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After Ida

South Carolina ERTs respond in Christian love after catastrophic Gulf Coast hurricane



Photos courtesy of Billy Robinson

At left, Mack Whitmire cuts a huge fallen tree off a shed. At right, the Rev. Mike Evans hooks a chain to an excavator to remove debris. At center, Evans and ERT Coordinator Billy Robinson take a break with John Schneider, of “The Dukes of Hazzard” fame, after their team worked at Schneider’s property.

By Billy Robinson and Jessica Brodie

PONCHATOULA, La.—Mangled metal. Newly homeless families. Widespread power and water outages. And in the aftermath, South Carolina stepped up to help.

Hurricane Ida ripped through the northern Gulf Coast Aug. 29, shredding trees and homes and claiming dozens of lives before barreling north with devastating tornadoes and catastrophic flooding. The second most damaging and intense storm in Louisiana history

behind Hurricane Katrina, Ida struck on the 16th anniversary of Katrina, bringing maximum sustained winds of 150 mph.

A week later, early disaster response teams deployed from South Carolina to Ponchatoula, Louisiana, and Pass Christian, Mississippi, ultimately assisting with work at 33 homes doing heavy chainsaw, machinery and tarp work.

See “After Ida,” Page 24

A circle of blessings

Reconciling Ministries raises more than \$6K for Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry

By Jessica Brodie

Tired of the pandemic keeping them isolated, one faith-centered group decided to organize a giving spree that would not only help share the love of Christ, but also connect them with each other.

This summer, Reconciling Ministries of

South Carolina mobilized its membership across the state through a virtual fundraiser to benefit Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry.

Aldersgate is a South Carolina United Methodist ministry formed by families and friends seeking to prepare for the future of their loved ones with developmental dis-

abilities. Reconciling Ministries of South Carolina is part of the Reconciling Ministries Network, an unofficial caucus of United Methodists that promotes full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and other individuals in the life of the church.

Sidney Gatch, president of Reconciling

Ministries of South Carolina, said their group effort to help Aldersgate was an excellent way for them to come together around a common cause, essentially becoming a circle of blessings.

See “RM Helps Aldersgate,” Page 12

Tri-conference Black clergy retreat helps pastors refresh, recharge

By Jessica Brodie

MYRTLE BEACH—Some participated from home, and some from a conference room a short walk from the beach. But at the end of their set-apart time at the Carolinas Black Clergy Leadership Retreat, attendees came away filled with new ideas for ministry in a world vastly changed by a pandemic.

Black, along with a sizable number of non-Black, clergy in South Carolina, North Carolina and Western North Carolina annual conferences gathered for the retreat Aug. 30 to Sept. 3 to explore “Crossroads: Where Faith and Innovation Meet.” Hosted at Kingston Plantation Resort in Myrtle Beach, leaders included South Carolina Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, South Carolina Congregational Development Director the Rev. James L. Friday, South Carolina Christian Action Council Executive Minister Dr. Regina Hender-

son-Moore, Emory Fellowship United Methodist Church’s Dr. Joseph W. Daniels Jr. and North Carolina District Superintendent Dr. Christopher Brady.

Dr. Otto Harris of the Western North Carolina Conference brought the opening worship and devotion, reminding the body that our people and even our churches might be paralyzed, Jesus came to move and work through us in midst of all uncertainty.

Holston and Dr. Albert Shuler then brought greetings, urging all to use the retreat as a time of rest and renewal.

“I know this is a plantation, but God has made it a sanctuary of grace,” Holston said, urging people not to waste this pandemic but understand God is trying to tell us something in the midst of the wilderness. “Take time to hear what God saying to us in this season.”

With that, they kicked off a four-day tri-conference event that strived to foster unity and learning amid change.

‘The Next Faithful Step’

Holston brought the first plenary, on “The Next Faithful Step,” calling on clergy to remember their purpose as they do their work.

“God is calling us to be a better version of ourselves,” Holston said, lifting up Matthew 14:13-21, when Jesus fed the masses after people lamented a lack of food.

“How often have we said in church, ‘we don’t have’—enough members, enough faithful people, my friends don’t understand me,” Holston shared. “Jesus began to refocus people on what they need to do with the things that they do have.”

See “Black Clergy,” Page 13



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A child gets fitted for shoes at the event.



A volunteer prays with some kids for a strong school year.



Volunteers pack giveaway bags.

Photos by Jim Luallen

Lancaster County students get boost to start school

A number of faith communities, organizations and businesses in Lancaster County joined Saturday, July 31, for their fifth annual Back to School Bash.

This year more than 600 students in grades 5K to 12 were given new shoes and school supplies to help them as school begins.

The event is a partnership of local churches and community groups across Lancaster County. The core leadership team for the event this year were the Rev. Mallory Nickerson (Belair and Osceola United Methodist churches), the Rev. Joel McMakin (Pleasant Hill UMC), the Rev. Candice Sloan (Hopewell UMC), the Rev. Carson Overstreet (Van Wyck Presbyterian), Mike Barnes (Lancaster County Parks and Recreation) and Anna Simms Jordan (Lancaster County Parks and Recreation).

While work goes on fundraising and organizing all year, the event kicked off Friday, July 30, when volunteers began packing backpacks.

According to data from the South Carolina Department of Education, more than 55 percent of the county's students live in poverty. In some parts of the county, it is even worse; some elementary schools report 90 percent of students live in poverty.

"Our intent is to take some burden off parents' shoulders," Nickerson said. "When we can provide a pair of shoes and school supplies, it relieves some of the pressure to decide how to take care of students' needs and balance family day-to-day requirements."

In the past as many as 1,000 students have been served; however, because of COVID concerns, this event was modified and scaled back the past two years. On July 31 it was a modified, in-person Back to School



More than 600 students in grades 5K to 12 were given new shoes and school supplies to help them as school begins.

Bash. Shoes were provided, and school supplies in pre-packed backpacks were given away.

"We spend roughly \$35-40 on the supplies and shoes for each child," Nickerson said.

A majority of churches in Lancaster County help in one way or another through volunteers or financial donations, along with many businesses. Residents of Sun City Carolina Lakes have been instrumental in the event, as well.

"As followers of Christ, we are called to love and support our neighbors," McMakin said. "With the help of all our partners we raised and spent \$14K on shoes and \$7,100 on backpacks and school supplies."

Rocky Swamp American Indian Ministries: A journey ends

By Zan Tracy Pender

The Rocky Swamp American Indian Ministries congregation, which was the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church's Native American outreach ministry, has decided to discontinue its ministry.

The congregation has faced a number of challenges over the last several years, which impacted their ability to grow the outreach ministry. One of the first losses was the passing of Keith Hiott. Hiott served as the Native spiritual guide and was a major force with the ministry's success. He was always there at the church on Sunday morning.

This was followed by numerous break-ins and damage to the church over several years. It is hard when you plan to go to church to worship, but arrive to find a break-in and now have to work with police. Then members have to clean up the damage and make repairs.

Next, a storm tore off the front of the church, damaged part of the roof and took out the electric connections. The conference was able to provide some support with mission teams for repairs. With a small congregation, every other Sunday became a work day. Progress was slow.

We were just about to the point of having a celebration Sunday where we fully reopened, but in March 2020, COVID-19 arrived. In April, the church was hit by an F-3 tornado tearing off most of the roof and damaging the inside to include water damage. Many of the trees on the property were damaged or torn down. The church was covered by insurance through the conference, and the roof was repaired and repairs had started on the interior.

Then, the conference informed the members there was a possibility they would sell the church and property. The conference was willing to relocate the ministry, but for the members, the idea of having to relocate was not favorable. There were strong connections with the church. It would be hard to relocate considering Sunday worship began around 11:30 but often did not end until late in the afternoon, 3 p.m. or later. The congregation also ate a meal together almost every Sunday.

Yet the major factor in the closure was that the membership had significantly decreased. A number of current members were older and some are having major health issues. As a result, members were unable to commit the

time to restart and meet the goals of growing the ministry. Thus, the decision was reached, although painful, to discontinue the ministry.

As this journey ends, I reflect back on the years, and I have learned so many things. I arrived in 2009 at Rocky Swamp American Indian Ministries. At first the welcome was not warm. I found myself being questioned and challenged about Methodism in a way I had never dealt with before. Yet I learned a great deal about my denomination in the process of answering questions.

The members became family to my wife and me. I experienced the death of members to include funeral services. We celebrated marriages. We enjoyed our worship service, the drumming, the meals and the fellowship. We held sweat lodges in the native tradition.

My wife and I would often comment that we did not like the hour-and-45-minute drive, one way, to and from the church, but we enjoyed every minute once we arrived. We greeted each other with hugs and welcome every Sunday. It wasn't just a scheduled time in a bulletin. We had deep discussions about the Bible and living Christian lives while embracing and encompassing the Native ways. The members will always be family to my wife and me.

In my reflections, there are two aspects that stand out to me above all others. When I first arrived, the members wanted to ensure we would continue Native traditions as part of the worship service. Working with Dr. Tim McClendon, I learned there is flexibility in the structure of worship and the Native way can be done even if it is not the traditional worship service you find in most United Methodist churches on Sunday morning. In Rocky Swamp's case, it was all day on Sunday. God and Christ were at the center of the worship. If visitors came, they could experience and see that so many American Indian stereotypes were wrong. We arranged the pews in a circle so everyone could see all members. I experienced some of the most insightful discussions and worship experiences I've ever been involved in.

The second is the power of the Native drum in worship. The drum was in the center. For Native peoples, the drum is the message, or the tool, for connecting us to Creator and Christ. It is voice of the sermon. It is often said that

the drum is the heartbeat of Mother Earth as it is played. Its round shape reminds of the sacred circle and that we begin and end with our Creator.

There are calling songs to call and welcome Creator, Christ, and spiritual helpers to come and worship with us. There are prayer songs to offer up struggles and concerns. Drumming concludes with a thank you song thanking the heavenly host for joining us and hearing our prayers.

The drum united the membership. It was the part of the worship service that everyone enjoyed the most. You could feel its power in your entire being. It is so hard to describe unless you lived and felt it. The drumming connected you to Mother Earth, your human brothers and sisters (your relatives in Native culture) and to Creator and Christ all at the same time—so powerful. It was such a pleasure when Rocky Swamp took the drum to many United Methodist churches in our conference to drum as the sermon for Native American Ministries Sunday. Every time, congregations would tell us that they felt the power of the drum and the connection to Creator and Christ.

We hope to keep drumming and gathering as a family from time to time, but only time will tell.

In the end, this path in my life has ended. It is with sorrow to see it close. Yet, in Native culture, there is no word for goodbye. Instead, it is until we meet again, wherever that shall be. Overall, Rocky Swamp has brought great joy into my life and an experience that I will never forget. I've learned so many things to take with me moving forward. I am all the better for the path that I walked with this congregation.

Thank you to each and every one of you for making my life better and more meaningful. I pray I was able to do the same for you. Finally, a special thanks goes to all the churches and members of our conference that reached out and helped in times of need or invited us to come to their churches. Your actions demonstrate the commitment of the Christian family. It was such a pleasure in sharing. I hope each one of you also gained something special for these experiences. Aho!

Pender is the South Carolina Conference's Native American Committee chair.

Whaley Street members help Navajo Nation with Christmas presents for kids

COLUMBIA—Members of Whaley Street United Methodist Church have been working for months gathering clothes, school supplies and gifts that will be packed into brightly wrapped boxes and sent to children of the Navajo Nation this Christmas.

Known as The Navajo Project, this ministry connects churches who want to minister with children at Christmas to churches within the Navajo Nation.

The Navajo Project was begun by the Rev. Charles Whaley, a retired United Methodist pastor in Ochlocknee, Ga.

Bonnie Moore, a member of Whaley Street, discovered the Navajo Project through her sister's church in Savannah, Ga. Since that time, Whaley Street has become a regular contributor to the project.

Church members collect items all during the year. In October, church members pack individual boxes with age-

appropriate clothes and gifts.

Each box is gift-wrapped.

Gift boxes, divided by age and gender, provide presents for children from infancy to 14 years of age.

This year, Whaley Street will send 150 Christmas boxes to join those from other churches and organizations that support The Navajo Project, said church pastor the Rev. Susan D. Culler. Two trailers of Christmas boxes will be delivered directly to churches and community centers within the Navajo Nation.

The Navajo Nation is an American Indian territory covering almost 18 million acres and occupying portions of northeastern Arizona, southeastern Utah and northwestern New Mexico in the United States. This is the largest land area retained by a Native American tribe in the United States.



Church members collect items all during the year. In October, church members pack individual boxes with age-appropriate clothes and gifts. Each box is gift-wrapped.

Clergy, Methodist, Children of God: 'Which Side Are You On?'

UMCSC pastor among those arrested at March and Action in Washington, D.C.

By the Rev. Amiri Hooker

"Woe to unjust judges and to those who issue unfair laws, says the Lord, so that there is no justice for the poor, the widows, and orphans."—Isaiah 10:1-2

This summer as my daughter Sia started her first day of high school in Florence, my wife and I left her to travel to Washington, D.C. for a God-inspired march and action.

The Poor People's Campaign intensified pressure on state and national leaders to use their power to bring change in this country through four weeks of nonviolent moral direct action in D.C. and in more than 30 states. I felt it very much a part of my calling—as an elder in The United Methodist Church, tri-chair in the Poor People's Campaign and a member of the South Carolina Conference Advocacy team—to stand with faith leaders and low-wage workers.

Monday's Aug. 2 press conference and march on Capitol Hill constituted one of the largest mass-arrest nonviolent protests at the Capitol in recent memory and attracted an array of prominent voices, including civil rights icon the Rev. Jesse Jackson and Luci Baines Johnson, the daughter of late President Lyndon B. Johnson, as well as the Rev. Freddie Haynes III and myself.

In the midst of COVID-19, around 500 voting rights activists and faith leaders sat outside the Hart Senate Office Building singing hymns, protesting poverty and calling for federal protection of voting rights that day. The actions were a part of the Poor People's Campaign's National Moral Monday Action.

Poor and low-income leaders and people of faith put themselves on the line, risking and undergoing arrest to bring attention to the dangerous rollbacks to our democracy. During this resurrection of nonviolent moral direct action, leaders from around the country took to the streets of Washington, D.C., and marched to senators' offices to ask,



Demonstrators chanted, "What do we want? Voting rights! When do we want them? Now!"

"Which Side Are You On?"

At a rally near the capitol immediately before the march, leaders laid out what they insisted were interconnected issues driving their protest, which centered on voting rights, immigration reform, a \$15/hour federal minimum wage and eliminating the Senate filibuster that has stymied passage of related federal legislation.

"Filibuster is a sin!" Bill Barber said that day. "Making essential workers work during a pandemic—and risk their lives to save this country—and then not give them a living wage is sin."

Barber also offered his own adaptation of the Scripture passage from Isaiah 10:1-3: "Woe unto you hypocrites who pay attention to all of Robert's Rules (of order), all the made-up rules of the Senate and the House, but you filibuster justice. And filibuster mercy. And you filibuster faithfully."

The event also featured music. Singers led the crowd in belting: "Somebody's hurting my brother, and it's gone on far too long. And we won't be silent anymore!"

The singers changed the lyrics as the song

progressed, inserting lines such as "Somebody's stealing our wages!" and "Somebody's blocking our voting rights!"

After the speeches, we and other activists massed into a column and marched toward the Capitol, with clergy walking alongside low-wage workers and those impacted by poverty. Demonstrators took to the street a short time later after processing past the Supreme Court and the Methodist building toward the Hart Senate building. One column of protesters stayed on the sidewalk, but our group—including Barber, Liz Theoharis and Jackson—positioned themselves in the middle of the road, refusing to move. Some briefly requested entry to the Hart building at Barber's urging, but police rebuffed them, and they returned to the street.

According to Capitol police, more than 200 faith-led demonstrators were arrested

while praying, singing and protesting in the street, hoping to draw attention to voting rights and a slate of other issues participants argued impact the poor and low-wage workers.

As demonstrators sang and chanted—"What do we want? Voting rights! When do we want them? Now!"—officers began arresting those in the road one by one, carefully leading them away.

Cheers rose up as Theoharis, Barber and Jackson were arrested, and they were followed by hundreds more. Clergy of multiple faiths, low-wage workers, young activists and elderly people in walkers or wheelchairs were all among those arrested.

I personally felt empowered being arrested side by side with the Rev. Jim Winkler of the National Council of Churches and Texas pastor the Rev. Frederick Haynes III, who joined the Texas march and has vigorously opposed state elections bills and was among the speakers at the Washington rally. You know you are doing God's work when you can stand hand and hand with your heroes of faith.

Another South Carolinian, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, addressed the crowd, bemoaning what he called a nation "in crisis" and voicing a willingness to go to jail for the cause.

He also led the group in a call-and-response chant: "I am! Somebody! I may be poor! But I am! Somebody! I may be unemployed! But I am! Somebody! I may not have health care! But I am! Somebody! Respect me! Protect me! Elect me! I am! God's child!"

This made me think. I am clergy—and I need to have faith and act.

Coastal church hosts families of four officers killed in the line of duty

NORTH MYRTLE BEACH—Trinity United Methodist Church, through its Miracle of Hope at the Beach program, recently hosted the families of four officers killed in the line of duty. They were Trinity's guests during the months of August and September.

Each family receives one week in an oceanfront condo provided for them absolutely free. Along with this, they are given \$500-\$700 in cash for expenses, plus vouchers supplied by local businesses.

The program has provided this gift for the past three years. Any family of a slain or permanently disabled first responder is eligible. Right now it is offered mainly to the first responders of South Carolina and nearby North Carolina. However, Trinity hopes to expand it at some point, as well as assist any other church or organization that would like start a program of their own.

This year, Trinity hosted the families of Jackson Winkler (Florence), Dale Hallman (Saluda), Terrence Carraway (Florence) and Farrah Turner (Florence).

The program has been solely supported by the members and visitors of Trinity UMC. All workers are volunteers. One hundred percent of all donations go to provide for these families of the first responders, whom the church called "our true heroes."

Trinity also provides meals several times a year for first responders and holds a First Responder Day Celebration every Labor Day on the lawn at the church with a free meal and entertainment.

"We are doing all that we can to serve those who serve us," said the Rev. Ed Daniel.

To learn more or help the project, write 706 14th Ave. S., North Myrtle Beach, SC 29582, or call 843-272-5236.

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Viewpoints



Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

When bad news leads to Good News

As a Christian and as a journalist for more than two decades, I'm more than grateful to serve as the editor of a newspaper that gets to publish mostly good news. We all know this is an anomaly in the secular press, but faith-based journalism is unique in that we cover events and occurrences in an imperfect world and culture, but with the hope and joy inherent in our faith undergirding all we produce. You'll find uplifting and encouraging stories throughout this publication, from exciting and effective new ministries to beautiful ways God shows up through God's people. I love these stories!

Still, we're a newspaper, and while in the church I'm thankful mostly good things happen, on occasion bad things do occur—and sometimes, they are very bad things. Evil works its tendrils into even those who are followers of Christ. Over the years, I've covered church-related lawsuits, thefts, arrests and more. Squabbles at General Conference are nothing new, and sometimes it can be hard to distinguish Christians from non-Christians by the way we act—or the verbal daggers we throw.

News outlets are often criticized for “bad news,” and we get that. I don't enjoy reading bad news, myself.

But bad news can bring much good. When we hear about bad news, whether in this paper or in secular news outlets, consider how that knowledge equips us to be Christ's hands and feet in the world in a better, more effective way. We can pray better when we know what we are praying for, and we can trust God hears our collectively raised voices and works mightily in our midst.

Sometimes when we hear about bad news, our hearts are stirred to anguish or anger. We feel compelled to do something—to stand up for injustice, to mobilize, to advocate, to legislate. When we don't know what's happening in our neighborhoods, regions or the world as a whole, we become inward-focused and complacent. But when we know, we can do.

Sometimes, bad news wakes us up out of our slumber and propels us forward, armed with new ways to share the gospel in a dark and hurting world that so desperately needs the light of Christ.

Between COVID-19, politics and so much more, we often feel bombarded, like we can't handle hearing “one more bad thing” or we'll break. If this is you, pray about that today.

Maybe bad news is the thing God needs you to hear so your heart can better spread the Good News.

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Bishop's Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

From the inside out

“The good news of Jesus Christ—the Message!—begins here, following to the letter the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Watch closely: I'm sending my preacher ahead of you; He'll make the road smooth for you. Thunder in the desert! Prepare for God's arrival! Make the road smooth and straight! John the Baptizer appeared in the wild, preaching a baptism of life-change that leads to forgiveness of sins. People thronged to him from Judea and Jerusalem and, as they confessed their sins, were baptized by him in the Jordan River into a changed life. John wore a camel-hair habit, tied at the waist with a leather belt. He ate locusts and wild field honey. As he preached he said, ‘The real action comes next: The star in this drama, to whom I'm a mere stage-hand, will change your life. I'm baptizing you here in the river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. His baptism—a holy baptism by the Holy Spirit—will change you from the inside out.’”—Mark 1:1-8 (MSG)

It has been said that, “When spoken together at just the right moment, there are two words that have amazing, life-changing power.” These two words possess the capacity to breathe into us new life, to lift burdens, and to calm fears—as well as to inspire hope. The two words to which I refer are simply these: “I understand.”

After the basic needs of food, shelter and clothing are met, one of humankind's greatest needs is really the need to be understood. What happens when we are in a serious disagreement with family, friends, coworkers, neighbors or the like?

We probably find ourselves rehearsing speeches in our heads while we are working, driving, pumping gas, studying or lying in bed late at night. We play out different scenarios in our minds and think of clever things we plan to say the next time the issue is discussed.

I believe that one of the reasons we do this is because we want people to understand our point of view. It's difficult to accept that people with whom we share a conflict do not understand our position. In fact, we are determined to enlighten them—if it's the last thing we do!

We have the tendency to rant and rave about all the things our critics don't understand. They don't understand the pressure we are under, the decisions we have to make or the journey our lives have taken. Our critics don't understand when we are lonely, depressed or possibly grieving. And when someone tells us to just “snap out of it,” our instincts tell us to mark that person or persons as insensitive and having no understanding of what we are experiencing.

Maybe it's in the midst of a global pandemic, racial unrest and political divisiveness—something none of us have ever experienced before—that has wreaked havoc on our lives, causing us to adapt to

new ways of living. I believe that some of the most frustrating times in life come when we desperately need understanding and can't find it.

Marie Curie, the Nobel Prize recipient in the field of science, said it this way: “Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we fear less.”

That is why these two words—“I understand”—are so powerful. When we find ourselves in the tough situations of life—and we will—these two words provide a lifeline, a sigh of relief, and a gracious hope.

Likewise, when it comes to our spiritual journey, we often want the perks without the process. We want the comfort without the challenge. We want relationship without investment. We want redemption without the cross of Calvary, and we want spiritual replenishment without the journey through repentance.

If we want to truly be people who can proclaim to our sisters and brothers, “I understand,” then we must put in the work of learning and growing ourselves—changing from the inside out.

John the Baptist tried to prepare the hearts of the people, delivering to us a message of repentance. Repentance is hard and painful work. No one ever feels that they have wronged anyone or done anything that needs an apology, which makes it easier to stay in the midst of our denial. We all need forgiveness and freedom for joyful obedience. To truly turn from who we were into who we will be requires commitment and intentionality.

In this spirit, I want to share with you two opportunities to learn and to grow. On Saturday, Oct. 30, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, of the Episcopal Church, will be the keynote speaker at the Fall Dialogue for the Fellowship of South Carolina Bishops. (See Page 13 for more information.)

I also invite you to engage in small group discussion using the resource, “Our Response to Racism,” found at www.umcsc.org/endracism. With this resource as your guide, the walls that divide will fall, and bridges of reconciliation will be built between all of God's people. The walls crumble when we begin to see and hear beyond our own experience—when we make an effort to learn and understand each other's stories.

The time is always right for us to have honest conversation and to take the next faithful steps together. May our willingness to learn, share, listen and grow reflect the light of God's love into a hurting world, rendering a true reflection of the gospel, and building up the kingdom of God.

These are two opportunities to live into our baptisms, actively seeking ways for our lives to change from the inside out as we turn toward Christ and our neighbors, boldly proclaiming, “I understand.”

Correction

In the article “S.C. Youth Leaders Help Launch New Confirmation Experience for Jurisdiction” (September *Advocate*) we left out two of the people who founded and led a past program at Lake Junaluska. The article should have noted that in the past, Dr. Chris Hughes and Rev. Gloria Hughes, in partnership with Ed and Kathleen Kilbourne, led the confirmation experience at Lake Junaluska, the Foundation for Christian Formation, but that program has now ended, and a vacuum remains. We apologize for this omission and, as always, strive to set the record straight.

Letters to the Editor

A poem: Remember

When I'm gone remember my song:
 "Love my Jesus all day long."
 I know good and bad happen in our life,
 But we must face the challenge and handle
 the strife.
 We can be thankful to see the morn
 Love my friends and family who have been
 reborn
 I've seen the good and I've seen the bad
 But with Jesus's love my sadness becomes
 glad.
 I've been to the grave and said my good-
 byes...
 Knowing I'll see you again dries the tears in
 my eyes.
 While on earth, let's show to others the love
 of our Lord.
 Thank you, Jesus, for dying for me.
 May others come to praise—so Jesus they'll
 see!

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

How deep are your roots?

In order for plants to grow well, they need a balance of light and rain. Their roots must go deep into the soil to get the nutrients they need to grow and flourish.
 We are not much different. We need activity and rest. We need good nutrition for our bodies. The old saying is "garbage in, garbage out." Enough about that.

We also need light. The light of Christ showing us the way. The rains and storms that strengthen us as we dig deeper into the soil that is our God. We must truly learn to be deeply rooted in our faith in order to flourish as we were created to do.

Yes, there will be rain and wind, and sometimes we get knocked down for a bit. But we can get up and be stronger with the knowledge we are rooted in love that is unconditional and never-ending.

Remember to grow well wherever you are planted. God needs you right there, right then.

*Deborah Len, president
 United Methodist Women
 The Church of the Good Shepherd, Lancaster*

Response to Wofford's JEDI recommendations

The 30 JEDI Recommendations endorsed by the Wofford College Board of Trustees need a closer review regarding the contradictions within the rationales of many of the recommendations.

As a long-term supporter of Wofford College and the venerable tenets of the "Wofford Way" as espoused by Dr. Lewis Jones, I am deeply saddened by the administration's promotion of the critical race theory ideology among the students and faculty.

The JEDI recommendations are replete with nonscientific implications of racial inequities throughout the campus and are advocating disproportionate remedies that are divisive because of their emphasis on the past sins of slavery, Black victimization and White guilt. Where are the positive programs that offer collaborative efforts of forgiveness, love and unity among the students?

The strength of Wofford's liberal arts education has been to provide open and unbiased discussions by students and faculty alike. However, the Wofford website recommends more than 150 resources focused on "combatting racism," but the number of resources that focus on opposing opinions is almost zero.

Discrimination of all descriptions (gender, religious and cultural, economic, social and racial) is one of man's innate sins and has been addressed for centuries.

The past three decades have seen the most

progress in American history in racial tolerance by this generation of students and with the greatest success in business and politics by Black citizens. However, this national racial narrative of judging a person through the prism of one's skin color has probably set back the past efforts of Dr. Martin Luther King and Congressman John Lewis more than 30 years.

The Wofford president has implied that systemic racism does not exist at Wofford College. The Princeton Review of Wofford highlights that students describe Wofford as having a "family atmosphere and close-knit community" and consider the student body as "kind and friendly."

If overt racism is not apparent at Wofford, then why is the administration risking disenfranchising more students, parents, faculty and alumni by spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to employ a chief equity officer, additional DEI staff members, and to promote anti-racist programs and speakers? Those funds could be better spent on underwriting more scholarships and assistance for needy students.

Identity politics do not belong at Wofford College. Wofford can become a leader among liberal arts colleges in refocusing its higher education vision on less racist dogma and more emphasis on a balanced curriculum surrounded with unification.

*Carroll Player, D.D.S., member
 Central UMC, Florence*

I am sick of COVID!

Not that things were perfect pre-COVID-19, but at least then, life had a certain rhythm, hectic though it may have been. To be quite honest, COVID had so much potential for making life better. It forced us to slow down, be more careful, to stay home. For some of us, being home was a novelty, a luxury even. After all, the staycation was becoming a thing before the pandemic!

We were busy then: moving, going, doing. I was no exception. I was the worship leader at my church. I participated in routine writing workshops (monthly and quarterly). I traveled several times a year (both home and abroad). I had a direction and a plan. I was the first to vote that my church shut down to protect our elderly congregation. I believed we could find a solution for staying together, and we did manage to build an online presence.

Our pastor has always been very good at ministering to the sick and shut-in members of our church. For more than a year, the whole world was shut-in by the pandemic. A minister such as ours is invaluable in such an environment—especially among smaller congregations.

Our church has resumed services, off and on. When our doors first closed, a pre-taped worship service was available online. That morphed into a parking lot service, which was also taped. We have since reopened and moved into a "blended" form of worship. The pre-COVID format of a contemporary service at 8:30 a.m. and a traditional service at 11 a.m. have become a mixed service at 10 a.m.

The fact is, I need to be in church. I need to be with people who know my religion and the rituals that come with it. I need a traditional, well-ordered, liturgical service to build my week upon. Surely, I am not alone in this. It just is not the same virtually. I miss the hymnal with its songs, prayers and affirmations.

The libraries are open now. Our hymnals and Bibles need to come out of storage. If we are truly trying to return to a sense of normality, please, let us return to our traditions!

*Joy Strange, member
 Windsor UMC, Columbia*



Guest Commentary

by Trey Sullivan

Life of a pastor's kid

I have been a pastor's kid—a PK—for more than half of my life. It's been an experience, to say the least, but one I've loved. Currently, my dad is the pastor at Kings Mountain Chapel United Methodist Church, York, and St. Paul UMC, Clover.

There are many upsides to being a PK. For one, I get to see background of the church and how everything functions. I also get to see firsthand the multiple roles needed to help the services and events run smoothly, how many people it takes and the amount of planning needed to help set up a regular Sunday service. It takes a lot more work than most people realize, and I get to personally experience the hard work.

I help set up vacation Bible school, promote events, invite youth, etc. I get to see the work my dad goes through in creating his sermons, deciding on the songs and getting in touch with people who have prayer requests they would like to share. I've actually preached a few times before, so I really got to experience firsthand the amount of preparation that goes into one Sunday. It's a lot more work than it seems on the outside. There are a lot of moving parts, and multiple people have specific roles that my dad must make sure are filled.

One thing I love about all the churches we have been a part of is that I get to make meaningful connections with the members of my church. To this day, my family still talks to people where we served more than four years ago. It's wonderful because they become like family to us, coming to soccer games, etc. My family and I are able to create even stronger relationships with the members and a stronger relationship with one another.

But like most things, no experience is without its downsides, and there are a few when it comes to being a pastor's kid. I believe no place is without conflicts between people with different perspectives, and

unfortunately those conflicts sometimes make their way into church. I see the inner conflicts between the members over topics of finance, COVID-19 procedures and everything in between. Another downside, which I'm sure other PKs have experienced, is that I've moved way more times than any other kid I've met. I'm currently 15 years old, and I have moved nine times. Since I have moved so much (every two to four years), it's hard to make and keep friends. When it comes to school, it's hard to make long-lasting connections with people if you know you might have a possibility of moving.

However, in saying this, I know God puts our family where he needs us, and we have grown stronger as a family because of that. Sometimes, the good outweighs the bad when God is in the midst. It's always good to see when something (such as an event or a regular Sunday service) goes better than expected, whether we have new members joining or having more than 100 kids come to our fall festival. To see the impact God has on the kids and on the members of our church is amazing. I love to see how much the few days at VBS can transform a kid, and how infectious their smiles and love of God is to the adults around them. To see them enjoy being at church and having fun learning about him makes the moves worth it.

I also love that I'm able to see the transformation of churches. To see churches go from an average of 20 people a Sunday to an average of more than 70 is awesome.

I know being a PK is hard work and we have a lot of eyes on us. However, we must continue to be a shining light for God and know that the time and hard work that we as PKs put in will be blessed!

Sullivan, 15, attends Kings Mountain Chapel UMC, York, and St. Paul UMC, Clover.

Tuesday Morning

After 20 years of God's mercy and grace, let us remember 9/11 and be thankful. Here is a poem that reminds us of who we are.

It was a Tuesday morn and all was well.
 The sun was shining—life was good.
 Many on their way to work—some to buy—others sell.
 Lingered over coffee—greeting friends—such a happy mood.
 This day like all others was normal, so they said.
 Take the children to daycare or drop them by school.
 Some were late—traffic was heavy—lights were red.
 No one expected the change to come. It was against the rules.
 Life would never be the same from this moment on.
 A deed to come was too dastardly for the depth of our minds to comprehend.
 Life has no value—evil looms large and is not alone.
 It rears its ugly head in faraway lands and here at home.
 The sorrow, the evil engulfs us like a shroud—a heavy load.
 Terror and anguish strip our souls and shatter our days.
 Where do we go to wipe away the gloom of our tortured souls?
 With one accord the answer comes—look up and see the sun's rays.
 Who are we? Of what are we made? What is this land?
 Are we united? Does the metal of America still ring its loud bell?
 Love, freedom, caring, our souls reach forth to share a helping hand.
 The sun is shining. God loves us still.
 Tuesday morning and all is well.

*Margie Cox, member
 Chapin UMC, Chapin*

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A journey of faith

Community Ministry of North Augusta opens new expanded facility

By Polly Hargrove

After years of hard work, Community Ministry of North Augusta has raised \$2 million, and on Aug. 15, it opened the doors of a new facility designed to meet its needs and enhance its ability to serve the local community.

Community Ministry of North Augusta began more than 36 years ago when area pastors—under the leadership of Grace United Methodist Church’s Dr. John M. Younginer Jr.—gathered to discuss the most effective way to minister to those in need.

The result was a multi-denominational community ministry better equipped to handle this outreach than individual churches. Financial support comes from partner churches and individuals. A thrift store stocked with donations from the community provides an important source of income. A director and managers for a large volunteer staff. Once clients complete an interview process, services include financial assistance with utilities and medical expenses. A food pantry provides grocery needs. No one in need is denied food or clothing.

The purpose of the ministry is, “Meeting needs and improving lives by serving as the hands of Christ,” with a goal of helping clients to become self-sufficient.

Over the years, as needs grew, the ministry and store grew to meet them, but always, facilities were what was available and affordable, and the ministry adapted as best possible in several different locations. Continued increasing demands resulted in cramped office space, inadequate space for the food pantry, overcrowding in the thrift store and, most importantly, a lack of privacy in client interview spaces.

A search for a building to purchase and remodel was unsuccessful, and in 2016, Community Ministry of North Augusta purchased property and formed a fundraising committee. A Christian-based fundraising consultant, DB&A, was hired, and the journey began.

The first step was a feasibility study, with a cautious recommendation that we could raise \$1 to \$1.5 million—but we needed more.

So we decided to move “Forward in Faith”—and to name our campaign the same. As with so many volunteer



On Aug. 15, Community Ministry of North Augusta opened the doors of a new facility designed to meet its needs and enhance its ability to serve the local community.



positions, none of us realized the scope of this effort or the many hours, days, weeks and years it would involve.

It was an exciting, demanding, frustrating, rewarding, educational and spiritual journey. Our comfort zones were pushed, stretched, redefined and pushed again, but the rewards were tremendous.

We and other members of the board of directors were charged by our fundraising advisor with revising some of the record-keeping methods, improving our branding and recognition in the community, taking full opportunity of available grants and other housekeeping issues—and this

was before we began our actual assigned task of fundraising!

Then came tours to make groups and individuals aware of the ministry’s services and needs: development of a case for support, financial projections, naming opportunities based on size of financial gift and gift agreement forms for an informational folder. We held individual meetings and group meetings in the homes of supporters and publicized the effort in partner churches. We held a Holiday Gala & Auction as well as other events, and we also produced a booklet to share information and plans.

All the while, our building chair worked with architects to design, redesign and try again for a facility that would work on our property and, most importantly, fit our budget. We learned more than we wanted to know about site preparation and creating business plans to apply for construction loans. The pandemic also slowed down our progress.

Of course there were times when we would become discouraged or tired, but God blessed us with energy to cheer each other on, as well as with many others who helped in ways both large and small.

And with unexpected generosity from those who gave of their time, money, talent and resources, the goal was achieved: \$2 million was raised.

On Aug. 15, Community Ministry opened the doors of a new facility designed to meet its needs and enhance its ability to serve. There are private interview rooms, meeting space for other agencies, a spacious food pantry, a chapel, and a large thrift store across the parking lot.

Grace UMC was generous financially, enabling the chapel to be dedicated to our beloved Dr. Younginer.

Much of the printed material was designed and produced at Grace with the help of Church Administrator Marianne Harlan, providing significant savings. Member Jenn Waller assisted in designing an important booklet.

Overall, this experience was so very gratifying as I learned, grew in faith and made wonderful new friends who inspired me with their faith and dedication.

Hargrove is donor relations chair and Forward in Faith campaign member at Grace UMC.

Four S.C. United Methodists release books

Four South Carolina United Methodists, including two pastors, have recently published books.

The Rev. James Phillip Smith, pastor of St. Paul United Methodist Church, Camden, published his book, “Healing a Broken Nation: Teaching and Preaching Forgiveness and Reconciliation.”

Released in August, the book helps people move beyond talk and step into a new future as they embrace forgiveness. Empowering preachers, teachers and facilitators to affect change in their areas of influence that can lead to widespread transformation, the book aims to help people live in community with others; acknowledge pain from the past; embrace the idea of forgiveness and settle and resolve differences with others.

Dr. Martin Luther Quick, associate pastor at Journey UMC, Columbia, published his book, “E-Vangelism: Creating and Implementing a Social Media Ministry for Outreach,” also in August.

Based on his pre-pandemic doctoral dis-

sertation case study, Quick shares his experience as a digital pastor responding to the pandemic, and offers his insightful quick takes after each chapter. The book provides fundamentals for creating an effective social media ministry for outreach, plus offers proven strategies for implementing a social media ministry with precise and definitive information, including pros and cons.

Cindy Barrineau Curtis, youth director at St. Andrews Parish United Methodist Church, Charleston, launched her latest

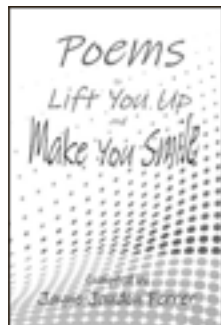
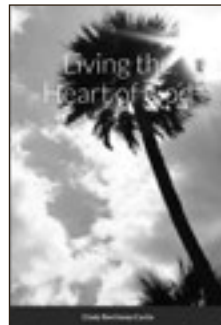
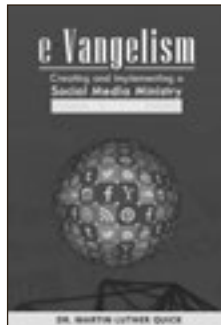
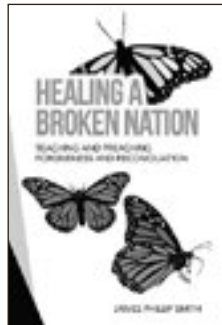
book, “Living the Heart of God,” in July.

Part of her Heart of God trilogy, the book is an in-depth study of The Lord’s Prayer. Curtis is a teacher, author and motivational speaker with a career spanning more than 30 years in education, ministry, writing and speaking. Her book offers hope and empowers readers with methods to live with confidence and grace.

And Jayne Jaudon Ferrer, member of Bethesda UMC in Powdersville and former longtime member of Berea Friendship

UMC in Greenville, has released “Poems To Lift You Up and Make You Smile.” A collection of 100 classic and contemporary poems especially selected for their upbeat perspectives, feel-good scenarios and humor, the book features the work of poets across the United States, Canada, England and Ireland. It is an anthology of work featured on www.YourDailyPoem.com, founded by Ferrer in 2009 to show the diversity of poetry and dispel the notion that poetry is boring.

All of these books are available on Amazon, as well as other book retailers.



Cindy Barrineau Curtis, youth director at St. Andrews Parish United Methodist Church, signs books at Main Street Reads bookstore July 17.

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Simpsonville UMC raises funds for prison basketball jerseys

An S.C. prison needed new basketball jerseys. Then a church stepped in to help.

By Lyn Riddle

Reprinted with permission of The State SIMPSONVILLE—Here's a story about the noisy buckets.

That's what the Rev. Dr. Michael Smith of Simpsonville United Methodist Church calls a special offering on certain Sunday mornings. Kids go around the sanctuary with tin buckets, and people throw in nickels, dimes, quarters and sometimes bills to raise money for organizations outside the church.

Most often, the money goes to the Church of God Children's Home in nearby Mauldin for flat screen TVs, Christmas gifts and other needs.

Recently, state Rep. Garry Smith, a church member, brought another idea. He heard from a friend that the basketball teams at Perry Correctional Institution needed jerseys.

To call the ones they had ragged was something of an overstatement.

Larry Epps, Perry's chaplain, said sports



are important at the Pelzer prison, and the most important of all is basketball. Each of the four dorms has a team. They play each other through the season and then play a championship game, which Epps de-

scribed as a "big, big deal."

The past 18 months have been tough at Perry, which, like all medium and maximum South Carolina prisons, has been closed to outsiders. No family visits, no

Simpsonville UMC presents new jerseys to Perry Correctional Institution on Sunday. From left, Simpsonville UMC Pastor Mike Smith, Perry Chaplain Larry Epps, Perry Athletic Director Cole Bullock and state Rep. Garry Smith.

volunteers.

"It has a devastating impact on the heart, mind and psyche of a man," Epps said.

Sports took on an even greater role.

Then came the noisy buckets at Simpsonville United Methodist.

"We raised \$4,000 in a few weeks," Rep. Smith said.

On Sunday, Epps, along with Perry athletic director Cole Bullock, went to the church for the jersey presentation. Epps preached a sermon on Jesus calling people to be fishers of men, which he described as the "sheer definition of active evangelism." He invited congregants to volunteer, and he thinks from the response he got, people will follow through once the prison opens back up.

Epps said the jerseys will have a big impact on the men. They will know people in the community cared.

"We asked for decent and we got awesome," Epps said.

Conference Connectional Ministries gathers by Zoom to share, learn

South Carolina Conference Connectional Ministries gathered via Zoom last month for their second meeting of the year.

Held Sept. 11, which was the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on America, CCM Convener Ross Chellis took a moment to remember the events that occurred two decades ago.

Drawing from Deuteronomy 8:1-3, and Luke 22:14, he lifted up the heroes who acted so bravely on 9/11, reminding all that God is active, present and faithful in our lives.

He closed with a prayer of remembrance.

Bishop L. Jonathan Holston next offered greetings, urging people to focus on the hope we have in Jesus during times of uncertainty.

Next, CCM Director the Rev. Millie Nelson Smith updated all on the four priorities developed by the bishop's working group and taken on by Connectional Ministries. These priorities are developing leaders; engaging our communities; connecting with and growing disciples; and measuring and evaluating current realities and missional possibilities.

Conference communications staffer Matt Brodie next updated the body on what disaster recovery teams have been doing, including recent work in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida in Louisiana and Mississippi (see article, Page 1). He said flood buckets and health kits are always needed. Brodie shared that three new Early Response Team trailers were purchased recently, and the conference is outfitting these trailers now.

Congregational Specialist the Rev. Jim Arant shared about the latest installment of "Come Follow Me: Disciples Love and Care for Others," which is available on www.umcsc.org.

Congregational Specialist the Rev. Cathy Joens spoke about the importance of clergy care, lifting up the website umcsc.org/clergycare with resources on spiritual, mental and physical care.

Salkehatchie Director Kathy Hart updated all about Salkehatchie Summer Service, noting camps are being planned for 2022.

Conference communications staffer Dan O'Mara told all

about the new "#ITookMyShot" media campaign encouraging people to get vaccinated, as well as reminded the body about the conference's "Our Response to Racism" initiative at umcsc.org/endoracism.

Reports on Forward Focus and the *Advocate* rounded out the first part of the meeting.

Next, all broke into various ministry areas—advocacy, lay leadership, discipleship and outreach—for discussion. After their separate time, each area reported their update.

Advocacy's the Rev. Bernie Mazyck noting their group is now part of an alliance with a "cap the rate" payday lending campaign.

Discipleship's Lee Jordan said their group has broken into task groups and will continue to work through these areas to teach others in their context to make disciples.

Lay Leadership's Joens shared about their group's exploration on what it looks like to "get out of the building."

And Outreach's Gail Corn noted their group approved funding for Advance Specials for 2022.

The next CCM meeting is Feb. 19, 2022.

BSA bankruptcy affects United Methodist congregations

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The United Methodist Church and its predecessor denominations have a relationship with the Boy Scouts of America that dates more than 100 years. In February 2020, the BSA announced the national organization would file for bankruptcy to allow it to continue carrying on its mission while also compensating sexual abuse victims who were harmed during their time in scouting.

While the bankruptcy is ongoing, the BSA, along with its local councils, recently reached an agreement with representatives of most of the survivors on a proposed \$850 million settlement.

At this time, negotiations are ongoing for other parties with an interest in the bankruptcy. Questions remain about how that agreement might affect chartered organizations, including thousands of United Methodist congregations that have sponsored scouting programs. United Methodist congregations represent the largest active collection of chartered organizations. The interests of those congregations are represented by an ad hoc committee established to represent United Methodist interests, which is actively engaged in the bankruptcy process and related negotiations.

The denomination continues to maintain a relationship with the BSA and churches may continue to support scout troops. However, the ad hoc committee recently noted it is disappointed and very concerned that the BSA did not include its sponsoring organizations, charter groups, in the agreement with

the claimants. This leaves as many as 5,000 United Methodist U.S. congregations—or more than 15 percent of U.S. congregations—exposed to potential lawsuits by the survivor claimants. Charter organizations were promised by the BSA to be covered by their insurance, but at this time, it is not clear to what extent United Methodist congregations will be covered.

The ad hoc committee has advised that churches that support scouting units should: 1) agree to extend an expiring charter through Dec. 31, rather than renew that charter; 2) replace an expiring charter with a facilities use agreement that expires on Dec. 31; or 3) terminate an existing charter and replace it with a facilities use agreement that expires on Dec. 31. All of those options allow more time to see how the bankruptcy will impact United Methodist congregations.

United Methodist leaders across the denomination grieve for those who experienced harm. Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey called upon the church to pray for the victims and their families.

"This tragedy is a reminder for all of us to be vigilant, update Safe Sanctuary policies and continue to review those policies to ensure congregations are following the policies and keeping all young people safe from harm," Harvey said.

More than 80,000 distinct claims from 1940 through 2018 were filed by the court-established deadline. Some of those claims are potentially connected to scouting units sponsored by United Methodist congrega-

tions. The BSA implemented its current program designed to help prevent sexual abuse and ensure the safety of Scouts starting in the 1980s and there have been fewer cases since the development and improvement in the program.

The percentage of claims related to United Methodist-sponsored scouting units is proportionately lower than that of other chartered units. United Methodists have and continue to implement Safe Sanctuary poli-

cies and practices.

A leadership team has also been formed to help develop principles, guidelines and action steps in preparation for leading the church through the unfolding bankruptcy and its impact on United Methodist chartered organizations.

The team, chaired by Bishop John Schol, includes representatives of the Council of Bishops, as well as persons with financial, legal and communications expertise.

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A community meal on O'Neal Street

Newberry church hosts community meals, new food pantry to reach out to neighbors

By the Rev. Darlene L. Kelley

The Todd family lived down the road at the end of the marsh and the beginning of Fisherman's Bay.

Donna—skinny, shy and 12 years old, just like me at the time—was one my closest friends on the Eastern Shore, literally and figuratively. Whenever I wasn't working with my father, I was more than likely looking for something to do with Donna Todd.

With the help of his two ablest sons, Mr. Todd worked the water, back and forth across the bay in his long, flat boat, running a trot line for blue crabs in the damp heat of summer and fighting ice, wind and freezing rain in the winter to pull oysters from the mud. Some gossiped about Sonny Todd and how his bad-boy ways kept him too interested in drink and other women to be a good husband or a decent daddy, but the gossip stopped whenever Donna's mother walked in the room. Still lovely through disappointment and fatigue, Lily Todd worked at one of the long steel tables, a cog in the row of women, picking the succulent meat from the bushels of crabs hoisted up on the docks and then steamed fiery red. That's the first time I ever heard anybody talk about "piece work," and I misunderstood completely, not able to separate the term from peace on earth. In reality, it meant Donna's mother got paid for each pound of crabmeat she picked—nothing more, nothing less. The Todds were hardscrabble people in a long line of hardscrabble people.

One beautiful afternoon that must have been too early or too late for us to be working, I played along the shoreline all morning with Donna and a gaggle of her towheaded siblings. There seemed too many children to count in the Todd house, and Donna usually had two or three of her younger siblings underfoot while her mother worked. As the sun climbed higher in the sky, my stomach started growling, and the idea of lunch came to me. It seemed rude to turn my friend and her brood away; we'd been having too much fun. Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches were just the thing, and I escorted Donna and her three mud-streaked siblings to our front porch and went in to raid the kitchen.

Much to my horror, there was no jelly—the jelly spot was empty. No jar lingered neglected on the table. Nothing stuck to a shelf in the fridge. There was just no jelly in the house, and I was as momentarily mortified as any 12-year-old can be. How could I serve peanut butter and jelly sandwiches without the jelly? It seemed downright uncivilized and un-American.

But I had no choice. It was peanut butter on a loaf of Shore Fine white bread, or it was nothing, and my guests were waiting on the porch.

So out I went with the loaf of bread and the jar of peanut butter, preparing to apologize or explain or assure them that we were not really brutes at all, just terribly unprepared.

But when I sat the bread and the peanut butter down on



Just like Jesus, says O'Neal Street UMC, their church wants to meet people where they are. They are trying their best to do that through a food pantry and community meal.

the porch, I had no words. The Todd children tore into that loaf of bread with an intensity I'd never witnessed, a hunger I'd never known, and I was left speechless, amazed at what I was seeing with my own eyes—hungry children, children hungrier than I'd ever been or ever known.

Children who lived just down the road.

Since that day, I've seen children as hungry as the Todd children, thankfully not often, but it's always as powerful. It punches you in the gut right above the space that must be empty in the children, and it's always discouraging to think that hungry children live just down the road, but they do.

Our local food bank in Columbia, Harvest Hope, informs us that one in six South Carolinians struggles with food insecurity and hunger. The food bank distributed more than 27 million pounds of food last year, and according to their website they rescued, packed, transported and delivered nutritious food to soup kitchens, shelters, food pantries and schools in 20 counties in South Carolina.

If we choose to be doers and not merely hearers of the word, we'd do well to learn more about hunger in our community and maybe even invite some folks over for dinner. That's just what we did at the O'Neal Street United Methodist Church, and we did it to honor the nurture, outreach and witness that undergirds mission in our church. Just like Jesus, we want to meet people where they are. Then we invite them for a plate of spaghetti, because nothing brings strangers together better than breaking bread with one another.

We ate with some old friends and made some new friends,



Photos courtesy of the Rev. Darlene Kelley

and met a few of our neighbors. We had an incredible kitchen crew and small staff of volunteers that made the work look easy and are blessedly willing to do it all again. At our next dinner, we are going to serve hot dogs and all the fixings.

Indeed, celebrating a monthly community meal is our goal and an important step in launching our new pantry at the O'Neal Street UMC.

Through a board representing an ecumenical collaboration of multiple churches in Newberry, God's Abundance For All People will be housed at O'Neal Street UMC and hopes to open as soon as next month.

Danny Newton, lay member of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Little Mountain and a board member of God's Abundance, recently led the first volunteer training event for the new feeding program. Ten volunteers from several area churches attended the training and signed up to work.

Our community meals and our new food pantry will work hand in hand to reach out to the neighborhood.

Being in mission is being in relationship, and we know that relationship with God and one another is what it's all about. James probably says it best: If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? (James 2).

At O'Neal Street UMC, James doesn't have to tell us twice—we're ready for a party. A dinner party, that is, where the whole community is welcome.

Kelley is pastor of O'Neal Street UMC, Newberry.

SEJ College of Bishops appoints Dr. Brad Brady as SEJ Conference secretary

During their virtual meeting Aug. 19, the Southeastern Jurisdiction's College of Bishops appointed Dr. Brad Brady to serve as the Southeastern Jurisdiction Conference

Secretary, effective upon current secretary Anne Travis' retirement Sept. 1.

This is not a new role for Brady, who retired in June as senior pastor of Perry United

Methodist Church in the South Georgia Conference. In 2008, he was elected to serve as the 2009-2012 Jurisdictional Conference Secretary, with primary responsibilities being the planning and implementation of the 2012 SEJ Conference Session. He assisted Joetta Rinehart during the 2008 SEJ Conference and began serving through the quadrennium in preparation for the 2012 conference session. He also assisted Travis during the 2016 session and 2021 virtual session.

"Dr. Brady is well known and highly respected throughout the Southeastern Jurisdiction for his leadership," said Bishop R. Lawson Bryan, president of the College of Bishops and episcopal leader of the South Georgia Conference. "He has previously served as the SEJ secretary, and we know his background and experience will be especially valuable at this time."

Brady's years of experience and leadership will be an asset during these challenging



Brady

times, Bryan said.

"The 2008 session approved a new structure for the jurisdiction," Brady said. "It was a time of transition and 'building the plane while we were flying it.' It was a pleasure working with leaders across the jurisdiction to support the ministries of our connection. I see this next quadrennium as another time of transition. No one knows what the future holds."

The College of Bishops also expressed its appreciation to Travis for her nine years of service to the SEJ. She served as assistant secretary in 2012 and secretary from 2012-2021. A lay person from the Holston Conference, Travis also served as the director of Connectional Ministries in Holston from 2000-2013.

The SEJ College of Bishops also announced that beginning Sept. 1, Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson will serve as president of the COB and South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston will serve as secretary.

Thanks!

We are grateful to those who gave so generously to Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry on Aug. 8, and to those who donate to the ministry year-round.

Your support helps us care for our residents, as well as plan for the future.



Aldersgate
Special Needs Ministry
The South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church
aldersgatespecialneedsministry.org



The congregation at St. Mark United Methodist Church, Sumter, welcomes **Rev. Charlie Thomas** and takes great pride in and appreciate the man of God that has been sent to care for this flock. You are eager to serve God and lead by your own example. Because of your leadership we learn daily that knowledge is of no value without personal application. 2 Corinthians 3:6
WELCOME TO ST. MARK!

Methodist youth leaves mark on Wesley Campus Ministry

When Woodland UMC's Makai Byrd came up with his Eagle Scout project idea to work with the nearby Wesley Foundation campus ministry, he had no idea the impact his efforts would have among fellow Methodists.

His project to enhance the center's grounds brought new life into a ministry that had struggled during the pandemic.

In March, Byrd, a Life Scout in Woodland's Troop 109 in Rock Hill, reached out to Methodist Campus Minister Charlie Farnum for project ideas.

"I had initially wanted to improve a volleyball area on the Winthrop University campus," Byrd said. "But driving by the center, I felt like it was a place where I could partner with other 'Friends of Wesley' to create a great project."

Farnum shared with Byrd, a South Pointe High School junior, that COVID-19 had been hard on the Wesley Foundation. Farnum was new in the position, having come aboard in summer 2020. Winthrop students had vacated campus the previous March, and many of the ministry's active students had graduated. Opportunities to recruit new students had been limited, and necessary COVID-19 restrictions had made making connections more challenging.



Byrd's team removed debris, landscaped, pressure-washed the concrete pad and the storage building, and constructed picnic tables to make the area more useful.

Byrd and Farnum worked on a plan to address several ministry needs that the Wesley Foundation Board of Directors quickly approved. The ambitious project plan included enhancing an outdoor gathering area, improving accessibility at the rear of the facility, and addressing exterior signage challenges.

Byrd tapped the foundation's friends list, local United Methodist churches, friends of scouting, Woodland's church family and



Exterior signage improvements rounded out Byrd's project. Byrd, above, is now a high school senior and soon-to-be Eagle Scout.

others for donations to the project. His first workday on May 15 drew 17 people, including Woodland United Methodist Men, scouts from Troop 109 and Byrd's friends and family.

Multiple workdays later, and with the hands-on involvement of approximately 30 individuals, the project's greatest impact may be in the center's improved accessibility. The project's stone steps and well-defined walking

path in the backyard have pleased groups that meet at the facility.

"We have really enjoyed the safety of using the steps to get from the parking lot to the building without falling or slipping," said Rock Hill District United Methodist Women President Crystal Barrs.

The group made a mission gift in Byrd's honor to acknowledge his efforts.

Farnum noted similar appreciation from The Welcome Table, a local congregation that worships at Wesley on Sunday mornings.

"I shared with Makai how grateful they are for the work he's doing," Farnum said. "He's making a difference!"

Byrd worked throughout the summer to complete the project in time for Winthrop's return to fall classes. Numerous donors contributed to the project, and their generosity more than tripled Byrd's initial donation goal.

The excess funds will provide additional improvements and allow the Wesley Foundation to continue its service to college students and the local community.

Byrd, now a high school senior and soon-to-be Eagle Scout, reflected on his accomplishment.

"I hope my project will be remembered as one that helped the ministry live out its slogan: 'Open. Authentic. Community.'"



Blessing the glasses

The Rev. Jody Flowers, pastor of Chapin UMC, Chapin, blesses some glasses his congregation donated for a Glasses for Guatemala collection. Organized by the Columbia District Outreach Committee of Connectional Ministries, the mission effort involves collecting used eyeglasses, both prescription and non-prescription. Prescription sunglasses and cases are also welcome. The glasses will go to Healing Guatemala, a United Methodist medical mission and clinic that offers ophthalmology, dental care and basic medical needs there. Glasses can be dropped off through Sept. 30 at Ashland UMC, 2600 Ashland Road, Columbia, SC 29210, Mondays to Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. If you need them to be picked up from you, call 803-345-2671 or email lindajdurant@yahoo.com. For more on Healing Guatemala: <https://healingguatemala.org>.



Leaving the four walls

In 1 Timothy 5, Paul describes the church as people dedicated to doing whatever it takes to reach out and help others. That was the mission of Hickory Hill UMC, Bamberg: leaving the building and going out into the community to host their yearly Back to School Supplies Giveaway. Volunteers from as young as 5 and 7 years old worked faithfully to see this task be a blessing to the community. The Rev. Adrienne Stokes and Hickory Hill UMC said they thank each and everyone for donating, advertising and receiving the supplies given away.



A treat of a trip

The seniors at Manning UMC, Manning, took a trip to McLeod Farms on July 27. Here, they enjoy some ice cream.

Rev. George K. Howle is the Senior Pastor at First UMC Myrtle Beach, "First Church." It is an absolute honor to have him leading this church. If you come in the doors of First Church, you will see a flyer on many of the doors of the staff that defines the role of the staff in relation to Rev. George. G-Force: (noun) the staff at First UMC Myrtle Beach who are dedicated to the success, health, and well-being of Rev. Dr. George K. Howle, whereas "G" relates to a) G-Force made my military aircraft seen at Warbird Park in Myrtle Beach, or b) Gale-Force winds produced by hurricanes in the Atlantic Ocean, which have consistently visited the shores of the Grand Strand, or c) the productive ministry of the staff and congregation at FUMC under the tutelage of Rev. Dr. George K. Howle and his infectious personality. In other words, Rev. George is the catalyst that drives the staff (G-Force) which produces many neat things at First Church. It is an honor to work with Rev. George, as he has brought laughter and momentum to move First Church forward. During 2020, his vision to remodel the contemporary worship space became a reality. First Church now has a beautiful fellowship hall in which to host contemporary services, funeral receptions, church dinners, etc. Rev. George has served over 40 years in ministry, and we are blessed to have him here at the helm. Thank you, Rev. George, for your positive personality, and all that you do to encourage us day by day.



We love you! The staff and members of First Church.

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Emmanuel United Methodist Church, paid off their mortgage in early January, but because of COVID-19, they held off on a celebration until more people could attend.

Emmanuel holds mortgage-burning celebration

One Anderson District church, Emmanuel United Methodist Church, paid off their mortgage in early January, but because of COVID-19, they held off on a celebration until more people could attend.

Finally, on Aug. 29, a celebration was held during morning worship. Their guest speaker was a former pastor, the Rev. Keith Hunter of Camden First UMC, Camden. The Act of Dedication was performed by the groundbreaking pastor, the Rev. Booker Whetstone, retired UMC pastor and former pastor of Emmanuel.

Anderson District Superintendent the Rev. Steve Patterson gave the prayer.

Also in attendance was former pastor the Rev. Eleanora Ellington, the Rev. Billy Cleveland and his congregation from Jefferson Chapel African Methodist Episcopal and the Rev. Henry Ravenel, UMC pastor.

Passing of the deed was done by Trustee Chair Hattie Gaines.

Members from the Anderson Circuit—Mount Sinai and Mount Pleasant UMC—also were in attendance.

The Rev. Annie Jackson is the current pastor of Emmanuel UMC.



Former pastor the Rev. Keith Hunter preaches at the celebration.

Around the Districts

Columbia District

Washington UMC, Columbia, will hold a Blessing of the Animals Oct. 2 from 10 a.m.-noon. The yearly event will also be the site of a supply drive for Pawmetto Lifeline, an organization whose mission is to solve the homeless companion pet problem in the Midlands.

Congratulations to the Rev. Jim and Kendall Rogers on the birth of their daughter. Hadley was born Aug. 17. Rev. Rogers is the associate pastor at Lexington UMC, Lexington.

Congratulations to the Rev. Sara Relaford and the Rev. Jon Hoin on the birth of their child. August Relaford Hoin was born Aug. 19. Relaford is the associate pastor at Union UMC, Irmo. Hoin is the pastor of Platt Springs UMC, West Columbia.

Congratulations to the Revs. Cynthia and Stephen Taylor on the birth of their granddaughter. Vivienne Taylor Ford was born Aug. 27 to Kelsey and Joseph Ford. Rev. Cynthia Taylor is the pastor of Asbury Memorial UMC, Columbia. Rev. Stephen Taylor is pastor of Union UMC, Irmo.



The East Camden Charge (St. Matthew and Emmanuel United Methodist churches) of the Hartsville District received a package deal when we got Pastor Jerry L. Dicks and his wife, Shelia. They have truly been a blessing to us. He delivers great messages every Sunday, teaches Bible study each Wednesday night and is always available to his congregations. Mrs. Dicks is truly a classic helpmate. She is always by his side helping in any way she can. She is famous for making sure that most holidays are observed with a gift from them. She eagerly participates in worship services. We are grateful for your service, your love and patience. We love you and pray God's blessings upon you.



Bethany hopes to bring the local communities of James and Johns islands together for fun and family entertainment while picking out the perfect pumpkin.

Bethany UMC to host community events in tandem with pumpkin patch

JAMES ISLAND—During the month of October, the church yard of Bethany United Methodist Church will transform into a sea of orange pumpkins.

Over the past nine years, Bethany's pumpkin patch has been successful in opening its doors to the surrounding community. The pumpkins are grown and harvested by the Navajo Indians of northwestern New Mexico. Pumpkin patch sales support the livelihood of the Navajo, who experience an unemployment rate of more than 40 percent.

This year, Bethany is planning a variety of fun events to its pumpkin patch. Each weekend in October, they will hold a different event in the patch.

Opening day, Saturday, Oct. 2, will feature a live Contemporary Music Sing-Along

with a fire pit for roasting marshmallows.

On Oct. 9, there will be a Children's Movie Night in the Patch. While the children are watching a movie and eating pizza, parents may opt for a date night.

On Oct. 16, Ark in the Park with a special Blessing of the Pets is planned to include a pet photo booth and plenty of treats. The James Island Animal Shelter has been invited to participate and bring some furry friends to play in the patch that day.

The last Sunday, Oct. 24, will be Bethany UMC's annual Trunk or Treat. This festival includes food, decorated cars and costumes, games, prizes and lots of candy.

Bethany hopes to bring the local communities of James and Johns islands together for fun and family entertainment while picking out the perfect pumpkin.



Photo courtesy of the Rev. William Smith

All God's people

An ecumenical clergy group recently started in Kershaw County. The group had its first meeting Aug. 26, and present were United Methodist, Southern Baptist and Nazarene clergy. They plan to meet the last Thursday of every month in hopes of providing support for each other and being proactive in their communities. Pictured in back from left are the Revs. Jerry L. Dicks (Emmanuel and St. Matthew UMC, East Camden), Keith Hunter (Camden First UMC), William Smith (Lyttleton Street UMC, Camden), Melissa and Brandon Williams (Tabernacle UMC, Hartsville) and Rusty Shuler (Camden First Baptist); in front from left are Donny Supplee (Kershaw County United Way president), and the Revs. Brenda J. Thomas (Good Hope Wesley Chapel UMC, West Camden), David Snodgrass (Camden Nazarene), Angela Marshall (St. John's UMC, Lugoff), Gary Rivas (Lyttleton St UMC, Camden), Debra Anderson-Joe (McLeod Chapel UMC, St. John, and the Rembert-St. John Charge), Michael Brisbon (Emmanuel-Sumter, Sumter) and Samuel Maddox (Rockspring and St. Peter, West Camden).



I love to tell the story

Ten-year-old Dot Turner created this painting, which she called "The Story of Jesus," during the August VBS at Wesley Chapel UMC, Jackson.

Leave A Legacy To Change Lives

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Shandon United Methodist Church honored Dr. Harvey Allen and remembered Judy Allen in their service to the church.

Shandon's Joy Class honors Allens with celebration, helps new educational fund

By Barbara Adams

COLUMBIA—When one thinks about special Sundays, many think of Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Thanksgiving or Christmas.

Now we must add another to our memory: Jubilee Celebration, held on Sept. 12, with flowers, a Christian concert and spoken word.

On this day, the Joy Class of Shandon United Methodist Church honored Dr. Harvey Allen and remembered Judy Allen in their service to the church.

Dr. Allen taught the adult Joy Class for 50 years, while Mrs. Allen taught the 4-year-old children for 44 years. She passed away in February.

Planning for the celebration was done over a period of a year and a half. Just think of the hands involved: the original planning committee, plus each member of the Joy Class contributing items for Harvest Hope, Family Promise, Epworth Children's Home, Oliver Gospel Mission, Family Shelter, Sistercare and Killingsworth. Those faithful

servants who delivered the items to the designated places were always ready to go when called. In addition to this, Jubilee Celebration roses were planted on the church campus in honor of the Allens, and notices were placed in the Shandon newsletter with a tribute in the Jubilee Sunday bulletin.

In the midst of all this activity, contributions were being made to the newly established Dr. Harvey A. and Judy M. Allen Educational Fund.

The Allen Fund Committee is working diligently to get all the details completed before launching the project.

Even though none of the members of the Joy Class were successful in growing the Jubilee Watermelons, slices of watermelon were available for all to enjoy at the end of the celebration.

What a glorious day this Jubilee Celebration has been for the Joy Class, Shandon UMC and the Allen Family.

Adams is president of the Joy Class of Shandon UMC.

Immerse 2021 canceled because of COVID-19 spike

After much prayer and deliberation, South Carolina Conference Ministries with Young People has decided to postpone its upcoming event Immerse, originally scheduled for Nov. 12-14 at Asbury Hills.

Leaders said the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase in the state's number of cases and hospitalizations prompted their decision. As they noted, this time, young people are being infected at much higher rates than they were earlier in the pandemic.

"As the spike in cases has continued to rise, it became increasingly challenging to create the Immerse experience for young people and still feel confident that we could do that in a safe manner," the design team said in a release. "Sleeping arrangements are a big concern, as lodging at Asbury Hills for Immerse cannot be accomplished without combining participants from different churches in the same cabins. During the summer, Asbury Hills was able to keep cabins grouped together as they dined, slept and participated in activities to decrease exposure risks.

"One of the beautiful and most powerful features of Immerse is the opportunity for participants from different churches to mingle together for breakouts, worship, dining and family group times. Keeping participants separate from those from other churches severely limits the Immerse experience."

If a church has already paid registration fees, the person who made the reservation should have received a separate email with details about refunds. If not, email info@scmyp.org.

The design team will now focus on Immerse 2022, with plans to make it an experience that will be worth the wait.

Revolution youth event to be one-day format

The Revolution Design Team is planning a new format for Revolution 2022: a one-day event on Saturday, Jan. 29.

Organizers said the change will allow churches from anywhere in the South Carolina Conference to be a part of Revolution without having to stay overnight, if they so choose.

Revolution will begin mid-morning and

wrap up before 9 p.m. to ensure all participants can make the trip in one day. Organizers said not only will this option allow churches to be a part of Revolution as a more affordable experience, it also will eliminate the need for overnight stays for most groups.

Regular registration will open Oct. 15.

For more information: <http://scmyp.org/revolution>.



Wesley Grove's new motto is "One God One Church One Community #JustBelieve."

Courtesy of the Rev. Johnny Epps

Church motto contest brings unity and needed morale boost

COTTAGEVILLE—It was a long time coming, but Wesley Grove United Methodist Church now has a new motto and renewed morale.

It all began three years ago at Wesley Grove as an idea by pastor Johnny Epps for a church motto contest.

The motto would come from the congregation by way of a contest between the members, with the winning slogan to be printed on the church bulletin and also on T-shirts to be worn by the members.

Church members voluntarily submitted their slogans, pastor included, to be voted upon by a select group of judges. The final three were to be voted on by the congregation after service. After the votes came in, they were tallied, and the winning motto was announced: "One God One Church One Community #JustBelieve," with the acronym "1G1C1C."

The winner was not the pastor's, but he was excited about the overall choice, as well as the fun and unity it brought among the members.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and other financial dilemmas, the church needed to make repairs on its air conditioning unit, and funds were not available to print the T-shirts. But with faith and trust in God to deliver his promises and answer prayers, the church never stopped worshipping or serving God through the pandemic. They found different ways to go about it, utilizing both drive-up and dial-in church, all the while staying obedient to the call of God and duty of the church.

In July, the project once thought abandoned came to fruition. The church was able to purchase more than 50 shirts, and all members were given one free of charge. Members at-large and abroad were also included.

In these uncertain times, something as small as a T-shirt can boost the morale of a small church. As Epps said, "We are Wesley Grove: 1G1C1C #JustBelieve."

South Carolina Conference United Methodist Women

49th Annual Meeting via Zoom

All persons are invited to attend our 2021 event.

Registration is Free.

Theme: Exercising Faith Over Fear

Saturday October 23, 2021 at 9:30 AM

The South Carolina Conference United Methodist Women's Program Committee is excited to once again offer our Annual Meeting in a virtual format. We pray that you have plans to be in attendance and are looking forward to seeing United Methodist Women members from around the state. Jacquelyn Session, Carol Lee, Lytleton UMW and the Hartsville District will be our host.

This year's keynote speaker will be Rev. Angela Marshall, pastor of St. John UMC, Lugoff. She has a word of encouragement from the Lord to share with each of us. During this time of many changes we must continue "Exercising Faith Over Fear." Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:9 ESV).



Bible Study will be led by Rev. Brenda Thomas, pastor of Good Hope UMC. We will look at the scriptures in a personal manner allowing us to apply it to daily living. I encourage you to have your Bible before you during this time of studying God's word. Come with an open heart and open mind to receive direction from God through his servant.

Session One will include our Bible Study Leader, Love Feast, Videos and greetings from Bishop L. Jonathan Hoston and others. It will begin at 9:30 and end at 11:00 AM. **Session Two** will include our Keynote Speaker, Elections, Videos and much more. It will begin at 12:00 noon and end at 1:30 PM. PDonations in lieu of a registration fee are encouraged and will be divided among our South Carolina United Methodist Women Mission Projects. Please make your check payable to SCCUMW and mail it to: Ruby Hannah, Treasurer at 3015 Audubon Drive Hanahan, SC 29410.

Register in advance online at www.umcsc.org/ministries/discipleship/united-methodist-women or by mail using the paper registration form found on this same website. Questions should be directed to Bernice Wright, Registrar at (803) 428-6705 or emailing bmwright44@yahoo.com.



Visit our website: <https://www.umcsc.org/discipleship/united-methodist-women/>

Rev. John Watts has been a great spiritual pastor and we appreciate his leadership.

Jordan Charge, Manning

RM HELPS ALDERSGATE: Members donate more than \$6K

From Page 1

Because of COVID-19, Gatch said, “We’ve all been separated all over the state, not seen each other, talked to each other, just become complacent. This was an opportunity to get together, to remind ourselves we are still here and our church still has a ways to go. And it did exactly what we wanted it to do—it helped a good charity we all felt was a good cause and brought our group together.”

As of press time, Reconciling Ministries has raised more than \$6,000 for Aldersgate, and more funds continue to roll in. One hundred percent of the donated funds will go to Aldersgate.

“Aldersgate is just one of those underserved ministries in the UMC, and a lot of people don’t know about it,” Gatch said. “As soon as they figure out what it is, they are immediately supportive. Almost everyone knows someone with an adult special needs child. The parents are their caregivers, and they get older or die, and they can’t take care of these adults who’ve been taken care of all their lives.”

Aldersgate provides housing for men and women with special needs so they can live in a Christian environment with a professional staff dedicated to providing a loving home. Currently, there are three Aldersgate homes in South Carolina—one in Columbia near Epworth Children’s Home that houses women with special needs, one in Orangeburg near The Oaks that houses men with special needs, and one called Rick’s House near The Manor in Florence for four men with special needs.

“Their mission is wonderful and we immediately and unanimously approved Aldersgate as an organization we wanted to work with,” Gatch said.



Sidney Gatch of Reconciling Ministries of South Carolina presents a check to Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry board chair Susan Kovas Sept. 13 on the campus of Aldersgate’s Columbia home, which houses six women with special needs. Reconciling Ministries raised more than \$6,000 for Aldersgate.

On Sept. 13, Gatch met Aldersgate Board Chair Susan Kovas at the Columbia home to present a check to their ministry.

Kovas said she is incredibly grateful for the donation.

“I just think it’s wonderful they had a heart for our ministry and saw there was a need,” Kovas said.

Kovas said Aldersgate is a much-needed ministry because adults with special needs are facing a tough situation.

“It’s almost a crisis, really, in our country and in our state because we have so many elderly parents taking care of special needs adults,” Kovas said. “What’s going to happen when they are no longer here to do it?”

“A lot of our residents would be homeless without our homes.”

Aldersgate was born out of a need for this type of ministry. One of the original board members, Yvette Hering, got together with other parents 25 years ago and decided there should be a support network for parents facing choices in housing for their adult children with special needs. They reached out to a number of faith organizations, and the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church immediately stepped up. The ministry grew under the leadership of the Rev. Milton and Betty Moss McGuirt, who guided and developed it into its present form. For many years, the board members handled every detail of the homes. In 2018,

Executive Director Elaine Mathis was hired. She and the board are taking Aldersgate to new heights.

In 2003, the South Carolina Conference approved Aldersgate as a ministry that would operate within the umbrella of the UMC. They formed a task force and incorporated that year, and in 2009 built their first two homes. The third home followed in 2016. They are hoping to build more in the future, and they are launching a pilot drop-in-style respite program at Grace UMC, Columbia, where parents can drop off their adult child while they run errands or go to the doctor. They are also working on a retreat program with Asbury Hills. Next May, residents of all three of the homes will spend a weekend at Asbury Hills, and they are hoping if this goes well to expand this to non-Aldersgate home residents, too.

Those who live at an Aldersgate home do not have to be United Methodist. There is a formal application, and they must possess the skills to live in a group home with staff that help them become as independent as possible. Many Aldersgate residents have jobs and volunteer responsibilities.

“It just doesn’t get any more important than this,” Kovas said about their ministry efforts.

Gatch said Reconciling Ministries of South Carolina hopes to do a statewide fundraiser regularly now to help others.

“We were just wanting to shine a light on Aldersgate, and that’s what we did,” Gatch said.

For more information about Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry, visit <https://www.aldersgatespecialneedsministry.org/>.

If you’d like to be included on Reconciling Ministries emails, send your contact information to SC.Reconciling.Ministries@gmail.com.

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BLACK CLERGY RETREAT: Many S.C. leaders led at event

From Page 1

Jesus took what they had, loaves and fish, and used it. His message is clear: We have more to work with than what we ever give ourselves credit for.

“It’s time to reverse our mindset,” Holston said. “We need as a Black church to look at who we are and whose we are and what we have at our disposal.”

We’ve got to revitalize, to use the gifts and graces we have and not just do same old thing but be open and willing to do a new thing.

Instead of sitting around waiting for big decisive moments, such as General Conference, or as Holston called it, “the big meeting,” we need to act now with what we have, working in the midst of what we are given.

Referencing Marvin Gaye’s song “What’s Going On” and Otis Redding’s “(Sittin’ On) The Dock of the Bay,” Holston turned the question to the clergy gathered.

“How willing are we as the Black church to see ‘what’s going on’ and to take next faithful step, or are we just going to keep ‘sittin’ on the dock of the bay, watchin’ the tide roll away, sittin’ on the dock of the bay wastin’ time?”

Current Realities and Missional Possibilities

Friday brought the next plenary, sharing his perspective on “Current Realities and Missional Possibilities.” He shared the power of using tools such as Mission Insight to understand the communities in which we serve.

Mission Insight gives conferences information on the people and areas in which a church is situated, including how many households in a certain radius are involved with a church, how many homes are in the area, what are the standard income levels and jobs in the area, how old are the people who live nearby, dominant races, etc.

Advertisers and businesses use this information for marketing, but churches can use it for reaching souls.

“To be the church in our current realities, we need leadership to sustain and multiply the growth of the Christian movement,” Friday said.

We often don’t take a walk or drive where our members live. We don’t know everyone. But tools like Mission Insight can help us know those in our community and our gathering space.

Seeing, Writing and Funding Your Vision

The next plenary was led by Henderson-Moore, who shared the importance of developing a clear vision and then implementing action around it.

In her position at the South Carolina Christian Action Council, she developed outlines for her first 100 days, her second 100 days and her third 100 days.

Then she identified needed tasks and efforts to achieve the goals for those time frames. Some include grant writing, while others involve communicating or connecting people.

‘If You Couldn’t Fail’

The Rev. Telley Gadson, new superintendent in South Carolina’s Hartsville District, brought the opening worship and devotion on Day 2 of the event, asking, “What would you do if you knew you couldn’t fail?”

That question has become the theme for her district’s ministry calendar year, and she is challenging her pastors and churches to do bold, Jesus-centered ministry with confidence.

“God Almighty took God’s time and poured treasures into us,” Gadson said—God knows what we can do through him. So we must reach far and wide, utilizing the treasures within us, so we can help God’s kingdom soar.

“Why are you putting off for tomorrow what you can do today? Maybe you’ve convinced yourself you’re not equipped for the task, you don’t have the time it takes, you can’t afford the risk.”

But even in the midst of distress, racism, sexism and more, God is always with us, and God’s grace is always sufficient.

Gadson lifted up what she called “a winning team combination of prayer, purpose and partnership.” Prayer is the key, and faith unlocks the door, she said. Ask God, and God will deliver. As for purpose, remember the important focus in our lives: We are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. What are the steps required to do this? And finally, understand your powerful partnership with Jesus and the rest of his body working with and around us.

“The UMC is a connectional church,” she said. “We have help all around us—the UMC connection, local church, district, conference, general church, charge conference, annual conference, jurisdictional conference, general conference.”

Use your partners, she said. Stop waiting and start doing.

The Power of Godly Vision

Daniels led next on “The Power of Godly Vision.” He shared how in his ministry at Emory UMC, Washington, D.C., God speaks vision in the center of the three circles; community vision, leader’s purpose and congregational passion.

“I’d always thought the vision comes from pastor, but that’s a lie straight from the pit of hell,” Daniels shared.

One day, God showed him that while he does have a role as “vision caster,” the vision itself comes from the leader, the people he serves and the people in the community who he might be ignoring.

As he learned, “As pastor, my responsibility is to discern what God is doing in ourselves, in our congregation and in our community.”

Every decade, Daniels said, he goes back to all the places where God spoke to him profoundly during his call to ensure he’s living in the purpose and plan God called him to. This helps him discern better.

During a discussion time, Daniels posed some questions:

Who/what does your heart break for, does your heartbreak line up with what you’re currently doing, what move do you need to make to address your heartbreak and how are you supporting people discovering their heartbreak?

“Sometimes those in the community will rise up and act even before your congregation will,” he noted.

We should find the “shiny eyes” in our midst—the ones who are eager and want to do the stuff. Embrace the people around you even if they don’t look like your congregation. If you’re a Black church in a White community, embrace the White folk around you. If you’re in a Latino community, embrace the Latinos around you.

Really explore your vision, he said. What do I really want to see come to pass? What are my prayers saying?

Reframe, Refocus, Retool

In the final plenary, Brady led on how the old days are gone. Now is a time to find a new way forward.

“God will bring good out of anything,” Brady told the crowd. “If we are willing to follow, surrender and change, to walk where God wants us to walk, we will flourish, but we cannot measure our faithfulness or success by old paradigms. The paradigms are broken.

“We need new paradigms.”

We are often so used to following our GPS, but sometimes errors occur, and following the GPS directions could take us into oncoming traffic. Likewise in the church, we must be wayfinders, open to reading the signs.

Brady shared some distress warning signs in communities, such as withdrawal, drop in functioning, problems thinking and concentrating, increased sensitivity, apathy or feeling disconnected. We need to see these signs and understand they are warnings, he said. Suicide ideation is on the rise, and there are so many negative effects on our minds and relationships because of COVID.

But God can bring good out of everything, and we must trust God.

“In the military we have ‘pathfinders,’ guys who go in and clear a path for others to come behind them. Spirit of God clears a path for us so we can follow God into the wilderness and not be fearful of what we are going to face.”

Now, we need some Joshuas and Calebs who will go before us and clear a path, making a new way.

Part of getting those wayfinders involves understanding our own psyche and mental health. Identify the ways your body responds to stress, how your personal and professional lives are affected by stress.

“We must understand so we can manage our stress and not let stress manage us,” Brady said.

The retreat also included fellowship opportunities such as dinners, free time on the beach, resource sharing with UMC agencies, and a time to hear the bishops reflect on what is ahead.

Episcopal bishop Michael Curry to keynote 2021 South Carolina Bishops Dialogue

The Most Rev. Michael Curry, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, will be the keynote speaker at the 2021 South Carolina Bishops Dialogue, set for Saturday, Oct. 30, at 9 a.m.



Curry

With the theme, “Love is the Way: The Cost of Beloved Community,” the event is presented by The Fellowship of South Carolina Bishops and The University of South Carolina Center for Civil Rights History and Research.

It will be held at The University of South Carolina Conference Center, Capstone Hall, Columbia.

As the descendant of slaves and the son of a civil rights activist, Curry’s life illustrates massive changes in our times.

Much of the world met Curry when he delivered his sermon on the redemptive power of love at the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle at Windsor Castle.

In Curry’s book, “Love is the Way,” he expands on his message of hope in an inspirational road map for living the way of love, illuminated with moving lessons from his own life.

There is no cost. However, seating is limited.

Registration deadline is Oct. 15. Register at <https://scsynod.com/2021dialogue>. The Fellowship of South Carolina Bishops

includes L. Jonathan Holston, resident bishop of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, as well as a

number of other church leaders, including Roman Catholic, African Methodist Episcopal, AME Zion and Lutheran.

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Columbia College ranked on four top lists

COLUMBIA—For the 2022 academic year, Columbia College was ranked on four of the U.S. News and World Report Best Colleges lists: Best Regional University in the South, Best Value School in the South, Best College for Veterans and Top Performers on Social Mobility.

The report evaluates more than 1,800 different institutions of higher education to assess each university's overall academic quality.

"We are thrilled to hear Columbia College's place in the rankings," said Columbia College President Dr. Tom Bogart. "Columbia College works to empower our students with a world-class education and unique opportunities, preparing them for a life of impact. It is incredible to be a part of the progress we have made and to see the possibilities for our future."

Columbia College ranked 40 out of 137 in the Best Regional Universities in the South category. Variables considered for ranking

include categories such as retention and graduation rates, class sizes, student-to-faculty ratios, and acceptance rates. The college was also ranked 19 in Best Value Schools in the southern region for 2022. Columbia College was one of 58 schools in the southern region that were recognized. Columbia College is ranked 39 in the region for Best Colleges for Veterans. In order to be considered for this ranking, the school must be certified for the G.I. Bill®, participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program and enroll a minimum of 20 veterans and/or active-duty military.

Finally, Top Performers on Social Mobility ranked Columbia College in the top four in the southern region. This designation identifies how well schools graduated students who received federal Pell Grants (those typically coming from households whose family incomes are less than \$50,000 annually, though most Pell Grant money goes to students with a total family income below \$20,000).

Wofford names first chief equity officer

SPARTANBURG—Dr. Dwain C. Pruitt has been named Wofford College's first chief equity officer.

In this role, Pruitt, a 1995 Wofford graduate, will lead the college's collaborative efforts to advance strategic goals, with emphasis on informing diversity initiatives, policy development, campus climate and the implementation of high-impact efforts that ensure inclusion. He also will ensure institutional compliance with applicable federal and state laws related to Title IX.

Pruitt comes to Wofford most recently from the University of Louisville, where he served as the assistant dean for curriculum and governance in the College of Arts and Sciences.

For the past year, Pruitt has served as a consultant on the "History, Memory and Place" working group of the Wofford College Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion task force. Pruitt earned his master's and doctoral degrees in early modern European history/colonial Latin America from Emory University. His primary research focus is race and slavery in 18th-century France, but he also studies contemporary popular culture and media. He has published, edited and lectured widely on a variety of topics.

He was Wofford's ninth Presidential International Scholar.



View from the Pews

by Bill Barnier

Are we serious yet?

Reading the *Advocate* is always informative for me. As a commentary contributor I often find food for thought in preparing my monthly contribution. In this time of anti-everything, cancel everything, misjudge and mislabel everything, there no longer seems to be responsibility for anything, either.

Reading about the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference's anti-racism efforts (*Advocate*, Page 12), I was impressed by the six responses addressed by the South Carolina video titled, "Our Response to Racism." Clergy meetings, group conversations, cross-racial exchanges, jubilee, healing and accountable honesty in society are all necessary steps toward God's command to love one another. But hearts wrapped in generational prejudice and simmered in the heat of historical practice are difficult to change.

While moving to the next page of the *Advocate*, the centerfold of this edition, my attention was drawn to the announcement of the Carolinas Black Clergy Leadership Retreat in August. Really? One page announces the anti-racism conference, while the facing page announces a Black clergy conference. Does it sound as though Methodist leadership talks with "forked tongue," as my Native American friends were known to say?

Several years ago our church temporarily adopted a young couple and their newborn who were down on their luck, giving them room, rent and a few days of food to tide them over. One day, my wife drove the husband to a predominantly African American United Methodist church food bank seeking baby food and produce for the family. When they arrived and moved toward the building, a church member intercepted them and rudely said the food was not for "their kind" and told them to leave.

On another occasion, the topic of increasing the membership of our own church

moved toward a suggestion that we invite our African-American Methodist brothers and sisters to join us in worship. One of our members, of several generations of local Southern Methodists, whispered to the person next to them that they didn't want "their kind" in our church.

Our prejudices run deep in our generational DNA on both sides! I learned late in his life that my father, a devout Catholic, was quick to voice racist opinions commonly expressed after the turn of the 19th century, with no fact to support his opinion. Raised in the West and free of regional notions, my arrival in the heart of Dixie was an incredible culture shock, and the chasm of racial division still seems far from closing.

Nowadays, the unbalanced exploitation of racial, gender and ethnic differences is out of control in the media, politics, business and yes, churches. Leadership in all venues talk of unity while the sinister forces of evil keep separation and strife lurking in the background. They're subtle and stealthy, but unwavering in destructive purpose.

Are we ready to change? To do so will require a deep, meaningful inspection of our personal and societal core values and beliefs. All people must willingly question the very origins of personal beliefs and attitudes that allow judgment without fact, beliefs without reason and life without an honest spiritual connection. Without voluntary spiritual discipline, truth, love and unity may never be possible for any of us. True, we are free to make our own decisions, but we are not free of the consequences of those decisions.

If everyone were blind, able to see everything except each other, how would things be different? By allowing the Holy Spirit to be our eyes, we may never find reason to use the worst of human behavior. Evil loses!

Barnier attends St. Paul United Methodist Church, Ridgeland.



Courtesy of Jodie Plyler

When the youth lead ...

The youth of Tabernacle UMC, Lancaster, led the worship service Aug. 8, performing a dramatic version of the song "Let the Truth Be Told." The youth also sponsored a mission project to collect school supplies. These supplies were collected and donated to the United Way of Lancaster County for distribution to schools and teachers in the Lancaster County School District. The Rev. Larry King is pastor and youth leaders are Leslie and Dwayne Plyler.

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Ashland United Methodist Church's congregation takes great pleasure in recognizing

Pastors Scott Efird and Reggie Rowell

for their dedication to our Lord, the United Methodist Church, Ashland United Methodist Church, and to the congregation of Ashland United Methodist Church.

As every nation and every person living in these most difficult times have seen and endured the challenges of this pandemic of the last almost two years, Pastor Efird and Pastor Rowell have asked for and listened to our concerns, given encouragement, given compassion, and provided leadership during this most difficult time.

The congregation of Ashland United Methodist Church wishes to honor and recognize Pastors Efird and Rowell for this dedication and we say "thank you."

Pendleton Charge celebrates many blessings in chaotic world

What are the odds of having so much to celebrate? With so much going on in the world that's not right and sometimes depressing, the Pendleton Charge—Bethel and Central UMCs—had a day of celebration on the fourth Sunday in July.

They celebrated service to country, birthdays, graduations, baptisms and the Lord above all, who continues to bless his people.

That day, Hack Garrison was honored by Quilts of Valor Foundation for his service in the United States Army. Garrison, who has been shut in, was able to attend church that day to receive his quilt. The quilts are handmade and each one is different. Garrison's quilt has a large star in the center.

Garrison was wrapped in his quilt by Tommy Forrest, Anderson County coordinator, and Carol Burdett, former mayor of Pendleton and a member of Pendleton UMC. Pastor Carleathea Benson presented Garrison with a plaque from his church family recognizing his military service. A cake to honor him was also served.

The Pendleton Charge also celebrated those persons who had a birthday in the month of July: John Hunter, Irene Webb and Stacy Walters. Members sang "Happy Birthday" and enjoyed a cake made in their honor.

Also celebrated were those in the 2021 graduating class, including three who graduated from high school and one from college. Jaqavious Clark and his twin brother, Jacari, graduated from Pendleton High School and will be attending Spartanburg Methodist College. Niya Reese graduated from Daniel High School and will attend South Carolina State University. Devante Wrenn, a graduate of Daniel High School Class of 2016, received his bachelor's degree from Limestone University.

The Pendleton Charge celebrated the baptism of 4-month-old Remington Maddox Goynes. He is the son of Andrew and Santina (Walters) Goynes and the great-grandson of



Hack Garrison is wrapped in his quilt by Carol Burdett and Tommy Forrest near his cake. on was honored by Quilts of Valor Foundation for his service in the United States Army.



Graduates share a smile as they gather with their cake and Hack Garrison, right, honored by Quilts of Valor Foundation for his service in the United States Army.



Photos courtesy of Doug Powers and Pastor Carleathea Benson. Santina Goynes holds her son as Pastor Carleathea Benson baptizes him.

David and Stacy Walters. They were visiting from Virginia Beach, Virginia.

"Amazingly, all that water cascading from his head to his face didn't bother him one bit," Benson said with a smile.

And last, but not least, the Pendleton Charge celebrated God for his faithfulness, love and his love made known to all through his son, Jesus. The question was asked, "What are the odds?" What are the odds of a youth leaving home with a lunch of three fish and five barley loaves being in the same crowd that Jesus would need to feed? What are the odds that so little could feed so many? What are the odds that 12 baskets of leftovers were collected?

And yet, as Benson shared in John 6:1-21, Jesus makes it clear that if we trust what we have and who we are to him, our little can become much, the few can become many and our weakness can produce our strengths.



Photo courtesy of Katie Jeter

A good sendoff

Sunday, Aug. 15, was a special day for Memorial UMC, Greer, as the congregation honored students and teachers before the start of a new school year with back-to-school blessings, a blessing of the backpacks and the presentation of Bibles to rising third graders. They also hosted their first churchwide catered meal since early March 2020. Katie Jeter, director of children's ministries, said it was a wonderful Sunday, and all were thankful for the opportunity to pray over students and teachers, honor them with special gifts and send them off to do big things with the blessings of their church family. That Sunday was also the final day of collection for Memorial's school supply drive to support a local elementary school, Chandler Creek. They filled the trunk and back seat of one SUV to capacity with brand-new backpacks, notebook paper, folders, pens and pencils along with other requested supplies.



Charge gives book bags, supplies to local children

The Rembert-St. John Charge of the Hartsville District, which includes Beulah, McLeod Chapel and St. John UMCs, came together in community outreach recently. The churches welcomed 30 children back to school at West Lee Elementary School, Rembert, with 30 book bags filled with school supplies. "As pastor I give all praise to God for the prayers, love and compassion shown," said the Rev. Debra Anderson-Joe. "Yes, Jesus lives, and he lives in the hearts of the people of the Rembert-St. John Charge, Hartsville District." From left are Bernard McDaniel Sr., superintendent of Lee County Schools; Mable Bush; Anne Seegars; Anderson-Joe; Jane Winch and Dr. Veronica K. Bradley, principal.



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THE BENNETTSVILLE PARISH

Epworth Children's Home

'Johnsons come to Epworth'

This month, we share a note written by James T. Johnson, Epworth resident beginning in 1914:

Johnsons come to Epworth

Tragedy struck early in my life: July 1912. I was 5 years old when my mother died. At that time, my family lived in the Cool Springs area of Horry County. There were seven children in the family.

After my mother's death we moved to McCall to a mill village where Dad secured work in this textile plant. We lived in a company house, such as supplied for the employees at that time by the mill owners. However, bad luck followed us up to Marlboro County from Horry. Our father passed away in April 1914, leaving seven little children alone and helpless. Our good neighbors came and took us into their homes. I recall living a week to 10 days with a couple with a teenaged son. Other brothers and sisters were parceled out to different families in the community.

However, this was to be only temporary. Dad had made his wishes known before his death. We were to go to the orphanage in Columbia, a Methodist institution now known as Epworth Children's Home. Our oldest brother, Stanley, didn't go because he was past the age limit. Needless to say, today I am grateful and appreciative to the Methodist Church for giving us a home when we were in need.

I well recall the train ride down to Columbia. The old steam engine was fired with coal. It huffed and puffed and didn't move too fast. But it was much more exciting to children then than is a diesel train trip today. In fact it was about the only means of transportation. Of course there were horses and buggies, mules and wagons for short trips, but for long journeys, a train was the answer.

Yes, the auto was in its infancy, so to speak, so you can understand when I say we were met at Union Station that night in Columbia by a young man with a horse and buggy to transport us youngsters over to our new abode. Oh, we were a tired and bewildered bunch of children ready for bed. Thus, our new and changed life began at Epworth.

I shall devote a few paragraphs that follow to give a peep into our life at our new home with its many children. But first, let me say that we really had a blessing in disguise, not immediately obvious to us of course. It was this: Had our father lived, we children would almost for sure have been put to work in that cotton mill up in McCall. It's a fact that children 10-12 years of age were employed at this time and worked about 12 hours a day. Here at Epworth we worked, but we also went to school.

Many, many youngsters were employed in work on farms and mills over our state. Illiteracy was widespread. We were fortunate that here at our new home, school attendance was compulsory.

Our lifestyle improved in other areas, also: Our homes at Epworth were supplied with an abundance of running water, and indoor toilets were being installed when we arrived. It was years later before these luxuries were available to the general public. Even today, some areas of our state are not endowed with these accommodations.

Dear Epworth, we love thee for thy tender care;

With loyal devotion we sing praises clear!

When early we asked for thy sheltering

arms

You folded us in them and kept us from harm.

As daily we labor beneath thy fond eye,
You fill us with love and ambition so high;

You've done for us all that a mother could do,

So, Epworth, we hope that the best comes to you.

When I arrived at Epworth, the source of water was a windmill between our home and what we called the girl's home. Out-houses were to the back of the campus. There were no bathtubs, only a sink (metal).

Then they installed pumps and a big tank such as you see in many towns and manufacturing plants.

Then came the toilets next and a concrete bathtub. Before that the big boys lined up at the old industrial building (Holmes Building) on Saturdays to get a bath with Octagon Soap and drying as best they could with towels made of flour sacks. The small boys in our home were bathed on Saturdays in a tin tub with water heated over the stove.

Hot water heaters came with showers and a real bathtub for each home in 1917, but drying was still with flour sacks. The sheets on the beds were made from unbleached muslin, the Laurens Cotton Mill contributing for several years a bale of such cloth. Towels and linen as we know them today did not come in use until 1922.

It was Hr. Roberts with the help of one of the lady members of the board who made an appeal to the Methodist Church for a linen shower, and for the first time each home had for use real towels and sheets that dressed us up quite a bit. Sore eyes requiring scraping was the result of children using the same towel.

When I arrived and up until 1917, the dairy barn was in the lower southeastern corner of the campus, and the cows grazed on the campus. Where Dreher High School now stands was part of the farm and land owned by Epworth. This extended to the now-Trenholm Road section of Columbia. The campus itself consisted of 30 acres.

Half the year (nine months) the children alternated going to school. That is, half would go to school in the morning, and half in the afternoon.

This continued until 1919.

The first steam heat we knew was for the then recently newly constructed dining hall and high school section (upstairs). Until 1948 or thereabouts every home would be heated only by stove or fireplace, as would every classroom. Getting kindling and coal was a chore every child experienced, and it was the duty of the larger boys to build the fires.

Now, all has changed. All are new homes, well-heated and with some cottages having only 12-15 children, with one house mother (no longer called matrons) and an assistant. Each gets a day off per week, a good salary, insurance and retirement benefits.

So it was when James Johnson needed a home, and a place to grow up.

So it is today and more, where children and families can find the resources they need to move from places of hardship to a place that models the love of Christ.

We celebrate 125 years of providing hope and care to people who need it most.

—Submitted by Epworth Children's Home



Photos courtesy of Donnie Hipp

Saluda Serve

Armed with hammers, nails and hearts that reflect Jesus, about 50 youth and adults gathered in Saluda this summer to spend a week of service, repairing a number of homes in their community. Called Saluda Serve, the ministry was inspired by Salkehatchie Summer Service. This was their fifth year of service, and the teams spent the last week in July doing three roof jobs, repairing the front porch and bathroom at one house, and cleaning up four different yards. The churches that participate vary each year, but this year, participating were Bethany, Emory and Nazareth UMCs in Saluda, as well as Saluda, Good Hope, Red Bank and Salem Baptist churches. Bethany member Donnie Hipp, along with Trey Shealy of Radius and Lexington and Phillip Hurt, organize the service effort. Above is one of the homes from 2020—at top is before, at bottom is after.



Photos courtesy of Mary L. Abbott

Home renovations in Camden

Youth from Lyttleton Street UMC in Camden participated in STAYahatchie, their alternative to Salkehatchie, this summer. Twenty-four youth and eight adults renovated a home in Camden, making improvements to the plumbing and septic system, kitchen, bathroom, den and dining room. New appliances were purchased and installed, yard work was performed and debris cleaned up. Windows were reframed and the entire exterior of the house was pressure washed and painted.



PASTOR APPRECIATION MONTH
Rev. Ronnie Lee Jeffcoat
Thank you for your faithful service and your heart.
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Killingsworth stay-at-home gala set for Nov. 11

Killingsworth is gearing up for its annual gala, and as with last year, it will be an online event.

The theme for the stay-at-home gala is “Home for the Holidays... Again” and is intended to be a night of joy and inspiration that celebrates the women who live at Killingsworth and the home’s many years of love and service. Killingsworth is a United Methodist home that helps women in crisis to transform their lives.

The gala will be Nov. 11 at 7 p.m.

Registration is free, and sponsorships are available.

To register: www.killingsworth.org.

The unmeasurable power of a pocket prayer quilt

By Crystal Barrs

Several years ago, I attended Osceola United Methodist Church in Indian Land, part of the Rock Hill District. I was amazed at the beautiful pocket prayer quilts their church had in a small basket as you entered their sanctuary.

I started requesting pocket prayer quilts to share with others. I have sent them to firefighters in California and family and friends throughout the states and wanted to start this ministry through our church at Good Shepherd UMC and other churches in South Carolina.

At one of the last in-person gatherings of the conference United Methodist Women’s “Come Together Be Together” events, we had the opportunity to learn how to make these wonderful gifts for those in need of prayer and hope. I have been sharing with others the awesome healing power of God through these small quilts.

Ann Thomas has been the sole person at our small church who has been creating the pocket prayer quilts for Good Shepherd.

She sews each one and puts them together with much love. Prayers are said over them during the sewing and after they are given to recipients.

Many recipients say they have been moved beyond measure by the pocket prayer quilts. I have seen the rewards from people who have received these small gifts quilts, and I am so grateful to Osceola UMC for inspiring this idea. So many people have received them. I don’t know how I know who to share with except that God leads me to those who receive them. Just today a man who came into my work said, “Hey, I have worn out my pocket prayer quilt.” I assured him that as soon as I get another supply of them, I will get one for him.

God’s hands are all in this ministry, and I will be forever grateful for the small part I have had in Good Shepherd’s pocket prayer quilts. May God continue to bless the receivers and those who share God’s amazing healing grace.

Barrs is a member of Good Shepherd UMC, Lancaster.



Photo courtesy of Wanda Altman-Shirah

Helping the Armenian people

Project AGAPE is a ministry to Armenia in a joint effort with the Armenian Apostolic Church and churches in the North Carolina, Western North Carolina and South Carolina conferences of The United Methodist Church. Members of Trinity UMC, York, have been working monthly for more than five years in support of this mission effort. COVID-19 has affected the Armenian people in ways similar to those across the world. With incomes flattened, it is difficult to put food on the table, much less to buy clothing for their children. There is currently a great need for new or gently used children’s clothing. The team from Trinity packed new clothes for shipment to Armenia at the end of August at the Terrell, North Carolina facility. This is the same facility that serves as a Mission Resource Center for UMCOR.

Emmanuel serves neighbors through ‘grab and go’ summer food program

CAMDEN—Emmanuel United Methodist Church of the East Camden Charge participated in a food giveaway program this summer sponsored by the Kershaw County United Way.

The program was held June 21 through July 26.

Dr. Ransom Smith and Brother Thomas Thompson, trustees of the church, picked up the food from Camden High School each morning around 9 a.m. Upon arriving at the church, the temperature of the food was taken. If the food was deemed safe, members of the United Methodist Women helped to package the food into bags to be distributed to parents of the children. The parents were able to pick up lunch and breakfast for their children for an entire week.

The food was distributed from 10-11 a.m. on Mondays only.

The church was able to serve food to 35 children.

Each bag held enough food for five days and included breakfast, lunch and milk. If more than 35 showed up needing food, they were sent to Camden High School for food offered there.

Normally, the church would be holding Camp Emmanuel during this period. However, the camp was closed last year and this year because of COVID-19. Also, one of the founders of Camp Emmanuel in the person,



From left are Patricia Smith, Thomas Thompson, Eva Bell Tucker and Ollie Thompson-Brisbane. (Not pictured: Ransom Smith.)

Valerie E. Grant, passed away this year.

The food giveaway program was called “Grab And Go” because the parents did not have to leave their cars; food was loaded into their cars for them.

The Rev. Jerry L. Dicks is pastor of the church.



United Methodist Women

by Janice Cockfield Eaddy

Getting ready for annual meeting

Greetings! It is my prayer that all of you are well and have escaped the virus or recovered fully if impacted by it in the past.

God has truly captured the attention of our nation and shown us there are different ways of accomplishing our goals. With that thought in mind, the members of the South Carolina Conference United Methodist Women’s Program Planning Committee decided to once again offer our events virtually.

Our first event will be the 49th SC-CUMW Annual Meeting, to be held Oct. 23 using two different sessions. This year’s theme is “Exercising Faith Over Fear” using as our chosen Scripture Joshua 1:9, which reads, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” While it is a virtual event, we are planning to include some of our favorite elements, as well as ensure all required business functions are completed.

As in years past, we will have the pleasure of South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston joining our meeting during the opening ceremonies. Thank you, Bishop Holston, for your continued support of our purpose of United Methodist Women. We feel so privileged to have you as a member of the South Carolina United Methodist Women organization!

The Rev. Brenda Thomas, of Good Hope UMC, will be leading our Bible study during Session One, on how there is a word from the Lord, and it will be delivered through his servant. Session One will also include our Love Feast, several National United Methodist Women videos and other treats that were planned with you in mind. Please plan to be present via Zoom or by phone

and join early. The Zoom sign-in and password will be sent to all registered participants at a later date.

For Session Two, the Rev. Angela Marshall of Lytleton Street UMC will be joining our meeting as our keynote speaker. She will bring a message I am sure you will not want to miss and will truly enjoy.

Session Two will also include our business session filled with unit recognitions, special music and the general business, which includes elections of new and continuing officers, as well as recognition of our retiring officers.

There is no registration fee this year, and you have the option to register online at www.umcsc.org under “UM Women Ministries” or by mailing a paper registration version to our registrar, Bernice Wright.

The paper version is available online at www.umcsc.org. Paper versions must be postmarked no later than Oct. 19, and there is no deadline for online registration.

Don’t miss your opportunity to receive a “surprise gift” by registering early.

This year’s hosts are Jacquelyn Session, Carol Lee, Lytleton Street United Methodist Women and the ladies of the Hartsville District. Session One will go from 9:30-11 a.m., then we will take a break. Session Two will go from 12-1:30 p.m.

Attendees are encouraged to contribute to our love offering that will be divided among our South Carolina United Methodist Women Mission Projects. Make your check payable to SCCUMW and mail it to Ruby Hannah, treasurer, 3015 Audubon Drive, Hanahan, SC 29410.

As always we thank you for your support of our mission projects and their good work of supporting women, children and youth.

Eaddy is SCCUMW vice president.

CUMC Pastor Fran Elrod
We love you and we are glad you are our pastor.
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St. Paul United Methodist Church
511 Knights Hill Rd., Camden SC 29020

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” —Matthews 5:16

It is an honor for our church family to pause and offer words of appreciation to our pastor, **Rev. Dr. James P. Smith**, and First Lady, **Rev. Millie N. Smith**, during Pastor Appreciation Month.

Dr. Smith and Rev. Smith, you are indeed a reflection of God’s love and we want you to know how very much we appreciate you and all that you do for the church and community.

The St. Paul (Camden) UM Church Family



From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

Early Methodism in York County

Every so often, I try to write about Methodism in some part of our state. Often articles from older *Advocates* help tell the story, as sometimes the *Advocate* would report on an anniversary celebration. Other times, in advance of the Annual Conference being held in a particular city, the *Advocate* would feature stories about the congregations in the area. This month, I've looked at some articles about Methodism in York County and Rock Hill.

A series of articles in 1908 talked about some of the early history of Methodism in York County, and they came from an address delivered at the 50th anniversary of Rock Hill Methodism in 1856. The articles featured the life and work of the Rev. William Gassaway, a Virginia native who ended up in York County as a young man. There he felt God's call and made his confession to a Presbyterian clergyman, mostly because he couldn't find any other clergy in the area. He wound up in the Methodist Church and joined the Annual Conference in 1788. He was an itinerant for close to 26 years—quite a stretch in that era. In 1809, he hosted a visit by Bishop Francis Asbury when the pioneer bishop was traveling through York County on his way to meet the South Carolina Conference. A few years later, Gassaway decided to locate over Asbury's protests, but the clergyman had a family to support. It was hard for clergy to have families in that era, a sentiment Asbury expressed when he supposedly claimed that "the women and the devil are getting all of my preachers!"

It was also in an 1812 visit in York County, according to his journal, that Asbury arrived at some notable brethren's home after a cold December ride and noted "brandy and the Bible were both handed me; one was enough, I took but one." Asbury doesn't say which. Presumably, as a bishop, he had a Bible.

Gassaway and the Rev. Joseph Holmes organized Trinity, York, the oldest Methodist church in York County, in 1824. They held the first Sunday school there in 1826. Gassaway remained involved with Trinity until his death in 1833, and so he is considered the pioneer of Methodism in York County. The church continued to grow, and of course as the new town of Rock Hill grew, Methodism took root there. The church that eventually became St. John's got its start in 1856, moving twice before building its current sanctuary in the mid-1920s. Articles about the history of St. John's and other Methodist congregations around Rock Hill in 1926 appeared in the *Advocate* in advance of the 1926 session of the Upper South Carolina Conference, which St. John's hosted. St. John's was initially part of the Rock Hill Circuit, but had long since become a station appointment in 1926. Other churches on that circuit in 1926 included Mount Holly, Friendship, Antioch and Catawba. Mount Holly had 285 members "and the most progressive and cooperative membership to be found anywhere." The circuit as a whole had just over 500 members.

Besides the churches on the Rock Hill Circuit, the *Advocate* ran pictures of the Park Methodist Church on Jones Avenue and the Ogden Church, a rural church that was less than three years old.

Of course, Methodism continued to grow and influence life in York County well after 1926, but the stories of these churches show what a good foundation the church has in the area.

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

Rehoboth celebrates 110 years

By Raegan Teller

The name Rehoboth comes from Genesis 26:22 and means "open spaces," which is fitting for Rehoboth United Methodist Church in Columbia.

In 1910, when a group of local citizens decided to start a church in their community, Marion Dent offered them the land, which was an open space except for a small chicken house. By 1911, the founding members were able to build a wooden church building on the property and joined the Methodist Conference. Since then, the church has built a diverse membership—an open space for all.

In celebration of its 110th anniversary, the church will host a special event Oct. 17, following the worship service. The theme will be "Remembering Our Loved Ones."

A short service will be held at 12:30 p.m. in the Christian Life Center, after which the church members and guests will gather in the cemetery, where butterflies will be released in honor of those who have gone on before them. Special invitations will be sent to their families, but the anniversary and celebratory



This magnolia in the church cemetery symbolizes the endurance of Rehoboth UMC.

event is open to all.

Within the church cemetery, a living reminder stands in testament to the congregation's enduring love and dedication. This reminder, a magnolia tree planted in 1950 by Miriam Smith Hollis and her grandmother Mrs. L.W. Smith, symbolizes the endurance of Rehoboth UMC's 110 years of service to God and community.

**In Honor of Pastor Meghan Cook,
our wonderful minister
at Cayce United Methodist Church.**



Conference Historical Society

by Dr. Roger M. Gramling

Francis Asbury and the Samuel Burdine Family

When friends of the Burdine Lodge Restoration Project gather on Saturday, Nov. 13, at 1 p.m., at the Hagood Mill Historic Site near Pickens to celebrate the restoration and opening of the Samuel Burdine Log Home, another link in the relationship between South Carolina and Bishop Francis Asbury will be connected.

Francis Asbury, born in 1745 in Handsworth, Staffordshire, England, to parents who were members of one of Wesley's societies, was licensed as a local preacher at the age of 18.

At a conference in Bristol, John Wesley called for volunteers from among his preachers to go to America. Asbury answered that call having felt led to such a venture. He set sail from Bristol and arrived in Philadelphia in October 1771. At the time, Methodists in America numbered less than 500, mostly in New York and Philadelphia. When the American Revolution broke out, Asbury chose to remain in America while other clergy chose to return to England.

In 1780, at the request of the remaining Methodist preachers, Asbury assumed supervisory duties temporarily over the Methodist work in America. Wesley, realizing that change in the Methodist Movement in America leading towards the organization of a separate church was inevitable, "set aside" an associate, Dr. Thomas Coke—who, like Wesley, was an Anglican priest—to be a "general superintendent" to oversee the work in North America also instructing him to ordain and likewise "set aside" Francis Asbury as a joint "general superintendent."

Coke, accompanied by Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, themselves recently ordained by Wesley, arrived in America in November 1784. A conference of the American preachers was convened on Dec. 24, 1784, at the Lovely Lane Meetinghouse in Baltimore, Maryland. Sixty preachers were able to attend.

In keeping with Wesley's instructions, Asbury was ordained a deacon on Dec. 25, an elder on Dec. 26, and the next day "set aside" as a "general superintendent." At Asbury's insistence both he and Thomas Coke were first "elected" to the General Superintendency by the American preachers. During the conference, henceforth known as the "Christmas Conference," a new church was organized in America to be known as the Methodist Episcopal Church, episcopal in its form of government as Wesley had insisted, but independent of Wesley, yet obligated to his theological and liturgical influence.

Coke soon returned to England making only infrequent visits to America thus leaving the supervision of the work in America largely to Asbury. While Asbury in time came to prefer the title "bishop" over general superintendent, he took the "general superintendency" of the work to heart. First by horseback and toward the end of his life by carriage, he traveled with rare respites from Methodist Society to Methodist Society. As many Methodist Societies were initially organized in homes and by families, he moved from one family to another lodging in the homes of Methodists as he traveled. Asbury kept a journal that details not only his activities but specifically the places at which he preached and the Methodist families with whom he lodged during his travels.

Traveling through the Saluda Pass from North Carolina to South Carolina, Asbury, accompanied by Richard Whatcoat, newly elected a bishop, came to the home of Samuel Burdine. The Burdines were originally from Virginia. Samuel Burdine had purchased a log house on Georges Creek in the Pendleton District in 1796 in what is known today as the Dacusville Community.

On Tuesday, Nov. 18, 1800, Bishop Asbury wrote in his Journal: "We came 15 miles to Samuel Burdine's, Pendleton County. Here were many wandering people. Brother Whatcoat preached. We administered the Lord's Supper. I was very much indisposed, and felt dejection of spirits. Our sister Burdine professeth to have known the Lord 20 years; in her you see meekness, gentleness, patience and pure love—and cleanliness."

On Nov. 16, 1802, Asbury again came to the Burdine Home spending time there and also with the Solomon James Family nearby. On Nov. 19, 1802, Asbury wrote in his Journal, "I preached at Samuel Burdine's on Heb. vi, 12, and pretty fully explained the doctrine of Christian baptism and Christian perfection."

As was the custom in the early days of the Methodist Movement in America, the Burdine Home became a meeting place for a Methodist Society which eventually was organized as Antioch Church on the Pickens Circuit. (Today Antioch Church is on the North Easley Charge in the Greenville District of the South Carolina Conference.)

Asbury's superintendency stretched from Georgia to Maine. While others were elected to the episcopacy of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Whatcoat in 1800 and William McKendree in 1808, Asbury was the undisputed leader of the Church until his death on March 31, 1816. Under his leadership, the Methodist Episcopal Church grew to 700 itinerant preachers, 2,000 local preachers and 214,000 members.

Gramling is secretary-treasurer of the South Carolina Conference Historical Society and serves as a member of the SEJ Commission on Archives and History.

Main Street to celebrate 175th Homecoming

COLUMBIA—Main Street United Methodist Church, established in 1848, is celebrating its 175th Homecoming Celebration on Sunday, Oct. 24.

Located at 1830 Main Street, the church was a mission of Washington Street UMC and spearheaded the formation of Virginia Wingard in the St. Andrews area.

Since its inception, Main Street United Methodist Church has provided a strong foundation to the city of Columbia and was once one of the largest, most active Methodist congregations downtown. Its strength has been its relationship with the community, as Main Street UMC continues to provide support through education, community engagement and fellowship.



Willimon

The 175th Homecoming Celebration will be celebrated at 3 p.m. with a musical service under the leadership of South Carolina State University's Gospel Choir.

Dr. William "Will" Willimon, a native son of South Carolina who was ordained at Main Street UMC, will be the guest speaker. A bishop in the United Methodist Church, Willimon served as the

dean of Duke Chapel and professor of Christian ministry at Duke University for 20 years.

The community is invited to join the celebration. Food vendors, pop up shops and community organizations will have tents set up in the parking lot.

Main Street said their goal is to make this a community event and to cultivate relationships.



Resource Center

by Betty Stalnaker

New Advent/Christmas Bible studies

The following are new Advent/Christmas Bible studies available from the Resource Center. Also, church musicians, we still have musicals available for your Christmas programs. Please check the website for all titles with descriptions.

All the Good

(DVD2719CA=) Author: Warner, Lacey/Barker, Amy Valdez/Choi, Jung/Kim, Sangwoo. 4 sessions, 10-12 min/leader's guide/devotional bk/bk/2021.

In "All the Good: A Wesleyan Way of Christmas," a group of diverse Wesleyan scholars will take you on an Advent journey guided by the practices in John Wesley's means of grace. In four sessions of study, prayer and conversation, readers will look at preparing the way for God, the discipline of prayer, the substance of good works and the recognition of God's presence with us in communities that are called to serve the world. This Advent, learn and practice works of mercy and works of piety examining how God's love is embodied in communities of faith in the world. CC. Age: YAS.

God the Savior: Our Freedom in Christ and Our Role in the Restoration of All Things

(DVD2735B=) Author: Frazee, Randy. 8 sessions, 11-17 min/study guide/2021.

Throughout the Bible, we find two parallel dramas unfolding. There is the lower story, which describes the events from our human perspective. But there is also an upper story, which reveals how the events unfold from God's perspective. The goal of God the Savior is to introduce you to these lower and upper stories as told in the New Testament. As you read these stories—featuring characters such as Mary and Joseph, the 12 disciples, John the Baptist, Mary Magdalene and the central figure, Jesus

Christ—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 Chosen: A Story of the First Christmas
(DVD2720CA) Author: Jenkins, Dallas. 22 min/2018.

Witness the birth of Jesus! In the first episode of this multiseason series, the story of Christ's nativity comes to life through the eyes of a shepherd, whose life of suffering and rejection is transformed when he encounters the newborn Messiah. Ideal for congregational viewing, small groups and families. Ages 12 to adult. CC. Age: EM-HYAS.

The Heart that Grew Three Sizes
(DVD2718CA=) Author: Rawle, Matt. 4 sessions, 8-10 min/leader's guide/flash drive/bk/2021.

Rediscover the gift of Advent that comes without packages, ribbons and bows. We don't know why the Grinch hated Christmas. We just know he did. In this new Advent study, Matt Rawle explores the faith themes in the Christmas classic, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas!" including how did the Grinch's heart grow three sizes come Christmas morning? How did Christmas save the Grinch? Could it be that the very thing we think we hate is the one thing that changes our lives? This Advent and Christmas season, look at a familiar classic through the lens of faith and see how Christ speaks to us through our culture. 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.

UMMen to host 'Give Day' Oct. 18

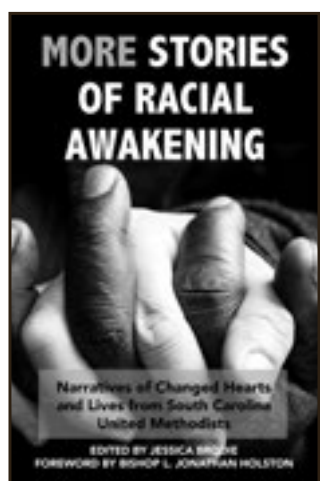
The General Commission on United Methodist Men is committed to its mission to "coach men and youth to thrive through Christ, so others may know Christ." To that end, they are holding their third annual "UMMen Give Day" Oct. 18 to help people support the ministry efforts of this group.

Men's ministry leaders said there is a continued financial need to dramatically expand the discipleship opportunities for men and young people, but former funding sources are continuing to struggle. To help, text UMMen to 44321; visit <http://bit.ly/ummgive2021> or send a check to P.O. Box 440515, Nashville, TN 37244-0515.

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More Stories of Racial Awakening Narratives of Changed Hearts and Lives from South Carolina United Methodists

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Global Briefs

Registration for UMW Assembly 2022 open

NEW YORK—Registration for the United Methodist Women's Assembly 2022 is open. The quadrennial event titled "Turn it Up!" is scheduled for May 20-22 at the Orlando Convention Center in Orlando, Florida, with an optional Ubuntu Day of Service on Thursday, May 19. Early-bird registration discounts are available through Nov. 30.

Boigegrain ready for life after Wespath

GLENVIEW, Ill.—After 27 years leading Wespath through economic crises and toward investments that are ecologically and ethically sound, Barbara Boigegrain is retiring at the end of the year. One of her signpost accomplishments is the creation of a pension plan for United Methodist clergy in Africa.

LDS church agrees to pay into BSA victims fund

DOVER, Del.—The United Methodist Church continues to be part of negotiations in the Boy Scouts of America's sex abuse-related bankruptcy. But another religious group that has sponsored many Scouting troops—the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—has agreed to pay \$250 million to a fund for abuse victims.

Horswill-Johnston to become seminary vice president

CLAREMONT, Calif.—The Rev. Steve Horswill-Johnston has been named vice president for communications and advancement at Claremont School of Theology, his alma mater and one of the 13 United Methodist seminaries. He starts Nov. 1. Horswill-Johnston has in recent years been chief communications officer for Discipleship Ministries. He produced the popular "Chuck Knows Church" video series and had a key role in The United Methodist Church's "Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors" campaign.

UMW opposes Texas abortion law

NEW YORK—The Texas law banning abortions after the sixth week of pregnancy will harm poor and marginalized women, United Methodist Women said in a statement. Women and families should have "access to the full range of reproductive health care, with the guidance the church provides," the statement said.

Celebrating Asbury's impact on two shores

BRISTOL, England—The 250th anniversary of Francis Asbury's crossing of the Atlantic from England to America is being celebrated jointly by the Methodist Church of Britain and The United Methodist Church. Though virtually unknown in England, Asbury went on to build the Methodist movement in America and became one of the first two bishops of what is today The United Methodist Church.

Conferences create Ida fund

NEPTUNE, N.J.—The Greater New Jersey Conference and Eastern Pennsylvania Conference have announced Hurricane Ida relief efforts and welcome financial support. The storm flooded a handful of United Methodist churches in the conferences, as well as a parsonage, and caused major damage in many local communities.

—Courtesy of United Methodist News Service



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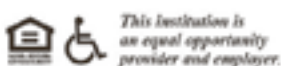


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Vow renewal unites churches while honoring couple

By the Rev. Jamie McDowell

Jack Simpson and Jo Snyder were both born in Sunbury, Pennsylvania. They grew up in Northumberland and Sunbury. They met when Jack was a senior in high school.

Their paths soon parted, and they did not come together again until 1987. At that time, Jack was in the Navy and only two years from retirement. Eventually they would marry at the Walhalla courthouse in 2005. They would go on to have a good marriage.

Eventually, they started attending Rock Springs United Methodist Church in Richland. With Jack's natural ability, they became deeply involved in the small church. Jack took on a leading role in taking care of the church and the grounds.

The day came when Jack developed brain cancer. It was debilitating, and soon he required surgery. The surgery seemed successful, and Jack was notified he would need to follow up with chemotherapy treatments.

However, this all was happening at the same time Rock Springs was undergoing some changes. Because of a new pastor coming in, service schedules were shifted. The new pastor was assigned to three churches—Double Springs UMC (Mountain Rest),

Hopewell UMC (Westminster) and Rock Springs UMC (Richland)—and the district superintendent and new pastor selected Rock Springs to be the middle service on Sunday morning.

With Jack's improvement, he and Jo decided the time had come to renew their wedding vows in front of God and the church. They wanted the service to be incorporated in a Sunday morning worship, but did not want the pastor to have to rush off to another service.

Little did they know the incoming pastor scheduled a joint worship service at his appointments once a year. When he announced that all three churches would be joining in worship at Chau Ram County Park one Sunday, an idea came to mind.

Jo contacted Pastor Jamie and asked if he could officiate a renewal service that Sunday. The idea was well received, and the details were worked out with all three churches.

It was planned for the worship to focus on God's relationship and commitment to humanity and the renewal service.

When the day came, it was better than expected. Members from all three churches, as well as some local and out of state visitors,

attended. Some had no idea of the purpose of the day. The service was beautiful. The final song was "Eternal Father Strong To Serve (The Navy Hymn)."

Jack and Jo led the way and cut the cake. The churches enjoyed a day of fellowship and getting to know each other.

As usual at a Methodist gathering, there was enough food to feed everyone present, as well as to send some to a local assisted-living facility.

It was a special day for Jack and Jo, and God was truly working through them.

However, the full extent of how God worked through Jack and Jo Simpson was not known that day, but continued to unfold over several more days. After the service, Pastor Jamie received several phone calls and emails about how special that day was: The family that had just dealt with a hard situation and was reminded of God's faithfulness in tribulation. The daughter whose father had been married at the same park years before. The widow who recalled her marriage.

And many others who could not fathom how God had brought them all there on that Sunday, July 25, but were exceedingly grateful.



Jack and Jo Simpson's vow renewal also served to unite the churches on their charge. Here, they stand with the Rev. Jamie McDowell.

Church honors late 'Reverend Jack' with special service, gifts to Epworth endowment

A new fund has been established in honor of a late South Carolina United Methodist pastor, and his family and church came together recently to honor him and raise awareness for the endowment that will help children for years to come.

The Rev. Jack Christopher Washington, known to many as Reverend Jack, passed away Sept. 28, 2019. Among other appointments, he pastored I. DeQuincy Newman United Methodist Church, Columbia, serving there as a retired pastor, and children were among his top priorities.



Washington

Given this, Johanna Washington, his widow, and the rest of the Washington family have chosen to honor Reverend Jack by establishing an endowment to the Epworth Children's Home.

On Sept. 19, I. DeQuincy Newman UMC created a corporate worship service to honor him, raise awareness about the endowment and pay homage to the man that many say opened their eyes and hearts to the possibilities of what a small and loving church could do.

The service was the vision of the current pas-

tor, Rev. Jeremiah Page, and was an opportunity to remember and acknowledge the lessons taught, honoring the man who taught many and giving all the chance to grieve.

"He made an incredible impact on the lives of everyone affiliated with the church and community," said Page and Lay Leader Dr. Julia M. Boyd, calling Washington a loving and diplomatic man who loved God and God's people.

"God places people in our lives for a season and a reason," organizers said. "We are not always wise enough to recognize all the wonders of our God. ... We will always cherish the memories we have shared with Reverend Jack and family."

Obituaries

Gladys Lefft Boone

SUMMERVILLE—Gladys Lefft Boone, wife of the late Rev. John Boone Jr., died Sept. 17, 2021.

A graveside service was held Sept. 25 at Mack-Zion Cemetery, St. Stephen.

Mrs. Boone is survived by her four sons.

Lois McKenzie Bradham

LEXINGTON—Lois McKenzie Bradham, wife of the late Rev. Edward Bradham Jr., died Aug. 31, 2021.

A memorial service was held Sept. 26 at Hibben United Methodist Church, Mount Pleasant.

Memorials may be made to Connie Maxwell Children's Ministries, P.O. Box 1178, Greenwood, SC 29648-1178; or to Hibben UMC, 690 Coleman Blvd., Mount Pleasant, SC 29464.

Mrs. Bradham is survived by her two daughters.

Ruth Botts Brock

TROY—Ruth Botts Brock, wife of the late Rev. Raymond W. Brock, died Aug. 29, 2021.

Funeral services were held Sept. 2 at Main Street United Methodist Church, Abbeville, with burial in Buffalo Baptist Church Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to Main Street UMC, 300 N. Main St., Abbeville, SC 29620; Buffalo Baptist Church Cemetery Fund, 3699 Hwy. 28 S., McCormick, SC 29835; or to Agape Care, 326 Montague Ave., Greenwood, SC 29646.

Mrs. Brock is survived by her son.

Harriet Coleman Cox

HANAHAN—Harriet Coleman Cox, wife of the Rev. George Walton Farrell Cox, died Aug. 30, 2021. Rev. Cox is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

A memorial service was held Sept. 4 at Pamplico UMC, Pamplico.

Memorials may be made to Pamplico UMC, P.O. Box 277, Pamplico, SC 29583-0277; to Hannah-Pamplico Athletic Department, 2121 S. Pamplico Hwy., Pamplico, SC 29583; or to Seaside Emmaus, P.O. Box 1084, Conway, SC 29528.

Mrs. Cox is survived by her husband, two daughters and two sons.

James Russell Erwin Sr.

GILBERT—James Russell Erwin Sr., husband of the Rev. Angela Etheredge-Erwin, died Sept. 14, 2021. Rev. Etheredge-Erwin is the pastor of Shiloh United Methodist Church.

A memorial service was held Sept. 18 at their home.

Memorials may be made to the family at 1000 Springs Hill Road, Gilbert, SC 29054.

Mr. Erwin is survived by his wife, four sons and two stepsons.

Donna Carter Fender

WALTERBORO—Donna Carter Fender, grandmother of the Rev. Justin Ritter, died Sept. 8, 2021. Rev. Ritter is the pastor of Providence United Methodist Church, Providence.

Funeral services were held Sept. 11 at Doctor's Creek Baptist Church with burial in the cemetery.

Memorials may be made to Doctor's Creek Baptist Church, P.O. Box 2, Walterboro, SC 29488.

Mrs. Fender is survived by her two daughters.

Mary McClam Fulmore

LAKE CITY—Mary McClam Fulmore, sister of the Rev. Mack C. McClam, died Aug. 31, 2021. Rev. McClam is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Sept. 6 at

Obituary Policy

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

Mount Clair Baptist Church, Lake City.

Mrs. Fulmore is survived by her three daughters.

Peggy Lynette Cantey Gardner

MANNING—Peggy Lynette Cantey Gardner, mother of Meri Lyn Rogers, died Aug. 27, 2021. Mrs. Rogers is the wife of the Rev. Tim Rogers, Marion District superintendent.

A graveside service was held Aug. 30 at Manning Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to New Covenant Presbyterian Church, 2833 Alex Harvin Hwy., Manning, SC 29102; or to the Clarendon Pilot Club, c/o Donna Thames, 2318 Stone Road, Manning, SC 29102.

Mrs. Gardner is survived by her two sons and two daughters.

LaSandra Strickland Grimsley

FLORENCE—LaSandra Strickland Grimsley, wife of the Rev. Preston Grimsley, died Aug. 23, 2021. Rev. Grimsley is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Aug. 27 at the Stoudenmire-Dowling Funeral Home Chapel with burial in Riverside Cemetery, Nichols.

Memorials may be made to Friendship UMC, 5422 E. Old Marion Hwy. Florence, SC 29506; to Liberty Chapel UMC, P.O. Box 13502, Florence, SC 29504; or to St. Jude's Children's Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place,

Memphis, TN 38105.

Mrs. Grimsley is survived by her husband and mother.

Erica Lenora James

FLORENCE—Erica Lenora James, daughter of the Rev. Lindora James, died Sept. 8, 2021. Rev. James is the pastor of Bowers Chapel United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Sept. 13 at Wesley UMC with burial in the James Memorial Gardens.

Ms. James is survived by her parents.

Walter Robert Kronz Sr.

HASTINGS, Fla.—Walter Robert Kronz Sr., grandfather of the Rev. John Kronz, died Aug. 15 2021. Rev. Kronz is the pastor of the Norway Charge, Norway.

A memorial service was held Aug. 21.

Wilmer Lee

DENMARK—Wilmer Lee, father of Connie Williams, died Sept. 9, 2021. Mrs. Williams is the wife of the Rev. Eddie Williams, pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church, Orangeburg.

Graveside services were held Sept. 17 at Hope Memorial Park, Barnwell.

Doris Marie Wilson Williamson

MULLINS—Doris Marie Wilson Williamson, sister of the late Mildred Wilson Abram, died Aug. 18, 2021. Mrs. Abram was the wife of the Rev. Joseph Abram Jr., a retired member of the South Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Aug. 23 at the Henry L. Jackson Memorial Park with burial in Devotion Gardens Cemetery.

Mrs. Williamson is survived by her three children.

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 covered dish lunch.
- Oct. 2—Blessing of the Animals and Supply Drive for Pawmetto Lifeline, Washington Street UMC, Columbia, 10 a.m.-Noon.
- 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, St. Andrew By-the-Sea, Hilton Head. Register: <https://www.umcsc.org/er-registration>
- Oct. 9—Holiday Market, Lexington UMC, Lexington, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
- 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. 10—48th Annual Homecoming Celebration, Smyrna UMC (Burnt Factory Road), Bennettsville, 10 a.m.
- Oct. 10—Camp Providence Lakeside Shelter Dedication, Anderson, 1-5 p.m. RSVP by Oct. 8: sccarm.org/getinvolved
- Oct. 11—Columbus Day
- Oct. 15—Revolution registration open. <http://scmyp.org/revolution>
- Oct. 15-17—Children's Sabbath A National Observance

**A dream come true**

Brunson UMC and Bellingier Chapel UMC recently helped 9-year-old Chayse Mole fulfill a dream. Because of an eye disease, Chayse has been slowly losing his eyesight since birth. His mother, Tawana Mole, said Chayse will soon attend a school for the blind to help him learn to live without sight. The churches found out Chayse has always wanted to ride a train. Brunson member Vickers Harrelson worked with the family to plan a trip by train for Chayse to Jacksonville, Florida. There, Chayse and his mother will spend the day at the beach. The churches' love offering paid for the tickets and included extra for meals. The churches were happy for Chayse and assured him their prayers for his future will continue. Because of Chayse's limited eyesight, his mother has put aside her career to care for Chayse. Chayse is very close to his older sister, a sophomore at Clemson University. "We ask everyone to join us in praying for this wonderful young man and his family," said the Rev. Carol Holladay, pastor of the Fairfax Charge. Above, Harrelson presents an excited Chayse Mole and his mother with a love offering.

Oct. 16—Fall Festival, Asbury Hills, Cleveland, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. asburyhills.org

Oct. 16—Fall Bazaar, Carteret Street UMC, Beaufort, 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

Oct. 16—Boy Scout Troop 655 and Cub Pack 653 Fall Bar-B-Que, First UMC, Cheraw, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

Oct. 17—Laity Sunday

Oct. 20—Early Response Team Basic class, St. Andrew By-the-Sea, Hilton Head. Register: 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, 10 a.m., 1 p.m., Hartsville District UMW, host. Register: www.umcsc.org

Oct. 24—United Nations Day

Oct. 24—Virtual Fall LSM School (Greenwood District). To learn more: <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 the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts, Shandon UMC, Columbia. Visit southcarolinafellowship.org

Oct. 30—2021 South Carolina Bishops Dialogue, Capstone Hall, Columbia, 9 a.m. Reservations required at <https://scsynod.com/2021dialogue>

Oct. 31—Reformation Day

Oct. 31—Virtual Fall LSM School (Greenwood District). <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Greenwood-District-Fall-2021-Lay-Servant-School.pdf>

November

Native American Heritage Month

- Nov. 1—All Saints Day
- Nov. 2—UMVIM, Grace UMC, Columbia, 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 5—World Community Day
- Nov. 5-6—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>
- Nov. 6—UMW Virtual District Office Training, 10 a.m., Florence District UMW, host.
- Nov. 7—All Saints Sunday
- Nov. 7—Conference Advance Specials Sunday
- Nov. 7—Daylight Savings Ends
- Nov. 11—Veterans Day
- Nov. 11—Killingsworth Stay at Home Gala, 7 p.m.. Register: <https://killingsworth-home.com>
- Nov. 12-14—Mountain Immerse, Asbury Hills, \$170. <http://scmyp.org/mountain-immerser-information/>
- Nov. 13—Burdine Lodge project opening celebration and dedication, Hagood Mill Historic Site, Pickens, 1 p.m.
- Nov. 13-14—Virtual LSM School (Marion District). <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Marion-District-Lay-Servant-Schools-for-2021.pdf>
- Nov. 14—Organ and Tissue Donor Sunday
- Nov. 20-21—Virtual LSM School (Marion District). <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Marion-District-Lay-Servant-Schools-for-2021.pdf>
- Nov. 21—Christ the King/Reign of the King Sunday
- Nov. 21-28—National Bible Week
- Nov. 25—Thanksgiving Day
- Nov. 25-26—UMCSC Center closed
- Nov. 28—United Methodist Student Day

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Deadlines are the 10th of the month
for the following month's paper.

Positions Open**Church Sexton**

Grace UMC in Greer is accepting applications for a part-time Church Sexton. Cleaning and light maintenance duties are weekly, monthly and annually. For a full job description, to ask questions or to submit a resume and apply, contact Rev. Weston Pendergrass at wbpendergrass@umcsc.org

Nursery Director

St. Andrews Parish UMC is seeking to hire a nursery director for part time work. 3225 Ashley River Rd, Charleston, SC 29414. standumc@gmail.com.

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by the Rev. Adrienne Fink

What does the church need?

Oct. 3 The Church's Activities

Lesson Scripture: Acts 2:37-47
Background Scripture: Acts 2:37-47; 4:32-37

Key Verse: Acts 2:42, "The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals and to their prayers."

This passage begins after the story of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descends upon Christ's followers to form the new Christian Church. Later, in this passage, the early Christians discern how to live. They determine they must share everything. At our core, we as Christians live into the calling of taking care of each other. How do we do that? As the passage shows us, we learn together, join together as a community, share with each other and pray with each other. To do all of this, we must ask ourselves two key questions: "What do others need that I have?" and "What do I have that others need?"

The writer of Acts, the same Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke, is specifically talking about physical needs and societal needs: food, money and housing. So let's make those two questions more specific: what physical and societal things do I have that others need? What physical and societal needs do others need that I have?

Jesus calls us to love each other. The Holy Spirit works in us and around us, urging us to be the church God calls us to be: the church who shares.

Reflect: Begin with the questions above. What do I have that others need? What do others need that I have? What helps me help others? What keeps me from helping others?

Oct. 10 The Church as One Body

Lesson Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31
Background Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:1-31

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:12, "Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many."

In this letter to the church of Corinth, the apostle Paul writes to a church whose members struggle for unity. Who should be served first at meals? (1 Corinthians 11) Should they follow Paul or Apollo? (1 Corinthians 3) How should they share worship leadership? (1 Corinthians 14) So, in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul uses a metaphor to show what a unified church looks like: a church that includes everyone and that needs diversity.

Each of us belongs to the body of Christ, and each of us brings unique and invaluable gifts into the body of Christ. Maybe you feel like the church does not need you. Listen, the church needs you! Maybe you believe that another person isn't the right kind of person for the church. Frankly, you're wrong; that person belongs, too. We all belong—to Christ and to each other. God calls us to be in relationship with each other.

When one of us suffers, we all suffer. When one of us celebrates, we all celebrate. We are the body of Christ, and the body of Christ needs you!

Reflect: What gifts has God given you that the church needs? What helps you share those gifts? What makes it difficult to share those gifts? Who is missing from the body of Christ? How can you welcome them and affirm their worth in the body of Christ?

Oct. 17 The Church as a Discerning Body

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 16:13-19
Background Scripture: Matthew 5:1-11

Key Verse: Matthew 16:18 "I tell you that you are Peter. And I'll build my church on this rock. The gates of the underworld won't be able to stand against it."

To risk stating the obvious, Jesus is the center of the church (or as we saw last week, the head of the church). Because the church is centered on Christ, we need to know who Christ is (and who Christ isn't).

In Matthew 16, Jesus poses two questions: Who do others say I am? Who do you say I am? Others say that Jesus is a prophet, but as Peter declares, Jesus is the Messiah, the one about whom the prophets prophesied. Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the savior of God's people and, thus, the savior of the world. For the church to be the church, we must always begin with proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah and Son of the living God. Then, everything else we say and do must flow from this proclamation.

As the church and as individuals, we constantly make decisions. If we follow Jesus and declare Jesus as the Messiah, then in all these decisions, we must begin with, "What will proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of the living God?" Sometimes, this question will lead us into uncomfortable, even unwanted, answers. In these difficult answers, God calls us to choose wisely so that we may live into what God calls the church to do: to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

Reflect: How do you see the church proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah? In what new ways can the church proclaim Jesus as the Messiah? What decisions do you or your congregation need to make? What do you need to aid in your discernment? How will asking, "What will proclaim Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of the living God?" inform your decision?

Oct. 24 The Need for Spiritual Renewal

Lesson Scripture: Revelation 3:1-6, 14-20
Background Scripture: Romans 12:9-17

Key Verse: Revelation 3:20, "Look! I'm standing at the door and knocking. If any hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to be with them, and will have dinner with them, and they will have dinner with me."

These excerpts from Revelation show two churches with similar struggles: stagnation. The church of Sardis has left its works un-

completed. The church of Laodicea's works are lukewarm, lacking passion. Christ calls the churches out on their stagnation. He's ready to spit Laodicea out of his mouth, and he tells Sardis to wake up or die.

How often are our congregations like these two? We fail to complete the works God calls us to do, and the work we do lacks passion. We become complacent, convincing ourselves that we have what we need, that we have reached perfection, and that we need not to do more.

Last week, we talked about how God calls us to proclaim Jesus as Messiah. It seems that the churches of Sardis and Laodicea have ceased in their proclamations. Have we, too, ceased proclaiming the good news that Jesus is our Messiah?

Christ speaks harshly in these excerpts, but he also speaks with hope and grace. The churches of Sardis and Laodicea do not have to remain stagnant; rather, Christ calls them to flourishing life. He calls them to change their hearts and lives. Sardis can still complete their works. Laodicea can still find new passion. Christ tells them that he waits for them. He wants to be in relationship with them. He waits at their door, calling to them. All they must do is open the door and invite him in.

Christ waits for us, too. He calls us into a better life with him, in which we do his good works with passion and joy. Jesus hasn't given up on us.

All we have to do is open the door and invite him in.

Reflect: In what ways do you see the church (your local congregation, our denomination or the universal church) stuck in stagnation? How does Jesus call us to change our hearts and lives? What do we need to escape stagnation? What would it look like to move beyond stagnation into flourishing life?

will make you his own people right now—he will be your God just as he promised you and just as he swore to our ancestors."

In Deuteronomy 29, Moses talks with his fellow Israelites, the ones who have wandered the desert with him in their journey to the Promised Land. Moses explains to them their covenant with God. God will bless and protect the Israelites and the generations after them. In return, Israel will obey God, remaining loyal to God alone. Deuteronomy 29 is not the first time God makes this covenant with Israel. It goes back to Genesis when God makes the covenant with Abraham. God has called Abraham and his descendants into a difficult covenant of loyal obedience. They must always obey God and God alone. Unsurprisingly, the Israelites fail to keep their covenant with God. God enters into a contract knowing the other party will fail—constantly fail. Yet, God does not give up. God renews the covenant, calling the Israelites to try again—to constantly try again.

As the church, we continue this covenant with God. God promises to bless us, and we promise to obey God loyally. Like our ancestors, we fail to keep our part of the covenant. We do not obey God. We turn away from God. Yet, God does not fail us. God never gives up on the covenant or on us. God calls us back, tells us to try again, and moves within our hearts to grow us in our love for God.

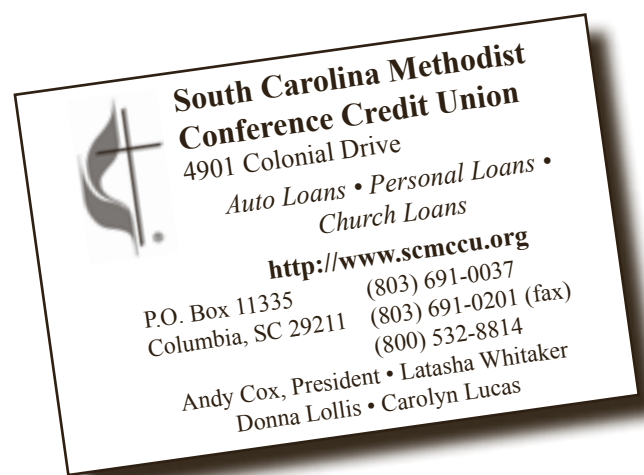
Reflect: In what ways do you see the church failing in keeping our covenant with God? In what ways do you see the church living into the covenant? What do we need to keep the covenant? When have you seen God forgive the church for failing and call us back into the covenant?

Fink, a deacon in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, serves as chaplain for the Prisma Health Department of Spiritual Care and Education. She is on the Columbia District Board of Ordained Ministry.

Oct. 31 Covenant Renewal

Lesson Scripture: Deuteronomy 29:10-29
Background Scripture: Deuteronomy 29
Key Verse: Deuteronomy 29:13 "The Lord

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AFTER IDA: 13-member team from S.C. helped Sept. 6-11

From Page 1

“We had a very productive disaster response mission,” said Billy Robinson, coordinator of the South Carolina United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Early Response Team, calling what they encountered “unprecedented destruction and chaos.”

Robinson said the 13-person team responded from Sept. 6-11 with many chainsaws and supplies, including a fully equipped disaster response trailer, a skid steer and a mini excavator.

“We had boots on the ground hard at work three days after receiving the call for dire help,” Robinson said. “We touched many lives, while our lives were also touched with true tears of joy and high, loving emotions.”

Survivors were devastated physically, mentally and financially, he said, and many lost everything they owned. The vast majority were without electricity, running water, ice and other bare essentials. Some had generators, but the fuel supply was limited. On top of that, the late-summer weather was hot and muggy with little relief at night.

“We moved everything from limbs, mangled metal and furniture to huge trees while making egress to homes and removing trees and debris off of homes,” Robinson said.

Thankfully, he said, the machinery and its operators made jobs that would have taken days turn into hours. They also provided high-quality tarps on their roofing/tarping jobs preventing further damage. The tarps the South Carolina team uses can last as long as a year, which is important because roofers and carpenters can be hard to come by in the aftermath of such a widespread disaster, Robinson said.

In addition to Robinson, responding from South Carolina were the Rev. Mike Evans of Edgefield, the Rev. Fred Buchanan of Orangeburg, the Rev. Stephen Turner of Seneca, Mac and Michael Whitmire of Seneca, Jill Evans of Salem, Curtis Burnett of Greenwood, Worth Adams and Wade Dickens of Florence, David Armstrong of Fort Mill, Hank Edens of Dalzell and Jerry Pullen of James Island. Armstrong’s brother Nathan also joined to help from Texas.

All worked in conjunction with other United Methodist ERTs from Louisiana, Missouri, Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Texas and Mississippi. Each team shared food, resources and personnel.

First UMC of Ponchatoula hosted the South Carolina



Curtis Burnett gives Scripture books and stuffed animals to a family of survivors after S.C. ERT members cut a huge tree out of their yard and off their home, then put a tarp on it.

team, providing shelter, food, showers and other support. First UMC also became a point of distribution in the community for water, ice, flood buckets, tarps, health kits and other essential items.

Lifting praises to God

As always, Robinson said, their highest priorities are the survivors and everyone God put into their path, from other volunteers and emergency workers to community personnel.

While the physical task of making their homes safe, sanitary and secure are important, the people themselves mean the most.

“We listen to them, cry with them, pray with them, help them in every way we can, then leave them with glimpses of God’s love through Scripture, prayer, actions and gestures of pure Christian love,” Robinson said.

At one point, the whole town pitched in to help an elderly blind woman. Another woman they encountered was nicknamed “Annie Oakley” because she wore a pistol on her side to protect herself and her possessions from would-be

thieves.

On another day, part of their group had the honor of helping John Schneider, of “The Dukes of Hazzard” fame, cut and remove two dangerous trees at his camp that is often used for children’s ministries.

But Robinson said the most heartwarming moments are those when tightly coiled emotions break free. One day, the South Carolina team found themselves working at the home of an elderly widow named Clara Russell, whose home was mostly intact except for two walls and a rear section of her roof where a huge oak had fallen onto it.

The team worked relentlessly for three hours, cutting away debris from the electrical weather-head so electrical power could possibly be restored and clearing off piles of limbs and debris from her roof. Then they put a tarp over the holes. Totally exhausted, they lay in the shade after they finished, when suddenly the homeowner drove up.

“She broke down crying when she found out that we were United Methodists and all of our work was free. As we gathered for prayer before we left her home, Mrs. Russell started crying again and began lifting praise so loudly to God that her voice rose over Rev. Mike Evans’ prayer for her and the community.”

Robinson said many people get taken advantage of by roofers and tree companies looking to make big profits in the aftermath of disasters. Sometimes, people are charged astronomical prices— from \$6,000 to \$62,000—to remove trees from their home and property, plus put on tarps.

“There is nothing wrong with contractors asking a fair price, but price-gouging people who are so vulnerable and already hurting so badly after a disaster is simply cruel and totally unethical,” Robinson said.

“When people find out that our services and ministry are free, they always start immediately giving thanks and praise to God.”

If you are interested in being a part of the South Carolina UMCVIM ERT program, your help is welcome. All ERTs must go through training and a background check. Two trainings are scheduled for October: one Oct. 9 at Aldersgate UMC, Greenville, and one Oct. 20 at St. Andrew By-the-Sea UMC, Hilton Head.

For more information, visit www.umcsc.org/disaster-response.



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