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January 2022

## ‘Something new’: Contemporary service fans connection, discipleship

By Jessica Brodie

GREER—It seemed like a crazy idea. But as followers of Christ have come to understand, when God’s at the helm, he makes what seems impossible become reality.

In the middle of the pandemic, when in-person worship has been dwindling most everywhere, Sharon United Methodist Church started a brand-new contemporary ser-

vice that struck a chord with unchurched residents in their booming community.

Now in its third month, the service is seeing growth as its numbers steady and more people come to worship—and choose to stay. Some have decided to do the traditional worship instead, while others prefer the more casual, modern style of the new service. Together, the church is seeing a

combined weekly average of about 160 people, which is a 28 percent increase over its original numbers.

“It was a crazy idea to try this in the middle of COVID, but it worked,” said the Rev. Gryff Carosiello, Sharon UMC’s pastor, who noted it was God who made it happen.

See “Something New,” Page 7

## New year, new energy

Men shift into high gear as they prepare for retreat

By Jessica Brodie

The last time United Methodist Men gathered en masse in South Carolina, it was two weeks before the pandemic shut down the world as we knew it for a while, wreaking havoc on worldwide health, education, finances, travel and even the way we gather in worship and community.

Now, two years after COVID-19 reared its head, South Carolina’s United Methodist men are hoping for a reset.

On Feb. 25-26, they are planning an in-person gathering for the first time in two years.

See “Men’s Retreat,” Page 9



Photo by Mandy Kilgiri

Mike and Karen Riley embody Joseph and Mary as they look down on “baby Jesus” in Bethany UMC’s Living Christmas Story.

## Living Christmas Story at Bethany draws crowd to encounter Jesus

By the Rev. Narcie Jeter

SUMMERVILLE—Bethany United Methodist Church’s drive-through story of Jesus’ life is celebrating 25 years.

Even during the height of COVID-19, last year more than 4,000 people drove through witnessing the miracle of Jesus.

Each year, cars and trams drive through stations such as the census tables, seeing Gabriel give the message to Mary, traveling Mary and Joseph on a donkey, the angel delivering the good news

of great joy to the shepherds, Herod’s Court and the wise men, the blacksmith, the carpenter, the basket weavers, the women at the well and the potter. They encounter a bustling Bethlehem village with Roman guards making their presence known, meet the innkeeper and his wife, and as they round the corner, hear Christmas carols and see the manger.

See “Living Christmas,” Page 8

## Christmas at Lee blesses incarcerated men with lunch

By Jessica Brodie

BISHOPVILLE—Once again, churches helped residents at Lee Correctional Institute experience the joy and love of Christmas.

On Dec. 17, the Rev. Edward R. McKnight, senior chaplain at Lee Correctional and pastor of Faith United Methodist Church in Cades, brought specially prepared lunches to the men incarcerated at the high-

security state prison.

It was an intentional effort to exhibit agape love toward these men who are separated from friends and family during the holiday season.

“As believers and the church, we are commissioned to go to those in prison,” Knight said.

See “Christmas at Lee,” Page 8

## Year-end apportionment payments push UMCSC toward budget goal

Just a few weeks remain until the 2021 books close, and conference financial leaders are hopeful.

As of Dec. 15, the conference had collected 79.46 percent of its apportionments, compared to 70.9 percent this time last year, said Beth

Westbury, conference treasurer.

The percentage collection goal is 90 percent of the budgeted \$17.3 million for 2021, though the ideal is for 100 percent of churches in the conference to pay their apportionments.

Churches have until Friday, Jan. 14, at

4 p.m. to pay 2021 apportionments. If the church is paying through Vanco, the payment must be initiated by 3 p.m. Wednesday, Jan.

12. Wires can be initiated and received on the same day, so the deadline to send a wire is Jan. 14 by 2 p.m.



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### Submissions

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

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### Photographs

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

### Accuracy Policy

The *Advocate* strives to produce error-free news reports. When mistakes occur, it is our policy to correct them as soon as they are brought to our attention. To request a correction, call Jessica Brodie at 888-678-6272 or 803-786-9486, ext. 338, or email [jbrodie@umcsc.org](mailto:jbrodie@umcsc.org). In the event of errors in advertisements, the *Advocate* will be responsible only for the space occupied by the actual error. The publisher assumes no financial responsibility for omissions.

### Back Issues

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

# United Methodists offer help after deadly December tornadoes

A string of deadly tornadoes and severe storms Dec. 10-11 devastated communities within the Kentucky, Western Kentucky-Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri and Illinois Great Rivers conferences of The United Methodist Church.

Now, United Methodists and other compassionate people are doing what they can to help in the aftermath.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief has been in communication with disaster response coordinators in these conferences and has initiated solidarity grants with three of the most severely affected: Kentucky, Western Kentucky-Tennessee and Arkansas.

These early emergency grants help meet the immediate needs of survivors and offer flexibility to the conferences in meeting those needs as they emerge.

Here's how else South Carolina United Methodists can help:

### 1. Pray

Pray for the survivors. Pray for those who

lost family and loved ones. Pray for families and individuals who lost their homes and possessions. Pray for the first responders who are putting their lives on the line to assist others. Pray that God's peace envelops all who have lost, and for the strength they will need for the difficult journey that lies ahead.

### 2. Stay out of the way

While our instincts often prompt us to drop whatever we are doing to assist someone in great need, you would actually do more harm than good if you were to self-deploy to the affected areas. Instead, wait for updates on how and when to engage.

The South Carolina Conference cannot send Early Response Teams to other conferences without a formal invitation, which will come once those conferences are prepared to welcome them. ERT members will be notified when that time comes.

As rescue efforts begin to shift to response, UMCOR stands ready to journey with the affected conferences from the chaos of disaster

toward a holistic, long-term recovery. There is a long road ahead, and we will walk it together.

### 3. Give to UMCOR

If you would like to help financially, the South Carolina Conference is urging people to give to UMCOR, so it can provide the resources that will be so critically needed over the coming weeks, months and years.

The best way to do that is to donate to UMCOR's U.S. Disaster Response and Recovery (Advance #901670).

Do not send supplies or other materials to the affected areas. This usually causes a logistical nightmare because officials and volunteers are simply not ready to accept physical donations.

To donate to UMCOR by mail, make your check payable to Advance GCFA, write #901670 on the memo line of the check and send it to Global Ministries/UMCOR, GPO, P.O. Box 9068, New York, NY 10087-9068. To donate online, go to <https://umcmission.org/umcor>.

## Annual gala raises \$26K+ for Killingsworth

COLUMBIA—The pandemic may have forced their party online, but the cheerful givers who support Killingsworth Home were no less generous.

Killingsworth held its annual gala and fashion show Nov. 11, and as with last year, they held the festivities virtually. Scores of Killingsworth supporters joined in for a Zoom-hosted event that evening that ultimately raised more than \$26,000 for the women's crisis organization—and helped officially kick off the holiday season for South Carolina United Methodists.

Funds raised were more than last year and will support operations and needed supplies for Killingsworth.

Every day we never know when someone new is going to knock on our door, and when we have these events and people give to Killingsworth, they are literally helping to feed, clothe, provide mental health services, those core necessities for the women who come to Killingsworth," said the Rev. Schrendria Robinson, Killingsworth's executive director.

With the theme "Home for the Holidays ... Again," the gala featured a fashion show, a donor spotlight, door prizes, and special music from guest artist saxophonist Darius Starks.

Noelle McNealy gave the Resident Spotlight, sharing her testimony about the help Killingsworth provided her.

"We couldn't do the work we do without this," Robinson said.

Robinson served as a fashion show model, as did Advocate Editor Jessica Brodie and a number of other clergy and laity: Cindy Graham, Flo Johnson, Brandon Knightner, Phyllis Knightner, Stephanie McMillian, Jenny Middleton the Rev. Kenneth Middleton, the Rev. Rebecca Shirley, Pam Speas, the Rev. Jeri Katherine Sipes and Hiram Sipes, and Barbara West. The fashion show was recorded in advance at Journey



Noelle McNealy shares her testimony about the help Killingsworth provided her.

United Methodist Church, Columbia.

Robinson's sons Marc, Caleb and Kyle Robinson also participated in the gala, and while the full event could not be held in person because of COVID-19, many United Methodist Women circles gathered together for their own smaller "watch parties." Some of these circles collected donations for Killingsworth at these watch parties, then sent it in in one big chunk.

Killingsworth is a United Methodist ministry that exists to support, empower and advocate for women recovering from crisis within a safe, nurturing Christian environment.

For more about Killingsworth, their work and how to help, visit <http://killingsworth.org>.

## Advocate seeks submissions for upcoming book on faith, mental illness

Do you have a story about how faith has impacted your experience with mental illness, whether for you personally or related to a family member or friend?

Given much-needed awareness about depression, anxiety, addiction, suicide, trauma and other aspects of mental illness, *Advocate*

Editor Jessica Brodie is planning a book in 2022 through the Advocate Press titled "Darkness to Light: Jesus, Mental Illness and our Faith Journey."

Submissions are welcome and much appreciated. Stories can be anonymous if needed but must be true tales.

Word count can vary, but the maximum is 2,000 words. The working deadline is March 1.

To share your story, or to talk with Brodie about her helping you write your story, email [jbrodie@umcsc.org](mailto:jbrodie@umcsc.org) or call her at 803-807-0018.

## Commission considers status of postponed General Conference

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The Commission on the General Conference announced Nov. 19 that it is continuing to move forward with logistical planning for the postponed 2020 General Conference. But it continues to monitor various factors, including pandemic-related developments, which could impact the decision to hold the event on the previously announced dates of Aug. 29 to Sept. 7, 2022.

A determination is slated to be made during the first quarter of 2022 about whether to hold the postponed 2020 General Conference as currently scheduled or to consider further postponement.

Meeting online on Nov. 18, the commission voted to meet during the first quarter of next year, when they will consider the most up-to-date information available relative to COVID-19 disease prevalence, vaccine availability, public health guidelines, travel restrictions, financial considerations and other pertinent issues.

Upon the recommendation of the executive committee, the commission also adopted a set of values to guide them in their decision making: a reasonable threshold of delegate presence and participation; the health and safety of General Conference delegates, staff, volunteers and guests; inclusion of the broad diversity of the church; anti-racism; integrity; credibility; recognition of the mission of The United Methodist Church (making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world); and awareness of the commission's responsibility and purpose in planning for the General Conference.

"We wanted to have stated values that we will lift up as we make these important decisions," said Kim Simpson, commission chairperson. "For example, we feel it is important to go beyond the minimum requirement of quorum when thinking about the involvement of as many delegates as possible."

# Fresh paint ... and now music

## Makeover transformation helps launch music department at Landrum UMC

By Joy Gardner

LANDRUM—In early October 2020, two friends (Pete and Bonnie) and I, who happened to be fellow choir and Landrum United Methodist Church members, were sitting on the front porch of the church office, socially distanced six feet apart, while working on our sign-up time for our annual Pumpkin Patch.

Of course, our main topic of conversation was COVID-19. I conveyed to them how “unfinished” I felt as a musician playing the piano or organ during our worship services but without any singing. I missed hearing the singing voices, not just the Chancel Choir, but I missed the congregational singing, too. I commented that I was sure the congregation was, or soon would be, tired of hearing me play instrumental music only.

I was venting my frustrations about the COVID-19 restrictions. Like many others, I understood the need, but I felt the restrictions had adversely affected our worship services.

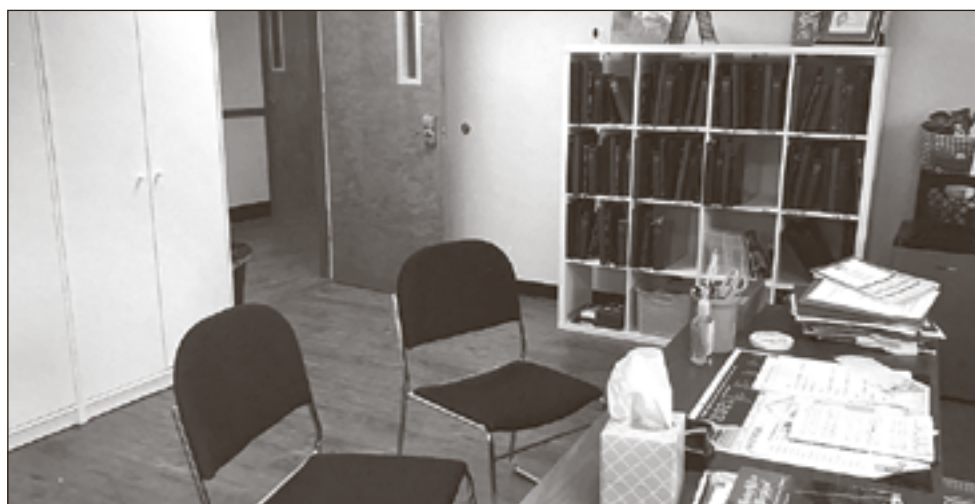
During the conversation I said, “I wish we could find a church that would be willing to let us borrow their handbells.” I felt if we could borrow bells, having members willing to learn how to ring the bells would be an excellent, different addition to the music portion of our worship services.

When I quieted long enough to give someone else the opportunity to speak, Bonnie mentioned she knew of a possibility.

Bonnie has been an active worker at Salkehatchie for years. Over those years of service, she has made many acquaintances both around and outside our local area. Bonnie said she would reach out to one of those acquaintances, the Rev. Ed Stallworth, who at that time was serving as pastor at the nearby Inman UMC. I knew we would not receive an immediate answer, but eagerly, I asked Bonnie often in the days thereafter if she had heard from Pastor Ed.

Finally, her call came: The trustees at Inman UMC had agreed to share their bells. It didn't take long for us to meet Pastor Ed and pick up the hand bells. We felt such excitement for a new adventure for LUMC and lots of appreciation to Pastor Ed and Inman UMC.

I assembled a group of ladies, some who could read music, and some who could not. Now these same ladies—who initially



Above is the new choir office, choir robe closet and storage for the music folders. Below is the new handbell choir room.



Photos by Paul Forster

had little to no musical background and who didn't know what a quarter note, half note or whole note looked like or even meant—have developed an ability to read music and are now amazing handbell ringers. What a good time we have at our rehearsals. We work hard, and we laugh—a lot!

In its history, Landrum UMC has never had a dedicated space for a choir. The choir robes and music folders were long stored in a walled-in closet in the back of the Fellowship Hall. Other music essentials were kept in a secondary room, approximately 10-by-10-feet, that functioned dually as an office and most recently served as storage for handbell cases and all the handbell necessities. Choir rehearsals (including handbells) took place in the fellowship hall unless another group was meeting there. On those occasions, choir rehearsals were held in the sanctuary, had to be rescheduled or didn't take place at all.

Sunday morning warm-up rehearsals were held in the Fellowship Hall, jointly with “Munch and Mingle” gatherings. The louder the choir sang, the louder people talked, disturbing the activities of both groups.

But with the arrival of the handbells, and the need for lots of extra space, the trustees revisited an 11-year-old dream: the development of an actual music department for the church.

The music program received approval from the trustees earlier this year for the use of one wing of the second-story of the Landrum UMC Family Life Center. The space consists of four rooms: a chancel choir room, handbell choir room, children's music room and choir office. We even have a separate storage closet now.

It has become Landrum UMC's first authentic music department.

It would have been nice if the transformation had been as easy as saying it. A lot



The new Chancel Choir room.

of time and hard work was spent cleaning up rooms unused for more than five years. The first step was the installation of a chair lift to provide assistance for accessing the second floor. The cleanup and removal of old furnishings, teaching materials and Sunday school supplies took a couple of weeks. Next, old carpeting was removed, with the hallway carpeting being extremely difficult to remove because of the prior overuse of glue.

Of course, during the tedious removal of the carpeting, the air conditioning unit failed (in early July, no less) and work had to be stopped until the unit could be replaced. Finally by late July, the new flooring was installed. New paint was next, and some walls required several coats of paint. Closets were ordered, cubbies were framed, additional chairs were purchased and furniture and music were moved in.

After tireless efforts of many who gave so generously of their time and monies, Landrum UMC held its first open house celebration for its music department following the morning worship service on Oct. 3.

By sharing this story, I hope others who feel their music or other church program is struggling will find some inspiration, especially after the obstacles presented to us this past year.

In an earlier article, “Fresh Paint and Positive Changes” (September *Advocate*), St. John UMC, Greenville, shared how fresh paint and positive changes can create a whole new environment. We have found this is certainly true for our music department, and we hope other churches will also.

God has blessed all of us and continues to bless us in ways we have yet to realize. Praise be to God!

*Gardner is director of music at Landrum UMC, Landrum.*

## Applications open now for Advocate's annual college scholarship

### Deadline is March 1

The South Carolina United Methodist Advocate invites applications for a \$1,000 college scholarship.

The scholarship is for South Carolina United Methodist students who will attend one of the four United Methodist colleges in South Carolina: Claflin University, Columbia College, Spartanburg Methodist College or Wofford College.

Students ideally will have an interest in communications, journalism or business.

Requests for the scholarship are due March 1.

Required are an application with an essay, a college or high school transcript, and a letter from the senior pastor of the applicant's home church or a college chaplain confirming the applicant is a United Methodist and describing their participation.

Learn more and download the application at <https://advocate.org/about-us/scholarship>.

For questions, email [jbrodie@umcsc.org](mailto:jbrodie@umcsc.org). Previous recipients are as follows:

2021: Garrison Burrows, Spartanburg Methodist College, of Mount Horeb United Methodist Church, Lexington;

2020: Grayson Jeffords, Wofford College, of Highland Park United Methodist Church, Florence;

2019: Grayson Jeffords, Wofford College, of Highland Park United Methodist Church, Florence;

2018: Andrew Whelchel, Wofford College, of Trinity United Methodist Church, Spartanburg;

2017: MacKenzie Summers, Wofford College, of St. John's United Methodist Church, Rock Hill;

2016: Ashly Higgins, Columbia College, of Mount Horeb UMC, Lexington;

2015: Jordan Geddis, Claflin University, of Wesley United Methodist Church, Johns Island; and

2014: C'Nell L. Boone, Claflin University, of Edisto Fork United Methodist Church, Orangeburg.

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# Viewpoints



## Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

### Leaving expectations behind

I should have known better, but I expected 2021 to be different. I expected the pandemic would have settled down a bit this year, that my masks would be in a bin somewhere, kept only as memorabilia from the crazy 2020 “year that was.”

I’ve scaled back my expectations for 2022. I rightfully should—after all, not a single one of us knows what tomorrow will bring, nor do we know God’s big-picture plan and how that breaks down regarding our day-to-day lives.

Still, a life lived brings lessons learned, and this year, I’ve learned plenty.

Some of us have lost close family and friends over the past year, some to COVID-19 and some to other things. Some of us have been faced with tremendous financial difficulty, physical disability, heartache and other completely unexpected circumstances.

As we approach 2022, I’ve decided I don’t want to live in planned expectation anymore. The only expectation I want is the one I have as a follower of Christ: that I can rest in the genuine peace and comfort that God is going to take care of everything. He always has, and he always will.

Part of that is showing up in the way I’ve looked at the holidays recently. This year, my husband and I embraced an alternative Thanksgiving. Our puppy had just been neutered and we couldn’t board him, he’s too rambunctious to bring to other people’s houses at this phase in his life, our kids were with their other parents (we’re a “blended family”) and all of our other family was out of town.

So we turned tradition on its head and went camping for Thanksgiving. I roasted a turkey a few days prior, and we had leftovers on sandwiches in the middle of the forest in Upstate South Carolina. It was freezing, and we slept in a summer tent on a leaking air mattress without pillows, yet I’ll never forget the feeling of deep soul gratitude that stayed with me those entire two days.

All the important aspects of the holiday—the meaning, the thankfulness, the joy and hope—were magnified when everything else was stripped away.

We carried that on to our Christmas celebrations, too.

I don’t know what next year will bring for myself, for my family, for our community, even for our denomination, but I have learned to be OK with that.

I don’t have to know the plan. I only have to trust that God is a mighty and sovereign creator who loves me deeply.

As you prepare your hearts and lives for a new year, I pray you join me in letting go of your expectations of what things “should” look like and instead seize the joy promised to us in our savior, Jesus.

Happy New Year, my friends.

May God bless you and comfort your soul with the everlasting contentment of a life spent wrapped in his loving, steady arms.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”—John 14:27 (NIV)



## Bishop’s Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

### Pressing on

“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.’ ... [Herod] sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.’ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.” Matthew 2:1-2; 8-11 (NIV)

Have you ever heard the story told that asks the question, “Why did the child throw the clock out the window?” The answer: “To see ‘time fly.’”

That expression “time flies” seems like an understatement. Some of that sense may be because of the continuing emphasis that our society places on speed. We are always seeking ways to do things faster.

However, as we cut down production time, we simply fill the time we save with more tasks. As we accomplish more, we are always seeking more ways to accomplish even more in a never-ending, spiraling cycle that continues to go on and on and never stops.

With the passing of time, I have come to realize that the real basis of life does not consist in how many jobs we get done, how many promotions we accumulate, how much money we save or how many things we possess.

What gives us life is our spiritual witness.

As we lean into Epiphany, the season gives a spark of light in our souls that reminds us that just as everything has an ending, so also do new things come along to engage us.

The year 2021, like 2020, was a year like no other, and the journey continues into 2022. We continue to live in the midst of pandemic, unrest and divisiveness that wreaks havoc on our lives and communities.

Yes, our routines continue to be disrupted and we continue to make adjustments in the way we live our lives and practice our faith. But as Christians, we know that the peace of God that surpasses all understanding has been revealed to us, and it will guard our hearts and minds. As a community of believers, we serve a mighty God who has plans for us, plans to prosper us and not to harm us, plans to give us hope and a future.

As a people of faith who profess to be followers, we know that our call is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind and all our strength.

The real task of Epiphany is following.

The Magi rejoiced and followed the star. The Christian life is one of receiving the Epiphany and following. The birth of the Christ child, Jesus, is a reminder that “God is with us.” He is with us however, whenever and wherever we gather, whether virtually or in-person. The challenge of the faith is to see, receive and follow.

Remember, Herod heard the report of the Magi along with the chief priests and scribes. None of them followed. The light continues to shine in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The task of Epiphany is learning to follow.

In a world where people are more interested in being right and proving it, we can miss out on the opportunities to learn, grow and follow. It takes an Epiphany, a revelation of God, for us to see where Epiphany shines.

Are we willing and ready to follow?

“Well, let’s press on the upward way, new heights we gain every day. Still praying as we’re onward bound. Lord, plant our feet on higher ground.”—From the hymn “Higher Ground”

## Letters to the Editor

### Choose life

What is normal in our world today? Someone said the only normal thing is the controls on the washing machine.

“Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11 CSB).

There is so much each life faces each day. Life is a paradox: hate/love, injustice/justice, depression/happiness, racism/equality, lying/truth, murder/life, homophobia/acceptance, sickness/healing, fear/trust, sin/grace, anger/forgiveness, death/life.

“Choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don’t let your heart be troubled or fearful” (John 14:27).

Rev. John Culp, retired  
Columbia

See “Letters,” Page 5

### Letters Policy

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



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## Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Steve Brown

### New Year's is like a blank book

I sat nervously looking at the clock. The old man seemed to be doing something, but I couldn't quite see what. It was almost midnight—time to pass out the books. I felt a mixture of excitement and expectation as well as uncertainty and apprehension. I tried to appear confident, but I wasn't sure I was pulling it off. Finally, he came over as the clock began to strike the hour and gave me my book. It was simple enough to look at on the outside with its gilded "2022" on the front, but that was not what I was interested in. As I opened it, I saw the first page. It was blank. I tried to turn to the last page, but it seemed fastened to the back binding. I tried to turn to any page but couldn't. In fact, all the other pages after the first seemed glued together. I couldn't see a one. "Excuse me," I said cautiously. "I think my pages are stuck together." "And a-why would ye be a-sayin' that?" the old man asked. "I, uh, can't seem to turn past the first page," I stammered. "And why would ye wantin' to be a-lookin' at them?" the old man replied. "I don't know," I said sheepishly. "I guess I just kinda wanted to see if I could find out what' going to happen." "The only page ye need so to see is right there in front of ye," he said forcibly. "It's the only one ye can a-write on, And so, ye will know, once a page is a-turned, there's no a-goin' or a turnin' it back." The blank page seemed to stare up at me, beckoning and inviting. I took the pen in my hand, and I started to write the first words on the page. I hesitated. Suddenly, it seemed so overwhelming. "Uh, sir," I began, "could I maybe use a pencil instead of a pen? I might make a mistake." "I have no doubt ye will be a-makin' mistakes, but ye cannot be a-usin' any pencil. The page only takes ink. What a-do, ye a-do. What ye a-write, ye a-write—and ye cannot a-change it." I gulped. "Am I responsible for everything that is written in this book?" "Aye, that ye are," he replied. "But you will find at times there are some parts a-written before ye. There, ye will be a-fillin' in the blanks. Other times, ye will be a-findin' questions that ye will have to answer." "But I'm not sure what I'm a-writing. I mean, writing," I protested. "How will I know what to write?" "It's your story, man," he answered. "Ye be a-writin' your story." "Oh, then it's an autobiography." "Well, now," the old man answered, pausing for a moment, "that all depends on what ye a-want the story to be about. Some write autobiographies, a-makin' the whole book all about themselves. But the best are biographies, when they tell their story within God's larger story and are a-written with the help of a Ghost writer." "A ghost writer?" I said. "You mean I can get help?" "Aye, that ye can, always and anytime ye a-ask for it," the old man said. "God's Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit as the new books say, is always there to help ye a-write your story—if ye a-let him. He it is who can a-change the verb tense and a-change the plot when ye make mistakes or your story goes a-wry." And so I begin to write ... and so do you. We will fill up this year with the story of our lives, shaping our destiny and intersecting with others' stories. This year, I hope we will write this year tales of worship and prayer, stories of family and friends, accounts of helping and serving others. 2022 is now with us. Moreover, God is with us, so that we can write, and live, with confidence as we let him help us "a-write" our story. May this be the best year in your story and my story, too. *Brown is senior pastor of St. Mark United Methodist Church, Greenwood.*

## LETTERS: Remembering

From Page 4

### Between the L's & R's

Cherokee Place United Methodist Church was founded in North Charleston near the Navy yard by Clara Lee and her husband, Jesse, in 1927 and closed on Oct. 31, 2021. Some of the charter members were the family of Herbert Lesesne Ridgeway. One of the Ridgeways was the first music director, and the first marriage was Herbert's son, Herbert Jr. At some point the original Ridgeway family left Cherokee, probably in the 1950's. In 2000, about 50 years later, Merrill and Pam Ridgeway, distant cousins of the charter members, began to worship and fellowship at Cherokee and served there until it closed. There are so many coincidences in these names it makes the history of Cherokee unique, like the dash between 1927-2021: 1. The first funeral and the last was Ridgeway and Ridgeway: Grace Ridgeway in 1927 and Pam Ridgeway in 2021. 2. Both Ridgeway/Ridgeway were very active as music director, with Pam as lay leader until her death and Merrill as chair

of the trustees. 3. Merrill Ridgeway signed the Charge Conference papers closing Cherokee permanently and, as acting acolyte, snuffed out the last candle after the final service. (The symbol of the UMC is a cross and a flame.) 4. Pam's son, Gordon Lesesne Smith, has the same middle name as charter member Herbert Lesesne Ridgeway. (Lesesne is a French Huguenot family name from the early settlers of South Carolina.) 5. The last recording secretary who witnessed the closing was Connie Lee—same last name and first initial of the founder, Clara Lee. None of this takes away from the multitude of saints who, like the dash, filled in from the beginning to the end of Cherokee's existence. We are all part of God's plan for his people and names are just names, a way to identify things from Alpha to Omega. Without words and names, life would be impossible since our thoughts alone cannot be heard. Once in a great while, though, the names all run together just to make our world seem a little smaller and closer. From the Ls to the Rs to the Ls. *Merrill Ridgeway, former member Cherokee Place UMC, North Charleston*



## Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Bernie Mazyck

### Answering the call: Time for a 36 percent cap-rate

Mr. Richardson is a middle-aged gentleman living on disability income because he suffers from Crohn's disease. He is working two jobs to make ends meet and was renting a mobile home in an area of South Carolina where housing costs are very high. With such tight funds, Mr. Richardson needed some money to pay his rent, light bill and other utility costs. So, after seeing a commercial for a title loan company promising him a quick loan, he went into the company's store and within 30 minutes was provided a \$600 loan without very much paperwork or documentation. What the title loan company didn't share with Mr. Richardson is that he will be paying a very high interest rate. Mr. Richardson quickly realized he was now saddled with high monthly payments. The new \$180/month payment on a \$600 title loan made his monthly expenses impossible, and he asked the title company if he could adjust his monthly payments. They refused. Eventually, Mr. Richardson fell behind on his light bill, and his electricity was turned off. He then stopped paying on the title loan so as to get his electricity restored, and he began to receive threatening letters and phone calls from the title loan company promising to repossess his car. Because he needed his car for work, Mr. Richardson sought a way to get out of his original title loan. So he went to a different title loan company across the street believing they would be more compassionate. They gave him the money to pay off the original title loan company and to get his car back, but their interest rates were just as high as the original title loan company. Mr. Richardson missed one payment with the new title loan company and they also repossessed his car. Just like Mr. Richardson, thousands of South Carolinians become trapped in this vicious cycle. Loss of transportation, evictions, lack of medical care and lack of mainstream banking access, each a victim of the cycle of poverty and predatory lenders. It's a cycle whose impact permeates through families, relationships and one's quality of life. It's a cycle that has an economic impact equal to \$245 million lost annually to our state's economy. And the root of this cycle, similar to an invasive root, can most likely be found in your community as well in the form of payday and auto-title lenders, also known as high-cost predatory lenders. Various studies have shown the devastating impact predatory lenders have not only on individuals but as a ripple effect throughout entire communities and state. Targeting the poor, elderly, marginalized and communities of color, predatory lenders charge up to 999 percent interest on small dollar loans and require automatic payments out of a checking account. Often this results in the closure of accounts and borrowing of additional high-cost loans, creating an endless, inescapable cycle of debt for the borrower. Lenders in South Carolina can charge any interest rate they want so long as it is filed with the South Carolina Consumer Affairs Commission, and in 2018 nearly 700,000 payday loans were made to 86,000 people living in South Carolina, an average of eight loans per person. Nearly 55 percent of South Carolinians use subprime credit and 42 percent of all South Carolinians have at least one account that is in collection. Chances are high that someone you know has been harmed from such practices. The toll predatory lending on an individual's overall health and well-being exemplifies the boundaryless devastation these loans can create. According to a 2020 Salary Finance study, a cash-strapped employee is 3.4 times more likely to experience anxiety and panic attacks, four times more likely to suffer from depression and five times more likely to miss deadlines and produce lower quality work. But as people of faith, there is hope. Following the command in Exodus 22:25 ESV—"If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him"—in 2020, the South Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church stepped up. The conference voted overwhelmingly to endorse a resolution to limit the negative impacts of predatory lenders by capping interest rates in South Carolina at 36 percent. Other organizations and leaders joined the UMC to form the South Carolina Fair Lending Alliance, a unified front representing neighbors all across South Carolina. This alliance is working to get legislation introduced in the State Legislature and advocate for a solution to this critical issue. Members of the alliance include organizations such as South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development (Charleston), South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center (Columbia), Habitat for Humanity South Carolina (Columbia), CommunityWorks (Greenville), South Carolina Community Loan Fund (Charleston), United Way Greenville County (Greenville) and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Charleston, to name a few. Your help is needed. As members of the South Carolina Conference of the UMC, you are encouraged to reach out to your representative to the South Carolina House and your state senator and ask them to support legislation that will cap interest rates in South Carolina. It is imperative that our state legislature listens to this demand for change and steps up to the plate. With a broad base of support from citizens and leaders across South Carolina, there has never been a better time to answer the call. Our legislature must act and pass an all-inclusive 36 percent cap-rate for all South Carolina citizens before one more family is cast out of their home, before one more full-time employee is faced with a choice of paying their utility bill or their small-dollar loan monthly payment and before one more grandmother is coerced out of her monthly social security check to pay egregiously high interest rates. "You shall not charge interest on loans to your brother, interest on money, interest on food, interest on anything that is lent for interest."—Deuteronomy 23:19 *Mazyck is the co-convenor of the Advocacy Committee of Connectional Ministries of the South Carolina Annual Conference. He is also the president and CEO of the SCACED.*

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Grace UMC just wrapped up its 14th year of offering the production with a cumulative total of 56,489 visitors attending.



Guests are escorted through the village with the final stop at the nativity complete with Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus, angels, shepherds and live animals.

# Bethlehem Blessings

## Grace UMC marks 14 years of 'Return to Bethlehem' production

By Marianne Harlan

NORTH AUGUSTA—In 1998, God called his people of Grace United Methodist Church to tell the story of the birth of his son by presenting a live nativity.

We answered that call and got to work building the village of Bethlehem, making costumes, gathering props and much more. After an entire year of preparation, our first presentation of "Return to Bethlehem" was held in 1999 with 5,154 visitors from the community coming to witness the events leading to the birth of Christ.

Fast forward to 2021, where we just wrapped up our 14th year of offering the production with a cumulative total of 56,489 visitors attending.

We have a cast of more than 300 who portray the story as our visitors walk through scenes. A costumed guide assumes a character, telling their life-changing story of the night of Jesus's birth.

The first stop begins with the angel Gabriel sharing the news with Mary that she is with child. This scene is followed by Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem to be counted in the census. Then we stop at Herod's Court, where Herod shouts his anger at his chief priests about the news that

a baby has been born who will be king.

Next, the group is transported back in time 2,000 years ago to the town of Bethlehem: a busy village of shops and cottages. The sights, sounds and smells of the village come to life with live animals, authentic music, costumes and artisans at work.

Guests are escorted through the village with the final stop at the nativity complete with Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus, angels, shepherds and live animals. Scripture readings are provided to visitors on hanging scrolls along the way with the final reading at the nativity: "For God so loved the world that he gave his son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

The premise behind the pageant is that God's love to us is freely given, so as a way of mirroring that love, we accept no donations from our visitors. This gift of love to our community is made possible solely by generous financial donations and untold hours of service from our church family.

At Grace UMC, we're blessed that God called on us to tell his story and we plan to continue to do so for years to come.

*Harlan is director of "Return to Bethlehem" and church administrator.*



No donations are accepted at the annual event.

## UMCSC to hold free clergy care Zoom retreat in January

The Clergy Care ministry of the South Carolina Conference will hold a virtual retreat in January that is free of charge and open to all clergy.

On Jan. 6 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., the Rev. Ken Owens and Dr. Robin Dease will lead "Why Should We Feel Power-

less?"


The event is a Zoom retreat.

Owens is a retired elder and certified spiritual director, and Dease is the former Hartsville District superintendent and now pastor of St. Andrew By-The-Sea UMC, Hilton

Head Island.

To register for the retreat, go to <https://tinyurl.com/clergycare010622>.

Once you register, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.



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**Advent reading**

Christian Murphy and her daughter, Kenna, give an Advent reading at Manning United Methodist Church, Manning, Dec. 5. Manning's pastor, the Rev. David McManus, lights the candle behind them.

# SOMETHING NEW: Weekly communion part of new service

From Page 1

After all, he said, there have been plenty of churches that have started contemporary services in the best of times that haven't worked. But Carosiello had been feeling God nudge him to start the service at Sharon throughout the last year, and six months ago, he approached the church council with the vision.

They voted unanimously: yes.

"I'm super thankful for a congregation that is willing to risk a lot and try something new that doesn't have the guarantee to succeed," Carosiello said. "We wanted to use COVID as an opportunity to try something new."

Sharon isn't a big church, but the surrounding area is seeing much growth right now and is one of the fastest growing regions in the state. Located right down the street from the BMW plant near Woodruff, Simpsonville and Reidville, Carosiello said there are "subdivisions coming in all around us."

The contemporary service is an additional service at Sharon, held at 9 a.m. and called the "Word and Table Service." Their traditional service is at 11 a.m. Unique about the contemporary service is that it features communion every week; many United Methodist churches do communion monthly, while some do it quarterly. But for Carosiello and the team who started the new service, sharing communion together is tangible response to worship that brings the message home in a deeper way for people.

"To me, there's no better response to God's word than participating in communion together," Carosiello said, noting that it was during communion when he experienced his call to United Methodist ministry.

That element of communion also ties in with the name of the service, Word and Table, which reflects the imagery of Christ inviting us all to his holy table to partake of his body and his blood, now and forever.

"We gather every single Sunday to hear the word of God preached, but also expecting to be visited by the word of God who took of flesh 2,000 years ago," Carosiello said.

Between the new service and the increasing number of small groups and Bible studies offered at Sharon, he and the congregation have a vision of Christ's table being further



Their proverbial leap of faith has led to renewed excitement in the 200-year-old church, which has seen its share of transitions over the years.

extended from the church, to the homes and restaurants of God's people in the community, and extended even further to those without a church home—and to the poor, the naked, the hungry, and the lost.

Their proverbial leap of faith has led to renewed excitement in the 200-year-old church, which has seen its share of transitions over the years.

Kelly Newman, a member of the church's outreach team, has been part of the church for a few years, and she said people were anxious when the new service started.

"But it all has worked out so smoothly," Newman said. "It has been amazing to watch it all come together, with everybody working together and welcoming new people. It's just

great."

Buster Wallof and his wife, Pam, are among the newer members at Sharon, moving to the area from Maine in September 2020. But when Carosiello invited them to be part of the planning committee for the new service, they were honored and excited. Now, after all their hard work as a team, Wallof said it's thrilling to see everything come to fruition. He thinks there is a need for a contemporary service because there is so much excellent contemporary music now, and the new service is able to weave these songs throughout as part of the worship.

"It's still a country church, but the flow of the service is very unique, with the songs integrated and blended in, and one of the

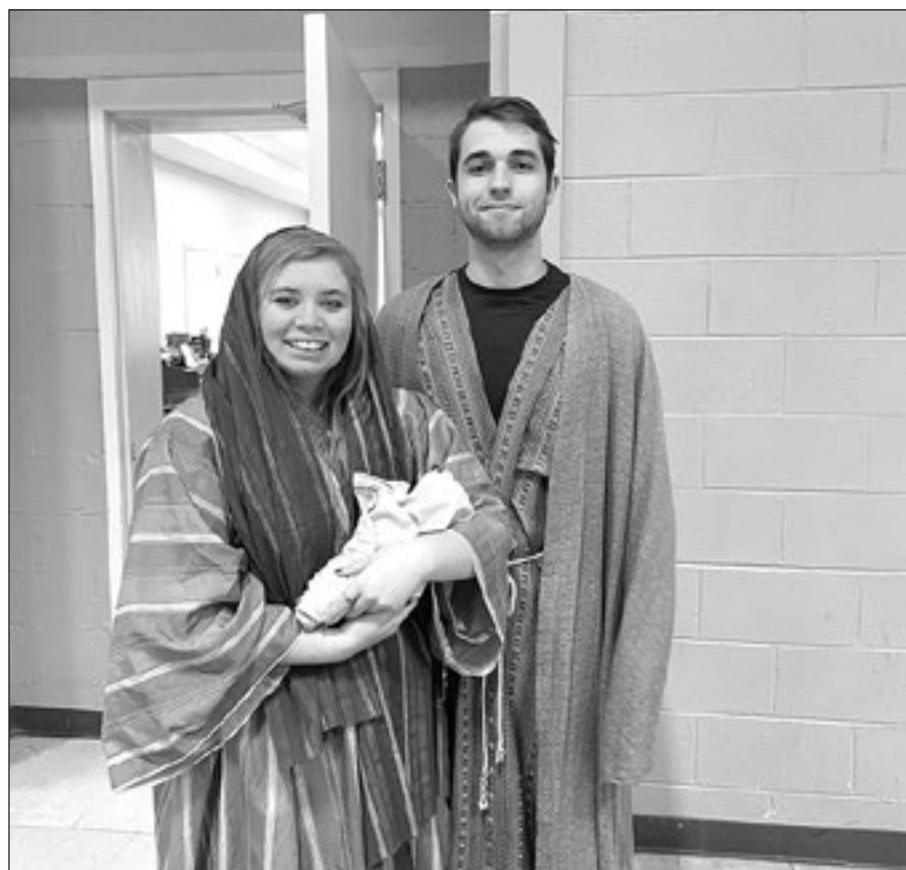
best gifts is our music director, Carl Gibson. He's fresh out of college, an accomplished pianist, very gifted, and brings the energy that is needed."

Between that, Carosiello's preaching and the communion offered each week, it's a great way to help formerly unchurched people understand the full message of Christ within their hearts.

"It feels like home," Wallof said.

Carosiello said it has been fun to see an up-close picture of God doing something they couldn't do themselves.

"It's a great step in the larger journey God has given us as a church to make disciples," he said. "We know we are called to go into the community."



## Christmas brought to life

Manning UMC, Manning, held a Christmas festival in December with games, prizes, face painting, cookie decorating, crafts and a parade led by Santa that concluded with a reading of the nativity story, which featured the church's young adults in costume.

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# LIVING CHRISTMAS: Event requires cast of 200 each night

From Page 1

It also includes the cross and the empty tomb. People are heard remarking about the bright, big star and the long-awaited Messiah.

“Telling the story of Jesus and his birth and life and getting the message out to all of the people who come through has been a wonderful thing; it really has,” said Ruth Ann Ivey, the deacon who brought the Living Christmas Story to Bethany. “I connected with Living Christmas Story through the Christian Educators Fellowship. The year before we started, I took a group to Columbia to see a Methodist church there that was doing it. The following year we started getting things ready to do it here. That was in 1996. I feel like it’s been a blessing to so many people.”

Travis Wheeler, co-chair of the Living Christmas Story said it has lasted for 25 years because of the reach of the ministry.

“Those of us who have driven through it when our children were little remember the conversations that it led to and hope that our version of LCS leads others to the same conversations,” Wheeler said. “We start the initial setup five weeks before the date. We work every Saturday for about four to five hours leading up to it. The week before, a lot of us take off a couple of days of work or all week to finish up the setup. Many church members show up the week before to help spread pine straw, hay, distribute live plants, put props in the correct place and help put the finishing touches on LCS.

“It is definitely a churchwide project.” Wheeler noted it is also a significant



Bethany’s Living Christmas Story features a scene depicting the angels on the mount (above). Below, basket weavers help provide a glimpse of early Bethlehem for attendees.



monetary investment for the church, but it is seen as an outreach ministry to the local community. It takes about 250 people per night to put it on with a cast of about 200 people and another 50 handling costumes, food, taking care of animals, coordination, casting directors, traffic control and trams.

“One thing I love about LCS is that our kids see how much time and effort it takes to put on the production,” Wheeler said. “It has led to many conversations about Jesus, the church and having a servant’s heart, not to mention talking about the specifics of the story. I hope it brings people as much joy and as many blessings as it has me and our family.”

UPTV’s “Small Town Christmas” included Living Christmas Story on its show about Summerville, which aired on Christmas Eve at 9 p.m.

Many people look forward to Living Christmas Story every year as it gives them a stress-free break from the hecticness of the holidays.

Matt Bates has experience serving five years as coordinator of Living Christmas Story.

“On a personal note, for me it goes back to the first time I drove through the Living Christmas Story before I was a member at Bethany,” Bates said. “I was really, really, impressed with the production quality and the sets and the actors. But what really hit me was the empty tomb at the end.

“Seeing the full circle from Jesus’s birth all the way through the ultimate sacrifice brought me to tears. It diminishes all the typical worries and anxieties that come with the holidays.”

# CHRISTMAS AT LEE: A community effort of love for ‘the least’

From Page 1

“As a chaplain it has been a blessing to minister to the men at Lee and to be a part of the plan of God for so many years.”

This year, roughly 20 churches and groups pitched in to help provide the lunches: the Great Commission Ministry; Friendship UMC, Chesterfield; Bethesda UMC; Kairos Ministry; Herbert Thompson Ministries; Faith UMC, Cades; Society Hill Church of God; Cades UMC, Cades; Wesley UMC, Hartsville; Ministries on the Move for Christ; Lake City Circuit, Lake City; Kingtree UMC, Kingtree; St. John Charge; Jeremiah UMC, Hemingway; Kennedyville UMC, Nesmith; Lake Point UMC, Lake City; Manning UMC, Manning; and Mount Zion UMC.

McKnight lifted up Jesus’s words in Matthew 25:31-46 as the impetus behind their loving service toward the men at Lee. “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’” (Matthew 25:37-40 NIV).

He also reminded us of the words of Methodism’s founder.

“John Wesley stated, ‘Let me do all the good I can, to all the people I can, as often as I can, for I shall not pass this way again,’” McKnight said. “Let this be our purpose and mission.”



Kingtree UMC members, with their pastor the Rev. Katherine Haselden-Crimm, prepare lunches for men at Lee Correctional Institute.



McKnight, left, and volunteers from local churches gather for a smile while delivering the lunches to the men at Lee.



Members of St. John UMC on the Lake City Circuit assemble Christmas lunches for the incarcerated men.





# MEN'S RETREAT: 'Resilient'

From Page 1

The retreat will focus on using lessons learned in the pandemic to propel men's ministry into an ever more powerful tool for God's kingdom here on earth.

Hosted at Mount Horeb United Methodist Church in Lexington, the theme for the annual Men N Ministry spiritual retreat is "Resilient: Timely Truth for Troubled Times," focusing on John 16:33.

In that verse, Jesus has just explained some important truths to his disciples to help them hold fast to faith, for he is about to be arrested and crucified. He's promised the Holy Spirit, the absolute love of the Father, the hatred of the world toward them and the transformation of their grief into joy.

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace," Jesus said in John 16:33 (NIV). "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

That's exactly the message Men N Ministry President Marvin Horton is hoping men will seize as they approach their 2022 spiritual retreat.

"The theme is really about what we've come through and where we want to go, which is to help men grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ and help other people to grow," Horton said.

While the pandemic has been hard and change has been a constant, Horton said, there is peace and empowerment in knowing Christ brings peace, for he has overcome the world. And through Christ, we can, too.

"We are resilient," Horton said.

The Rev. Trevor Miller, one of the pastors at Mount Horeb and a member of the Men N Ministry design team, said he is excited about the event, which will feature three elements: a golf tournament, an oyster roast and a daylong teaching session.

On Friday, Feb. 25, men will have the chance to play golf together. A Men N Ministry golf tournament will be held at Indian River Golf Club, West Columbia. Teams will play Captain's Choice, with range balls before the tournament and lunch after the tournament, plus drinks and dessert. The event starts at 11 a.m. Organizer Kenny Bingham said he hopes the day will bring an opportunity for fellowship and a good game of golf. Cost is \$80 per player, and mulligans can also be purchased.

On Friday evening, men will gather at Mount Horeb for the church's annual men's ministry oyster roast.

And on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., they will return to Mount Horeb for a full day of inspiring worship, breakout learning sessions and a main speaker, as well as a strong word from South Carolina UMC Resident Bishop Jonathan Holston. Cost is \$60.

While there will be opportunities for people to experience the event online, the push is for men to gather in person so they can learn together and from each other, Miller said.

"Now more than ever, it's important for the men of South Carolina to come together in person to be equipped for ministry for a brand-new year," Miller said.

Registration will be online at <https://mennministrysc.org>.

Men can register for one event or all three.

Sponsorships are also available, and church sponsors receive a number of free tickets to the event.



## View from the Pews

by Bill Barnier

### Time passes

The silence in our house was noticeable, as it often is when I'm at my desk trying to wring out a particular column or edit a new manuscript. My wife was sitting at the kitchen table writing Christmas cards and listening to quiet soulful songs on Celtic pipes. She stamped the stack of envelopes ready for the post and announced, "There are fewer this year. Many in my address book have gone on to heaven."

As we get older we certainly notice a rising number of friends and family who no longer share our life journey. Memories of my father's funeral come to mind. At 96, he had outlived most of his friends and siblings, while we children are now gray-haired and retired. The attendees of his funeral service only filled one-third of the small chapel.

Our Bible speaks of many who knew God and lived hundreds of years. It's hard to imagine a life of that length, but I suspect the common people had lifetimes much shorter. Archeological discoveries and modern science confirm lives of similar length as our own. Honestly, I can't imagine living hundreds of years on this earth. But there are those who say it's possible if we live a more natural life and stop replacing what God has created with that which man deems better.

By our Christian faith, and other belief systems, we accept that our spirit, our essence of life, is of God and will return to God when this life journey has ended. We believe in the promise of life at our funeral because the spirit of God-given existence resides with God alone.

Debate abounds about the people we bring into our personal lives and about mea-

asuring the quality of friends and companions we allow to walk our path with us. Some may arrive to take a step on their own journey and stay with us only briefly. Others are sent to us to remain an entire lifetime, to explore with us all that God's universe contains or to simply love and be loved despite our human weaknesses.

It is our interaction with other humans that is perhaps the most tiresome in life, and the most rewarding. If our daily walks with God and the Holy Spirit are rich and loving, we can learn of great and wondrous things and not grow weary of living.

Some years back my wife and I attended a couple of funerals of people dear to us. With an open mind, despite our feeling of great loss, we observed the full gambit of human emotions. Grief, anger and confusion, as well as love and peace, were in great supply. None of those things altered the outcome of the funeral, and none of the praise and stories of the deceased changed the final breath of a human life. We both decided we didn't care for the drama and expense of the ritual. What we really care about is loving and being loved by those who come into our lives, for a day or a lifetime, and leaving this life into the arms of a loving God. Come what may, nothing else matters.

Having a near death experience some years ago, I pledged to be more open to God's love and the wonders of the universe, and to not be shy about telling others they are loved. A celebration of my life must occur every day, not just after the last day. Address book not necessary. Live!

*Barnier attends St. Paul United Methodist Church, Ridgeland.*

## Thank You, Men N Ministry Sponsor Churches

Men N Ministry in South Carolina has been blessed in past years to provide a wonderful men's event in February that has been possible because of support from Sponsor Churches. During the last three years, a total of 42 churches or charges have responded to support Men N Ministry in South Carolina. Ten of those 42 have committed all three years. Listed below are those churches or charges and their years of support. We extend a special thank you to these churches and also to men and pastors in these churches. We also thank our district superintendents for their help in Men N Ministry.

Our event on February 26, 2022, is approaching fast (see article, Page 1). \$600 will give you 12 registrations for the 2022 event. Churches or charges listed below will receive two additional registrations for each prior year of support.

### Thank you, South Carolina UMCs that have been Men N Ministry Sponsor Churches

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**Columbia District**  
Ashland UMC 19-20-21  
Francis Burns UMC 19  
Journey UMC 21  
Mount Hebron UMC 20  
Mount Horeb UMC 19-20-21  
Pond Branch UMC 19  
Rehoboth UMC 19-20-21  
Shandon UMC 20  
Union UMC 19-20  
Windsor UMC 19-20-21

**Florence District**  
None

**Greenville District**  
Buncombe Street UMC 20  
Covenant UMC 20  
Lee Road UMC 21  
Simpsonville UMC 20  
St. Mark UMC, Taylors 20

**Greenwood District**  
Edgefield UMC 21  
Panola UMC 20  
St. Mark UMC 20-21

**Hartsville District**  
Aldersgate UMC, Sumter 19-20-21  
Centenary-Kingsville 21  
Lytleton Street UMC 20-21  
Mount Zion UMC, Sumter 19  
St. Luke UMC, Hartsville 20  
Trinity UMC, Darlington 21

**Marion District**  
Belin Memorial UMC 19-20-21  
Surfside UMC 20

**Orangeburg District**  
Bethlehem-St. Matthews 20  
Forest Chapel-Cedar Grove 21  
New Light UMC 21  
St. Mark UMC, North 19  
St. Johns UMC, Aiken 19-20-21

**Rock Hill District**  
Good Samaritan UMC 19-20-21  
Hopewell UMC 20  
Western York Charge 20-21  
Woodland UMC 19-20-21

**Spartanburg District**  
Lyman UMC 21  
New Beginnings UMC, Boiling Springs 19-21  
Reidville Road UMC 19-20-21  
Silver Hill Memorial UMC 20-21

**Walterboro District**  
Dorchester Parish 21  
St. Mark-St. George 19



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## Reflections

by Deborah Len

### Any way we can, whenever we can

**M**ary Jo awoke early on a bright Sunday morning. She was looking forward to church as she was going to help assist the pastor with communion.

She was so excited to be doing more in her church. Recently, she had prayed for God to help her find ways to serve his people and be more like Jesus. Then the pastor asked her to help with communion. Prayer was answered.

Mary Jo got busy cooking her breakfast. She was smiling and humming. She looked out the kitchen window and gasped. Her sheep had gotten out of the fenced area they had been living in for more than a year.

Mary Jo took a deep breath and whispered a short prayer that her sheep would be OK. Out she went to gather her sheep and fix the fence. The task was more than she anticipated, and she hung her head low and went home.

She called the church to let them know she would not be there today. Distraught was more than she felt. She felt sad, like she was letting God down. The pastor assured her God was not displeased with her at all.

The next call was to her best friend. Peggy Sue and her husband, Bob, came over quickly to help repair the fence. Peggy Sue went on to church and added Mary Jo to the prayer list in Sunday school and also during the service. Peggy Sue asked the pastor if he needed help with communion, and he quickly agreed to let her help him. God does have a plan all the time.

At this point in our story we have seen several ways people respond in times of crisis. Mary Jo prayed and asked for help, and her friends came quickly and offered to help her and the pastor.

But there are more people in this story that have been in the background. We now introduce Chadworth and his wife, Lisbeth, also were members of the same church who lived on the same road as Mary Jo.

Lisbeth was screaming at Chadworth: "Mary Jo's sheep are messing up our lawn. Go out, Chad, and get them out of our expensive custom-bought sod yard. We paid good money for this, and those dirty sheep are eating it all up!"

Chad did not want to get his new imported designer shirt dirty, so he called animal control and the local police. Let them take care of it, thought Chad. I pay taxes, and it is not my job to take care of other people's problems.

Lisbeth and Chad stomped around and fumed. How could Mary Jo do this to them?

When Lisbeth and Chad saw Peggy Sue and Bob drive up, they decided they had done the right thing by staying in their home and calling the authorities.

Lisbeth and Chad noticed Peggy Sue had gone and now it was only Bob and Mary Jo at the home. They raised their eyebrows and winked at each other.

Off they went to church. Pulling into the parking lot, they waved for several of their church friends to wait on them. With excited voices talking over each other, Lisbeth and Chad recapped the terrible problem they had from Mary Jo's sheep and how Bob was alone now with Mary Jo.

The friends lapped up all this gossip as the real truth, never contemplating how the truth was being twisted to make Lisbeth and Chad look helpless and Mary Jo to be made the villain and potential temptress on this bright Sunday morning.

The police came and helped Bob put posts back up, and animal control found a way to gather the sheep back in their corral. Mary Jo was beyond grateful. She had never stopped praying for help.

The pastor overheard the gossiping couples as they entered the church and quickly and politely put all that nonsense to rest. He also shared that his sermon next week would be on gossip and how it can hurt the body of Christ.

Lisbeth and Chad decided this was not the church for them. They did not in their minds do anything wrong. They would, after all, have to get a new lawn, and Bob was alone with Mary Jo. They'd just told the facts.

The pastor reminded them that just because you see or hear something does not mean you have to repeat it. This convinced them even more that this was a horrible church. You should be able to say whatever you want!

Peggy Sue stopped at a local restaurant and brought lunch to Mary Jo's. Pastor and his wife came by later that day to make sure Mary Jo and her flock were all safe and sound again.

You see, dear readers, Mary Jo's sheep provided wool for the nearby town to produce sweaters and lap robes and hats for the victims of the last war in their small country.

Each of us has a responsibility to do all we can in any way we can whenever we can.

*Len is a member of the Church of the Good Shepherd United Methodist Church, Lancaster.*



## Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Tony Rowell

### Christmas dinner, Bobbie Jean style

**M**y momma was a lovely Southern belle born and bred in the backwater of the Florida Panhandle.

She was beautiful in a country girl sort of way. With her emerald green eyes, jet black hair and lithe form, she could turn a head or two with no effort at all. I will never forget the light that came into her eyes when she spoke of those glorious days of youth when to be pursued by the local beaus was a matter of course. She was the talk of the town, what town there was, and the belle of the ball, and she loved every minute of it.

Like most of the Southern belles I have been blessed to meet and marry over the years, she was a lovely combination of gentility and "don't mess with me." Like her mother before her, she had a heart of gold, a backbone of cast iron, the temper and tenacity of an irate bobcat and a smile that could disarm any number of desperados.

The definition of a Southern belle was my momma, and the Southern heritage in her veins rang true.

But like the Liberty Bell before her, my momma was a little cracked.

She hid it well, but once in a while a discordant note would sound, and the family would know that Mom was in a mood—and that at the very least, something unique and perhaps, dare I say, disturbing was about to happen.

Christmas dinner was often accompanied by such a discordant note. You see, my mother had a unique and, to me at least, startling take on Christmas dinner sometimes.

Whereas most of the civilized world, that would be the South, had settled on ham or turkey for the entrée with mashed potatoes, butter beans, creamed corn, candied yams and the like for the side, it would appear my mother had attended the Andy Warhol School for the Culinary Arts and had other opinions.

I kid you not. Over the years we as a family enjoyed, or in my particular case endured, a vegetarian Christmas dinner, a Mexican Christmas dinner, a broiled fish Christmas dinner and a cocktail weenie Christmas dinner. And for the crème de la crème of Christmas dinners, a steamed oyster Christmas dinner with a side of raw oysters for the "regular folks."

Now I can take a lot. I can. But when I entered Mom's house that Christmas morning for the annual Rowell family Christmas expecting to be greeted by the savory smells of roast beast and figgy pudding, only to be met with the pungent odor of oysters on the half shell enjoying a nice steam, my reaction

was predictable if not pleasant.

You see, I am very consistent in a few things. I don't like change, and I have no love for oysters, raw or otherwise. To me they are gooey and creepy, squishy and grey. As a foodstuff, they are a sorry substitute for turkey and dressing, trust me.

At the time of this surfside Christmas dinner, I was old enough to know better than to make a scene. After all, I was a seminarian and student preacher, and to fuss and cuss and fume just wouldn't do. So I did the next best thing. I found a chair off by itself, sat down and pouted like a 3-year-old.

My momma, God rest her soul, spied her melancholy middle child, pulled up a chair across from me and shamelessly laughed at me.

When she finally caught her breath, she said with a grin, "You haven't learned much in that seminary of yours have you?"

I said, "Ma'am?"

Then Momma looked deeply into my eyes. "Christmas isn't about you, Tone. You of all people should know that."

Later, when she brought out the fried chicken she had prepared for my Christmas dinner, I had to fight off the rest of the family like they were a pack of wild dogs. No matter, though—it was nice to know I wasn't alone.

A few years later, just before Christmas, my momma passed away, leaving the family lost and alone and rudderless for a while, and leaving her melancholy middle child heartbroken even to this day.

Jane, my sister, and I were with Momma when she passed, and as I felt her body relax beneath my touch, I breathed a prayer of thanksgiving for the mother with whom I had been blessed. Odd as she could be at times, I could not have asked for better.

Christmas can be a difficult time for some of us. I will forever be reminded of my mother's passing as Christmas approaches. I am reminded as well of the poignant words of my mother all those years ago reminding me that Christmas isn't about me. Christmas is about the amazing love that our creator holds in his heart for each of us.

So whether it's turkey and dressing or steamed oysters, celebrate the Christ child this coming Christmas and rejoice in the love that your Lord has for you.

Bon appétit, and merry Christmas!

*Rowell pastors Beulah United Methodist Church, Gilbert. He's also the author of "What Would Granny Say? And Other Somewhat Embellished Memories," a faith-based essay collection published by the Advocate Press. The book is available as a paperback and ebook at [www.advocatesc.org/books](http://www.advocatesc.org/books).*

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## Guest Commentary

by Dr. Phil Thrailkill

### What is the church?

It's a big question: So what is the church? The Greek word most often used in the New Testament is *ecclesia*, which means the people Jesus has called out and called together around himself. The risen Jesus—he really is alive and nearby—crosses our path with a compelling command: “Follow me,” to which a mission is attached, “and I will make you fishers of men and women.”

The church is a fishing cooperative, but then it was fishermen Jesus was addressing, so the metaphor fits.

To Levi the tax man, it may have been, “I will make you gather riches for God,” but to me at age 19 it was, “I will clean you up and make you a true and good man.”

Jesus is mission-in-motion, and in his company something happens. We catch a glimpse of people through his eyes, and then it all makes sense. He loves them before we show up, and we get the privilege of joining him as co-workers and junior partners. Divine love is the world's greatest superpower, and to voluntarily endure difficulty and suffering for the welfare of another is what it looks like at ground level on Battlefield Earth. It's what a daily cross is all about.

This living and present Jesus—the same one described in four New Testament biographies, comes with a new allegiance and a new purpose. If we say “yes,” life changes from that point. And if “no,” he is very persistent and has all sorts of ways of gaining our attention along the way, but he will not coerce. Pressure? Yes. Coercion? No.

His desire is to glue us back to himself in love and loyalty so that he can rescue and rehab us to the uttermost, what we call being saved and sanctified (the church word “sanctified” can be paraphrased as “cleaned up by love and happy about the change”).

It's the only way to get us what we most need, and there is no greater education than this, no greater challenge or privilege than to be a disciple of this Jesus along with all the others who name him as friend and teacher, lord and savior.

As a female theologian in England, Dr. Allison Morgan, is wont to say, “The plural of disciple is church.” If, along the way, we veer off to serve one of the common substitutes—be it religion or nation or family or the self and its endless demands—then church becomes very difficult since we make it over in our image.

It is highly instructive that one of the first things Jesus did after going public at his baptism was the serious business of calling followers to leave all they knew for an extended camping trip with him. For what he was about to do, there had to be an official transcript, and with 12 sets of eyes and ears everywhere he went, the truth about him and his new reality was secured in their mutually corrective memory banks. Well toward the end of the first century, eye witnesses remained to say, “That's not quite how it happened. I was there.”

A second goal for Jesus, first through close observation

and then through immersive participation, was to begin the transfer of kingdom operations from him alone to them with his supervision. No lone rangers. No solo artists, but a pilot group of men and women into whom Jesus is pouring everything he is and everything he has.

It's what we now call the apostolic tradition:

- That God is a wonderfully mysterious Triune communion with Jesus the Son sent by the Father and empowered by the Spirit.
- That love was there running things before ever we came along.
- That the world in all its misery and beauty remains user-friendly to the touch of its creator, thus the healings and exorcisms of Jesus restoring human beings everywhere and every day.
- That this complex creation is on a timeline and has a final appointment with its maker, and in that moment the only question will be, “How did you respond to the love and grace God gave every day as defined in the person of Jesus? Did his love make you loving, his grace make you gracious, his wisdom make you wise, his faithfulness make you courageous, his cross make you weep at the blind foolishness of your own sin? If not, why not?”

So what is the church? We are the people Jesus created to be his followers and official representatives. In his company we find our relationship with God the Father healed and the Holy Spirit at work in and through us. We love him, listen to him, read his stories, obey his commands and follow him in his ongoing adventures as the world's only rightful ruler. And we do it together in small and larger bands as two great privileges are restored to us: We get to love God with all we are and our neighbors as ourselves because God loves them as well.

The God who is a triune communion calls us into an always-messy community.

I close with a personal story. I have two brothers, both younger, who are disabled veterans from the Gulf War. Between the missiles they fired and the tank rounds they loosed, the death toll was well more than 100 Iraqis. But Chris was blown out of a tank with a made-in-America tank mine from Hussein's arsenal, and Tony had his chest crushed in the Navy by a container that broke loose and knocked him into a bulkhead, splitting his sternum like a popped pulley-bone and leaving him with severe concussions. Both struggle every day with addictions, depression, seizures, too many meds to manage, the after-effects of divorce, mental illness, horrific dreams no medication can touch and a deep sense of being forever different and not fitting in much of any place. As a family we do what we can, but some wounds are only healed at death and the welcome of the Savior. Both are Christians to whom tears come readily.

Last week, Tony had a crisis brought on by a change in

medications leading to an unstable gait, blurry thinking and garbled speech. I was speaking at a conference in Indianapolis, so rather than driving home by the same route, we detoured through Nashville for a check-in and a helping hand.

In the last few years, and a fact that was kept secret from us most of the time, Tony has developed a face-to-face homeless ministry. Most mornings when money allows, he's up early buying a dozen or more hamburgers from Burger King, after which he makes routes under interstate overpasses and to the corners of some of the more seedy neighborhoods with food, friendship, the aid of a new tent or sleeping bag, a winter coat, a heartfelt prayer and a good word about King Jesus, sometimes including an offer of a place to stay in his other bedroom. No judgement, just the sturdy bridge of Christian friendship. My father Dr. Jim made house calls, I make house calls and now Tony makes house calls to those without a roof. It's love taking the initiative and going to where the need is, just like Jesus who didn't set up an office in Capernaum and take clients by appointment only.

So on Saturday morning we went grocery shopping, and the route we took was not the most direct. For about a month now, Tony's not been able to make his rounds because he wrecked his van.

I thought the erratic route was because of his impairment, but there was another reason. As we drove and stopped at traffic lights and four-way stop signs, he named the men and women on every corner and gave me a bit of their histories and how many he'd help connect with social services and local churches.

And it hit me: he was their missionary. Tony was giving me a tour of his church. He sings them gospel tunes he's written, and all their cell numbers are in his phone. One of the women—a close friend—had been washed away and drowned by the Nashville floods a few months ago.

This, my friends, is same thing the Kairos Prison Ministry does, only in a more restricted venue. It is the ongoing work of Jesus through his frail and sometimes failing church, not here for entertainment but for engagement. No human being is a throw-away. And if my broken, shuffling brother finds joy and meaning here, maybe it's because Jesus got there first.

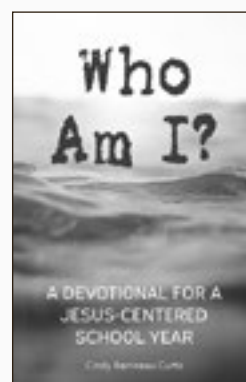
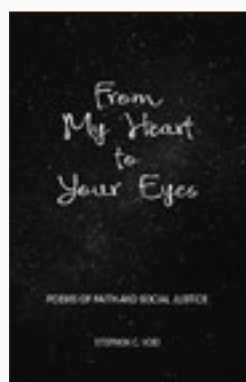
I don't care what church you go to, only that Sunday finds your butt in the pew, your bucks in the plate and your heart and hands open to the next person who crosses your path.

Any church is good enough for you! Find a need and meet it; find a hurt and heal it. It is his work, and he will be there with you, just beyond sight.

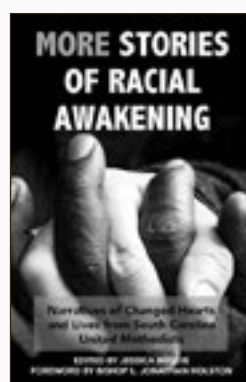
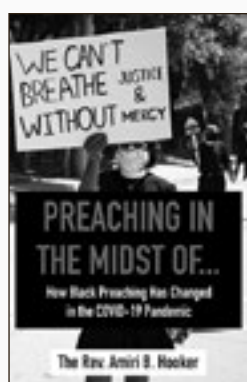
Church is where you find it. On a street corner, in a jail cell, maybe even in your sanctuary.

Look for him. He will be disguised as a needy human being.

## Books for South Carolina United Methodists



The Advocate Press is the small publishing branch of the South Carolina United Methodist Advocate. Books are produced by the Advocate with the goal of amplifying regional voices and those that advocate for the advancement of the kingdom of God.



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(Some also available on Amazon.)

# 'Tis the season

Many Christians eagerly anticipate the season of Advent, when churches often decorate their sanctuary or narthex with evergreens decorated in unique and beautiful Chrismons, decorations that remind us of the true meaning of the Christmas season and point us to the Christ child. Chrismon means "monogram of Christ." Here is a sampling of some of the trees across the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. (See more on Page 24.)



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Christopher Greene

Above is the Chrismon tree at New Beginnings UMC, Boiling Springs.



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Jonathan Tompkins

The Christmas message of hope in Jesus is primary on this Chrismon tree at Travelers Rest UMC.



The Chrismon tree at St. Mark UMC, Greenville, glistens for all to see.

Photo courtesy of Rev. Michael Maston

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Photo courtesy of Leslie Plyler

The sanctuary at Tabernacle UMC, Lancaster, is all dressed up for the Advent/Christmas season.



Photo courtesy of Lindsay Tallant  
Above is the Chrismon tree at Cannon's Camp Ground UMC, Spartanburg (if you peer closely, you can see there's a guest appearance by Samuel the Shepherd, who is on a search to find the manger).



New wooden Chrismons were made by Rebecca Johnson for the Chrismon tree at Warrenville UMC, Warrenville, where the Rev. Kendell L. Healy is pastor.

Photo courtesy of David Salter



Photo courtesy of J. Lemon  
An ornament on the Chrismon tree at Murray UMC, Summerville, gets an adjustment.



Photo courtesy of Stephanie Ponds Henry  
The Chrismon tree at Good Hope Wesley Chapel UMC in the Hartsville District is all decked out in gold and white.



Photo courtesy of Lisa Fisher  
At right, the Chrismon tree at Cayce UMC, Cayce, glimmers in the sanctuary.

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## SMC President Scott Cochran named to AGB Council of Presidents

SPARTANBURG—A South Carolina United Methodist college president has been appointed to a national council on higher education.

The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges recently appointed Spartanburg Methodist College President Scott Cochran to serve on its Council of Presidents.



Cochran

governance experts, the AGB Council of Presidents ensures that boards across the country are receiving leading and practical guidance on salient topics throughout the year. These council members help to ensure that we are aware of not only what's going on at that moment, but also what they need to know from AGB to lead with confidence and knowledge in the boardroom.

"It's a crucial partnership, and I appreciate their hard work."

Cochran was named the president of SMC in 2015 and has overseen an extended period of growth at the college, resulting in three years of record student enrollment prior to the impact of the pandemic.

During his tenure, the college has expanded its educational offerings, adding four-year bachelor's degree programs and an expanded online degree program.

Prior to joining SMC, Cochran served as dean of The Space in the Mungo Center at Wofford College as well as an adjunct professor of finance.

He had a 20-year career in the financial services industry with UPS Capital Corporation and GMAC Finance before moving into higher education.

Cochran is also a member of the Liberty Fellowship, the board of United Way of the Piedmont, the board of South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities and the Rotary Club of Spartanburg.

"I'm honored to be asked to join the Council of Presidents. I look forward to contributing to the mission of the organization and the future of higher education," Cochran said. "We have a tremendous relationship with our Board of Trustees at SMC, and I hope I can share some of that experience and knowledge with AGB and its members."

AGB is a national organization focused on providing education and leadership for boards, administrators, staff and policymakers regarding the importance of higher education. The Council of Presidents leverages the experience, perspectives and insights of its members with active leadership roles for the development of AGB expertise designed to strengthen strategic board governance across higher education.

"Our council members generously agree to lend their time and talent to advancing strategic governance across higher education," said Henry Stoeber, AGB president and CEO. "Alongside the AGB Board of Directors, AGB consultants and other board



### O, Holy Night

Manning UMC, Manning, youth, children and others participated in the Parade of Lights Nov. 28 in Manning.

## LTSS to host 'Seminary Snapshot'

Is God's spirit gently nudging you towards ministry? Learn more about Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary through Snapshot Seminary on Jan. 30-31.

Spend a couple of days on LTSS's Columbia campus intentionally focused on slowing down and listening to what God may be calling you to do next.

Take this opportunity to worship in Christ Chapel, attend classes, enjoy fellowship with students and professors, pray and discern together and learn about degree requirements and financial aid.

Meals and overnight accommodations are provided at no cost.

Register by Jan. 22 at [tinyurl.com/SnapshotLTSS](http://tinyurl.com/SnapshotLTSS).

Have questions before registering? Contact Jennifer Shimota, coordinator of seminary enrollment, at 803-461-3297 or [Jennifer.Shimota@lr.edu](mailto:Jennifer.Shimota@lr.edu).

## Columbia College celebrates accomplishments of 196 graduates

COLUMBIA—The tests are taken, the essays are edited, the grades are in and the tassels have been turned. The finish line has been reached.

On Dec. 10, Columbia College graduates gathered alongside families and friends to celebrate the end of one chapter and the beginning of the next.

With 196 total graduates—120 graduate students and 76 undergraduate students—Columbia College saw more than half its graduate students (75) receive a Master of Education in Trauma-Informed Education. This program provides candidates with an understanding of how childhood trauma, mental health and poverty impact students' ability to learn.

Keynote speaker the Rev. Becky Shirley (Columbia College Class of 1984) addressed and advised graduates to embrace the fullness of life as they enter this next chapter, taking with them the values instilled in them over the last four years.

Graduates entered Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center as students, and they exited as alumni. Regardless of their new titles, the hope is these graduates recognize Columbia College will always be home.

Among this term's graduates was Natasha Seymore, granddaughter of former Columbia College president Dr. Ralph T. Mirse. Seymore grew up on Columbia College Drive, right next door to her grandmother and grandfather. A lifelong healthcare professional, wife and mother aged 50, she utilized the Online MBA Program while living in Clinton and working full-time in Greenwood. She graduated with a master's in business administration with a concentra-



Keynote speaker the Rev. Becky Shirley (Columbia College Class of 1984) addressed and advised graduates to embrace the fullness of life as they enter this next chapter, taking with them the values instilled in them over the last four years.

tion in hospital administration.

"Today, Columbia College sent forth a new class of professionals, prepared to take hold of their careers and live

lives of impact, and we could not be more proud," President of Columbia College Tom Bogart said at the ceremony. "The legacy they have left with us is unmatched."

## Applications open for SCCUMW annual presidential scholarship

For the sixth year in a row, South Carolina Conference United Methodist Women are offering their Presidential Scholarship.

The SCCUMW scholarship is designed to financially assist young women in reaching their higher education goals. United Methodist Women said it greatly desires to partner with these future leaders through a \$1,000 scholarship. The scholarship application packet requires a March 1, 2022, postmark and can be found on the UMW website at [www.umcsc.org/umw](http://www.umcsc.org/umw).

The application contains the name and address of the person to whom it should be mailed by the deadline.

To date, SCCUMW have awarded 16 scholarships. Two were awarded in 2017: Alleah Glover and Allison Hannah Simpson; six in 2018: Emma Cohen, Jada Crawford, Alleah Glover, Hannah Porter, Lauren Rhodes and Brittany Williams; three in 2019: Danielle Edwards, Olivia Porter and Grayson Caroline Jeffords; three in 2020: Alyssa Gottheimer, Morgan Grace Steele and Joyden Glover; and two in 2021: Joyden Glover and Jillian Spencer.

The Scholarship Committee said they eagerly await the time when the applications of some of South Carolina's brightest and most accomplished young ladies begin to arrive.



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## Around the Districts

### Anderson District

The Ninth Anderson Holiday Model Train Exhibit was held Dec. 11-Dec. 22 at **St. John's UMC, Anderson**. Fifteen model trains ranging from Z Gauge to G Gauge were on display.

### Charleston District

Congratulations to the Rev. Roye Lynn Kulik on the birth of her great-grandson. Charlis Alston was born Oct. 26 to Miranda and Maurice Alston. Kulik is the pastor of the Sewee-Santee Charge, McClellanville.

### Columbia District

**Columbia College, Columbia**, has announced the addition of men's swimming and men's tennis programs. The additions will bring the total number of sports to 14. Competition for the two teams will begin in the 2022-2023 academic year and both sports will compete in the Appalachian Athletic Conference.

### Greenwood District

Congratulations to the Rev. Judith Alford on the birth of her grandson. Maximus Nolan Mathieu was born Oct. 26 and welcomed home by big brother Titus O'Brien Mathieu. Rev. Alford is a retired elder.

### Hartsville District

**First UMC, Cheraw**, hosted a DHEC Vaccine Clinic Nov. 18. First, second and booster shots of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine were offered during the four-hour clinic.

### Marion District

Congratulations to the Rev. Marvin and Carolyn Karn on the birth of their great-grandson. Keagan Jackson was born Nov. 30. Rev. Karn is the pastor of Bethel-Ebenezer Charge, Bennettsville.

### Orangeburg District

Marcia L. Fudge, secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, was the keynote speaker for the 2021 Fall Commencement Convocation at **Clafin University, Orangeburg**, Dec. 10. More than 160 graduates received bachelor's and master's degrees.

### Spartanburg District

Congratulations to the Rev. Walter and Christiana Cantwell on the birth of their daughter. Mia Grace was born Nov. 17. Rev. Cantwell is the pastor of Lyman UMC, Lyman.

## John Wesley UMC hangs the greens

LAMAR—On Sunday, Dec. 5, at the 11 a.m. morning worship service, John Wesley United Methodist Church celebrated its annual "Hanging of the Greens Ceremony."

This year's event also happened to be their pastor's first experience with a greens service in spite of his almost 20 years in ministry in the UMC.

"This service was excellent," their pastor, the Rev. J. Elbert Williams, said. "Directed by Mrs. Crystal Jett, it flowed with superbness. The characters responded in their respective places on point and precision."

Jeronell Bradley carefully read the Scripture relating to how God will send a righteous king, found in Jeremiah 23:5-6.

Tiffany Walker read the Scripture relating to how the prophet declares a child will be born, found in Isaiah 9:2, 6-7.

Thomasina Blackwell read the Scripture relating to the fourth servant's song, found in Isaiah 53:1-6.

Anna Jackson read the Scripture relating to the mystery of the incarnation, found in John 1:1-5, 9-14.

All blessed the Christmas tree together.

"After was one of the most exciting moments of the ceremony when Mrs. Alberta McCollum plugged in our tree," Williams said. "At age 98 and born Feb. 18, 1923, she is the oldest member of the church. This was her first appearance since I became pastor and we began in-person worship on July 4, 2021."

There were 35 persons present for the event, plus 25 on dial-up and 65 on Facebook Live.

These services were concluded with the blessing of the Advent wreath. Darius Evans invited all older adults to surround the wreath, which is a simple circle of evergreen branches—a sign of life without end.



Alberta McCollum plugs in the Christmas tree at John Wesley UMC. At age 98 and born Feb. 18, 1923, she is the oldest member of the church.

Williams closed services by praying the Christmas season will fill all with peace and joy as they strive to follow example of Jesus Christ. Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel!



### Church helps domestic violence victims

St. Paul UMC, Ravenel, recently contributed \$2,250 to support My Sister's House, an organization that has been servicing critical needs such as food, clothing, transitional housing, counseling and therapy to more than 2,000 women and children annually who have experienced domestic violence. "There is no doubt we understand the pressing need for solutions to eradicate domestic violence in the state of South Carolina," said the Rev. Sharon Spann Gamble, pastor of the New Hope-St. Paul Charge in the Walterboro District. Yet, she said, there are so many more victims in the community left unserved. With more than 340,000 women living in the tri-county area, Domestic Violence Policy Center statistics show that 1 in 3 women have been victims of domestic violence during their lifetime. Gamble said the church's goal for 2022 is to continue to provide support for My Sister's House and other agencies or facilities in the community. From left are Velma Ray, My Sister's House Development Officer Hallie Smith and Gamble.



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Above, a patient gets a vaccine. Below, the mobile unit served both church and community members all afternoon.



## St. Paul hosts vaccine clinic with Prisma Health Mobile Unit

CAMDEN—A Prisma Health Mobile Unit was at St. Paul United Methodist Church Nov. 21 from 12-5 p.m. to administer COVID-19 vaccines to eligible individuals.

The staff gave vaccinations to persons who waited in the designated areas outside the unit, as well as some persons who required drive-through services.

Initial vaccines and booster shots were given.

St. Paul members said the event was quite a success as together they reached out to the congregation and the Camden community to help individuals get immunized to protect themselves and their families.

They issued a big “thank you” to all persons who helped coordinate the event and to the Prisma Health onsite staff for their efforts to address the vaccinations needs within the community.



Bethesda women did their best to give hope and health a boost, donating numerous personal hygiene and clothing items, activity books and gift cards.

## A community issue

### Bethesda women help domestic, sexual assault survivors

LAKE CITY—Bethesda United Methodist Women demonstrated their faith, hope and love in action through their local 2021 service project with gifts to the Pee Dee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Assault of Williamsburg County.

On Sunday, Nov. 14, the United Methodist Women gathered and presented gifts to Teavis Young, trauma counselor with the Pee Dee Coalition. The women did their best to give hope and health a boost, donating numerous personal hygiene and clothing items, activity books and gift cards.

Gifts given included items suitable for women and children.

“It is the belief of the Pee Dee Coalition that the reduction of family violence, sexual assault and child abuse is a community issue and concerns the total community,” said Freda Cox, service county coordinator. “The Bethesda UMW have a wonderful gift to reach out to others, and we at the Williamsburg County site feel fortunate to be one of the special groups you have touched. The resources your organization provided will benefit our clients in meaningful ways.”

Ronita Gaddist, president of Bethesda UMW, said, “I am extremely proud of the manner in which the women gave from their heart. It is our prayer that God will continue to strength this coalition and build relationships to support their mission of caring for victims of sexual assault and abuse.”

The Rev. Joyce T. Edwards is pastor, and Joslyn Cooper is project chair and communication secretary.

## Smith inspires St. James UMC with faith over fear Women’s Day Program

SUMTER—The United Methodist Women of St. James United Methodist Church celebrated Women’s Day Oct. 24 with a morning worship service and a message from Deaconess Selena Smith.

Valerie Jones, UMW vice president, presided over the service, which had the theme “Exercising Faith Over Fear.”

Smith, the honored speaker, was called an “energetic, tell it like it is, inspirational woman of God,” and she reminded all of the strength and work of women in the church. She noted that women have historically been the church’s movers and shakers, serving for the betterment and upbuilding of the church.

Dr. Tonya Mack recognized the 2021 UMW honorees, Stephanie McMillian and Jennifer Adams. McMillian was recognized for her work with the United Methodist Women’s Killingsworth Home, providing valuable services to women and their children living there. Adams, a longtime United Methodist Woman who has served in various capacities, was recognized for her faithfulness and service as a member who works in the church and community to support children, youth and women.

UMW President Nancy Wilson recognized and welcomed new members to the United Methodist Women who are younger than age 40. These women also have active roles in the missions of the church that include United Methodist Women, Trustee board, finance, administrative council chair,



Deaconess Selena Smith said women have historically been the church’s movers and shakers, serving for the betterment and upbuilding of the church.

children and youth ministry chair, young adult ministry chair and higher education ministry chair.

The women closed with a special thank you to their pastor, the Rev. Allen Nesmith, for allowing them to grace the pulpit for the Women’s Day Program Celebration.



From left are the church’s United Methodist Women who are younger than age 40: Brayonna Nesmith, Renee Maple, Natasha Solomon, Amanda Willis, Tory Willis and Quenisha Harvin Green. Not pictured: Tiffany Johnson, Stephanie McMillan, Jaleesa Perry and Savannah Perry.





The bears pose with Bethel members, above.



Here, St. John members smile with their bears.

## Ruffin Circuit churches help make Christmas ‘bearable’ for area children

The three churches in the Ruffin Circuit (Bethel, St. John and Tabor United Methodist churches) coordinated their efforts recently to provide stuffed animals for less fortunate children within Colleton County.

St. John and Bethel UMC collected donated stuffed animals for the Board of Disabilities and Special Needs, the children’s network, while Tabor UMC collected its bears for the Colleton County Fire and Rescue Department.

This holiday outreach ministry started eight years ago under the guidance of Frank Crosby, a member of St. John UMC, who then worked for the Board of Disabilities and Special Needs in Walterboro. The idea soon blossomed, and all three churches started this tradition of giving that has lasted for many years. According to Crosby, this year’s goal was 44 stuffed animals, which St. John and Bethel UMC’s

exceeded with a count of 70.

Tabor UMC collects its bears and other stuffed animals for the Colleton County Fire and Rescue Department, which then distributes the toys to any child in the county who is in need of a new huggable friend in case of a tragedy such as an accident or fire.

All of the stuffed animals posed for a photograph with attendees at each church Dec. 5 and were blessed by Pastor Larry Stocker before being gathered up and taken to their local agency for distribution to children for Christmas morning and beyond.

The members of the Ruffin Circuit look forward each Christmas season to this ministry and to being the hands and feet of Jesus to children within the Colleton County area.



Photos courtesy of Janice M. Ulmer

The stuffed animals posed for a photograph with attendees at each church on Dec. 5. The animals were blessed by Pastor Larry Stocker before being taken to a local agency for distribution to children. Here, the bears pose with Tabor members before heading to the fire and rescue department.



### United Methodist Women

by Linda Eichenbaum

## South Carolina United Methodist Women’s Legislative Advocacy Days to be February via Zoom

“And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”—Micah 6:8

Once again, it’s time for South Carolina Conference United Methodist Women’s annual Legislative Advocacy Days.

The free virtual Legislative Advocacy Days will be held on four days in February via Zoom.

These 90-minute workshops will feature knowledgeable speakers on a variety of topics that address South Carolina United Methodist Women’s focus for this year.

COVID-19 has changed the ways we live, worship and connect with others. Unfortunately, the pandemic has also multiplied the many challenges faced by our most vulnerable brethren. The workshops have been planned to provide for an introduction, a 60-minute presentation by an expert and a Q&A session to address participant questions.

The UMW Tech Team also plans to record the four workshops for future use and will manage the computer aspects of this delivery.

Workshop topics will include predatory lending, South Carolina public health issues, teen pregnancy and kinship care.

- The workshops are as follows:
- Wednesday, Feb 2, 10-11:30 a.m.
- Tuesday, Feb. 8, 7-8:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Feb. 17, 2-3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Feb. 26, 10-11:30 a.m.

The global UMW continues to focus upon two social justice priorities for this quadrennium: 1) mass incarceration/ criminalization of communities of color, with a particular focus on the interrupting the school-to prison pipeline campaign, and 2) climate justice, with a particular focus on the Just Energy for All Campaign.

Both national campaigns are fully addressed at [www.unitedmethodistwomen.org](http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org).

Additionally, SCCUMW district social action coordinators have chosen to continue our attention to quality education and expanded physical and mental health services access as legislative issues for 2022.

Our statewide action focus for the upcoming year will be predatory lending in all its many forms.

United Methodist Women are 8,000-plus strong in South Carolina. We can make a legislative difference for our most vulnerable citizens. As God’s children who are charged to love one another, we are singular in seeking justice.

To do so, we must educate ourselves, critically listen and learn, then take appropriate action. As Christians, we believe that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:14-17), and we are alive in Christ!

Registration is strongly encouraged online via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3xSgOPf>.

Alternative paper registration should be mailed to Registrar Rebecca Eleazer, 5116 Burke Ave., Columbia, SC 29203.

Send name, email, district, church and phone number to her. You can call her with any questions at 803-754-0942.

Eichenbaum is SCCUMW Social Action Mission Coordinator.

## Native American Representative training set for February at Chapin UMC

Mark your calendars: The 17th annual Native American Representative Training is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022, COVID permitting.

The *Book of Discipline*, Para. 654, states that all churches are required to have one person per charge (without regard to race) to be the church’s Native American Representative. As such, the Native American Committee trains this person.

The representative is the contact person between their church and the NAC; secures a calendar date to observe Native American Ministries Sunday; encourages awareness and appreciation of Native American history, traditions and spirituality; advocates for inclusion of Native Americans within the conference; provides reports to their church; and assists with the South Carolina Native American Comprehensive Plan.

The training will be held at Chapin United Methodist Church, 417 Lexington Ave., Chapin, SC 29036.

Registration starts at 9 a.m., and the training starts at 9:30 a.m.

A Chick-fil-A lunch is provided. There is a \$10 non-refundable registration fee.

The training will end no later than 3 p.m.

NAC T-shirts and polo shirts will also be available for purchase. Shirts purchased

with registration receive a \$3 discount.

The training features historical information about American Indians, especially the South Carolina American Indians, myths and stereotypes, Native American spirituality and the mission and function of the NAC. After lunch, NAC provides an orientation into a traditional worship service for American Indians, which may include drumming, singing and flute playing.

New Native American Representatives and anyone interested in the mission and advocacy for Native American Ministries should attend. NAC also highly encourages Cabinet members, conference and church staff, district superintendents and pastors to attend.

Schoolteachers who are responsible for Native American Social Studies standards should also consider attending to improve historically and culturally accurate information.

We will be starting a new tradition at the training, so there will be a surprise for two participants attending.

If you are planning to attend, contact LaShella Kirkland at 803-713-5305 (mobile), 803-432-3699 (home) or [LaShella-Kirkland@live.com](mailto:LaShella-Kirkland@live.com) to receive a registration form. Registration deadline is Jan. 22.

### The South Carolina United Methodist Foundation



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## Resource Center

by Betty Stalnaker

### Top five DVD resources used in 2021

A special thank you goes to all our Resource Center members. We hope these and other resources have been helpful in your church ministry. As Sunday schools and small groups resume, we are ready to provide you with the Bible study of your choice.

Listed below are the most used resources in 2021. Two tied for third place, 11 tied for fourth place and 20 tied for fifth place.

#### First place

“Words of Life: Jesus and the Promise of the Ten Commandments Today”

#### Second place

“The Journey”

#### Third place

“Incarnation: Rediscovering the Significance of Christmas”  
“Simon Peter: Flawed but Faithful Disciple”

#### Fourth place

“A Savior Is Born”  
“Because of Bethlehem”  
“Entering the Passion of Jesus: A Beginner’s Guide to Holy Week”  
“How Happiness Happens”  
“Seven Words: Listening to Christ from the Cross”  
“The Acts of the Apostles (Efird Bible Study)”  
“The Gospel of Luke (Efird Bible Study)”  
“The Grace of Les Miserables”  
“The Heart That Grew Three Sizes”  
“The Walk: Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life”  
“You’ll Get Through This: Hope and Help for Your Turbulent Times”

#### Fifth place

“Basic. Who Is God?”  
“Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets”  
“Book of James: Developing a Faith that Works”  
“Creed: What Christians Believe and Why”  
“Elijah: Faith and Fire”  
“Finding I Am”  
“Forward: Discovering God’s Presence and Purpose in Your Tomorrow”  
“Half Truths: God Helps Those Who Help Themselves and Other Things the Bible Doesn’t Say”  
“Jesus in Me: Experiencing the Holy Spirit as a Constant Companion”  
“Jesus: The God Who Knows Your Name”  
“John: The Gospel of Light and Life”  
“Light of the World”  
“Shaken Bible Study: Discovering Your True Identity in the Midst of Life’s Storms”  
“Surprised By Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church”  
“The Acts of the Apostles (Efird Bible Study)”  
“The Case for Easter”  
“The Difficult Words of Jesus: A Beginner’s Guide to His Most Perplexing Teachings”  
“Unafraid: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times”  
“Wesley and His Times”  
“You Are Never Alone: Trust in the Miracle of God’s Presence and Power”

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



### Lollipops galore

Belin Memorial United Methodist Church, Murrells Inlet, held a trunk or treat Oct. 30 with around 300 children trick or treating.

## Global Briefs

#### Foundation offering local church grants

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C.—The Foundation for Evangelism is launching a new \$250,000 Equipping the Local Church grant cycle. Grants for \$5,000 or \$10,000 will be awarded to Wesleyan-tradition congregations with fewer than 250 participants, or clusters of churches working together. Applications open Jan. 15.

#### Conference camping centers go green

METHUEN, Mass.—In recent years, the New England Conference’s four Camp and Retreat Centers have taken steps to reduce their carbon footprint and increase energy efficiency, as well as to move toward renewable energy sources and reduce waste. Conference staff report on the ways, both large and small, that the camps practice environmental stewardship.

#### Seminary grant reduces student debt

DAYTON, Ohio—United Methodist United Theological Seminary has received \$3 million to reduce the educational indebtedness of its students. Under the grant from an anonymous donor, each graduate will receive up to \$20,000 to reduce his or her educational debt from both theological and previous academic studies.

#### United Methodist connection to UN report

WASHINGTON—The anti-racism work of The United Methodist Church is now included in a report to the U.N. General Assembly. The 13-page submission is supported by official statements from the denomination’s *Book of Discipline* and *Book of Resolutions*, both of which contain the United Methodist Social Principles.

#### New Appalachian Trail chaplain named

BOWDON, Ga.—The Rev. Randy Simpkins, a local pastor serving Bowdon First United Methodist Church in the North Georgia Conference, has been named the 2022 Appalachian Trail chaplain. Each year, the chaplain hikes from Georgia to Maine with the purpose of listening, helping and showing God’s love. The chaplaincy is a ministry of the Holston Conference.

#### United Methodists respond after deadly twisters

MAYFIELD, Ky.—United Methodists in Kentucky, Tennessee and neighboring states are coming to terms with the death and property devastation caused by an outburst of tornadoes, while also mobilizing quickly to provide food, emergency shelter and other relief.

#### New EarthKeepers commissioned

ATLANTA—Seventeen new EarthKeepers are working to improve the environment after being commissioned this month in an online ceremony. The United Methodist Board of Global Ministries’ EarthKeepers program, which is in its fifth year, trains recruits to pursue effective creation care ministries in their churches and communities.

#### Church promotes COVID-19 vaccines in Africa

HARARE, Zimbabwe—The United Methodist Church continues to collaborate with governments in Africa to promote COVID-19 vaccinations. Zimbabwe congregations and church-related clinics offer COVID-19 vaccines and testing. Similar efforts are underway in Malawi, Mozambique and Congo.

#### Making sure all are mourned

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—A United Methodist pastor is recruiting clergy to conduct graveside funeral services for homeless people and others who might not otherwise be mourned. The Rev. Jay Voorhees, lead pastor at City Road Chapel United Methodist Church, fashioned a funeral service that briefly pays tribute to the deceased, saying repeatedly, “We remember them.”

#### Grants to aid AU in malaria fight

MUTARE, Zimbabwe—Two grants worth \$2 million will help Africa University make strides in the fight against malaria on that continent. Africa accounted for 94% of malaria cases and deaths in 2019. The money will help establish a malaria entomological center of excellence to foster research and innovation at the United Methodist university.

#### Church exits, COVID lead to steep budget cuts

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—United Methodist financial leaders are struggling to estimate what a proposed church split and ongoing pandemic mean for the denomination’s bottom line. For now, the General Council on Finance and Administration board proposes cutting the budget for denomination-wide ministries by nearly a third, starting in 2023. But board members stress this is a work in progress.

#### Churches told to oppose BSA bankruptcy plan

DOVER, Del.—More than 9,000 United Methodist churches that sponsored Scouting troops have a say in the Boy Scouts of America’s sex abuse-related bankruptcy proceedings. United Methodist leaders are advising the churches to vote “no” on a proposed BSA bankruptcy reorganization plan.

#### Lilly makes grants to seminaries

INDIANAPOLIS—Six United Methodist seminaries are among those getting grants of about \$1 million each from the Lilly Endowment Inc., as part of Lilly’s Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative. The United Methodist grantees are Claremont School of Theology, Iliff School of Theology, United Theological Seminary, Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Wesley Theological Seminary, Duke Divinity School and Candler School of Theology at Emory University.

#### Local churches welcome Afghan refugees

NEPTUNE, N.J.—Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey is one of eight in the United States where tens of thousands of Afghans who were evacuated from Kabul are being housed. Area United Methodist churches have mobilized to welcome their new neighbors, hosting fundraisers, donating clothing and other items and helping connect them with potential area sponsors.

—Courtesy of the United Methodist News Service

Connect @advocatesc





## Conference Historical Society

by Joyce Plyler

### The forgotten founder of Vanderbilt University

I was watching “Jeopardy: on March 6, 2015, when Alex Trebek read this clue: “Bishop Holland McTyeire, a cousin of the founder’s wife, chose the site in Nashville for the campus of this private university.”

The contestants probably had never heard of Holland McTyeire, but even if they had not, it was easy for them to guess the correct answer by naming Nashville’s most well-known private university: Vanderbilt.

I was excited to witness a Jeopardy clue related to Methodist history, but peeved to see how badly the clue misstated the facts, especially for a game show that requires the highest standard of accuracy when contestants give their answers in the form of questions.

Let’s set the record straight.

1. Who founded Vanderbilt?

Give yourself partial credit if you answer Cornelius “Commodore” Vanderbilt. He donated a total of \$1 million, in stages, for its initial endowment. But give yourself full credit if you knew it was Holland N. McTyeire, bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, who presented the plan to Vanderbilt, purchased the land, oversaw construction of its first buildings, helped develop the curriculum, became the first president of its Board of Trustees in 1873 and personally supervised everything from faculty dinners to tree plantings while living in a campus residence from 1875 to his death in 1889.

2. Whose cousin was connected to Cornelius Vanderbilt?

“Jeopardy” was mistaken about the cousins. It was not Bishop McTyeire, but rather his wife, Amelia Townsend McTyeire, who was the cousin of Cornelius Vanderbilt’s second wife, Frank Armstrong Townsend. (Yes, her parents named her Frank.) Frank was younger than Amelia and looked up to her like an older sister. They attended a Methodist church in Mobile, Alabama, to which a 23-year-old Rev. McTyeire was assigned in the late 1840s. The two cousins remained close even after Frank moved with her family to New York in the 1860s, where she met and married the widowed Vanderbilt. When the McTyeires visited New York, they stayed with Vanderbilts.

It is said that Cornelius Vanderbilt was not easily swayed to give away his money, keeping charity-seekers at bay, but Frank’s religious values had a strong influence on the commodore. McTyeire’s conversations and correspondence with Vanderbilt ultimately persuaded him to make the most substantial philanthropic gift of his lifetime to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, so that the denomination’s vision of a central university could be realized.

McTyeire was born near the tiny town of Govan in Bamberg County, South Carolina. His family attended Salem Methodist Episcopal Church. Young Holland and his brother attended the Cokesbury Conference School for a year before the family moved to Alabama. McTyeire would later describe his conversion at a prayer meeting at Cokesbury.

After further education at the Collin-sworth school in Georgia (also a manual labor school), he joined the Methodist itinerancy in Alabama.

McTyeire became a bishop of the MECS at the beginning of Reconstruction, in 1866. While in this role he published, among other things, a “Catechism on Bible History” (1869), a “Catechism on Church Government” (1869), “The Manual of the Discipline” (1870) and “A History of Methodism” (1884). During his 23 years in the episcopacy, 1866-1888, he was the presiding bishop for at least 125 annual and mission conferences, from the Carolinas to Illinois to California. He presided over the South Carolina Conference four times, in 1873 (Sumter), 1882 (Greenville), 1884 (Charleston) and 1887 (Spartanburg).

After completing his round of conferences in 1887, which included Holston, North Georgia, South Georgia and South Carolina, McTyeire wrote a positive report for the *Southern Christian Advocate*: “The Conference sessions are of great interest to the people—crowds attend. The standard of examination for entering and for undergraduate preachers, though higher and stricter, does not lessen the number of candidates. ... Methodists are giving themselves and their substance to the Master. Holiness is spreading. Prohibition is growing. Missions and Church Extension are at the front, or coming to the front. ... There is peace in our borders. Conference sessions are marked by dispatch and harmony.”

Apparently, not all was peace and harmony, because the bishop acknowledged in the same report that some might have expected him to make “per contra statements,” but he would leave that to the “kickers and croakers” who were “troubled, not so much at what is, as at what is to be, or what might, could, would or should not be.”

Concluding his report, the bishop fondly recalled visiting his childhood home in Barnwell, seeing old friends, preaching at Salem and securing a shipment to Nashville of a “couple bushels of potatoes raised on the Hutto farm.” The professors at Vanderbilt would “appreciate the Carolina flavor of those tubers,” he said.

The life of Holland McTyeire represents a fascinating time in our history and is well chronicled in the biography, “Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire: Ecclesiastical and Educational Architect,” written in 1955 by McTyeire’s grandson, John J. Tigert IV, a former president of the University of Florida. Although most of the information in this column came from Tigert’s biography, I also referred to notes from primary sources obtained during a visit to the archives of Vanderbilt University, where an archivist confirmed for me my suspicion that McTyeire has been largely forgotten.

Students walk past his grave on campus, unknowing. Sadly, Methodism seems largely forgotten as well. When I visited in 2016, the campus chapel offered no Methodist service.

It is one thing to forget the details of our history; it is quite another to forget the very foundation of our faith.

Which leaves me to wonder: who is the real forgotten founder?

*Plyler is president of the Historical Society of the South Carolina Conference. She welcomes comments or inquiries at joyce@charlotte.twcbc.com or 704-847-6096.*



## From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

### The Advocate seeks support, 1922

As a new year dawned in 1922, South Carolina Methodists continued to do the work of the church in their local communities.

The *Advocate* declared February 1922 to be “*Advocate Month*” and ran banner headlines in several of its January editions to this effect. A story on Jan. 12 noted that the conference had largely overlooked the financial support of the newspaper. The editor contended that the *Advocate* was one of the church’s educational institutions and had played a critical role in supporting all of the church’s ministries. The *Advocate*, in supporting all of the other ministries, had failed to cultivate its own support, but if it stopped publication, the editor wondered what would happen to those other ministries. The paper was seeking help in getting rid of some debt and to expand its subscription base in the local churches.

The Epworth Leagues, which were the conference youth organizations, had pages in each *Advocate*. The Upper South Carolina Conference reported that 115 congregations had Epworth Leagues, but hoped to organize 20 more before their state conference. Several cities had city unions of their leagues, and both Greenville and Columbia city unions reported on their activities. In the South Carolina Conference, the Spring Street church in Charleston reported on sending Christmas packages to Korea, on raising funds and on the materials they were studying.

The Women’s Missionary Society pages also reported on the work of the local church societies. The Cheraw society held its December meeting “at the beautiful country home of Mrs. R. B. Laney,” which the report noted was decorated with holly for the season. The society had understandably grown tired of being referred to as the “old ladies missionary society” and decided to name itself the “Sallie Caston Missionary Society” in honor of a longtime member.

Washington Street’s society reported on how it was organizing to involve more women, and the Manning Church reported on its efforts with younger members. And each week saw reports of the society’s foreign missions work in China and Japan.

The upcoming 1922 General Conference got some press, with some references to how much legislation might be proposed. The writer noted that perhaps 90 percent of proposals would not pass, but urged the delegates to avoid approving any radical changes. One proposal evidently would make bishops subject to re-election every four years, which the writer strongly opposed, saying it would inject a level of politics into each General Conference that should be avoided.

Advertisements, as always, helped both fund the *Advocate* and spread the word about different goods and services to South Carolina Methodists. Readers often saw ads for pianos, and in one 1922 ad, readers were encouraged to join a piano club, which allowed for a bulk purchase of 100 pianos at a lower cost. Other ads, perhaps using the recent flu pandemic as a motive, sold various tonics and cures to keep the kidneys and liver clean and in good working order.

And, reflecting South Carolina’s status as a heavily rural, agricultural state, the *Advocate* carried lots of ads for seeds, fertilizer and tools.

The *Advocate* was spreading the news of the good works of so many South Carolina Methodists in 1922, just as it does in 2022.

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



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### Rev. Thomas Richard Bailey

IRMO—The Rev. Thomas Richard Bailey, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Nov. 16, 2021.

Prior to his retirement in 2017, Rev. Bailey served the Chesnee Charge, Duncan Acres, Timmons-ville-Salem and St. James, Laurens charges.

Funeral services were held Nov. 20 at Floyd's Boiling Springs Chapel, Boiling Springs. A private funeral was held Nov. 22 in Good Shepherd Memorial Park.

Memorials may be made to Spartanburg Methodist College, c/o Institutional Advancement, Reference "In Memory of Tommy Bailey," 1000 Powell Mill Road, Spartanburg, SC 29301; or to Crescent Hospice, 1370 Browning Road, Suite 120, Columbia, SC 29210.

Rev. Bailey is survived by his wife, two daughters and mother.

### Letcher Reaves Bingham Jr.

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.—Letcher Reaves Bingham Jr., father of the Rev. Michael Bingham, died Dec. 3, 2021. Rev. Bingham is the pastor of Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Greenville.

A memorial service was held Dec. 11 at Benton UMC, Benton, Tennessee, with a private interment.

Mr. Bingham is survived by his son and daughter.

### Rev. George Walton Farrell Cox

PAMPLICO—The Rev. George Walton Farrell Cox, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Dec. 7, 2021.

Prior to his retirement in 1983, Rev. Cox served the Rock Hill Circuit, Buford Charge, Vacluse-Charles Wesley, Charles Wesley, Olanta, Easley-St. Andrews, St. Andrews-Antioch, Surfside Beach and Greenville-St. Paul charges. He returned to the ministry in 1990, serving the Bennettsville Circuit, before retiring again in 1997. Following that



Bailey

retirement, he served the Hebron Charge, Olanta-Coward Associate and Old Johnsonville as a retired supply.

Funeral services were held Dec. 18 at Pamplico UMC with burial in the Garden of Devotion Cemetery, Johnsonville.

Memorials may be made to Pamplico UMC, 105 W. Third Ave., Pamplico, SC 29583; or to Seaside Emmaus, P.O. Box 1084, Conway, SC 29528.

Rev. Cox is survived by his two sons and two daughters.

### Dr. Marion Brabham Crooks Jr.

GREENVILLE—Dr. Marion Brabham Crooks Jr., a retired elder in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Dec. 6, 2021.

Prior to his retirement in 2005, Dr. Crooks served Washington Street Associate, Goose Creek, Cottageville Charge, North Myrtle Beach, Inman, Cayce Associate, Lewis Memorial, Buncombe Street Ministry of Counseling charges. Following his retirement he served as director of Canterbury Counseling Center.

Funeral services were held Dec. 11 at First Baptist Church Greenville with a graveside service at Rosemont Cemetery, Newberry.

Memorials may be made to Canterbury Counseling Center, 7 Pettigru St., Greenville, SC 29601.

Dr. Crooks is survived by his wife, Mary Ann Crooks, son and daughter.



Crooks

### Grady Carlton Ervin

FORT MILL—Grady Carlton Ervin, brother of the Rev. David Ervin, died Dec. 10, 2021. Rev. Ervin is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Dec. 15 at St. John's UMC with burial in Unity Cemetery. Memorials may be made to St. John's UMC, P.O. Box 1298, Fort Mill, SC 29716; or to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105-9959.

Mr. Ervin is survived by his wife, Betty Mac Bolin Ervin, and three daughters.

### Patricia Bundrick Furstenberg

CHAPIN—Patricia Bundrick Furstenberg, a former local pastor, died Dec. 3, 2021.

### 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.

Mrs. Furstenberg served the Bethlehem-Gassaway Charge from 2015-2017.

A memorial service was held Dec. 8 at Wrightman UMC, Prosperity.

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

### Susan Gail Odom Jaques

LEESBURG, Fla.—Susan Gail Odom Jaques, stepmother of Jessica Brodie, died Dec. 12, 2021.

Mrs. Brodie is the editor of the *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate*.

Graveside services were held Dec. 20 at Memorial Park Cemetery, Orangeburg.

Memorials may be made to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, P.O. Box 91891, Washington, DC 20090.

Mrs. Jaques is survived by her step-daughter.

### Anna Lou McGee Thompson Kutz

GREENSBORO, N.C.—Anna Lou McGee Thompson Kutz, mother of the Rev. Greg Thompson, died Nov. 28, 2021. Rev. Thompson is the pastor of Golightly-Tabernacle Charge, Cross Anchor.

A memorial service was held Dec. 4 at Forbis & Dick Funeral Service.

Memorials may be made to Muir's Chapel United Methodist Church, 314 Muirs Chapel Road, Greensboro, NC 27410.

Mrs. Kutz is survived by her husband, Eugene Kutz, daughter and son.

### Rev. Earnest James Reece Jr.

McDONOUGH, Ga.—The Rev. Earnest James Reece Jr., a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Nov. 8, 2021.

Prior to his retirement in 2010, Rev. Reece served charges in the Pacific Northwest Conference and in South Carolina at the St. Michael,



Reece

Good Hope-Wesley Chapel, Pendleton Charge, Orange Grove, New Life and Ch-eraw Parish charges.

### James Everette Steen Jr.

BENNETTSVILLE—James Everette "Jamie" Steen Jr., brother of Michelle Flowers, died Oct. 10, 2021. Mrs. Flowers is the wife of the Rev. Jody Flowers, pastor of Chapin United Methodist Church, Chapin.

A graveside service was held Oct. 14 at Ghio Church of God of Prophecy Cemetery.

Mr. Steen is survived by his two daughters, son and father.

### Rev. Robert Thompson Jr.

SUMTER—The Rev. Robert Thompson Jr., a retired local pastor of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church and father of the Rev. Gwendolyn T. White, died Dec. 4, 2021. Rev. White is the pastor of Mount Zion UMC.

Prior to retiring in 2005, Rev. Thompson served Mount Zion Charge. Following his retirement, he served the Mount Zion-North Sumter Charge.

Funeral services were held Dec. 11 at St. Mark UMC with burial in Evergreen Memorial Park.

Rev. Thompson is survived by his three daughters and three sons.

### Ruby Snow Vaughn

REIDVILLE—Ruby Snow Vaughn, sister of the Rev. Murray Snow, died Nov. 27, 2021. Rev. Snow is the pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church, Fountain Inn.

Graveside services were held Dec. 5 at Sharon UMC, Greer.

Memorials may be made to Sharon UMC Cemetery Fund, 1421 Reidville Sharon Road, Greer, SC 29651.

Mrs. Vaughn is survived by her son and two daughters.

### Thomas Randall Willyerd

WEST COLUMBIA—Thomas Randall Willyerd, grandson of the Rev. J. Herbert Thomas, died Nov. 26, 2021. Rev. Thomas is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Nov. 29 at Union UMC, Irmo.

Memorials may be made to Green Pond UMC Cemetery Fund, 3568 Sunrise Hwy., Smoaks, SC 29481.

Mr. Willyerd is survived by his mother.

## ERT training set for Jan. 8

Anyone interested in being trained to help in the aftermath of a disaster can take a training next month for the South Carolina United Methodist Volunteers in Mission's Early Response Team.

Set for Saturday, Jan. 8, ERT basic and renewal classes will be offered at New Beginnings United Methodist Church, Boiling Springs.

The basic class goes from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fees are \$40 per person, which includes a manual, shirt, cap and badge. The renewal class is from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Fees are \$20.

To register for either class, go to <https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration>.

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

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

For questions: [brpraisejesus@aol.com](mailto:brpraisejesus@aol.com).



Photo courtesy of Odean Ralley

### Socks for the homeless

The ladies group and the children of Indian Branch UMC, Darlington, recently collected socks for the homeless. The children made a sock tree, and each Sunday they hung socks on the tree. The socks will be given to their local homeless shelter. Above are Tyson Barron, Caleb Watford, Tierra Grady and Trillian Bishop.

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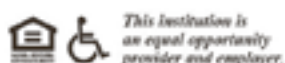
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## December

- Dec. 24—Christmas Eve
- Dec. 23-27—United Methodist Conference Center closed
- Dec. 25—Christmas Day
- Dec. 31—New Year's Eve
- Dec. 31—United Methodist Conference Center closed

## January

- Jan. 4—UMVIM, Grace UMC, Columbia, 7:30-8:30 p.m.
- Jan. 8—ERT Basic/Renewal class, New Beginnings UMC, Boiling Springs, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Register: <https://umcsc.org/ertregistration/>.
- Jan. 9—Clergy Care Ministry Self-Care Virtual Retreat, led by Rev. Ken Owens and Dr. Robin Dease, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/event/clergy-care-virtual-retreat-why-should-we-feel-powerless/>
- Jan. 17—Rev. Martin Luther King's Birthday, UMctr. closed.
- Jan. 28—Stewardship Symposium, Stavros Auditorium, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Register: <https://2022-stewardship-symposium.eventbrite.com>
- Jan. 29—Revolution 2022, Township Auditorium, Columbia. <http://scmyp.org/revolution/>



Photo courtesy of Suzy McLean

### Bibles and bags

St. John UMC, Blacksburg, participated in the Iron City Festival in Blacksburg Oct. 9 and gave away 200 fall bags to children and Bibles to adults. Pictured here from left are the Rev. Richard Andrews, Margie Hope, David Roark, Russell McLean and David McLean.

## February

### Wallace Family Life Center Special Emphasis Month (UMW)

- Feb. 1—UMVIM, Grace UMC, Columbia, 7:30-8:30 p.m.

- Feb. 2—UMW Social Action Workshop #1 (virtual), 10 a.m. <https://bit.ly/3xSgOPf>

- Feb. 5—17th Annual Native American Representative Training, Chapin UMC, Chapin, 9:30 a.m. \$10. LaSheila Kirkland, 803-713-5305, 803-432-3699 or

LaSheilaKirkland@live.com.

- Feb. 8—UMW Social Action Workshop #2 (virtual), 7 p.m. <https://bit.ly/3xSgOPf>
- Feb. 15-17—2022 Bishop's School of Ministry, Myrtle Beach
- Feb. 17—UMW Social Action Workshop #3 (virtual), 2 p.m. <https://bit.ly/3xSgOPf>
- Feb. 19—Connectional Ministries Zoom meeting, 9 a.m.
- Feb. 25—SC Men N Ministry Annual Golf Tournament, Indian River Golf Club, West Columbia, 11 a.m. \$80 per player. Kenny Bingham, [kbingham42@yahoo.com](mailto:kbingham42@yahoo.com) or 843-246-8398.
- Feb. 26—SC Men N Ministry Conference, Mount Horeb UMC, Lexington.
- Feb. 26—UMW Social Action Workshop #4 (virtual), 10 a.m. <https://bit.ly/3xSgOPf>

## March

- March 1—Deadline, UMW Presidential Scholarship Application
- March 23—UMW Legacy Fund Day of Giving

## April

### Columbia Bethlehem Center Special Emphasis Month (UMW)

- April 15—Good Friday, UMctr. closed.
- April 17—Easter

### STEM support and more

Philadelphia UMC, Fort Mill, was recognized recently for their support and dedication to the Historic Paradise Community and their 2021 Summer STEM Camp. The church was named a Platinum Sponsor.

Photos courtesy of Maggie Justus



## Classified Advertisements

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Classified ads are \$19 per inch tall. Web site ads are also available ([www.advocatesc.org](http://www.advocatesc.org)).

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

### Positions Open

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### Positions Open

#### Director of Music Ministries

Bethany UMC in Summerville, SC, is seeking a creative and experienced individual to serve as our Director of Music Ministries. Bethany has a long tradition of a strong music ministry including a chancel choir, ensembles, youth and children's choirs, and special music during the year. As one of the largest UMC congregations in the state, Bethany is renowned for our music programming. This Director is responsible for the leadership of the entire music ministry, in cooperation with the pastor. The Director will assist with worship planning and select music. Music should be challenging, uplifting, creative and encompass a variety of musical styles. The ideal candidate must be a committed and growing disciple of Jesus Christ who seeks to help others grow, as well as be a team player, flexible, and creative. The successful candidate should possess at least a Bachelor's Degree in Music and five years experience leading a choral program. Salary range is \$50,000 - \$65,000. Contact Henry Thompson, Bethany Church Administrator at 854-429-1835, [hthompson@bethany-umc.com](mailto:hthompson@bethany-umc.com), and 118 W 3rd S St, Summerville, SC 29483 for questions or to apply.

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# The wonder of it all

by the Rev. Wendy Hudson

Jan. 2

### In Awe of God's Creation

**Focal Passage:** Psalm 19:1-6

**Background Text:** Psalm 19

**Key Verse:** "Heaven is declaring God's glory; the sky is proclaiming his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1).

We know the Psalms are sacred to God's people for thousands of years. They are the hymnbook and poetry collection of the ancient Israelites. Some of our favorite and most often-sung hymns today have key phrases and verses that come directly from the Psalms.

The Psalms touch on every aspect of human life: the desire to connect with God, the grandeur of the natural world, the joy of human love, the pain of grief and loss, anger at harmful actions taken by others. Every single human experience, all of the good and all of the bad, are found in the Psalms.

As we start this month's focus on wonder in these lessons, we are centered in this Psalm that calls us to contemplate wonder outside of our human selves and into God's expansive creation. Our emphasis on the individual connection with God is very much a Western cultural experience and especially an American one. The writers of the Psalms rooted their lives in the communal—they lived in close proximity to their family and friends and to the land on which they relied for their existence. God was found and reflected in the places where they spent most of their time. In the case of this writer, it was the expansiveness of nature.

Many of us connect with this Psalm and the direct tie to the grandeur of God and the wonder of creation. Deeply green rolling mountain views, the sound of the ocean lapping the shore, the breadth of creativity we see in animals and the striking colors of a sunset take our breath away. These experiences of nature pull us out of our humdrum lives and reorient our hearts and minds to the wonder that is beyond what we see every day and toward the unknowable wonder of God. Next time you step out to look into the sky, what wonder and delight will you experience from God?

Jan. 9

### Coming Into God's Presence

**Focal Passage:** Isaiah 6:1-13

**Background Text:** Isaiah 6:1-13

**Key Verse:** "Then I heard the Lord's voice saying, 'Whom should I send, and who will go for us?' I said, 'I'm here; send me.'" (Isaiah 6:8)

After graduating from college and being deeply formed by the Methodist Student Network at the University of South Carolina under the leadership of the Rev. Tom Wall, I embarked on a three-year adventure as a young adult missionary through the Board of Global Ministries. The first two months of the program were spent in training. We learned how to examine our own bias, learn cultural competencies, arrive into new settings as listeners and learners and keep ourselves grounded in our faith in situations that were far different from any experience most of us had had before.

The guiding Scripture for that initial training and for the entire three-year experience is our focus verse for today: "Whom should I send, and who will go for us?" I said, 'I'm here; send me.'" (Isaiah 6:8). We memorized this verse, we examined its context in this vision that Isaiah has, and we sung (more times than I could ever count) "Here I Am, Lord" (United Methodist Hymnal No. 593).

This vision Isaiah has is seated in an experience of wonder: the wonder of worshipping God, the mystery of the heavenly courts, the surprise of flying divine beings, the awe-filled experience of being asked by God to

speak for the Holy. Using my holy imagination, I like to think that Isaiah called back to this experience every time he delivered a prophecy for God. This encounter wasn't a singular event; instead it was an experience that oriented his entire life.

Many of us have forgotten or let the wonderful experience of being called by God for the first time fade. What if, every morning, we remembered our initial encounter with God and let it orient our choices each day? Our lives can reclaim some of the wonder we once knew so well.

Jan. 16

### The Transfiguration

**Focal Passage:** Mark 9:2-8

**Background Text:** Mark 9:2-13

**Key Verse:** "Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice spoke from the cloud, 'This is my son, Whom I dearly love. Listen to him!'" (Mark 9:7)

"Listen to him!" Most of us who read our Bibles regularly do so precisely so we can listen to God speak to us through these holy words in the pages of Scripture. We believe the Bible is a living document, filled with the very Spirit and power of God to impact, form and change our lives. It is not a static book filled with words placed down thousands of years ago. In Scripture, we come to know deeply the God of the cosmos revealed in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

I used to be very jealous of the crowds who got to experience Jesus up close and in person. I would daydream about watching Jesus pass by in a crowd, of getting close enough to feel his presence go by, to catch a faint word when he was teaching. I was especially jealous of the disciples who experienced Jesus every single day, up close and personal.

But stories like this, known as the Transfiguration of Jesus, remind me that even those who were closest to Jesus didn't fully grasp exactly what he was about. They listened to him teach, watched him heal, saw him cast out demons and restore people to community. And they still didn't get what Jesus was all about. God had to use this incredible experience of Moses, Elijah and Jesus to break through to the disciples: "Hey, pay attention! I'm not kidding around. Listen!"

Becoming numb to the presence of the divine among us seems to be a human experience. We let the responsibilities, obligations and routines of our daily lives lull us into complacency, and we miss God's presence that is right in front of us. How can you let wonder back into your life so you can hear God's call to listen and to share the good news of Jesus?

Jan. 23

### Beholding God's Glory

**Focal Passage:** Exodus 34:29-35

**Background Text:** Exodus 34:29-35

**Key Verse:** "After that, all the Israelites came near as well, and Moses commanded them everything that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai." (Exodus 34:32)

Think of the people in your life who have taught you the most about a life with God. Recall their habits, their way of speaking, their thought patterns, their actions toward others.

When I recall the saints of my own life, most of them are ordinary people. None of them were famous, none were wealthy, none were a household name. But each and every one of the saints in my life had some trait about them that set them apart. People wanted to be around them. Others felt comforted or lovingly challenged when they were in the presence of these people. Some would even say they had an aura that shone about them.

In this passage, Moses exhibited a physical change because of the time he spent in God's presence. At first, Moses himself didn't even realize the shift. But the change was so stark that the Israelites were taken aback by the glow around Moses. Yet Moses was so moved by his encounter with God that he persisted in calling the people to him so he could share all he had learned.

Most of us who follow Jesus want our lives to be reflect our commitment to him. We deeply hope that the way we interact with others, spend our money, give our time and prioritize our lives are formed by our ongoing experience with him. That's why as Wesleyans and Methodists, we spend so much time talking about the spiritual disciplines and the process of sanctification. Because of the testimony of others, we know that life change is possible when we encounter the living God through Jesus.

Moses' presence was changed by his encounter with God. This passage reminds us that a life change is possible for us, too, when we spend time drawing close to God ... so we can then invite others to draw near to God, as well.

Jan. 30

### Joining the Choir of Angels

**Focal Passages:** Revelation 19:1-10

**Background Text:** Revelation 19:1-10

**Key Verse:** "Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said, 'Don't do that! I'm a servant just like you and your brothers and sisters who hold firmly to the witness of Jesus. Worship God! The witness of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy!'" (Revelation 19:10)

We finish our month of looking at wonder in Scripture at the place where it all begins: the Book of Revelation. It's fitting that the last book in Scripture turns our focus to our primary purpose as human beings: to worship the one, true and living God.

Worship is more than an activity we attend one, two or three hours a week. Worship is the purpose of our lives as followers of Jesus Christ. Our entire lives are meant to be led in a spirit of worship. All of our actions, words, thoughts, prayers and desires, through the power and grace of Jesus Christ, reflect our purpose to worship.

I'd like to leave us with the idea that worship is based fully and completely in wonder. Wonder, mystery, awe, delight, amazement, silence, shouts—it's all at the heart of what it means to worship. Wonder is hard to define and to explain; we know it when we feel it.

A key characteristic of wonder is the inability to fully and completely share what we feel. We stumble over the words and try in vain to communicate wonder fully to others. The best we can do is be present in the moment of wonder and invite others to come and see what it's all about.

And isn't that what it means to live in worship? We fumble around for the words to say but we can stop and live in its mystery. We can invite others to come and see what it's all about. We can leave space and time for their own experience with wonder to unfold. We can say and do and show and be people who live to worship.

For God, in all of God's wonder, lives in us. Thanks be to God.


*Hudson pastors Two Rivers Church in Charleston.*



## Did You Know?

The Advocate offers a free one-year subscription to anyone who joins a United Methodist Church in South Carolina. Send us your new members' names and addresses and the name of your church and we'll get them started on becoming more informed about our conference and our church.

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Photo courtesy of Eugenia Vicars  
Sunlight beams with the Chrismon tree at St. Paul UMC, Greenville.



This full Chrismon adds to the already beautiful sanctuary at St. Paul's UMC in Orangeburg, where the Rev. Fred V. Buchanan Jr. is the minister.

Photo courtesy of Claire Buchanan

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT THIS YEAR**

FROM THE EPWORTH CHILDREN'S HOME FAMILY

*We couldn't have done it without you!*

- You supported over 120 children in the Residential Program
- You supported more than 5 families in the Family Care Center
- You supported over 20 young adults in the Center for Independent Living
- You supported more than 250 clients in the Center for Counseling

- You supported over 100 toddlers in the Early Intervention Center
- You supported more than 20 families in the HOMEBUILDERS program
- You supported over 200 children in the Foster Care Program
- You supported more than 100 foster families in the Foster Care Program



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Scott S. Gilmer  
Hope is front and center on this Chrismon tree at St. Paul UMC, Ninety Six.