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February 2022

Apportionments close at 91.67%

Financial leaders call it a return to 'pre-pandemic levels' of giving

By Jessica Brodie

South Carolina United Methodist churches paid more than 91 percent in apportionments for 2021, exceeding not only pandemic levels but pre-pandemic levels and the annual conference's goal for the year.

The South Carolina Conference Treasurer's Office reports 91.67 percent for total 2021 giving, compared to last year's 87.16 percent. That percentage translates to nearly \$15.8

million of the church's \$17.3 million total budget for the year for church ministries, missions and programming across the conference's 12 districts in South Carolina.

"I want the churches to recognize that they have not just recovered from the effects of the pandemic, but they have also grown stronger," said Beth Westbury, conference treasurer and director of administrative services.

She noted the apportionments collection rate in 2019 was

90 percent and in 2018 was 90.9 percent. "I think we are on the path to greater success than we can imagine."

South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston called the strong performance on apportionments giving a "reflection of the generosity and faithful commitment of South Carolina United Methodists."

See "Apportionments," Page 13

Church makes space for mental healing with Healthy Minds Team

By Jessica Brodie

TRAVELERS REST—Mickey Hess knows what it's like to navigate mental illness alone. For decades, he experienced depression struggles within his family, but he kept it all quiet, not even daring to admit it to himself. Tragedies were not discussed in his circles, and there was a cloak of secrecy around mental health.

"It was never talked about, never shared," Hess said.

But over the years, after two major depressive episodes and the loss of a son who'd also struggled with depression and anxiety, Hess began to open up and understand the importance of awareness and sharing as a part of mental, spiritual and emotional healing.

One day, his pastor asked whether he'd consider leading a new support group at his church, Travelers Rest United Methodist Church, for people and their loved ones struggling with mental health issues.

See "Healthy Minds," Page 12



Photo by Billy Robinson

Elaine Turner and Felix Vazquez of the Early Response Team carry a log with ice on it from a home in Greenwood. They were among 14 who helped Jan. 17 to remove downed trees and other debris from homes impacted by wintry weather.

S.C. ERTs help damaged homes after icy weather

By Billy Robinson

GREENWOOD—After snow and ice from Winter Storm Izzy blanketed much of the Southeast, a crew of Early Response Team members headed to the Greenwood District Jan. 17 to remove downed trees and other icy debris from homes and neighborhoods.

Fourteen sets of boots were on the ground within 24 hours of the icy winter mix Jan. 16 that caused trees to crash into homes and more.

The Jan. 17 mission was coordinated in conjunction with the Greenwood County Emergency Services director by the Rev. Mike Evans, who is the Greenwood District Disaster Coordinator. Fourteen South Carolina United Methodist Church ERT volunteers braved frigid conditions that created wind chill in the 20s, accompanied by 30 mph arctic winds.

See "ERT Ice Response," Page 11

Sixteen Salkehatchie camps plan to reopen this summer

By Jessica Brodie

After two years on pause, Salkehatchie Summer Service is gearing up to repair, rebuild and restore homes across South Carolina.

Sixteen of the 43 camps plan to open this summer with COVID-19 protocols in place. The remaining 27 camps are slated to reopen in summer 2023.

Some of the camps will be shorter weeks, while others will accept

fewer campers to ensure COVID-19 safety measures are followed.

"It is exciting that we're cranking up the engines to restart Salkehatchie camps this coming summer," said Kathy Hart, Salkehatchie board chair. "Salkehatchie Summer Service is like a large locomotive pulling out of a station. It is starting out slowly in 2022 with fewer camps and will be full steam ahead by 2023."

See "Salkehatchie," Page 13

Men's spiritual retreat shifts to virtual, different day

By Jessica Brodie

The men's ministry retreat is going virtual.

Organizers had wanted badly to hold this year's spiritual retreat in person after a virtual event last year, but between rising COVID-19 numbers and the challenge of social distancing with such a large

group, they decided to take the gathering online.

Instead of being held all day Saturday, Feb. 26, at Mount Horeb United Methodist Church, Lexington, the event will now shift to Sunday, Feb. 27, from 6-8 p.m., and be free.

See "Men's Retreat," Page 11

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 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
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The *Advocate* is delivered to mailboxes via U.S. mail every month prior to the first Sunday of the month. Subscriptions are \$20/year for the print and online version, and \$10/year for the online-only edition. Church plans are available for as low as \$1/member (online version) or \$10/member (print version with 6+ subscribers per church). To start your subscription, visit www.advocatesc.org, call with credit card to 888-678-6272 or 803-786-9486, ext. 335, or send a check to Advocate, 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203.

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Christmas Eve Under the Stars returns in Bluffton as model for future worship

BLUFFTON—It was a joyous Christmas Eve as St. Andrew By-The-Sea United Methodist Church's Bluffton Worship was able to hold its Christmas Eve Under the Stars once again at the community's Oyster Factory Park.

COVID-19 had prevented the gathering in 2020 at the site owned by the Town of Bluffton. Last year, the congregation struggled with options and finally held a small in-car service in the parking lot at the church's Bluffton Ministry Center, located in a commercial area.

Bringing back the outdoor service in the heart of the community this Christmas enabled more than 1,000 people to be a part of worship.

Once again, St. Andrew partnered with the primarily African-American First Zion Missionary Baptist Church located near the Oyster Factory Park. First Zion and St. Andrew often gather for Bible studies, special programs and for youth group. St. Andrew Bluffton Campus Pastor Daniel Burbage and First Zion Pastor Bennie Jenkins, along with musicians and leaders from both churches, helped to lead the night under the stars with the theme "Jesus Is with Us."

"What we know is that outdoor worship is a safe way to gather," Burbage said. "We have been in a huge learning curve these past two years, but one thing is for certain: "Being outside gives us the opportunity to be together."

In addition to training tech teams for live outdoor sound, the church has been working to not only continue the livestreaming from inside the sanctuary, begun in 2019, but to also livestream the outdoor services through the use of a Wi-Fi hotspot.

St. Andrew By-The-Sea was the first church in the South Carolina Conference to become a multisite with a more than 50-year-old loca-



Photo by Tina Johnson

According to Rev. Daniel Burbage, they are hoping to hold weekly services on the property once ground has been broken by mid-February, modeled on worship such as Christmas Eve Under the Stars, noting how outside venues provide the most comfortable way for the community to attend and to have a first-time experience with the congregation when looking for a church.

tion on Hilton Head pastored by Dr. Robin Dease, appointed in June 2021, and Bluffton Worship starting in 2012 in a leased space at the University of South Carolina's Bluffton campus.

Currently the Bluffton congregation meets in a space that was a former pool hall and bar, but the church purchased 10 acres in 2014 on Buckwalter Parkway for a future campus where growth is exploding.

While the pandemic has slowed efforts, the church has no debt on the land and is now in the process of ascertaining an interim way to use the site until plans are finalized and campaigns can be put into place to construct

buildings and recreation fields for the community.

According to Burbage, church leadership is hoping to hold weekly services on the property once ground has been broken by mid-February, modeled on worship such as Christmas Eve Under the Stars, noting how outside venues provide the most comfortable way for the community to attend and to have a first-time experience with the congregation when looking for a church.

The ease of participation was one of the considerations when the church first landed on the outdoor Christmas Eve service plan in 2012.

Trinity starts Epiphany door-chalking tradition

NEWBERRY—Trinity United Methodist Church has initiated a new tradition this year for Epiphany: chalking the doors.

Have you ever seen a strange set of numbers and letters similar to an equation inscribed in chalk over a doorway at a church or at the home of a friend? Did you know what it meant? Maybe you were too embarrassed to ask.

If you don't know what the chalk is all about, you're not alone. Epiphany (also known as Twelfth Night or Three Kings Day) marks the occasion of a time-honored Christian tradition of "chalking the doors."

The formula for the ritual adapted for 2022 is simple: Take chalk of any color, have your pastor bless it, write 20 + C + M + B + 22 above the entrance of your home and say a prayer of blessings.

The letters have two meanings. First, they represent the initials of the Magi—Caspar, Malchior, and Balthazar—who came to visit Jesus in the manger. They also are an abbreviation of the Latin phrase "Christus mansionem benedicat," or "May Christ bless the house."

The "+" signs represent the cross, and the "20" at the beginning and the "22" at the end represent the year.

Taken together, this inscription is performed as a request for Christ to bless the homes that are marked.

It is a practice in which one dedicates his or her year to God, asking for his blessing on the home and on all who live, work, or visit them there.

This practice is most commonly performed on the traditional Feast of the Epiphany—the Twelfth Day of Christmas, which was Jan. 6.

The chalking can be done at any church, home or dwelling. The blessing can be performed simply by just writing the inscription over a door and offering a short prayer.

The chalking of the doors of a home encourages Christians to dedicate their life at home to God and to others. Seeing the symbols over our doors can help to remind us, while going in and out on a daily basis, that our homes and all those who live there belong to Christ.

Lay Servant Harriet Stevenson came up with the idea to initiate this tradition at Trinity UMC, and pastor Doug Benton thought it was a great idea.

Stevenson said the chalking should serve as a reminder of the wonderful welcoming the Magi gave to Jesus and encourage us to strive to be as welcoming to all who come to our homes to visit us.



Photos courtesy of Harriet Stevenson

Trinity UMC chalked their doors, and many of the congregation chalked their doors at home. Above is the chalk of Ron and Harriet Stevenson's home, while below is the chalked church door.



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The church's cancer-care bags (above) and memory boxes (below) are part of the outreach.



Small church, big missions

Zoar reaches out with children's home gifts, memory boxes, cancer-care bags

No one can say Zoar United Methodist Church in Greer is a small church, for while they might be small in number, they are huge in community and local missions.

This past Christmas, Zoar adopted a project to enable the children at Southeastern Children's Home in Duncan would have a good Christmas. Zoar member were provided with a wish list from 14 children living there, and they fulfilled every wish and more. Members bought clothing, music players, earbuds, shoes, books and personalized engraved Bibles.

Zoar UMC's Sunday school class headed up this project beginning in November and completed it by the first week of December thanks to the generosity of the congregation, who donated items from the lists.

Zoar's men's group, known as the "Woodchucks," also handcrafted memory boxes for each child out of specialized wood. Each box contained a New Testament provided by the congregation and a hand-cut cross provided by a friend of the church.

Another ongoing project of Zoar is their Bag Ladies Program. These ladies, along with a woman who is a member of Grace UMC, Greer, hand-paint cartoon characters onto cotton canvas bags. Then the bags are filled with crayons, coloring books, puzzle books and puzzles, writing pads and pencils and Playdoh, as well as small handmade wooden cars, trucks and airplanes made by the Woodchucks.

These bags are then presented to Children's Cancer Partners of the Carolinas, which gives the bags to children who are in treatment for life threatening cancers. Many times, children who are being treated have siblings who are also given bags.

To date, 1,260 bags have been painted, filled and donated.

Zoar learned of one instance where a child being treated had three brothers, who were triplets. Each child was given a bag, which happened to be on their birthday. The mother told the caseworker that was the only gift they received.

Matthew 19:14 quotes Jesus as saying, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Zoar's mission is and will continue to be reaching out to young people like these who are caught up in delicate situations, many times through no fault of their own.



Photos courtesy of Dr. Luke Rhyee



Thank you, South Carolina

People in Guatemala can now see clearly thanks to a glasses collection effort organized by the Columbia District Outreach Committee. United Methodists in the Midlands and across South Carolina collected used eyeglasses, both prescription and non-prescription (readers), as well as prescription sunglasses and cases. The glasses were sent to Healing Guatemala, a United Methodist medical mission and clinic led by South Carolina pastor Dr. Luke Rhyee that offers ophthalmology, dental care and basic medical needs, both at the clinic and in rural communities in the Chuisajcaba, Guatemala, region. Rhyee said poor Guatemalans are not able to afford glasses, and they have been distributing the glasses to the people, who are extremely grateful. "Thank you so much for your love and dedication to Guatemala," Rhyee said. Beginning Jan. 7, the clinic there has been holding a weekly glasses giveaway where participants get an eye exam and glasses free of charge. In February, they plan to have a cataract surgery camp and open 40 eyes in the name of Jesus. For more on Healing Guatemala, visit <https://healingguatemala.org>.



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Viewpoints



Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

The danger of factions

Have you ever been teaching something to another and all of a sudden the lesson hit you in the face?

My daughter, Avery, switched from the large public school system she'd attended her whole life to a small, private Christian school. She has major anxiety, and the smaller class sizes and extra attention have been phenomenal for her. Recently, her Bible teacher had them studying the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), and she asked me to quiz her with flashcards.

"Envy: Feeling ill will or desiring something another person has," she recited. "Sorcery: Using things forbidden by God to predict or influence the future, like magic."

But when we got to "factioning," she paused, and we looked at the definition: organizing into separate groups for the spirit of breaking down unity.

"Like ... cults?" she asked.

I frowned. "It's more like political groups, or groups in the church that are breaking off?"

Immediately, my mind jumped to all the various groups and subgroups within The United Methodist Church today—and how some of these groups have been blatantly obvious about their intention to split from the denomination and start their own group.

Now, I'm not necessarily branding today's groups within the UMC "factioning." The actual word used in Galatians 5:20 for factions is "airesis," from the root word "haireo," which has to do with a self-chosen opinion, such as choosing to be part of a religious sect. Here, Paul was probably meaning groups like Pharisees or Sadducees, or other, newer Christian groups teaching false or divisive gospels.

In the UMC today, groups can be very good and helpful. Many help bring about understanding or advocacy for things within the church. I don't mean exclusionary groups or groups that promote hate, but rather groups that come together in covenant and love around a particular interest.

But taking a deeper look at "factioning" and its place among Paul's works of the flesh gave me pause. What would Jesus think about intentionally gathering with others for the purpose of splitting up the unity of God's church? Is there good to be had from intentionally fostering division and difference instead of intentionally working together to foster a spirit of common bond in Christ? For some, our differences in theology are such that we choose to seek a different denomination or start our own. But for most, I think we're more alike than different.

I believe we can all find common ground together in our belief in Christ, Christ's deep love for all people and the authority of God's word in the lives of Christian disciples. I believe Methodists and Baptists and Presbyterians and non-denominational evangelicals are far more alike than we are different, and in my heart of hearts, I don't think we're advancing the cause of Christ in today's already-divisive world by putting so much energy into splitting up. I think we serve him better by coming together, being tolerant of each other's differences of opinions and devoting our energies to heeding Christ's command just before his ascension to heaven: Go. Be my witnesses. Make disciples. Share the Gospel.

I urge you to pray on this, and do your best to understand your brother or sister whose opinions are different from your own.

Are we really, truly so different after all? Or is our greater unity in Jesus Christ?



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The S.C. United Methodist Advocate (ISSN 1078-8166) continues the Southern Christian Advocate, authorized by the General Conference of 1836. Publication began Annual Conference-July 24, 1837. The paper is published monthly by the S.C. United Methodist Advocate Trustees. We cannot be responsible for unsolicited manuscripts. Please direct all inquiries regarding commentary submissions to the editor, 4908 Colonial Drive, Suite 207, Columbia, SC 29203-6070. 803-786-9486. Periodicals postage paid at Columbia, S.C.

Postmaster: Send address changes to: S.C. United Methodist Advocate, 4908 Colonial Drive, Suite 207, Columbia, SC 29203.

February 2022 • Volume 186 • No. 2



Bishop's Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

Clear the way

"This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God. My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love!"—1 John 4:9-12 (MSG)

In the midst of our fast food, drive-through, one-day Amazon delivery world, we recognize patience is hard. We know God's desire for us is to pause our self-imposed time limits, to stop the urge to do life by ourselves and to linger a little longer in God's presence.

But, it seems we are in an unrelenting, unwavering, unyielding storm that won't end. For the past 22 months, we have lived in the midst of a global pandemic complete with variants, racial unrest and political divisiveness.

The mantra of relentless attack has crept into our conversations, teaching us to never back down, that the fight is never over and the only answer to any question is to destroy, even if destruction of one means the destruction of many and the obliteration of sanity and hope.

Can you say this with me: social distancing, washing hands, wearing masks and vaccinations—all necessary to reducing the spread of COVID-19, delta and omicron—have made us feel isolated and lonely, increasing our levels of stress and anxiety.

These are frightening, stressful and overwhelming times that have taken a toll on us literally and emotionally.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, one-third of all Americans have experienced depression or chronic anxiety during this time of pandemic, unrest and divisiveness. Professionals from the United Nations to the World Health Organization are warning of widespread repercussions resulting from grief, increased personal

stress and panic responses.

During the month of February, many in our world celebrate love. Love is a gift. As we're told in 1 John 4:7-10, "This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about." God gave us the greatest gift of love through Jesus Christ.

Maybe a simple gift of love we can give ourselves and others is to attend to our mental, physical and spiritual health. Caring for our minds, bodies and spirits should be a priority in our lives.

Perhaps God is trying to show us the things we think we have to do to be happy are really not that important.

Even in these trying times, we might realize we don't need to worry so much about what is being done and what is not being done, because God is at work putting into motion plans "for our welfare, and not for harm, but to give us a future with hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

While we breathe, perhaps with hope, we may recognize how God is at work, doing what God does best—redeeming dark situations with miraculous light.

Friends, whether laity or clergy, young or old, if you are feeling anxious, worried, isolated, depressed or disconnected because of what is happening in the world, be still and know that God is God (Psalm 46:10), and give yourself the gift of caring for your mental health.

Our conference is offering multiple ways for us to take these next faithful steps—trusting, believing and knowing God is with us.

We are united with one another in the love of Christ; a love shown to you and me in the crucifixion and handed out to all of us in the Lord's Supper.

In this era of expediency, may we seek ways to slow our pace enough to feel the warmth of God's perfect love and reflect it into the world.

May we choose to prioritize taking care of ourselves and one another, resisting the urge for impulsive reactions and destruction, and instead choosing to follow the one who has cleared the way for us.

Changes of Appointment

Bishop Jonathan Holston has announced the following changes of appointment:

Effective Jan. 1, 2022

Marion District: Lake View: Preston Grimsley (RE) (1/2)

Marion District: Brook UMC: Deborah Patterson (FL)

Effective Jan. 16, 2022

Rock Hill District: Trinity-Fort Lawn: Jerry L. Phillips (RE) (1/2)

Effective Feb. 1, 2022

Florence District: New Zion: Eric McGill (SY)

Marion District: Pisgah: Allen Vaught (FL)

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Guest Commentary

by Bishop Will Willimon (retired)

S.C. Methodism's most courageous sermon

This February marks the 75th anniversary of a momentous double tragedy in South Carolina history—the lynching of Willie Earle after he was taken from the Pickens jail and the subsequent trial in Greenville.

For United Methodists, it is also the anniversary of the most courageous sermon preached by a White preacher in our church, the Rev. Hawley Lynn's 1947 sermon, "Who Lynched Willie Earle?"

A mob of White men took young Willie Earle (who was being held without charges under suspicion of killing a White Greenville taxi cab driver, Tom Watson) out of the Pickens jail on Valentine's weekend and tortured him to death in the middle of the night on a rural road between Pickens and Greenville counties. South Carolina's New Deal governor, Strom Thurmond, condemned the lynching, saying that it marred South Carolina's "wonderful record of race relations."

Alas, only one Methodist preacher spoke out against the crime: the new, young pastor of Grace Methodist Church, Pickens. The Rev. Hawley Lynn had been appointed to Grace in the summer. That fall, the beloved church had burned to the ground. Shortly thereafter, Lynn's wife died giving birth to their first child.

In spite of all the good reasons Lynn had for not speaking up, he preached. Working with other White clergy in Pickens, he organized a public meeting for the purpose of drafting a resolution to condemn the lynching. The meeting ended in chaos when a group from Dacusville barged in shouting that the lynchers "ought to be rewarded for saving the state's money with a trial."

Most people told Lynn he had done all he could and now ought to just accept that this was the way things had always been in South Carolina race relations. Two weeks later, Lynn stood up in the Agricultural Room of the high school (where Grace church was meeting) and preached when nearly all White South Carolina preachers were silent.

Lynn began his sermon rhetorically asking, "Who lynched Willie Earle?" He noted that everyone already knew the answer to that question: 23 men from "another county" had signed confessions, bragging that they had committed the deed. Their names were registered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (whom Thurmond had condemned for meddling in the state's affairs).

Then pausing for effect, Lynn asked his question again and gave answer. "Who lynched Willie Earle? We did!"

He then launched into a jeremiad in which he said that White jokes, put-downs,

election laws, politicians and racial injustice had all contributed to the culture that made lynching a part of life for Black people in the American South. He cited biblical examples that showed how racism was sinful and drew on experiences from his own impoverished childhood in South Carolina. He ended with a passionate plea for White Christians to step up and give witness to Christ's condemnation of our White supremacy and Christ's encouragement to work for justice in America.

A few weeks after Lynn's sermon, a jury in Greenville acquitted all of the lynchers, in spite of their confessions, as an international press recorded the sad miscarriage of justice. Walter Winchell, in an editorial condemning the sorry spectacle, noted the irony that the double tragedy occurred just a few months after the end of America's defeat of Nazi terror in Europe. Winchell said that it was a sad day for America. Lynn had asserted to his congregation that it was a sad for the church.

A month later, Lynn's prayer against the "Sin of Lynching" was printed in the *Advocate*, though there is no record of any other South Carolina Methodist preacher (or bishop) speaking out against the crime.

I've spent much of my ministerial life fascinated by the lynching and Lynn's sermon. The Evangelical Press Association awarded my book on the topic, "Who Lynched Willie Earle? Preaching to Confront Racism" (Abingdon Press), Book of the Year. In my book, I played homage to Lynn's sermon and put forth Hawley and his preaching as a model for all of us contemporary servants of the word. Whereas most White preachers kept quiet in the face of South Carolina's "last lynching," Lynn spoke up and spoke out. He knew that if preachers don't bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to bear on America's racist sin, we do the church much damage by implying that the gospel has nothing to say.

In our time and place, 75 years after Lynn stood up in a high school classroom and preached the gospel to the congregation of Grace Church, let us preachers take Lynn as our model and speak Christ's good news with courage, passion and conviction.

If you would like to order a signed copy of Willimon's "Who Lynched Willie Earle?" you can find information at <https://mailchi.mp/willwillimon/lords-prayer-pandemic-5394217?e=00aaadc834>.

Willimon is a retired bishop of The United Methodist Church, having served from 2004-2012. Born in Greenville, he served as an elder in the South Carolina Conference before his election as bishop.

Letter to the Editor

Knowing truth

Despite the fact that critical race theory (CRT) is a complicated academic theory that some scholars use to examine disproportionate outcomes in the criminal justice system, school board meetings across the U.S. have erupted in passionate debates with parents demanding it be banned.

As David Wiley Camp and Allison Mahaley recently wrote in "Sojourners," "Ironically, CRT cannot be taught to children because it is not age appropriate for K-12 just as we would not teach advanced nuclear physics to schoolchildren. Yet the strategic placement by far-right activists of a narrative that CRT has crept into K-12 education is causing dramatic outburst of racial anxiety. All this passion could be rerouted to address an important question that everyone cares

about: What should children be taught about race and racism in the United States? This conversation, if well done, could actually move our society toward much-needed racial healing."

Racism continues to raise its ugly head. Education is the foundation of our lives, and Scripture says we need to know the truth (John 8:32).

The Bible contains stories of sin and grace (Matthew 1:21). Are we to eliminate the stories in the Bible we do not like?

The truth needs to be known even if it is painful. Racism is part of history and remains today. Jesus calls us to repent (Luke 13:3).

*Rev. John Culp, retired
Columbia*



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Amiri B. Hooker

God's call for compassion

For some of us, \$250 does make a difference.

Hopefully by the time this is printed the policy argument will be settled, but I'm not real optimistic. Some people may not realize that for many Americans, the child tax credit has been a real support. So church leaders need to understand this is important.

We've got to challenge Democrats and Republicans. Somebody in every age has to challenge this country to be true to its moral foundation in the Constitution, Declaration of Independence and our deepest religious values.

Many of us are experiencing COVID-19 again even being vaccinated and having the booster. Sometimes I think we just miss in this country how these grand plans and policies effect the everyday ordinary working family. For my family, the earned income child tax credit increase was not \$250. With three high-school aged children, we received \$650 a month. This significantly helped during these COVID-19 months with the increase in food and gas costs. Yes, at times the money has provided an ability to purchase an extra pair of shoes or shirt, but in all honesty, without the extra \$5,200 last year we would have experienced life differently.

One might suggest that in the richest country in the world, we should be focusing on the poorest citizens and not be giving bonuses to the middle class. I would counter that in the richest country in the world where the 5 percent richest Americans increased their net worth in the trillions during the COVID-19 outbreak, we can do both.

The Bible reminds us in Deuteronomy 15:7 (ESV), "If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother."

This is indeed the calling of this holy nation, the home of the brave. As the church it is our responsibility to press the government to pass legislations and policies that are directed to and for the people. We also know that Scripture tells us in Isaiah 10:1-2, "Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless."

This is a slight tangent, but how do you make religious sense of a pandemic? Is it God's will? No, no. People start trying to figure out what God's will is, but I tend to lean more into, "What is God's will in my response to a pandemic? What is God's call for compassion?"

Jesus said, "Love your neighbor." So how do I love my neighbor politically, policy-wise, in the midst of realities? What is the godly response to tragedy? And as I said, Jesus is very clear: When I was hungry, did you feed me?

That's the question for America right now. Every one of those politicians who's going to put their hand on the Bible and swear to uphold the Constitution, I wish they'd make sure they knew what was in the Bible about how we treat one another.

The Rev William Barber of the Poor People Campaign said, "Dr. King didn't get shot because Dr. King believed in love. He got shot because he dared to raise the love question in the wrong places." He dared to look at a piece of policy and say, "How does this policy reflect love?"

But I do believe—and I'll be honest with you, I'm conservative in this way—that our sins can find us out. I do believe that there can be retribution. What you sow, you can reap. No, it's not about the \$250 child credit, or even \$15 an hour minimum wage.

It's about the disciple of Jesus being able to say that they work so all can have life and have it more abundantly.

Hooker pastors Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church, Lake City. He is also the author of "Preaching In the Midst Of: How Black Preaching Has Changed in the COVID-19 Pandemic," from the Advocate Press. The book is available as a paperback and ebook at <https://advocatesc.org/books>

College students encouraged to apply for Advocate's annual \$1,000 scholarship

Do you know a student who is planning to attend or is attending one of the four United Methodist colleges in South Carolina: Claflin University, Columbia College, Spartanburg Methodist College or Wofford College?

Applications are being accepted now for the *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate* annual \$1,000 college scholarship. The scholarship is for South Carolina United Methodist students for the 2022-2023 academic year.

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://advocatesc.org/about-us/scholarship>

For questions, email 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'Neil L. Boone, Claflin University, of Edisto Fork United Methodist Church, Orangeburg.

Pisgah intentional about outreach with Pee Dee Nation

FLORENCE—Like many United Methodists, the people of Pisgah United Methodist Church have long put an emphasis on Native American ministries.

Several lay leaders at Pisgah UMC with personal ties to Native American culture, namely Stephen Welch and Tom Holston, worked hard to advance Native American cultural awareness in Pisgah's congregation for the last few decades.

Through occasions like Native American Sunday, the congregation has had many opportunities to highlight the particular history and ongoing cultural reality of Native American peoples in the Carolinas and beyond.

Several years ago, Pisgah UMC was even presented a handmade "friendship necklace" by the South Carolina Conference Native American Committee to serve as a reminder to continue to grow in advocacy.

Specifically, Pisgah UMC has forged an ongoing relationship with the Pee Dee Nation of Upper South Carolina, a state-recognized tribe in the region.

Several times each year, especially during the cold winter holidays, Pisgah UMC's congregation donates items and organizes elder care baskets for Chief Carolyn Bolton to distribute among her people as she sees need.

Items in each basket include household cleaning and paper products, first aid supplies, personal hygiene products and cold weather warming items.

This year, some 15 members of the tribe received support through the baskets.

Over the years, as a sign of this friendship, the Pee Dee Nation gifted Pisgah UMC with river cane beads.



Photo courtesy of Rev. Josh McClendon

The Pee Dee Nation gifted Pisgah with River Cane beads. They are a sign from the tribe that those who receive them will maintain good relations with these "people of the river."

The river cane plant is native to the banks of the rivers and creeks in the traditional homeland of the Pee Dee tribe. Similar to bamboo, it's been used by Native Americans for centuries in all manner of ways.

They are a sign from the tribe that those who receive them will maintain good relations with these "people of the river."

"It has been our honor as United Methodists at Pisgah to build on this relationship, and we believe that other congregations all over South Carolina could do similarly with tribes and groups in their own backyard," said Pisgah's pastor the Rev. Josh McClendon.

Enrollment now open for the 2022 session of the Modjeska Simkins School for Human Rights

"It must be conceded that at this very hour, more so than at any time in the history of this nation, there is urgent need for the development of progressive thinkers to become the leaders of tomorrow."

Modjeska Monteith Simkins wrote this in a 1946 announcement for the upcoming Leadership Training School at Harbison Junior College in Irmo under the auspices of the Southern Negro Youth Congress.

Some 70 years later, the Modjeska School curriculum and sense of urgency is much the same. Continuing in the tradition of Simkins' school, the South Carolina Progressive Network launched the Modjeska Simkins School for Human Rights in 2015 to educate and mobilize emerging social and political activists.

The 13 classes include a people's history of South Carolina designed to provide a framework for understanding current political, economic and social conditions, and to inform ongoing work. The intent is to graduate effective citizens who can improve the quality of life in South Carolina and enrich their own lives in the process.

The entire session this year will be held on Zoom, and students can join from the comfort of their homes or offices. Breakout rooms will help make the classes as interactive as the online format permits.

The lead instructor, Dr. Robert Greene II, is an associate history professor at Claflin University in Orangeburg. Green received his doctorate from the University of South Carolina, has published more than 350 articles and is a nationally respected civil rights historian in South Carolina. In the four years he has led, students have been



Simkins

unrestrained in their praise of his talents as a teacher.

Beyond the regular classes, students are offered Deeper Dives, a closer look at key people and events in South Carolina's history of resistance. The Sunday Seminars are similar, but are open to the public. This session's guests include Dr. Vernon Burton, whose book "Lincoln's

Unfinished Work" was nominated for a Pulitzer and was a multiple Book of the Month recommendation.

On Sunday, Feb. 20, students will meet each other and the faculty and staff from 4-6 p.m. The Modjeska House will be open prior to the welcome for a tour. At the orientation on Monday, Feb. 21, all will review the purpose of the school and view the SCETV documentary about Simkins. Classes and Deeper Dives start Feb. 28 and continue on Mondays through June 27.

Graduation will be held Saturday, July 2.

Dr. Tom Summers, a retired United Methodist minister and Modjeska School graduate, said, "I've been involved with the S.C. Progressive Network since its beginning, and this school is indeed one of the best products in their 26 years of fine work. For anyone interested in the historical and current struggle for racial conciliation in our state, I strongly recommend that they attend this unique school. I also urge every congregation to sponsor a student."

Tuition is \$350, with monthly payments and scholarship assistance available.

For details about the school, the class 2022 class schedule and application process, see ModjeskaSchool.com.

Questions? Call 803-808-3384 or email modjeskaschool@scpronet.com.

South Carolina Conference United Methodist Women

Legislative Advocacy Days Via Zoom All Concerned Social Advocates are invited!

Each workshop will include a question & answer period and will close with prayer:

SC Public Health Issues Workshop, Wednesday, Feb 2, 10-11:30 a.m.

Featuring "Holding Out the Lifeline: A Mission to Families" presentation by Program Coordinator and Diabetes Prevention Coach Ava Dean, who will share overdose prevention by practicing safe storage and disposal of medications information as well as broader SC health concerns including diabetes and lifestyle patterns that impact other health conditions.

Predatory Lending in SC Workshop, Tuesday, Feb 8, 7-8:30 p.m.

This workshop will feature Director of the SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center Sue Berkowitz. She will describe this very harmful business practice, share past legislative victories in curtailing this abuse, and encourage us to move forward in the fight to halt these targeted and discriminatory practices.

A Teen Pregnancy Workshop: "Parents as Primary Sexuality Educators," Thursday, Feb 17, 2-3:30 p.m.

Featuring Carol Singletary, a 34-year Teen Pregnancy Prevention Specialist and Trainer, who will discuss the scope of this SC issue and the role of parents and grandparents in supporting our youth.

Kinship Care Program of DSS Workshop, Saturday, Feb 26, 10-11:30 a.m.

This workshop will feature Ms. Tamra Scott-Wilson, the DSS statewide Kinship Care Program Manager, who will also introduce and include the four regional Kinship Care Coordinators. They will discuss the scope of the kinship care for children who can no longer stay with their biological parents and the procedures and benefits of family kinship or fictive kinship as a means of keeping children within their familiar, comfortable, and loving world.

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!

FREE online registration is required to get Zoom link at <https://bit.ly/3xSgOPf>
or CALL Registrar Rebecca W. Eleazer at 803-467-5655.
Registration permits access to any/all of the four programs.

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



Conference updates COVID-19 best practices for in-person gatherings

In response to the emergence of the highly contagious omicron variant, South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston and leaders of the South Carolina Conference have updated COVID-19 Best Practices. These were updated Dec. 20.

They are urging local churches to review their current practices to ensure the health and safety of all.

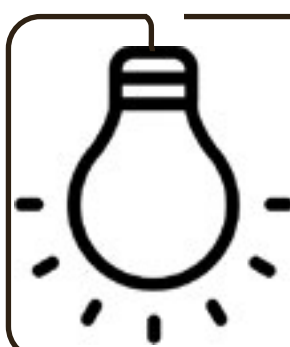
In the tradition of John Wesley, who believed in the value of science and medicine, Holston affirms the following guidance for in-person worship and other gatherings, which were compiled by a team of South Carolina United Methodist pastors and laity:

- All eligible persons, anyone age 5 and older, are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated and to receive a booster shot as soon as possible.
- Everyone should wear masks at all times when indoors, including choirs and those waiting to receive communion.
- Everyone should practice social distancing when indoors, including while waiting to receive communion.
- Local churches should hold events outdoors, including drive-up services, whenever possible. Outdoors is always safer than indoors.

Conference leaders urge congregations to remember that persons 65 and older and those with weak immune systems because of health conditions are more susceptible to COVID-19, even when vaccinated. Everyone is encouraged to wear masks out of respect and love for them.

Local churches are urged to continue to follow the latest guidance from the State Department of Health and Environmental Control as they make the health and safety of their congregations and communities their top priority.

Also while Holston and conference leaders recognize that there are differences of opinion in many congregations about the best way to respond to COVID-19, they urge patience and understanding as all continue to seek the best ways to serve God and one another together.



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.



Photo courtesy of Amanda Thomas

Chrismon trees at Clemson UMC

At Clemson UMC, Clemson, a group of women began meeting in September to make Chrismons for the trees. It was a time of fellowship and serving, and the results of their efforts are pictured above. They plan to continue making more Chrismons after the new year.

United Methodists reach settlement in Boy Scouts' Bankruptcy Case

United Methodist leaders have reached a settlement in the matter of the Boy Scouts of America's pending bankruptcy proceedings.

Upon final court approval, the settlement would absolve any claims of sexual abuse that may have occurred in congregation-sponsored Scouting programs.

Under the terms of the settlement, United Methodists would raise and give \$30 million over a three-year period into a fund that will be utilized to compensate survivors, and United Methodist congregations that charter Scout troops and packs would be released from all abuse claims involving scouting activities. A team has been formed to identify strategies and materials that may be used to raise the funds. The church would also agree to work for the healing of survivors and recommit to work toward ending sexual abuse of young people. Through the General Commission on United Methodist Men, United Methodists will work with the BSA to continue to ensure Scout safety and grow Scouting ministry as part of its mandate through The Book of Discipline.

"We are sorry for what occurred and are praying for all those who experienced harm through scouting activities. We are committed to the protection of children and youth, and the United Methodist Council of Bishops will be working with the church, the Survivor Working Group and BSA to address policies, programs and procedures in order to keep scouts safe from abuse," said Bishop John Schol, chair of the UMC leadership team created to support the United Methodist chartering organizations in the bankruptcy matter.

The settlement follows months of mediation by an ad hoc committee of bishops, chancellors and general agency employees that has been advocating for United Methodist interests.

"I want to thank everyone who has been working through the mediation process for the healing and just resolution of the survivors," Schol said. "Our settlement agreement has the support of both the BSA and the Coalition of Abused Scouts for Justice."

The United Methodist Church has long worked proactively to prevent child abuse. The percentage of claims in the last 20 years potentially related to United Methodist congregations'-sponsored scouting units is less than 1 percent of all UMC claims.

Under the terms of the agreement, denomination leaders will intensify efforts to prevent and raise awareness of child sexual abuse.

The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church has committed to lead the church in carrying out the following:

- Work with all United Methodists to raise funds for the Survivor Trust Fund;
- Tell the story of harm done to survivors

through a series of articles to be published by the denomination and by each U.S. annual conference to draw attention to child sexual abuse and call upon the church to be vigilant in working to prevent child sexual abuse in churches, homes and the community;

- Carry out a denomination-wide review of all Safe Sanctuaries and other policies to safeguard young people from sexual abuse and update policies as necessary and ensure the policies are being followed;

- Provide opportunities for sexual abuse survivors to share their experiences with United Methodist leadership if they choose to do so;

- Work with all United Methodist ministries and with the Boy Scouts of America to continue to make programs safe for all young people;

- Provide leadership to help all BSA chartering organizations to make a \$100 million contribution to the Survivor Trust Fund; and

- Participate as a member of the Survivors Working Group.

The ad hoc committee recommends that churches who filed a proof of claim vote "yes" on the plan and for those who previously voted "no," the ad hoc committee recommends congregations change their vote to "yes." An email from conference leadership will be sent to churches that filed a proof of claim on how to vote "yes" and how to change a vote from "no" to "yes."

Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, resident bishop of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, said the settlement would support abuse survivors and protect UMCs. In a statement on the settlement, he called it "a substantial step forward in our efforts to maintain our compassionate support for survivors of abuse, while safeguarding the security of local United Methodist churches affected by the Boy Scouts of America bankruptcy case."

"This week, the United Methodist Ad Hoc Committee, which was tasked with advising and supporting the lawyers who are representing UMC congregations that have chartered BSA units, signed a settlement agreement that would provide both healing and support for survivors and legal protections for local churches. For more details about the settlement, I encourage you to read the statement from United Methodist Communications below.

"While much remains to be done to finalize this settlement, we are grateful for God's grace and guidance and the dedicated work of many throughout this difficult process to date."

Holston urged people to keep in prayer all of those victimized by abuse, as well as the local and national church leaders working to bring this difficult process to a fair and just resolution.

Nominations sought for Annual Conference awards

Deadline is April 1

The time has come to nominate outstanding clergy and laity in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church for awards to be presented at the 2022 Annual Conference in June, as well as an annual award for scouting units at UMC churches.

Nominations for the awards must be submitted by April 1.

For more details about any of these awards, and to download nomination forms, go to www.umcsc.org and click on "Resources," then "Awards."

Awards to be presented are as follows:

Bishop's Five-Star Award (Board of Evangelism): This award provides an incentive for churches to embrace new ministries each year geared toward growth and outreach.

It enables small and large churches to receive recognition. Criteria include an increase in Sunday school attendance and/or enhancement of Christian education ministry; a "new work" that impacts growth; members received by profession of faith or rededication, one for every 100 members; emphasis on youth ministries that demonstrate growth; and all apportionments paid in full for 2021, or a 25 percent increase in apportionment payments compared to 2020.

Harry Denman Evangelism Award (The Foundation for Evangelism): This award honors a pastor, a lay adult and a youth from any size church for responsible evangelism in the local church. It recognizes people who are effective in making disciples of Jesus Christ. This can involve speaking, personal witnessing or inspiring the church to be involved in evangelism.

Nominees' lifestyles bring honor to Christ, the church and works in ways that are in keeping with the United Methodist history and traditions.

Barbara Boultinghouse Bridge Builder Award (General Commission on the Status and Role of Women): Named after a UMC deaconess, this award is given to a person or organization in the South Carolina Conference who has built bridges of understanding by promoting equity and inclusiveness without regard to race, gender, age, handicap or economic condition.

Michael C. Watson Volunteer in Mission Award (Conference Board of Global Ministries): Named in honor of the founder of the South Carolina United Methodist Volunteers in Mission, this award is given to one clergy and one layperson who exemplify extraordinary volunteer mission service within the conference, beyond the local church.

Joseph Benjamin Bethea Distinguished Service Award (Conference Committee on Religion and Race): This award is presented to a person who has performed outstanding service in working for racial justice. Laity or clergy of the conference who have shown a strong commitment to Christian social justice for at least five years (fewer, if the individual is a youth) are eligible. Criteria include efforts toward elimination of racism; efforts toward building inclusiveness; efforts toward empowerment of persons considered a minority (racially or ethnically); Christian character; and servanthood.

Bishop's Award of Excellence (Conference Scouting Ministry): This award recognizes United Methodist congregations that extend their ministry to children and youth by creating a faith-based environment for children, youth, their families and their leaders who participate in Girl Scouts of the USA and Scouts BSA. All of the following criteria must be met:

- 20 percent or more of registered youth members of the unit working toward or having completed appropriate religious emblem program;
- 20 percent of the registered adult leaders must be members of the United Methodist Church;
- Unit must participate in annual Scouting Ministries Sunday observance in the local church;
- Unit must plan and complete one service project in each of the following categories: local church (e.g., grounds workday), the community (e.g., litter pick-up), conference, national or work programs of the United Methodist Church (e.g., hunger relief, work service or UMCOR);
- Unit leader and scouting coordinator must review unit sponsor agreement program plans with pastor annually;
- Unit must observe regular worship services when away from the church on Sundays for camping experiences or trips; and
- Unit must have a person assigned to encourage active participation in religion, respecting the faiths of all, and Boy Scout troops must have a registered unit chaplain (adult) and chaplain aide (youth).

Recipients of the awards will be recognized at the 2022 Annual Conference.



REV. KEN OWENS

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WCA's vaccine offer for General Conference delegates draws criticism about 'colonialism'

The Wesleyan Covenant Association has organized an effort to ensure General Conference delegates from Africa, Europe, Eurasia and the Philippines are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

But their announcement has drawn stark criticism by many, including Central Conference bishops and the global United Methodist Council of Bishops, who question the WCA's motives and say the offer has all the marks of colonialism.

In a statement released by the WCA, they state that thanks to a partnership with other organizations, the WCA is planning to fund delegates' access to vaccination sites so they can receive their COVID-19 vaccine, thereby making it possible for these delegates to attend The United Methodist Church's General Conference later this year.

Currently scheduled for Aug. 29-Sept. 6 in Minneapolis, General Conference delegates seeking entry into the U.S. will have to demonstrate they have been fully vaccinated with a World Health Organization approved vaccine. While the vaccines are now available free of charge to all delegates and many delegates have already been fully vaccinated, a barrier remains.

"The barrier for those still unvaccinated delegates is not the availability of vaccines, but their ability to travel to cities where they can receive free immunizations," said the Rev. Keith Boyette, president of the WCA. "For example, in the Congo Central Conference, where approximately 150 delegates reside, free immunizations are only available in a limited number of major cities. Many delegates reside in rural areas requiring multiday trips to reach the clinics. Often this requires several days of travel on the ground followed by travel by air on flights that operate once a week just to reach

cities where vaccines are available. And since two doses are required for most WHO-approved vaccines, delegates must remain near the clinics for up to 18 days in order to receive both doses. Not only must the delegates incur the cost of travel by ground and air; they must also have resources for lodging and food while awaiting administration of their second dose. Such costs are beyond many delegates' ability to pay."

The WCA would fund those travel expenses.

However, the leadership of the Central Conference bishops of the UMC released a statement Jan. 17 noting they are "appalled" by the WCA offer.

In a release, the Central Conference bishops said the entire process has all the marks of colonialism, which African countries went through some years ago.

"The tactics of divide-and-conquer have created chaos and division on the African continent and should not be allowed in our churches. ... We people called United Methodists from the Central conferences promote unity and we treasure our connectional spirit but we deplore any form of colonialism."

The leadership added, "While we understand that vaccines are not easily accessible to all people in many parts of the world, we are dismayed that the WCA would choose to help provide vaccines to only a few people and not the community as whole. If the WCA's motives are pure, why not provide vaccines for the entire family of that delegate or the entire church or the community in which the delegate lives?"

The Executive Committee of the Council of Bishops of the UMC said they are standing with the statement from the leadership Central Conference bishops.

In a brief statement released Jan. 19, the Executive Committee said: "We stand with our Central Conference colleagues and urge all to read their letter and hear the concerns. These matters impact the entire church and undermine the integrity of the work of the General Conference delegates. We are grateful for the leadership of our Central Conference colleagues."

As of press time Jan. 21, the WCA shared a rebuttal on their website from three men—Simon Mafunda, layman in the Zimbabwe East Annual Conference and the WCA's Africa Coordinator; Dr. Jonathan Razon, senior pastor at The Living Faith UMC in Murong, Bagabag, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines; and Dr. Daniel Topalski, superintendent of the Bulgaria Annual Conference and the president of the WCA's Eastern Europe Regional Chapter.

In the rebuttal, the men noted they strongly disagree with the charge that the WCA's vaccine initiative "has all the marks of colonialism."

"It should be obvious to anyone that the WCA's vaccination initiative has none of the 'marks of colonialism,'" their letter reads. "Far from exercising 'full or partial political control' over anyone, the WCA's initiative empowers delegates to fully participate in the General Conference so they can represent their annual conferences."

General Conference, originally slated for May 2020, has been postponed because of COVID, and the Commission on the General Conference aims to decide in the first three months of this year whether it can go ahead this year as scheduled.

To read more about the vaccination offer and the reaction, visit <https://www.unitedmethodistbishops.org> and <https://wesleyan covenant.org>.

Bishop responds after racist message posted on S.C. roadside

Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, resident bishop of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, has released a statement regarding a racist message posted on a roadside sign in South Carolina over the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend.

The sign was a digital message board in a high-traffic area in Sumter, South Pike Road near U.S. Route 76. It was tampered with and altered to urge drivers to honk if they hate (racist expletive).

Holston's statement said the posting of a racist message on an electronic roadside sign in Sumter has prompted much dismay, anger and sorrow.

"Such use of hate speech has gained renewed acceptance in recent years, proving we have a long way to go in fulfilling God's commandment to love our neighbors.

"As a people of faith opposed to racism and committed to social justice, we must pledge that our response to such an act is to take action through witness, advocacy and prayer. We must resist all efforts by those who would seek to divide us by inciting hate, whether

through speech, action or complacency.

"It was the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. himself who reminded us that 'every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.'

"As we take our next faithful steps on this path, let us be tireless in our witness to the love of Jesus Christ and to God's commandment to love our neighbor. Let us be passionate in our advocacy for justice. Let us be dedicated to constant, active prayer for righteousness to prevail."

Holston urged people to engage in this effort through "Our Response to Racism," a resource developed by South Carolina UMC clergy and laity to provide people with tools to listen, lead discussions, strengthen relationships and help in the process of healing within churches and communities.

"Please join me in praying that love will be vigilant and truth will be bold," he said.

Washington Street UMC's Reconciling Next Team partners with Reformation Lutheran for Friday Unwind

COLUMBIA—The Reconciling Next Team at Washington Street United Methodist Church has partnered with members of Reformation Lutheran Church, to offer an online "happy hour" for LGBTQIA+ individuals and allies.

On the third Friday of each month, these two groups have begun to gather together online from 6-7 p.m. for fellowship and to socially engage with each other.

Washington Street's RNT is a group of individuals who work together to enlighten,

engage and educate the congregation and community about LGBTQIA+ issues and concerns and help to stop the spread of misinformation and misconceptions surrounding it.

This group is open to anyone interested in participating. You do not have to be a member of either church to attend.

If interested, contact Jim Lane at jlane@columbiasc.edu or Gary Parish at gparish57@gmail.com for a Zoom link.

Washington Street was established in 1803 and was the first Christian house of worship in Columbia. In January 2016,

WSUMC updated its identity statement to reflect the vision of the church and its congregation: "The congregation of WSUMC praises and serves God from the heart of the city in ways which reach our neighbors near and far. We welcome all who seek the love and mercy of Christ regardless of race, creed, age, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or economic status. We honor traditions as rooted in our history, our expression of worship and our respect for theological curiosity. We nonetheless see vital change and ongoing renewal as essential for spiritual growth."

Faith in Action

Stories of Salkehatchie Summer Service



Since 1978, Salkehatchie has been changing hearts and lives by offering youth and adults an opportunity to draw closer to Christ through service. In this book, Salkehatchie's founder, the Rev. John Wesley Culp Sr., gathers stories of those who offered sweat, blood, and tears in grueling heat, some for one summer and some returning summer after summer for decades—today bringing their own children and even grandchildren. Today, these volunteers are teachers, doctors, lawyers, business people, ministers, military personnel, parents, and community members engaged in all walks of life. Their work is a collective witness of the power of Christ's redeeming and merciful love at work in our lives.

A portion of the proceeds from each book purchase supports Salkehatchie Summer Service. Paperback and ebook available.

Order at <https://advocatesc.org/faithinaction>
Or send \$15 plus \$3 shipping/handling
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Check out our redesigned website:
AlstonWilkesSociety.org



United Methodist Women

by Ann Alexander

'Turn It Up!' at Assembly

Exciting plans are underway for the 21st Assembly of United Methodist Women, May 20-22, 2022. We hope that you will be among the thousands of women attending this exciting celebration in Orlando, Florida.

I want to personally encourage you to attend Assembly 2022 in Orlando. In 2022, women will reflect on today's challenges and together find comfort and strength to move forward, building new ways for faith-filled women to make a difference in their communities and the world. Attendees will recommit to our purpose, but also more. For such a time as this, we will "Turn It Up!"

At Assembly 2022 we will "Turn It Up!" for spiritual healing and renewal. We will "Turn It Up!" for rebirth in a new time. We will "Turn It Up!" for women leaders. We will "Turn It Up!" for justice for women, children and youth.

This is our chance to continue building on our more than 150-year heritage as women leaders who know how to organize and serve. We are women who are willing to be challenged to grow in our faith as we build deeper connections with one another, community leaders and partners in the work of justice for all of God's children.

Bold action, like faith, takes courage. Our bravery is inspired by God's love and driven by our powerful commitment to improve the lives of women, children and youth. We're a sisterhood acting in faith to tackle the hard work of the world without hesitation. We show up, we take action and we get it done. Our passion is boundless. And it all begins with you.

Can't join us in Orlando? Then join us from your living room! Assembly 2022 has both in-person and online experiences allowing even more women to participate and "Turn It Up!"

Virtual attendees receive access to all five community gatherings, one workshop on Friday and Saturday, exclusive behind-the-scenes speaker interviews, sisterhood networking and more. Knowing you no longer pay for travel, hotel and meals, this is a great bargain for a low price of \$199.

Register for Assembly 2022 at www.assembly2022.org.

Two \$500 "Under 40" scholarships are available. Applications are available <https://www.umcsc.org/discipleship/united-methodist-women>, and the application deadline is March 15.

Alexander serves as trip coordinator for SCCUMW.



Photos Courtesy of MIDAS TOUCH Photography/ Linton McCants

Caring for the sick and shut-in

Mechanicsville UMC Outreach Ministry partnered with My Brother's Keeper Shelter to provide more than 50 cooked meals to sick and shut-in members and individuals in need in Lee and Sumter counties. My Brother's Keeper Shelter, a registered 501(c)(3) organization, began operation Feb. 18, 2019. Its founder, minister Marcus Simmons, wanted to ensure the homeless and others in need would receive essential services. Mechanicsville pastor the Rev. E.W. Frierson, along with Ophelia Davis, delivered hot meals days before Christmas with the help of Mechanicsville's Usher Board, youth ministry and United Methodist Men.



Epworth Children's Home

Creating conditions for change

Sixteen years ago, Epworth Children's Home became a trauma-based institution. The staff and leadership at Epworth recognized that a consequence-based treatment was not the ideal treatment model for children who had already suffered abuse, neglect, homelessness, poverty and community unrest.

In addition to the trauma Epworth's children may have experienced in their homes, all of Epworth's children have suffered the trauma of being removed from their families, no matter how unstable the family may have appeared.

Pain-based consequences used with traumatized children results in pain-based behavior, and often retraumatizes young people. Consequence and fear-based treatment programs often result in either short-term behavior improvement or resistance and defiance.

Currently, trauma-informed care is being billed as the best new program from social welfare settings to educational settings. There are seminars, college courses and dozens of web-based companies who advertise trauma-based learning opportunities.

Epworth has not only been a trauma-informed institution, which means the effects of trauma are known and recognized, but Epworth is a trauma-based campus. Being a trauma-based campus means that all of the

programs are designed to treat traumatized individuals.

Epworth continues its 16-year relationship with Cornell University where the program CARE—Children and Residential Experience—was developed. Epworth is acknowledged as one of the pioneer institutions that participated in the development of CARE. One of the fundamental principles of CARE is that it is trauma-informed and the requirements are that staff members are trained in trauma treatment. This includes the knowledge that trauma has a debilitating effect on children's growth and development, and that challenging behavior is often pain-based behavior.

Epworth's responsibilities in maintaining a trauma-based treatment model include providing a consistent, predictable environment; developing relationships that are based on trust and respect; providing activities that are future oriented, and allow children to contribute; and maintaining an environment of safety and non-violence, which is essential for children to learn new types of responses to stressful situations.

Epworth continues to lead the way in innovative practices that serve children and families. This United Methodist agency of the South Carolina Conference has for 125 years been recognized as a pioneer in the area of social welfare.



God's gift of music

Steward Chapel UMC, Huger, held a musicians appreciation moment Sunday, Dec. 19, lifting up their organist Renard Milford (above left) and drummer Stephen Gladney (above right). Below, they are pictured with their pastor, the Rev. Shawn V. Chestnut.





During the Advent and Christmas season, the cross, manger and star were a welcoming sight for members as well as those passing by the church, especially at night when everything was lit up.

Church reaches out in several ways during Advent, Christmas

ROCK HILL—During the Advent and Christmas season, Friendship United Methodist Church went caroling and delivered 13 fruit boxes to some of their shut-ins and older members.

They all enjoyed hearing the songs, and church members said they enjoyed seeing them in person from a safe distance away.

During Advent, Friendship also did a “reverse Advent,” where members collected food items for the Hope House in Rock Hill. People took laundry baskets home and each day placed nonperishable food items into those baskets. Scripture reading was included as well.

Also during the Advent and Christmas season, the cross, manger and star were a welcoming sight for members as well as those passing by the church, especially at night when everything was lit up.

At the Christmas Eve service, people were encouraged to come in through the main front door so they could get the full effect, especially with the walkway lined with lighted lanterns.

“It was beautiful,” said B. Joyce Newman.

Friendship UMC also collected more than \$3,000 for Epworth Children’s Home this year through their “Clang Bucket Offering” each month.

“We were so excited to be able to do this and can’t wait to see what happens in 2022,” Newman said.



Photo courtesy of Rev. Meredith Dark

Fellowship, goodwill and community service

Fran Bristow, a member of Mount Hebron UMC in West Columbia, was honored Jan. 7 at the Ruritan convention in Myrtle Beach as the Ruritan of the Year. Ruritan is a national civic organization dedicated to improving communities and building a better America through fellowship, goodwill and community service. Here, Bristow shares a smile with Ruritan president Linward Hedgspeth.

Around the Districts

Columbia District

The South Carolina Christian Action Council has been awarded \$194,500 by The Duke Endowment to support COVID-19 relief and recovery work with Black, Indigenous, People of Color faith communities. With these funds, SCCAC will award as many as 21 mini-grants during the next 11 months to aid rural communities of all ages in the physical, spiritual and mental support through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Journey United Methodist Church, Columbia, celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King Day of Service on Jan. 17. At noon that day, “The Legacy of a Drum Major of Justice, Peace, and Righteousness,” a program presented by Clergy for Racial Justice, aired on Journey’s Facebook and YouTube pages. The church had also planned COVID vaccines and testing that day, but DHEC postponed the events because of wintry weather. They had also planned a voter registration drive for that same day, but Journey also rescheduled it because of weather. However, they were encouraging people to participate in an electronic campaign to notify senators of constituent support of the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act. The act, named in honor of the civil rights icon and late Georgia congressman, was aimed at fighting voter suppression and restoring enforcement provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. While voted down Jan. 19, the Freedom to Vote Act would have made it easier to register to vote, make Election Day a public holiday, ensure states have early voting for federal elections and allow all voters to request mail-in ballots, among other provisions.

Marion District

Belin Memorial UMC, Murrells Inlet, had a great turnout at the Caledonia Golf and Fish Club Nov. 1. More than \$17,000 was raised for mission and outreach projects.

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ERT ICE RESPONSE: Conditions made it difficult to tarp roofs

From Page 1

The conditions made it extremely hard to tarp roofs, but ERT members pitched in with hard work and loving hearts and accomplished the task.

Among the responders was Greenwood District Superintendent Dr. Stephen Love, who worked hard alongside other ERTs to help homeowners in need.

One woman lost her heating and air unit because of a fallen tree. When it was discovered she was a member of Lowell Street UMC in the area, Evans reached out to her pastor, Rev. Cheryl Remchuk, who was able to get space heaters in the woman's house so she could heat her home until the unit is repaired.

"I did not know that we United Methodists had this wonderful ministry," the woman shared.

Responders included Evans and Love, as well as Greenwood District Lay Servant Ministries Director Cathy Trevino, Dawn Rhodes, Bill and Elaine Turner, Curtis Burnett, Tony Watson, Sandy Shaffer, Leonard May, Jerry Pullen, Felix Vazquez, Michael Hughes and Billy Robinson.

It is an honor and joy, with blessing beyond all measure, to be a part of God's hands and feet to people during their times of need. The UMCSC ERT ministry is in need of equipment such as tractors and skid-steers and other support, as well as volunteers. To be a volunteer, one needs to attend a one-day training.

The next scheduled ERT training class will be held at New Beginnings UMC, Boiling Springs, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. March 5.



A crew of Early Response Team members, including Greenwood District Superintendent Dr. Stephen Love, removed downed trees and other icy debris from homes and neighborhoods during a Jan. 17 response.

Photo by Cathy Trevino



Fourteen sets of boots were on the ground within 24 hours of the icy winter mix Jan. 16 that caused trees to crash into homes.

Photo by Cathy Trevino



The Rev. Mike Evans gives spiritual care items to a homeowner during the response (Dr. Stephen Love in foreground).

Photo by Billy Robinson

For more on ERT and how to volunteer or help: brpraisejesus@aol.com or 803-539-8429.



Holy night

A candle shines light on the Christmas Eve service at Manning United Methodist Church, Manning.



Jordan remembers

Having been a victim of Hurricane Hugo, Jordan UMC, Jordan, remembers the extensive damage that they sustained when the winds tore their steeple down, damaging their roof. Many South Carolina businesses, homes and lives were destroyed. The disaster team from Grace UMC, North Augusta, cleared the debris back then, displaying Christian love in action. Recently, in honor of the help they received, Coleen Brochette, Jordan's treasurer, presented a \$3,700 gift to retired minister Kenneth Phelps, an ERT coordinator. The gift was forwarded to the conference treasurer's office to be used as a helping hand for UMCOR and ERT ministries.

MEN'S RETREAT: Keynote speaker will be Jerrod Lopes

From Page 1

"We envision it'll be a lot like last year, two hours, where many of the churches will host get-togethers for the broadcast and smaller groups can all participate there together," said Men N Ministry President Marvin Horton.

For those eager for in-person fellowship, the men's oyster roast will still be held at Mount Horeb UMC Friday, Feb. 25, at 5:30 p.m. There will be a \$10 cost for the meal.

And earlier that day, the Men N Ministry Golf Tournament will be held at Indian River Golf Course, West Columbia, with a shotgun start at 11 a.m. and a tournament cost of \$80 per person.

The Sunday night retreat will feature keynote speaker Jerrod Lopes, author, speaker and founder of Dad Tired, a ministry focused on equipping men to lead their family well. He hosts the weekly Dad Tired Podcast, downloaded more than 3 million times by men from around the world. He and his wife, Leila, live in Portland, Oregon, with their four children, and he is passionate about motivating men with the gospel, not merely what he calls "behavior modification."

"Millennial men are the least engaged demographic in the church. And yet, I can assure you that they have not given up on Jesus," Lopes said, calling himself a "broken dude who has been saved, is being saved and will be saved by Jesus."

Horton said he's excited about Lopes as the speaker.

"I've listened to some of his stuff, and his ministry is directed toward men and growing men in Jesus, and that's why we like his message," Horton said. "He'll speak to us about being resilient but from a men's perspective."

The event will also feature South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston and other men's ministry leaders. Last year, they estimate about 700 people participated in the virtual gathering, and organizers are hoping this year for that many and maybe even more.

Learn more about Lopes at www.jerradlopes.com. To register for the men's retreat or learn more about the retreat, oyster roast or golf tournament, visit <https://mennministriysc.org/> or contact Horton at mjhcont@gmail.com.

HEALTHY MINDS: Creating a space in church for mental health support

From Page 1

Now, the Healthy Minds Team is more than three years in and going strong. More than a mental health support group, Hess said, it's a compassionate mind-health team filled with caring and honest believers who surround each other with love and encouragement—and a listening ear.

"It's all about healthy comfort, healthy confidentiality, healthy communication and healthy community," Hess said, and all of it in a church setting.

The Healthy Minds Team is one way churches are beginning to support their members with awareness and supportive environments to foster conversation and healing around mental health. As mental health issues become more prevalent, and more talked about, the need is strong. The National Institute for Mental Health estimates nearly one in five U.S. adults live with a mental illness (52.9 million in 2020), whether anxiety, depression, bipolar or other issues.

At TRUMC, Hess and his team embrace Ephesians 4:23 as their banner verse. Penned by the apostle Paul, it emphasizes being made new in the attitude of our minds.

"That seemed to me to really give us an anchor there for our group and say, 'OK, we're a Christian mind-health team,'" Hess said.

After all, the concept of mental health is supported throughout Scripture, from what is going on within a person to the relationships they have with others.

On the first Sunday of every month, the group of nearly a dozen men and women gather after the second church service for a time of listening, learning and a healthy meal.

They have started working their way



Recently, the Healthy Minds Team put a "sunshine box" in the church, which was a shoebox covered with yellow paper and a slot and invited everyone in church to contribute one thing that helps improve their mood. Responses included everything from listening to a certain song to going for a walk with a neighbor. They created a "TRUMC Sunshine Calendar" from the responses, which was made available to the whole congregation.

through the Living Grace resource from the Mental Health Grace Alliance, and they also make sure every member gets a chance to talk about their struggles and other needs on their mind. Individuals, couples and one family participates right now, and more are welcome any time.

"It's been extremely well received," said Pat Hansen, a nurse and member of TRUMC. While she's not in the group, she has steered a number of people to it and appreciates what the group says about the church's emphasis on mental health and awareness.

"Having that group has kind of established a stake in the ground that we (at TRUMC) are committed to this," Hansen

said.

The Rev. Jonathan Tompkins, lead pastor at TRUMC, said the Healthy Minds Team is the fruit of their congregation's effort to focus on mental and emotional health.

"Several years ago, we at TRUMC made an intentional commitment to bring mental and emotional health to the forefront of what it means to be a disciple of Christ," Tompkins said.

After a sermon series on emotionally healthy spirituality, based on a book by Peter Scazzero, Tompkins said Hess started the group.

Tompkins said the Healthy Minds Team is "a vital and life-giving source of God's grace, Christ's peace and the Holy Spirit's healing and wholeness for our church and community."

“
It's good to have a place you can go and not be judged.

—Mickey Hess

”

Ashley Gutschow, a Stephen Minister at TRUMC, said the Healthy Minds Team has been a huge benefit to the church. As someone with Bipolar II disorder, Gutschow said she is now in a healthy place in her life and has a second chance at life, and she helps with the Healthy Minds Team as a way of giving back and helping others who might not have the access to the resources she does.

"The Healthy Minds Team gives our church a space to say, 'You're not weird if you have depression; if you have bipolar you are not alone,'" Gutschow said.

It's so important to have a space to go seek support if you have mental illness, and the fact that it's in a church—which naturally focuses on wholeness in Christ—is tremendous, she added.

Hess agreed, noting the entire church has been incredibly supportive of the Healthy Minds Team.

"It's just good to have a place you can go and not be judged, not be reprimanded, that's just sharing in complete acceptance," Hess said.

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SALKEHATCHIE: Camps will focus this year on exterior repair work

From Page 1

Camps Slated To Reopen this Summer (As of press time)

- Bamberg: July 9-16
- Bishopville: June 25-July 2
- Black Swamp: July 9-16
- Chester: June 11-18
- Clover: July 16-23
- Columbia: July 16-23
- Emerald City: July 16-23
- Laurens: June 18-25
- Moncks Corner: July 16-22
- Newberry: July 17-22
- North Augusta: July 16-23
- Piedmont: June 25-July 2
- Rivertown: June 11-18
- Santee: July 9-16
- Union: July 18-25
- Winyah Bay: June 11-18

The Rev. John Culp, who founded Salkehatchie in 1978, said he is happy to know people will get the help they need this summer.

“Poverty still exists, and people want to help,” Culp said. “We’re going to be safe, and we have to take precautions, but we can’t let fear dominate our lives.”

The COVID protocols must be followed at all camps and include the following:

- All campers, directors, homeowners and others in proximity to campers (such as those serving meals) must be fully vaccinated at the time of the camp;
- Camps will focus on exterior repair work, such as accessibility ramps and roofs;
- Sleeping arrangements will be socially distanced; and
- Masks will be worn inside for evening programs, standing



Campers work during a previous Salkehatchie. This year, 16 of the 43 camps are planning to open.

in lines or working near someone else.

The other camps plan to reopen in the summer of 2023: Anderson, Baker Creek, Calhoun, Catawba, Circuit Rider, Creekfront, Dalzell, Fairfield, Foothills, Harvest, Jenkinsville, Lake City, Lake Murray, Lancaster, Marlboro-Flowers (formally Pee Dee), Middle Tyger, New Hope, North Strand, Penn Center, Sand River, Spartanburg, Summerville, Sumter, Two Rivers, Upstate Greenville, Water-

ee and Williamsburg (formally Hemingway-Kingstree East).

Hart said that in addition to COVID-19 concerns, Salkehatchie is also facing skyrocketing costs in building materials and supplies.

“We ask for your prayers as we take these steps to reopen,” Hart said.

Registration will open soon.

To register, go to Salkehatchie.org.

APPORTIONMENTS: UMCSC also saw boost in churches paying 100%

From Page 1

“It is heartening to see how steadfast we remain in keeping our focus on ministry and mission,” Holston said. “As we take our next faithful steps together, this investment in the day-to-day work of making disciples of Jesus Christ confirms God’s plans to prosper and not harm us, to give us hope and a future.”

Apportionment monies pay everything the UMC is responsible for in South Carolina and throughout the global UMC connection, from clergy salaries, congregational development, campus ministries and United Methodist retirement homes in South Carolina to the global Africa University fund.

Some churches held special events to raise extra funds to pay their apportionments, such as festivals or special collections.

Westbury also reported an increase in those churches paying 100 percent of their apportionments, with

781 of the 961 total churches paying their apportionments in entirety. That number is 58 more than 2020.

The Orangeburg District saw the highest percentage of apportionments paid, with a collection percentage of 98.03 percent. Walterboro District came in second place at 96.98 percent, and Columbia District was a close third at 96.89 percent.

Westbury said she is grateful for the churches for their response in faith, love and generosity, as well as for the bishop, district superintendents and lay leadership for their leadership.

“Together, this is an amazing team doing much more than we can do as separate units,” Westbury said.

Collection has already begun for 2022 apportionments; the budget for 2022 is \$16.7 million. The Conference Council on Finance and Administration has been working hard to reduce apportionments in hopes that more churches will participate and reach 100 percent.

2021 Apportionment Payments by District

- Orangeburg 98.03%
- Walterboro 96.98%
- Columbia 96.89%
- Spartanburg 95.38%
- Florence 95.17%
- Charleston 94.27%
- Greenwood 88.86%
- Greenville 88.29%
- Rock Hill 87.64%
- Anderson 85.88%
- Marion 85.80%
- Hartsville 84.80%

—South Carolina Conference Treasurer’s Office

South Carolina Apportionment Giving Through the Years

2021	91.67%
2020	87.16%
2019	90.0%
2018	90.9%
2017	92.3%
2016	92.0%
2015	91.1%
2014	89.5%
2013	89.7%
2012	87.0%
2011	84.2%
2010	83.2%
2009	84.0%
2008	86.1%
2007	86.8%
2006	86.0%
2005	78.7%
2004	78.9%
2003	87.8%
2002	90.9%

—South Carolina Conference Treasurer’s Office

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Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Tony Rowell

Potholes

Years ago, back in the early 2000s, I took several mission teams down to Vulcan, Panama, in Central America. On such trips our driver was always the same man, and he was a man after my own heart. He and I share the same name, Antonio, as well as a lasting friendship.

Antonio is a family man, a devout Christian and a fine fella, and under normal circumstances he is a calm, measured and a relatively sane individual. Put him behind the wheel of a bus, however, and you soon discover that deep down, in the recesses of his heart, he has the soul of Richard Petty with a touch of Mario Andretti for flavor.

I would trust Antonio with my life and have done so on several occasions. So while I traveled along in comfort and peace with him at the helm, others found the experience a bit disconcerting. It was always a blast to watch the expressions and hear the gasps from the first-time missionaries when first they set foot on his bus. I think it would be fair to say that their prayer life was improved because of the experience.

Other than a good-looking girl crossing his path, I didn't think there was anything that would slow him down, but on one of my last trips to Panama, I discovered something that slowed even Antonio down a bit. It was a pothole like no other pothole before or since.

Somewhere along the road between Vulcan, where we stayed, and Puerto Armuelles, where we worked, there was a vast expanse of nothingness through which we had to pass. When that angry black hole came into sight, even Antonio would come to a complete stop. Then he would meticulously work his way through the expanse until we were safe on the other side. Quickly thereafter, he would slam us back in our seats, and we would be off again.

It is difficult to see the countryside, much less the people of a place, while you are transitioning into light speed. But slow it down a bit, and it is amazing what happens.

I am one who likes to keep my window open while on a bus. I like the fresh air, and I like to hear, smell and experience the country. So when we came to this pothole, I was able to hear and see outside once the dust settled.

It was on the third crossing of the pothole, as we were heading to Puerto Armuelles from Vulcan to start our second day, when I heard the voice of a little girl quietly say, "Hola." As I looked closer, I noticed that a little piece off the road there was a mud-sided, thatched-roofed hut, and standing on the makeshift porch was a little girl of 4 or 5. She had been playing hard that morning and was dusty from head to toe. In return I mouthed "Hola" to her and waved, and she ran back into the house as fast as she could, terrified of the bearded gringo on the bus.

The next morning when we stopped, she was there again, and once again I heard the "Hola."

This time I just smiled and waved, and before she thought about it her little hand went up and waved back, just before she bolted.

To shorten the story, by the end of the

trip our greeting had gone from "Hola" to "Buenos Dias," and on our final pothole crossing, I will never forget the sight of that smiling little girl standing on that rickety old porch watching and waving for all she was worth until we were out of sight.

I will cherish the memory of that little girl and the brief friendship we shared for the rest of my life. It was one of those precious gifts of God that we receive from time to time.

Only God could throw together a relatively well-off preacher and a little girl in abject poverty and allow them to realize that under it all we are the same. We all need a smile and a wave and the love of a neighbor, even the love of a scary looking gringo.

And to think it was all made possible by a pothole.

It has been a long year, hasn't it? Last spring, things seemed so calm, almost sleepy. We were all getting ready for the Easter season, thinking—in my case—that it would be like all of the other 61 Easter seasons of my life: a time of blessing and family. I expected that it would be a time to remember the Lord and his wonderful love and a time to take a look inside and clean up a bit.

We were looking forward to a time of renewal and refreshment as we settled nonchalantly into another year, and then we hit a pothole called COVID-19. And instead of just fixing the pothole, the powers that be decided to tear things up and repave the entire highway. Hindsight is always 20/20 though, so I'll cut the powers that be a little slack on this one. One way or the other, it has been a doozy of a year. I can hear the amen chorus warming up as I speak.

For many this has been a year of hardship and for some a year of tragedy and sorrow. For others it has merely been an inconvenience, but for all of us I daresay that this past year has affected us in more ways than we realize right now.

One of those ways may be that the fragility of life and the transient nature of time have been made clear, and with that clarity a certain foreboding has cast a shadow over your spirit. Perhaps the words of the psalmist have begun to ring true in your life: "Man is like a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow" (Psalm 144:4 NIV).

If this is your condition, find hope. When Christ stepped from the tomb, he brought with him a new paradigm in which life is no longer fragile, but eternal; and time is no longer transient, but nonexistent for the believer. There is no death, nor are there timepieces in a new life with Christ.

Rely upon your Savior. Know that no matter how uncertain the times or difficult the road, Christ has been there before you and will see you through safely to the other side.

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 <https://advocatesc.org/books>



View from the Pews

by Clara Hodges McFadden

Grieving during a pandemic

Coronavirus, or COVID-19 as it is more commonly known, has caused a degree of fear, sadness and death over the last 21 months. People are fearful for their lives, and death now seems to come more frequently.

Grief is defined as deep sorrow, especially when it comes to death. According to the Center for Disease Control, more than 800,000 have lost their lives from COVID-19 alone. That's an incredible number, and it continues to rise every day.

Our Ruffin Parish community has suffered from COVID deaths at an alarming rate. To have one person in a family pass away is difficult enough, but when the number is three or four within a two-week period, it's devastating!

We live every day and truly only die once, but just the thought of death to us all is frightening. We've gone from in-church funeral services to either services being held in the chapels of funeral homes or graveside services. Families are unable to gather as they normally would, and it can really take a toll on everyone involved.

Vaccinations are the key. Think about how we all had to be vaccinated in order to attend school years ago and even in today's society. And once you started school, most of those vaccines had to be repeated for the prevention of childhood diseases or conditions.

COVID-19 is a pandemic that has fully consumed us. It has caused us to quarantine, wear masks when we're out and socially distance. Even with all of that, there is still some resistance.

We must continue to emphasize the importance of being vaccinated so that we can all get back to a routine of not having to wear masks and take the other precautions in-hand. Family gatherings, traveling and going to restaurants have all had to be put on hold while we're trying to figure out how we're going to get past this.

Philippians 4:6 says, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Prayer is the key to all things. We must continue to ask God to hear our prayer and heal the land and His people.

Psalms 4:1 says, "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress: have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer."

With prayer we must also be obedient, not only to God but to others around us. If you do make a decision to travel and visit restaurants, etc., let's be mindful when being asked to wear our masks and be socially distant when entering these establishments.

It's for your safety as well as everyone else's.

McFadden is a member of the Ruffin Parish in the Walterboro District.



View from the Pews

by Bill Barnier

Restless

Id worked until midnight, climbed into bed about one, then tossed and turned until five. I couldn't clear my mind of upcoming financial matters, my wife's upcoming oral surgery and the thousands of what-ifs that come from the uncertainty in life. I went to my study and brooded.

Not long after my wife arose, I joined her for coffee, then proceeded to ruin her peaceful morning by venting about something unkind without hooking my mouth to the kindness filter. I guess we silently agreed to wait for the grumpy in me to abate before I really messed things up.

Later in the morning, two men came to pick up a freezer I was donating, and their kindness and caring attitude were remarkable and refreshing, the practice of God's teaching evident in them. On my way to work, I stopped to make a deposit at the local rubbish tip, where I was again greeted with a friendly smile and an offer to assist me. About 30 minutes later I stopped at the grocery store for a few items, as I often do on my way to work. In the parking lot I was given right of way to a parking spot right up front, while the other shopper took a spot down the row. At check out, the workers were friendly and helpful, even happily offering to wheel my three small bags to the truck. At work, another employee held the door for me, offering a smile and a happy holiday greeting.

As I settled into my workspace, the Holy Spirit yelled at me. "You awoke cranky and tired because you worry about things you can't control. I've shown you today, through the love in the hearts of eight strangers, how I expect you to act. Their troubles are as great as yours, but you forgot who's in charge. They have not!"

I quickly sent a message to my wife tell-

ing her of my lesson as an apology for my behavior. Her reply was simply a heart, and I was humbled.

Scripture tells us that worry in any form is foolish and accomplishes nothing. When we retreat from the love and strength of the Holy Spirit we also lose touch with our anchor in the universe of our creator. We allow our selfish human nature to blame or hurt others, forgetting how it feels when others do the same to us. Being unkind to others is not a lesson of God, but an outward reflection of our own inner insecurity.

In our world today there is great cause for concern. People are wandering away from the love and guidance God has given them in favor of quick and easy reward without consequence. The poison of greed and power leaves emptiness where love and respect should flourish. Empty churches, failing schools, children without guidance and adults lacking responsibility for their actions all contribute to a world of stress and uncertainty.

Yet we still have the love and grace of the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen us. We still have the core knowledge of right and wrong, selflessness instead of selfishness, forever engraved upon our souls.

Weakness of character is a poor display of God's image within us. We must restore the incredible knowledge and abilities we all have in us to rise above the negatives we create and let the light of the Holy Spirit shine brightly, to guide, heal and nurture us.

In the words of one of the few hymns I like; "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me."

Aho.

Barnier attends St. Paul United Methodist Church, Ridgeland.

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Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Ed Traxler Jr.

Epiphanies

On Christmas Eve, the Barnwell Charge hosted a reenactment of the Christmas story inside the Barnwell United Methodist Church sanctuary with adults and children participating in a service remembering the birth of Jesus in a Bethlehem stable.

Everyone held a candle while watching the actors and listening to the Scriptures, which provided a calm, inspiring peace that helped people relive Christmas times in the past, understanding that while times have changed, Christmas has not.

Maybe, if just for a moment, everyone experienced a feeling of peace, all because we experienced a silent and holy night while a quiet and peaceful baby laid in a manger for everyone to see.

All who were present in the Barnwell sanctuary and on Facebook Live, as with others present in other sanctuaries throughout this entire world, found peace through an epiphany from God.

Sometimes, maybe we should all take heed to recent and not-so recent occurrences in our lifetimes that may be seen as direct signs from God, changing our own lives or even the lives of others. These same visions or dreams may be coming from God as an epiphany for us to change our own way of living, such as an epiphany from God that led me to begin changing my own lifestyle.

At 2:45 a.m. on Friday, Jan. 12, 1990, God spoke softly, gently and lovingly: "My son, you've lived according to your own will; now, it's time for you to live by my own will." I remember in detail this message from God in a dream—an actual epiphany I will never forget. Immediately, I began changing the way I had been living my entire life. I knew it was time.

Isaiah, as with most prophets, used dreams, visions or direct commands from God to give foresight, either good or bad, to God's chosen people. One such epiphany occurred around 734 BCE, leading the prophet to write in Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel."

We have just experienced, once again, the season of giving and receiving of gifts, celebrating God's gift to all, a savior who is Christ the Lord.

And during the Advent and Christmas seasons, we enjoy angels and shepherds, along with stables and sheep, Joseph and Mary, not to forget mangers with babies, either real or not so real, representing the Christ child.

As we settle into the Season of Epiphany, let us all try to remember a time when the Lord actually spoke to us, in the spur of a moment or even in a dream. Epiphany refers to dreams involving a divine or supernatural imagery that may present a significant message for you, the dreamer. And, unlike most dreams, an epiphany will remain in your memory, never to be forgotten!

Many of us forget what we dream upon awakening from sleep, and for me this is true.

In light of the Season of Epiphany, let us remember its significance in regard to God's Holy Word.

Biblically, Epiphany concerns the later visit of the three wise men with the infant Jesus whose parents had been warned by a messenger of God to flee Herod's wrath and go to Egypt. These same three men experienced a similar epiphany to refrain from returning to Herod's court once the messiah had been found.

Epiphanies are evidence of the reality of God's love and God's purpose for us all. For



Barnwell UMC's Live Nativity helped the Christmas story come to life.



For the young and the older, the nativity gave a broader horizon to the manifestation of an epiphany.

example, in Matthew 1, an epiphany came in a dream to Joseph concerning Mary and her unborn child who was to be the Son of God. And Mary's in-person epiphany with the Angel Gabriel, in Luke's Gospel, he blessed her with the message of being "favored by God to bear and give birth to God's Son." Even three wise men named Melchior, Balthazar and Caspar all had the same epiphany leading them to study and eventually follow a distant star on a very distant journey that led them to a messiah prophesied by Isaiah.

Advent, thusly, is all about an epiphany, whether it's a dream, a small audible voice or a vision.

And Christmas is all about the everlasting dreams, small voices and visions serving as reminders that God loves us so much that "God gave his only begotten son," whose name is Jesus.

I pray for the Holy Spirit living inside of every one of God's children, worldwide, to enhance our lives in a way that we pursue each day seeking love, hope, peace and mercy longing for grace through an epiphany from God.

Traxler pastors the Barnwell Charge.



Reflections

by Deborah Len

A tug at the heart

Once again, Lucas was frustrated. He took his sketchbook and threw it on the ground, got up from his chair and stomped all over it, and then he stormed off.

The people in the room with him looked at him and just shook their heads.

They knew Lucas got frustrated very easily and so very often. None of them were quite sure about Lucas. What had happened in his life that caused him to be so easily frustrated? They all knew to stay out of his way. A few of the young people at the shelter were pretty sure that one day Lucas was going to cross a line.

He was so focused on what he had to have—his nicotine fixes, his caffeine fixes and his salty snacks and sometimes his drugs. Some of these seem pretty tame.

But the issue was Lucas only had \$1 in his sweaty hand when he exploded into the corner convenience store. He was not leaving empty handed tonight! That one driving thought propelled him. He had gone beyond reasoning.

Lucas was so focused on his cravings that even though there was plenty of food at the shelter where he lived, he didn't pay attention to the fact that there was somebody else in that convenience store at 2 o'clock in the morning. It just happened to be a police officer. Once the gun was fired, Lucas was in cuffs and now he sits in jail.

It's 3 in the morning on a Tuesday. Lucas is 14. Today is his birthday.

The officer's name is Martha. Martha grew up in that neighborhood. She knew what it was like and how easy it was for kids to get lost. Martha had been a schoolteacher. At a Bible study years ago, Martha heard God nudging her to do more for the children in her community. She decided that she wanted to be a peace officer. That's what she called herself: a peace officer.

Her decision at 40 years old to go to the police academy took a lot of physical effort on her part. God was with her every painful step of the way. It seems her faith overcame any of her fears about this radical life change at 40.

For some unseen reason Lucas tugged at her heart.

You can guess the way this story's going to go.

It took five long years, and she had never given up. Not one time did her faith in God waver. She knew this young man was a child of God and one day he would do great things for the kingdom. Martha visited Lucas in prison regularly. She prayed over him. Some days he would not even look at her. Some days he spewed vulgar obscenities at her. She never gave up. She sought God for all her decisions about Lucas.

The rules in her home were simple. Someone could stay there as long as they wanted. They had to keep a job. No drugs, no alcohol, no guns. And they had to go to church regularly.

After five long years, this was the moment. Martha was outside to pick up Lucas on his release day. He thought he would be going back to the shelter. However, he was now 19 and could not stay there any longer.

Martha offered him a solution. He humbly lowered his head and said he would be honored to stay at her home. Lucas had accepted Jesus in his heart. They both cried and hugged so long people started to stare. They did not care. Lucas was going home!

Once a troubled young person, Lucas is now part owner in an auto repair shop called Inspired Repairs. He designed the logo and the business cards. Sure, he still gets frustrated. But now he takes a breath and asks for Jesus to help him.

God never gives up! God never stops loving us! God never fails.

Sometimes we decide we can do it on our own. We allow our wants to overrule our simple needs. But even if we had bad parents who were not loving and caring, it doesn't matter. At some point we must decide to trust God fully with every fiber of our being and know that we are wonderfully and frightfully made. We are the clay that God molds and builds—as long as we trust him with everything that he made us to be.

Author's note: This short story was inspired from Psalm 139:13-14 and Psalm 23:6.

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

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GBHEM recognizes SMC professor with Exemplary Teaching Award

SPARTANBURG—Long-time Spartanburg Methodist College music professor, Dr. Lanny Lanford, was recognized by his peers for his dedication to his students and craft as they selected him as the 2021 recipient of the Exemplary Teaching Award.

“To be chosen as the recipient of this award is deeply humbling, to say the least. ‘Exemplary Teaching’ has been a requirement of us all this year,” Lanford said. “Many years ago, I became aware of the desire to make a difference in the lives of college students. I had answered a call to ministry, which took the form of music ministry, but after only a few years, that call shifted over to teaching and conducting.”

The honor is a part of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church. Each year, the GBHEM’s school members select one faculty member who exemplifies excellence in teaching, civility and concern for students, the institution and the community.

Fellow faculty recognized Dr. Lanford for his hard work to continue to provide music courses and maintaining the SMC chorus throughout the pandemic. He thoroughly researched, planned and executed a choral program that was safe and enriching for students.

“Through it all, Dr. Lanford maintained his commitment to the safety of the students and his work with helping students grow as individuals and as singers,” said Dr. Kris Pratt, religion professor and chair of the



Dr. Lanny Lanford was selected by GBHEM as the 2021 recipient of the Exemplary Teaching Award.

Department of Humanities at SMC. “There were certainly bumps along the way, but through it all, Dr. Lanford continued to care for his students, to think of new ways to accomplish the goals of the course and to adapt on the fly when necessary.”

Interim Provost Kris Neely also praised Dr. Lanford’s commitment to his craft as both an educator and musician.

Lanford started at SMC in 2011 after stints as the Minister of Music at several churches, choral directorships, composer in residence posts, and music professorships at a number of colleges. His list of awards and accolades speaks to his commitment to music. He has 33 published compositions and has composed music for films and an e-book.



Guest Commentary

by Fletcher Carter

Visiting and the church

“And I say unto you, that you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

Today are the gates of hell prevailing against the church in the name of viruses and the lack of concern? “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and the son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 16:19-20).

The church has faced a lot in the last few years, and I am sure it may have become discouraged; now it is time for a new vision. We need to lead the church in redefining God’s purpose for its life and ministry.

The church must define its history, where its members live and the community in which it is located. What are its population and its racial makeup? What are the community’s ages, genders and marital statuses? Its faith relationship?

The most powerful step in the process is to answer the question, “What is God’s purpose for our church today?” The next step is to write a purpose statement that can be reported to the church’s membership.

Then based upon the discoveries, we should write action goals that answer these question: What is to be done? Who will do it? For whom will it be done? When will

it be done? And to what extent will it be done?

This package should then be reported to the church council for a decision to be made for carrying it out.

Since joining the CCOM staff, I have worked all across the country helping the church become a more effective center of Christian ministry. When asked what does God look like, I tell people to look at the church.

Every person who joins the church brings to the church gifts and needs. When the church helps these people develop their gifts to meet the needs of the church’s membership, the church develops its story.

Every church has a story that is lived out every day in the life of the church and its community. When the church’s story is effective in changing the lives of its members and the lives of its community, it will grow in membership and will have the financial support to meet the needs of the community.

Pastors are the key person in the church to set these action goals and get them approved.

They must be the spiritual leader in building the story and encouraging the laity to live the story.

Carter is a retired diaconal minister of the South Carolina Conference and an active member of Virginia Wingard Memorial UMC, West Columbia.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Steve Brown

The Mystery

He stood on the edge and looked down and waited.
How long had He been waiting?
Did it seem like the blink of an eye ... or an eternity?
The sounds of heaven echoed in His ears
“Holy, Holy, Holy” round the throne,
the Song of Creation ringing out.

The blur of angels’ wings caught the corner of His eye
their beating, moving, to and fro, here and there, ever faithful,
ever obedient, ever about His will.

His eyes looking forward, His back to all behind Him,
yet He could still feel

the pulse of Love, the heat of Holiness, the weight of Glory ... and His Presence!

One step and it was all over. One step and it would all begin. One step.
And He waited.

Waiting for the word as He had a creation

“Let there be light!”—and the Light of the World made light!

“Let there be life!”—and the Life made life!

Heaven still within His reach. The earth waiting just before Him.

Waiting, wanting, wishing, willing, promising, purposing, powering,
emptying, obeying, loving, waiting.

Waiting for the words to all be spoken

to Adam, Abraham, Jacob, Judah, Moses, Joshua, Israel,
to David, Elijah, Hezekiah, Zechariah ... and Mary;
through Jacob, Balaam, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah,
through Ezekiel, Joel, Micah, Zechariah, Daniel, and Malachi;
in Heaven, in Eden, in Ur, in Canaan, in Egypt, on Sinai,
in Israel, in Babylon, in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Galilee.

The Word of God spoken now waits for the speaking and the sending,
the calling and the naming, the sound and the hearing.

Waiting ...

Now comes the Word—

let it be unto me according to your word

Now comes the Word—

you shall call Him Jesus for He will save the people from their sins

Now He leaves and now He arrives—

Yet, how many steps does it take from Heaven to reach Earth?

Does He hold His breath as plunges from Heaven
or does He breathe it all in as He enters the earth?

Eternity stops as His time begins,

The Infinite now contained within the womb of a woman

The Word of God now silent ... until a baby’s cry.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ... God with us.

Brown pastors St. Mark United Methodist Church, Greenwood.

Homework club led by Wofford students earns national recognition

By Robert W. Dalton

SPARTANBURG—The first time Jacqueline Hansen met the students she would be working with in an after-school homework club, she was hooked.

“I just fell in love with it,” says Hansen, a sociology and anthropology major at Wofford College from Clover. “The kids are always so happy and eager to learn. When I go there, even if I’ve had a bad day, they just make everything better.”

The clubs meet twice weekly at two Spartanburg Housing apartment complexes, Prince Hall and Camp Croft Courts. Wofford students assist elementary and middle school students in completing their homework assignments.

“We’re trying to bridge gaps and provide educational opportunities,” Hansen says. “We want to make sure the kids don’t get left behind.”

The clubs have received national recognition, earning Spartanburg Housing a 2021 National Award of Merit in the resident and client services category during the 2021 National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials Online National Conference and Exhibition.

The clubs got their start as a project during the 2019-2020 academic year through Wofford’s sustainability seminar led by Dr. Alysa Handelsman, assistant professor of sociology and anthropology. The seminar is part of Wofford’s Milliken Sustainability Initiative.

Wofford graduate Alex Hill and Cierra Fowler, Spartanburg Housing’s director of resident services and community engagement, partnered to design the club. Hill and her partner in the class, Carlyle O’Herron, also a Wofford graduate, went door-to-door conducting surveys and led a focus group to get input from the community.

“We did a lot of research, but we didn’t want to come in and say this is what we think would be best for you,” says Hill, who is in her first year of law school at Campbell University. “We spent a lot of time working with teachers at Cleveland Academy and parents in the community to make sure we provided something they wanted and could use.”

They launched the first club at Victoria Gardens in February 2020. They held sessions twice each week until March, when the COVID-19 pandemic shut everything down.

“That was just so devastating,” Hill says. “Not only was I not going to get to see the kids anymore, but I knew they needed the homework club more than ever with everything going online.”

Fowler also worried about the impact of online learning. She thought it was imperative to revive the club as students returned to in-person classes. Wofford students were more than happy to help.

Sarah Buckmaster, a Wofford sociology and anthropology major from Simpsonville, began volunteering in September, and she wants to expand programming.

“We want to get the students involved in extracurricular activities like sports, arts and crafts, drama lessons and life-building skills,” Buckmaster says. “We want to build their confidence so they can learn to be leaders at a young age.”

Handelsman also is looking for new opportunities, including linking the homework clubs with a food-sharing program and implementing a chef’s club that offers kid-friendly recipes.

“This type of multilayered programming demonstrates how homework club continues to evolve and grow with new ideas and initiatives,” Handelsman says. “It shows the depth of student engagement and collaboration in designing and implementing meaningful programming with long-lasting impacts on everyone involved.”



Guest Commentary

by Dr. Phil Thrailkill

Does the UMC have a faithful, defensible sex ethic?

What a church officially confesses, teaches and guards is its doctrine, and here Jaroslav Pelikan's definition is apt: doctrine is "what the church of Jesus Christ believes, teaches, and confesses on the basis of the Word of God."

The church is a training camp for disciples. Our curriculum is our body of teaching as grounded in Scripture, enacted in worship and lived out in love of God and neighbor. Our mission is to spread the fame of Jesus that all may have an opportunity to enter a healed relationship with the Triune God.

While many still invoke the myth that we are not a confessional church, United Methodists have a body of five texts from which we develop a wide range of faithful teaching. We are a confessing church with genuine content. Scripture is primary, and our doctrinal base is textually fixed.

Our Constitution protects five texts. The Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith express the faith of the early church and later Protestant Reformation and provide resources for preaching and Bible study. The standard "Sermons of John Wesley" and his "Explanatory Notes on the New Testament" provide insight into Wesleyan soteriology, including our doctrines of grace. The General Rules provide a concrete picture of the Christian life.

These texts are our Constitutional Standards and all but inviolate.

Those who wish to change our sexual ethic know it's not the place to start because of its traditional nature, its defense of Scripture as the norm for "faith and practice" (CF, Article 4) and the support found in Wesley's notes on Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Ephesians 5:1-11, and 1 Timothy 1:8-11, as well as Sermon 38, "A Caution Against Bigotry." They must choose other battlefields, especially at the next tier of official—but not constitutionally protected—teaching.

The second level is a cluster of contemporary statements in our *Book of Discipline 2016*. They are subject to change at each General Conference, but it is clear that sections of the *Discipline* (Part III: 1. "Our Doctrinal Heritage," 2. "Our Doctrinal History," 3. "Our Theological Task," Part IV: "The Ministry of All Christians, Part V: "Social Principles," Part VI.7.2.2702, "Chargeable Offenses" and *The Book of Resolutions 2016*), as well as several other scattered paragraphs, have authority as current teaching. (On the three levels of United Methodist teaching, see Scott Jones, "United Methodist Doctrine: The Extreme Center," p. 33-68.) It is at this level that most of our teaching on sexuality is found and upon which the debate centers.

A third level is our Hymnal and Book of Worship. The adage is that "belief shapes worship, and worship shapes belief." Worship is where our convictions as a church get into our hearts and hands. Because the debate over marriage includes our liturgies, this also is a disputed arena.

Now that we understand our sources, the question remains, "Does The United Methodist Church have a faithful, defensible sex ethic?"

This requires us to revisit the three tiers of teaching.

The Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith contribute basic assumptions. The Triune God is the maker of the good creation, including male and female image bearers (AR, Article 1; CF, Article 1). But all are corrupted by the distorting powers of sin and rebellion with a bent towards evil as a deep inclination (AR, Article 7; CF, Article 7). This includes our sexual capacities.

The common appeal to creation—"This is how God made me"—must be nuanced by an accounting of the devastating effects of sin on all our capacities (see Timothy C. Tennent, "For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body," p. 31-32). No simple appeal to creation is adequate, but only a "created good, but now fallen" tension that holds Genesis 1-2 and 3 together. The tragedies, brokenness and vices of the fallen world may not be attributed to the goodness of creation fresh from the hand of God but to our deception, treason, distortions, and their effect on

all relationships.

The incarnation of God the Son in Jesus, including his words and works and climaxing in death and resurrection, is God's action to reclaim the whole person and eventually all creation (AR, Article 2, 3; CF, Article 2, 12). Jesus attended weddings, defended marriage against casual dissolution, called himself a bridegroom and spoke of the vices of fornication, adultery and all forms of flagrant immorality (licentiousness) as evil impulses that, when acted out, render us morally polluted (Mk. 7:14-23). Jesus was a voluntary celibate but did not make it a condition of discipleship. Compulsory celibacy is not required of our clergy, who may marry at their discretion "to serve best to godliness" (AR, Article 21).

Our doctrine of sanctification in the direction of mature love holds out the promise of substantial freedom from the powers of sin and evil, including sexual vices and their reduction of persons to objects and commodities (CF, Article 11). That our General Rules with its lists of prohibitions does not include sexual vices likely indicates, in light of Wesley's other teachings, that they were assumed as out of bounds and so not listed.

It is at the level of contemporary statements that our most detailed teaching is found, most particularly in the "Social Principles" (161C. "Marriage," G. "Human Sexuality," I. "Sexual Abuse," J. "Sexual Harrassment," P. "Sexual Assault," Q. "Pornography"). Summarizing this deposit is difficult, but the most basic affirmation is that sex and gender are God's good gifts to all, whether or not persons are married. Sexual relations are affirmed only within monogamous, heterosexual marriage, thus polygamy, polyamory, adultery, cohabitation, hook-ups, homosexual practice and all other variances are "incompatible with Christian teaching" (BOD:113), as is pornography and sexual harassment, including commercial exploitation.

God resists all practices that damage those crafted in the divine image. Jesus Christ must be Lord over all our appetites and bring them under his graced supervision. The casualties of the sexual revolution are all around us in rampant sexually transmitted diseases, millions of convenience abortions, the degrading of male/female relations, ever-more bizarre practices and the increasing mockery of marriage as the best venue for full, loving sexual expression and the rearing of children.

A clarification is necessary here. Ours is not a general sex ethic for the culture, nor are we trying to enforce standards on those who do not share our faith, be they secular or searching, deist or polytheist, the open hedonist or the growing numbers of the church alumni association who've moved on to something more in tune with the times, even if still found in our pews on occasion or making pastoral appointments.

Ours is a true, loving and wise teaching for disciples of Jesus Christ. It is contrary to fallen human nature and its unruly impulses, so we must expect struggle and call for compassion. It only makes sense from the inside, once you surrender the self to the risen Jesus and learn his holy, happy ways in our book and among his people. Ours is a healing minority report, a genuine alternative.

In the sections of the *Discipline* on Ordained Ministry, the epigram "fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness" is used three times (BOD: 226, 231, 269), and the list of chargeable offenses is expanded to "immorality including, but not limited to, not being celibate in singleness or not faithful in heterosexual marriage" (BOD: 788-789). It is instructive to compare the current list of chargeable offenses for clergy and laity with the shorter lists prior to 1972. Of the 12 for clergy, five are now sexual offenses, and for laity, four of 11.

As the culture experiments with sexual license and the church notes the casualties of misconduct, harassment and pornography inside our fold, the lists must be frequently updated.

The five chapters in *The Book of Resolutions 2016* dealing with sexual ethics ("Response Team Ministry for Sexual

Misconduct," "Sexual Misconduct with the Ministerial Relationship," "Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the UMC and Society," "Sexual Ethics as Integral Part of Formation for Ministerial Leadership," "Pornography and Sexual Violence") may be read as extended footnotes on relevant materials in the "Social Principles" and "Chargeable Offenses." Their aim is faithful implementation, not the creation of new or different teaching.

The third level in our doctrinal system is our worship practices, particularly "A Service of Christian Marriage," which begins with a greeting that is brief and elegant and summarizes what Scripture teaches. It refers to the Creation account in its phrase, "who created us male and female for each other." It later refers to Jesus' example of sacrificial love as the model "for the love of husband and wife." The binary of "husband and wife" occurs three other times in the service. In addition, three of the six hymns under the heading of "Marriage" make explicit reference to "man and woman" (No. 642) or to "husband, wife" (No. 643, 647).

Our wedding service reflects our teaching. It does not say other arrangements do not legally exist, only that this is the only valid one available to followers of Jesus in our denomination.

A close review of our doctrinal materials indicates clearly that the answer is, "Yes, the UMC does have a faithful sex ethic that is a coherent expression of our doctrines and defensible as binding on all professing members." Our failure is not that we do not have the teaching; it's that we largely have failed to offer it as part of a life-giving call to discipleship in the modern world. We have lost our theological and moral nerve. We have been internally secularized, and it's showing.

The reason our church will soon divide is over an ethical issue concerning our teaching on human sexuality. The current position is "traditional," if that means continuity with the apostolic tradition across time. In another sense it is "radical" because of the way it stands over against the erotic obsessions of our culture. What could be more out of step than our crisp, official summary of "celibacy in singleness and fidelity in heterosexual marriage," meaning that all the creative ways of not keeping this norm are "incompatible" with being a follower of Jesus?

We have a comprehensive sexual ethic and not just an isolated teaching on homosexual practice and same-sex unions. Our conflict is with progressive leaders who refuse to abide by our teaching and intend to scrub a new *Book of Discipline* clean of its understandings and prohibitions. With that erasure, a layer of the apostolic tradition will have been banished from our churches.

Our teaching is undermined from within, and the challenge is unapologetic: "The church is bigoted, mean, and we have a better way based on new revelations in science and experience." All erotic impulses are now equally blessable, with consent and the age of consent the only limit.

British Methodists recently approved same-sex marriage and made cohabitation without marriage an acceptable practice for church members by an 85 percent majority. Shacking is now sacred; making promises with your body you do not keep with your life is now blessable. "I am yours, but only until my personal growth requires a new partner."

Of 600,000 members 30 years ago, only 164,000 British Methodists remain today. Our mother church is hemorrhaging and will die, the cut being made with her own hand. What the Bible terms fornication or immorality and warns against because it damages people, they now treat as an adult freedom compatible with the faith. They have merged with the culture as its smiling, non-judgmental chaplains.

All that will be left is a Methodist Board of Trust managing abandoned real estate. Reduce the faith, and you will be reduced. The coming schism will free part of our church to follow our British friends into increasing folly and decline. It will free another to repent and recover the work of discipleship without current distractions.

What is lost may yet be found again!

Claflin to host virtual Granville Hicks Leadership Academy for Laity and Clergy

ORANGEBURG—On Jan. 27-28, Claflin University will host the 30th Annual Granville Hicks Leadership Academy for Laity and Clergy.

Themed "The Black Church: This is My Story, This is My Song," this event equips laity and clergy for ministry and leadership within the church.

Because of the pandemic, the academy will take place via Zoom.

Special guests for this year's conference include Rev. Zach-

ary Dillard, pastor of St. Mark United Methodist Church, North; Rev. Dr. Sheila Elliott Hodge, pastor of Silver Hill Memorial UMC, Spartanburg; and Rev. Dr. Allison Gise Johnson, associate professor of chemistry at Claflin University.

The Granville Hicks Leadership Academy honors Dr. Granville A. Hicks, a 1957 Claflin graduate who has been recognized for his leadership as a pastor and district superintendent in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Hicks was instrumental in creating programs to improve race relations, education and leadership development at the conference. It began as a lecture series before evolving into a leadership academy that emphasizes connections between the academy, Claflin University and the UMC. The event empowers attendees with biblical knowledge, intellectual growth and theological reflection. Registration is \$75.

To register for the conference, visit <https://alumni.claflin.edu/2022-granville-hicks-lecture-series>.

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 one, email jbrodie@umcsc.org.



Eagle Scout honored

New Light UMC, Orangeburg, gained and recognized its 14th Eagle Scout through Troop 500 of the Boy Scouts. From left are the Rev. Enrique Gordon, pastor; Ron Moseley, senior Scout master; Jamavie Glover, Eagle Scout; Leon Waymyers, assistant Scout master; and McArthur Lewis, president of the church's United Methodist Men.

Revolution Jan. 29 to require youth comply with COVID protocols

COLUMBIA—Youth across South Carolina will participate in Revolution 2022 Jan. 29, though they will be required to adhere to COVID-19 protocols.

Held at Township Auditorium in Columbia, Revolution will be held all in one day beginning at 9:30 a.m. and ending by 9 p.m. This will allow all churches in South Carolina to make it a day trip (if they choose) and to make this the most affordable Revolution ever.

The worship leader will be Stars Go Dim with the Rev. Samuel Yun (known as P. Sam) as speaker.

The COVID-19 protocols established by the Revolution Design Team align with the conference's current COVID-19 Best Practices (see Page 6).

All adult leaders are asked to monitor their groups to ensure they adhere to the following:

- All eligible participants are encouraged to be vaccinated and boosted;
- Masks will be required at all times for all participants while inside Township Auditorium. Please wear masks properly, covering both nose and mouth;
- To help with social distancing, groups are expected to sit as a group while in the auditorium, keeping at least three seats and two rows between one group and another group; and
- If anyone in a group shows COVID-19 symptoms less than five days prior to Revolution, they are asked to remain at home to reduce the chance of exposing others. If an attendee cannot come because of COVID, the ticket price will be refunded.

Learn more at <http://scmyp.org>.



Lemonade from lemons

When the youth ski trip to Winterplace didn't go as planned when the slopes did not open, the youth made the best of it anyway. The youth group from Manning UMC, Manning, went to a park, played on the playground and tried to sled, also entertaining themselves with indoor games, movies and good fellowship. Here is an image from the fun.

Global Briefs

Lenten anti-racism small group study available

WASHINGTON—“Faithful Lent: Connecting the Practices of Lent and Anti-racism” is a new Lenten resource for congregations to use in a small group setting. The purpose of the six-week study is to make explicit connections between the traditions of Lent and the work of anti-racism.

Church helps buy food truck for school district

GRAHAM, N.C.—First United Methodist Church of Graham has always helped its local school district by providing classroom supplies and clothing, but after reading an article about the difficulty of feeding students over the summer, the church had a big idea: Buy the district a food truck. The church collaborated with other local churches and individuals to raise the needed funds.

United Methodist Women names new director of reading program

NEW YORK—United Methodist Women today announced that Emily Jones, the organization's executive for racial justice, will lead its Reading Program. Jones succeeds Andris Salter who retired in December 2021. In her new capacity, Jones will further Salter and the organization's vision to promote diversity, inclusion, equity and antiracism.

Extending prayer, aid to Tonga after eruptions

WELLINGTON, New Zealand—United Methodists and other faith leaders are calling for prayer and aid for Tonga after a massive volcanic eruption and tsunami Jan. 15 wreaked significant damage on the archipelago. About 35 percent of the population is part of the Free Wesleyan Church, and The United Methodist Church has several Tongan congregations.

Vance promoted to operations director

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The Rev. Rick Vance has been appointed as operations director of United Methodist Men, replacing the retiring Martha Davis. Vance, an ordained elder from the Peninsula-Delaware Conference, has directed the Center for Men's Ministries for more than six years.

More than \$2 million in scholarships available

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The United Methodist Higher Education Foundation is accepting scholarship applications for the 2022-2023 academic year. Through March 1, United Methodist students are invited to apply for funds available to help pay for attending colleges, universities or seminaries related to The United Methodist Church.

Update aims to make Bible translation more accurate

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—One of the most popular Bible translations, the New Revised Standard Version, is getting an update. The new version is not a fresh translation but an update that modifies language, grammar and punctuation aimed at increasing its accuracy.

Free music offered for churches

LAKELAND, Fla.—The Florida Conference has put together the Worship Warehouse, a trove of free video material that churches can use to supplement their worship or midweek classes. There are about 100 items on the site now, but conference staff expects that number to grow as word spreads about what is available.

Scholarships available for unity workshop

WASHINGTON—The Council of Bishops is offering scholarships to seminary students and first-time attenders to participate in the National Workshop on Christian Unity and UMEIT: USA 2022. UMEIT: USA stands for United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Training in the USA. The national workshop is scheduled for May 3-6 in Anaheim, California.

Trailblazing Bishop Wilbur Choy dies at 103

SEATTLE—United Methodists remember Bishop Wilbur Choy, the denomination's first Asian American bishop, for helping the church grow more ethnically and racially diverse. He also had a great sense of humor. Choy died Dec. 28 at 103.

UMCom makes room for Publishing House

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Faced with pandemic-related financial challenges, the United Methodist Publishing House sold its building last year. Though most Publishing House employees are working from home, the agency has still needed office space, and it's getting that from United Methodist Communications. The Publishing House, which is self-supporting, reports on the mutual benefits of the partnership.

Bishops pay homage to Archbishop Tutu

WASHINGTON—United Methodist bishops joined the world in mourning the death of Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu, their Anglican colleague, who was buried Jan. 1 in Cape Town, South Africa. “In the midst of grief, we also celebrate the life of one who did not hesitate to use the Gospel to advocate for human rights,” said Bishops Cynthia Fierro Harvey and Sally Dyck in a statement. Harvey is Council of Bishops president, and Dyck is ecumenical officer. Retired Bishop Will Willimon also remembered when the archbishop visited Duke Chapel.

Preserving Black church history

MADISON, N.J.—The African American Methodist Heritage Center needs money and attention so it can continue to preserve the history of African American Methodists. The center is prioritizing fundraising in 2022 and considering a name change.

—Courtesy of the United Methodist News Service



From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

The beginning of the 1866 Conference

This summer marks the 50th anniversary of the merger of the 1785 and 1866 Annual Conferences into a new South Carolina Annual Conference. I'll be writing more about that later this spring.

Let's look back at how the 1866 Conference got its start in the aftermath of the Civil War and the emancipation of enslaved persons in our state.

At 9 on the morning of April 2, 1866, Bishop Osman C. Baker convened a meeting of the Methodist missionaries who were serving members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in South Carolina. These ministers were working among the state's recently emancipated people of color, and the bishop had convened them to create a new Annual Conference.

After a time of worship, Baker read a resolution of the previous General Conference that permitted the creation of missionary annual conferences. Fourteen clergy members became the first members of the new South Carolina Missionary Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The new conference covered South Carolina, Eastern Georgia and Florida and consisted of some 12 pastoral charges (seven in South Carolina, five in Florida).

This may have marked an official beginning, but many thousands of enslaved men and women had worshipped in South Carolina Methodist churches for 80 years or more. Before the Civil War, White clergy as well as African-American lay preachers and class leaders had brought the word, and often the balconies, or galleries, of Charleston's churches were filled with Black Methodists.

The Civil War brought a new chapter in that history, especially in the areas around Beaufort after the Union Army captured the Sea Islands in November 1861. There the first Northern Methodist missionaries came to serve the freedmen. In 1865, with the war over, both White and Black Methodists had to adjust to new circumstances.

White Methodists hoped and planned to resume the pre-war custom of White control of the church, with White parishioners sitting on the main floor of the sanctuaries and African-American Methodists sitting in the galleries. Property disputes abounded in Charleston, and attempts at compromise had faltered when an announcement of a settlement was to happen at Trinity Methodist.

There, before any decision had been rendered as to how the freedmen would be treated, the Rev. T. Willard Lewis rose and shouted, "Brothers and sisters, there will be no galleries in heaven, those who care to go with a church that makes no distinctions as to race or color, follow me to the Normal School at the corner of Beaufain and St. Philip Streets."

And from that point, South Carolina's African-American Methodists declared their independence.

The Revs. V. H. Bulkly and James R. Rosemond were the first Black clergy to lead congregations in the new conference. Rev. Bulkly served largely around Charleston, and Rev. Rosemond is remembered for founding numerous churches in York, Spartanburg, Greenville, Anderson and Oconee counties.

The *Advocate* of the 1860s did not report on these happenings. The Southern church's General Conference was meeting in New Orleans in April 1866, and the pages of the *Advocate* were full of the daily proceedings. But the *Advocate* did publish a number of opinion pieces from around the South that were critical of the northern missionaries who were working in the South. Many of the articles expressed bitterness over the way they felt they had been mistreated by the national government, and even somehow that the northern branch of Methodism had misrepresented their positions.

The shock and dismay around the end of an era would linger for generations among White Carolinians, but the creation of the 1866 Conference marked a new day dawning for Black Carolinians. They moved forward with a new hope and a sense of purpose and set about creating new institutions, such as the church, where they could lead a free people and create a new community.

Note: Much of the information in this column comes from Rev. Warren M. Jenkins' book "Steps Along the Way: The Origins and Development of the South Carolina Conference of the Central Jurisdiction," published in 1967.

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



Conference Historical Society

by Dr. Roger M. Gramling

Bishop Watkins and the first 'Columbia Area'

In recounting the history of South Carolina Methodism in the 20th century, the fact is frequently overlooked that there was a "Columbia Area" prior to the Columbia Area that came into existence in 1960 and that continues to this day.

The Plan of Union adopted in 1939 to create The Methodist Church included not only the "jurisdictional system" but also incorporated the "area system" for the new church, which had come into use earlier in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

In 1940, the "Columbia Area" was created in the Southeastern Jurisdiction. It comprised the South Carolina and the Upper South Carolina Conferences of the former Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The two conferences had been in the "Charlotte Area" the previous year.

The South Carolina Conference of the former Methodist Episcopal Church was placed in the newly created "Atlantic Coast Area" of the Central Jurisdiction. It had been in the "Atlanta Area" the previous year.

Bishop William Turner Watkins, who had been assigned to the Memphis, Mississippi and North Mississippi Conferences for 1939, was assigned to the newly created Columbia Area in 1940.

Watkins was born May 26, 1895, in Maysville, Georgia. He married Frances Edith Hancock on Jan. 21, 1914. They had five children. He joined the North Georgia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1914, and served several pastoral appointments in North Georgia. However, he was destined for the classroom, not the parish.

In 1926 he received a Ph. B. degree from Emory University and went on to study at the University of Edinburgh and at the Yale Divinity School. He became Professor of Church History in the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in 1930 and also served as editor of the Wesleyan Christian Advocate for four years during

the 1930s. His book, "Out of Aldersgate," published in 1937 by the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had wide appeal across the church and no doubt added to his being considered for the episcopacy.

The 1938 General Conference of the ME Church, South, the last general conference of the Church, South prior to unification, elected seven persons to the episcopacy. Watkins was the last of the seven to be elected. Thus, he was the last bishop to be elected by the Church, South. He was assigned to the work in Missouri for that year, then to the Atlanta Area the next year, although his conferences were in Mississippi and Tennessee, then to the new Columbia Area in 1940. His residence was on Sims Avenue in Columbia, near Epworth Children's Home. He held the sessions of the conference in Florence, Bennettsville, Bishopville and Sumter during his four years in South Carolina.

Watkins was primarily a scholar. Bishop Roy H. Short notes that his personality was "marked by both the scholar's brooding and to some extent the scholar's forgetfulness." While gracious, he was not given to "casual fellowship" and "kept largely to himself." He was primarily an intellectual and a progressive in his social consciousness.

In 1944, Watkins was assigned to the Louisville Area, which included the Kentucky and Louisville conferences, where he served effectively for the next 16 years concentrating especially in church extension. The South Carolina and Upper South Carolina Conferences were returned to the Charlotte Area, and the Columbia Area was discontinued, not to reappear until 1960.

Watkins died on Feb. 6, 1961, at age 65, not long after his retirement for health reasons. He is buried in Louisville, Kentucky.

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



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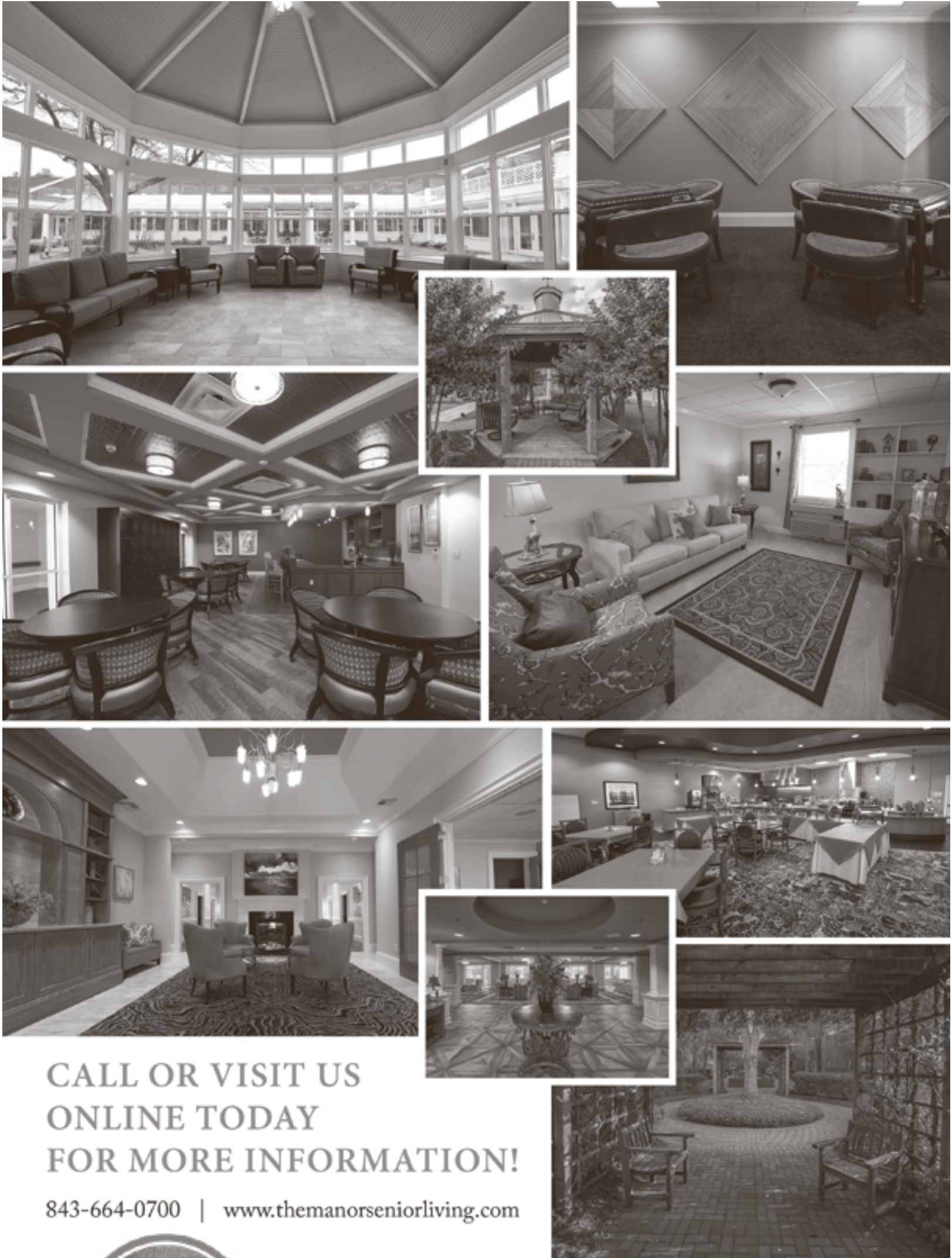
Well done, long-time servant

John Burgess was recognized as a lay servant emeritus for serving many years as a committed lay servant at New Light UMC, Orangeburg. From left are Burgess with the Rev. Enrique Gordon, pastor, and Rosa Kennerly-Dance, lay leader.

Photo courtesy of Rosa Kennerly-Dance



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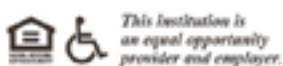
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Rubielee Lawrence Addison

CONCORD, N.C.—Rubielee Lawrence Addison, a former president of the South Carolina Conference United Methodist Women and Anderson District Lay Speaking director, died Dec. 30, 2021.

Funeral services were held Jan. 15 at Simons Funeral Home, Orangeburg.

Mrs. Addison is survived by her three daughters and son.

Martha Burnette Ballentine

BLYTHEWOOD—Martha Burnette Ballentine, widow of the Rev. Wyman Wayne Ballentine, died Dec. 18, 2021.

Funeral services were held Dec. 22 at Trinity United Methodist Church with a private graveside service following.

Memorials may be made to Trinity UMC Hand Bell Choir, 90 Boney Road, Blythewood, SC 29016.

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

Henry L. Evatt

GREENVILLE—Henry L. Evatt, father of the Rev. Perry Evatt, died Jan. 17, 2022. Rev. Evatt is the pastor of the St. Luke-Salem Charge, Lancaster.

Funeral services were held Jan. 22 at the Thomas McAfee Funeral Home, Northwest, with burial in Graceland Cemetery West.

Memorials may be made to United Housing Connections, 135 Edinburgh Court, Greenville, SC 29607 or <https://www.united-housingconnections.org>.

Mr. Evatt is survived by his two sons.

Marjorie Jewel Smith Floyd

SCRANTON—Marjorie Jewel Smith Floyd, widow of the Rev. Merritt Floyd, died Dec. 8, 2021.

Funeral services were held Dec. 11 in the chapel of Floyd Funeral Home. A private burial service will be held at a later date in Thomas Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to the Upper Lee Cemetery Fund, c/o Mrs. Wanda Smith, 2136 Salem Road, Scranton, SC 29591.

Mrs. Floyd is survived by her son.

Willis Everette Haselden Jr.

MURRELLS INLET—Willis Everette Haselden Jr., grandfather of the Rev. Katherine Haselden Crimm and the Rev. Rett Haselden, died Jan. 16, 2022. Rev. Crimm is the pastor of Kingtree United Methodist Church, Kingtree. Rev. Haselden is the pas-

tor of Grace UMC, Columbia.

A celebration of Mr. Haselden's life will be held at a later date.

Memorials may be made to First UMC of Hemingway, 201 E. Broad St., Hemingway, SC 29554.

Mr. Haselden is survived by his three sons and daughter.

Abraham Jenkins Jr.

JOHNS ISLAND—Abraham "Abe" Jenkins Jr., a member of the Charleston District Board of Congregational Development, died Jan. 17, 2022.

Funeral services were held Jan. 29 at St. John's High School Stadium with burial at Wesley UMC.

Robert F. Lewis Jr.

ALDEN, N.Y.—Robert F. Lewis Jr., brother of the Rev. James Lewis, died Jan. 15, 2022. Rev. Lewis is the pastor of the Berkeley Circuit, Bonneau.

A memorial service will be held Feb. 12 at Grace in Community Church.

Memorials may be made to Grace in Community Church, 11269 Broadway, Alden, NY 14004.

Mr. Lewis is survived by his wife, Kimberly Inbody Lewis, and two sons.

Joyce Adeleen Pennock

OSAWATOMIE, Kan.—Joyce Adeleen Pennock, mother of Chester Pennock, died Dec. 12, 2021. Mr. Pennock is the husband of the Rev. Susan Pennock, pastor of Bethany United Methodist Church, Charleston.

Funeral services were held Dec. 16 at Eddy-Birchard Funeral Home with burial in Osawatomie Cemetery, Paola, Kansas.

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

Rev. Fredericka Whaley Phipps

LANCASTER—The Rev. Fredericka "Ricki" Whaley Phipps, a retired local pastor serving the Trinity-Fort Lawn Charge, died Jan. 3, 2022.

Prior to her retirement, Rev. Phipps served Bethel, Lancaster, charge before being appointed to Trinity-Fort Lawn Charge.



Phipps

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.

A memorial service was held Jan. 8 at Hopewell United Methodist Church.

Memorials may be made to Trinity UMC, 1664 Flat Creek Road, Lancaster, SC 29720.

Rev. Phipps is survived by her husband, Don Phipps.

Rev. Conrad Allen Senn

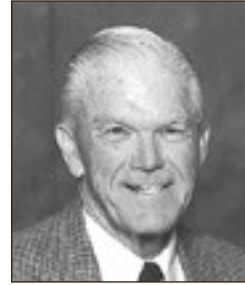
SPARTANBURG—The Rev. Conrad Allen Senn, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Jan. 18, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 1994, Rev. Senn served the Bamberg-Main Street, Homeland Park-John Wesley, Newberry-Trinity, Galloway Memorial, Spartanburg-St. Luke, Union-Bethel and Trinity-Spartanburg (Associate) charges. Following his retirement, he served the First Startex-Arcadia and Cherokee Springs-Liberty charges.

Funeral services were held Jan. 22 at Floyd's Greenlawn Chapel. Burial with military honors will be in Greenlawn Memorial Gardens.

Memorials may be made to the Minister Educational Fund at <https://www.umc.org/en/content/ministerial-education-fund-annual-conference-gifts>; or to Global Outreach First Presbyterian Church, 512 Old Mount Holly Road, Stanley, NC 28164.

Rev. Senn is survived by his wife, Rosa, son and daughter.



Senn

Helen Gribble Short

McBEE—Helen Gribble Short, wife of the Rev. Charlie Short, died Jan. 11, 2022. Rev. Short is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Jan. 13 at Union UMC with burial in McBee Cemetery.

Mrs. Short is survived by her husband and two daughters.

Dorothy Estes Sprayberry

HOGANSVILLE, Ga.—Dorothy Estes Sprayberry, widow of the Rev. Rance Sprayberry, died Dec. 22, 2021.

A memorial service will be held Feb. 12 at Disciples United Methodist Church, Greenville. A joint memorial service for both the Sprayberrys will be held March 26 at Hogansville First UMC followed by burial in Shadowlawn Cemetery, LaGrange, Georgia.

Memorials may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Fl. 17, Chicago, IL 60601, or <https://act.alz.org>.

Mrs. Sprayberry is survived by her three children.

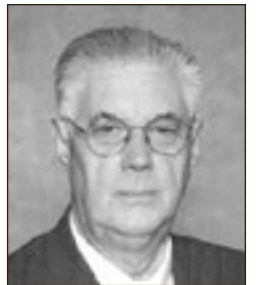
Dr. Leon Edwin Thompson

GREENWOOD—Dr. Leon Edwin Thompson, a retired elder in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Jan. 15, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 2000, Dr. Thompson served the Valley Falls-Bethel, Centenary Circuit, Ridge Spring Circuit, West Columbia-Trinity, Ninety Six-Cambridge, Midland Park, Bishopville-Bethlehem, Clover-First and John Wesley, Charleston, charges.

Funeral services were held Jan. 22 at Main Street UMC, Abbeville, with burial in Greenwood Memorial Gardens.

Rev. Thompson is survived by his wife, Patricia, two sons and two daughters.



Thompson

Miriam Bunch Tumbleston

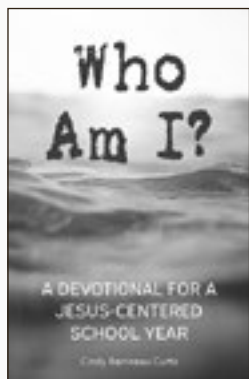
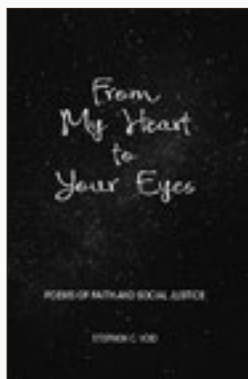
SUMMERVILLE—Miriam Bunch Tumbleston, grandmother to the Rev. Paige Wheeler, died Jan. 9, 2022. Rev. Wheeler is the pastor of Union United Methodist Church, McBee.

Funeral services were held Jan. 12 at Boone Hill UMC with burial in the church cemetery.

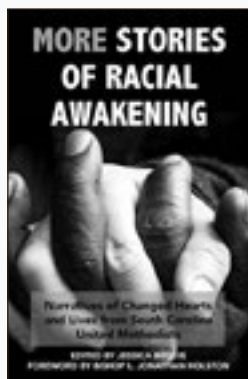
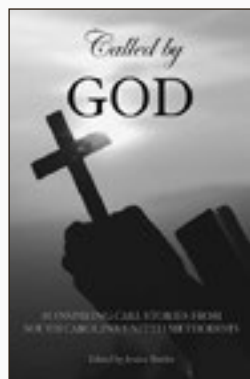
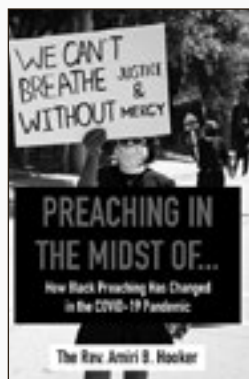
Memorials may be made to Boone Hill UMC, 801 Boone Hill Road, Summerville, SC 29483; to Victory Junction Camp, 4500 Adam's Way, Randleman, NC 27317 or <https://victoryjunction.org/the-gift-of-camp/>; or to the Alzheimer's Association, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Fl. 17, Chicago, IL 60601.

Mrs. Tumbleston is survived by her two daughters.

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.)

January

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/>

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), 10-11:30 a.m. <https://bit.ly/3xSgOPf>

Feb. 3—Registration deadline for in-person Bishop's School of Ministry, <https://www.umcsc.org/cs-bsm/>

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), 7-8:30 p.m. <https://bit.ly/3xSgOPf>

Feb. 10—Clergy Care Virtual Retreat: "Introduction to Enneagram: A Mirror into the Soul," 1-4 p.m. [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYoceurTlPpGNHSG5DYTbrzMtYKTbQA02i](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYoceurTlPpGNHSG5DYTbrzMtYKTbQA02i)

Feb. 11—Registration deadline for online Bishop's School of Ministry, <https://www.umcsc.org/cs-bsm/>

Feb. 11—"Why Does the Black Madonna Weep?": Ancient Divinities of Blackness and their Scandalous Upeaval in English Reformation Theology," 2022 Bishop Alfred E. and Mrs. Mamie White Endowed Heritage Lecture Series, 7-8 p.m. <https://www.hoodseminary.edu/news/2022-heritage-lecture-series/>



Submitted by Ruth McCants; Photo courtesy of Midas Touch Photography

150 years

Mechanicsville United Methodist Women, Sumter, celebrated Homecoming Service Oct. 24, along with their fellow parishioners. They celebrated 150 years with a powerful message from their pastor, the Rev. E.W. Frierson, titled, "Where Do We Go From Here." The theme was "Joyfully Celebrating Our Past and Committed to the Future." Here, the United Methodist Women paused for a group photo after the service.

lecture-series/

Feb. 12—"Harry Hozier Was Here': Constructions of Race and Legacies of American Methodist Theological Evangelicalism," 2022 Bishop Alfred E. and Mrs. Mamie White Endowed Heritage Lecture Series, 10-11 a.m. <https://www.hoodseminary.edu/news/2022-heritage-lecture-series/>

Feb. 12—LSM School (Marion District), Zoom, <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Marion-District-Lay-Servant-Schools-for-2021.pdf>

Feb. 13—2022 Greenwood District Leadership Training Event, Rivers Street Campus, St. Mark UMC, Greenwood, 2-5 p.m.

Feb. 13—LSM School (Marion District), held via Zoom. Sign up at <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Marion-District-Lay-Servant-Schools-for-2021.pdf>

Feb. 15-17—2022 Bishop's School of Ministry, Myrtle Beach

Feb. 17—UMW Social Action Workshop #3 (virtual), 2-3:30 p.m. <https://bit.ly/3xSgOPf>

Feb. 19—Connectional Ministries Zoom meeting, 9 a.m.

Feb. 19—LSM School (Marion District), Zoom, <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Marion-District-Lay-Servant-Schools-for-2021.pdf>

Feb. 20—LSM School (Marion District), Zoom, <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Marion-District-Lay-Servant-Schools-for-2021.pdf>

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 or 843-246-8398.

Feb. 26—UMW Social Action Workshop #4 (virtual), 10-11:30 a.m. <https://bit.ly/3xSgOPf>

Feb. 27—SC Men N Ministry Conference

March

March 1—Deadline, UMW Presidential Scholarship Application, <https://www.umcsc.org/discipleship/united-methodist-women/>

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

March 1—Deadline, Advocate Scholarship, <https://advocatesc.org/about-us/scholarship/>

March 23—UMW Legacy Fund Day of Giving

April

*Columbia Bethlehem Community Center
Special Emphasis Month (UMW)*

April 1—Nominations due for Annual Conference Awards

April 5—UMVIM, Grace UMC, Columbia, 7:30-8:30 p.m.

April 15—Good Friday, UMCTr. closed.

April 17—Easter

April 23—UMW Spiritual Growth Event (virtual), 10 a.m.

April 23—UMW Legacy Fund Day of Giving

April 23-24—LSM School (Marion District), Trinity UMC, Bennettsville or Zoom, <https://tinyurl.com/marionlsm>

Bishop's School to focus on 'Healing the Healers'

MYRTLE BEACH—Clergy are gearing up for the 2022 Bishop's School of Ministry, set for Feb. 15-17.

With the theme "Healing the Healers," the event will be in-person or online.

It will be held at the Sheraton, Myrtle Beach, for those

gathering in-person.

Event registration deadlines are Feb. 3 for in-person and Feb. 11 for online attendance.

Participants will earn 1.5 CEUs for full conference attendance.

As well, 1 CEU for safe sanctuaries/sexual ethics will be awarded at the completion of the school.

Full details, including registration link, daily schedule and presenters, can be found at <https://www.umcsc.org/cs-bsm>.



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

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by Dr. George Donigian

Four Expectations of Disciples

Feb. 6

The Greatest Commandments

Lesson Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:34-40

Background Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:34-40

Key Verse: “He replied, ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment’” (Matthew 22:37-38).

When I edited curriculum resources at The United Methodist Publishing House, we received calls from Sunday school teachers who wanted to know if they had permission to adapt a lesson plan. By all means, adapt. Always! A published lesson plan is a general guide, but every wise teacher will need to adapt that plan to fit the needs of a class. Adapt the material for your circumstances. Having written that, I will say that the “Adult Leader Guide” offers excellent material for Bible study and suggestions for class use.

Today’s lesson pairs Deuteronomy 6:4-9 with Matthew 22:34-40. How do members of your class respond to the Deuteronomy text? When asked about the greatest commandment, notice that Jesus focused on the Shema rather than the Ten Commandments or other commandments. Would your class agree that the Shema summarizes the remaining commandments? Invite the class to discuss whether the Shema is an appropriate summary of the Law.

You may also ask whether the Shema applies to the challenges of contemporary life. How do our choices reflect love for God and love for neighbor? Would you post the commandment to love God and neighbor in a public setting?

Invite class members to offer specific ways in which they show love for God and neighbor in daily life.

The leader guide refers to “The Spiritual Practice of Testimony.” For a more thorough exploration and suggestions for your class, you may read “Faith-Sharing,” by Eddie Fox and George Morris, and “The Faith-Sharing Congregation,” by Roger Swanson and Shirley Clement, to supplement the lesson note and to help class participants. These user-friendly books offer guidance and suggestions to speak honestly about faith and life.

“Lord, kindle in my heart a flame of love to my neighbor, to my enemies, my friends, my kindred all.”—Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals via Sojourners (12/10/2021)

Feb. 13

Making God’s Love Visible

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 5:14-16

Background Text: Matthew 5:1-16

Key Verse: “In the same way, let your light

shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

If the first lesson in this sequence is titled “The Greatest Commandment” and the last lesson is titled “The Great Commission,” then this lesson could better be titled “The Great Expectation.”

The lesson focuses on Jesus’ expectation that his disciples are salt and light: a good and necessary seasoning within the world and the light needed for a dark world. The lesson reminds us that Christian disciples are to be salt and light not for the sake of the community of faith or the church, but for the world, particularly those who are not part of the church or the Christ movement. The leader guide contains solid Bible background material and suggestions for a Sunday school class. Remember to adapt, adapt and adapt as needed.

You may wish to engage the group in a conversation about the statement: “Our mission is (to) shine God’s light in the darkness, to share divine love, and to serve others in his name” (Leader Guide, p.117). How does this statement align with the denomination’s mission statement: “The mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world”? How does your congregation’s mission statement compare with the Leader Guide statement?

Jesus, according to the writer, “was more concerned with the fate of a salt-free disciple. Such a person will be rendered useless and subject to judgment” (p. 118). You may wish to engage the group in conversation about whether a disciple of Christ can be salt-free. What would be that person’s mission for Christ? Another side of saltiness in disciples concerns our use of salt substitutes. What would your class substitute for saltiness in a disciple?

If you are supplementing this material with “Faith-Sharing,” by Fox and Morris, take time to review concepts and to invite group members to practice sharing faith with one another.

Feb. 20

Informing, Transforming Faith

Lesson Scripture: James 1:19-27

Background Scripture: James 1:19-27

Key Verse: “You must be doers of the word and not only hearers who mislead themselves” (James 1:22).

If we were to retitile this lesson in keeping with the superlative “Great,” we might name this lesson The Great Lifestyle. The leader guide offers helpful insight into James, particularly in showing how the passage deals with speech (the tongue), hearing and doing (action) and the connection of being and action in what the letter calls “pure

religion.” Today we hear many conversations that contrast “religion” with “spirituality.” People distinguish between the two because of their mistrust of institutionalism and because the church has broken trust. Why else would The United Methodist Church need to develop Safe Sanctuaries policies? If the covenant of trust between church and individual had not been damaged, we would not need these policies.

The author of James would say that “pure religion” is also true spirituality, a lifestyle in which Christians obey and do the commands of Christ. James, like others writing in the first two centuries, would not imagine church as we know the institution today nor could he or other writers in his time imagine a Christian spirituality outside the community of faith.

The leader guide refers to questions asked by the officiant in the baptismal liturgy of The United Methodist Church. Give your class opportunity to discuss the baptismal liturgy, which is included in The United Methodist Hymnal (pages 33-39), particularly the questions asked of candidates or their sponsors for baptism (pp. 34-35). Take time to go through each question and notice how they also reflect a concern that all participants reflect the salt and light of discipleship.

You may wish to supplement this material with the video study titled “Opening Ourselves to Grace” (a Bible study by Steven Manskar, video produced by Mark Purushotham), which focuses on John Wesley’s understanding of the means of grace and holding ourselves accountable to one another as disciples of Christ.

Feb. 27

The Great Commission

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20

Background Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20

Key Verse: “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

Today’s lesson focuses on the Great Commission. Consider the different ways

we use the word “commission”: a fee paid for a business transaction; a sign of authority, such as a notary public commission; an action, such as the commission of a crime; a certificate that confers military rank (to be commissioned in the military); a group of people with a special task or authority.

My Nashville church commissioned music in memory of the 1998 tornado that destroyed much of our part of town. How else do we use the word commission? How do these contribute to the meaning of the Great Commission?

The leader guide offers solid Bible background and suggestions for class participation. Notice that the writer points out that Jesus did not use the word commission when he told his followers to go and make disciples of all nations (v. 20). Tradition gives this section its title, but the title is not as important as the task itself. How do we baptize and teach others to obey what Jesus commanded? We begin in our neighborhoods. We begin by showing love, by being salt and light (living The Great Expectation of Jesus) and by practicing The Great Lifestyle written about in the Book of James.

Give your class time to look at the neighborhood around your congregation. Whether your church is urban or rural, suburban or small town, some form of neighborhood surrounds it. Where are the children and youth? Where are the schools? Where do adults work? Where are the older adults? Are there convenient stores and day-care centers? Are there grief groups or 12-step groups? Are there ways to connect different generations? What is available and what is missing?

We will accomplish the Great Commission and all that Jesus commanded as we see the needs of the world and take steps to fulfill those needs.

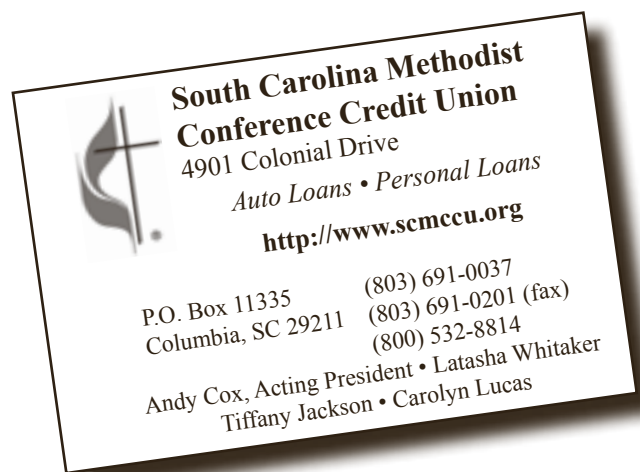
The resources “Faith-Sharing,” “The Faith-Sharing Congregation” and “Opening Ourselves to Grace” are published by Discipleship Resources and available through The Upper Room or other online booksellers.

Donigian is a retired elder in the South Carolina Conference of The UMC.

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James Salley on growing tomorrow's African leaders

By Jim Patterson

Courtesy of UM News Service

James Salley, known by some as “Mr. Africa University,” has been with the United Methodist institution in Zimbabwe since it was in the embryonic stage.

In its nearly 30-year history, AU has produced leaders in government, religion and business. Its alumni include United Methodist Bishop Mande Muyombo of Congo; Mercy Kafotokoza, executive director of Wandikweza, which works to improve access to quality health care in rural areas of Malawi; and Lillian Achom, an information technology entrepreneur who mentors young women in Uganda.

“We are growing up the new generation of leaders,” said Salley, who recently added the title of president and chief executive officer of Africa University (Tennessee) Inc. He remains associate vice chancellor for institutional advancement. Africa University (Tennessee) Inc. is one of three entities used to run AU.

Salley, 70, met with United Methodist News at the Nashville, Tenn., offices of Africa University (Tennessee) Inc., to speak about the past, present and future of AU. A lifetime United Methodist born in Orangeburg, Salley pursued a successful career in broadcasting before shifting his focus to education. He's also been active in church leadership, serving as a General Conference delegate since 1988 and on the board of United Methodist Global Ministries from 1987 to 1991.

The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

You were involved with Africa University in its formative stages, when it was no more than an idea. What has that like?

It's been very rewarding for me to see an institution grow from an empty field with students—40 originally—with a staff of seven full time along with a number of consultants.



James Salley speaks about his vision for Africa University, the United Methodist-related institution in Zimbabwe.

Photo by Mike DuBose, UM News

There are now more than 10,000 graduates with 3,000 enrolled. The staff is now 360 people. ... We're getting ready to put into the bank enough money in 2022 to build a new female dormitory. By the end of the year, we'll put another \$1.5 million into the capital project and build that with no debt.

To actually help shape and produce good, solid citizens for Africa and the world, that's been the reward I get. Some of these people, folks said would never make it, but all they needed was just a chance.

You've had terrific success getting churches and annual conferences to support a university miles away on another continent. How did you manage that?

I truly believe that if it wasn't a calling from God, we would not be as successful as we are in this work. I remember the late Bishop F. Herbert Skeete, who served on the board of Africa University, convened a meeting when I was first setting up the development office. There were four (fundraisers) there from some of the premier institutions

of The United Methodist Church. I won't say what they were, but we were all in the meeting. The first thing they told me was, “Don't waste your time going to local churches and annual conferences. You'll never be successful doing that work.” Well, that's the foundation of our work.

Now, we have more than 30,000 individuals, local churches and annual conferences in our database. And that's no accident. It just doesn't happen. It had to be God's work.

Is it true that your new title is more a reflection of what you've been doing rather than conferring new responsibilities?

It's actually what I've been doing since setting up the development office. ... I am a senior cabinet member of the university. I'm the longest-serving person employed at the university now, since 1992. September of 2022 will be 30 years. I have an office on the university campus. During a non-pandemic time, I will make a minimum of six trips a year to the university and sometimes seven to eight, depending on whether or not we have donors or persons who want to visit.

Culturally, is it an issue getting African women to come to college?

Yes. Our ratio of male to females this semester in Africa University is 58% female. The average ratio of males to female on the

traditional college or university is about 30% female. So it's an intentional effort of the administration and the board to help educate females, because they assume responsibility for educating the rest of the family and the rest of the city or village and they help provide education to the children and others.

How does your curriculum reflect your location in Africa?

We did not want to build a duplicate of a European-American university in Africa. ... These are programs uniquely designed and implemented for Africans. Our Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance provides degrees in conflict management, resolution, peace and governance—the kind of things that address the hot spots all over the continent. We are also the center for malaria studies in Zimbabwe. ... In the area of agriculture, we do research with crops that are resistant and grow well during the drought seasons. So, yes, we look at the problems of the continent and try to find solutions.

What do you see as the major challenges going forward?

Sadly, some of the things that persons in the U.S., Europe and other places take for granted are still rampant (in Africa): malaria, tuberculosis, food security. There's also climate change and environmental challenges. Also, providing enough support for persons who are first-generation higher education people. The majority of our students are still first generation, first one from the family to go to college or university. So, the challenge is to find persons who are competent in teaching these first-generation persons that we are turning out. Another challenge is going to be remaining the kind of institution that wants to recruit some of those people who can pay for their education, but always be an institution that will provide assistance and help for those persons who would not have a ghost of a chance at getting a higher education otherwise.

Can you tell me about your vision of where AU is headed?

We want to be a premier, world-class, innovative university that's United Methodist-related unashamedly.

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