



\$2 copy or by subscription

March 2022

Mental health and the church

New 'Fresh Hope' group offers faith-based support for people with mental illness



Video screenshot

Advent UMC, Simpsonville, members Sydney Marguet (left) and Kelly Black share about their new mental health support group, Fresh Hope, with their congregation. Black, a lifelong member of Advent, has battled severe depression since she was in elementary school and knew people needed a faith-based place to find support for mental illness.

By Jessica Brodie

SIMPSONVILLE—Another church in the Upstate is opening its arms—and its doors—to people with mental illness through a new support group, Fresh Hope.

Its organizers are two women in their 20s, Kelly Black and Sydney Marguet, who are passionate about the intersection of faith when it comes to healing and thriving mentally and emotionally. And they are doing all they can to help people feel the love of God in the depths of their struggles.

Black is no stranger to mental illness. A lifelong member

of Advent United Methodist Church, Simpsonville, Black has battled severe depression since she was in elementary school. While today she is married and starting a career in mental health peer support, the lows of her illness have wreaked havoc in her life.

A hard worker who has held a job since she was 15, Black was out of work during one of the world's most isolating times—the pandemic. While her family and friends have always been supportive, it was a desolate season.

“From basically January 2020 to April 2021 I was looking for a job, and I was just feeling really lost and lonely. I

was feeling really alone in my depression, like I didn't have anyone who could say, ‘I know exactly what that feels like,’” Black said. “I started looking for a support group, but I didn't find anything that was faith-based.”

A strong woman of faith, Black said her hope in God has helped her weather the toughest lows of her depression.

One day, Black found the website for Fresh Hope, which helps churches start Christ-centered peer support groups for individuals and their loved ones who are affected by a mental health diagnosis.

See “Mental Health and the Church,” Page 12

Pandemic again shifts Annual Conference to virtual event

Yet again, the pandemic has forced conference leaders into an all-virtual Annual Conference.

Normally a four- or five-day event held in person with nearly 2,000 attendees from every church in South Carolina, this year's Annual Conference will be an abbreviated online session slated to begin June 5.

Conference Secretary the Rev. Ken Nelson, who also serves as Orangeburg District superintendent, said the shift from in-person to virtual prioritizes the health and safety of South Carolina's lay and clergy members and the broader community, who “continue to be our top concern,” Nelson said.

The theme is “Seeking A More Excellent Way: Trusting, Believing and Knowing God is With Us.”

GNTV Media Ministry will host the virtual gathering and help coordi-

nate participation via Zoom video conferencing and voting on a separate, secure platform. In the spirit of transparency, Annual Conference is traditionally open to the public. AC2022 will be live-streamed so anyone can observe the proceedings online.

The Florence District and Pisgah United Methodist Church in Florence will host AC2022 at the Florence Center, where in-person attendance will be limited strictly to those who must be on site to conduct the business of the Annual Conference.

Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, resident bishop of the South Carolina Conference of the UMC, will preach the worship service.

See “Annual Conference,” Page 13

Online registration for 14 Salkehatchie camps to open March 1

By Jessica Brodie

Salkehatchie Summer Service is poised to open online registration March 1, though with fewer camps and a mostly outdoor experience planned.

Of the more than 40 camps typically planned for the summer mission experience, only 14 are currently slated for this summer:

Bamberg: July 9-16

Bishopville: June 25-July 2

Black Swamp (Hampton County): July 9-16

Chester: June 11-18

Clover: July 17-23

See “Salkehatchie,” Page 24



Hours/Location

Open Monday through Friday
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Submissions

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

Advertising

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Photographs

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

Accuracy Policy

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

Back Issues

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

Advocate offers opportunity to thank church administrative professionals with an appreciation ad in April edition

National Administrative Professionals' Day recognizes the professionals who keep an office running smoothly every day. Celebrated on the Wednesday of the last full week in April of each year, the day recognizes the work of secretaries, administrative assistants, receptionists and other administrative support professionals.

This year's National Administrative Professionals' Day in April 27, and to help churches honor their administrative professionals, the

Advocate is offering an advertising opportunity.

Show your church administrative professional your appreciation with an appreciation ad in the April *Advocate*.

"It's a great chance to honor and thank your church's administrative professionals for their hard work," said Editor Jessica Brodie.

Three sizes are available for the administrative professional appreciation ad. All are the same width (five inches), but the height varies:

- Small: One inch tall, \$38
- Medium: Two inches tall, \$76
- Large: Four inches tall, \$152

To place an administrative professional appreciation ad in the April edition, email ad text to atrussell@umcsc.org or send to *Advocate*, 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203. Deadline is March 10.

Churches will be billed for the ads unless otherwise noted. For questions, call Allison Trussell at 803-786-9486.

Methodist woman's 'Merry Mouse' books teach kids about Jesus

By Jessica Brodie
GREER—An 80-year-old great-grandmother in the Upstate has published her third children's book, and she's hoping this newest story of Merry Mouse will help children understand the meaning behind Easter.

"I want to touch little children's lives," said Patricia Galbreath, whose book "Merry Mouse: Easter In Our Father's House" released in February. "I know parents are busy—mothers work, fathers work, and not everyone makes time to go to church. But my hope is by reading these, a child can maybe learn about Jesus, learn who he is and why were are created."

While today Galbreath is a member of Victor United Methodist Church, Greer, where her daughter the Rev. Debbie Pisor is pastor, Galbreath grew up on a 47-acre farm in Western Pennsylvania.

"I'm a country kid, and my faith started out there in a country church," Galbreath said, sharing how her early lessons of God's people helping and caring for each other amid beautiful creation built the foundation for her faith.

Later she taught Sunday school and vacation Bible school, where she discovered her passion for teaching children about Jesus.

One day when she still lived in Pennsylvania, the idea for Merry Mouse—a humble mouse who begins to learn about Jesus—came to mind.

"I cannot tell you where the idea came from, but it was something that came running around in my head to start writing about this, so I went to my pastor and said, 'I would love to write these sorts of books,'" Galbreath said.

"He told me, 'You know, how about you write some stories for the church newsletter every month and go from there?'"

She did that for 12 years and honed her writing skills. Finally, in 2015



"My hope is by reading these, a child can maybe learn about Jesus, learn who he is and why were are created," said Patricia Galbreath, 80, a great-grandmother who has authored three children's books and still works at an auto sales shop daily.



she published "Merry Mouse in Our Father's House," a story about a mouse who goes for a walk on a cold, snowy day and finds himself in a big church, where he soon learns about God, Jesus and what church is all about.

In her next book, "Merry Mouse: Christmas in Our Father's House," Merry learns the true meaning of Christmas.

In her newest book, Merry goes to church on Palm Sunday, receives a palm branch and soon learns the full story of Easter—and how Jesus loved us so much he died for our sins.

Galbreath said she wants every child to know Jesus and how much God loves us all, and that is why she writes.

Galbreath has several more books in her mind and is currently working on a new Merry Mouse book—that is, when she is isn't working at Northside Auto Sales in Greer, where she is employed almost daily.

"It's written in the Bible that God knows you—he knew you in the womb and even before you were ever conceived," she said.

"This isn't for me—these books are for God and for his children."

The Merry Mouse series can be found on Amazon or <http://www.merrymousechurchmouse.com>. Galbreath said if anyone is interested in a churchwide discount on books in bulk to provide for children during Lent or other seasons, they are welcome to call her at 864-920-8237.

Francis Burns: First Black bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church

Editor's note: One of the United Methodist churches in the South Carolina Conference is named after Burns: Francis Burns UMC, Columbia.

The Rev. Francis Burns was the first Black bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Elected in 1858, he served as a missionary bishop in Liberia.

His early life was spent in Greene County, New York. His family was poor, and at the age of 4 he was indentured to a farmer. At age 8, he was indentured to the Atwood family. Mrs. Atwood was a Methodist class leader. She permitted Francis to attend school with her children during the winter season.

Francis joined the Methodist Episcopal Church at age 15 and at 17 showed interest in preaching. However, the term of his indenture prevented him from pursuing his calling at that time. His indenture would not expire until he reached 21.

After the end of his indenture, Francis worked as a teacher and became licensed to preach in the Catskill Hudson District. Others took notice of his preaching skills and encouraged him to study to become a missionary. His opportunity to do this came in 1834, when he accompanied the Rev. John Seys to Liberia.

After 10 years as a missionary teacher and leader in Liberia, he traveled to New York to be ordained by Bishop Edmund Janes. Returning to Liberia, Burns taught in Monrovia



In 1858, Francis Burns was elected as the first Black bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church. He served as a missionary bishop in Liberia. Image originated from an engraving by J.C. Buttrey; photographed by Matthew Brady, courtesy of GCAH.

Seminary and in 1845 succeeded Seys as editor of "Africa's Luminary," the quarterly publication of the Missionary Society in Liberia.

Burns also served for many of these years as president of the Liberia Conference.

In 1856, the General Conference approved

the election of a missionary bishop in Africa. The Liberia Conference elected Burns as their first bishop in 1858. The importance of this action for Methodism, especially Methodism in Liberia, cannot be overestimated.

When his health declined because of ongoing effects of what was referred to at the time as "the African fever" (possibly malaria), he returned to America in late winter 1863.

He died three days after arriving and three months after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. His body was returned to Liberia, where he was buried.

The legacy of Liberian-based Methodist ministries started, organized and led by Bishop Burns continues to flower in many forms today. United Methodists in Liberia number more than 300,000. Though not the largest Christian denomination in Liberia, United Methodists have had a significant influence in public life, including as the nation's last two presidents (Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, 2006-2018, and George Weah, 2018-present).

Liberian United Methodists are organized in one annual conference with 20 districts and a variety of outreach ministries including agricultural development, health care (clinics and hospitals), and education (pre-K through university).

This content was produced by Ask The UMC, a ministry of United Methodist Communications.

Viewpoints



Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

Two years—where are we now?

Two years ago, as I was preparing the March edition of the *Advocate*, I had no idea we'd soon be on mass lockdown, with schools and churches shuttered because of a deadly virus sweeping the globe. As a journalist, I stay on top of the headlines, and I'd heard about this mysterious "coronavirus" sickening people overseas, but in February 2020 as I penned my commentary, I was blissfully ignorant of what was to come. I have a personal faith-based blog in addition to my *Advocate* work, and just before the pandemic changed the world as I knew it, I wrote a blog that ran March 9, 2020, titled "Something New Within Me" (www.jessicabrodie.com/shiningthelight/somethingnew). In it, I talked about how I sensed God working something strange and different in me and in the world that I didn't yet comprehend.

As I wrote, "I don't understand it yet, but I trust him, just like I trusted him when I felt my unborn son kicking and swirling within me."

Little did I know I was sensing the massive impact of COVID-19 upon the world around me.

In that same blog, I reflected on how, "Sometimes I look back at certain times in my life, times I now know were important, and wonder why I didn't sense what was happening then. How could I have been so blind as not to see God's master plan? Why didn't I understand all those changes and signs meant he was opening a new career path for me, or steering me away from a toxic relationship? Hindsight often makes everything so clear."

Indeed.

Two years after COVID-19 changed so much, I have a new opportunity to reflect. How have we done as a people in all of this? Where are we now? How did I, as a woman of faith, respond?

Some of us turned inward. Some of us decidedly did not, starting new online church services and innovative, alternative ways to gather. A good friend celebrated her 40th birthday with a "Zoom Party." Others did online weddings and funerals.

It's always amazing to me how the most horrible or dire of circumstances can often bring out the best in people. Wells of strength we didn't know existed within us begin to rise up and water vast seas of scorched land, land that had been barren and fruitless prior. I hold a master's in English, and I did my thesis on the hope children present within dystopian fiction. That's what the pandemic became in many ways: an opportunity for hope and love in an awful time.

Yes, it exacerbated some issues, but the pandemic also put some of our denominational infighting on pause while we worked together to create vaccines and feed the hungry. It put some of the disagreements over doctrine and politics on a shelf as we focused on more important things.

Two years later, I'm OK with leaving some of our pettier squabbles in the distance while we focus on the bigger picture: loving others in the name of the risen savior, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Two years later, where are you?



Bishop's Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

Sweet hour of prayer

"Well, now is the right time to listen, the day to be helped. Don't put it off; don't frustrate God's work by showing up late, throwing a question mark over everything we're doing. Our work as God's servants gets validated—or not—in the details."—2 Corinthians 6:3-4 (MSG)

The old saying goes that if you see a turtle on a fence post, it obviously did not get up there on its own. And so it goes for each of us. We are not meant to do life on our own. We need each other to lean on for encouragement, motivation and inspiration to continue the work God has planned for us.

As we begin this season of Lent, reflecting on the struggles endured by Christ as he was tempted in the wilderness, we are reminded of our own difficulties and struggles.

Over the course of our lives, we experience moments of praise and seasons of disappointment; times of fame, yet plenty of invisibility. In this season of ongoing pandemic, civil unrest and divisiveness, challenges are not difficult to see.

And yet, regardless of the circumstances that surround us, we are representatives of Jesus Christ here on earth. Through his letter to the church in Corinth, the apostle Paul reminds us that God is with us through every step and every misstep, too. The world is watching, looking for glimpses of our witness to the love, grace and mercy available through God, during award acceptance speeches and also in morning commuter traffic. No matter what is going on around us, we've got to let God's love shine through us.

I invite you to take time for self-exami-

nation and reflection. Lent is a time for us to focus on our relationship with God and to take stock of our own spiritual condition. Take the time during this 40-day journey to the cross to dig into who you are and whose you are so that you can live on purpose for the sake of Christ in this world.

Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world requires of us to first be transformed by God's love ourselves. No matter what is going on around us, we've got to show up for God to work within us. Allowing yourself to be changed from the inside out in response to God's gift is the ultimate sacrifice.

Remain focused on following God's plan for your life rather than simply following your own plans. This requires discipline, dedication and a commitment to prayer. God promises to direct our steps, not to provide us a detailed map in advance. And no matter what is going on around us, we move forward in faith, finding strength and refuge in God's grace, hope, mercy and love.

Friends, prayer is powerful. When our hearts and minds are engaged and focused, prayer is powerful. We begin to see situations from the perspective of hope rather than defeat. In the midst of it all, our perspective shifts from a spirit of despair toward a spirit of hope. While we breathe God's promises, we find hope and relief.

When we trust in God's promises, we finally find that relief of which the hymn sings. "In seasons of distress and grief, my soul has often found relief, and oft escaped the tempter's snare, by thy return, sweet hour of prayer!"

May these 40 days be our testimony to a sweet hour of prayer.

Letters to the Editor

We need a savior, not a supervisor

Phil Thraillkill's commentary in the February *Advocate* is well written and well researched. He skillfully and quite scholarly lays out the position of the traditionalist's side in our current debate inside of our denomination. But his is a position that I cannot agree with.

For one thing, Rev. Thraillkill lumps homosexual attractions and marriage in with a host of other sexual practices that most of us agree are harmful. It is an old, worn-out tactic to lump homosexuality together with sexual abuse, sexual harassment and sexual assault. But those things are often committed by heterosexual persons! They are wrong, no matter who commits them.

In the closing paragraph in his commentary when he talks about happenings in the

See "Letters," Page 5

Correction

In the February edition, we accidentally put the column title, "View from the Pews," over two columns. It should have gone only above Bill Barnier's regular column, titled "Restless." The other piece, "Grieving During a Pandemic," by Clara Hodges McFadden, was a one-time commentary and should have read "Guest Commentary" above it.

We apologize for this error and strive to set the record straight.

Letters Policy

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



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888-678-6272 or 803-786-9486
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Assistant Editor: Allison K. Trussell, atrussell@umcsc.org

Sales Representative: Toni Strawther, advocatesales@umcsc.org

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

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Guest Commentary

by Dr. Kenneth Mufuka

Black history: What shall we teach our children?

For Black History Month, celebrated in February, Critical Race Theory advanced by the New York Times 1619 Project has taken center stage.

Its proponents go about their business with the urgency of zealots. Their intention is to capture the academic world in the same way evolutionists did before them.

CRT can be traced to Derrick Bell who went to Harvard in 1969. Associated with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples, he was involved in 300 school desegregation cases.

Disillusioned by the slow progress of integration, Bell left Harvard in 1992 having concluded that the legacy of slavery, segregation and the historical reality of second-class citizenship continue to prejudice the decisions of decision-makers, consciously or unconsciously.

In short, systemic change of society was called for.

To Bell's disciples like Nicole Hannah Jones, the editor of the New York Times 1619 project, the idea of systemic change is now a religion. These missionaries of race add that racial incidents, like George Floyd's death at the hands of the police, are reflective of a racist society.

Like true missionaries, they believe American society in its present state is beyond redemption.

This is where moderate thinkers part ways with the race theorists.

To call American society "irredeemable" is to destroy any sense of hope for our Black children. To teach our Black children that every White man wishes them harm or is a benign racist would make our children misfits in American society and deprive them of cordial interracial friendships. Thirdly, the theory goes against the tradition of Black liberation, which called upon American society to a higher purpose that is stipulated in its constitution.

Lastly, the theory is a betrayal of many Whites, who sacrificed their careers on behalf of Black rights.

We can add the fact that the New York Times 1619 project itself is financed by the mother of all White liberals, the New York Times.

The project sidelines the genius of Black leadership, from Bishop Richard Allen (1794) to Dr. M. L. King (1963). Their genius lay in their realization that hate would

not bring about a society in which they wanted to live. This, suffering under grace, is what religious scholars in Africa and in India have learned from Black Americans.

The German philosopher Dietrick Bonhoeffer acknowledged the lessons he learned while attending a Harlem Black church: their genius in finding grace amidst great sufferings. To miss this element of Black liberation is to miss the souls of Black folks.

There is another example, the reaction of a Black church in Charleston to the murderous acts of a White supremacist, Dylan Roof.

The letter Frederick Douglas wrote to William Garrison (Oct. 27, 1844) illustrates their grasp of reality. They believed in the decency of the general public. Their duty was the "enlightenment of the public mind, the quickening and enlightening of the dead conscience of the nation into life, and to a sense of the gross injustice, fraud, wrong and inhumanity of enslaving their fellow men, the fixing in the soul of the nation an invincible abhorrence of the whole system of slaveholding."

Even in the darkest hour of rejection, Mary McLeod Bethune wrote in 1955 of a hopeful future.

"I leave you hope," she said. "Yesterday our ancestors endured the degradation of slavery, yet they retained their dignity. Today, we direct our strength toward winning a more abundant and secure life. Tomorrow, a new (African American), unhindered by race taboos and shackles will benefit from more than 330 years of struggle. Theirs will be a better world. This I believe in my heart."

In the same vein, Dr. King (August 1963) repeated the same argument of hope.

"We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So, we have come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and security of justice."

Further, the project ignores the tremendous progress in sharing the table of brotherhood (King) since 1963.

Mufuka serves on various committees of The United Methodist Church. He is an active member and the chairperson of the Church Council at Trinity UMC, Greenwood.



View from the Pews

by Bill Barnier

The knot

I was speaking recently with a church member who explained the reason for her lengthy absence was partly because of COVID safety, but also because of physical issues, which cause her great pain and loss of mobility. Being a lifelong independent sort, she's not one to allow others to help her much.

"I've lived a long time following the advice of another seasoned church member," she explained. "When you get to the end of your rope, just tie a big knot and hang on."

A profoundly simple tidbit of advice, indeed.

Sometime back, I relayed a story of a man who was also of advanced years but lived along a troubled rope of life. His explanation of his long but rewarding life culminated in his refusal to leave this earth because, as he said, "I ain't done doin' yet." There were many tough spots in his life, but whenever he arrived at a rough patch, he simply clung to the knot on his life rope until an angel appeared with more rope.

We've all been at these rough spots in our lives. A few of them seem insurmountable, and we reach a point where we don't know what to do or who to ask. The really tough events may even force one to ask for permanent, irreversible relief. Those are the times when people of faith reach out to the Holy Spirit for strength, answers or guidance.

The truth is that life was given to us with the intent that we serve our creator. We were given a warm and loving spirit that has strength like no other. We were also given a spiritual heart, which feels the greatest joys and the deepest pain, all of which nurture and strengthen our spirit.

For those who have a deep and meaningful relationship with God through the Holy

Spirit, there is a comfort in knowing that the joys of this life pale in comparison to the wonders of our next life. We understand that we need those difficult and painful times to grow in strength, to force us to learn humility and to know we're not in control. The name for that knot at the end of our proverbial rope is faith.

Our creator gave Jesus the task of demonstrating to humankind what is required of us under our life contract with God. But in order for Jesus to fully understand, God made him flesh and blood so Jesus would know what we know and feel what we feel. Love was his standard, but he learned anger and greed, disappointment and loss. He learned of the worst of evil in the hearts of some, and the greatest of love in the actions and faith of others. Even at the advent of his death he clung to the last knot in his human life rope and faithfully asked to be spared the suffering to come.

So for us, we must all learn to tie a faith knot in our life rope. We must also understand and honestly believe that when our creator decides we have learned all we can learn, done all we can do and have traveled the full measure of our rope, the angel he sends will not be bringing more rope. It will be in faith that we will release our hold on the last knot and give ourselves back to the Spirit from whence we came.

We should all take the advice of the wise. Learn how to tie a good faith knot. When you're finally "done doin'" or when the end of your rope appears, you'll know you're truly going to be fine.

Blessings.

Barnier attends St. Paul United Methodist Church, Ridgeland.

LETTERS: Sounding off

From Page 4

Methodist Church in England, again he lumps same-sex marriage with cohabitation without marriage and "shacking." Surely your readers know, as I do, a number of same-sex couples who have maintained their commitment to each other for decades. We also know about same-gender dating couples who are looking to the church for guidance as to how to prepare themselves for a marriage in a Christian context. Must the church continue to shut the door on them, declaring that they must keep their identities hidden, depriving the church of their leadership gifts? That is clearly wrong, and some of us do not want to be a party to this any longer.

Secondly, while we have historical documents (traditions) he mentioned to inform us and help us make our decisions, we also need to listen to the new revelations coming from science and the Spirit (reason and experience), new insights that inform us that while many people are attracted to their opposite gender, there are many people who are not. The preponderance of evidence says that our gender attraction is not something we choose; it comes to us either from birth or from a time that precedes our ability to choose.

Forty-eight years ago, the American Psychiatric Association, the largest psychiatric organization in the world, stopped referring to homosexuality as a psychiatric illness or abnormality. The church is a half-century behind the times. This is hardly "news" any longer.

Back in the 1980s, the *Advocate* printed a commentary I wrote, pointing out that some people see the church's job to be a law-enforcement agency, enforcing community standards and morals. But others see the church's task as being the place where grace, redemption and second chances are given.

It seems very clear to me that Rev. Thrailkill's commentary represents those who want the church to enforce rules. The word "grace" only appears once in his commentary (twice if you count the word "graced," which preceded a description of Jesus as a "supervisor").

I think I really need a very gracious Savior and not just a "graced supervisor."

Rev. Arthur H. Holt, retired Spartanburg

2022 School of Pastoral Ministry registration open through April 4

Registration fee is \$25

Registration is now open for the 2022 School of Pastoral Ministry (also known as licensing school) of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

The school will be conducted in a hybrid format this year because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Sessions are as follows:

- Session 1: April 11-13 in-person at Francis Burns UMC in Columbia, and April 14-15 all-virtual;
- Session 2: April 29-30 all-virtual; and
- Session 3: May 13-14 all-virtual.

All sessions begin at 8:30 a.m.

Registration ends April 4, and the registration fee is \$25.

Participants will need to provide the following books:

- The Holy Bible
- The United Methodist Hymnal
- The 2016 Book of Discipline

For questions, email clergyservices@umcsc.org.

To register, visit <https://www.umcsc.org/licensingschoolregistration/>

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'Better Grace and Lynwood UMCs finalize

By the Rev. Matthew Alexander
LANCASTER—On Nov. 11, 2020, the Lynwood United Methodist Church Council voted to begin discussions with its sister church, Grace UMC, regarding a future merger. That vote became reality in October, as the two churches gathered as one: Grace-Lynnwood UMC.

But the Grace-Lynnwood story goes back with generations of a shared history.

A close history

In 1898, Grace UMC was organized within the Lancaster mill village. For years, Grace thrived on Brooklyn Avenue.

In the 1940s, about two miles away, a group of faithful women started a regular prayer group modeled after a traditional Methodist class. Bible reading, prayer, reflection and holy conversations shaped their life together and fueled their impulse to reach outside themselves. In 1947, this class grew into a church called Lynnwood UMC.

As the new church looked to build a meeting house, a few acres of land on Lynnwood Drive were donated from a member of Grace UMC, and the people of Lynnwood began laying bricks.

Over the next several decades, both churches grew as they ministered to the families of Lancaster. In the 1990s, Grace began to sense a call to relocate to a larger plot of land to build a contemporary facility better suited to the mission of the church. By 1998, Grace had spent several years worshipping in a local elementary school, sold their former building and built a multi-purpose sanctuary and Christian education building on Country Club Drive.

This move brought the two churches within one mile of each other, and their mission in Lancaster continued to grow.

On March 1, 2011, Lynnwood UMC launched a ministry to the Lancaster community called "The Bridge." The Bridge quickly grew into a community-wide ministry including a partnership with dozens of churches and organizations over the next decade. Each Tuesday night, dozens from the Lancaster community were hosted at Lynnwood for a hot meal, fellowship, a time of worship and an optional bag of groceries. Around these tables, seasoned Christians



A group of leaders from both churches, including Shirley Gaston, Brenda Horne, Claudia Johnson, Jerry Taylor, Rick Walters and Alexander, dedicated the former Grace Men's Building as the new home of The Bridge.

served and shared meals with people who were new to the church, building relationships. The hot meal was prepared by a different group each week, including people from Grace UMC.

A shared life

On July 1, 2018, Grace and Lynnwood were gathered into a common charge, the Grace-Lynnwood Charge, with the Rev. Sh'Kur Francis serving as their first pastor. Francis fostered the relationship between the two churches, investing energy in the ministry of The Bridge and coordinating combined worship and outreach events.

In March 2020, during the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic, Francis organized the two churches around a shared drive-in worship service, setting the stage for the two congregations to worship together and in-person throughout the pandemic.

On June 30, 2020, the Rev. Matthew Alexander was appointed to the Grace-Lynnwood Charge. It took no time to recognize the churches' desire to deepen their shared life.

Within a few months, several members from each congregation vocalized desires to explore the possibility of merger.

Alexander began conversations with Rock Hill District Superintendent the Rev. Anthony Hodge and South Carolina Conference Congregational Development Director the Rev. James Friday to explore resourcing and support for merger.

The merger conversation proved to be very timely during fall 2020, when Lynnwood began to be concerned about a structural issue in their sanctuary. After hiring an engineer, the church council received a report that the facility was not safe to occupy, and the repair costs would likely be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

At the close of a prayerful and reflective meeting, Nov. 11, 2020, the Lynnwood church council voted unanimously to explore demolition and merger with Grace.

A few weeks later, with all details in the open, the Grace church council reciprocated with a unanimous vote to pursue merger conversations with Lynnwood.

The plan comes together

On Jan. 4, 2021, Grace-Lynnwood celebrated a new beginning for The Bridge with a ribbon cutting. A group of leaders from both churches, including Shirley Gaston, Brenda Horne, Claudia Johnson,

Jerry Taylor, Rick Walters and Alexander, dedicated the former Grace Men's Building as the new home of The Bridge. In its first year in this new location, under the leadership of Rick Walters, 702 clients were served 11,067 pounds of food. (A video of the ribbon cutting can be found at <https://glumc.org/the-bridge>)

Over the next year, Alexander led the congregation in developing a plan for merger, a vision casting campaign and a communication network to support the process. A merger team was appointed including members from both congregations. Within the merger team, sub-teams investigated four main concerns of the merger process: prayer, communication, finance and properties.

First, the Prayer Team developed weekly prayer initiatives focused on the future of the church, as well as a daily prayer initiative based on Isaiah 43:19a, "See, I am doing a new thing!" Church members set their alarms for 4:31 p.m., so each day at that time, they prayed together asking God to direct them in the "new thing" God was doing among them.

Second, the Communications Team mailed letters, coordinated scheduling and prepared surveys to keep the churches connected with the process.

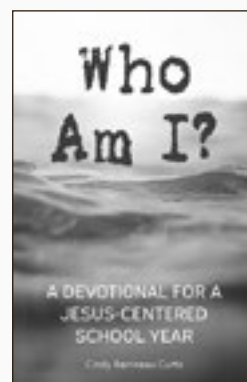
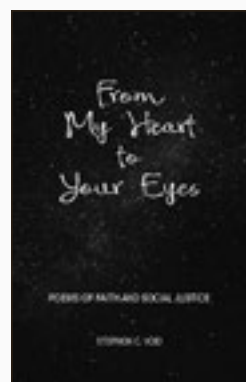
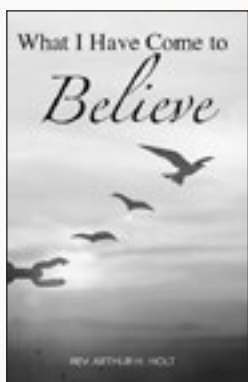
Third, the Finance Team reviewed the historical financial data of both churches and developed draft budgets for the new church with input from the properties team and the PPRC.

Finally, the Properties Team was charged with evaluating the properties of the two churches for future use by the new church.

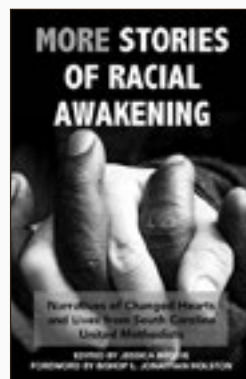
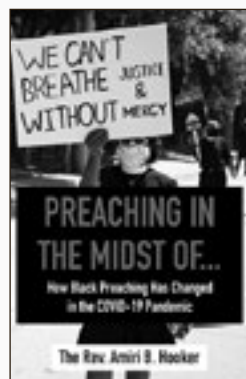
The Lynnwood church council gave the properties team the authority to recommend actions relating to the Lynnwood properties especially considering the demolition concerns. Over the course of several months, the Properties Team cataloged the inventory of the Lynnwood church, evaluated every item for usefulness and explored contractors for demolition. The team designated every item for one of three categories: useful for the new church, good for donation to another church or disposal.

Continued, Next Page

Books for South Carolina United Methodists



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together'

merger, launch Grace-Lynnwood

From Previous Page

Several items were donated to South Carolina Conference churches, including Mount Prospect-Ebenezer Charge, Green Pond UMC and Bethlehem-Prospect Charge.

Preparing for 'marriage'

The best quotes for demolition came in at around \$55,000. This number could have easily become a point of conflict because it was more than Lynnwood's annual income and far more than their funds on hand. However, with the Properties Team's leadership and recommendation, the Grace church council voted unanimously to assist in the demolition of the Lynnwood facility through a loan of \$50,000, to be forgiven upon merger.

This moment of cooperation became a sign of a spirit of coordination growing among the two churches.

In January 2021, Alexander led the charge in a sermon series focused on "Pre-Marital Counseling" in preparation for the merger, during which he framed the "courtship" of the two churches and expectations for what a healthy marriage looks like. As he taught, in marriage, the two become one. Two rich lives are joined to be one life together. There is no more "mine" and "yours" but "ours."

As Alexander noted, marriage is not 50-50. Divorce is 50-50. However, marriage is 100-100. Marriage is not inviting someone to spend the night but to make a home together. Merger is no different. Merger is not inviting one church to join another but the two making a new life together. Merger is not pooling resources but includes sharing all things in common. Merger is about more faithfully pursuing God's mission for the church: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

A new name

Over the next year, these thoughts would be put to the test, but Grace and Lynnwood refused to allow anything to divide them. Even in difficult moments, they resolved to stand together. Finally, the last piece of the process was to settle on a new church name.

Alexander began the last merger team meeting by inviting the team to split into small groups and discuss three questions:

- 1) Who have we been? That is, what has God done through the life of our churches and where has God been at work in Grace and Lynnwood?
- 2) Who is God calling us to be? That is, what will our future life look like and how will God shape our mission for the future as one church?
- 3) In light of these things, what will the



The former Lynnwood UMC property was demolished after structural issues were discovered. The "Eubanks Cross" was relocated to the new Grace-Lynnwood UMC property, and the cornerstone was relocated to the new site of The Bridge.

name of our new church be?

After a lengthy discussion, each group presented their options for future names. Every group brought back the same two names: Grace-Lynn and Grace-Lynnwood. The first option got tossed after a few too many jokes about Memphis, and the team settled on the name Grace-Lynnwood.

As one team member said, "I feel like we've been Grace-Lynnwood for a while now. Preacher, from your first Sunday you began worship saying, 'This is the Grace-Lynnwood Charge of the United Methodist Church.' Now, we are just dropping three words: 'Charge of the.'"

Alexander responded to the team's decision with another story of their shared life.

"Some of you remember April 23, 1968. I don't. My mother wasn't born yet. ... But many of you do. On that day, a new church was organized called The United Methodist Church. This church came about through a merger of two churches with a shared story and tradition: the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church. When they decided on a name for the new church, they did what you have decided to do. They took a piece of the name of each of the parent churches to make the new name. How fitting is it that you have chosen to do the same?"

'Something that is Grace and Lynnwood'

With the name decided, the merger team had completed their recommendation for a plan for merger. The team presented the plan at town hall meetings with each church to receive feedback from the broader congregations. From these town halls came one

The response was overwhelming affirmation.

A celebration

With the new amendment, Alexander worked with Hodge to schedule church conferences, during which each church voted unanimously in favor of the merger plan as a way forward.

Finally, on Oct. 17, 2021, at the Grace-Lynnwood charge conference, the membership of both churches voted unanimously to adopt the merger document.

Pending the approval of Bishop L. Jonathan Holston and the South Carolina Annual Conference, they formed a new church: Grace-Lynnwood United Methodist Church.

On Oct. 24, 2021, the new church celebrated its merger beginning with a parade from the former Lynnwood campus to the new Grace-Lynnwood campus.

The service began with a commemoration on the ground where the Lynnwood church facility once stood. Then, a few dozen cars and a few dozen pedestrians proceeded the one mile to Country Club Drive, led by a banner reading "Rejoice."

The service continued on the church lawn as it had many times during the previous year with a drive-in/tailgating worship format. It included the installation of church officers, a pledge from all members, the reception of two new members, and was followed by a fellowship meal.

A video of the merger celebration can be found at <https://glumc.org/who-we-are/>

amendment, known as the "Tonya Singleton Amendment," named for Singleton, a member of Grace. During the Grace town hall, Singleton drew everyone's attention to the picture collages hanging around the sanctuary of what would soon become Grace-Lynnwood United Methodist Church.

"When I look at these pictures, I see a lot of Grace, but I don't see Lynnwood," Singleton said. "What if we made these collages into photo albums and made space for something that is Grace and Lynnwood?"

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Donations were able to fill a dump-trailer and a car trunk with non-perishable food items. They collected enough items to support the food pantries at both campuses: Allendale and Walterboro.

Walterboro District makes donation to USC-Salkehatchie Food Pantry

By the Rev. Adrienne Elaine Stokes

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on many problems we face in our communities. One problem is food insecurity.

During the pandemic, the federal government and schools provided meals and supplemental nutrition assistance for students in grades K-12. However, there are limited resources for college students.

There is a growing concern for college students who identify as food insecure. Feeding America data indicates that 31 percent of food-insecure individuals had to choose between paying for food or education; furthermore, 38 percent of college students identify as food insecure.

In late November, an article in the Press and Standard in Walterboro caught the district's attention. The article described University of South Carolina Salkehatchie's growing concern among its students regarding food insecurity. USC Salkehatchie opened Student Food Pantries on their Walterboro and Allendale campuses to address this.

We wanted to help in the fight against hunger. The Outreach Committee of the Walterboro District Connectional Ministries solicited each United Methodist church in the

Walterboro District and collected nonperishable food items and feminine products from clergy, laity and friends. We were able to fill a dump-trailer and a car trunk with non-perishable food items. We collected enough items to support the food pantries at both campuses: Allendale and Walterboro.

On Jan. 19, Walterboro District Superintendent the Rev. Joey McDonald blessed the items collected, and the contributions were taken to Lamar Hewett at the Campus Store on USC-Salkehatchie Walterboro campus, where the items were divided between the two campuses. This outpouring of support and love shown to our neighbors are greatly appreciated by the Outreach Committee of the Walterboro District Connectional Ministries.

Special thanks go to the Outreach Committee as well as to Harold McFadden, Clara McFadden, Eddie Stokes, Sherri Jerideau and the Rev. Marvin Jones for their assistance with loading and unloading the trailer.

Outreach comprises Jones, the Rev. Wilhelmina Thompson, the Rev. Keon Stephens and the Rev. Adrienne Elaine Stokes

Stokes is pastor of Buckhead and Hickory Hill UMCs in the Walterboro District.



The Outreach Committee of the Walterboro District Connectional Ministries solicited each United Methodist church in the Walterboro District and collected nonperishable food items and feminine products from clergy, laity and friends.

Bethel UMC women host book brunch

The United Methodist Women in Spartanburg hosted a Book Brunch at Bethel United Methodist Church Feb. 9.

This annual event celebrates and encourages participation in the United Methodist Women Reading Program.

In addition to hearing about some of the selected books this year, attendees also had

the pleasure of hearing about two newly published books in the Bethel family.

Two authors shared the experiences of writing and publication of their books. Kathy Butler, Bethel's Circle 4 member, has written a novel titled "Wisdom Lives Here." This multigenerational story reveals how God helps a young woman finding her way

and the stories of lives in assisted living to inspire each other. The Rev. Arthur Holt shared how his book, "What I Have Come to Believe" (an Advocate Press publication), was inspired by experiences over the years

in his ministry and faith journey.

Attendees enjoyed brunch, were encouraged to read and were challenged to share their own talents as they grow in their faith journey.



Bethel member Kathy Butler and the Rev. Arthur Holt spoke about their books at a "book brunch" held at Bethel UMC, Spartanburg.



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The sorority will help the church maintain the food supply, and church youth will refill the box when needed.

Church, sorority team up to provide community blessing box

COPE—On Jan. 8, Alpha Zeta Sorority and Union United Methodist Church, Cope, dedicated a Blessing Box at Union UMC.

The church, in conjunction with Alpha Zeta Sorority, arranged for the box to be constructed by Wayne Ott and Wendel Harrison.

The church and sorority said they appreciate the work these men did to provide the box, which will be used to meet the needs of the community.

The blessing box is intended to be a way they can directly help people in the Cope area on a daily basis. People will be able to get groceries whenever they need. Many people have a lot of pride and do not want to ask for help, so this is a way they can receive what they need without asking. The sorority will help the church maintain the food supply, and church youth will refill the box when needed.

They placed cards in the box with the phone number of the church if someone needs additional assistance.

Their scriptural basis for outreach comes from 1 John 3:17-18: "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

In Luke 12:15, Jesus said, "Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

The church and sorority said they believe Christians should never be so caught up in their belongings that they are not willing to share them with those in need. After all, they said, God could distribute the wealth of the world evenly, but he doesn't do that. He gives his people the opportunity to give and receive love. That means he blesses some so they can experience the joy of generosity. But if we become greedy and covetous, then the blessings we've received become a curse. The goods we withhold from those in need testify against us.

The sorority and church have dedicated many of their resources to support charities such as The Samaritan House, Connie Maxwell Home, Mabry Cancer Center, Dazz Orangeburg, Relay for Life, Aldersgate Home at The Oaks, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, Killingsworth, the Bethlehem centers, Wallace Family life Center and many other organizations.

Organizers for the project include Carole Harrison, vice president Union United Methodist Women and outreach chair for the church; Claire Grogan, president of Union United Methodist Women and secretary of Alpha Zeta Chapter; and Sherry Kittrell, president of the Alpha Zeta Chapter.



Courtesy of Nicolette Houston

St. Mark UMC holds inaugural Fall Festival

On Saturday, Oct. 30, the Rev. Zachary Dillard and First Lady Cari Dillard hosted a fall festival—their first event at St. Mark UMC, North, since his appointment in July. Held from 2-7 p.m., there were hayrides, face painting, basketball, bounce houses, trunk or treaters, food vendors, music, games for all ages, and most important of all, the Holy Spirit was present. After months without face-to-face contact, members of the community were graciously greeted by the Dillards and the St. Mark church family. The community was well represented with fire trucks and police cars, and many stopped by to join the fellowship. Many attendees thanked the church for providing a safe and enjoyable event for the entire family and said they are looking forward for the next event.

Epworth Children's Home

Epworth 1929

Going to church was a must for all of Epworth's children. It was required of all. We had Sunday school in the morning and in the afternoon, church services were held. This arrangement was necessary because we had no regular pastor. Usually we had the preacher from the Shandon Methodist Church or some other visiting minister over for the afternoon service.

I remember Mrs. Capers getting us dressed for Sunday school. Over the years she had acquired, in one manner or the other, several little boys' overcoats. I don't recall getting to wear one except for one time, and how proud I was then.

But we all knew Mrs. Capers' rule: Go immediately after the morning services and take those Sunday clothes off, and change back to everyday wear. This was repeated for the church service in the afternoon. Thus, these special coats, along with all other Sunday "dress up" clothes, were given the best of care, lasting a number of years.

During the summer, we had what we called "Big Meetings" in our church. Some called them revivals. These meetings lasted a week or two. All churches had them; it was the way of life back then. People were more religiously oriented back then. I might add here that on Thanksgiving Day, people were to be found at church worshipping and giving thanks—oh, how time changes things.

At times, the preacher got pretty boring to us little boys and girls, who had probably had a long day at play and, too, it was hot. Add a slight breeze from an open window, and sleep was hard to resist.

Mrs. Capers was right with her charges though, seeing that we stayed awake. Should she see one child nodding, she would whisper the word to the one next to her to pass the word down to the sleepy one to wake up!

It was amusing to some who were awake and had no interest in the sermon to observe a sleeping boy or girl. The sleeper sat relaxed, his head bobbing forward and up again, back and forth, up and down, until his head struck the pew in front of him with a bang! Suddenly awake, he was embarrassed because it seemed everyone was staring at him and some probably laughing. But, all in all, I know much good came from these meetings influencing our lives for years on end.

On Sunday we had our Sunday school in the morning and our preaching in the afternoon. Children were divided into various classes according to age. The girls and boys were segregated. Each sex had its respective class. Our teacher was usually a member of Epworth's staff, though not necessarily so. At times, my class had a male teacher and at other times a female.

We boys had a variety of teachers. Sometimes it was a problem to keep our minds on

the lesson study. If we should have a male instructor, we would do our hardest to get him switched over to the subject of baseball. How we loved that game! We were so wrapped up in it until it crowded out the spiritual aspects of the Sunday school altogether. Most of us were wary of showing too much interest in religion or church-related activities for fear of being dubbed "preachers."

I remember once we had a young lady schoolteacher as our Sunday school teacher. Back in those days, there was a tacit understanding among the towns and villages all over our state that a schoolteacher would attend church and Sunday school on a regular basis as well as mid-week prayer meetings. This was generally true throughout South Carolina years ago. And at Epworth, this attitude of conformity was quite well understood and adhered to. Some few years later, I had two sisters become public schoolteachers, and they affirm this was the normal expectation of those in their profession at that time.

Well, back to the young lady Sunday school teacher. She was all right. We liked her OK. But as a religious instructor to a group of lively youngsters, it was quite a problem for her to capture our interest in the lesson study and to maintain decorum as an older person might have done. In our regular day school, discipline was tight and order was maintained. However, in Sunday school, the routine was more relaxed, as it should always be. Now, we knew for sure that our teacher had no interest in the game of baseball and probably no knowledge of it at all. So we somehow got her off on tops and marbles; this was our second-best sport, to spin tops and shoot marbles. (Yes, at times we played for keeps. This, of course, was gambling, but we weren't monitored too closely by the staff on this minor vice.)

As time marched on, we acquired a new Sunday school teacher. She was slightly elderly, a very devoted Christian woman, genteel and pious. We boys were quick to sense her dedication to the principles of love for God and for her fellow man. We sat quietly and gave her our respectful attention as she presented the lesson study. It's remarkable how quickly children can understand and adjust to the decorum of an adult.

Something she said during her short duration as our class teacher remains with me today; this is it: "Boys, I'm just as sure of going to heaven when I die as I know I'm sitting in this chair this morning."

Well, I'm sure her testimony that day at Sunday school did much to influence us in our Christian experience and steer us in the right direction. This Christian lady was Mrs. W.E. DeLoache, now deceased. She was the wife of our farm manager.

—Written by an Epworth resident at the time

What does your time in the Bible look like?



Are you an avid student, digging deep into books like Leviticus or Hebrews? Or do you prefer the poetry of Psalms and Proverbs? Are you an early-morning or a late-night studier? Have you been walking with Jesus for years, or did you just meet Him?

Regardless of who you are or where you're at in your spiritual life, Don Hocker understands the importance of spending time with God and reading His words to us. After ten years studying the Bible each morning, his dog Lucy nestled at his feet, Don now pours his wisdom, insights, and humor onto the pages of *Just Me, Lucy, and the Lord* (High Bridge Books, 2021).

This 31-day devotional contains:

- Daily Bible passages
- Amusing and engaging commentary
- Insightful questions and thoughts to take you deeper
- Prayers to help you begin conversation with God

Just Me, Lucy, and the Lord, by Don Hocker, available as eBook or Paperback (Don is a certified lay speaker in the UMCSC)

Available on Amazon or at Highbridgebooks.com

Resident panelists included Callie Miley, Cameron Martin and Boyd Chavis.



Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry holds its 2022 annual meeting

IRMO—Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry, the United Methodist agency that helps families prepare for the future of loved ones with developmental disabilities, held its 2022 Annual Meeting on Feb. 10 at The Oaks of Orangeburg.

The theme was “The Next Faithful Steps.”

Board Chairperson Susan Kovas of Bethel United Methodist Church, Chester, welcomed everyone and introduced the Rev. Doug Chambers, retired United Methodist clergy who attends Grace Community UMC, Fort Mill, who gave the invocation.

Next, South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs State Director Dr. Michelle Fry and Interim Associate State Director Lori Manos provided a budget overview and updates. Attorney Lorri Shealy Unumb spoke on advocacy successes and still unmet needs.

Kovas and Executive Director Elaine Mathis gave a summary of the 2021 organizational accomplishments, including managing operations during the ongoing pandemic, expressing gratitude for support and expanding ANSM's network of UMC representatives led by volunteer coordinators Sarah Bozier, Dr. Carolyn Briscoe, the Rev. Shannon Bullion and the Rev. Nellie Cloninger.

Respite Program Director Ebony Dawson-Mack discussed the opening of AIM (Aldersgate in the Morning) in partnership with Grace UMC, Columbia. The program provides a short-term break for caregivers of adults with development disabilities.

Kovas shared plans for ASNM to engage in advocacy and said the ministry will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2023. She announced future dates for giving, including Midlands Gives on May 3 and Aldersgate Sunday on Aug. 14.

Next, Mathis facilitated a panel discussion on what ASNM means to the residents. Resident panelists included Callie Miley, Cameron Martin and Boyd Chavis. Panelists said

they enjoy living at Aldersgate because of the friends they've made, the peaceful environment and the skills they are learning.

Mathis recognized ASNM's staff including Administrator and Team Leader LaVeda Jenkins, Administrator Rosemary Ray-Hill, Residential Manager Victoria Maple and Administrative Assistant Linda Gifford, as well as employees with three or more years of service.

Three staff members, LaVeda Jenkins, Vernell Boyd and Gloria Tyler, were recognized as the longest-serving employees with 12 years of service.

After thanking all members and honorary members of the board of trustees for their dedication, Kovas recognized outgoing members Vice Chairperson Suzette Catoe of St. Paul UMC, Florence, and Peggy Makins.

Kovas presented the 2022-2023 officers: W.C. Hammett of Union UMC, Irmo (chairperson), Mike Simpson of Grace UMC, Columbia (vice chairperson), Michelle Hunt of Mount Horeb UMC, Lexington (secretary) and Daly Ward (treasurer). Kovas will serve as immediate past chairperson.

Kovas closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their support. Attendees enjoyed a tour of Aldersgate at The Oaks following the meeting.

ASNM is the result of several families and interested persons, some of whom were parents of special needs children, taking their desire to develop a place for the care of adult children with developmental disabilities to the Conference Council on Ministries. Delegates to the 2003 Annual Conference approved the Council on Ministries' plan to create Aldersgate. Today, ASNM operates homes in Columbia, Orangeburg and Florence and provides the highest quality of life and greatest level of independence in three Christian homes for adults with special needs. For more information: aldersgatespecialneedsministry.org.



Healthy hearts, healthy church

On Sunday, Feb. 13, Trinity UMC Newberry proudly participated in “American Heart Month” and “Wear Red Sunday.” Members of the congregation wore red to increase awareness of the disease, which kills one in four persons. Harriet Stevenson, communications chairperson, spoke to the congregation about how heart disease and stroke also affects family and loved ones. As she said, it's not only about wearing red once a year or sharing heart health facts. It is time to start over with heart health and maintain it year-round. The American Heart Association has a campaign this year called “Reclaim Your Rhythm.” After dealing with the pandemic for the past two years, many have become complacent about their health in general, Stevenson said, but it is time to rejuvenate and “Reclaim our Rhythm” by walking more and exercising regularly, eating more healthily and taking care of our physical and mental health. As she noted, heart disease can be prevented. After the service, information from the AHA was handed out to the congregation for all to read and share with others. For more information, visit www.heart.org.



United Methodist Women

by Maureen Thomas

For the future

The United Methodist Women continue to celebrate The Legacy Fund Endowment Campaign today, lifting up the continued commitment of time and investment made by thousands of United Methodist Women since the campaign's beginnings in 2014.

As of Jan. 28, the Endowment Fund has received more than \$39 million, which is 65 percent of the total goal.

We are grateful to all members, units, family and friends who have contributed. Your generosity ensures that the mission movement started by our foremothers in 1869 continues so future generations of United Methodist Women can and will continue to lead, serve and discover new ways to change the world. However, we must not stop now; the continued support of The Legacy Fund Endowment is important and ensures our mission dollars can be used to sustain programming that helps chart a course for a bright and hopeful future for women, children and youth around the world.

This worldwide pandemic continues to create great health and economic hardships throughout our country and the world. Our mission work for women, children and youth in vulnerable communities is and will continue to be more important than ever as our world deals with the lasting effects of COVID-19. We must be equipped to continue our work of putting our faith, hope and love into action.

As a permanently invested endowment, The Legacy Fund will forever be a source of income for United Methodist Women. As such, we will continue to fundraise, promote and grow the fund to reach and surpass our \$60 million goal.

Mission giving must always come first because it supports all our current mission and advocacy work. The Legacy Endowment Fund is money for our future. Proceeds from the invested funds will endow future core expenses so that even more money can be directed to support and grow vital mission work throughout our country and the world.

We ask you to continue to promote and support the campaign throughout your districts, units and circles. Our gifts are at work.

On Wednesday, March 23, we will celebrate Day of Giving 2022. The link to the live event is <https://fb.me/e/Tp00GXU9>. Please invite your friends and family to share in this opportunity to help us achieve our goal. The event flyer will be available soon.

Additionally, for those attending Assembly in Orlando, there is still time to register for the Inaugural Legacy Banquet. It is scheduled for Saturday, May 21, from 5-6:30 p.m. It will be a special fundraising event to celebrate and grow the Legacy Endowment Fund.

Tickets are \$65 and must be purchased separately and in advance for each attendee. For tickets: unitedmethodistwomen.org/legacybanquet.

Thomas is Legacy Fund Liaison for SCCUMW.

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Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Amiri B. Hooker

Critical Race Theory is a church concern

I am a fourth-generation schoolteacher and yes, I'm not in a traditional school setting. I teach from a pulpit on Sunday morning. I have a mother who taught more than 40 years and a family full of both current and retired educators.

Given this, I find it saddening that the current conversation around education is in restricting teachers from teaching.

As a pastor, I have been to several school board meetings this year and last year helping to deal with the gravity of the time missed from education because of COVID-19 shutdowns. I look at the number of students who are still not back in school because of fear of another virus outbreak. I consider how the virus affected my own children at home and in our church and realize that a great deal of learning has been lost in South Carolina—and we were already behind much of the nation with education.

Therefore, I am concerned why our legislators would be proposing bills that take away from instruction and ask that teachers limit discussion and freedom of thought, especially around issues of inclusion.

Bills like H.4325 prevent public school districts, public schools and public institutions of higher learning from compelling students to personally affirm, adopt or adhere to the tenets of "Critical Race Theory." These types of bills do not define what it would mean for a school or teacher to compel a student to affirm, adopt or adhere to Critical Race Theory. Teachers do not typically compel students to affirm, adopt or adhere to anything besides classroom and schoolwide policies or rules.

There is no reason to believe teachers would use their authority to compel adherence to Critical Race Theory.

Teachers are not instructing their White students that they themselves are responsible for slavery. However, folks advocating for this legislation, regurgitating the same few anecdotes, suggest there to be an army of teachers committed to preaching these tenets.

I watched a local school board meeting in Marlboro County as a parent got up in tears to ask the school to stop teaching her daughter Critical Race Theory because she didn't want her daughter to "date Black boys."

This type of legislation requires schools to maintain a constantly updated website including information on every curricular resource that teachers use. The Department of Education would withhold money for each class in the district that fails to adhere to this requirement.

This places an impractical burden on teachers and administrators.

State curricular standards are published online. Many schools post syllabi and/or "scopes and sequences" on their websites. Parents who have concerns regarding what their children are learning can, and do, reach out to the school.

H. 4343 bans mandatory training or instruction that may make any individual feel discomfort, guilt, anguish or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race or sex.

Yet Jesus spoke often about the importance of our discomfort. There were many times Jesus asked pointed questions or told stories that greatly disturbed some of those listening. Some people, especially the children or sick people, loved being around Jesus. Others, especially many of the leaders, couldn't wait to get rid of him.

Jesus clearly made some people extremely uncomfortable.

Jesus came to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." Additionally, one would expect topics such as slavery, Jim Crow laws and the genocide of indigenous peoples to cause students discomfort. Discomfort allows to students to challenge their own beliefs, others' beliefs and, subsequently, grow and learn. This provision shows a complete legislative distrust of educators' ability to navigate discourse in their classrooms.

But in all reality a teacher cannot reasonably be expected to know what will make each student uncomfortable. As a result, teachers are being asked to censor their speech, that of their students and the exploration of different ideas in their classrooms.

Schools are meant to be the bedrock of democracy. A freeze on the free exchange of ideas and the censoring of difficult conversations will ensure the next generation is ill-equipped to engage in discourse respectfully, let alone consider different viewpoints thoughtfully.

The American Church and The United Methodist Church has a monumental struggle with the subject of Critical Race Theory, a once-obscure field of legal scholarship that has become a flashpoint in the culture wars. The whole idea has resulted in several contentious run-ins that speak not just to a historically consistent pattern regarding the church's fumbling of racial justice issues, but whether the church will be seen as a viable champion of justice by younger generations for whom racial equality is a core principle.

On the surface, such a ban sounds benign or even commendable. But critics warn that such bans are being used to censor accurate teachings of American history. For example, a proposed CRT ban in Texas schools would remove Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's "I Have a Dream" speech and "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" and the entire 1619 Project from the mandatory curriculum.

CRT teaches that racism is an ordinary part of the American experience at a deeper level than the beliefs of or different denominations and faith traditions. If racism is coded into American laws at a systemic level, then White people can make decisions that uphold racism even if they, themselves, "don't have a racist bone" in their bodies. In other words, a White person doesn't have to be a racist to do racist things.

It is perfectly possible for a White person who does not actively care if his neighbor is "Black, White, green, red or purple" to nevertheless move into a gentrifying neighborhood and start calling the police on his or her new Black neighbors. A White person may be more than happy to put a Black Lives Matter sign in their front yard and still move their children out of a school with predominantly Black students.

Their reasons for doing these things may be innocent or even defensible, but CRT argues that they are unwittingly supporting a system that is designed to benefit them.

The teaching of this type of awareness might even release racially divided worship services.

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>.



The Masters in Criminal Justice program at Columbia College has sent graduates of the program on to work in agencies like the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, South Carolina Highway Patrol, Connecticut State Police and Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

Columbia College ranked in U.S. News and World Report Best Online Programs

COLUMBIA— For the 2022 academic year, Columbia College was ranked 37 in Best Online Masters in Criminal Justice by the U.S. News and World Report.

The institution was also included in the Best Online Bachelor's Programs and Best Online Master's in Education rankings.

Annually, the U.S. News and World Report Best Online Programs rankings are released in order to aid future college students in selecting the school for them. To determine the 2022 rankings, the report evaluated more than 1,800 different institutions of higher education to assess each university's overall quality of education.

The Master's in Criminal Justice program at Columbia College has sent graduates of the program on to work in agencies like the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, South Carolina Highway Patrol, Connecticut State Police and Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

Master's in Criminal Justice Program Chair Wayne Davis views this recognition as an opportunity to expand and grow the program content.

"We are striving for continual improvement," Davis said. "Our program in the near future will include both qualitative and quantitative research methods. In addition, students will apply logic and math to assess various laws and behaviors, all while recognizing the importance of diversity, ethics and relationships."

Columbia College President Dr. Tom Bogart said it is an honor to be recognized each year among the top online programs.

"Our faculty and staff work tirelessly to deliver a top-tier experience for our students, and it is truly humbling to see that hard work recognized," Bogart said. "As an institution, we will continue to strive for excellence moving forward to prepare our students for what comes after graduation."

Clafin, Johnson launch partnership to support Panther Athletics, expand career and leadership opportunities

Clafin President Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack and entrepreneur philanthropist Marcus T. Johnson had no idea that their lunch meeting in March 2021 would lead to a partnership with the university's athletic program or introduce students to career opportunities in the automotive industry.

Clafin's Department of Athletics received a generous donation from Johnson to fund upgrades to athletic facilities, including a new video scoreboard in the Jonas T. Kennedy Health and Wellness Complex.

As president and CEO of Johnson Automotive Group, Johnson will also offer internships and management training programs to prepare Clafin students for executive leadership in the global workforce of the 21st century.

"We are tremendously grateful to Marcus and the Johnson Automotive Group. Our partnership began to evolve when Marcus was very straightforward and asked, 'How can I help?'" Warmack said. "He made it clear that he did not want anything from us, only that he wanted to support Clafin by investing in the future of our students and this historic university."

Johnson's primary goal within the partnership is to expand access and exposure for Clafin students to career opportunities at the corporate level. He believes this will enhance their preparation for leadership positions after graduating from Clafin.

"Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are incubators for African-American scholars, and these proud institutions have produced leaders in every industry. But some of their best and brightest graduates do not have access to transformational opportunities that will allow them to achieve their full potential," Johnson said.

He added, "Some are limited by the misconceptions of decision-makers who marginalize people of color. Often all they need are opportunities to display their distinctive talents and skills. My goal is to use my access and resources to expose these students to what's possible and help them showcase their leadership, innovation, professionalism, tenacity to succeed and other essential qualities that define highly capable managers."

The partnership aligns with Clafin's emphasis on student success. U.S. News and World Report has ranked Clafin in the "Top 10" on its list of the nation's Best HBCUs for 11 consecutive years. Clafin is the only HBCU in South Carolina ranked in the top 10. The publication ranked Clafin seventh in the Best Regional Colleges in the South category and third among the Top Performers on Social Mobility for Regional Colleges in the South.

"We are extremely excited about the partnership and its potential impact on Clafin and the greater Orangeburg community," Warmack said.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND THE CHURCH: Open to all in area

From Page 1

"I thought, 'I want this!' I really wanted someone to do this."

Quickly, Black realized that "someone" needed to be her.

Fresh Hope provides intensive training for anyone who wants to start a group in their church, including certification for facilitators. They require a team of two to four people to be trained facilitators to lead the group, and one of these must have a mental health diagnosis. This is so the group is genuinely peer-led and embraces a wellness model; that is, the belief that one can live a rich and full life in spite of a mental health diagnosis.

Black enlisted Marguet, her friend and fellow member of Advent UMC, who is a recreational therapist and works in a mental health setting. They completed the Fresh Hope training and lined up support at Advent, which gave them the OK to start a group.

Pete Aubin, director of discipleship and connections at Advent UMC, said the church has a number of small "life groups," including one for people in grief and one for caregivers of people with Alzheimer's disease. Aubin said he thought adding a small group devoted to mental wellness and support "was a fantastic idea."

“
**In order to thrive
 as an individual,
 you have to be
 connected to
 faith.**

—Sydnet Marguet,
 co-leader of Advent UMC's
 Fresh Hope mental health
 support group

”

"It's another opportunity to reach out to community," Aubin said.

He said that while he is not a mental health expert, he knows many people in the community struggle with mental illness, and the church should be a place where they can

find help and connection, especially now.

"People who might have had issues that might have been hidden before, COVID brought to surface," Aubin said.

Black and Marguet completed their training this summer and launched their first meeting in January. Right now, Fresh Hope meets the last Thursday night of the month, and it is open not only to Advent members, but also the whole community. They are hoping to meet more often as their group solidifies.

"It's a group for anyone and everyone," Black said.

Black noted it's so important for people with mental illness to have a safe place where they can feel loved and supported, and their family members also need that support network. Having such encouragement in a church is essential.

"I felt so alone in my illness, and even though many (secular) mental health support groups exist, I wanted someone to pour into me in my faith and share my faith," Black said. "Our hope is in God, and especially mentally and emotionally, God is what has given us hope to live in spite of this illness. To be able to share that and grow into it, and help others with it and teach others, is extremely important."

Marguet agrees. "I think everyone, no

matter who you are, is touched by mental illness, just like I think everyone is touched by cancer, whether it's a friend or a family member, but we don't like to talk about it," Marguet said. "A lot of people who deal with these struggles seek help at their church first, but I don't think a lot of churches have mental health resources."

Marguet said that is a big reason why they wanted to start a faith-based mental health group.

"In order to thrive as an individual, you have to be connected to faith," Marguet said.

And that's the whole point: thriving in spite of mental illness, not just surviving, so we can be all Christ needs us to be for his kingdom.

Besides, Aubin added, Jesus did say the most important commandment, besides loving God, is to love others as yourself.

"Jesus was always there to meet people's immediate needs, not just standing on a hillside preaching, but healing lepers or somebody who was lame," Aubin said.

"I really feel the church should be in that business."

To explore using the Fresh Start model to start a peer-led support group at your church, visit <https://freshhope.us>. To connect with Advent's Fresh Hope group, visit <https://www.facebook.com/freshhopesimpsonville>.

Bethel youth talk candidly about mental health, suicide

By Erica Whitt

SPARTANBURG—Early in the pandemic, the pastors at Bethel United Methodist Church began to create a plan for how to respond to what was sure to be a mental health crisis in response to the pandemic. They had insight that people interacting through Zoom meetings without face-to-face contact would quickly take a toll on the emotional wellbeing of our community.

They reached out, and we compiled a list of local therapists and nonprofits that could be shared with individuals in need. At this meeting, we discussed creating a plan to address big-picture mental wellness concepts with the youth in our church when we returned to regular in-person meetings.

In fall 2021, we started a seven-week group focused on growth mindset. Our curriculum was based on "Big Life Journal," of which each participant received a copy.

I led the group through the journal, and Chad Deetz, our youth minister, brought in the spiritual component that reinforced the concepts being presented. We felt this allowed youth the opportunity to see that mental health and spiritually can stand together to help us be happy and whole individuals.

We discussed forming new neural pathways for positive thinking, setting goals, recognizing strengths and seeking support in times of adversity. We also tried to normalize failure, letting our youth know that failure can be the greatest teacher of all and that there is a support system around them when they do mess up.

But following a week with multiple losses in the community, we went off-script from "Big Life Journal" to focus on two hard topics: death and suicide.

The entire mood of the group shifted this night.

Our youth went from typical teens, who would get distracted at times, to one hour of total attention and respect for anyone who shared. We discussed the importance of asking for help when you need it and appropriate ways to be there for your friends when they might need it. We talked about the value that every youth had no matter what they may be struggling with or feeling rejected about.

Older youth took on a leadership role and shared personal stories of struggling but also overcoming. The vulnerability displayed by those who shared allowed younger youth to better recognize that some of the people they look up to have gone through hard things, but they

have also been able to overcome those challenges.

I know that the seeds planted, and the stories shared that night will stick with our youth. I am hopeful that it will allow them to not only support each other, but also support friends outside of youth group as they face the challenges that come with middle and high school and into their adult years.

While the youth met, parents were invited to meet with Bethel's pastors, the Revs. Megan and Brad Gray. This integrative approach allowed the parents to know what the youth were being taught. The idea was this would allow them, when appropriate, to reinforce these skills.

Yet it was just as much to remind them that they don't have to save their children every time they struggle. Parents were able to explore coping skills to use in times of stress as well as work to identify the different strengths in each member of their family. Parents were able to process the struggles of parenting teens growing up with constant connection and discuss ways to set healthy boundaries.

Overall, the parents may have taken away as much as the youth and hopefully were able to remember that our church family can be one of our greatest supports.



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**Deadline
 extended to April 1
 for upcoming
 Advocate 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 compiling a book in 2022 through the Advocate Press titled "Darkness to Light: Jesus, Mental Illness and our Faith Journey."

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

Word count can vary, but the maximum is 2,000 words. The deadline has been extended to April 1.

To share your story, or to talk with Brodie about her helping you write one, email jbrodie@umcsc.org.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE: Cont'd

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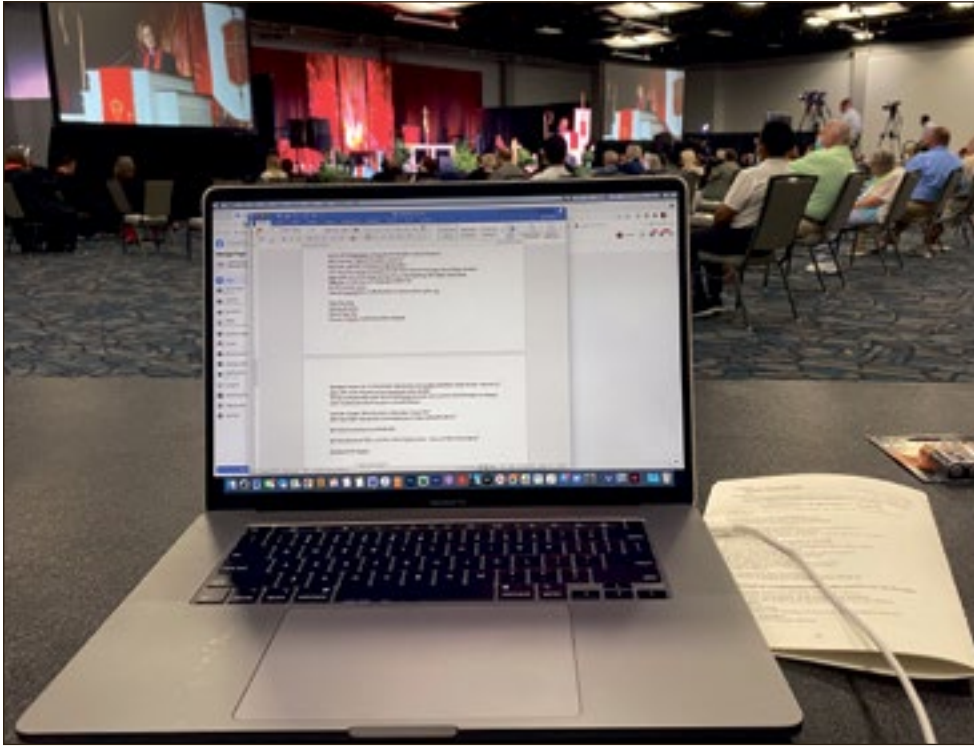


Photo by Jessica Brodie

This is a view from Advocate Editor Jessica Brodie's seat at the press table during the virtual Annual Conference 2021. Only people necessary for reports attended in person. Annual Conference 2022 will also be a virtual event beginning June 5.

Bishop Gary E. Mueller, resident Bishop of the Arkansas Conference UMC, will preach the ordination service.

And Dr. Robin Dease, former Hartsville District superintendent for the South Carolina Conference and now the senior pastor of St. Andrew By-the-Sea UMC, Hilton Head, will preach the memorial service.

Holston said he and other conference leaders look forward to celebrating at Annual Conference the many ways South Carolina United Methodists have embraced the conference's "four priorities" over the past year: developed leaders, engaged with their communities, connected with and grown disciples, and measured and evaluated their current realities and missional possibilities

"While we would prefer to be gathering in person, we trust, believe and know that God

is with us as we seek a more excellent way—even across the digital landscape," Holston said. "The abundance of mission and ministry endeavors across South Carolina these past two-plus years shows us that connecting virtually still allows us to do more together than we could ever accomplish apart."

The full schedule for AC2022 is still in development, including how many days the virtual session will last.

Online registration for lay and clergy members will run from April 15-May 11, and pre-conference packets and video reports for the session will be posted in mid-April at umcsc.org/ac2022.

Two virtual training sessions are slated for June 1 and June 6 to help clergy and laity understand how to navigate the virtual event, including how to cast votes.

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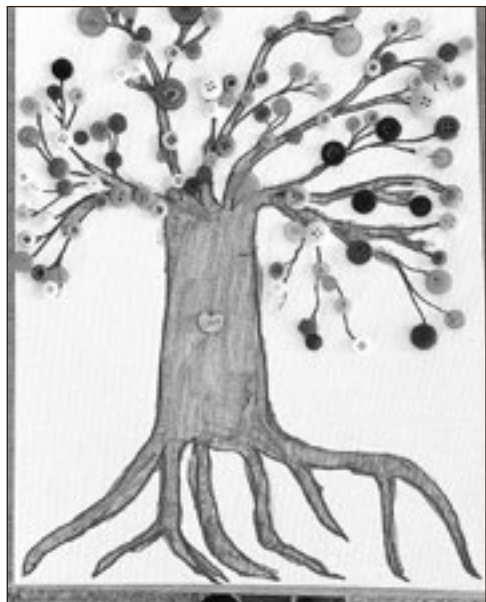
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Grace had a photo challenge on the church's social media platforms using the hashtag #creationphotochallenge. The photo challenge encouraged people to post pictures about each week's sermon topic.



'Lord of All Creation'

Grace gets creative with children, adult extension activities to mirror sermon series

By Amber Forrest and Yolanda McCabe
NORTH AUGUSTA—At Grace United Methodist Church, our programming team wanted to try building out extension activities for an upcoming sermon series. The hope was to keep the congregation involved in the conversation all week long.

We started 2022 off with a sermon series titled "Lord of All Creation." Our Adult Ministry team tried a photo challenge on our church's social media platforms using the hashtag #creationphotochallenge. The photo challenge encouraged people to post pictures about each week's sermon topic.

We were blown away by the level of participation. Adults from both our traditional and contemporary services posted weekly pictures of trees, rivers, rocks, animals, etc. Several people who participated in worship virtually also shared pictures from their Facebook or Instagram accounts.

Not everyone in the congregation uses Facebook or Instagram, but that did not stop them from joining the challenge. They sent in pictures for Grace staff to post on the church's social media accounts on their behalf.

During the six weeks of Grace's #creationphotochallenge, people shared so many pictures of God's beautiful creation and some touching tributes. The activity

also served as an interesting way to increase engagement traffic on our social media platforms. This byproduct of a good time will serve us well in the future.

Our Children's Ministry participated in the "Lord of All Creation" extension activities as well, as we saw an opportunity to incorporate family discussion time together. We turned a sermon into a devotion time for our Sunday school elementary classrooms. We followed this with an arts and crafts time.

One week, the children painted trees with roots for our sermon "Being Rooted in God." The next week, the children created aluminum foil waters on cardboard for our sermon "River of Life," then painted on rocks the following Sunday for our sermon, "Standing on the Rock of Ages." Finally, they created animal masks for our sermon "The Call of the Wild."

Families said they enjoyed being able to drive home together from church and have family discussions in the car about what they learned in church that day; they were on the same page and able to go just a little deeper in their family conversations.

Forrest is director of adult ministries and McCabe is director of children and family ministries at Grace UMC.



Training leaders

St. Paul UMC, New Ellenton, hosted a Lay Leadership Development Day on Saturday, Jan. 29. All who attended the events gathered in the church's Family Life Center for a day of fellowship and leadership training. Trainings were led by the Rev. Ken Nelson, Orangeburg District superintendent, who gave the keynote presentation. The Rev. Cathy Joens led a Safe Sanctuary training. Also in attendance for the training were Bethel and Wesley Chapel UMCs (Jackson Charge), Williston UMC and the Branchville-New Hope Charge. The Rev. Joseph D. Kovas serves as the pastor of St. Paul UMC.

Around the Districts

Rock Hill District

Bishop Will Willimon will be the guest preacher at **St. John's UMC, Rock Hill**, March 13 at both the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. services. On March 14, he'll hold a seminar on his book "Accidental Preacher" at the church from 9:30-11:30 a.m. The seminar is \$10 plus the purchase of a book if desired. Books are available from Cokesbury, Amazon as well as the church office.

Nearly 50-year-old Columbia College mascot to receive makeover

With 46 years of experience representing the spirit of Columbia College, CeCe the Koala will receive a token of appreciation from the Columbia College Community: a new suit.

The beloved koala was named the official Columbia College mascot in spring 1976 when a student contest was held to choose a mascot that represents what Columbia College embodies as an institution. Koalas are a symbol of community, family, loyalty and stability, much like the college throughout the years.

CeCe's suit originated in the early 2000s, representing the Columbia College student body, and has become an important part of student life, providing excitement, energy and a "larger than life" personality to college events.

To show CeCe some extra love, the college launched a capital campaign during the months of February and March. The campaign goal of \$10,000 and will provide a new custom-designed costume with custom attire, plus a \$1,500 scholarship (apiece) for two students to be CeCe actors for a year.



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.



More than 50 volunteers helped pack the hygiene kits Jan. 23. Dr. Stephen Love, Greenwood District superintendent, is at right.



Love offered prayers for all who packed the kits, all who would receive the kits and all who would interact with them going forward offering housing, food and health care.

Photos by Cathy Trevino

St. Mark youth pack hygiene kits for UMCOR

By Cathy Trevino

GREENWOOD—On Sunday, Jan. 23, the youth of St. Mark United Methodist Church came together to kick off 2022 with a mission project.

A group of 37 youth and 16 adults gathered at St. Mark's River Street Campus, where everyone enjoyed a nacho/taco salad meal. Julie McLaughlin, minister of children and youth, Jennifer Lybrand, assistant to the minister of children and youth, and Robby Lybrand, worship minister, then gathered everyone in the sanctuary for worship and business where they watched a video showing them how to put together the hygiene kits for UMCOR that they would be working on that evening.

With the help of money left over from a flood bucket packing event at First United Methodist Church of Laurens, St. Mark members were able to put together 290 hygiene kits that will eventually go to refugees and the homeless. Dr. Stephen Love, Greenwood District superintendent, also helped pack the kits.

These kits consist of a hand towel, washcloth, bar of soap, comb, toothbrush, fingernail clippers and 10 bandages, which were then folded up and placed in a gallon Ziplock bag.

The original plan was to do more of the flood buckets but after talking about supply chain issues with the Rev. Mike Evans, area disaster relief coordinator, all decided to do the

hygiene kits. With the influx of refugees from Afghanistan and the southern border, people felt it made good sense.

After all of the kits were packaged, everyone gathered around as Love blessed the kits.

Prayers were lifted up for all those who packed the kits, all who would receive the kits and all who would interact with them going forward offering housing, food and health care.

All in all, everyone experienced the fun and fellowship of a mission project.

Pastors and laity, youth and adults, all working together to be the hands and feet of Christ—it doesn't get any better than this.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Telley Gadson

Diversity as a testimony of God's creativity

In February, we celebrated Black History Month. I pray that we share the same gratitude space of thanking God for the contributions and culture, heritage and homage, soul-food and soul-fruit, and traditions and trademarks of Black history across this country and God's created world.

As a Black Woman from the Lowcountry, I am a native of Hollywood, South Carolina, and a proud "daughter of the dust" of the Sea Islands. My appreciation for my Black history started at the knee of my parents, as they told and taught my brothers and me about their own labor and legacy in the civil rights movements.

In my very early childhood, Mama and Daddy taught me there is absolutely, positively nothing wrong with the color of my skin, the aptitude of my brain, the acumen of my thoughts or the foundations of my faith—and they were absolutely, positively right-on and on-point.

I am the person I am today because Herbert Gadson and Linda Dingle Gadson taught me to appreciate who I am, fearfully and wonderfully created in the image of God.

Knowing whose I am and whom I serve is an honor and a privilege, afforded by the grace of Creator God, the one who continues to form and fashion me for my destiny. The very transparent and often painful recollections of my parents' Black history instilled in me strength, fortified by courage, heavily seasoned with wisdom for the facing of my days.

I am deeply-rooted in a daily-abiding trajectory of appreciation for diversity. My parents' witness of racism, separate-but-

equal segregation, discrimination, unfair regulations and even unwarranted violence from law enforcement provided perspectives of their grit to survive and God's grace upon them to thrive. As harsh as their realities were, their teachings were never cause for separation, but always, even to this very day, the clarion call to be empowered, to grow and to learn how to be "the change I want to see."

To me, the beautifully diverse colors of our skin is a testimony of God's creativity, not a cosign on racial stupidity. I claim my Black skin to be absolutely, positively beautiful, and such affirmation does not create the degradation of any other complexion or experience. As a matter of fact, such an affirmation aligns respect for myself and respect for others.

In the words of the Black national anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," I hope and pray that we will, "Let our rejoicing rise high as the listening skies, let it resound loud as a rolling sea."

As we close our historical matriculation through the 28 days of February, let us be certain that our practices in social justice and our due diligence for liberation transport us from the sanctuary to the streets and from the altar to the allies.

Our efforts should be organic testaments of our humanity and authentic testimonies of our diversity, marching to the drum of our destiny, "Shadowed beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand, true to our God, true to our native land!"

Gadson is the superintendent of the Hartsville District of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Robert Cox

Untangling membership complications

Recently, I was called to a church to help them untangle their membership records as they made the transition from one church management program to another. The financial secretary had created new membership categories to match the giving status of people and entities and created as many as 15 to 20 different types of members.

The United Methodist Book of *Discipline* gives us the five types of membership in Paras. 215 and 230:

- Baptized: All infants, children, youth and adults who have received Christian baptism, but have not yet made a profession of faith;
- Professing: All baptized persons who have made a profession of faith in The United Methodist Church or other denomination and received into the membership of the congregation through appropriate services;
- Affiliate Member: A professing member of another UMC that wishes to affiliate with a local congregation;
- Associate Member: A professing member of another denomination that wishes to affiliate with the local congregation; and
- Constituent Member: Non-members who are part of the life of the congregation and for whom it shares pastoral care.

These are the only types of memberships in the UMC. What financial secretaries may need is some kind of designation for a donor, but that does not change the type of membership.

What may be helpful is to create a designation for membership status or participation, such as active, inactive, homebound, military, student, institutionalized or something similar.

An excellent source of help is the "Church Membership Records Manual," available from Cokesbury.

Cox, a retired elder in the South Carolina Conference of the UMC, said he has a retirement ministry that helps churches for free. Cox said that anyone who needs help with cleaning up membership rolls or reorganizing them to proper membership types can contact him at rlcox@umcsc.org or www.church-admin.org

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SMC team earns top-15 finish in first try at business pitch competition

SPARTANBURG—Many successful entrepreneurs will tell you that one of the keys to their success is their willingness to take a chance and put themselves out there. One group of enterprising Spartanburg Methodist College students did just that and earned a top-15 finish in the SC Innovates statewide business pitch competition for their effort.

Six students from the SMC Trep Club—Pioneer Entrepreneurship Club—banded together to form Team Hypeman for the state competition. The team pitched their idea for Hypeman, a professional development program they could sell to colleges and individual students to better prepare graduates for life after college.

Their business plan and presenting skills earned them a trip to the semifinals and a place among the top 15 programs from more than 70 teams across the state. The SC Innovates Statewide Student Pitch Competition is a program by the South Carolina Department of Commerce and the South Carolina Research Authority to promote entrepreneurship during Global Entrepreneurship Week.

“Our team was ecstatic to hear about our placement in the semifinals,” said Kahleag Terry, an SMC junior. “We all worked long, hard hours to make sure every requirement was fulfilled.”

Terry, along with junior Kalista Pedersen, led the team and presented the Hypeman pitch to the judges. They were joined by junior Alberto Hernandez and freshmen Shameya Graham, Sergey Culbreath and Hannah Autry in developing the idea. Facing off against much larger schools and programs from around the state, the team was encouraged to pursue the competition by SMC Business Department Chair Dr. Jonathan Keisler. He told them there was no reason they couldn’t succeed with a passion for their idea.

“I am just so incredibly impressed with them,” Keisler said.

Keisler helped revive the Trep Club in 2015 for students interested in business startups and learning more about the entrepreneurial spirit. The club meets every Wednesday at 7 a.m. for presentations, discussions and now to plan for the next pitch competition. He continues to encourage the mem-

bers to innovate.

The members of the pitch team were so invigorated by the SC Innovates experience that they are planning to develop their own competition to encourage younger students to follow their passions. They plan to develop and host a competition for teams from high schools in Spartanburg County.

“We are very excited to host our own competition for multiple levels of education and the overall Spartanburg community,” Terry said. “We hope to use our experience at SC Innovates to create the foundation for SMC’s pitch competition to build on.”

And their dream doesn’t stop there.

“They are hopeful to create an ‘entrepreneurship festival’ with SMC at the center of it,” Dr. Keisler said. “The event would feature guest speakers, local entrepreneurs, and, of course, a pitch competition.”

Leave it to the members of the Trep Club to come out of a business pitch competition with an idea to create their own business pitch competition.



Guest Commentary

by Dr. Kim Strong

Reading the obits

I have developed an odd habit each morning. At least, it feels odd to me. I pick up my iPad and start browsing through the obituaries of at least five local newspapers from around the state. As a member of that organization of traveling vagabonds known as the Methodist clergy, I have personally said words over and buried hundreds of people all over the state.

Therefore, I have an unusual obsession with the dead. I read the obits to see if someone has died whom I might have ministered to over the years. I also read the obits from my hometown newspaper to see if any of the people I went to school with or grew up with have died.

Unfortunately, a good number of my classmates, former church members and fellow clergy have passed on. I always read the entire obituary because it concerns me that people my age are in the obituary column. I am always hoping that their obit will end by asking people to contribute to the American Cancer Society, Alcoholics Anonymous or ALANON. I hold to the thought that if someone my age bought the farm it was because they indulged in some bad habit that I don’t and it caused their much-too-early demise.

If I don’t see that, I am hoping they were killed by a freak chemical accident, in a plane crash, a bolt of lightning or some act of nature. If none of these are the culprit, I pray they died of lead poison administered by a jealous husband, wife or girlfriend.

Anything but old age or natural causes.

As I have read thousands of obits over the years, I have found a trend unique to our Southern culture: Nicknames in the obits. I recently saw the obit of a man who died whose name was listed, and then in parentheses, it said “Jim Dandy.” Neither his first nor middle name was Jim, and after reading his obit, I seriously doubt he was a dandy.

“Big Daddy,” “Junior,” “Butch,” “Buster” and “Toots” are nicknames that show up on a regular basis. I saw a man whose given names were Robert and James but whose nickname was “Eunice.” There is a story there that needed to be expounded on. Interestingly, his wife’s name was not Eunice.

There are always plenty of Roberts called Bob, Elizabeths called Lib, Bettys called Bette and Harolds called Harrys. Those are commonplace.

The one that was set apart from the rest was a guy nicknamed “lover boy.” He had seven sons and four daughters. Every son had a different last name. He had dozens of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The last line of his obit said, “He loved everybody.” Apparently!

So I read on each morning trying to make sense of this thing called life. No matter how long you live or what you accomplished, everyone’s life can be summed up in three column inches or less.

So here is my obit. I wrote it myself. It pretty much sums it all up.

Kim (Big Mac) Strong died last week of natural causes (heart attack in a fast-food line.) He is survived by one long-suffering wife, two children, five grandchildren and a host of astonished and bewildered relatives. He was born in Spartanburg because he wanted to be near his mother. He served, and was served by, numerous churches in South Carolina, some of which are still in business today.

He served in the military and helped defend Myrtle Beach against the Iraqis during the first great Arabian war. He was a man of many passions, most revolving around barbecue food and things that go fast and make a lot of noise.

His services will be Saturday from 1 until 5 p.m. Five different Baptist preachers have been asked to preach his service because he wanted to make sure someone would be sorry he died.

His ashes will be carried to the Carolina-Clemson football game each fall with the falling hopes of a Gamecock victory and a Tiger defeat.

Instead of flowers, you are asked to contribute to The Ronald McDonald House, since it was one too many hamburgers that killed him.

That pretty much sums it up. See you in the obits.

Strong pastors Pendleton UMC, Pendleton



Reflections

by Deborah Len

Filled up with the Holy Spirit

Monica absolutely loved putting away the chairs after her A.A. meeting. She often wondered why wiping them off, folding them and placing them on the mobile rack made her feel exhilarated.

She hummed a little tune and did this task with such a positive attitude that one of the new members paused and watched her intently—not in a stalker creepy kind of way, just in an interested kind of way.

Monica only noticed the new member, Lisa, watching her as she started to push the cart to the closet to have the chairs to be stored until the next meeting. This, after all, was a volunteer fire department they used weekly for their meetings. There was brief eye contact, and Lisa went out the door like she was on fire. Monica remembered that attitude.

Jeremy was getting the broom out to sweep after he made sure everyone had gotten safely on their way. He was the facilitator of the A.A. meetings at this location, and he also was one of the volunteer firefighters. He could count on Monica putting up the chairs and Keith cleaning up the coffee and snacks.

Jeremy remembered when they would not even talk at these meetings. They would come in and sit in the last row away from everyone and do their best to not be noticed. Then they would pop up and be out the door before he could even get a “stay safe” out of his mouth.

Weeks went on like this. Jeremy knew the program would only work if people actually participated.

One night, Jeremy asked if Monica could wipe off some of the chairs. She made it clear she was not ready to share her story, but she would help Jeremy. Jeremy sensed she needed to help. Some of the folks who came to these meetings did not have places to bathe or clean coats to wear. Therefore, mud and leaves would be stuck to the chairs after. Every night for the next few weeks, Monica added to the chair clean-up process.

While she was building up her desire to be part of something bigger than her alcoholism, Keith noticed Monica was helping Jeremy, and that spurred him to ask Jeremy, “How can I help?”

Jeremy, delighted to see Keith wanting to engage in some way, suggested he empty and wash the coffee makers.

Jeremy was a firm believer in the power of prayer and allowing the Holy Spirit to fill the room. He never spoke of this at the A.A. meeting, as all are welcome no matter their personal belief system. But Jeremy was a true believer, and therefore he always had

hope. He was confident in waiting on God to do only that which God can do.

Jeremy only 10 short years ago was so deep into alcohol, opioids and other unsavory behaviors that he’d ended up in the hospital. He was the most truculent person the doctors and nurses had ever dealt with in their lives. No matter what was done or said to him, he would vehemently argue and cuss, meaner than a junkyard dog. People thought he was beyond hope.

One day in the middle of one of his rages, he ran down the hall and actually knocked over a lady and her small child. Jeremy laughed and acted like he was about to stomp on the lady’s hand.

That’s when she looked up at him and said, “I am sorry. I was going so slowly, and I did not see you coming.”

Jeremy stopped—that was it. That was the person God had placed in his path to slow him down enough so he could actually think about what his behavior was doing. (God is cool like that.)

Of course, the transformation from meaner-than-mean to caring and compassionate took some time. When Jeremy was an unbeliever, he had no hope. Jeremy did not care how or who he hurt with his sharp tongue and anger-fueled fists. He did things. He did more things.

And soon the bad behavior became easier and easier.

Now he smiles about each new member of A.A. in his meetings because he has a hope for their future, and Lisa is next. He sees the spark of change in her. He sees she actually hung around for a few moments to watch Monica.

When Jeremy sought to be happy from worldly endeavors, he was truly miserable, and he spewed that misery onto everything and everyone who came near him. Now Jeremy has the hope that passes all understanding in the Lord Jesus Christ. To God be the glory.

God never stopped believing in Jeremy. Only Jeremy stopped believing in God. Jeremy had to replace the lie of despair with the truth that God only wants what is best for us. Once Jeremy stopped filling himself with worldly lies and opened his heart and mind, he became filled with the Holy Spirit.

And once filled with the Holy Spirit, Jeremy had faith much more than fear ever could hold him down again.

Inspired by Proverbs 13:12, Romans 15:13 and Jeremiah 29:11.

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

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Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Tony Rowell

At the helm

There are a few things in this life that I am very fond of doing; a few things that I truly enjoy with my entire being. One of these is deep-sea fishing. I mean real deep-sea fishing.

There is nothing like being out on the ocean far from the sight of land to get the blood pumping. You see, deep-sea fishing isn't deep-sea fishing if you can see land; that's coastal fishing. That's alright for some, I suppose; but why catch red drum and speckled trout when you can go for king mackerel and wahoo?

Down in Murrells Inlet there is a place by the name of Captain Dick's Marina where you can board one of his boats and go out deep-sea fishing. When I get the chance to head out, which unfortunately is not very often, my favorite excursion is the overnight trip. You leave out at about 8 in the evening and return the next day at about 2 in the afternoon. Three hours out to the Gulf Stream, 12 hours fishing and three hours back. It will wear you out, but it sure is a lot of fun.

You get to see a lot of things out on the ocean at night that you would never see during the daylight hours. Over the years I have seen sea snakes surrounding the boat by the hundreds, drawn by the lights. I have seen lots of sharks, manta rays, sea turtles and some things I could never identify. I have heard the low melancholy cry of whales in the night. I have listened for the siren call and looked far and wide, but as of yet I have neither seen nor heard a mermaid; but if there is one out there somewhere, I hope to meet her one day.

There is something magical and a bit frightening about the ocean and its power that draws me to it. There is nothing like the vast ocean to help bring your life and yourself into perspective.

There are some strikingly beautiful things that one can only see while out on the ocean late at night. I have seen more falling stars while out there than anywhere else, I believe. You have an unobstructed 360-degree view. Well, actually, it's a 540-degree view, if you consider the sky. One of the most beautiful things to see, in my opinion at least, is a thunderstorm way off in the distance.

I remember years ago on one of these ventures when upon our departure, I spotted the top of a thunderhead just beyond the horizon right before darkness descended and the ocean went black. I paid little attention to it. I was paying closer attention to figuring out how to get my prized spot up at the front of the boat where I always parked myself. Later on, however, after about three hours of riding the waves, when we had stopped and settled ourselves into our chosen positions and our legs were once again familiar with the ever-present pitch and roll, I took notice again.

It was apparently a very slow-moving storm, for it was now only just above the horizon. Perhaps we had been quartering away from it. I truly don't know; but when we stopped, it hadn't seemed to have moved very much.

There are some things of such intense beauty and awesome power that they will send a shiver up and down my spine every time. One of these is a lightning flash in the distance. You know, one of those flashes that light up the interior of a storm and place it in stark relief against the sky. A flash of that sort, late at night with nothing obstructing the view, is breathtaking and a bit chilling.

Well, that night after we came to rest over the Stream, I looked over to the east where I knew the storm to be and saw nothing for a moment; but then there was a flash that lit up the eastern sky, and I felt that shiver. I waited

for what seemed an eternity, and finally I heard what I took to be thunder, but it was so faint and far off that I was left to wonder.

As the night deepened, the storm moved closer to us. It moved very slowly, but that it was getting closer was undeniable. In a strange phenomenon, our boat, so vast and powerful a few hours earlier, had dwindled in size; and we all felt exposed and more than a little concerned as the night drew on.

There was nothing but stars in the rest of the sky that evening, not even a cloud, so the storm wandered the heavens untethered. In its lonesome travels, however, it had apparently set its affections upon our little craft and decided to seek consolation in our company. For the sound of the thunder quickened its pace, and the lightning intensified as the incredible beauty of a moment before was quickly overtaken by the awesome power that now closed in upon us.

At about 2 a.m., it hit us full force. The waves picked up from a tranquil three to four feet to 10 to 15 in a moment, and higher still a moment later. The wind reached gale force in what seemed to be an instant, and the lightning was so intense and repetitive that you were forced to close your eyes in a fruitless attempt to escape it. To escape the thunder was equally impossible. It cracked and rolled and shook you to your bones. It threatened to tear our little island apart.

The first mate, a salty sailor of 50 years or so, scoffed at those of us cowering in the cabin. His rough voice told us not to worry, that we were perfectly safe. It was just a little squall.

It was about that time that a bolt of lightning struck the flag pole, and the accompanying thunder seemed to drive us deep into the sea that our salty sailor reconsidered his position. The resulting tumult sent us all, first mate included, down to the floor where we fervently confessed our sins and prayed for deliverance.

The squall was on top of us for no more than 15 minutes. That was nowhere near long enough for all of our confessions to have been properly dispensed. But because of the storm's movement, and the skill and courage of our captain, we slipped out from under the danger safe and sound.

In no time at all we were back enjoying peaceful seas, nervously laughing at our fear after having been reminded of our mortality and continuing once again upon our quest of reeling in the big one.

There are times when it feels as if the whole world is crashing down around you. Times when all you can do is hold on for dear life and pray. There are times when it appears that sanity has taken a holiday and the world seems ready to spin off into the vastness of space.

Perhaps that is today in your life, perhaps it will be tomorrow; but when that happens, and it will, remember that Christ Jesus is always at the helm and always in control.

"Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We're going to drown!' He replied, 'You of little faith, why are you so afraid?' Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm" (Matthew 8:23-26 NIV).

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>



Guest Commentary

by David Bryant

Just Puttzin'

I have always loved a boat. My first recollection of boating is my dad taking me fishing in a wooden swamp pirogue (we called them Ogeechee River boats) when I was so tiny I could nap on the floor in the shade under the center thwart. I won't divulge how long ago that was, but the lakes we fished were outside of Orlando, Florida, where a certain mouse-invested amusement park now sits! But I digress.

My first boat of my very own was a 10-foot flat-bottom from J.C. Penney. I worked an entire summer to buy a very used 2½ hp motor. You had to wrap the starter rope around the recoil wheel on top to start it. If anyone else was in the boat, they had to lie down to prevent being hit by a virtual bull whip.

My fondest memory of boating was after Hurricane Andrew. A friend had bought a salvage boat in Florida and had her repaired and refitted: an aft cabin Hatteras cruiser. We, with our two sons younger than 8 years old, flew to Florida, picked up the boat in Vero Beach and headed north to Charleston. We saw manatees, rays, dolphin and any number of other wildlife and coastal scenery. We spent nights in marinas and gunk-holed several times, once in a beautiful—but incredibly humbling—electrical storm.

My most insane memory of boating is having taken a Mako 17-foot center console out of Oregon Inlet, North Carolina, to blue water with only a handheld AM transistor radio for navigation. (I won't mention I was still working on the "what it was like" section of my alcoholism story!)

My current boat is a pontoon purchased to accommodate friends, family, guests and grandchildren comfortably and safely ... OK, it was really purchased for the grandchildren. I feel much better on the water with them in a "gated community." The boat is kept in a marina so I don't have to trailer or load/unload it, and her name is Just Puttzin'.

I'm currently studying Job in the Cokesbury Adult Bible Study. I was perplexed by the resources spent debating the use of either "patience" or "endurance" to describe Job's reaction to his suffering, especially since we know so much more of the story than Job himself knew. We know the interaction of the Holy Council, God and Satan. We also know Jesus is coming. We know he will depart from us but will leave the Holy

Spirit while he goes to make a place for us and intercede with God on our behalf. You see, we know that both "patience" and "endurance" are really faith, and we are told precisely what faith is in Hebrews.

We struggle, like Job, with justice versus injustice. With grief, bereavement, lament and mourning. With anger and resentment. With both extending and accepting forgiveness. We skip Philippians 4:11 to get to verse 13, largely because "contentment" escapes us. For many of us, we have no real clue of injustice or the devastating impact of withheld justice largely predicated by our own—albeit often unrecognized and unintended—actions, beliefs and prejudices on those so physically close to us yet unseen, unnoticed and outside of our cocoons.

Perhaps, like Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice," we should focus on learning to be content with being happier than we deserve.

As the study of Job led to justice versus injustice, I immediately thought of the famous quote by Oliver Wendell Holmes, "There is no justice to be found in or out of court." Except, it wasn't Holmes—it was Clarence Darrow. While looking up Holmes' quotations in my Barrett's, however, I found this gem of spiritual social justice: "Most people are willing to take the Sermon on the Mount as a flag to sail under, but few will use it as a rudder by which to steer."

I can't help but wonder if Holmes wasn't pondering Matthew 7:21-23 at the time.

Just Puttzin' is my place of quiet contentment where I can ponder such as the above and connect the dots in my scattershot mind. It is where I write the most, prepare Sunday school lessons, attend Zoom meetings, dream dreams and see visions, think, contemplate or even sometimes just "sits."

I agree with Ratty and Mole, "There is nothing—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats"... other than trying, and repeatedly falling short of, following the one new commandment Jesus gave: to love one another as he loves us.

So, "Avast ye, I'll be making landfall post haste, high and dry... refreshed for labor in the fields. Fishing on solid ground with love, caring and service as bait. Join me if 'ye dare."

Bryant attends Bethesda UMC, Easley.

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From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

South Carolina's Methodist Women's Colleges

South Carolina's Methodists have taken pride in educating their daughters as well as their sons.

At the same time Wofford College opened for men in 1854, the conference's leaders were planning opportunities to open colleges for women. The minutes of the 1854 Annual Conference attest to this: "The subject of Female Education is one highest importance. The movement now on foot, show that although the Conference has been late in coming into this field, it means to make up by future activity for past debt."

At least five women's colleges operated at various times within the bounds of the South Carolina Conference. Some no longer exist; one has transformed into a state university, and of course one is still part of the Methodist connection.

The 1854 minutes reported that "the Carolina Female College in Anson County, NC, has been in successful operation for the last four years. As a conference institution it has been exerting a hallowed influence upon the minds and hearts of the young ladies who have been favored with its instructions. ... It is commended to the increased attention of the ministers, members and friends of the church."

The minutes also reflect the conference's direction that colleges for women should be established in Spartanburg and Columbia. In Columbia, land and buildings sufficient to accommodate 200 students were acquired, and the trustees requested the conference appoint a financial agent to raise funds.

In Spartanburg, a plot of 23 acres had been acquired a half-mile west of the Wofford campus, and the trustees contracted with Clayton and Burgess, the same men who supervised the construction of Wofford's buildings, to build houses for the president and professors. They reported that they expected to be open by the next year. In fact, the college did open in August 1855, with an inaugural address given by William Gilmore Simms.

Spartanburg's Female College got off to a good start. The trustees reported that 53 young women were enrolled, and three faculty members were providing instruction in literature, music, languages, geography, astronomy and physiology. The trustees requested the appointment of the Rev. Charles Taylor, M.D., as professor of mathematics and natural sciences, which was approved. He joined J. Wofford Tucker, the president, and instructors Phoebe Paine and St. Pierre Saunier on the faculty. Tucker was a nephew of the Rev. Benjamin Wofford.

The college conferred its first degree at Commencement 1857 to Miss C. M. B. Golding, of Laurens.

The college prospered during the Civil War, as many refugees from other parts of the state settled in Spartanburg. But the college's debts mounted, and it was sold after the war ended.

Columbia's Female College, of course, did much better, and after a move from downtown, continues to operate. Another college that started with some of the faculty of the Spartanburg Female College opened in Williamston, led by the Rev. Samuel Lander. It eventually moved to Greenwood and became Lander College, and it was a Methodist-related institution until after World War II.

A final college for women was also in the planning stages in the mid-1850s. Davenport Female College, in Lenoir, NC, opened in 1857. The Rev. Henry Mood was the college's president, and he reported on the curriculum and faculty in the 1858 minutes. Lenoir and Wadesboro, where the Carolina Female College was located, were both in the South Carolina Conference at least until 1870.

Once it was organized, the 1866 Conference quickly set about organizing a college, and Claflin University opened in 1869.

Interestingly enough, while the historically White conference colleges were single gender, women and men attended Claflin essentially from the beginning. Claflin had a profound influence as it helped form women leaders in the Black church.

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 Joyce Plyler

Hymnody

My husband, Mark, enjoys classical music—Bach, Schubert and Mendelssohn, for example. I enjoy the classics, too—Cash, Parton and Orbison.

We each enjoy a variety of genres, but there is one genre in which our tastes converge: traditional hymns, such as "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing," "Great is Thy Faithfulness" and "Blest Be the Tie that Binds."

Any minister who has had to navigate the turbulent waters of musical preferences understands how divisive hymnody can be. Such controversies, I have learned, are nothing new.

Aside from the issue of whether to sing at all—primitive Quakers, for example, did not allow music—one of the earliest controversies in Protestantism was whether lyrics other than the sacred word were appropriate for religious worship. Handel's "Messiah" uses a libretto written by Charles Jennens and comprises verses from both the Old and New Testaments. Martin Luther veered outside of the Bible for "A Mighty Fortress is our God," but Messiah was written in 18th century England.

At that time, Anglicans and Presbyterians used a "Psalmody" incorporating only words from the Psalms.

Moravians made avid use of song in their worship and practice. Their singing in the midst of violent storms at sea convicted John Wesley to seek a deeper spiritual life and influenced him to compile and publish a "Collection of Psalms and Hymns," which, according to some scholars, was the first "real" hymn book used by Anglican congregations (Benjamin A. Kolodziej, "Isaac Watts, The Wesleys, and the Evolution of 18th-Century English Congregational Song," *Methodist History* 42:4 (July 2004), 238, citing Winfred Douglas, "Church Music in History and Practice" (NY: Charles Scribner's, 1937), 235.)

It was printed at the Lewis Timothy Print Shop in "Charles-Town" in 1737 during Wesley's visits to South Carolina.

This compilation was heavily influenced by the hymns of Isaac Watts and included Wesley's translations from the German of several Moravian hymns. He also included some verse written by his father, Samuel, but not a single hymn by brother Charles, whose prolific output would come later to fill Methodist and many other Protestant hymnals.

Congregational singing became one of the distinguishing and most effective tools of early Methodism. Singing had an emotional appeal and helped teach spiritual truths and Bible verses to those who could not read. Moreover, Methodist leaders were willing to use songs and tunes that were simple and easy to sing. Folk songs learned in camp meetings, including what became known as "Negro spirituals," were a significant source of early Methodist and Southern hymnody.

In his 1937 book, "Our Hymnody," Methodist hymnologist Robert McCutchan observed that Methodist hymns over time adopted more complex tunes associated with "high" church styles, but that "all along there has been a common variety of everyday music that perhaps has kept Methodism nearer the soul of the people than" other denominations.

For many years, hymnbooks did not include musical notes. A leader would "line out" the song, and the congregation would mimic each line.

Tunes from well-known secular songs were often applied to the words of a religious poem, and in this way, new hymns

became popular.

In the 1800s, Methodists and other denominations offered singing schools, which were greatly aided by the work of a South Carolinian, William "Singing Billy" Walker, who published "Southern Harmony" in 1835, one of the first books to use shape notes.

Walker (a Baptist who became closely connected with Wofford during his lifetime) helped to preserve many of the era's popular folk songs, especially those used in camp meetings.

"Singing Billy" is not widely known, but he should be, for we owe him a great debt—he was the first person to apply the lyrics of John Newton, a former slave trader, to the tune with which we are all so familiar, giving Christians one of our most beloved hymns, "Amazing Grace."

African-American Methodist churches have shared some of the same issues regarding hymnody. The Rev. Daniel Payne, born into a Methodist family in Charleston in 1811, was a free man of color who championed education and high cultural standards. He was a bishop of the A.M.E. Church and one of the founders of Wilberforce University in Ohio. According to Harry V. Richardson in "Dark Salvation," Bishop Payne "waged a vigorous battle against the use of 'fugue tunes' or 'cornfield ditties' in worship services. He called for singing the hymns that were found in the Methodist and other hymnals. ... (W)e would regard the tunes Payne opposed as indigenous folk music, possibly precursors of the now-accepted 'spirituals.' But Payne felt that they were neither good music nor good religion."

Many disagreed with Payne.

Folk tunes and spirituals appealed not only to African Americans. In 1851, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, issued "Songs of Zion: A Supplement to the Hymnbook of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South."

Discussing this volume in his book, "Black Hymnody," Jon Michael Spencer asserts that the supplement was produced primarily for the White membership of the MECS but also acknowledges that it contained "numerous camp meeting songs which might have made it equally attractive to black Methodists."

In the early 1980s, The United Methodist Church issued three supplemental hymnbooks designed to provide more ethnically diverse hymns. The late Dr. William B. McLain was a major force behind the 1981 "Songs of Zion," a compilation of Black hymnody that the compilers hoped would enrich the worship of all church members, Black or White.

Many of the songs from the three supplements were incorporated into the UMC's 1989 hymnal.

We may have different stylistic preferences for how we worship and what we sing, but I am convinced that the foundations of our faith and our hymnody give us more in common than not.

As for me, I will always remember that as a small child in the rural South of the 1960s, I had the privilege of hearing through my father's strong tenor voice, swaying back and forth on our front porch swing and as twilight waned:

"Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home ..."

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of song. May we find in it the ties that bind.

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

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Jurisdiction mourns death of SEJ Conference Secretary Brad Brady

The Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church announced it mourns the death of SEJ Conference Secretary and retired South Georgia Conference clergyperson Dr. Brad Brady.

Brady died Feb. 7.

According to a release from the SEJ College of Bishops of the UMC, Brady was a pillar of SEJ Methodism and a trusted and gifted leader known and respected throughout the jurisdiction.

"I knew Dr. Brady as a wise and dedicated servant leader," said Bishop David Graves, episcopal leader of the South Georgia and Alabama-West Florida annual conferences.



Brady

"He loved the Lord, loved people and loved The United Methodist Church."

Brady was named SEJ Conference Secretary in August, effective Sept. 1, for the second time in his career.

In 2008, he was elected to serve as the 2009-2012 Jurisdictional Conference Secretary, with primary responsibilities being the planning and implementation of the 2012 SEJ Conference Session.

He offered assistance during the 2016 session and the 2021 virtual SEJ Conference session.

"Brad Brady was my mentor as a director of Connectional Ministries and, beginning in 2012, as SEJ conference

secretary. His leadership skills were widely known throughout SEJ, and I could not have had a better mentor and instructor," said Anne Travis, former SEJ conference secretary. "His organizational skills as jurisdictional secretary set an example for all conference secretaries, as well. I will miss him tremendously, both personally and in the life of our beloved UMC."

In addition to serving in the jurisdiction, he was a delegate to multiple General and Jurisdictional conferences and held leadership roles on a number of denominational-level boards and committees.

Find the obituary, including funeral arrangements, at <https://www.dealfuneraldirectors.com/obituary/Remer-BradyIII>.

Global Briefs

Ministry partner provides new digital tools

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Subsplash, a United Methodist ministry partner since 2020, works with thousands of churches on their digital-engagement strategies. The company recently launched the Subsplash One platform that offers a complete ecosystem of mobile/digital options available to local churches in one place. The General Council on Finance and Administration vets ministry partners.

Immigration conference is March 4-6

NEW YORK—A virtual national faith gathering to strengthen support for refugees, immigrants and migrants is set for March 4-6. Faith and community leaders are invited to participate in the event organized by Church World Service. The United Methodist Committee on Relief is one of the sponsors. The conference will be presented in English and Spanish.

Editor named for Ministry Matters

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The United Methodist Publishing House has named the Rev. Cameron Merrill as editor of Ministry Matters and Leadership Resources. Ministry Matters is an online source of book excerpts, articles and reference materials for pastors and other church leaders. Merrill is an elder in the North Carolina Conference and will continue as pastor of Hillsborough United Methodist Church.

11 church camping ministries receive grants

LITTLETON, Colo.—Each year, United Methodist Camp & Retreat Ministries honors the legacy of the Rev. Solomon Graydon Cramer by awarding grants bearing his name to United Methodist-affiliated camp programs. In 2021, more than \$32,000 was distributed among 11 United Methodist camp ministries. Jen Burch highlights the grant recipients on the United Methodist Camping and Retreat Ministries blog.

Hispanic/Latino ministry plan names executive director

ATLANTA—The Rev. Lydia Muñoz, an experienced advocate for multicultural ministries and social justice, will be the new executive director of the National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry, effective July 1, the plan's executive committee announced. "I am excited that Rev. Dr. Lydia Muñoz will bring her love of God and her deep commitment to creating a more inclusive church to the leadership of the plan," said Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, committee chair. Muñoz is an ordained elder in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

New ministry partner aims to use parking lots

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The General Council on Finance and Administration has added Reef Technology as the newest United Methodist ministry partner. Reef, the largest provider of re-purposing parking real estate in North America, can work with local United Methodist churches to make good use of vacant parking spaces by working with

local organizations needing space.

Agency offers assistance with education

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—United Methodist Communications, the denomination's global communications agency, is offering two educational assistance opportunities to help United Methodists who intend to work in religious journalism. Eligible people have until March 15 to apply.

Church court clarifies disaffiliation rules

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The United Methodist Church's top court released six decisions dealing with a new church law that allows congregations to leave with property if they meet certain conditions. Because of the pandemic, the Judicial Council has been meeting online and releasing decisions as they are completed.

Haiti recovery efforts continue

ATLANTA—Haitians continue to be aided by The United Methodist Church as they recover from an earthquake in August and Tropical Storm Grace, which hit just two days after the first tragedy. The United Methodist Committee on Relief has released a series of grants to help, with the latest providing emergency food rations to more than 5,000 people.

Church disaffiliations, court cases mount

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—As General Conference continues to be delayed, an increasing number of congregations are parting ways with The United Methodist Church. Most are using the denomination's disaffiliation procedures, but some are heading to civil court instead.

Bishops rebuke hatred, racism

WASHINGTON—The Council of Bishops has released a statement condemning the recent attacks and threats against houses of worship and institutions of learning in the United States. Specifically, the Feb. 8 statement referred to the recent attack on a synagogue in Texas and bomb threats against historically Black colleges, including Claflin.

Scholarship deadline approaches

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The United Methodist Higher Education Foundation will accept scholarship applications for the 2022-23 academic year through March 1, 2022. Students who are members of The United Methodist Church and planning to attend a United Methodist-related college, university or seminary full time are eligible to apply.

Visa access a challenge for General Conference

ATLANTA—U.S. State Department information shows that it may be visas, rather than vaccinations, that are the insurmountable obstacle to holding General Conference this year. David W. Scott, mission theologian for the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, writes that wait times mean up to a third of delegates might not be able to get visas in time.

Church parking lots double as safe spaces

DENVER—From June to December, Park

Hill United Methodist Church members pitched 40 fishing huts on the church's parking lot as part of the city's "Safe Outdoors Spaces" program for people experiencing homelessness. Park Hill is among several United Methodist congregations that have discovered that inviting people who lack housing to rest and recharge on church property is a way to put their faith into action.

Foundation reports substantial growth

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Foundation Investment Management, a strategic asset manager of The United Methodist Church, reports that 2021 year-end performance and returns for its customers have resulted in industry-surpassing returns on investments. The foundation's investments adhere to United Methodist Social Principles.

Bishop Woodie W. White honored

ATLANTA—The state of Georgia has honored retired United Methodist Bishop Woodie W. White with the Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery Civil Rights Award. The award recognizes White's unwavering advocacy for leadership development in the fight for civil

rights. The late Lowery, a United Methodist pastor, was a co-founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference alongside the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Invitation to join #BeUMC campaign

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—A new #BeUMC online toolkit has launched to assist church leaders in creating engagement in their church communities focused on the work of the Holy Spirit being done through the people of The United Methodist Church. #BeUMC is a grassroots effort built upon powerful stories of congregations and individuals living their faith.

10 young adults selected for ecumenical work

WASHINGTON—The Council of Bishops has announced the names of 10 young adults selected as the next cohort of United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Training: Young Adult Network. Those selected for the 2022-23 cohort live their faith in Africa, Asia, Europe and the United States.

—Courtesy of the United Methodist News Service

Benjamin James Barr

SUMTER—Benjamin James “B.J.” Barr, brother of Carolyn B. Wilson, died Feb. 2, 2022. Mrs. Wilson is the wife of the Rev. Charles K. Wilson, a member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Feb. 7 at Bishopville Church of Christ, Bishopville, with burial in the church cemetery.

Mr. Barr is survived by his wife, Evelyn, three sons and three daughters.

Regina Bullions

PELZER—Regina Bullions, wife of Andy Bullions, died Feb. 12, 2022. Andy Bullions is a former local pastor who served churches in the Anderson District.

A memorial service will be held March 19 at Latimer Memorial United Methodist Church, Belton.

Mrs. Bullions is survived by her husband and two sons.

Gloria Elizabeth Pressley Burroughs

HEMINGWAY—Gloria Elizabeth Pressley Burroughs, mother of Winfred Pressley, died Jan. 22, 2022. Mr. Pressley is the husband of the Rev. Yvette Pressley, pastor of Good Samaritan United Methodist Church, Lake Wylie.

Funeral services were held Jan. 29 at Friendship UMC, Nesmith.

Mrs. Burroughs is survived by her daughter and son.

Robert L. Cain Jr.

MOUNT HOLLY, N.C.—Robert L. Cain Jr., father of Amanda Gambrell, died Feb. 10, 2022. Mrs. Gambrell is the wife of the Rev. Joey Gambrell, associate pastor of St. Mark United Methodist Church, Greenwood, and campus minister for the Greenwood Wesley Fellowship.

A graveside service with military honors was held Feb. 18 at Rowan Memorial Park, Salisbury, North Carolina.

Mr. Cain is survived by his wife, Pamela B. Cain, and two daughters.

Warren O. Farmer

PAULINE—Warren O. Farmer, father of the Rev. Jeff Farmer, died Jan. 18, 2022. Rev. Farmer is the pastor of the Buffalo-Sardis Charge, Buffalo.

Funeral services were held Jan. 23 at Mount Lebanon Baptist Church, Buffalo, with burial in the church cemetery.

Memorials may be made to Sardis UMC Cemetery Fund, 334 Deep Water Road, Union, SC 29379.

Mr. Farmer is survived by his son and daughter.

Annie Mae Flood

SUMMERVILLE—Annie Mae Flood, sister of the Rev. Roosevelt Geddis, died Jan. 15, 2002. Rev. Geddis is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Jan. 21 at Canaan UMC, Ridgeville.

Mrs. Flood is survived by her daughter and son.

Ameta Lynn Hall

BENNETTSVILLE—Ameta Lynn Hall, daughter of the Rev. Daniel M. “Sonny” and Linda Hall, died Jan. 26, 2022. Rev. Hall is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Jan. 29 at Burroughs Funeral Home with burial in Hebron Cemetery, Clio.

Memorials may be made to the Lupus Foundation of America, North Carolina Chapter, 2820 Selwyn Ave. #701, Charlotte, NC 28209.

Ms. Hall is survived by her parents.

Linda Elene Gladden Heape

GOOSE CREEK—Linda Elene Gladden Heape, widow of the Rev. Ernest Heape, died Jan. 25, 2022.

Graveside services were held Feb. 1 at Riverside Memorial Park, North Charleston.

Memorials may be made to Goose Creek UMC Food Ministry, P.O. Box 96, Goose Creek, SC 29445.

Mrs. Heape is survived by her three stepsons.

David Wayne Helms

SWANSEA—David Wayne Helms, brother of Edith Arant, died Jan. 29, 2022. Mrs. Arant is the wife of the Rev. Athon Arant and mother of the Rev. Melton Arant and the Rev. Michael Arant. Rev. Athon Arant is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church. Rev. Melton Arant is the conference director of Clergy Services. Rev. Michael Arant is currently on leave.

Funeral services will be held at a later date.

Mr. Helms is survived by his wife, Janice H. Helms, four daughters and three sons.

Rev. Marvin R. Moore

BLUFFTON—The Rev. Marvin R. Moore, a retired elder of the Central Texas Conference serving as a retired supply in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Jan. 30, 2022.

Rev. Moore served churches in Missouri, Ohio and Texas before coming to South Carolina, where he served the Hardeeville UMC from 2016 until his death.

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 Feb. 15 at Hardeeville UMC. A memorial service will be held in Missouri at a later date.

Memorials may be made to Hardeeville UMC, P.O. Box 1110, Hardeeville, SC 29927.

Rev. Moore is survived by his wife, Leigh, two sons and daughter.



Moore

Rev. John Leon Newton

FLORENCE—The Rev. John Leon Newton, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Feb. 3, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 1999, Rev. Newton served the Darlington Circuit, Pamplico, Herbert Memorial, Chesterfield, Buford Street, Mullins-Macedonia and Trinity, Conway, charges. In his retirement he served the Main Street-Pine Grove Charge.

Funeral services were held Feb. 12 at First UMC, Bennettsville, with burial at Newton Cemetery #1.

Memorials may be made to First UMC, P.O. Box 456, Bennettsville, SC 29512.

Rev. Newton is survived by his son and daughter.



Newton

Dr. Norman Keith Polk Jr.

GREENWOOD—Dr. Norman Keith Polk Jr., a retired elder in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Jan. 31, 2022.

Prior to his second retirement in 2006, Dr. Polk served the Dillon Circuit, Spartanburg-St. Luke, Florence-Pisgah, Tranquil, Greenwood-Main Street Associate, Galloway-Ebenezer, Aldersgate and Johnston-Harmony charges.



Polk Jr.

In his retirement, he served the Troy and Matthews-Harris charges.

Funeral services were held Feb. 19 at Main Street UMC with a private burial in Greenwood Memorial Gardens.

Dr. Polk is survived by his wife, Rebecca Kelly Polk, and two sons.

Cornelia C. Quarles

ANDERSON—Cornelia C. Quarles, widow of the Rev. Calvin Quarles, died Jan. 30, 2022.

Funeral services were held Feb. 4 in the Ollie Robinson Brown Memorial Chapel of Marcus D. Brown Funeral Home. Burial will be at a later date in the M.J. “Dolly” Cooper Veterans Cemetery.

Mrs. Quarles is survived by her five daughters.

William E. Robinson

HARTSVILLE—William E. Robinson, father of Celeste DuBose, died Jan. 20, 2022. Mrs. DuBose is the wife of the Rev. William DuBose, pastor of the Lugoff Parish, Lugoff.

Funeral services were held Jan. 27 at Gilbert Hines Memorial Chapel with burial in the Mount Calvary Baptist Church Cemetery.

Mr. Robinson is survived by his son and daughter.

Doris W. Ray

HERKIMER, N.Y.—Doris W. Ray, mother of the Rev. Michael Ray, died Jan. 21, 2022. Rev. Ray is the pastor of the Bethune Charge, Bethune.

Funeral services were held Jan. 28 at the chapel of the Enea Family Funeral Home with burial in Mount View Memorial Gardens, Little Falls, New York.

Memorials may be made to the East Herkimer Fire Department, 193 Main Road, Herkimer, NY 13350; or to First UMC of Herkimer/Little Falls, 127 N. Prospect St., Herkimer, NY 13350.

Mrs. Ray is survived by her two sons.

Rev. Mark Anthony Williams

MONCKS CORNER—Rev. Mark Anthony Williams, a retired local pastor of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Jan. 22, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 2016, Rev. Williams served the Cordesville, Ruffin Parish, Silas and Rowesville Parish charges.

Funeral services were held Jan. 28 at Wesley UMC, Ladson, with burial in Cherry Hill Cemetery, Ladson.

Rev. Williams is survived by his son and stepdaughter.



Williams

Remembering the Rev. J. Leon Newton (Nov. 16, 1932—Feb. 3, 2022)

By the Rev. Joseph Abram Jr. (retired)

It seems my daily check of the “conference concerns” notification system reveals a recognizable name. Some are sick or have entered the Church Triumphant.

Each engenders my attention and personal reflections, because of the service rendered and our common humanity. Some have impacted my life in more personal and significant ways that go beyond human kinship, ways that leave indelible marks that have reshaped my life and outlooks forever.

One such individual was the Rev. J. Leon Newton. Rev. Newton and I served in the Marion District South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, and beyond the church on the Tri-County Board of Mental Health, serving and representing Darlington, Florence and Marion counties.

During my earlier days on the board, I served in a student appointment with a salary of \$6,500 yearly, transitioning later to full-time local.

It was during this backdrop that the mental health board scheduled a celebration for one of its retiring member who had

spent her professional life as a social worker. The celebration was held at the Darlington Country Club. I was asked to participate on the program by the honoree, as she noted, because of my “unique way of humor” as one of the roasters. (Note: I was part of an improvisational comedy group in high school.)

As much as I enjoyed making folks relax with a good laugh, I said I probably would not attend, but if I did, I would. I didn’t share that my hesitancy was because I was not sure I could afford the fee.

As fate would have it, I did come and did appear on the program.

Sometime later, I appeared before the Ordained Ministry Board’s Sermon exam sub group and provided a sermon for its perusal titled, “Released By A Touch To Serve.” The sermon was based on Luke 4:38-41 about how Peter’s mother-in-law was healed from her illness and accompanying high fever by the touch of the Master. Released from her sickness, she got up and served the guests.

I recounted my dilemma from the country club experience, and how it had hampered and paralyzed me in my ability to serve—that

is, until one man, J. Leon Newton, a fellow UMC pastor, called at the 11th hour to ask if I was attending. Rev. Newton said he would be honored if I would accompany him. He said he knew I might not have a reservation because of the lateness of my decision, but that wasn’t a problem because his wife had a conflict and wouldn’t be going. Then he shared how important my presence was to him and the board.

I relented, but some anxiety still remained. I thought when we arrived there would surely be prepared seating cards for the Rev. and Mrs. J. Leon Newton, and folks would certainly know I didn’t pay my own way.

When we arrived, Rev. Newton spent moments in leisurely conversation with those in attendance, but I anxiously moved quickly through the crowd looking down or away to avoid conversations that would detain me.

Arriving at the tables, I begin looking for the Newtons’ seats, without drawing attention. Suddenly, before me was the card for the Rev. J. Leon Newton. I thought, “His wife’s card must be to the left or right.” But after a careful check, I didn’t see one. Instead,

I saw my name—the Rev. Joseph Abram Jr. And, oh, what a relief it was!

Finally in our seats, the program under way, my new calmness was interrupted by regret—that I hadn’t accepted the request to participate.

Near the end of the program, the leader announced that the honoree had informed him there may be another participant not listed on the program, and he looked at me and smiled.

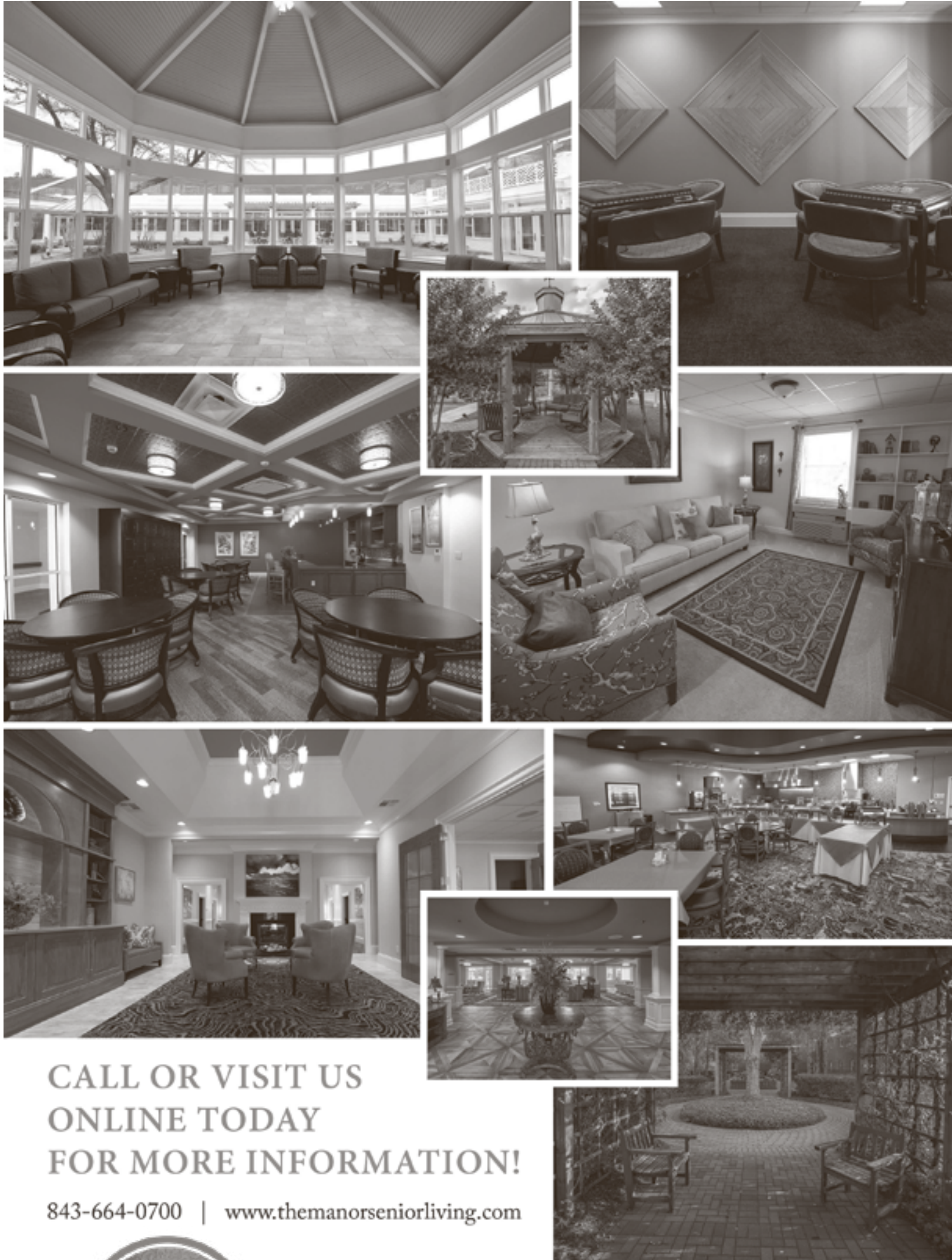
I looked to the dais, and the honoree gestured with a head nob, smile and wink, “Will you?”

I rose, went to the dais, and at the end my presentation received a standing ovation and gratitude.

Some noted, “Look what we would have missed!” But I whispered, “Look what I would have missed!”

Just as my brother released me with his kindness and words of encouragement, I’ve been trying to do the same for others on my journey ever since. Thank you, Pastor Newton. Rest in peace, my brother. May God bless your family, friends and memories.

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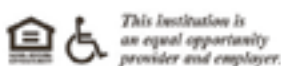
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February

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

Feb. 24—Coffee and Conversation in person or virtually with Kermit Moss, Price House Living Room, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary of Lenoir-Rhyne University, 12:45-1:45 p.m. <https://calendar.lr.edu/coffee-and-conversation>.

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. 25-27—Hands and Feet Service Weekend, Asbury Hills

Feb. 26—SC Men N Ministry Conference, Mount Horeb UMC, Lexington.

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

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 1—Deadline for EarthKeepers training applications. <https://umcmmission.org/earthkeepers/>

March 2—Ash Wednesday

March 3—American Red Cross Blood Drive, First UMC, Cheraw, 1-6 p.m.

March 4—Deadline for Community Developers Annual Conference Cohort application. <https://umcmmission.org/february-2022/global-ministries-extends-cdp-annual-conference-cohort-application-deadline/>

March 6—LSM School (Spartanburg District), Zoom, 2-5:30 p.m. \$40. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-Spring-2022.pdf>

March 12-13—LSM School (Florence District), Zoom, 2-5 p.m.

March 13—LSM School (Spartanburg District), Zoom, 2-5:30 p.m. \$40. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-Spring-2022.pdf>



Creative and fun

Wesley Chapel UMC, Lake City, got creative in raising funds for apportionments, holding a Ms. Wesley Pageant. The pageant was a success and brought in around \$13,000 for apportionments, said the Rev. Amiri Hooker.



SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-Spring-2022.pdf

March 13—St. John's UMC, Rock Hill, 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. services, Bishop Will Willimon speaker.

March 14—Clergy/laity seminar by Bishop Will Willimon, St. John's UMC, Rock Hill, 9:30-11:30 a.m. \$10.

March 16-18—Mission Volunteers Training. <https://umcmmission.org/mission-volunteers/>

March 17—Coffee and Conversation in person or virtually with Brian Peterson, Price House Living Room, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary of Lenoir-Rhyne University, 12:45-1:45 p.m. <https://calendar.lr.edu/coffee-and-conversation>.

March 18-20—LSM School (Walterboro District), Zoom, <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Walterboro-District-Lay-School-March-2022-final.pdf>

March 18-April 2—EarthKeepers Training. <https://umcmmission.org/earthkeepers/>

March 19-20—LSM School (Florence District), Zoom, 2-5 p.m.

March 20—LSM School (Spartanburg District), Zoom, 2-5:30 p.m. \$40. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-Spring-2022.pdf>

March 23—UMW Legacy Fund Day of Giving

March 31—Deadline for Global Mission Fellows US-2 applications. <https://umcmmission.org/become-a-fellow/>

April

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

April 1—Nominations due for Annual Conference Awards

April 2—LSM School (Orangeburg District), St. Andrews UMC, Orangeburg, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Orangeburg-District-Lay-School-April-2022-final.pdf>

April 3—LSM School (Orangeburg District), St. Andrews UMC, Orangeburg, 3-7 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Orangeburg-District-Lay-School-April-2022-final.pdf>

[tent/uploads/Orangeburg-District-Lay-School-April-2022-final.pdf](https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Orangeburg-District-Lay-School-April-2022-final.pdf)

April 3—Open House, Asbury Hills, Cleveland, 1-5 p.m. <https://asburyhills.org/open-house/>

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

April 8 and 9—"The Week That Changed The World," an Easter drive-thru drama presented by several churches from the Columbia area. Rehoboth UMC, 6911 Two Notch Rd., Columbia. 7-8:30 p.m. For info: office@rumcsc.com or 803-788-2220.

April 15—Good Friday, United Methodist Center closed.

April 17—Easter

April 21—Coffee and Conversation in person or virtually with Justin Nickel, Price House Living Room, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary of Lenoir-Rhyne University, 12:45-1:45 p.m. <https://calendar.lr.edu/coffee-and-conversation>.

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://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Marion-District-Lay-Servant-Schools-for-2021.pdf>

April 24—LSM School (Greenwood District) Session I, 2-6 p.m.

April 30—Deadline for Afghan Refugee Resettlement reimbursement grants. <https://umcmmission.org/umcor/afghan-refugee-resettlement-reimbursement-program/>

April 30-May 1—LSM School (Marion District), Trinity UMC, Bennettsville or Zoom, <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Marion-District-Lay-Servant-Schools-for-2021.pdf>

May

May 1—LSM School (Greenwood District) Session II, 2-6 p.m.

May 3—UMVIM, Grace UMC, Columbia, 7:30-8:30 p.m.

May 7—WCA's Sixth Global Gathering, Indianapolis, Indiana. <https://wesley-ancovenant.org>

May 20-22—21st Assembly of United Methodist Women (hybrid), Orlando



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The Mark You Make

by the Revs. Chrisie Reeves-Pendergrass and Weston Pendergrass

March 6

Titles Matter

Lesson Scriptures: Mark 8:27-38

Background Scripture: Same

Key Verse: Mark 8:29, "He asked them, 'And what about you? Who do you say that I am?' Peter answered, 'You are the Christ.'"

Welcome to the journey of Lent, friends! The weeks ahead are a time of discovery not just of who Jesus is. We take what we discover about Jesus' identity, orient our lives around him and discover who we are, as well.

Today's Scripture passage from Mark 8 holds an important question from Jesus, "Who am I to you?"

I (Weston) have been leading my congregation through a sermon series about being the body of Christ in the world. All of our discussion has started with one thing: that Christ came into the world, and we are the body of Christ continuing in the world. We must know who Christ is to continue Christ's work. Naturally, Jesus has to ask his disciples the question, "Who do you think I am?" How else could they be expected to continue doing his work in his name after he is gone?

What is fitting, though is that not long after Peter gets Jesus' official title of Christ correct, he tries to correct Jesus' teaching! "No, teacher, the Messiah (you) won't have to die for anything!" Peter gets Jesus' title right, but not Jesus' complete identity. The same could be said for many of us as followers of Christ. We might get our titles right: we are United Methodists of [BLANK] UMC in Town, State. But ... can we honestly say that we truly understand who we are?

What does it mean to be a member of our local church? Are we people who follow a Christ who loved the world so much that he just had to be born into it as one of us, to live and breathe as one of us, to meet our needs and address our sufferings?

Or, like Peter, do we try to tell Christ what we think the agenda is?

March 13

An Authentic Faith

Lesson Scripture: Mark 9:38-50

Background Scriptures: Same

Key Verses: Mark 9:41, 50, "I assure you that whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will certainly be rewarded. ... Salt is good, but if salt loses its saltiness, how will it become salty again? Maintain salt among yourselves and keep peace with each other."

It is a natural human impulse to try to decide who is "in" and who is "out." We develop thousands of categories to define who

is worthy and who is unworthy.

The disciples were no exception and sought to label some followers as good and others and bad. Jesus immediately rebukes this impulse as contrary to the gospel he is proclaiming and living amongst them. Our country, world and even our denomination are continuing this trend of seeking to ascertain who is more correct or more biblical or even more righteous. Jesus challenges the disciples in this text to remember that whoever is not actively against God, is for God.

How do we see the salt in our neighbors, even when they disagree with us? How do we acknowledge their witness to God when it is not how we would speak out for God? How do we see the image of God in another? To Jesus in this passage, it is more about the disciples behaving in a way that honors God, than how the other believers behave.

How do we see our neighbor in this way? We have to start with our own hearts. We have to pray that we do not lose our saltiness and see people the way that God does.

We must start with our own lives and stop trying to decide how other people fit and recognize that it is only by grace that we fit.

March 20

A Topsy-Turvy Kingdom

Lesson Scripture: Mark 10:35-45

Background Scriptures: Same

Key Verses: Mark 10:44-45, "Whoever wants to be first among you will be the slave of all, for the Human One didn't come to be served but rather to serve and to give his life to liberate many people."

Before we assume that James and John are just itching for an opportunity to ask Jesus for the best seats in his new kingdom before anyone else has a chance, we need to remember something. The passages immediately before what we just read, Mark 10: 32-34, contain Jesus' teachings about what exactly is going to happen to the Messiah (the "Human One" in the CEB).

So it is even stranger, then, that James and John choose this moment, immediately following this revelation from Jesus, to ask for the highest positions of honor in the new kingdom. Stranger still that when challenged by Jesus, "Can you drink the cup, or receive the baptism," they answer, "Yes!"

Clearly, they once again have not fully understood what Jesus is laying out for his disciples. They do not understand just what it is they are asking, or what it is they are committing to do. Even the other disciples don't get it. Their biggest complaint is that these two brothers are trying to politic for the best positions of authority and honor (maybe there was some sense of "Aw, man, they beat us to it" going on there).

None of the other disciples thought to correct James and John by pointing out that they had got it all wrong. All of them misunderstood what Christ's coming kingdom was.

Just as we began our Lenten journey here by needing to be certain about who Christ is so we can be certain of what our own work is as Christians, we must be clear on what the kingdom of God is so we can be certain of what we are building. Are we building our own little molehill kingdoms in the congregations we inhabit, deluding ourselves that we bring honor to God by our work? Or, are we building God's kingdom honestly with our labors, stepping aside, giving God all the credit, seeking inspiration first and foremost from the one who lived, breathed, suffered, died and rose again ahead of us?

March 27

Faith to Move Mountains

Lesson Scripture: Mark 11:12-14, 20-25

Background Scriptures: Mark 11:12-25

Key Verses: "Therefore I say to you, whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you will receive it, and it will be so for you. And whenever you stand up to pray; if you have something against anyone, forgive so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your wrongdoings."

This passage seems to jump around from idea and thought to a new idea or thought. It is one of the passages that Jesus' words cause us to scratch our heads and wonder what in the world Jesus is going on about. One thought seems to not be connected to Jesus's next thought, but for some reason, the gospel writer gives us the entire passage to work and read through.

At first glance, the key verses seem more prosperity gospel than anything, like something a Joel Osteen follower would paint on their kitchen walls. However this type of prayer is not simply wishing for something and believing it will come to pass; it is having faith that God hears your prayers.

God is not a magic genie granting wishes and giving us our every whim or desire, but God is attuned to our every thought. Prayer requires our hearts to be turned to God and trusting that God yearns to give us good things in life and life beyond death. That we are not alone.

Our prayers slowly begin to reflect the heart of God as we continue our life in Christ. The selfish prayers begin to fade, and the selfless prayers replace them. This kind of prayer not only takes belief, but also takes repentance and grace.

How might you need your heart cleansed? Do you believe that the same God who died on a cross is still forgiving? Who is God calling you to forgive this day? What do you need forgiveness for?

Rev. Reeves-Pendergrass is an ordained elder and serves in the Greenville District as the associate pastor of outreach and evangelism at St. Matthew UMC, Greenville. She serves on the Advocate Board and the Clergy Care Team for the South Carolina Annual Conference.

Rev. Pendergrass is an ordained elder and serves in the Greenville District as the pastor of Grace UMC, Greer. He serves on the Greenville District Board of Church Location and Building and on the Title I Planning Team at Chandler Creek Elementary School in Greer.

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SALKEHATCHIE: Of the 40+ camps, 14 expected to open this year

From Page 1

- Columbia: July 16-23
- Emerald City (Greenwood): July 16-23
- Laurens: June 18-25
- Newberry: July 17-22
- North Augusta: July 16-23
- Piedmont: June 25-July 2
- Santee (Clarendon County): July 9-16
- Union: June 18-25
- Winyah Bay (Georgetown): June 11-18

“With only 14 camps operating in the summer of 2022, we anticipate the camps will fill up quickly,” Salkehatchie Board Chair Kathy Hart said, urging those who hope to participate to act quickly.

Registration is \$250/person, and anyone aged 14 and older is welcome if they comply with the new protocols.

Several changes are in place this year given the lingering impact of COVID-19, which is already well past the two-year mark. These changes include the following:

- All campers, adults and youth, must be fully vaccinated to include all vaccinations and boosters in accordance with CDC recommendations at the time of camp. There are no exceptions to this protocol. Campers must bring a copy of their current white COVID-19 vaccination record card to camp;
- If a camper becomes sick with COVID-19 or any of the variants in the weeks prior to camp, they must quarantine for five days and provide a negative test prior to camp date. If this is not possible, camp fees will be refunded upon request;
- Mask-wearing will be determined by the camp director when social distancing is impossible;
- Camps will focus on exterior repair work, such as accessibility ramps and roofs; and
- Sleeping arrangements will be socially distanced.

The registration link will be found on the Salkehatchie.org and the umcsc.org websites. All adults must secure a background check through Smart Trak for Volunteers before completing their registration.

“Salkehatchie camps are God’s camps,” said Salkehatchie founder the Rev. John Culp at the camp directors’ Feb. 12 meeting. “The success of a Salkehatchie camp depends on God’s guiding hand with the unified efforts of local churches and Salkehatchie volunteers.”

Hart said costs are higher this year, and the board is asking for prayer and other support as they approach a year feeling what she called the “pinch of inflation,” especially considering the escalating price of building materials such as lumber and shingles.

“Salkehatchie relies heavily on the delicious meals provided by churches,” Hart said. “If a church is not ready to open their doors to Salkehatchie campers, we are hoping they will consider other ways to help, like sending boxed lunches, setting up an outdoor picnic or providing a financial donation for a meal instead.”

“We recognize that Salkehatchie camps will be operating differently this year, but God is calling us to get back to work, and we are packing our tools.”

The other camps not opening this year 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, Moncks Corner, New Hope, North Strand, Penn Center, Rivertown, Sand River, Spartanburg, Summerville, Sumter, Two Rivers, Upstate Greenville, Wateree and Williamsburg (formally Hemingway-Kingstree East).

Since 1978, Salkehatchie Summer Service has been changing hearts and lives by offering youth and adults an opportunity to draw

closer to Christ through service. Teams go directly into communities of chronic poverty and repair the homes of local families there. By immersing them in an intense physical,

emotional, and spiritual experience, Salkehatchie aims to make disciples of Christ. After a week of service, many of the volunteers say, “My life changed forever.”



Photo by Matt Brodie

Campers volunteer at a Salkehatchie Summer Service week pre-pandemic. This year, 14 service camps are expected to run throughout South Carolina, and registration is \$250/person. Anyone aged 14 and older is welcome if they comply with the new protocols, including vaccinations and boosters.

HEAVEN'S WORK

Second book by South Carolina author John P. James

Charles Bishop is feeling the pressure. The investors in the company he has formed to develop the next generation of bulletproof vests are growing impatient. Bishop Technologies needs to win defense agency DARPA's contract in order to survive, but there are other companies competing for the same contract. One of those companies has sinister intentions toward Charles and his company. Carol, Charles' wife and business partner, is nearing a breakthrough development using her research into the uses of spiderweb silk fibers, but time is running out.

When Charles unexpectedly dies in an automobile accident, he is unable to finish his work on earth. Carol and his son, Aaron, are left to run his company and complete his work, but Carol and Aaron ask the question: Why did God let this happen?

Charles awakes to find himself in heaven and asks that same question. And he finds answers, though they are not what he expected.

He discovers he and the other angels are in the midst of a battle between the forces of light and those of darkness. It is a battle that has been waged throughout the ages. And God has work for Charles to do—heaven's work. He must help Carol and Aaron discover the gift that God intends for mankind, but this discovery cannot fall into the hands of those working for the darkness.

Charles needs the help of others to battle these forces of darkness and accomplish God's plan—people like Lee Grissom, a retired FBI agent, and family and friends on earth and in heaven.

A story of how God uses us, even after our death, to accomplish his work on earth and defeat the forces of darkness.

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