the Florida Panhandle to stumbling into boars and bear in the Carolina wilderness to ministry in Bolivia, Colombia and Latvia, Rowell weaves beauty with simplicity and good old-fashioned humor. His photographs of nature and people are peppered throughout, along with a healthy dose of Granny's wisdom, prompting the title.

To find Rowell's book on Amazon, search “Tony Rowell” or “What Would



Granny Say,” or go directly to <https://www.amazon.com/Would-Granny-Somewhat-Embellished-Memories/dp/0985472146>. The cost is \$15.95 paperback or \$5.99 Kindle e-book.

Also available on Amazon is “Preaching In the Midst Of: How Black Preaching Has Changed in the COVID-19 Pandemic,” by South Carolina pastor the Rev. Amiri Hooker. The book explores the innovative and Spirit-filled ways Black preachers are bringing Jesus and justice to the people in the midst of a tri-pandemic of disease, racism and poverty. A

fierce challenge to rise up and embrace prophetic, transformative preaching, it draws from a rich blend of hip hop artists, theologians and other intellectuals as it guides readers toward a new paradigm for bringing the gospel message with truth.

To find Hooker's book on Amazon, search “Amiri Hooker” or “Preaching In the Midst Of,” or go directly to <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09D3RXQPT>. The cost is \$15 paperback or \$5 Kindle e-book.

You can also still buy both books directly from the *Advocate's* website at <https://advocatesc.org/books>.

## Letters to the Editor

### A poem: He Did It for Me

He did it for me, so I might live  
Jesus on the cross—his life to give!  
Take heed my friend, we have a choice to make.  
Sin and do as we please, or live for the Lord  
Jesus's sake!

When I was young, I didn't understand  
Why Jesus would die to save man.  
Now I know he died for me!  
Prayer and praise—Jesus in my life forever  
will be!

Come, come to the cross and share his love.  
Others will receive God's love from above  
We honor Jesus and bow at the cross.  
No greater man than he paid the cost.

*Margaret G. Faulkenberry, member  
Mount Holly UMC, Rock Hill*

### Thank you!

We want to thank our two churches, Friendship and Liberty Chapel in Florence, for all their help in packing and helping move us to our new home. We especially thank them for the great retirement celebration for Preston that was held at Liberty. Our love and prayers go out to them.

It has been a pleasure serving each church and God for the six years that I was there, as well as all of the churches and God's children during my career as a minister. We wish God's blessing to their new pastor.

*LaSandra S. Grimsley  
Florence*

### On vaccines

Dr. Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) was a German philosopher, teacher and lecturer who was the inspiration for Waldorf education, biodynamic agriculture, the Christian Community and the Anthroposophical Society. In September and October 1917, he delivered a series of 14 lectures in Dornach, Switzerland, where he said the time would come when people will say, “It is pathological for people to even think in terms of spirit and soul. ‘Sound’ people will speak of nothing but the body. It will be considered a sign of illness for anyone to arrive at the idea of any such thing as a spirit or soul. People who think like that will be considered to be sick—and you can be quite sure of it—a medicine will be found for this ... Taking a sound point of view, people will invent a *vaccine* (my emphasis) to influence the organism as early as possible, preferably as soon as it is born, so that this human body never even gets the idea that there is a soul and a spirit. ... Materialistic physicians will be asked to drive the souls out of humanity.”

In another place in these lectures, he continued, “The spirits of darkness are go-

ing to inspire their human hosts, in whom they will be dwelling, to find a vaccine that will drive all inclination toward spirituality out of people's souls when they are still very young. ... Today, bodies are vaccinated against one thing and another. In future, children will be vaccinated with a substance, which it will certainly be possible to produce, and this will make them immune, so that they do not develop foolish inclinations connected with spiritual life—‘foolish’ here of course, in the eyes of materialists.” (See also, Thomas Cowan, M.D.; Vaccines, Immunity, and the Changing Nature of Childhood Illness, p. 5f.)

And from Revelations 13:11a, 14a, 16-18: “And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth. ... And it deceives those dwelling on the earth. ... And it causes all, both the small and the great, both the rich and the poor, both the free and the slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, so that no one could buy or sell except the ones having the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let the one who has understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred sixty-six.”

Consider these quotes in the light of what we have lived through in the last two years.

*Rev. F. Levon Hucks, retired  
Marion District*

### Considering injustice

Thank you to the Rev. Bob Huggins who reminded us of our Resolution Supporting Law Enforcement Officers. I was especially struck by the statistic that South Carolina ranks 50th out of 51 in crime rates, which is one behind New Mexico and one above Washington, D.C.

In all three of these areas, injustice has raised its ugly head perhaps more than in any of our other states.

First, South Carolina has yet to make amends for starting the Civil War. Never an apology or an acknowledgement of wrong, never a sincere effort to make reparations of any kind, but continues to deny that there is a problem in our state regarding arrogance and unrepentance. Second, New Mexico was the site of mass Indian slaughter and injustice. Injustice in health care and education is still present there. So is crime. And good people suffer, but good people must act to change and make up for past atrocities. An apology is just the beginning. Third, Washington, D.C. does not even have representation in our government. If its racial background were different, it would be treated with greater respect.

Crime is the logical though evil result of injustice.

*Judith Polson, Missions Committee  
St. John's UMC, Anderson*

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## Francis Burns women help African women with reusable sanitary pads project

By Carrie R. Murray

COLUMBIA—This spring, Francis Burns United Methodist Women took on a project to make reusable sanitary pads to be distributed to women and girls across the continent of Africa.

At the culmination of four months of planning, organizing, accepting donations and soliciting volunteers from the church and community to help trace, cut and sew fabric, the fruit of our labor was realized.

We thank God for being able to make in excess of 800-plus reusable pads and collect 35-plus ready-made reusable pads, an assortment of ladies' undergarments, buttons, beads and safety pins. This was enough to fill 140-plus kits that will have a positive and healthy impact on the lives of women and girls beyond our borders.

The Rev. Geneva Stafford blessed the items during our Sunday, July 4, outdoor livestreamed worship service, and the items were collected July 21 by a local volunteer of the Africa Sanitary Pad Project.

We also received 33 handmade children's masks that we have since donated to the Francis Burns Back to School Campaign in conjunction with the Salvation Army.

We thank Rebecca W. Eleazer for serving as the project coordinator and Vernita Cobbs and Doris McNair who served as trainers.



The women assembled reusable sanitary pads and other items.

"Thank you, Francis Burns Family and ladies of the community, for your genuine support of this most worthy project," Eleazer said. "You have witnessed to The United Methodist Women's purpose of helping women, children and youth around the world, as well as having promoted our 2020-2021 Program Book's theme, 'Knitted Together for God's Good Work.'"

"This project was the essence of sisterhood and working



Women gather for a blessing of their Reusable Sanitary Pads Project.

together for the greater good. To God be the glory! Stay tuned for more information about where this initiative may lead us."

Since education is the key to success, we pray the kits we donated will empower African girls to stay in school, become educated and live healthier lives so they can achieve their dreams of a better and brighter future.

*Murray is president of Francis Burns United Methodist Women.*

## Pleasant Hill UMC expands to meet needs of growing community

By Rev. Joel McMakin and Tony Carnes

Located in one of the fastest growing areas of South Carolina, Indian Land, Pleasant Hill United Methodist Church held a service of consecration for its new \$2.6 million Family Life Center on June 27.

Dr. Anthony Hodge, Rock Hill District superintendent, helped officiate the service alongside the Rev. Joel McMakin, pastor. Tony Carnes and Dennis Moore, chairman and vice chairman of Pleasant Hill's building committee, led part of the liturgy and discussed the Family Life Center and its ability to help the church further its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

After consecrating the altar table, the pulpit, the baptismal font and the communion vessels, the congregation took part in a prayer walk around the facility. There were stops at each of the four corners of the facility. Church members read Scriptures and led prayers and silent prayers at each of the four corners.

The design of the Family Life Center features a half basketball court or full volleyball court, suitable for a variety of indoor recreation opportunities. There is also a fellowship hall for church meals, programs and the contemporary worship service. Large sliding doors can be opened between the fellowship hall, gym and foyer to expand the spaces for larger gatherings and events.

After the prayer walk and some closing remarks and the benediction by Hodge, the congregation was invited to enjoy some refreshments and shoot some hoops and play corn hole in the gymnasium.

Large barn style doors also allow us to close off the various rooms to allow different



Members and others gather June 27 to consecrate the new Family Life Center.

groups to use the facility at the same time and to expand the spaces for larger gatherings and events. There is a larger kitchen and a large foyer with soft furnishings for additional meeting space.

To date, local groups including the Indian Land Chamber of Commerce have utilized the new facility.

### About the FLC

In 2008, Pleasant Hill UMC had a vision that developed into a plan for Family Life Center. Over the years of raising money, praying and planning, Pleasant Hill's building committee recommended they downsize the original plans into a facility that was much more affordable, but also equipped to meet their ministry needs and goals.

They held the groundbreaking on March 8, 2020, two weeks before they were forced to

stop in-person worship for more than three months because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In spite of the challenges of 2020, the congregation gave generously to the building fund in addition to covering operating expenses and apportionments.

As they were planning, promoting and raising money for the Family Life Center, they looked to their mission and their future, but they looked to their past. They were able to incorporate into the design a bell tower over the front door to hold a 4-foot, 800-pound bell that is historic to Pleasant Hill. The bell was used in one of Pleasant Hill's previous facilities, but when that facility was taken down, the bell was put in storage where it stayed for decades. Many church members are grateful and proud to see and hear this special bell.

The building committee worked with the

technology committee to select and install modern audio visual equipment. They also installed camera systems in the Family Life Center and sanctuary that will enhance their ability to livestream worship services, giving them an improved online presence.

Their primary goal for building the Family Life Center is to make disciples of Jesus Christ by enhancing their ability to minister to people of all ages. The indoor space will provide additional opportunities for children, preschool, youth and adults for recreation, performances, meetings and meals. The new facility will be an attractive space with a Christian environment for the community to use, which will give the church opportunities to connect with more people.

Pleasant Hill's former fellowship hall, built in the mid 1980s, will eventually be converted into additional offices and classrooms, which will provide many new spaces for existing classes and the opportunity to start new classes. In addition, there will be more space to continue service to the community through an Alzheimer's caregivers' support group, blood drives, high school standardized testing, homeowners' association meetings, voting, scout functions and more.

The church's theme verse for the project was Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Members said they are looking forward to using the new Family Life Center in even greater ways as they open their facilities to more and more people.

## Tyger River grows reach with basketball, food ministries

Big things are happening in the Tyger River Charge, comprising Loree, Duncan and Fairmont United Methodist churches.

Duncan UMC is experiencing an expansion in the ethnic and racial makeup of its congregation. They started a basketball ministry last year and this year started a mid-week service on Wednesday nights just before the basketball ministry. They have a free meal at 5:30, the service in the gym at 6:30 and then basketball ministry at 7:30. The whole thing is called Food, Faith and Fellowship. The makeup of the Wednesday night service is about half African American and half White, said the Rev. Brent L. Dehlbom, and they have hired a new youth director, as well: Kedric Casey.

"Kedric has brought energy and excitement to our youth programs," Dehlbom said. "We have been blessed by the richness of diversity as we worship the Lord together, all of God's children together as one."

In addition, Fairmont UMC has been experiencing some excitement as they have engaged in feeding the hungry. There is a weekly free meal at the church given out in to-go boxes since there is no dining facility. This meal is on Sunday afternoons and feeds about 40 to 50 people per week.

In addition, Marty Martin of Fairmont UMC has been hosting a food and clothing ministry for homeless people every Thursday evening. Martin takes along whoever wants to help from the Tyger River Parish and goes out to where the homeless are, providing food, clothes, blankets and toiletries.

"We are very excited about these ministries," Dehlbom said. "They are providing excitement for us as we see what we really can do for the mission of the church in making disciples for Christ for the transformation of the world, even in our small church settings."



Above, the charge hosts a food and clothing ministry for homeless people every Thursday evening. At left, a new basketball ministry is bringing diversity in age and race to the church.



# 'The Oaks is going to be there' now and in future; sale of retirement community finalized

By Gene Zaleski

Reprinted courtesy of The Times & Democrat  
ORANGEBURG—The sale of the Methodist Oaks retirement community to a private company has been finalized.

The Oaks of Orangeburg LLC has completed the acquisition with plans to further enhance services and make the community a destination for seniors and the Greater Orangeburg community.

"We are excited," The Oaks of Orangeburg Manager Clay Fowler said. "In the last almost year and a half, we have reworked the way things are done at The Oaks. The Oaks has an incredible history and so many people before us have done their part to build on folks before them."

The Methodist Oaks trustees agreed to sell the assets of the retirement community in June 2019 to The Oaks of Orangeburg LLC, an entity led by Fowler, owner and operator of Orangeburg's Longwood Plantation Assisted Living and Magnolia Place Memory Care. The Methodist Oaks had operated as an independent, non-profit corporation.

The sale was made because of financial challenges as the facility was about \$17 million in debt. The sale amount was not disclosed.

"As the sale concludes, the Methodist Oaks won't have any debt left," Fowler said.

Fowler thanked the parties that have helped with the transition, including the Methodist Oaks board; the Methodist Conference; Orangeburg County and the Orangeburg County Development Commission.

"It is clear that Orangeburg loves The Oaks," Fowler said. "I can't tell you how many people contacted me over the last two years and said how much it meant to them and how glad they are that The Oaks is going to be there and that it will continue to be there in the future."

To assist with the transition, the buyer assumed a loan from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as part of the sale. The purchase agreement was executed in August 2019 and the closing on the sale was expected in 2020.

Fowler said the delay in closing was because of COVID-19 as the application loan process from HUD was held up when the pandemic hit.

"Now that is behind us and it is out of COVID limbo," Fowler said.

Fowler said he was excited about the changes that have already occurred and that are planned for The Oaks going into the future.

Fowler said in many ways The Oaks "was sort of on an island" prior to the ongoing transition.

"The health care world is very different from the one that

The Oaks started with," he said.

Fowler noted changes that have occurred.

"We increased the capability in the nursing home as far as what the organization can provide," Fowler said. The nursing home can now provide residents with IV treatments and care for residents with tracheostomies.

The Oaks has also brought to the campus a geriatric medical practice, with doctors specializing in geriatric care. The geriatric group is in the facility full time all week.

The group of doctors and nurse practitioners is also doing house calls for independent and assisted-living residents. They have served the Longwood Plantation facilities for several years.

"We feel this is a tremendous acceleration in the medical care in the nursing home at The Oaks," Fowler said, noting it is not something that is otherwise available in the area. "We are trying to find ways that we can make things better for them."

Fowler said The Oaks also has a resident counsel with whom he will seek to meet regularly to get a better idea what they would like to see happen on campus.

He said The Oaks has already done a number of things such as a Mardi Gras event for residents and special meal nights.

Fowler said The Oaks will also look to invest capital into the campus, with plans to refresh, clean up and improve the aesthetics of buildings, specifically the Wesley Pines area consisting of duplexes. The Oaks of Orangeburg has committed to the county to invest at least \$5 million over the next five years.

"There is a lot of work that needs to be done," Fowler said. "The community has tremendous bones. It is really a solid place and a beautiful place. It just needs some TLC."

He said one of the areas that will be sought to be improved will be the living arrangements in the independent living section of the campus.

"The Oaks is a place for people who are at different price points," Fowler said. "We are changing the model to either a lower entry fee required or no entry fee at all."

He said there will be something for everyone -- for those wanting a higher price point, a more affordable price point or a limited-budget price point.

"We will look for affordable housing for seniors and premium housing for seniors," he said.

Fowler said the grounds of The Oaks will also be cleaned up and appropriately maintained.

Fowler said The Oaks has also created some new jobs by doing away with agency staffing.

"We brought a therapy group in-house," Fowler said. "We

created a bunch of jobs by doing that."

Fowler said the amount of employees at The Oaks has not changed significantly. He said some have shifted around but numbers have remained the same.

Another thing that has remained the same is PACE (Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) program. The program remains in place with all its components but will be purchased at a later date.

Fowler said COVID has been difficult for both The Oaks and Longwood.

He said during the height of pandemic, The Oaks set up a separate COVID unit in a wing of its nursing home. He said the unit helped to successfully prevent any further spread of the virus.

He praised the employees who have worked with COVID patients as "heroic."

"It has impacted the senior living industry tremendously," he said. "We are right now getting to the point where the campus and Longwood are opening back up."

He said visitation is starting to open back up and he says he foresees a time when the public will be able to once again come back to The Oaks on Sundays and have a dinner or brunch.

He also envisions the campus as the site for weddings and community events.

"The Oaks has the best fried chicken," Fowler said. "Just like the fried chicken at Longwood."

Fowler is no stranger to health care.

His father was a hospital executive in the South and owned a nursing home while the young Fowler was in high school.

After receiving his master's degree in business administration and master's in health care administration from Georgia State University, Fowler worked at a Healthsouth Rehab hospital and was a top executive at two hospitals in Texas.

He served Palmetto Health as an administrator of the Parkridge Surgery Center. He was also a hospital administrator in Lithonia, Georgia, at then-DeKalb Medical Hillandale, which is now part of Emory. Many of his hospital roles involved turning around troubled organizations.

The land The Oaks occupies once housed a World War II flying school: the Hawthorne School of Aeronautics.

The retirement community is situated on 650 acres and includes picnic and recreational areas, ponds and a golf course.

Formerly named The Methodist Oaks, the facility underwent a name change a few years ago and today is an independent, nonprofit corporation. It is not owned by The United Methodist Church.

## UMCSC leaders urge people to get COVID-19 vaccine

Facing a stagnant COVID-19 vaccination rate across the state, leaders of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church are strongly encouraging all laity and clergy to get vaccinated against the potentially deadly coronavirus disease.

As of this summer, just over half of South Carolinians have begun the vaccination process, and less than 45 percent are fully vaccinated—the 12th-lowest rate in the nation.

Bishop L. Jonathan Holston and other leaders also cite a renewed rise in COVID-19 cases, along with the rising threat of the more-contagious Delta variant, in recommending that everyone—including those who already are fully vaccinated—wear a mask when indoors in public settings.

Both recommendations come on the heels of updated advice from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which was quickly echoed by the state Department of Health and Environmental Control.

"Ever since the outbreak of the pandemic early last year, we have encouraged our local churches and their members to follow the guidance of local, state and federal health officials," Holston said. "This week, we once again take to heart warnings from the CDC and DHEC, which are based on the latest developments in the pandemic and ongoing research.

"As a people of faith, we know that our foremost call is to love the Lord with all our

heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbor as Jesus has loved us.

"Our hope is that South Carolina United Methodists consider the ongoing threat of this still-deadly pandemic through this scriptural lens, and take action by using the tools God has placed in our lives to protect ourselves, our families and our neighbors."

The CDC reported its updated guidelines were prompted by a rise in "breakthrough cases," those in which fully vaccinated individuals test positive for COVID-19, that is likely being fueled by the rise of the Delta variant.

Updated CDC recommendations include the following:

In areas with substantial and high transmission, which includes many communities in South Carolina, everyone (including fully vaccinated individuals) should wear a mask in public indoor settings to help prevent the spread of the Delta variant;

Community leaders should encourage vaccination and masking to prevent further outbreaks in areas of substantial and high transmission; and

Universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.

DHEC recommended all South Carolinians follow the new CDC protocols. To schedule a vaccine appointment: <https://scdhec.gov/covid19/covid-19-vaccine>.

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Photos courtesy of Gwendolyn T. White

**Supporting the schools**

The United Methodist Men of Mount Zion UMC, Sumter, donated \$200 worth of school supplies to support Gear Up for Learning, a Sumter United Ministries annual project. The goal was to provide school supplies for students in need in the community. They donated 216 packs of notebook paper, 288 pencils and 185 three-prong paper folders in assorted colors. This is one of their projects that supports the schools in that community.



Photo courtesy of Rev. Daniel Eplee

**Blessed**

On Aug. 8, First UMC, Laurens, held a Blessing of the Backpacks and School Supplies. The items blessed went to nearby elementary schools.

**Protective prayer**

Beaumont UMC members and friends met, laid hands on and prayed at Drayton Mills Elementary School for all persons who would be entering their doors and all schools across South Carolina. "We pray God will put a hedge of protection around them, keeping everyone safe from anything seen or unseen," said the Rev. Annie R. Crocker, pastor. Through the United Methodist Women, Beaumont chose to be of assistance to the students and staff of Drayton Mills this school year. They offer prayer, supplies, personal items, time and much love as they form this partnership of serving the children in their surrounding neighborhood.



**Memorial helps students with \$30K in scholarships**

Memorial UMC, Greer, awarded its annual scholarships for high school seniors and continuing college students. This year, they were able to award nine recipients with more than \$30,000 in scholarship funds. The recipients this year were Ella Kate Branon, Hunter Janes, John Shennan, Julia Shennan, Andrew Scudder, Sara Catherine Lee, Gray Stanton, Blake Humrickhouse and Carson Radlein. Memorial created a scholarship fund in the 1980s in memory of some of the saints of the church. Those funds were eventually combined into one scholarship fund and invested in Wespath. The church scholarship committee meets each year to award scholarships to those members who apply. The money awarded comes only from the gains of the money invested at Wespath. "We also have a generous church member who every year donates a scholarship worth \$2,000 that is above and beyond what a recipient receives from the Wespath funds," said the Rev. Gene Aiken, Memorial's pastor. Here, Aiken celebrates the scholarship recipients.

**UMC Scouting to participate in Salkehatchie**

During the Salkehatchie Reboot meeting on July 24, attendees heard a presentation by Rolland Fitch, the conference scouting ministries coordinator, on inviting youth who are part of scouting ministries to participate in the 2022 and beyond camps.

Fitch had been contacted earlier in the year by the Rev. John Culp, Salkehatchie founder, about scouting participation.

Asking scouts in the appropriate age groups to participate seems only natural. The Methodist Church has had a relationship with scouting since 1920 when Boy Scouts of America and the Methodist church signed an agreement to collaborate on reaching out to young men as a youth program and mission. Currently The United Methodist Church is one of the BSA's largest Charter Partners. The UMC and Girl Scouts USA go back almost as far, with one of the first meetings of the Girl Scouts—with founder Juliet Gordon Lowe—taking place in a Methodist church in Savannah in 1912.

In the South Carolina Annual Conference, there are 97 churches that charter more than 300 BSA units. Two thirds of those units (Scouts BSA and Venturing) have boys and girls in the age group eligible for Salkehatchie service. The number of senior (high school age) Girl Scout units associated with our churches is currently not known.

Participation by scouting groups in Salkehatchie is beneficial to the camps, the UMC and the scouts. Scouting units offer the program a potential pool of additional people. It was pointed out at the Salkehatchie Reboot meeting that the canceling of the 2020 and 2021 camps resulted in the loss of introducing two years of 14-year-olds to Salkehatchie. The introduction of the program to youth at this age is considered vital in capturing and retaining their interest before other competitive activities grab them.

Inviting scouting units to participate offers a great opportunity to reach and make disciples of otherwise unchurched youth. It is estimated that around 50 percent of all youth in scouting have no home church. Inviting

those young men and women to a church-based disciple-making activity such as Salkehatchie could not help but to have a positive effect on them just as it does many of the youth who are already active in the church. Salkehatchie participation could teach scouts that the UMC is about love of and service to our fellow person.

Finally, inviting scouts to participate in Salkehatchie will provide them an opportunity to earn required service time. It also offers the opportunity to complete work on requirements for certain merit badges relating to the building trades (though this would not be a principal objective because Salkehatchie participants are not supposed to get personal benefit other than a feeling of satisfaction).

Fitch said inviting scouting participation at this time of year is a great opportunity because most scouting units are planning their activities for the coming year. He said participation may be slow initially until the word gets out, but over time there will be an increase in participation—by individual scouts if not whole units.

Management of the scouting program in the South Carolina Conference is done using an under-construction network of district and local church scouting coordinators as well as other specialists. Currently the network consists of Fitch and seven other district coordinators.

The intent is to publicize the Salkehatchie camps to the churches through the scouting coordinators in place and through district superintendents and congregational specialists in districts where they are not.

Scouting coordinators were alerted in August of the expected invitations from Salkehatchie participating churches with camp dates going out as soon as they are known.

The aims of both the BSA and GSUSA are to raise young people into adults of high character who are willing to help those in need. Both programs include, among their principles, the slogan of "Do a Good Turn Daily." What better way to do a good turn than helping to repair somebody's home?



**Mechanicsville holds Back to School Bash**

Mechanicsville UMC, along with their Children and Youth Ministry, held a Back to School Bash Saturday, Aug. 14, at the church. Here, the Rev. E.W. Frierson enjoys some time on the grill. As he says, "The key to good grilling is to remember grilling is an art."

Photo by Arswanette Myers; text by MIDAS TOUCH: Linton McCants



**Grace hosts scouting camp**

The Yamasee Cub Scout Day Camp was held July 26-30 on the campus of Grace UMC, North Augusta. This year's theme was "Adventures Around the World." The scouts participated in a variety of activities from around the world including crafts, slingshots, BB shooting, a waterslide, a Lego Derby, indoor soccer, first aid, cooking and scout skills. On Wednesday, PJ Perea from Savannah River Ecology Laboratory visited with exotic animals and taught about their habitats. On Friday, scouts were cooled by water sprayed from a fire truck courtesy of North Augusta Public Safety. BSA Scouts from Troops 7, 7G and 463, and a couple of students from Aiken High School's Health Science Program, helped on the day camp youth staff teaching and leading groups for the week.







Ladies from India Hook UMC, Rock Hill, show off their cap collection.

## Plastic caps recycled into park benches

Rock Hill District United Methodist Women helped this year with a project to help Miracle Park in Rock Hill.

The project was to collect recyclable plastic caps that will be melted and molded into benches to be used in the park.

Miracle Park is a project designed for people of all ages and abilities to play and work. It will be the first of its kind in the United States.

Nancy Mathis at Good Samaritan United Methodist Church at Lake Wylie, Debbie Wood at First UMC in Lancaster, Marie Thompson at Philadelphia UMC in Fort Mill and the Abigail Circle members at Woodland UMC in Rock Hill brought in trash bags full of lids.

Once the lids are sorted and only the correct recyclable lids are bagged, these bags will be taken to Indiana, where they will be processed into benches.

Because of the help received, Miracle Park will get five benches.

For more information about Miracle Park: [miracleparkrockhill.com](http://miracleparkrockhill.com).

## Repair outreach helps community

By Marianne Harlan

NORTH AUGUSTA—What do you get when you combine a church's United Methodist Men's WARM (Weatherization and Repair Ministry) project and Salkehatchie? You get Grace United Methodist Church's WARM-a-hatchie!

With youth Salkehatchie Summer Service camps not being offered this year, Grace United Methodist Church's United Methodist Men joined forces with church youth to complete three days of community home repair projects. Working with United Way to choose sites, 13 youth and 40 adults spread themselves out to three different locations in the community.

Each day began bright and early at 6:30 a.m. with breakfast provided to volunteers at the church. Then it was off to the work sites where those in need saw the hands and feet of Christ in action. Many repairs needed to be done, and volunteers were found patching rooftops, reenforcing a porch and deck, rebuilding a portion of a roof and painting the exterior of a house.

Lunch was taken to each site and was provided through a partnership with area churches and local restaurants. Reflections on the day and music were provided in an



Grace UMMen joined forces with church youth to complete three days of community home repair projects.

air-conditioned environment that was much-needed after a hard day's work in the heat.

The project appropriately had the name "WARM" in its title since the heat index soared into the high 90s each day, but that didn't deter the work.

At Grace UMC, our mission is "To Know Christ and Make His Love Known." We certainly shared his love during this project and left each site a little better off than it was found.

*Harlan is Grace UMC's church administrator.*

"It's not every day that you get to present the Gospel to so many," Matson said about the garden party. "This was one of those days that the Lord can look down upon us along with a host of heavenly angels to see how much a small community church is in love with Him and in love with their neighbors."



## St. Mark community garden celebrates 10 years with party, dedication

GREENVILLE—What started as the Sans Souci Community Garden has grown into a multipurpose outdoor community area where people gather for outdoor movie nights and community garden concerts.

Sans Souci Community Garden is a community outreach of St. Mark United Methodist Church, a partnership between the church and a handful of members of the community.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Sans Souci Community Garden outreach at St. Mark, and they celebrated with a garden party and dedication ceremony attended by approximately 45 people.

Guest speakers included the Sans Souci Garden Coordinator and Liaison Neil Collins

and the Sans Souci Neighborhood Alliance President Rachel Rossman, who shared what this ministry means to them and to the community.

"We are so honored to be able to provide a place where we can all come together despite our differences, a place where we can build connections and make stronger bonds and where we can meet new neighbors and make new friends," said St. Mark's pastor the Rev. Mike Maston. "It reminds me of our Wesleyan heritage says: to do no harm, to do good and to stay in love with God."

The garden is just one of the tools at St. Mark the Lord can use for his glory, he said. Maston closed the event in prayer.

## Franklin UMC hosts suicide prevention workshops to help raise awareness

DENMARK—Franklin United Methodist Church is hosting a suicide prevention program at their church to help people understand the problem and how to help.

AS+K? About Suicide to Save a Life is a best-practice informed suicide prevention curriculum that teaches lifesaving skills, said the Rev. Sheera Disher-Yates.

The AS+K? acronym stands for:

Ask: Recognize suicidal risks, thoughts and behaviors.

Seek: Seek more information about the individual, their risk factors, warning signs and protective factors.

Safety: Safety first.

Secure: Secure access to lethal means.

Know: Know how and where to refer someone at-risk to care.

Like CPR or the Heimlich maneuver, the fundamentals of AS+K? are easily learned. And like CPR and the Heimlich maneuver, the application of AS+K? may save a life.

Franklin UMC hosted its first training of AS+K? Aug. 21 at 9 a.m. virtually given rising COVID-19 numbers. Trainings will be held every other month at a minimum and possibly every month depending on interest.

The next AS+K? training is slated for Oct. 23 from 9-11 a.m.

AS+K? About Suicide to Save a Life is intended to offer hope through positive action (not a form of counseling or treatment). It teaches the public to recognize the warning signs, clues and suicidal communications of people in psychological distress and what action to take to prevent a possible tragedy.

Workshops are approximately two hours in length and have a capacity around 25 participants. Workshops are open to any interested individuals, faith-based groups, professionals or community groups. You may register individually or schedule an AS+K? workshop for your group

For more information contact: 803-707-4240 or [sdyates@umcsc.org](mailto:sdyates@umcsc.org).



Camp director reflects on "resilient" summer.

## Summer 2021: Lessons in resilience

By Sarah Moseley

This summer at Asbury Hills was certainly one to remember. After not being able to host our traditional summer camps last year, there was an extra level of excitement and nerves leading up to the start of our summer season. The excitement and joy of staff training and each week of camp quickly overshadowed those nerves.

When I reflect back on this summer at Asbury Hills, there are two words that immediately come to mind: resilience and joy.

While this summer was incredible in so many ways, it also came with its own sets of challenges. Staff recruiting leading up to summer was more difficult than ever this year, and there was serious concern about finding enough staff to properly run our programs. While our day-to-day operations were not completely changed, our new procedures because of COVID took some getting used to and adaptation. Even though our procedures had a positive impact, we unfortunately did have to make the heart-breaking decision to cancel a week of camp because of a positive COVID case on staff.

Even with difficult challenges facing us this summer, our staff and campers learned resilience. We learned to trust in God when things didn't go as we planned or hoped. We learned how to mourn and how to support each other when our brothers and sisters

struggled and needed a hand. We learned how to accept support when we needed it and do it with grace and open hearts. Most importantly we learned that even in times of trials we are not alone.

We are surrounded by and a part of a great cloud of witnesses encouraging us and cheering us along in this race of life. When we stumble, when we are sick, when we feel all the pressures of life crashing around us all at once, we are not alone. God is there with us in our valleys, on our mountaintops and in the walking in between. This summer was a reminder of how resilient we can be when we fully rely on Christ.

Along with our challenges, there were so many sweeter moments of overflowing joy. Seeing old friends, making new friends, stepping outside of comfort zones, worshipping together, soaking in the beauty of God's creation—the list goes on and on.

Our prayer each week this summer was that each person realized that while we are each running this race for the prize, we are not competing alone. There are those who have gone before us, those who will come after us and those who are running with us. We are all competing together.

And how sweet it has been to be together again.

*Moseley is director of summer camp at Asbury Hills.*



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"I met Jon Michaels of Lexington this year and had him come sing for our senior adult luncheon. Outstanding! He is relatively new to the Lexington area, having moved here from Nashville. He has been on the professional circuit for years, traveling all over solo and with several bands, but took off awhile to raise a family and now is wanting to get back into performing. He is as good an acoustic guitar player as I have ever heard, seriously. Great voice, great songwriter. He was a big hit with our senior adults here. He will not bust your budget!"  
—Dan Williams, member, Lexington Baptist Church

Call Jon at 803-467-2298 or <https://jonmichaelsmusic.com>





One neighbor commented, "You can do this every Sunday. Now I have my afternoon snack!"

Photo courtesy of Rev. Tammy Abee Blom

## Heyward Street pop up ice cream shop helps Epworth

COLUMBIA—Heyward Street United Methodist Church hosted an Epworth Ice Cream Pop Up Shop on Sunday, Aug. 8.

The church invited friends from the neighborhood via Facebook neighborhood pages, and they invited sister Methodist churches. Neighbors around the church halted their afternoon walk to purchase ice cream, and one neighbor commented, "You can do this every Sunday. Now I have my afternoon snack!"

As well as connecting with those in walking distance, friends from Mill Creek, Whaley Street, Trenholm Road and Suber Marshall UMCs visited the ice cream shop. The shop had steady business and was capably staffed by Will Edwards, Epworth's summer intern.

"Two visitors shared their connections to the ministry at Epworth," said the Rev. Tammy Blom, Heyward Street pastor. "One guest lived at Epworth as an elementary-aged child, and another guest told me of her father growing up at Epworth Children's Home."

Blom said Heyward Street is honored to support the care and nurture of children, youth and young adults at Epworth Children's Home.

## Epworth Children's Home

### Going back

There is an old song that begins with the chorus, "I'm going back to school!" In the song, summer has ended, and the singer is citing the reasons he is planning to return to high school. The young people in Epworth's care find themselves at the same point in the calendar year, but their pathway back to school is much more complex than how the singer Sam Cook spelled it out in his song.

During the summer Epworth's elementary age children had tutors available on campus to make sure the students didn't regress. The middle school students attended an academic camp that the school district provided. The older students participated in a program provided through the Urban League that focused on job skills and job readiness. Epworth's computer lab was open, and Epworth employed a special tutor to assist the students with the online Urban League experience.

As Epworth's students return to school many will return with "learning gaps" as a result of family complications and unusual school conditions brought about by COVID-19. In response to COVID-19 and e-learning, Epworth has increased its tutor ranks to help students close these learning gaps. The younger students especially need one-on-one tutoring to help with the deficits in reading and math that most of the resi-

dents arrive with.

Epworth children living with foster parents (90 children at the writing of this article) also face the uncertainty of what the new school year holds for them. With the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus spreading, many foster parents are not certain whether or not schools will remain open. This creates a level of anxiety for both foster parents and foster children. There is also the uncertainty of foster parents being available during school hours if school returns to e-learning.

Epworth's foster parents and the staff members who worked with them have been amazing. They have been heroes in adapting and moving forward, as have Epworth's residential staff members.

There have been a few foster parents who have lost jobs or businesses. That has hindered their ability to continue to foster, but most have been able to, change with the circumstances and continue to give superior care to the child or children they have agreed to take into their homes.

Families across South Carolina are, in increasing numbers, answering God's call to make a difference in a child's life.

It is more complex than ever, and the uncertainties are many, but Epworth's students are going back to school to start Epworth's 126th academic year!

## Three ERT trainings slated for this fall

South Carolina United Methodist Volunteers in Missions' Early Response Team will hold three ERT training events this fall.

On Saturday, Sept. 25, an ERT quarterly training will be held at Mount Horeb United Methodist Church, Lexington. Classes are Basic (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.), Renewal (9 a.m. to 1 p.m.), Chainsaw (9 a.m. to 12 p.m.) and Cleanout/Assessment (1-5 p.m.).

On Saturday, Oct. 9, an ERT Basic class will be offered at Aldersgate UMC, Greenville.

And on Wednesday, Oct. 20, an ERT Basic class will be offered at St. Andrew By-the-Sea UMC, Hilton Head.

To register for any of these classes, go to <https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration>.

All ERT Basic Classes are \$40 per person, which includes a manual, shirt, cap and badge. There is a \$20 fee for renewals.

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

If you have not had COVID vaccines, then please bring your personal mask and wear it as you see fit. Temperatures will be taken. If you feel bad after registering, cancel and you will get a refund.

For questions, contact ERT Coordinator Billy Robinson at [brpraisejesus@aol.com](mailto:brpraisejesus@aol.com) or 803-539-8429.

## Faith works hard to help Mission Lexington food pantry

LEXINGTON—During the pandemic, Faith United Methodist Church placed a food collection barrel on its front porch for members to drop off their donations without contact. Each week a church member would deliver the collection to the Mission Lexington food pantry.

Recently, Faith UMC decided to offer its Mission Lexington drop off and delivery service to the community by posting it on their church sign. Since then, they have been overwhelmed with the community response. They said they love supporting this mission for those in need and have done so since they opened our doors.

In June, Faith was named Mission Lexington's "Church of the Month" for its support of Mission Lexington through financial contributions, donations for the food pantry and sending volunteers to serve at Mission Lexington.

Mission Lexington (formally Lexington



Since they put their food collection on their sign, Faith has been overwhelmed with community response.

Interfaith Community Service) is the hub of care for Lexington County, assisting families and individuals with life essentials, resources and guidance. More information can be found on their website at [www.missionlexingtonsc.org](http://www.missionlexingtonsc.org).



Volunteers unload pumpkins during a previous year. Disciples begins sales for this year beginning Sept. 19, and funds help church missions.

## Disciples pumpkin patch to benefit church missions, Navajo Indian Nation

GREENVILLE—Disciples United Methodist Church annually raises funds for missions by selling pumpkins. The Disciples Pumpkin Patch partners with the Navajo Indian Nation in Farmington, New Mexico, growing 1,200 acres of pumpkins each year. More than 700 Native Americans are employed growing, managing, harvesting and shipping the pumpkins to more than 1,000 pumpkin patch sites located at churches of various denominations.

Disciples UMC is one of those churches, selling big pumpkins, tiny and everything in between, including orange, green, striped, and even white pumpkins with gourds of all shapes and sizes, too.

Pumpkin Patch sales begin Sept. 19, and the patch is open daily through Oct. 31. Hours are Monday to Saturday 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday noon to 7 p.m.

Sales benefit United Methodist Missions and the Navajo Indians of New Mexico, where the pumpkins are grown.

The church is located at 185 Riley Smith Road, Greenville, SC 29615.

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

## City Lights: An Overnight Hospitality Ministry in the Charleston Area

By Stephanie Zartman

Want to bring your church group to stay in the Charleston area? Are you interested in service, missions and retreat in the Holy City?

City Lights is Aldersgate United Methodist Church's hospitality ministry. Their purpose is to make a Charleston missions and renewal trip possible for groups looking to serve. They welcome youth groups, service teams, disaster recovery groups, alternative spring break groups and more.

There is no set schedule of fees. Instead, the church only asks for a love offering. We understand that group accommodations can be difficult to schedule and can quickly eat up group budgets. We know that by making a mission and service trip to our area possible, you're multiplying ministry across the Lowcountry. Any way we can help make that happen is a win for the kingdom.

For accommodations, there are two bunkrooms available with a total of 28 beds, with additional overflow rooms and cots available as needed that can accommodate up to 75 people total. Visiting teams have

use of Aldersgate UMC's classrooms and game room, kitchen and dining hall, showers and restrooms, playground, soccer field and basketball court. Teams are always invited to join for Sunday worship and are welcome to use the sanctuary and other spaces for week-night worship and gatherings.

Visiting teams have a variety of reasons for staying in the Charleston area. Some groups already have events and activities scheduled. Other teams like to have a little assistance from the locals. Aldersgate can help schedule groups with mission opportunities with trusted local partners such as Lowcountry Food Bank, Habitat for Humanity, Home Works of America or Carolina Children's Home. They also welcome teams to assist in the church's local Food Bank and Clothes Closet, To Go Soup Kitchen and Winter Warming Shelter.

Aldersgate's calling as a church is to glorify God and to be good news to the city. We are grateful for the chance to welcome teams to experience and serve in our city.

For more information: 843-744-0283 or [AldersgateRemount.org](http://AldersgateRemount.org).



## Epworth Children's Home helps Rotarians understand how to help kids

Epworth Children's Home staff Lisa Fusco, director of development, and the Rev. Kathy James, director of church relations, recently shared with the Rotary Club the story of how Epworth is reaching out to communities to increase the positive impact they have on children and families.

The mission of Epworth is to serve children, youth and families through a caring, accepting and safe Christian community where hurts are healed, hope is nurtured and faith in God, self and others is developed.

With two campuses in Columbia serving as its home base, Epworth has missional outposts in 11 United Methodist churches around the state, and it is growing every day.

On June 16, Fusco and James gave highlights of the dilemma children are facing in South Carolina and how Rotarians can help through service, giving of resources or

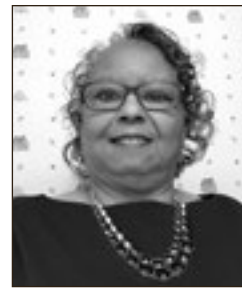


From left are Katy Byron, Lisa Fusco, Jackie G. Jenkins and the Rev. Kathy James.

making connections to others who might be interested in sharing resources, being foster parents, being respite caregivers or forming a support network.

## Walterboro District United Methodist Women 'on the move'

By Clara Hodges McFadden



McFadden

The last 16 months, the COVID-19 pandemic has made in-person church services and gatherings rather difficult. Nevertheless, Buckhead United Methodist Women decided to continue to meet virtually, either via Zoom or conference call.

Our meetings have been fulfilling, and it made carrying out the tasks of the projects we engaged in just that more meaningful. In our meetings, we have shared ideas about how we could give back to the communities at-large and continue to spread the good news of Jesus Christ at the same time.

A few of the projects that we've taken part of in this past year were donations given to the "In His Name" shelter in Colleton County, the Veteran's Victory House. Also, the members of the group collected donations and items for the new home of a family in the Ruffin community that had been burned out.

Helping our neighbors and loving one another is what we should continue to do. It is heartwarming and gives us a good feeling deep down inside to see the expressions of appreciation and thanks when the donations and gifts are delivered.

Some of the new projects the group will engage in beginning in the fall are the Bells Elementary School Reading Project, where we will spend a day at the school reading to the children, and donations to people incarcerated at the Colleton County Detention Center. We look forward to taking part in these projects.

When we volunteer our time and energy to help others, it not only makes the world better, but it also makes us better. Giving boosts our happiness, health and sense of well-being. Hebrews 13:16 says, "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for such sacrifices God is pleased." And that is what we are thriving for: for God to be pleased with our caring and giving.

As the days and months go by, we will continue to engage in service to ourselves and to the communities in which we live. We are the Buckhead United Methodist Church United Methodist Women's group. And if you haven't noticed it yet, "we're on the move!"

Buckhead United Methodist Women are part of the Ruffin Parish in the Walterboro District. The Rev. Joey McDonald is district superintendent, and the Rev. Adrienne E. Stokes is pastor of both Buckhead and Hickory Hill United Methodist churches.



Photo courtesy of Elaine G. Mathis

### Aldersgate heads to the stadium

Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry was the featured community organization at the Columbia Fireflies baseball game on Aug. 12. The ministry was promoted throughout the night. Above, residents and staff enjoyed the game along with board members and ASNM friends.



Residents promote Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry Sunday at Mount Horeb UMC in Lexington.

## Aldersgate 'grateful for support'

COLUMBIA—Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry, the United Methodist agency that helps families prepare for the future of loved ones with developmental disabilities, celebrated its annual special Sunday recently, and leaders say they are grateful for the support they received.

The South Carolina Annual Conference designates the second Sunday in August as Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry Sunday, or churches may select an alternate day to collect a special offering for the ministry. This year, that second Sunday was Aug. 8.

"We thank the churches and individuals who have given faithfully on Aldersgate Sunday and other times during the year," said Board Chair Susan Kovas. "Their continued support helps us care for our residents, as

well as plan for the future."

ASNM operates homes in Columbia, Orangeburg and Florence.

ASNM is the result of several families and interested persons, some of whom were parents of special needs children, taking their desire to develop a place for the care of adult children with developmental disabilities to the Conference Council on Ministries. Delegates to the 2003 Annual Conference approved the Council on Ministries' plan to create Aldersgate.

Today, Aldersgate provides the highest quality of life and greatest level of independence in three Christian homes for adults with special needs.

For more information, visit [aldersgatespecialneedsministry.org](http://aldersgatespecialneedsministry.org).

## United Methodist Women



by Helene Cargile

### A link to a better community

Columbia Bethlehem Community Center is a nonprofit organization founded in 1945 by a group of women associated with The United Methodist Church. We are located in a building donated by Wesley UMC.

For more than 75 years, the CBCC has focused on serving families and communities in the Columbia metropolitan area. With the literacy-based children's programs, community programs and spring and summer camp, we continue to provide intimate educational experiences to our students and families. With the support of partnerships with local businesses and community agencies, we continue to thrive to expand our resources and extend services to strengthen the families we serve.

Although we currently do not have any paid staff, we have two faith volunteers and a rotating group of volunteers that assist regularly. With their assistance, last year during the pandemic, we remained in partnership with Francis Burns UMC. Through this partnership we were able to supply free meals (breakfast and lunch) for more than 50 families daily from June to August. In addition, we continued serving meals to the community every Friday, increasing our number to 65 families some days.

We have applied for a grant from Advance Special Ministries to provide funding for weekend meals. The funds would also be used to provide supplies for our monthly community fun days. Food, prizes and other entertainment are provided. The Columbia Police Department attends and provides an ice cream truck.

We also partnered with Junior League of Columbia to do a clothing giveaway to families from Columbia Housing, Transitions,

a Boys Group Home, Habitat for Humanity, Sisters Care, First Year Teachers and the Family Shelter. Items were donated/ purchased from Delivering Good, a nonprofit in New York. Through this mission we assisted approximately 536 people over the past 12 months.

United Methodist Women circles donate regularly and volunteer when requested throughout the year. We also attend and speak at UMW circle meetings and gatherings. CBCC partners with The Potters Resurrection Tabernacle Church to host weekly community Bible studies. Volunteers from I.D. Newman UMC support our weekly feedings and monthly community gathering.

Our research has determined that CBCC is located in a childcare desert. In an effort to meet this need as we move forward in 2021, we are meeting with the Childcare Licensing Board to determine resources and renovations that will be necessary to provide childcare for area children ages 2-5. We hope to have a childcare center open by January 2022.

Please keep CBCC in your prayers as we move into this new phrase of our mission.

CBCC could use your support as we plan for the events for the rest of this year. Donations can be sent to CBCC at 308 McRae Street, Columbia, SC 29203. Items on our wish include cleaning products, paper goods, hand sanitizer and gift cards to grocery stores, hardware stores, Walmart or Target. Someone is usually at the center from 7 a.m. until 2 p.m. daily, or you can contact Kara Simmons for an appointment at [CBCCexecutive@umcsc.org](mailto:CBCCexecutive@umcsc.org) or 803-807-9583.

*Cargile is the SCCUMW representative to the Columbia Bethlehem Community Center.*



### Happy Hookers help Epworth

The Happy Hookers group from Camp Creek UMC, Lancaster, delivered a number of items to Epworth Children's Home in Columbia in mid-July. Delivered were 100 knit hats/blankets, 100 pillowcases and 50 individual hand sanitizers. "God is good all the time; all the time, God is good," the Rev. Mike Catoe said.



# GLASSES FOR GUATEMALA: Collection will help kids, adults

From Page 1

The mission project involves collecting used eyeglasses, both prescription and non-prescription (readers). Prescription sunglasses and cases are also welcome.

“If you wear glasses, chances are you have

one or two spares lying around the house because your prescription changed,” said Linda DuRant, who along with the Rev. Scott Efird and Nancy Bradshaw are leading the mission effort.

The glasses will go to Healing Guatemala, a United Methodist medical mission and clinic led by South Carolina pastor Dr. Luke

Rhyee that offers ophthalmology, dental care and basic medical needs, both at the clinic and in rural communities in the Chuisajcaba, Guatemala, region.

Rhyee said Guatemala has a tremendous need of glasses.

“Poor Guatemalans are not able to afford glasses,” Rhyee told the *Advocate*. “Glasses will not only reduce daily inconvenience but also change the lives of Guatemalan forever. Glasses will help the kids to study better, which is extremely important considering education in Guatemala is the only way to escape from generational poverty. For the adults, with glasses they can sew better, which is the major income source to many Guatemalan families.”

He also noted people will be able to read the Bible with their glasses, something many currently cannot do.

“It’s a need, and we have the resources,” said Efird, who pastors Ashland United Methodist Church, Columbia. “I know what it’s like not to see—it’s frustrating, and it affects so much of life.”

Lack of sight can also be life-threatening, DuRant noted.

“For us it’s just an inconvenience, but if you use a chainsaw for a living and you can’t see well, that’s a problem,” DuRant said.

It’s also a great chance to downsize and clean out old stuff in her house.

“To me, it’s a no-brainer,” DuRant added. “We have it, so why not?”

The mission project was the idea of Betty Void. Void said we often take things like eyesight for granted, but it’s important to note it is a blessing to see, and to have glasses when we cannot.

“One day, I was home looking for a pair

of readers to read the minutes from the Columbia District Connectional Ministries meeting. I did not even think about all of the old glasses and readers I had in the drawer. Several months passed, and I asked God to help me to help others.”

One day, her District Connectional Ministries began discussing how to help Rhyee and his ministry in Guatemala.

“God asked me, ‘How can you serve this ministry?’ and I thought about all of the unused glasses in my drawer,” Void said. “So I presented it to the Outreach team.”

The district is collecting any kind of glasses possible—children’s, adult, reading glasses, regular distance glasses, sunglasses, cases, chains, etc. They prefer gently used, but as DuRant said, “Even beat-up ones are OK. If you’ve never been able to see, they’ll be a blessing.”

Donations to offset shipping costs are also being accepted.

“I’m proud of our District Connectional Ministries Outreach Committee for organizing this important mission project. Even in the midst of a pandemic, we can engage in serving ‘the least of these,’” said Dr. Cathy Jamieson, Columbia District superintendent. “Jesus gave sight to the blind and sent his disciples out to do acts of healing. We can’t perform a miracle, but we can share glasses to give better eyesight to those in need.”

Glasses can be dropped off in person Mondays to Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Ashland UMC, 2600 Ashland Road, Columbia, SC 29210, or mailed. If you need them to be picked up from you, call DuRant at 803-345-2671 or email lindajdurant@yahoo.com. For more on Healing Guatemala, visit <https://healingguatemala.org>.

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# RACIAL AWAKENING: Cont'd

From Page 1

It is a follow-up book to the first collection, “Stories of Racial Awakening,” published in 2017 and available as an ebook at [www.advocate.org/books](http://www.advocate.org/books).

“As followers of Christ, we have a sacred calling to lead our communities in tearing down the walls that divide us and to engage in ministries of reconciliation. The walls crumble when we begin to see and hear beyond our own experience—when we

make a concerted effort to learn each other’s stories,” Holston writes in his foreword.

“Listen with authenticity to the stories that are shared in this book, and then invite someone to reflect with you on what you have learned. Act with intentionality to hear the truth of history and heritage from all sides of the discussion. It is an uncomfortable journey, but as people of faith we trust that it will lead us to God’s own truth.”

The Advocate Press is the *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate’s* book publishing venture. The Advocate Press produces books targeted to South Carolina United Methodists with a mission to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The mission of the Advocate Press is to produce books of interest to South Carolina United Methodists on matters of faith and to amplify regional voices and those that advocate for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

“More Stories of Racial Awakening” is available as a paperback (\$12) and an ebook (\$5). Learn more at <https://advocate.org/racialawakening2>.

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Narratives of Changed Hearts and Lives from South Carolina United Methodists

EDITED BY JESSICA BRIDIE  
FOREWORD BY BISHOP L. JONATHAN HOLSTON



# CONFIRMATION: Retreat weeks held at Hinton Center in March

From Page 1

The Rev. Elizabeth Murray, youth pastor at Lexington United Methodist Church, Lexington, has chaired the design team for the last year in developing the plan, drawing heavily from her own experience with youth and confirmation. While her church is larger and has an active confirmation program, many churches in the South Carolina Conference do not. Some have only a handful of students and haven't held confirmation in a decade, even longer. Others do a tiny confirmation based on old materials or other, non-United Methodist programs.

"Confirmation can be very difficult for churches," Murray said, especially churches with just a pastor, a parent and two kids participating.

In the past, Kathleen and Ed Kilbourne led a confirmation experience at Lake Junaluska, the Foundation for Christian Formation, but that program has now ended, and a vacuum remains.

Enter Hinton Theotokos.

The design team—comprising seven men and women, four from South Carolina (Murray along with Dr. Sheila Elliott Hodge, the Rev. Megan Boatwright and the Rev. Jad Taylor)—developed an experience that would take place at Hinton Rural Life Center, a United Methodist agency located in Hayesville, North Carolina. Others on the team are Sallie Anna Broome and the Rev. Monica Childers of the Western North Carolina Conference and the Rev. Karen Kluever, formerly from South Carolina and now a deacon with the Kentucky Conference and the director of church relations at Hinton.

Slated for four weekends in March 2022, the experience will include lodging, meals, a mission opportunity and an emphasis on the five United Methodist membership vows: prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.

They are also in the midst of designing a free curriculum to pair with the confirmation retreat, though it does not have to be used. Churches can have the option of doing the curriculum only, the retreat only or both.

Murray said the vision is that a group with only two kids would not just be OK but invitational. "This is meant for all churches but especially small churches," she said.

Hodge said she's long been concerned about the need for a confirmation retreat that includes small churches and churches of color in a way that enriches them and calls them to discipleship.

Hodge said she and Kluever have been friends for many years, and over the years they have had a number of talks about this need. Much of Hinton Theotokos stems from those conversations—and that need.

"One of thing that warms my heart and speaks to my hope for the children and youth of our conference is that Karen always heard me," Hodge said. "She didn't dismiss or poo-poo it; the idea didn't leave her, either."

In the past, South Carolina's youth often had Youth Annual Conference and Spring-maid youth retreats to help connect them and create intimacy and meaning in relationship with each other. That time is now over, and while current youth events like Revolution and Immerse are good, youth ministry has been missing a piece in the form of a confirmation experience, Hodge and Murray said.

"You have to have (confirmation) for the whole picture, the whole rhythm for youth ministry," Hodge said.

Hodge said she sees the confirmation experience as an opportunity to lead more into the ministry, particularly African Americans.

"We have fewer and fewer younger people coming into the ministry, and I wonder if participating in a different, intentional, diverse and inclusive confirmation program and curriculum might help us," Hodge said.

"That's my hope."

Murray said she has the same hope. She'll be passing the role as design team leader off this fall—she has the bittersweet opportunity to serve as the associate pastor of youth and young adult ministries at the American Church of Paris, and she'll start her new position Oct. 10.

"I'm excited about job but I also felt sick to my stomach—Hinton Theotokos is our baby!" Murray said.

Still, she's doing her part with the other team members to finalize plans for the March

event, as well as finish the curriculum, so all churches will have the opportunity for their students this winter.

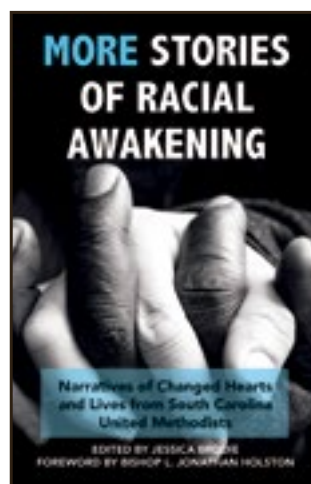
The name of the experience, Theotokos, comes from the Greek word for the Virgin Mary, which means Christ-bearer or God-bearer. In essence, Murray said, this is what Christians are to do as disciples—bear Christ to the world through our gifts and ministry.

Anyone interested in being a part of the design team, or interested in learning more about Hinton Theotokos, should visit <https://hintontheotokos.org>.

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# PIEDMONT SUMMER FEEDING PROGRAM: Being neighborly

From Page 1

For the last six years, Piedmont has been operating a thriving summer feeding program on-site, its members trying to help the surrounding community in the name of Jesus.

"It's about being a good neighbor," Greer said, noting the community is a food desert. Other than the local Dollar General, there is no place to get groceries unless one has transportation to a grocery store many miles away—and many of the residents do not have cars.

Piedmont UMC feeds about 100 kids aged 18 and younger all summer long every week, from the day after school lets out until the day before it starts up again in August.

Greer calls the church "glorified middle-people," as the food comes from the Freedom Within Walls organization, and all they have to do is open their doors, prepare the food for pickup and track their numbers.

"It's super easy," Greer said. He and weekly volunteers Maria Hollis and Pat Stranger gather around noon to prepare the boxes and bags. Around 12:30, neighborhood kids begin to trickle in.

The day the *Advocate* visited, middle schoolers Aubrey and Reagan have brought Reagan's little sister, Harlyn, and their new friend, Kameryn, and the girls laugh and tease Greer while they eat and play with some of the activities laid out on the tables for them.

Cars pull through the drive, as well, and parents send in their kids to grab their bags and head back home, where other little ones wait.

When the official pickup time is over, around 1:15, volunteers gather any remaining food and head out to homes in the community, delivering to families they know need assistance



Reagan signs in to get free meals for herself, her little sister, Harlyn, and their two friends.

Photos by Jessica Brodie



"I come because this is the avenue Christ has given us," says volunteer Pat Strange, packing food bags above.



The Rev. Matthew Greer keeps a running banter with middle schoolers Reagan, Aubrey and Kameryn while they eat.

"It's fun, something to do in the summer, and a chance to hang out with your friends," says Reagan, a rising eighth grader whom Greer has dubbed one of their local "hosts."

Greer said the need for the feeding pro-

gram is strong. Poverty is heavy in the Piedmont area, and many people have lost jobs recently. Rent used to be very low, but lately many of the families are being displaced as landlords fix up the homes—and increase

rent prices. Some families have been forced to leave or find roommates because they cannot afford the higher rent.

It just makes him and the other church volunteers that much more determined to do their part to help.

"God called me to it," said Hollis, a daily volunteer who first brought the idea for the food program to Greer—and to Piedmont UMC.

A longtime hunger advocate, Hollis posted a message on Facebook six years ago seeking a place with a sink, trashcan, water source and tables that might be willing to host a food ministry. Greer, who was in his first year at Piedmont at the time, replied back within minutes—Piedmont UMC was in.

"I come because this is the avenue Christ has given us," Stranger said. Her husband is a pastor in community, and they try to do all they can to meet whatever need is out there. "We just say yes."

Many of those who come to the summer feeding program join them for church on Sunday morning or get plugged into Wednesday night youth group or the church's vacation Bible school programs. Greer said they advertise heavily on Facebook and through flyers at the local food bank, but word of mouth has been most effective.

The young "hosts," Reagan and Aubrey, stuff their trash into garbage cans, hug the volunteers goodbye and collect their belongings.

"We'll be back tomorrow," one of them tells the littlest.

Then the foursome heads off into the hot afternoon, their bellies full and their giggles echoing behind them as they go.

Greer just watches—and smiles. It's church in action, and he is grateful for the opportunity to help.

# MOUNT CARMEL HUNGER: Serving others in Jesus' name

From Page 1

trailer, park it in the parking lot and start cooking. Smalls spreads the word in the days leading up to the event, and then on Saturday watches as hundreds line up for a meal and some community love, Jesus style.

They held their first meal in September 2020 and try to do something monthly—usually a free meal, though once it was free COVID testing and once a free clothing closet.

For the fish fry events, Smalls catches the fish himself. An avid fisherman, he loves to fish.

"The Charleston Harbor has a limit of 50 fish a day, so I had to make four trips to catch 200 fish. I cleaned then all myself and everything!" Smalls said.

It was a good chance to combine some fun with a way to love his neighbors—and model the life of Christ.

After all, Smalls said, "As a pastor, I can't preach to hungry people. You've got to have a stomach full to hear me. That's what Jesus

did—Jesus fed them."

The last community event brought more than 200 people to the church for food. Smalls hopes even more will come in the future.

Not everyone in his congregation was eager about the effort at first, questioning whether it would work or whether people would take advantage of the church. But Smalls said it's not the church's job to judge, just to do what they can do. A couple of people helped the first time, then a couple more. One Saturday a woman showed up with two giant containers of red, brown and yellow rice.

Now, Smalls said, "Each time we have it, we have a smorgasbord of food available to give out, and it's all at no charge."

He hopes other churches will hear about what they are doing and be inspired to do similar. Smalls believes all Christians are called to serve others in Jesus's name.

"This is a way of extending ourselves," he said.



Rev. Nathan Smalls (left) shares a conversation during one of the food giveaways. Hundreds come each month for the church's free food events.



The church has held a fish fry and offered spaghetti, barbecued chicken and barbecued ribs. One month they also held a free clothing closet.

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# ERTs respond to call for help in Vance

By Billy Robinson

On July 16, an 11-person Early Response Team crew responded to a desperate cry for help in Vance. A big tree had crashed into the end of a mobile home during a storm July 13, penetrating four feet into the home with big limbs perched dangerously over the rest.

Orangeburg County Emergency Services Director Billy Staley contacted South Carolina United Methodist Volunteers in Mission ERT Coordinator Billy Robinson about the need for help, and a team was formed of ERT members from across the state.

ERT Team Leader the Rev. John Elmore had just moved into the parsonage of Holly Hill United Methodist Church when the storm hit. He did an assessment of the damaged home July 14 and coordinated with

homeowner Lashanda White to get her the help she and her family needed. Power was shut off to the home until the tree could be removed and the home deemed safe.

Elmore reached out to his church to also provide aid to the family. Church member Michael Dennis brought a dump truck and hauled off several loads of debris. Other members brought drinks and supplies that helped crews through the demanding and dangerous work on a hot and muggy day.

The ERT members divided into three crews: roofing, ground and debris removal. The roofing crew methodically cut the dangerously big limbs hanging over the home using a pole saw with precise coordination from the ground crew, who had a rope attached to the limbs being cut. In perfect precision



The team onsite.

they would pull it away from the home as it was cut into. The debris was loaded onto the dump truck and hauled off.

The roof crew faced some challenging obstacles in to cutting the tree trunk from inside the home without causing further damage. A FRED lifting device was used to help keep tension off the tree trunk. After all the tree was removed, the roof was tarped with a

30- x 30-foot tarp, which also encompassed the damaged end of the home.

Crews prayed before and after with the family and left them with cross pendants and Scriptures, including John 3:16. Members asked for extras for other relatives and friends.

One family member said he plans to attend the next ERT training. He stated, "I want to help others in need just as y'all have helped our family. Today, we have felt the love and presence of Jesus." The family is still in need of reconstruction of the damaged roof and end of the home plus interior repairs.

Anyone wanting to join an ERT mission team may do so at [brpraisejesus@aol.com](mailto:brpraisejesus@aol.com) or 803-539-8429. Several ERT trainings are held throughout the state each year.

# ERTs repair Santee home damaged after severe thunderstorm

By Billy Robinson

SANTEE—On June 18, members of the South Carolina United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Early Response Team responded to the home of Freddy Taylor near Santee.

Taylor's mobile home received major damage when a big oak tree came crashing down during a severe thunderstorm that wreaked damage to the area June 15. The severe storm toppled a big oak that tore power lines away from his home and severely damaged the end portion of an addition to the mobile home. It also left a big hazardous oak tree perched dangerously over and onto his home, making it unsafe and unable to patch or tarp the wide variety of holes until the roof could be cleared of debris.

Taylor was not injured and was back at work but in dire need of help, including getting the tree removed so power could be restored, plus a future need of new steps into his home.

ERT members started the monumental task in the early morning with only three volunteers. Meticulous preplan-

ning and continuous sizing up with God's direction and mercy enabled the small team to successfully and professionally complete the huge project on a very humid and hot day. Frequent hydration breaks were mandatory.

Using pole saws and chainsaws, they were able to clear the big tree from the structure by 1:30 p.m. and had the damaged area completely tarped by 3 p.m. using a 20- x 30-foot tarp.

The team plans to return within several weeks a replace severely damaged—basically non-existent—steps into the home.

At the end of the day, the team serviced all their saws and equipment and made preparation for the potential hazardous weather impact from the coming weekend's cyclone/tropical storm forecast.

A Go Fund Me account has been set up for people wanting to help.

Robinson is UMVIM ERT/disaster coordinator.



Felix Vazquez and Rev. Frank Copeland tarp the home.



## View from the Pews

by Bill Barnier

### Walking home

As you know, I like to collect sayings, quotes and inspirational tomes that bring my attention to the realities of living. The Bible is a place to find inspiration, but you just never know what will pop up on social media these days.

One of the big questions humankind has asked is, "Why am I here?" Of course, being a creation of God certainly lends a suggestion as to our purpose. He told us how we should live, forgave us when we couldn't live up to his expectations of us and made sure we know of his love in so many different ways every day we live.

Yet, without showing himself to us or speaking directly to us, we are left to speculate as to the purpose for our existence. One can search mind, body and spirit for the answer and come up lacking. If one chooses to expand their spirituality to search another level of knowledge and experience, one might learn that things are much simpler than we thought. This earthy life may just be a waystation on our spiritual journey. A quote from Rom Dos simply states, "We are here to walk each other home."

As children, most of us accepted the peace, comfort and safety of the place we knew as home. It was where family shared a common space and parents shielded us from outside danger and prepared us for the struggles of the adult world. Our home was our refuge of peace and safety.

As adults we keep the same lessons in our hearts as we work to also make our adult homes a place of rest, comfort and safety. It seems to be a theme for our lives, but only through the blessing of our heavenly Spirit are we successful.

Our affirmation that we are to journey home to be reunited with our gracious God implies we began our earthly existence

there. It suggests we were once there, then sent out to live an earthy life as part of God's larger plan for all he created. Though frequently thought to be a bit "nuts," there are those who recall other lives, in other times, with people who they may have the fortune to remember in this life. After all, God is all powerful and all knowing, so absolutely anything is possible.

Our lives were given to us for a purpose. Within our tick of universal time, we must fill it with God's bidding, not with that of Satan. Our human history is mostly a story of jealousy, greed, hate, disrespect, power and control. Each life should be filled with respect, kindness, understanding, caring and responsibility. Maybe we won't be allowed the final journey home until we all learn to get along.

There are many who speak of the looming ending times for our human race. I don't know if that's true, but we certainly know of many ancient civilizations who are gone completely from this earth. The clues they left behind don't tell us much of their decline, though measured against our understanding of God's wishes, their stories are similar to ours. They prospered, grew powerful, then greedy and perhaps soulless. Their fall was complete, either at the hands of others or by earthly calamity.

It's unfortunate each successive civilization is given a second chance without the memories of the past, or of the home from which we came. We use our brains to find new ways to rape the earth, harm each other and question the advice God allows us to study.

Still, "We are here to walk each other home." Spirit knows the way.

Barnier attends St. Paul United Methodist Church, Ridgeland.



Photo by Billy Robinson

### Home gets new steps

On June 30, members of the Orange Circuit constructed and prefabricated steps near Santee at the home of Freddy Taylor. The home had severe damage because of a straight-line wind storm, which an ERT Team led by Billy Robinson responded to June 18. Crews cut a big oak tree off and away from the home, plus put a tarp on. While at the site, Robinson noticed the badly deteriorated and damaged steps, then contacted the owner, who graciously accepted their offer to build him steps free of charge. The Rev. Richard Toy took charge of the project, with North UMC funds purchasing the lumber and materials. On June 30, Toy, Bobby and Janis Livingston and Michael Hughes built the steps in a three-piece set at the home of Bobby Livingston. On July 1, Toy, the Livingstons and Billy Robinson set the new steps in place after a demolition on the old porch. Above are Toy (left) and Bobby Livingston.

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by Betty Stalnaker

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#### God The Deliverer: Our Search for Identity and Our Hope for Renewal

(DVD2734B=) Author: Frazee, Randy. 8 sessions, 11-15 min/study guide/2021.

Second in the series, this study consists of stories in the Old Testament books of 1 Samuel through Malachi. As you read these narratives—featuring characters such as Samuel, Saul, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah—you will see how God has been weaving our lower story into the greater upper story that he has been writing. CC. Age: YAS.

#### The Difficult Words of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to His Most Perplexing Teachings

(DVD2710B=) Author: Levine, Amy-Jill. 6 sessions, 12-14 min/leader's guide/bk/2021.

Jesus provided his disciples teachings for how to follow Torah, God's word; he told them parables to help them discern questions of ethics and of human nature; he offered them beatitudes for comfort

and encouragement. But sometimes Jesus spoke words that followers then and now have found difficult. He instructs disciples to hate members of their own families (Luke 14:26), to act as if they were slaves (Matthew 20:27) and to sell their belongings and give to the poor (Luke 18:22). He restricts his mission (Matthew 10:6); he speaks of damnation (Matthew 8:12); and he calls Jews the devil's children (John 8:44). In "The Difficult Words of Jesus," Levine shows how these difficult teachings would have sounded to the people who first heard them, how have they been understood over time and how we might interpret them in the context of the gospel of love and reconciliation. CC. Ages YAS

#### The One: Reaching the Lost with the Love of Christ

(DVD2729B=) Author: Cowart, Jim and Jennifer. 4 sessions, 11-17 min. each/leader's guide/participants bk/2021.

Learn to see others through God's eyes. Think about the happy relief that floods through you when you find a lost cell phone or a misplaced set of keys. This is just the tiniest hint of what it feels like to reach out to the ones in our lives who are spiritually lost—who have not yet discovered the rich love God has for them. Plus, as the parables in Luke 15 show us, to save "the one" is a wonderful way to respond to God's great love. Jesus tells stories about rejoicing when lost things are found—specifically, a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost child. "The One" uses these parables to teach us how to become passionate about sharing the love and message of Jesus to reach those who don't know God. CC. Age: YAS.

*The South Carolina Conference Resource Center is your connection to DVDs and seasonal musicals. We are here to serve your church family. To reserve resources, call 888-678-6272 or 803-786-9486, or visit [www.umcsc.org/resourcecenter](http://www.umcsc.org/resourcecenter).*



#### 'Senior VBS'

COVID-19 shut down many activities this past year, but the Senior Center in Ninety Six reopened and held a "Senior VBS" in June. The ladies at Cambridge UMC, Ninety Six, were asked if they would lead this effort. The three-day event started each day with a Bible lesson, crafts and time for fellowship. On the last day, Bible Bingo was added in the depot's great room. The church extended a special thank you to Mary Ann Goodman for providing leadership and prayers for this year's VBS. They said it was a great week, and Cambridge UMC is looking forward to serving these seniors for VBS again next year.

### Jamieson to lead in-person clergy health cohort

Dr. Cathy Jamieson will lead a clergy health cohort the second Thursday of every month from September through May.

Jamieson is the Columbia District Superintendent for the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. The cohort is part of Pinnacle's Clergy Collective and will be held from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Shandon United Methodist Church, Columbia.

This track is in person for the seminar and coaching group, both in the same day each month. The purpose of the clergy health initiative is to provide resources, coaching and clergy collective peer groups focused on enhancing the mind, body and spirit of those who serve in pastoral ministry. Each participant will develop his/her own self-care plan.

To learn more or register: <https://www.pinnlead.com/clergy-collective>.

## Global Briefs

#### A look at COVID-19's impact on churches

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—United Methodist Communications has released the final phase findings of its Impact of COVID-19 Study. The agency began surveying local church leaders about the pandemic's impact on worship, giving and church activities starting on March 26, 2020. The fourth phase looked at local church ministries, finances and clergy well-being.

#### A Wesleyan take on personal finance

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Jesus talked a lot about money. So did John Wesley, Methodism's founder. Wespath and the United Methodist Publishing House have collaborated on a personal finance program called Saving Grace that is meant to reflect Wesleyan Christian values.

#### Standing with Haiti amid quake and storm

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—United Methodists are reaching out with their prayers and pocketbooks as Haiti deals with a devastating earthquake and encroaching tropical depression. The United Methodist Committee on Relief is collecting donations, and churches are working with partners in the country to provide relief.

#### Training on effective communications

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Valuable information to help church leaders communicate better is available Aug. 24-25 during Moving the Church Forward Through Communication, a virtual conference led by United Methodist Communications. The ecumenical sessions will include insights on reaching different generations, orienting to the digital-first era and maximizing the effectiveness of online worship and engagement. The cost of the workshop is \$50.

#### A Christian look at critical race theory

WASHINGTON—Critical race theory examines how laws in the United States have built and supported racial inequities. The United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race offers an online panel about the theory, featuring law and seminary professors. The agency also has an infographic that aims to separate myths from truth.

#### Site offers photo resources for churches

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—In observance of World Photography Day on Aug. 19, United Methodist Communications has gathered photographic resources to help local churches tell their stories through compelling imagery. Tools available include a searchable media library of downloadable images, a training course on capturing better smartphone photos and a video tutorial on making photo slideshows. The new website also will feature an interview with United Methodist News photojournalist Mike DuBose, who shares stories, tips and examples to help viewers improve their picture-taking skills.

#### Faith leaders support worldwide vaccine access

WASHINGTON—As citizens in many countries remain unprotected from the coronavirus, United Methodists and other faith leaders view access to the COVID-19 vaccine as a human right, along with other basic health care needs. The Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe, top executive of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, was among the religious leaders who met virtually Aug. 4 with U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai to express support for waiving vaccine patents to increase COVID vaccine access for developing countries.

#### Scarritt Bennett leader stepping down

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Sarah Wilke, executive director of the Scarritt Bennett Center, plans to step down at the end of 2021. Wilke has led the independent nonprofit for five years. Scarritt Bennett, whose campus is owned by United Methodist Women, serves as a conference center and hub for women's empowerment, racial justice, spiritual formation and education of laity. The center is launching a search for a new executive director.

#### 'Renaissance' Bishop Beverly Shamana dies at 81

EAGLE ROCK, Calif.—Bishop Beverly Shamana, who led the California-Nevada Conference from 2000 to 2008, has died at age 81. She was the second female African American elected to the United Methodist episcopacy. Bishop Grant Hagiya described her as a "renaissance person," given her talents as an artist and musician, as well as church leader.

#### Conference and megachurch enter mediation

ATLANTA—The North Georgia Conference and Mount Bethel United Methodist Church have agreed to enter a mediation process in an effort to resolve their dispute stemming from a pastoral appointment. They will refrain from public comment on this matter until the mediation process has concluded. Mount Bethel also held a prayer rally July 25 that included leaders of the Wesleyan Covenant Association.

#### Rev. Eddie Fox, evangelism leader, dies at 83

SEVIERVILLE, Tenn.—As longtime director of World Methodist Evangelism, the Rev. H. Eddie Fox traveled millions of miles sharing the gospel and helping other Wesleyan Christians to do the same. Fox, a United Methodist elder in the Holston Conference, has died at age 83.

—Courtesy of the United Methodist News Service



#### A true adventure

A dozen kids participated in this year's "Adventure Island" VBS at First UMC, Laurens. The event was held July 30 to Aug. 1.

Photos by Rev. Daniel Eplee





## From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

### The Summer of 1941: Before the war

War clouds were on the horizon for South Carolina Methodists in the summer of 1941, and the international crisis made the pages of the *Advocate*.

The recent announcement of the Atlantic Charter by Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill drew comment: "What is proposed by totalitarian countries is not peace; it is the quietude of broken spirits. The eight points set forth by Messrs. Roosevelt and Churchill last week are distinctly peace aims. With equality and security for all and malice toward none, they proposed a new order, with the seed of lasting peace—not a new war. Here were only two men, their European allies broken and helpless, incapable of entering into engagements, secret or otherwise, making a statement clearly and above board which embodies the highest hope of democratic civilization. It carries a promise of healing, a promise of restoration and a promise of forgiveness. It has been said that it embodies the spirit of the Golden Rule. It should."

South Carolinians were seeing an increase in defense work, but even before American entry into the war, concerns were growing about a return to depression after the war.

An officer of the Federal Council of Churches wrote, "In their feverish preoccupation with defense activities many are too busy to give any thought to what will happen when defense production comes to an end. Because of temporarily rising employment, others are under the illusion that the problem of unemployment has been solved at last. Few are giving thought to the menace of the large-scale post defense unemployment which is sure to come unless intelligent and adequate plans are worked out in advance. The Federal Council urged the appointment by Congress or the president of a commission on unemployment representing various groups without regard to race or color. This Commission should propose systematic plans for the long-range solution of the basic problems of unemployment. Unemployment is a moral as well as an economic problem and that there is general informed opinion

that the present defense program will have only a temporary effect on the reduction of unemployment."

Many articles in August 1941 promoted international peace, even though Europe was already at war. While most Americans at that point opposed entering the war, some writers were trying to determine America's role.

"Many are in dissatisfied with the statement of President Roosevelt that our national role is to be 'the arsenal of democracy.' We feel that God has some greater role than that for us to play in human affairs. It seems cheap that we should manufacture instruments of war with which other people are to fight what many believe to be our battles for us."

The writer believes we could be a participant in the war, an arbitrator, or we can be a mediator. He opposes participation, noting that the last war was disastrous to everyone concerned. Being an arbitrator seems to be popular among Americans, deciding the right and wrong of the dispute and then throwing its resources on the side of the right.

He dismisses this possibility, for "if Hitler is the immediate cause of this war, the Allies are the remote cause." He makes the case for being the mediator. "When this war began a verse in Scripture became luminous for me and provided a guiding star amid the gloom. It is Ephesians 2:15, 'To make peace by The Creation in himself of a new man out of both parties.'" He believes that if Britain conquers Germany or if Germany conquers Britain, it will simply lead to another war.

While he admits he would prefer Britain win, "As a Christian I am not content to have the British spirit dominate in the world. Frankly I do not want any existing national spirit to be dominant in the new world. I want a new spirit."

He concludes, "We must offer that something else."

Stone is archivist for the South Carolina Conference and Wofford College. Read his blog at [blogs.wofford.edu/from\\_the\\_archives](https://blogs.wofford.edu/from_the_archives).



## Conference Historical Society

by Joyce Plyler

### Camp meeting time!

I love camp meeting. Let me emphasize: I LOVE camp meeting. You would, too, if you had benefited from the camp meeting in Georgia that I have attended for more than 50 of my 63 years.

In July, that camp celebrated its 130th encampment. I accepted Jesus as my personal friend and savior at camp meeting. I studied the Bible with scholars of Hebrew. I learned Wesleyan beliefs that mainstream churches ignored or openly disdained. I sang joyful songs, met and heard the testimonies of global missionaries and learned of miracles in the here and now. Every year I grew closer to God.

As the years went on and cynicism replaced youthful optimism, I needed camp meeting more and more. With its focus on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, I needed it this year more than ever.

Camp meetings are not widely known or understood. They were a major catalyst of the Second Great Awakening and played a significant role in the growth and development of early Methodism. They still exist throughout the United States, but their popularity was at its peak during the early 1800s.

South Carolina hosted yearly camp meetings in more than 50 different locations throughout the state, most of which ceased to exist by the time of, or because of, the Civil War. Those still in operation include Indian Fields, Cypress, the AME-affiliated St. Paul's, all in Dorchester County, and Cattle Creek in Orangeburg.

Some historians have credited Presbyterians for the origins of camp meetings because of the notoriety of one of the first and largest in Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in 1802, attended by as many as 25,000. However, early histories and more recent scholarship indicate that these evangelistic encampments were an outgrowth of the Methodist quarterly meeting and that they were first held within the bounds of the South Carolina Conference, though never becoming an official denominational ministry.

The author of the first written history of American Methodism, Jesse Lee, said in 1810 that he had been unable to determine whether camp meetings began in South Carolina, Tennessee or Kentucky. Albert Shipp, in "History of Methodism in South Carolina," published in 1880, reported that the first camp meeting was held in Lincoln County, North Carolina, in 1794. It was so successful that another was held the next year and continuously after that.

Kenneth O. Brown, both a Methodist minister and a historian like his predecessors Lee and Shipp, conducted an extensive analysis of camp meeting development, and in 1992 published convincing documentation in "Holy Ground: A Study of the American Camp Meeting" that the first camp meeting was very likely held by Methodists in either Georgia or the Carolinas as early as 1789.

The annual encampment of early camp meetings typically lasted from a few days to more than a week. People came from distances near and far, on foot, by horseback, boat or wagon, hauling families and provisions, to set up camp around the perimeter of a central gathering area. Two or more preachers at a time might expound several times a day from pulpit stands strategically placed. Camp meetings allowed an easier mingling

of Blacks and Whites, and Black preachers or exhorters were welcome; Harry Hosier is the first known.

After sermons and exhortations, preachers would minister to those convicted, or visit with campers in their tents for prayer and spiritual guidance. Over time, crude cabins replaced tents, the meetings became more organized and the campgrounds morphed into small temporary villages. Large, open-air tabernacles replaced preaching stands.

These revival meetings were ecumenical (and most today are independent), but their style found a natural affinity with early American Methodism. Accustomed to "enthusiasm" in its original sense, Methodists were willing to accept a more emotional worship style, influenced in part by the spirituality of the significant number of African Americans who attended camp meetings, along with similarly minded Whites who had been allowed to express their own spirituality more freely under the leadership of Francis Asbury, a proponent of camp meetings.

Camp meetings reached into remote areas and provided a religious power and energy that might not be experienced in regular church service. The social life of camp meeting attracted those who avoided church altogether. One Methodist preacher recalled that he was "wicked" in his youth and did not go to church, "having no use for preaching—but I went to camp meetings."

Camp meetings profited the Methodist church in new members, new churches and a supply of workers who found their calling to preach. William Capers, later to become South Carolina's first Methodist bishop, was "awakened" at the Rembert camp meeting near Sumter.

Henry M. Turner, a free Black man who became a bishop of the AME Church, gave this testimony in a letter to the minister responsible for his conversion: "I joined the Church under Rev. Mr. Crowell, on probation, at Abbeville, in the latter part of 1848, but soon went to cursing and getting drunk ... and was the worst boy at Abbeville Court House until you, at Sharon Camp Ground, in 1851, so stunned me by your powerful preaching that I fell upon the ground, rolled in the dirt, foamed at the mouth and agonized under conviction till Christ relieved me by his atoning blood. I was licensed to exhort shortly afterward and from that time to the present I have been in the Master's service." (Letter from Henry M. Turner to Rev. Samuel Leard, as quoted in W. P. Harrison, "The Gospel among the Slaves," p. 380).

Conference historian Dr. A.V. Huff Jr., has written: "It was the development of the camp meeting which provided Methodism with its most effective form of evangelism in the 19th century and stamped its mold on Southern religion." Historian David Duncan Wallace reported that during 1800-1830 (the height of the camp meeting movement), membership in the South Carolina Conference increased almost 1,500 percent in Black membership and 740 percent among Whites.

Thankfully, the power of camp meeting—more precisely, the power of God through camp meeting—lives on.

Plyler is president of the Historical Society of the South Carolina Conference. She welcomes comments or inquiries at [joyce@charlotte.twcbc.com](mailto:joyce@charlotte.twcbc.com) or 704-847-6096.



### Showing up big and bold

Wightman UMC, Prosperity, held an in-person vacation Bible school this summer that brought 75 children and 80 adult and youth volunteers. With the theme "Rocky Railway," children's director Jennifer Boozer said the event taught adults, youth and children alike that Jesus' power pulls God's people through. Wightman had different "Bible Buddies" each night who taught attendees how to be bold and courageous, to be good friends and how to live forever. There were different stations rotating through each night: kid vid/music, imagination station (crafts), Bible adventures, food and games. "As always, our God showed up big and bold this year," Boozer said. "The God-sightings that I witnessed myself and through the eyes of our little ones was nothing short of amazing."



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## Pisgah's 'The Hunt' VBS aims for interesting way to teach kids Bible wisdom

FLORENCE—Like most churches, Pisgah United Methodist Church suspended its in-person vacation Bible school in 2020 and instead did a streamed program for about an hour each night on Facebook Live.

It had the usual ingredients—music, teaching, games—and organizers created some “so bad they’re good” videos with college students acting out scenes for the theme, which was “Survive, Come Alive!” last year. It was a big hit.

Given that, this year Pisgah UMC fleshed things out a bit more and did it again.

They offered four sessions for about an hour from Sunday, July 18, through Wednesday, July 21. The theme was “The Hunt,” and it was a take-off on the classic VBS theme of our faith being like a priceless thing to actively search for.

“We hoped to avoid doing it in the usual cheesy, ‘plastic gold coins from Oriental Trading Company’ kind of way,” said Pisgah’s pastor the Rev. Josh McClendon.

McClendon said the kids were told very little about the theme ahead of time, to make it feel a little secretive and mysterious, except their adults were told to pick up a take-home packet for each child ahead of time. There were explicit instructions not to open the packet until the proper time.

“We made the packets from simple craft-paper envelopes with a single red rubber stamped ‘X’ on the outside,” McClendon said. “We got all the materials for dirt-cheap at Hobby Lobby. Inside, we included some basic activity sheets for each



The kids were told very little about the theme ahead of time, to make it feel a little secretive and mysterious, except their adults were told to pick up a take-home packet for each child ahead of time.

night of VBS, including clues for them to try to figure out along the way, follow-up discussion for their family and then some kind of assignment to stay involved in the Hunt.”

They also taped a single authentic U.S. Gold Dollar coin inside, which was for use with Session Three; kids were instructed to use the dollar toward some act of love/service.

The centerpiece of the livestream was pre-recorded video content that leaders made in-house. Two of the young adults at the church returned from last year’s program and starred

as treasure hunters who followed clues all over Florence on their way to ultimately finding that “X” marked the spot at the church.

Along the way, they met a mysterious stranger who helped guide them (ultimately representing the Holy Spirit). In the closing session, the guide led them to a worship service at Pisgah and then eventually to the baptismal font, where they discover not only is faith the real treasure they’ve been hunting for, but also that God has been actively pursuing them from the start. They are God’s treasure.

“Overall, the participants loved the whole thing,” McClendon said. “We filmed on-location all around Florence, and then we combined the pre-recorded videos with some basic teaching and games during the livestream. Each night we used a different green-screen background to imply that we were treasure hunting all over the world.”

You can watch the sessions on Pisgah’s Facebook page.

McClendon said they pulled it all off with a shoestring budget, had several hundred kids in attendance each night and then had a big final fellowship gathering in-person on Thursday of that week, with food, an ice cream truck and a giant bouncy water slide.

About 50 of Pisgah’s kids came out for that, plus their families.

McClendon said he’s incredibly proud of all the Pisgah people that made it possible.



### You are treasured

Kingstree UMC, Kingstree, hosted more than 70 children for their “Treasured” vacation Bible school the week of June 20. With 43 volunteers—from food donations to nursery workers, actors, dance leaders, crew leaders and kitchen workers—pastor the Rev. Katherine Haselden Crimm said they had a blast sharing the love of Jesus with community children and hearing the constant shouts that “you are treasured” all throughout church halls.



### Splash!

Water day during vacation Bible school was a big hit for St. Paul UMC, New Ellenton. Their VBS theme this year was “Quest for God’s Great Light,” and it was held Aug. 3-5.

Photo courtesy of the Rev. Joseph Kovas

## Bogansville VBS embraces adventure, discovery

On July 13-15, Bogansville United Methodist Church in Union County was transformed into Discovery Island. There were palm trees, a lighthouse and a little puffin named Beacon.

On average, 23 young people and 11 adults attended the island adventure. The children kept the adults on their toes as they explored three different Bible stories—creation, Moses and the prodigal son—through story, crafts, science and games.

Each evening began with a visit from a

friendly little puffin that helped introduce the Bible story and theme. Then, the Rev. Wally Culp—dressed in costume from Obi-Wan Kenobi to Pharaoh Ramses II to Scottish hero Rob Roy—presented the children with the Bible lesson.

While this was taking place, youth were taking part in devotionals of their own.

After dinner, the rest of the evening was spent making crafts, singing, doing science experiments, holding scavenger hunts and playing games. To be as safe as possible, as

many activities as possible were done outside. The week culminated at Joan Steven’s house for a pool party that included hot dogs and homemade churned ice cream.

“Our youth director, April Bogan, did a wonderful job of putting the vacation Bible school together and leading all the activities that week,” Culp said. “It was a fantastic week.”

Right, the Rev. Wally Culp, as Pharaoh Ramses II, tells the children the story of Moses during Bogansville’s VBS.



## First UMC’s VBS brings parents, kids together for fun

By Julia Brooks

MYRTLE BEACH—First United Methodist Church celebrated its annual vacation Bible school July 19-22 at its North Campus location.

First Church had close to 50 children participate. Because of COVID-19 and trying to socially distance the children as much as possible, this year’s activities also included parents (who said they had as much fun as the kids).

The theme was “The Way, The Truth, The Life.” Activities included prayer jars, tie-dying shirts, creating door hangers and cross canvases and painting planter pots for flowers. A very special activity was praying for and sharing handmade get-well cards to a 4-year-old child who is ill and has spent quite a long time at the Medical University of South Carolina.

Outdoor activities included a dunking booth, inflatable water slide, bubble flying



This year’s VBS was organized by Mary Ashley Bellamy, Michelle Sturzenbecker and Julia Brooks.

discs and a bounce house. They even had their own ice cream truck, and each night, a full meal was provided thanks to Scott Bellamy and his crew of volunteers.

It was a fun and successful week made possible by the volunteers, the children, the parents and church staff. Our church families are looking forward to many more VBS summers ahead.

## St. Paul Camden VBS ‘exceeds expectations’

CAMDEN—St. Paul United Methodist Church held vacation Bible school the week of July 12-16 from 6-8 p.m. every day.

Pre-registration indicated attendance would be high; however, it exceeded expectations with approximately 75 daily attendees. The abundant number of volunteers in all areas allowed the church to effectively accommodate the eager learners during the week. With safety in mind, organizers ensured that CDC guidelines were followed, and masks were worn for all indoor activities.

With the overall theme “Discovery on Adventure Island,” the sessions provided learning experiences for pre-K through adult learners. Daily topics focused on ways God shines great light in the world, and attendees learned of ways that they, too, can shine light in the world.

Many in attendance said this year’s VBS was a different spiritual encounter than previous VBS sessions. The Rev. James Smith and many of the adults referred to this year’s VBS as a “mountain top experience,” while



The daily areas of focus for the five days were Shine with Love, Shine with Trust, Shine with Faith, Shine with Joy and Shine with Hope.

some others noted that the students seemed “hungry for learning” and “totally involved as they soaked up the teachings.”

Organizers said St. Paul UMC was truly a beacon of light to the church and community members through a most memorable and spirit-filled VBS week.



# Trinity's Ken Mufuka witnesses to Christian Fellowship in the United Arab Emirates

By Dr. Kenneth Mufuka

It was on the 19th of May that I left the United States for Africa to mourn the passing of my mother. COVID-19 had prevented me from making the journey when she passed away in January at the ripe old age of 100.

But a Christian Fellowship in the United Emirates, in the kingdom of Sharjah (near Dubai), had heard that I would be passing through those regions. They requested I take some time and show them how to organize a church. This area is what is called Magna Asia in biblical times, and I was awed by the chance to witness to Christ there.

First, I sought advice from Greenwood Superintendent

Dr. Steven Love and my pastor at Trinity United Methodist Church, Greenwood, the Rev. Thessa Smith.

Seeking opportunities thousands of miles from East and West Africa, these 50 families found that though they were in the richest part of the world, and surrounded by Muslims, they yearned to hear the gospel of Christ. The emir of Sharjah was progressive and welcomed all worship services.

So there I was, faced by this community that desired their children be brought up in the Christian faith.

I took the lesson of Ruth and found new meanings there. Surely there was a crisis. Ruth was faced with a choice. Having lost everything she had so far depended on, materially

and spiritually, the easy was to abandon her faith. Or was picking up the faith of their surroundings an easy way?

Finding themselves isolated in a strange land, the commandment to "love one another so the world might know we are Christians" became even more urgent.

They brought their children so that I might bless them as I ministered to them and that the elders among them might be strengthened in their faith. A great reverence fell among the congregation and they begged me to stay another week, but my homeland was calling me.

*Mufuka is chairperson of Church Council at Trinity UMC, Greenwood.*

## Around the Districts

### Anderson District

Congratulations to the Rev. Megan and Dr. Brandon Boatwright on the birth of their daughter. Margot Alice Boatwright was born June 7 and welcomed home by big brother Griffin. Rev. Boatwright is the pastor of Trinity UMC, Honea Path.

A class on dealing with grief will begin at **Pendleton UMC, Pendleton**, Sept. 12 from 3-5 p.m. The nine-week course dealing with the pain of bereavement will be held Sundays.

### Columbia District

**Shandon UMC, Columbia**, offered "Racial Realities and Responses in South Carolina and The United Methodist Church" across four Sundays with each Sunday focusing on a different aspect. July 18 featured Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, general secretary of the General Board of Church and Society, discussing how racial injustices are being addressed by the UMC. The Rev. Charles Johnson, a retired member of the conference, led the discussion July 25 on the African-American experience in South Carolina Methodism. Lynn Teague, vice president for Issues and Actions in South Carolina League of Women's Voters, discussed voting rights and pending legislation Aug. 1. On Aug. 8, Lawrence Nathaniel, founder and leader of the state chapter of Black Lives Matter, discussed current initiatives and perspectives being taken up by the movement.

**Union UMC, Irmo**, will hold its 10th annual Martha's Market Sept. 10-11. Proceeds will go to the District 5 Foundation and Snack Pack Program in addition to Sharing God's Love. Tickets for the Friday night preview party can be found on Eventbrite, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/marthas-market-tickets-167024539895?aff=ebdssbeac>. The market will be open Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and is free to the public.

**Washington Street UMC, Columbia**, held a supply drive and Back to School Bash Aug. 14 in the church parking lot. The event collected book bags and school supplies to benefit the students at Alcorn Middle School. A blessing of the book bags was held Aug. 15 during the morning service.

Congratulations to the Rev. Cathy Jamieson on the birth of her granddaughter. Mary Blythe Silvia was born Aug. 13 to Hannah and Brent Silvia. Rev. Jamieson is the Columbia District superintendent.

### Greenville District

Congratulations to the Rev. Josh and Ali Blackwelder on the birth of their son and to the Rev. Joe and Deanne Blackwelder on the birth of their grandson. Theodore "Teddy" Stewart Blackwelder was born in late June and welcomed home by big brother Ben. Rev. Blackwelder is honorably located.

Congratulations to the Revs. Rachel and Gryff Carosiello on the birth of their son. Theodore "Theo" Victor Carosiello was born July 15. Rev. Rachel Carosiello is the associate pastor at Advent UMC, Simpsonville; Rev. Gryff Carosiello is the pastor of Sharon UMC, Greer.

### Marion District

The **Dillon Parish—St. Stephens UMC, St. Luke UMC and Beulah UMC—Dillon**, welcomed its new pastor by preparing a "welcome meal" at the parsonage June 30. The Rev. Rickey Levon Stuckey and his wife, Yvonne, said they are excited about being in Dillon and expect God to do some great things in all three churches.

### Orangeburg District

**Wightman UMC, Bowman**, held its Vacation Bible School June 16-19. They had 23 children and 30 adult volunteers. They met from 5-8 p.m. each night. The 18th featured a pool party and a sleepover. VBS concluded at about noon on the 19th. The children performed, and a slide show was featured at the worship service on Father's Day. Wightman UMC said it extends a big "thank you" to Diane Ervin, Rachel Weathers and Sherry Carter for coordinating everything.

**Beulah UMC, Sandy Run**, has made the decision to cancel its annual Labor Day Festival because of rising COVID-19 numbers. The festival had been slated for Sept. 6 and was to include a garage sale, music, barbecue and bake sale.

### Rock Hill

**Friendship UMC, Rock Hill**, dedicated its Blessing Box July 12. Participants were asked to bring non-perishable food items to the event.

**Friendship UMC, Rock Hill**, held a dedication service Aug. 29 during its 11 a.m. service. The church has finished the first of three projects, the renovation of the altar area. The project was funded by the gifts and memorials given in memory of Edna King Davis.

### Spartanburg District

The Mission Committee of **Central UMC, Spartanburg**, collected for its 2021 School Supply Project during August. The Cleveland Academy will be the beneficiary for this year's project.

Congratulations to Revs. Mason and Maggie Cantey on the birth of their first child. Olivia Mae Cantey was born Aug. 12. Rev. Mason Cantey is the pastor of Cherokee Springs-Liberty Charge, Spartanburg; Rev. Maggie Cantey is the director of Student Ministry at New Beginnings UMC, Boiling Springs.

## Hatcher to speak to women on finding God in the busyness of life

Lori Hatcher, an award-winning author and women's ministry speaker, will be speaking about "Hope: Unshakable Reasons Not to Lose Heart" at Mount Hebron United Methodist Church's Women's Event Sept. 11.

Held at 10 a.m., the event has no registration fee, but lunch follows and will be \$10.

Hatcher knows what it's like to wear many hats. As a healthcare worker, author, editor of South Carolina's Reach Out



Hatcher

Columbia magazine, pastor's wife, mother and grandmother, she knows what it's like to be hungry for God and starving for time. With the knowledge of a Bible teacher and the heart of a woman, her goal is to help today's women find God in the busyness of life.

All women are invited. RSVP online by Sept. 3 at <https://mthebronstudies.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/939172>.

## Lay Speaker represents principal, protector for many in community

By the Rev. Robin D. Miles

Last year the coronavirus disease hit the United States like the force of a wild, out-of-control hurricane, ultimately causing the country to shut down. This has been something few in this lifetime had ever experienced. The number of positive cases were in the millions, death from the virus was rapid, massive amounts of layoffs occurred and a stay-at-home order was issued across the country, leaving most people feeling like a latchkey kid. The effect of COVID-19 also created various negative factors in other areas, such as the economy, hospitals, church closures, etc.

As COVID-19 cases continued to rise last year, the decision to reopen school in Florence School District One was made to allow parents to choose to have their children attend class face-to-face or virtually. Questionnaires were sent to parents and staff concerning safety precautions to ensure all who completed the questionnaire had the opportunity to somewhat be involved in the decision-making process.

Theodore Lester Elementary School has an enrollment of 456 students in kindergarten through sixth grade, including a large percentage of autistic and special education students with about 123 staff members. The safety of students and staff is a very big responsibility for a principal, not excluding other duties such as being accountable for academic scores, parent conferences, discipline, administrative meetings, etc. Days for a principal can be turbulent at times.

To ensure students and staff could stay healthy and physically together in school, E. Janette Williams went beyond the call of duty to go through the entire school to make sure all safety procedures were being followed and academics taught in a safe environment.

Williams, a member of and lay speaker at St. Philip UMC, Marion, physically placed stickers on the floors of the school with social distancing messages encouraging students



Williams

and staff to maintain social distance in the hallways, cafeteria and other areas throughout the building. She helped check temperatures of students entering in the building every morning. She made sure masks were being worn properly and consistently during the school day.

She personally corresponded with anyone who contracted

COVID-19 or had anxieties about it. She sent meaningful and inspirational emails every day to staff with titles like "Magnificent Monday," "Happy Chooseday Tuesday," "Wisdom Wednesday," "Thankful and Thoughtful Thursday" and "Fabulous Friday." At the end of the day during announcements when it was time for students to pack up and leave for home, Williams ended the announcement by reminding all, "The more you read, the more you know, and the more you know, the farther you will go!" She passionately quotes words of wisdom encouraging students that knowledge is power and to read daily to better themselves in life even as life is not as it was before the pandemic.

Personally, having to return to school after contracting COVID-19, I, too, was a little apprehensive. However, arriving on the campus of Theodore Lester Elementary on Day One, and observing Williams personally and physically ensuring all policies and safety precautions and procedures were in place, confirmed and assured me that through my faith in the Lord I would be well protected. Her presence was confirmation that the Lord was ever so present in our time of need. It was affirmation to me from God.

It is yet another school year, and the world is still experiencing a pandemic. Williams continues to personally monitor doorways, hallways and classrooms. Yes, she is still passionately quoting words of wisdom to students every day, and yes, she is still sending emails with inspirational antidotes.

Williams is more than a principal—she is a protector.

### Leave A Legacy To Change Lives

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## India Hook Memorial Garden consecrated July 18

ROCK HILL—A place of solitude, beauty and comfort was the vision for a Memorial Garden at India Hook United Methodist Church. In March, that vision became a reality.

With a rock fountain, natural rocks, sitting area, blooming camellias, azaleas and dogwoods in the spring and greenery throughout the year, families can come and find comfort. The India Hook Memorial Garden is the result of ideas and generous contributions from The Sherwood Cannon Endowment Fund and the families of Bob and Edith Deas and Bill and Ann Spencer.

Each of these individuals were instrumental in the life of India Hook and served in many leadership roles. Bob Deas served as chairperson of the trustees. Most days, you would find him at the church working on various projects to keep the property maintained. He was active in United Methodist Men and died in June 2017. Edith was just as active in the life of the church, serving as a key officer in United Methodist Women and other committees. Both were very active in Sunday school classes. Edith died in February 2019.

Bill Spencer served as a “free” church attorney. Spencer took care of property swaps on the land, the purchase and building of a new parsonage and never charged any fees for his services. He was finance chair for many years and also served as chairperson of the trustees. He served as the chair of the building committees for the sanctuary and Family Life Center and handled construction loans. He was also active in Sunday school classes. Spencer died in August 2018. In his will, he left money to the church that helped fund the Memorial Garden.

Additional donations were made by Glen and Linda Jackson, John and Sandy Sindell and the India Hook United Methodist Women.

The memorial garden was designed by Ann Spencer, Spencer’s widow, with input from the trustees and Bill and Edith’s daughter, Jan Cushman McCoy. Ann and her family purchased the fountain and contributed several plants. Justin Domer with Domer Dreamscapes Inc. in Rock Hill designed the fountain and sitting wall and did the landscaping. Glen Jackson, chairperson of the trustees, oversaw the work.

The Memorial Garden was consecrated on July 18 with Rock Hill District Superintendent Dr. Anthony Hodge and the Rev. Michael Walker officiating.



Photos courtesy of Sandy Sindell

The garden features a rock fountain, natural rocks, sitting area, blooming camellias, azaleas and dogwoods in the spring and greenery throughout the year.



The family of Bob and Edith Deas and Bill Spencer helped make the garden possible. From left are Jan Cushman McCoy, Robert Deas, Debra Deas, Ann Spencer and Chaplin Spencer.

Members of the Spencer and Deas families, as well as the congregation, were in attendance at this sacred occasion.

India Hook’s Memorial Garden will allow interment of cremains of members and their immediate family, as well as maintaining a master grid with the location of each interment. Individuals who are interred will be honored with a plaque placed on the outside brick wall of the sanctuary next to the Memorial Garden.



Photos courtesy of Rev. Larry Wannamaker

### Happy 100th, Mrs. Mary

It’s not often that someone gets to celebrate a 100th birthday. On Sunday afternoon, July 11, the West Bethel UMC family, Orangeburg District, honored Mary W. Spigner of St. Matthews with a 100th birthday drive-by celebration. “Mrs. Mary” (above) has been an active and supportive member of West Bethel UMC for more than 75 years. She was also honored in Orangeburg when South Carolina Surgical Associates put her birthday and picture on their billboard (below).



## Obituaries

### Kechia Crump McSwain Dicks

NEW ORLEANS—Kechia Crump McSwain Dicks, widow of the Rev. Willie Dicks, died July 28, 2021.

A funeral mass was held Aug. 3 at St. Maria Goretti.

Mrs. Dicks is survived by her daughter and two sons.

### Mary Catherine Reed Ellis

WILLIAMSTON—Mary Catherine Reed Ellis, sister of the Rev. Freda Brock, died Aug. 1, 2021. Rev. Brock is the pastor of Toxaway United Methodist Church, Anderson.

Funeral services were held Aug. 6 in the Ollie Robinson Brown Memorial Chapel of Marcus D. Brown Funeral Home, Anderson, with burial in Oaklawn Memorial Gardens, Anderson.

### Sharon Johnson ‘Sheri’ Hughes

KINGSTREE—Sharon Johnson “Sheri” Hughes, widow of the Rev. Steve Hughes, died July 6, 2021.

Funeral services were held July 9, 2021 at Kingstree United Methodist Church with burial in Kingstree Memorial Gardens.

Memorials may be made to Belin Memorial UMC, P.O. Box 528, Murrells Inlet, SC 29576; or to the Ernest F. Hollings Cancer Center at MUSC, 18 Bee St., MSC 450, 29425.

Mrs. Hughes is survived by her daughter and four sons.

### John McDowell

CHARLESTON—John McDowell, son of the Rev. Julius McDowell, died July 25, 2021. Rev. McDowell is the pastor of Wesley United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held July 31 at Union UMC, Kline, with burial in Hope Memorial Park, Barnwell.

Mr. McDowell is survived by his mother and father.

### John T. McNeill Sr.

MYRTLE BEACH—John T. McNeill Sr.,

brother of the Rev. David Caughman, died July 21, 2021. Rev. Caughman is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

A memorial service was held July 24 at McMillan-Small Funeral Home.

Memorials may be made to the Grand Strand Humane Society, 3241 Mr. Joe White Ave., Myrtle Beach, SC 29577.

Mr. McNeill is survived by his son and daughter.

### Mary McCall Patterson

HARTSVILLE—Mary McCall Patterson, sister to the Rev. Willie M. Cannon, died Aug. 5, 2021. Rev. Cannon is the pastor of the Hopewell-Wesley Chapel Charge, Jefferson.

Funeral services were held Aug. 10 at Mount Rona Missionary Baptist Church, Society Hill, with burial in the church cemetery.

### Frosty Thomas Pearson

SUMMERTON—Frosty Thomas Pearson, sister of the Rev. Charlie Thomas, died July 24, 2021. Rev. Thomas is the pastor of St. Mark United Methodist Church, Sumter; his wife, the Rev. Brenda J. Thomas is the pastor of Good Hope Wesley Chapel UMC, Camden.

Funeral services were held July 31 at Gumsprings Missionary Baptist Church, Pinewood.

Mrs. Pearson is survived by her husband, Rock S. Pearson.

### Beverly Pigford

BEAUFORT, N.C.—Beverly Pigford, mother of the Rev. Bryan Pigford, died July 25, 2021. Rev. Pigford is the pastor of Stallville United Methodist Church, Summerville.

Funeral services were held at Ann Street UMC with burial in Gethsemane Memorial Park.

Memorials may be made to Ann Street UMC, 417 Ann St., Beaufort, NC 28516; or to Stallville UMC, 255 Stallville Loop, Summerville, SC 29485.

Mrs. Pigford is survived by her husband,

### 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.

Turner, and two sons.

### Carol Kaminis Reddic

CLEMSON—Carol Kaminis Reddic, mother of John Reddic, died July 5, 2021. Mr. Reddic is the husband of the Rev. Mollie Reddic, pastor of Lawrence Chapel United Methodist Church.

A memorial service was held Aug. 14 at The Church of the Holy Trinity, North Augusta.

Memorials may be made to The Church of the Holy Trinity, 160 Merovan Drive, North Augusta, SC 29860; or to the Bishop Gravatt Center, 1006 Camp Gravatt Road, Aiken, SC 29805.

Mrs. Reddic is survived by her son and daughter.

### Richard Henry Reece

PICKENS—Richard Henry Reece, father of the Rev. Edna Bowers, died July 28, 2021. Rev. Bowers is the pastor of the Marlboro Circuit Charge, Bennettsville.

Her husband, the Rev. Randy Bowers, is the pastor of the Main Street-Pine Grove Charge, McColl.

Funeral services were held Aug. 1 at Grace United Methodist Church.

Memorials may be made to the American Legion Post #11, 185 Hagood St., Pickens, SC 29671; or to Grace UMC UMM, 309 E. Cedar Rock St., Pickens, SC 29671.

Mr. Reece is survived by his wife, Nancy, daughter and son.

### Rev. Sandra Laroche Riddy

CHARLESTON—The Rev. Sandra Laroche Riddy, grandmother of the Rev. Shamond Riddy, died July 27, 2021. Rev. Shamond

Riddy is the pastor of Wesley United Methodist Church, Pinopolis.

Funeral services were held Aug. 2 at Ferry Field Missionary Baptist Church, Johns Island, with burial in Cedar Spring Baptist Church Cemetery.

Rev. Riddy is survived by her son and daughter.

### Timothy Roderick

PHILADELPHIA, Penn.—Timothy Roderick, brother of the Rev. Emma Jones, died Aug. 10, 2021. Rev. Jones is the pastor of the Lamar Circuit Charge, Lamar.

Funeral services were held Aug. 19 at G. Choice Funeral Chapel with burial in Northwood Cemetery.

### Wofford Walter ‘Walt’ Strawther

GREENVILLE—Wofford Walter “Walt” Strawther, father of the Rev. Walter Strawther, died Aug. 3, 2021. Rev. Strawther is the congregational specialist for the Columbia and Hartsville districts and the African American Ministries.

Funeral services were held Aug. 14 at Watkins Garrett and Woods Mortuary with burial in Resthaven Memorial Gardens.

Mr. Strawther is survived by his wife, Corine Dotson Strawther, three daughters and son.

### Rev. Frank Daniel Weatherman Sr.

TOWNVILLE—The Rev. Frank Daniel Weatherman Sr., father of Janie Lindley, died July 22, 2021. Mrs. Lindley is the wife of the Rev. Kevin Lindley, pastor of St. Luke United Methodist Church, Walhalla.

Funeral services were held July 26 at the Tribute Room of The Standard Cremation and Funeral Center, Anderson, with burial in the High Falls Church of God Cemetery, Seneca.

Rev. Weatherman is survived by his wife, Pricilla Toole Weatherman, son and daughter.





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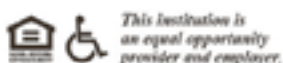


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**August**

- Aug. 29—Dedication Service, Friendship UMC, Rock Hill, 11 a.m.
- Aug. 30-Sept. 3—Crossroads: Where Faith and Innovation Meet, Carolinas Black Clergy Leadership Retreat, hosted by North Carolina, Western North Carolina and South Carolina conferences. \$150. Register: <https://www.umcsc.org/2021cbcleadershipretreat/>.

**September**

Sept. 15-Oct. 15:

**Hispanic Heritage Month**

- Sept. 6—Labor Day/UMCSC Conference Center closed
- Sept. 7—UMVIM, Grace UMC, Columbia, 7:30-8:30 p.m.
- Sept. 10-11—10th Annual Martha's Market, Union UMC, Irmo. Saturday: 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Friday Preview Party tickets at Eventbrite, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/marthas-market-tickets-167024539895?aff=ebdssbeac>
- Sept. 11—Connectional Ministries meeting
- Sept. 11—Women's Event, Mount Hebron UMC, West Columbia, 10 a.m. Lori Hatcher, speaker. Register online at <https://mthebronstudents.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/939172>.
- Sept. 12—Epworth Children's Home Work Day Offering
- Sept. 12—Dealing with Grief class, Pendleton UMC, Pendleton. Nine-week class, Sundays, 3-5.
- Sept. 12—LSM School (Spartanburg District), 2-4:30 p.m., \$40. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-F2021-Fall.pdf>
- Sept. 12—LSM School (Spartanburg District in person), 2-5:30 p.m., \$40. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-F2021-Fall.pdf>
- Sept. 19—Youth Service Fund
- Sept. 19—LSM School (Spartanburg District in person), 2-5:30 p.m., \$40. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-F2021-Fall.pdf>
- Sept. 19-Oct. 31—Pumpkin Patch, Disciples UMC, Greenville. Mon.-Sat.: 9 a.m.-7



**Reward for Bible reading**

On June 25, a 54-passenger bus picked up 53 people at St. Paul's UMC, Ridgeland, and headed to Savannah. They all got on the Georgia Queen (see picture) and had a 90-minute dinner and entertainment cruise on the old Savannah River. The dinner cruise was a reward for reading through the Bible in 2020 from Genesis to Revelation. The reward had been delayed because of the pandemic. Eighteen people had read through the Bible and this was their reward. The other 35 paid \$100 each to go along, but the 18 readers earned their right to the cruise. Organizers said the real lasting reward was not the cruise but the knowledge they'd gained from reading God's Word.



- p.m.; Sun.: Noon-7 p.m. 864-297-0382, <https://mydisciplesumc.org>.
- Sept. 24-26—Virtual LSM School (Walterboro District). <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Walterboro-District-Lay-School-September-2021.pdf>
- Sept. 25—Early Response Team quarterly training, Mount Horeb UMC, Lexington. Classes are Basic, Renewal, Chainsaw and Cleanout/Assessment. Register at <https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration>.
- Sept. 25-26—LSM School (Marion District), Marion First UMC, Marion. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Marion-District-September-Lay-Servant-School.pdf>
- Sept. 26—LSM School (Spartanburg District), 2-4:30 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-F2021-Fall.pdf>
- Sept. 26—LSM School (Spartanburg District in person), 2-5:30 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-F2021-Fall.pdf>
- Sept. 27—Eighth Annual Bishop Jonathan L. Holston Golf Invitational Benefiting Africa University, Orangeburg Country Club, Orangeburg. [https://www.support-africauniversity.org/2014/news-and-media/events\\_bljhgi\\_sc\\_2021\\_overview](https://www.support-africauniversity.org/2014/news-and-media/events_bljhgi_sc_2021_overview)

**October**

Sept. 15-Oct. 15:

**Hispanic Heritage Month**

- Oct. 2-3—Centennial Celebration, Cambridge UMC, Ninety Six. Sat.: Hot dog supper, 5 p.m.; tent meeting, 6 p.m. Sun: worship service and lunch.
- Oct. 3—World Communion Sunday
- Oct. 3—LSM School (Spartanburg District), 2-4:30 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-F2021-Fall.pdf>
- Oct. 5—UMVIM, Grace UMC, Columbia, 7:30-8:30 p.m.
- Oct. 9—Early Response Team Basic class at Aldersgate UMC, Greenville. Register at <https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration>.
- Oct. 9-10—LSM School (Orangeburg District), Bethel Park UMC, Denmark, \$35. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Orangeburg-District-October-Lay-Servant-School.pdf>
- Oct. 9-10—LSM School (Rock Hill District), First UMC, Clover, \$20. <https://www.umcsc.org/rockhillonlineregistration/>
- Oct. 11—Columbus Day
- Oct. 15-17—Children's Sabbath
- Oct. 16—Fall Festival, Asbury Hills, Cleveland, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. [asburyhills.org](http://asburyhills.org)
- Oct. 17—Laity Sunday
- Oct. 20—Early Response Team Basic class at St. Andrew By-the-Sea, Hilton Head. Register at <https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration>.
- Oct. 21—McCain Lecture Series, Jim Winkler, guest lecturer, sponsored by Christian Action Council, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Columbia.
- Oct. 23—UMW Virtual 49th Annual Meeting, Hartsville District UMW, host.
- Oct. 24—United Nations Day
- Oct. 24—Virtual Fall LSM School (Greenwood District). <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Greenwood-District-Fall-2021-Lay-Servant-School.pdf>
- Oct. 29-30—Church Music Workshop, sponsored by S.C. Chapter of Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts, Shandon UMC, Columbia.



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# Hospitality: A requirement, not a suggestion

by the Rev. Kelly G. Snelgrove

**Sept. 5**  
**Hospitality to Strangers**

**Lesson Scripture:** Jeremiah 29:4-14  
**Background Scripture:** Jeremiah 22:3-5; 29:1-23

**Key Verse:** Jeremiah 29:7, "Promote the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because your future depends on its welfare."

Jeremiah is called to deliver prophetic words to those living in Babylonian exile. They will inhabit this land for 70 years. He instructs them to build homes, plant gardens, raise families and seek peace. To the exiles, these words were difficult to hear. It meant they would not be going home anytime soon.

The most difficult command to follow may be found in the key verse for this lesson. They are commanded to promote and pray for the welfare of the city because their future depended on it. Exile was their punishment. They were to make the best of it and change the world around them while they are at it.

Loving your neighbor as yourself is not just a New Testament command (see Leviticus 19). God expected the same of the Israelites. Their enemy has now become their neighbor. Lord, how can we love our enemy while living in exile? The answer may be found in verses 12-14. When we seek the Lord and pray, he will listen. When we search for him, we will find him.

It is not possible to truly love our spouse, family or friends without first having the love of God in our hearts. The same is true for our neighbor and especially our enemy. If we want the ability to love the difficult people in our lives, we must earnestly seek the Lord. He made a way for the Israelites living in exile just as he will make a way for us. But it requires work and a willingness to reach out to those we call an enemy.

Today's society defines an enemy as anyone with whom we disagree. How do we as Christians define the word "enemy"? What obstacles will we need to overcome to promote and pray for the welfare of our enemies?

**Sept. 12**  
**Being Bold to Join**

**Lesson Scripture:** Luke 7:36-50  
**Background Scripture:** Mark 2:13-17  
**Key Verse:** Luke 7:50, "Jesus said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.'"

When it comes to your relationship with God, are you the woman who washed Jesus' feet or the Pharisee who pointed out her sin? The Pharisee looked good on the outside, but inwardly his life was racked with as much sin, if not more, than the woman he called a sinner.

Throughout history, church culture has slipped into the sandals of a Pharisee. We are really great at pointing out sin in someone else and nearly blind to our own sin. Congregations are often not hospitable or accessible to the outside world. We forget what it is like to visit a church for the first time.

If someone new walks in the door to the sanctuary this Sunday, how will you receive them? What if they happen to be the most notorious sinner in your town; would you speak to them? Would your congregation receive a member of another race, ethnicity or nationality? How hospitable is your church to a young single mother who can't seem to keep her children quiet during the service? Is your church campus accessible to those in wheelchairs or who may have limited mobility? Do you have at least two people in place to greet newcomers? If your pastor is the only person to greet a visitor, you have a problem that needs to be addressed immediately!

When we fail to offer hospitality to both

newcomers and long-standing members of the church, we fail to be the church. Hospitality shows kindness, mercy, grace and forgiveness.

A hospitable Christian is just like the repentant woman in this passage. They recognize their own sin and seek to lavish Jesus with their praise. Are we willing to be bold, to step out of our comfort zones and reach people, who just like us, are in desperate need of a Savior?

**Sept. 19**  
**Opening the Door to Christ**

**Lesson Scripture:** Galatians 2:11-21  
**Background Scripture:** Romans 10:1-13  
**Key Verse:** Galatians 2:16, "However, we know that a person isn't made righteous by the works of the Law but rather through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ."

The question for the first-century church: How could Jews and Gentiles share a meal together because the old law would make such a gathering impossible?

Peter at first shared meals with the Gentiles, but when confronted by conservative Jews, he felt caught between his newfound faith and the faith of his childhood. Paul points out that Peter's actions are not consistent with his beliefs.

Remember, the law was not just the Ten Commandments. Over time, the religious leaders developed laws to keep the Jewish people from breaking commandments. Eventually these laws were written in a book named the Talmud, which would become longer than the Torah itself.

Paul chose to remind Peter that we are not made righteous by our works but through our faithfulness in Jesus Christ. Paul emphasized in verse 21 that simply following the law does not make us righteous. If we could achieve righteousness on our own, then there would be no need for Jesus' sacrifice.

Church culture even for the longtime member can be difficult to navigate. We have created our own set of rules for what people should or should not do.

It's time to truly examine every aspect of church life from what we do in worship to our online presence, as well as fellowship activities. Would someone who had never been to church or had little church experience feel welcome in Sunday school, worship or even a covered dish meal? The Church of England did not create a hospitable environment for most of society. When barred from their pulpits, the Wesley brothers took church to open fields, cemeteries and entrances to mines. Are we willing to follow the example of the Wesley brothers and open doors to Christ that have been previously closed?

**Sept. 26**  
**Citizens of God's Household**

**Lesson Scripture:** Philippians 3:2-21; Ephesians 2:19-22  
**Background Scripture:** Philippians 3:2-21, Ephesians 2:11-22

**Key Verse:** Ephesians 2:19, "So now you are no longer strangers and aliens. Rather you are fellow citizens with God's people, and you belong to God's household."

There were two kinds of Christians in the first century. There were those who were Jewish by birth and followed the law yet believed in Christ. There were also Gentiles who were not Jewish yet believed in Christ.

It was not an easy process trying to bring these two distinct groups together. Often disagreements occurred when Jewish law was not observed by the Gentiles. This is what we encounter in the fourth lesson. The Gentile men were not circumcised, and this presented a problem.

Paul takes time to explain in Philippians

3 that he is of Hebrew heritage, has observed the law, even to the point of persecuting Christians, but he now counts those attributes as loss. He further explains that his righteousness is not his own and does not come from the law. The new faith is comprised of both Jew and Gentile. Together they form the household of God in which they have equal footing because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Do we really understand what it means to be fellow citizens belonging to God's household? Paul reminded the Philippians their true citizenship was in heaven and not Rome.

J.D. Walt, in the book "First Love," asks these questions, "Which citizenship will be

primary for me? Am I an American Christian or will I be a Christian American?"

I claim my citizenship in heaven to be far greater than my American citizenship. It doesn't mean I don't love my country, but what it does mean is that I love God more. Membership has its privileges, but it also comes with great responsibility. Are we cultivating a hospitable environment for Jesus to build the church in our midst? How serious are we when it comes to building a household that is a welcome place for the Spirit of God to dwell?

*Snelgrove, pastor of Aynor United Methodist Church, Aynor, also serves on the Marion District Board of Ministry, as well as mentors local pastors.*

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# FRESH PAINT: Dwindling congregation choosing to step out in faith

From Page 1

They learned they could get some roof funds if they started the conference's Forward Focus process, which is a voluntary South Carolina-specific plan for church revitalization unique to the individual church.

Greenville's district congregational specialist, the Rev. Cathy Joens, walked with them through that process, which took a longer time because of COVID-19 and all the closures and restrictions.

Finally in December 2020, Joens and Greenville District Superintendent Jim Dennis came to St. John to present their findings and let the congregation vote on what they wanted to do next.

"Basically, we were in a bad place—really struggling," Underwood said.

Their choices were to close the church immediately, let things ride until they were forced to close or try something new.

They chose the latter.

"It was really three people who started it," Underwood said. "They stood up and said, 'Hey, we're not dead. We want to try to find ways to do something different, some new way to do ministry in the community. We don't know what that looks like, but we want to try.'"

Underwood said he was willing to put in the effort if they were.

And since January, that's exactly what they have been trying to do—something different. Something new.

Already, St. John had been renting space to Christ Mission Outreach Baptist Church, a mostly Black church that worships in their fellowship hall every Sunday. And they were also providing space for Blue Star Mothers of America to store and package care packages and other items. But they decided to strengthen their bonds with these groups, intentionally building their relationships.

Next, they decided the church needed a facelift. They had two dingy, vacant rooms being used for nothing but storage, so together they cleared them out, gave them a fresh coat of paint and brought in some new



A St. John member helps renovate a dingy unused room into a bright new space for ministry.



From June 14 to July 30, the church hosted a summer camp every day for neighborhood kids.



The Rev. Cathy Joens leads a discussion of "When Helping Hurts" in St' John's newly refurbished conference room.

furniture provided by nearby Travelers Rest UMC. Now they have a brand-new conference/meeting room and a children's space—even though the church currently doesn't

have any children.

"The room is really nice," Underwood said. "Several have walked in and said, 'Man, I just can't believe how bright it is in here. You walk in here and feel like there's life!'"

On the heels of this, they learned the city had closed an old, run-down community

building on their block where a local woman had been hosting a summer camp. The woman approached St. John to see if they'd be willing to serve as a host.

At first the church didn't know what to do.

"But finally, we said we can wear this out talking, or we can say maybe God brought this to our doorstep. So we said, 'If you can help with a little money to cover air conditioning, lights and water, then yes,'" Underwood said.

With that, from June 14 to July 30 the church hosted the camp there every day for neighborhood kids ages 5-13.

Earlier this year, they hosted a representative from the National Alliance on Mental Illness so they could discern how to help some of their neighbors with mental illness, and maybe also add chapters of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.

They realized they needed to learn a lot about how to help people in this way, so now with Joens they are walking through the book "When Helping Hurts: Alleviating Poverty Without Hurting the Poor." Christ Mission and their sister church, McBee Chapel, is also doing the book with them.

Underwood is also going through training so they can offer a GriefShare support group in the future.

"They are really stepping out in faith," Joens said.

Not only do they want to learn, but they aren't afraid of what could be perceived as obstacles, she added.

"They really want to help their community," Joens said.

Underwood said being a part of the transformation has been amazing.

"Before, we didn't have much spark. There were not many people getting involved, and we thought it was probably only a matter of time. But now there's enthusiasm. There's people wanting to make something good happen.

"It's a whole new environment when you have fresh paint and positive changes."

He, Joens and the members of St. John hope others will be inspired by what they are trying to do by stepping out in faith and preparing the church so God has ample space to move.

## Bishop Holston, other UMCSA leaders to speak at Carolinas Black Clergy Leadership Retreat

MYRTLE BEACH—Final preparations are going on for the Carolinas Black Clergy Leadership Retreat, set for Aug. 30 to Sept. 3 at Kingston Plantation.

With the theme "Crossroads: Where Faith

and Innovation Meet," all clergy in South Carolina, North Carolina and Western North Carolina annual conferences are invited. The event is hosted by all three conferences.

For more information: [www.umcsc.org](http://www.umcsc.org).

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