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May 2022

New direction after prison



Photo by Jessica Brodie

Larry works at one of the screen-printing stations at Turn90's Columbia site.

Turn90 helps formerly incarcerated men start over with job, behavior skills

By Jessica Brodie

They call him “Unk,” a kind-faced man in his 50s who is quick with a smile and has an easy rapport with the men working alongside him. But it wasn’t always that way—something Unk knows well. In September, Unk was released from prison after 25 years behind bars. At first he was happy about the release, but reality set in. “I had a hard time adjusting. The whole world is different now.”

While he lived with family members upon release, “I’d stay in my room or sit on the back porch, depressed. One day my niece caught me crying, and I told her, ‘I don’t feel like I belong.’ I even considered doing something to get myself locked back up again, because it’s all I know.”

His probation officer visited and told Unk about Turn90. Within days he was part of the program.

Now, he’s outspoken and happy, brim-

ming over with laughter. He celebrated Thanksgiving and Christmas with his Turn90 family, and he’s learned how to cope and to deal with people and difficult situations.

“I don’t think I’d have made it if not for this program. I’ve learned it’s OK; it’s not over for me. I have a new beginning.”

Unk is one of a number of men learning to rebuild his life thanks to the

See “New Direction,” Page 13

Methodists rally to end death penalty after executions announced

By Jessica Brodie

United Methodists are among loud voices crying both to end the death penalty in South Carolina and to get the execution of death row inmate Richard Moore commuted.

The Rev. Hillary Taylor, the Advocacy area of Conference Connectional Ministries and others with the UMC are joining with South Carolinians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty to stop what many consider the barbaric practice of human execution in this state.

As of press time, they had just participated in a rally at the South Carolina Statehouse April 23 with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to denounce the death penalty and were gearing up for a press conference April 27 with the South Carolina Black Activist Coalition, also at the Statehouse, to continue the conversation.

Much recent activity came about when it was announced in March that the execution date had been set for Richard Moore, convicted in the 1999 killing of convenience store clerk James Mahoney in Spartanburg. The last execution in South Carolina occurred in 2011, and since then, Department of Corrections officials have stated they have been unsuccessful in securing lethal injection drugs. South Carolina passed a law in 2021 that made the electric chair the default execution method instead of lethal injection, with the firing squad as an alternative.

See “Death Penalty,” Page 12

Registration going on now for Annual Conference 2022

A little more than a month remains until South Carolina’s Annual Conference, which again will be held virtually because of the lingering COVID-19 pandemic.

The agenda, pre-conference packets and advance

video reports are scheduled to be posted at umcsc.org/ac2022 during the first week of May, to give clergy and lay members a full month to prepare for the virtual gathering, now scheduled for June 5-6. Members can register for the

session at umcsc.org/ac2022.

“While we all are eager to gather once again in person, the health and safety of our lay and clergy members and our

See “Annual Conference,” Page 15

Bishop calls for patience over questions about UMC, future

By Jessica Brodie

United Methodists across South Carolina are having a variety of reactions to the news that General Conference has been postponed to 2024 and that the Wesleyan Covenant Association is launching its new denomination, the Global Methodist Church, this month.

Some are taking the news in stride, continuing their work for Jesus and waiting until the general church gathers again to tackle some of the tougher questions around sexuality and separation. Others are having discussions about whether or not they wish to pursue disaffiliation and what to do next.

The United Methodist Church’s top court, the Judicial Council, released six decisions Feb. 9 related to how congregations can leave the denomination with property if they wish. However, the court had not ruled as of press time on whether an annual conference within the United States can separate.

South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston released a statement calling for patience amid a “cacophony of voices” that have been offering details and conversations about the future of The United Methodist

See “UMC and Future,” Page 14

UMC seminars teach first aid for mental health

By Jessica Brodie

Seeking a way to address a gap in mental health care and mitigate a steady decline in mental and emotional health, Wespeth offered a two-part live, virtual seminar on first aid for mental health this spring well attended by clergy and

laity across the United Methodist connection.

Wespeth, the health benefits and pension agency serving the UMC, offered the seminar free in March and has now made it available for the public to view the session videos, slides and other information at

www.wespath.org/r/firstaidmh.

Chris White, an international hostage and crisis negotiator for the government of the United Kingdom, led the trainings with participation from Kelly Wittich, Wespeth director of health and well-being.

The first session covered the basics of mental health, how to identify when you or someone else may have mental health needs that require assistance, and the skills to start a conversation and get them the help they need.

See “Mental Health,” Page 15



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Website: www.advocatesc.org

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

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Display ads, classifieds and inserts can be ordered by contacting us at 888-678-6272 or 803-786-9486, ext. 338, or advocate@umcsc.org. Deadlines are the 10th of each month for the following month's paper.

Subscriptions

The *Advocate* is delivered to mailboxes via U.S. mail every month prior to the first Sunday of the month. Subscriptions are \$20/year for the print and online version, and \$10/year for the online-only edition. Church plans are available for as low as \$1/member (online version) or \$10/member (print version with 6+ subscribers per church). To start your subscription, visit www.advocatesc.org, call with credit card 803-726-6743 or 803-786-9486, ext. 335, or send a check to Advocate, 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203.

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 803-786-9486, ext. 338 or 803-807-0018, 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.

I-95 Corridor Authority bill passes House, now in Senate

By Jessica Brodie

A bill spearheaded by United Methodists and other people of faith to address intergenerational poverty along I-95 in South Carolina has passed the State House and is now being considered by the Senate.

H 4985 would establish an I-95 Corridor Authority, a proposed state agency to provide increased economic opportunities for those living along the I-95 corridor. That stretch of land is known as the "corridor of shame," a poor, rural region along the interstate long-plagued by economic and education struggles. If established, programs will focus on education, health and economic development, and partnerships will be established with existing organizations working in these areas. In addition, best practices will be introduced from other parts of the country with offices established in Orangeburg and Florence.

However, the bill must pass the Senate by

May 12 and then go back to the House to approve the amendments before going before the governor to be signed into law.

It has been introduced and read in the Senate and referred to the Senate Committee on Finance. It passed the House 77 to 27, and amendments were made to add Sumter and Jasper counties to the original list. Also, it was approved that no legislator or their spouse could serve on the board of the I-95 Corridor Authority.

The revised list of counties includes Allendale, Barnwell, Bamberg, Clarendon, Colleton, Darlington, Dillon, Hampton, Jasper, Lee, Marion, Marlboro, Orangeburg, Sumter and Williamsburg counties.

"There's a lot of time crunch. Unfortunately, there are only a few weeks remaining in this year's session," said Dan Ligon, who has been working with retired South Carolina United Methodist pastor the Rev. Marvin Ira Lare, re-

tired social services official Dr. Leo Richardson (a member of Francis Burns UMC, Columbia) and others to champion the legislation. "The rules of the State House make us start all over next year."

But passage of a bill later in the season isn't impossible or even unlikely, he said.

Ligon urged anyone in support of the legislation to contact their senator right away and encourage passage, and to call Lare if they personally know a state senator: 803-466-7730.

You can read the legislation in full at https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess124_2021-2022/bills/4985.htm.

He is hoping United Methodists will pray about this bill, consider participating in public hearings and contact their legislators.

Sen. Brad Hutto of District 40 is the sponsor of the bill in the Senate, and Sen. Kevin Johnson of District 36 has been asked to champion the bill in the Senate Finance Committee.

New memoir from Advocate Press explores sexual assault, domestic violence

The newest book from the Advocate Press aims to shine light into the problem of sexual assault and intimate partner violence through the true story of a South Carolina United Methodist pastor who lived it.

The book, "Betrayed With a Kiss: One Pastor's Story of Finding God In the Wake of Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence," is authored by the Rev. Chrisie Reeves-Pendergrass, outreach pastor at St. Matthew United Methodist Church, Greenville.

It is in final editing now and expected to be released sometime in May at <https://advocatesc.org/store>.

Raised a "good girl" pastor's daughter in a wholesome Christian environment, Reeves-Pendergrass thought the horrors of abusive relationships or sexual assault were things that happened to other people. But she found herself in the midst of an abusive marriage, wedded to a predator who convinced her that she was to blame for the rape and degradation she endured. "Betrayed with a Kiss" is the story of how she escaped her



Reeves-Pendergrass

marriage and the chaos of post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental anguish that threatened to tear her apart. But escape she did, going on to graduate from Duke Divinity School and become an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church while finding the true heart of God in the process.

"My story is not new, sensational or exceptional. It's quite common," she writes in the introduction. "That is why I am writing it: So the world stops believing it's rare. My story could be your story, your daughter's, your sister's, your friend's or your co-worker's, and it very well might be. Thirty-four is probably too young to write a memoir about domestic violence and sexual assault, and I am no expert on pain, suffering, mental illness or God (despite my degree). But here I am still attempting to make sense of who God is, what God promises and where God is in our suffering."

Her story shines light into the spiritual transformation she experienced out of heartbreak and betrayal.

Men launching new men's ministry digital platform

The General Commission on United Methodist Men is introducing a "modern way" of doing men's ministry, launching a new program and brand, "United Men's Ministry."

Greg Arnold, General Secretary and chief executive office of GCUMM, said they aren't changing their name, but rather unveiling a brand-new men's ministry digital platform.

It's about approaching men's and scouting ministry with a much larger and more modern vision, Arnold said. The commission has reimagined how men's and scouting ministry can be effectively offered, packaged and distributed to the church and world around us.

GCUMM is opening this platform May 1 with a live webinar launch May 2.

Every church leader who feels their men's

ministry effort could use a restart, upgrade or boost is encouraged to visit <https://UnitedMensMinistry.com> to register on the website for the launch event and get in on the launch.

"Our vision is to offer a credible resource which meets men and youth where they are. Discipleship has been the focus of the church for 2,000 years and cannot take a back seat to the current administrative discussions of the church," Arnold said. "The older chartering model has been showing a steady decline over the past several years and placing its effectiveness in question. We'll continue to offer the chartering model of service according to our *Book of Discipline* mandate; however, we're adding these new and exciting ways to serve the men, youth and families of the church."

United Men's Ministry is an online resource providing an easy-to-follow package of resources including leader coaching, online learning, support, topical studies, connection and more.

Each subscribed church will receive a kickoff kit packed with items when signing up for United Men's Ministry. The goal is to help churches launch, grow and sustain effective men's Ministry.

The United Men's Ministry product is designed to help any local church easily provide a consistent men's ministry. The model is wrapped around a process rather than dependent upon a program. United is layered with the framework of a well-developed discipleship pathway, small group support resources and leader's materials.

Thank children's ministry staff in June Advocate

Does your children's minister go above and beyond what is expected when it comes to cultivating kids in your church? Are you getting ready to kick off your first vacation Bible school in awhile? Or do you just want to give a big "thank you" to the person responsible for tending the youngest of your congregation's flock?

This June, the *Advocate* is offering a chance for your church to recognize their children's minister or ministry team with an appreciation ad.

"We know how important children's ministry staff and volunteers are to the growth of any church," said *Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie. "This is a great way to express support and show your children's ministers their work is valued—and how much they mean to

you."

Three sizes are available for the children's ministry 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 a children's ministry appreciation ad in the June edition, email text to atrussell@umcsc.org or send to Advocate, 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203.

Deadline is May 10. Churches will be billed for the ads unless otherwise noted.

For questions, call Allison Trussell at 803-726-6743.

Advocate launches redesigned website

Advocate readers now have a newly redesigned website where they can share stories, read articles, subscribe and more.

In April, the *Advocate* launched its website redesign.

"We think it offers our readers a fresher look, a smoother feel and a more efficient way

to share stories, purchase *Advocate* books and ebooks, donate, subscribe and more," said *Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie, who with the *Advocate's* Board of Trustees managed the redesign.

All who receive the print edition of the *Advocate* are also entitled to a free subscription

to the digital version of the full *Advocate* via a "premium access" internal site where they can read the paper onscreen. The rest of the content is free for all and sharable via email and all social media platforms.

Check out the website at <https://advocatesc.org>.

UMCOR collaborating to relieve the suffering of Ukrainians

The United Methodist Committee on Relief, a Texas-based humanitarian organization focused on Ukraine and Ohio Health are collaborating to send 47,895 pounds of medical supplies and equipment worth \$935,000 to three hospitals in Kyiv, Ukraine.

AEC Parcel Services is handling transport of the supplies, which are being sent in three shipments.

The effort was put together by the Arlene Campbell Humanitarian Foundation, headquartered in North Zulch, Texas, which has links to health facilities in Ukraine. UMCOR is paying specific costs, including transportation, of approximately \$160,000. Ohio Health, a not-for-profit, charitable, health care ministry of The United Methodist Church, donated the supplies through a medical surplus program. UMCOR put the foundation in touch with Ohio Health and opened the door to the United Nation's Logistics Cluster to move the supplies into Ukraine after they arrived in Poland from the U.S. via chartered jet.

The first shipment arrived at the State Ukrainian Health Ministry Heart Institute in Kyiv on April 14. The second shipment was shared between the Heart Institute, the Center for Pediatric Cardiology & Cardiac Surgery Clinic for Children and the National Specialized Children's Hospital, which is the nation's largest children's hospital, on April 20. The third shipment is scheduled to follow soon, according to Roland Fernandes, general secretary of UMCOR and its parent organization, Global Ministries.

"UMCOR is pleased to facilitate both the procurement and the transportation of essential medical supplies to war-torn Ukraine," Fernandes said. "We multiply our own efforts and the generosity of our contributors when we engage in creative service partnerships."

"This is the biggest shipment we have ever had," said Dr. Vitaly Demyanchuk, deputy director of the State Ukrainian Health Ministry Heart Institute in Kyiv. "Every box contains useful supplies that give us the possibility of providing high quality medical care to our patients, for wounded individuals and others in our area. We



Courtesy of Dr. Adrii Maxymenko

Items in the shipments include wound care/triage supplies, surgical kits and masks, examination gloves, mask respirators, varieties of hospital gowns, stethoscopes, sterile containers and basic medicine.

thank all of the American people. Together we are strong."

Playing a vital role in the transport of these supplies is AEC Parcel Services, a Chicago-based shipping company. AEC Parcel's long-established connections with key points and customs agencies on the Ukrainian border has made them one of the few shipping companies still able to deliver regular parcels and aid from the U.S. and Canada. When war broke out, AEC partnered with several international nonprofits to provide greatly reduced overseas shipping costs to Ukraine and other affected areas.

Items in the shipments include wound care/triage supplies, surgical kits and masks, examination gloves, mask respirators, varieties of hospital gowns, stethoscopes, sterile containers and basic medicine.

To learn more about UMCOR's continued efforts to offer immediate relief and long-term recovery for the war in Ukraine: <https://umcmmission.org/advance-project/982450>.

Willimon publishes new book on listening and hearing God in sermons

This month, Bishop Will Willimon has published a new book on preaching from the listener's point of view: "Listeners Dare: Hearing God in the Sermon."

As Willimon notes in the book, discipleship and witness are not self-sustainable. Preaching equips God's people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11).

The gospel is news that passes from the lips of one who has heard to the ears of one who has not yet heard, then (God willing) it burrows in the soul, energizing the hands in daring response to a word received. Preaching is instigated by an astounding claim: Good news; God has spoken to us. The Christian life is what you get when ordinary folk respond: I have heard.

The book (a companion to Willimon's "Preachers Dare") is for anyone who listens to sermons, which includes preachers, as there's no way to preach without gaining skills as a listener. Listening is a human skill, but as God's word is proclaimed, the hearer experiences a vocal mix of preacher, listener and God.

"In five decades of preaching and teaching



preaching, I've learned to respect preaching as a demanding practice for listeners. 'Listeners Dare' is my celebration of the ways in which God gets through to people through sermons," Willimon said. "I offer specific help for listeners seeking to get more out of sermons and for preachers who must listen to their listeners."

Included are ways to help preachers better speak the gospel and guidelines for preaching.

"Christians are those who have dared to listen for a word from the Lord and have heard that word in Jesus Christ. Listening to sermons is a major way that God gets through to God's people," Willimon added.

Willimon, who served churches in South Carolina before becoming a bishop for The United Methodist Church in northern Alabama, serves as professor of the practice of Christian ministry at Duke Divinity School and director of the Doctor of Ministry program. A prolific author and preacher, he continues to serve the church by offering an unapologetic attempt to articulate the language of the Christian faith on the page and in various pulpits around the country.



Guatemala kids to get help through scholarship

Healing Guatemala has started a new scholarship program to help local students in the Chuisajcaba community and surrounding areas. They are accepting sponsors from people who contribute a certain dollar amount every month to support the education of a youth there, which will enable them to finish middle and high school and eventually attend college. Pictured (above right) is Marleny, a 12-year-old who just became a first-year student in middle school. Her dream is to be a medical doctor. The Rev. Luke Rhyee, a South Carolina United Methodist pastor appointed to serve in that nation with Healing Guatemala, said the organization is supporting her with a scholarship for middle school. If she completes middle school with excellent grades, they will continue to support her with a scholarship to high school, and after high school, she can join Healing Guatemala as part of their medical school scholarship program. It will not be easy, even almost impossible, for Marleny to make her dream come true. Her family is too poor to support her academic years. Most of the people in her village live from hand to mouth. They can barely afford to buy the cheapest grain (corn) for survival. In this extreme poverty, it is simply too hard to pay for school. This is why the achievement of any of their dreams seems almost out-of-reach and impossible. Currently 71 students in that area are supported by scholarship. For more information on the program, visit www.healingguatemala.org.

UMCSC's Erik Grayson to address WCA May 7 gathering

The Rev. Erik Grayson, pastor at Aldersgate United Methodist Church in North Charleston, will address the Wesleyan Covenant Association's Sixth Global Gathering, "More Than Conquerors," in Indianapolis, Indiana, May 7.



Grayson

"Erik's passion for Christ's church and its people is always evident in his leadership, his hands-on service in the local church and community and in his writing," said the Rev. Keith Boyette, WCA President. "He's a working-person's theologian, a pastor simultaneously steeped in Scripture and the traditions of the church, and one who takes the Gospel into the world in both word and deed."

Grayson will take as his text for his presentation the great Isaiah passage on exile, redemption and restoration (Isaiah 40:1-11). Recognizing his leadership skills and pas-

sion for serving others, Grayson was tapped to lead the WCA Task Force on Missions with Marginalized Peoples. In the South Carolina Annual Conference he has chaired both the district committees on connectional ministries and congregational development. He also serves as a board member of the Charleston Wesley Foundation.

During his tenure at Aldersgate UMC, Grayson led the congregation in the creation of a missions non-profit called Holy City Missions, that is now pursuing the establishment of a \$4 million missions campus and year-round shelter for marginalized people.

He also spearheaded the creation of a summer day camp program to provide affordable child care and to daily share Jesus with the campers.

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Viewpoints



Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

More

As we go to press on the May edition, the word settling on my heart is “more.” It’s a word echoed throughout many of the articles and commentaries in this edition. People want “more” information about General Conference and whether or why a church should or should not disaffiliate from the denomination.

There is “more” we can and should be doing to help people getting out of prison to transition successfully into a new and fruitful life.

There are “more” alternatives we should consider beyond the death penalty.

“More” can be done to dialogue with people struggling with mental health issues, and the “more” we do to listen and help, the “more” we can prevent suicide.

In her column, “Blemished Lambs” (Page 5), Rosalie Browning asks whether giving someone our gently used items is the best we can do, or whether we should be called to “more perfect” giving.

The word “more” has a few meanings. Merriam-Webster defines it as meaning “a greater quantity, number, or amount,” “something additional” and also “a person of higher rank.”

Sometimes, we don’t need more—more money, more material items, more stressors. We’re called to be content with what we have, to find joy in the midst of hardship and rest in the peace that comes from simplicity.

But other times, “more” is the answer.

In the Gospel of John, John the Baptist talks about how Jesus is the priority, not him. “He must become greater; I must become less,” John tells his followers in John 3:30 (NIV).

Similarly, in a letter to the early church, the apostle John urges people to test spirits to be sure they are of the Lord and not of the antichrist.

“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood” (1 John 4:4-6).

My friends, it’s not always easy to discern when “more” is the answer. Wherever you are today, take a moment to pause and reflect on what God is calling you to do. You might discover you do need to do more in your path to become more like Christ.

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

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



Bishop’s Corner

by Bishop Jonathan Holston

Now is the time

“This is what the Lord says—he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters ... ‘Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland ... to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.’” Isaiah 43:16-21 (NIV)

For the past two years, we have lived in the midst of a global pandemic, racial unrest and political divisiveness. These frightening times have taken a toll on all of us—both literally and emotionally, in fact—wreaking havoc on the way life is experienced and lived.

In the midst of this prolonged, pandemic-induced pause, we have had to stop almost everything. And now the challenge is to avoid being a “SnapBack” church—one that simply goes back to what we “used to do.” There is an opportunity before us to recalibrate our ministry and carry forward those things we have learned during these challenging two years.

Our current challenge is understanding that we are a connectional denomination in an ever-more-individualistic society. We are Boomers and Gen Xers in a Millennial and Gen Z world—a world that grates against the traditions of older generations and values personal relationships over the value of participating in institutions.

How we relate the Gospel of Jesus Christ with these generations will be important to the building of faith today and into the future.

In her poem, “New Day’s Lyric,” Amanda Gorman writes, “We are learning that though we weren’t ready for this, we have been readied by it.” While the past two

years have been filled with cancellations and disappointments, there has also been unexpected space for intentional reflection and conversation. Time to rediscover our “why.”

Now is the time—an opportunity, really—to claim our relevance and tell our story. What would your community look like if your church was gone? What needs would go unmet? Remember that we were created for God’s purpose, and not our own pleasure. We are created, redeemed and sustained that we may proclaim God’s praise.

Now is the time to develop both the current and next generations of leaders for our church, to engage our communities out in our communities, to connect with and grow disciples and to measure our current realities and evaluate missional possibilities that are truly relevant wherever we find ourselves in ministry.

Yet we acknowledge the elephants all around that demand our attention. Former ambassador Andrew Young describes it this way, namely, “We live in the tension of who we are, who we say we are and who we want to be.”

Facing the difficult truths of General Conference postponement, disaffiliation possibilities and the polarization in our communities are tensions we cannot avoid or hide from.

What we need to do will become evident in the time ahead. But what we do know now is we must continue to make space for God to work and go out and be disciples that God can use.

Being a witness for how God is working in your life and for your life might be the only sermon they ever hear.

Now is the time to take the next faithful steps—trusting, believing and knowing that God is with us.

Letters to the Editor

What’s going to happen?

What’s going to happen to our South Carolina Conference? I fear that it might soon be divided, and it breaks my heart because you people are family to me.

You took me in. You adopted me like a son and being with you—all of you—is like going to a great Thanksgiving gathering. I love it. Everybody’s there. We may argue a bit. Make different points, come down on different sides, but we are still family. We can still pray together. We can still share things we are thankful for and where we have seen God at work, and tell how our children are progressing, who’s been sick or struggling or needs prayer. We find meaning in being part of something bigger than ourselves. It is wonderful having people care about us, care if we get sick and stand up and ring a bell for us if we die. What is happening to our dear church? I love this church.

I was so honored to be appointed as pastor to my first congregation, Trinity UMC in Newberry. Our oldest started school there. Harry Workman took me under his wing. Robert and Carol Cannon lived across town. Our children grew up seeing each other. I joined the South Carolina Annual Conference clergy choir. The Bowman Brothers sang bass. Debra Quilling was our director. We felt the presence of Christ as we sang with all our hearts. So many wonderful friends.

I remember the power of Salkehatchie. Hard days of hot work and joyful nights of worship and singing. Our church made that happen. We also stepped up in the malaria fight. Our work saved so many lives in Africa and inspired others to give as well. Our church stood up for racial justice, and I was proud we did. We have been a beacon of light, not just for our members but for the whole state. Because we come together, work together. Support our colleges and camps and ministries together. We have been South Carolina United Methodists together. Our children go to camp together. They gather around the campfire and receive communion together. They learn about John Wesley’s warm heart. They sing funny songs and holy choruses. This is who we have been.

And when someone’s neighborhood gets hit by a hurricane, South Carolina United Methodists show up, and we don’t give people a theological test before they shovel out muck.

LETTERS: Readers sound off on death penalty, disaffiliation

From Page 4

If you want to help, you're welcome. If you want to eat, come to the table. It's not my table, it's God's table and God says you're welcome here. That is who we have been. But what's going to happen to us?

What are we going to do? Divide the family?

"Children, we have to talk. Family meeting. Mom and Dad have something we need to tell you. We are getting a divorce. So who is it going to be? You decide. Me or them?"

"No, Mom! No, Dad! Say it's not so. I love my family, even the ones I hate. We want to keep our big table. We want everybody there. They are our family. Even the folks who may not think like me, may not agree with me. They are still my brothers, my sisters, my cousins, my family! And I don't want to quit them or have them quit me."

It breaks my heart to see our family split, our house divide. And I think that it is not just me who's weeping. There are a lot of us weeping. We have had something so, so special here. Such a beautiful gift. And it looks like it may never ever be the same again, and it breaks my heart to see it. It just breaks my heart.

*Rev. Clayton Childers, retired
Manassas, Virginia*

Going backward

The State of South Carolina is turning time backward when the plan is to use the firing squad to kill a life. This is barbaric.

The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church condemns "torture of persons by governments for any purpose" and asserts that it violates Christian teachings. The church through its Social Principles further declares "we oppose capital punishments and urge its elimination from all criminal codes" (*Book of Resolutions*).

"We believe the death penalty denies the power of Christ to redeem, restore and transform all human beings" (*Book of Discipline*, Social Principles 164G).

Matthew 5:38-39. Mercy.

*Rev. John Culp, retired
Columbia*

A poem: Christ, My Savior

I cannot go to the cross with you.
I cannot bear the pain.
Nor can I with broken-body hang
Amid shouts of mockery and disdain.
I cannot go with you.

For I am a coward, weak and still,
And I must find a place to hide
With others who followed yet denied,
Amid those who cowered, those who cried.
I cannot go with you.

Nor can I go to the tomb with you,
For there I may be discovered too,
As one who walked and talked with you.
We sought to change the world, 'tis true,
But now we are such a frightened few.
I cannot go with you.

Yet, I can be resurrected with you,
And I can share that glory too.
I, who turned away and lied,
Who sinned and scoffed and yes, denied.
Even I can know your grace.

*Dianne T. Evans, member
Hopewell UMC, Lancaster*

Opposing the vaccine mandate

I am shocked somewhat and saddened that the Methodist denomination is mandating vaccines for the young people and staff who want to serve God in the Salkehatchie camps.

I know the argument on loving others and protecting them. But the truth is that when viruses mutate and spread, they be-

come more contagious and less potent and deadly. A great majority of people have had Omicron. It was very transmissible, which the vaccines did nothing to stop. The vaccinated caught it and spread it as much as anyone unvaccinated. The vaccine is also for an old spike protein that has mutated many times to different variants. Even the CDC has now admitted that people who have had COVID have better immunity from natural immunity than those with vaccinated immunity.

And the OSHA mandate by President Biden for the vaccine was ruled unconstitutional by the highest court in the land.

But I think the worst thing in this is the danger to young people, especially young males from myocarditis (inflammation of the heart). This is a dangerous condition that causes scar tissue to develop in the heart and can cause many other complications of the heart. There are also reports of VARS and death. And lastly, this divides people even more.

How can you demand that you can't do God's work unless you get the shot? Where is this in the Bible? Please do not get all your info from the mainstream media. There are many studies, videos and reports from other doctors, scientists, immunologists and medical workers available. But you won't find them on the one-sided censoring media.

Please do not do something dangerous to our young people in the name of God. I ask this respectfully. Thank you.

*Paula Mills, member
Mesopotamia UMC, Gaffney*

Leadership needed regarding disaffiliation

The United Methodist Church has been involved in a difficult struggle, which many believe is about our various views concerning human sexuality. From the outset, I have suggested it is about our various views concerning the ways we read and interpret biblical Scriptures. On one hand are those who think the Bible is to be read and interpreted literally. Others believe that we must read and interpret the Bible in accordance with various new understandings of the Scriptures. Whether you hold one of the two views mentioned or a view somewhere in between, I think we all will agree that it has produced deeply divisive views when applied to human sexuality.

It had been hoped that a called General Conference would be held in 2022 where action would be taken on these matters, but COVID prevented such from happening. The Committee on the General Conference recently voted to put off that called General Conference until 2024, saying that the inability of the U.S. government to process visas in time for delegates from other countries to come for the called General Conference necessitated the postponement.

The more traditional/conservative groups within the UMC have been working hard to form a new denomination, which is now going by the name of Global Methodist Church. They have announced that they will formally begin that new denomination May 1, 2022. There have been progressive groups that have announced new forms of organizational structures outside the UMC, as well.

Although I retired in 2008, I was called in October and asked if I would serve three small UMCs in the Anderson District. Soon after I began serving as pastor of these churches, questions began to arise from the members about where the UMC was in the process of possible division. I found myself struggling to get the latest resources to responsibly respond. Left mostly to my own research, I have found and recommend to all clergy and laypersons interested in these matters the following two websites:

First, <https://wesleyancovenant.org> and look for their information on how any church, conservative or liberal in view,

can apply to disaffiliate with the UMC. It contains info on the process regarding the property held in trust by the local church for the UMC, and other terms which must be met.

Second, go to <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/church-court-clarifies-disaffiliation-rules>. These recent rulings further clarify questions raised since the last General Conference.

Please note that each of these websites indicates that an Annual Conference may add further steps that must be met by the local church.

Please understand that I write this letter not to encourage any individual or church to disaffiliate with the UMC. Rather, I believe

the most responsible approach for pastors and churches regarding this matter is to be as informed as we possibly can. The UMC has already passed the legislation necessary for the process of disaffiliation to go forward, and that process is spelled out on the websites listed above.

Far more vague is what will happen to churches and/or members who do not desire disaffiliation. I believe the pastors and lay people of the South Carolina Annual Conference of the UMC will express deep appreciation to Bishop Holston and the Cabinet if they will provide the leadership we need in these matters.

*Dr. Michael Vandiver, retired
Anderson*



Guest Commentary

by Rosalie Browning

Blemished lambs

If you present a gift to the Lord, it must be without defect (paraphrase from Leviticus 22:18, 19).

During the cold winter of 2022, our church held a "gently used" coat drive for the needy in our neighborhood. We received a number of warm donated items, all of which blessed their recipients. We plan to continue regular clothing drives, as this endeavor created a valuable sense of community for organizers and donors as well.

But could our best intentions ever have unforeseen consequences? Might it be wrong if what we give to God is only what we don't like or what is no longer the latest style? When is sacrifice important? What is the meaning of the old song, "Give of your best to the Master?"

Do the instructions about the blemished lambs apply to us today?

Just how much has our emptying out of our unwanted items for the less fortunate contributed to our perception of an established social hierarchy of people? Does our giving others our blemished possessions ever reinforce a notion that there are those who are "less than" we are in our society, and that this positioning is okay—that they somehow deserve this status and our imperfect gifts?

If Jesus needed a coat because he did not have a home, would we take a worn jacket out of our packed closet for him, or would we order a new Mambe hooded fleece blanket to keep him warm and dry? He says that what we do for the least of these, we do for him.

What is involved in our responsibility to address systemic poverty in our midst? All of us come into this world as helpless infants unable to determine our status or our characteristics. Those of us who "have" tend to attribute our position on the social ladder to our hard work. Sometimes we even ascribe our material successes to the love our God has for us and to the special blessings he has given to us. In truth, the hand we have received often has little to do with what we have done or what we may or may not deserve. Sometimes the most difficult manual labor is the least financially rewarding. We have no control over our heredity or our opportunity. And we are taught that God loves everyone equally.

How seriously do we take Jesus' instructions in Matthew 19:21-22 to the wealthy young man? "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." The story continues by saying that when the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

For me, the questions remain. How do I avoid the young man's mistake? How do I give of my best? When do I need to make sure that the lambs I bring to Jesus are without blemish? Are my blemished lambs a sufficient offering for those trapped in systemic poverty?

What else can I do? Am I ever called to more perfect giving? Could there be any changes in my heart if next year I kept my gently used coat and instead gave my new coat to my neighbor in need?

Browning is member of Virginia Wingard Memorial United Methodist Church, Columbia.

Carolinas Black Clergy retreat is this month

Final registration is going on now for the 2022 Carolinas Black Clergy Leadership Retreat, set for May 23-27.

The theme for the event is "From Mourning into Dancing: Psalm 30:11." It will be held at the Embassy Suites Myrtle Beach and hosted by South Carolina, North Carolina and Western North Carolina annual conferences of The United Methodist Church.

All clergy are welcome.

For cost and to register: <https://www.umcsc.org/cbclleadershipretreatreg>.

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: atrussell@umcsc.org.



Kensi Gray gives an eye exam.



The team gathers for a smile.



Reading glasses are always helpful.

MSN students return to Ecuador for mobile optometry clinic service

It's been called "the greatest health crisis you've never heard of" (New York Times May 2018). Impaired vision affects more than a billion people in the world today.

Over the course of a number of service/mission trips to Africa and Latin America, students from the Methodist Student Network (Wesley Foundation) at the University of South Carolina have served more than 10,000 people through their mobile optometry clinic run by students and a supporting optometrist.

There are 2,600 pairs of used refitted glasses in the inventory and some 1,800 pairs of reading glasses. A woman who no longer has a livelihood for sewing and embroidery gets her eyes tested and get a pair of reading glasses, and suddenly her life is changed. She can support her family and provide enough food for the children. A child who has fallen behind in school because he cannot see well is also acting out, embarrassed about his failing. A pair of glasses changes everything. He can see and discovers he is a great student and a great person.

For Spring Break 2022, a group from MSN traveled for the eighth time to Ecuador to work with the Evangelical United Methodist Church.

To gain the gift of vision can create a new world for those who have been doomed to a life out of focus. Jesus heals the blind. It is a sign of the in-breaking reign of God. Conversely, some who have 20/20 vision cannot see. They have religion but lack faith to see reality. Such mission trips are about the gift of faith and faith has to do, in part, with seeing with both the heart and the eyes.

The medical clinic in Ecuador was led by Dr. Ron Neuberg, a member at Chapin United Methodist Church. Dr. Ron is usually joined by Ecuadorian doctors who take leave of their practice (and some are retired) to serve remote communities that lack and cannot afford health care. The medical clinics have served more than 15,000 people over the years. Many of the people who came to the clinic in Quevedo were refugees from Venezuela. A medical consultation can often uncover an unknown life-threatening condition that needs advanced treatment. A consultation includes health education and often includes prayer for the patient and family.

Students run the pharmacy, and premed students often shadow the doctors and take the vitals. Local people from the host churches share in the running of the clinics.

Between the optometry and medical clinics, some 1,700



The medical clinic in Ecuador was led by Dr. Ron Neuberg, a member at Chapin UMC.

people were served in the course of the week. We always find that at the end of these trips it is ourselves whose eyes and hearts have been opened. It is we who have found healing. Indeed, it is we who have been converted.

Upon returning from Ecuador this March, one student remarked, "That was the best week and a half of my life."

Bible study fuses bread-baking with intergenerational connection

By Todd Handell and Heather Connor

Every Wednesday evening during the season of Lent, the halls of Lexington United Methodist Church were filled with the enticing aroma of freshly baked bread.

Children's Minister Heather Connor and Youth Pastor Todd Handell co-lead a Bible study titled "Baking with the Bible." Adapted from "Bake with the Bible" by Kendall Vanderslice, this six-week study focused on stories in the Bible that are centered around bread. Each week as the stories were studied, people wondered together while making bread from scratch. From cornmeal cakes to sourdough loaves, this class covered a wide variety of breads all pointing toward the community connection found in breaking bread together.

Baking together wasn't the only unique component of this study, as it was taught to an intergenerational group ranging in age from 4 to 74. With young children and seasoned members of Lexington UMC, all studied the Scriptures and baked bread together. As they mixed and kneaded doughs, participants not only worked together to bake but also pondered over questions related to each week's story. Through activities designed to create collaboration, stories were built and shared. Not only did the younger learn from the older, but the grown-ups had the chance to see what valuable things children also bring to the table. It truly was a collaboration of all ages and stages.

From manna in the desert to traveling along the road to Emmaus, each week's lesson stood independently to allow maximum participation no matter how many weeks a person could attend. But on the weeks where people couldn't attend, they asked for

the Scripture and recipes to have the opportunity to make the bread on their own. Even people who weren't able to attend the study constantly asked what was being baked when they smelled the scent of the freshly baked bread.

To connect this study with the entire congregation, the recipe of Honey Coriander Crackers from week 1 of the study was baked to be used for communion at the Lexington UMC Maundy Thursday Service. This allowed the congregation to experience a fresh perspective on the unity of the Body of Christ while sharing in this sacred meal.

Some highlights from the study included creating menus with meaning to share a bit of what each participant holds dear in shared dishes; sharing each week's Scripture lesson from both the Bible and "The Read, Wonder, Listen Storybook Bible"; sharing communion together on the last night of study with sourdough bread made from one of the recipes; and closing each lesson with a shared body prayer, even getting the grown-ups up and jumping.

This study gave us a small glimpse of the beauty that can come from uniting people of all generations through the baking of bread and the study of Scriptures that remind us that Jesus is the bread of life. Jesus shows us the value found in both the young and experienced, listening to the Temple elders as a boy and telling his disciples to let the little children come to him during his ministry.

As we seek new ways to minister to our communities post-COVID, perhaps incorporating all ages and stages is the way forward for a better-connected body of Christ. What better way to bring the kingdom of God here on earth than together?

Comfortable with the uncomfortable

Pastor shares lessons from Shift Happens conference

By Jessica Brodie

One South Carolina pastor is taking wisdom gleaned at a conference and turning it into a new way to do ministry in her local church and district.

The Rev. Thessa Smith attended Shift Happens: Doing Ministry from the Right Side, a conference offered by Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century, a ministry that works to transform and sustain Black and cross-racial churches and pastors in The United Methodist Church. There, she learned valuable information about a needed perspective shift that she is working to implement in her church, Trinity UMC, Greenwood, as well as across the Greenwood District as a whole.

Smith presented her learnings April 19 to Greenwood District clergy, sharing how with the pandemic particularly, churches have had to move into bold new places. But that movement has been fruitful for the church.

Shifting to the "right side" is not a political innuendo, SBC21 noted. They are referring to a shift from the old way of doing things—comfortable, predictable, but often with lackluster results—to the new.

"It's about being comfortable with being uncomfortable," Smith shared. "The church will never ever again be as we know it."

But, she said, Jesus told us to cast our nets into the deep, the right side of the boat (John 21:6), and look what happened—the nets overflowed.

Held at St. John's Downtown UMC in Houston Dec. 1-2, Shift Happens featured a host of powerful speakers, authors and church leaders, including Dr. Michael Bowie Jr., executive director of SBC21, as well as the Rev. Kevin Murrell, the Rev. Olu Brown and the Rev. Nathalie Nelson Parker.

Smith shared about how shifting involves moving into the digital world; being aware and knowing change is necessary; and being clear about our purpose, mission and identity.

It's like driving a manual transmission,



Photo by Jessica Brodie

"It's about being comfortable with being uncomfortable," Smith shared. "The church will never ever again be as we know it."

Smith said.

"You've got to know when to downshift, when to upshift, when to reverse or speed up and when to coast," she said.

She said before the pandemic, most churches did zero virtual worship, but now, most do.

"The church must be open to all," Smith added, whether that is people, issues or ways of doing.

For example, her church decided to offer Easter Sunday worship at the Greenwood Uptown Market as a way of reaching new people. Many members wore their "Shift Happens" T-shirts, which are an admitted conversation starter given the slightly irreverent play on words. People slow down to read, realize the word is "shift," and then engage in dialogue.

She noted churches today must also be willing to talk about hard issues, such as racism and mental health.

"We must deal with the things we don't want to talk about," Smith added.

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Advent Scuffletown launches weekly worship

By the Rev. Laura-Allen Kerlin
SIMPSONVILLE—It started with a conversation in 2015. Pastor Michael and I were in his office at Advent United Methodist Church, and somehow we start talking about church planting and starting new things. I said in that meeting that I am not sure I would want to start a church from scratch, but starting something with the support, both human and financial, from a healthy church was intriguing.

He talked about how he had thought for years about one day launching a second campus of a church he was serving, and that was the beginning of this idea.

In the coming months, a few other church members expressed similar leanings and nudging of the Holy Spirit, so much so that we included a casual mention of eventually launching a second campus in our Beyond Initiative materials from January 2016. In June 2016, we had our first meeting of the multisite exploratory committee. That team visited other multisite churches, met with some of their staff and leaders, read books on multisite campuses and began to dream about what it could look like to plant a second campus of Advent.

Along the way we have encountered some obstacles, including a fire in our sanctuary at Five Forks and a pandemic, but we have also repeatedly experienced God's faithfulness and leading on this journey. Despite these challenges, God's calling on us at Advent has not changed. Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, and Advent Scuffletown is another way we are planning to do that.

We have been calling this the biggest mission trip Advent has ever taken, as we are sending some people from Advent to go to a new place.

This new place is not all that far or differ-



Advent Scuffletown launched weekly worship on March 13.

ent from where we started, but there is a need for a faith community in this area.

To begin, we are worshipping at Rudolph Gordon School, one of the largest schools in the district, which is 6.4 miles from our Five Forks Campus. We know that the vast majority of people who attend worship at our Five Forks Campus live less than three miles away, meaning we should not expect the majority of people in the Scuffletown Road area to drive six to eight miles to get to us. We also know that there are very few other faith communities in this area.

We have done a lot of things in preparation for launching a new faith community. We have been partnering with Rudolph Gordon School in some capacity for four years now. In Christmas 2020, we held our first big event, Christmas Under the Stars, where we hung lights over the football field at the school, sang carols, heard a brief Christmas message and sang "Silent Night" by candlelight. We had more than 400 people our first

year and 551 at Christmas. Since then we have also held Easter worship and a flashlight egg hunt. We hosted vacation Bible school in the front yard of someone in a nearby neighborhood. We've done outdoor movie nights and snow-cone trucks and collected food for Advent's Backpack Blessings programs.

Last fall, we started having regular dinners for people interested in being part of what we are doing, as a way to begin to foster community among us.

Through all of these things we've met people looking for community and looking for a faith home. I've gotten emails and phone calls from people who've heard we are starting a church out here and are excited to be a part of it. All these people affirm what we have known for a while: that this area needs another faith community. There are people searching for a faith home, and there are people who don't know they are searching, but who for some reason or another will find their way into our doors one Sunday that

might lead them to encounter Jesus.

After years of prayer and planning, Advent Scuffletown launched weekly worship on March 13. We had 106 people join us for our first Sunday. Even though we are in a different physical location and community, we want Advent Scuffletown to feel like Advent, and to feel like home. We worship at 10 a.m. in the elementary school cafeteria at Rudolph Gordon School. When you arrive, you can grab coffee before you go into worship. We have kids programming for kids ages six weeks through fifth grade that follows the same curriculum and structure as kids ministry at our Five Forks Campus. I preached live for our first two Sundays and will continue to do so from time to time, but the majority of time we will watch a video feed of the sermon at Five Forks.

On launch Sunday, I preached from Luke's Gospel, the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). I talked about how we find ourselves in different roles in that story in different seasons of life. While we all want to be the Good Samaritan—bringing healing, hope and love into the lives of others like the man who was beaten and left on the side of the road—we all find ourselves in the ditch at some point in need of saving. Fortunately, God loves us too much to leave us broken on the side of the road and sent Jesus, our Good Samaritan, to bandage our wounds, bring us to safety and love us unconditionally.

As followers of Jesus, the Holy Spirit empowers us to become Good Samaritans to others so that through us others can experience the mercy and love of Jesus. I believe that the faith family being formed at Advent Scuffletown will be another way God shares the mercy and love of Jesus to people hurting in our community, and I am excited to see the plans God has for us.

Kerlin is pastor for Advent Scuffletown.

Feeding the Spirit: Pantry bags provide love, outreach for people on probation

By the Rev. Darlene L. Kelley

Officer Lindsey Brown, 2019 Agent of the Year for the South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon, lifts the last two bags of food from the back of the car and smiles. Packed by volunteers at God's Abundance For All People, the ecumenical food pantry housed at O'Neal Street United Methodist Church, the bags of food are now ready for folks coming in to meet with their probation officers.

"It's great to be able to give people something positive," Brown says. "A pantry bag of food helps. Instead of it being all about what they've done or what they need to do, our interaction can end with a gift."

According to the South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon, at the end of last year, there were more than 22,000 people listed in the "active offender population" in our state. The vast majority of these people are nonviolent offenders, people who made a mistake and are trying to get their lives back on track. The South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon works to supervise these individuals, monitoring their behavior, working to assure restitution for those who may have been harmed as a result of their actions and providing outlets that enable them to pay society back for any wrongs they may have committed.

State statistics affirm that they are very good at their jobs. According to the SCDPPP, South Carolina has an 84 percent success rate; only 13 percent who complete the programs successfully ever reoffend.

Some of the people receiving the pantry boxes have been



A church and a probation department may seem like unlikely partners, but working together, people in need of a little help and a lot of grace can be reached.

away from home and in prison, but many are not required to serve time in jail. Instead they are on probation for minor offenses, traffic violations and petty crimes. In Newberry County, all of them are under the supervision of Officer David Simmons, the agent in charge of the Newberry County Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon. But it was

Newberry's Methodist mayor, Foster Senn, who first reached out to the people at God's Abundance about providing food for the program.

Senn is a member of Trinity UMC, Newberry, and people at his church are also contributing to the cause. The people of Trinity are packing boxes with personal care items like shampoo, soap, shaving cream, toothbrushes and toothpaste.

"By providing hygiene supplies, along with a box of food from God's Abundance for all People, the individuals are welcomed back to their hometown," said Harriet Stevens of Trinity. "We got our church's women's group involved, and they took it on the next month as their mission project. Now the church's men's club is packing boxes. We also added messages of welcome and encouragement to the boxes. This is such a simple project, yet it can positively impact the life of someone. I would love to see all the counties of South Carolina involved. You never know what a difference a box can make in the life of an individual."

A church and a probation department may seem like unlikely partners, but working together, people in need of a little help and a lot of grace can be reached. In the future, they are even hoping to have people working at the food pantry through the community service programming offered by SCDPPP.

All make mistakes, and God's grace is everywhere. At God's Abundance For All People, finding new ways to share in God's grace provides creative new avenues for mission.

Kelley pastors Mount Pleasant and O'Neal Street UMCs.

Good Samaritans for All People a 'daily labor of love'

For 27 years, Good Samaritans for All People Inc. in Bishopville has filled the needs of many families in the Lee County and surrounding counties with food, furniture, clothing, school supplies and other donated items.

Retired United Methodist minister the Rev. Eddie C. Thomas Jr. and his wife, Corine, have answered God's call and worked tirelessly to make a better life for the less fortunate.

The Good Samaritans ministry is a daily labor of love for the Thomases. Almost every day you will find them throughout the Midlands and the Pee Dee area gathering,

sorting and preparing donated goods. They use multiple storage facilities in the Bishopville area in order to be ready to distribute at a moment's notice or to have available during their many major giveaway events. In addition, Thomas utilizes his land to grow a large community garden where he plants 500-600 different types of plant foods every year.

Recipients are given life-sustaining provisions during many events during the year. Events such as afterschool breakfast distribution, back-to-school supply days and pre-Thanksgiving and pre-Christmas giveaways are just a few of the times that hundreds of people in the Lee County area participate in.

This past holiday season, the joy of Thanksgiving and Christmas meals and gifts were shared with 550 families over three days. Also, Good Samaritans fulfills emergency needs that are referred by several partners: the Lee County Fire Department, Lee County EMS, the American Red Cross and Lee County Department of Social Services. There are 26 members of Good Samaritans in four counties.

Many volunteers and donors play a big role in the success of Good Samaritans for all People. But it's the constant love and passion of Thomas and his wife that drive this ministry as they answer the call that Jesus put forth

in Matthew 25:37-40: "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Thomas is available to supply a vacant pulpit once or twice per month and can be reached at 803-459-4989. For anyone with questions or comments about Good Samaritans for all People, he can be reached at that same number.

ERTs help swath of homes after tornado wreaks havoc in Branchville

By Billy Robinson

On the afternoon of Tuesday, April 5, strong thunderstorms and multiple tornadoes ravaged parts of South Carolina.

One of the tornadoes was an EF-3 for most of its 39-mile path from Ulmer to Bowman. At its widest portion, it was 500 yards wide, with the weather service stating it had the power of an EF-4 when it touched down in a pine tree plantation, snapping all the big trees five feet off the ground and decimating the forest.

Thankfully the tornado happened in a rural area and was constantly touching down and picking up off the ground throughout its path, minimizing the damage.

When it touched down just outside of Branchville at 5721 Freedom Road (Highway 21) it was an EF-3 and caused havoc to at least 13 homes in the rural community located between Branchville and Rowesville. By the grace of God, no one was seriously injured, though many big trees were violently thrown to the ground with the majority of them falling across driveways and near homes. A few trees did partially fall onto some homes, causing roof damage and breaking windows.

The following day, more violent storms rocked our state, hindering aid to the affected areas. Orangeburg County Emergency Services Director Billy Staley contacted our South Carolina United Methodist Volunteers In Mission Early Response Teams Wednesday night to aid the families affected.

The next morning, Thursday, the ERT responded first with assessment teams, who made contact with the survivors and assessed their needs, prayed for them and offered Scripture aids of comfort and care.

Then Friday and Saturday, ERT disaster response teams responded with 21 volunteers from various portions of the state, two disaster response trailers and two skid steers to



Photo by Billy Robinson

After an EF-3 tornado ravaged the Freedom Road area near Branchville, 21 ERT volunteers stepped up to help.

take on the phenomenal task of cutting up the big trees with chainsaws at 11 homes and piling the debris in wood lines since the county was not going to pick up the storm debris.

We also tarped seven homes and structures that had damaged roofs and windows to prevent any further weather damage.

We started at 5721 Freedom Road, cutting a big pine tree away from the side and roofline of a home and placing tarps over three broken windows for a grateful family unable to do the task themselves because of health issues. We went from house to house in the same vicinity and across the road, saving homeowners ten of thousands of dollars and making their homes accessible and livable again.

In several locations, we also cut out access so the power company could restore power to the homes. On Seacrest Lane we found family helping family, some traveling from Charleston to do so. We worked side by side with them, cutting fallen trees and debris away and tarping damaged roofs.

The last home we worked at was a unique one, where a big oak tree had fallen over and into Bob and Diane Williams' shed, located at 5842 Freedom Road. The big tree was completely covering the shed, making access to it impossible and very dangerous because of partial collapse of the building.

Using a skid steer and chainsaws, we methodically and carefully removed the big tree from the partially destroyed shed. We were then able to save the large majority of its contents including a collection of more than 300 elephant collectibles, educational items for kids and various other items. The salvaged items were loaded onto a trailer and hauled to their home. A tarp was placed over the severely damaged shed to help salvage half of it and protect its remaining contents.

The homeowners kept stating that they were so grateful and had never witnessed or even heard of a group of people who would come out in the midst of a disaster to voluntarily help complete strangers in need. Mr. Williams teared up as he stated, "Y'all work so hard and somehow keep a smile on your face at all times."

I replied to him, "We are so blessed and find great joy, hope, fulfillment, excitement and much love in being God's hands and feet to others in need. It is truly our honor and privilege to represent the love of Jesus in such caring ways. We become so much better people and are so blessed ourselves when we heed God's calling to be our brother and sister's keeper. We are the church being 'the church' as Jesus Christ calls us to be." Anything less would be unacceptable.

Robinson is the South Carolina UMVIM ERT coordinator.

The Stone House houses seven therapists to help community

By the Rev. Dr. Donald Hillyard

When J. Cleveland Bledsoe and his wife built a residence at 201 McNulty St. in Blythewood in 1948 they had no idea their house would eventually become a house for healing and health for the entire community.

They built "The Stone House," one of the few houses in Blythewood constructed with Winnsboro Blue Granite, and it became known as "The Bledsoe House."

The home was purchased by the Peggy Blume (Norton) Jeffcoat family in 1961, then owned by Irene (Andes) V. Shepherd in 1969 and finally purchased by Trinity United Methodist Church in 2010.

Under the direction of Ed Farnell and the Board of Trustees of Trinity, church members have been undertaking extensive renovation of the property for the past year. The church has recently written a vision and five-year ministry plan and has the goal of broadening the ministry of the Blythewood Counseling Center under Initiative Four: Community Ministry.

The center has been housed at Trinity for eight years and was moved to The Stone House in fall 2018 so the ministry could be expanded, belong to and reach out to the entire Blythewood community.

The Stone House has offices for seven private-practice therapists who see people by appointment Monday through Saturday.

Staff members include Michael J. Burney, specializing in hypnosis and attachment



The Stone House is one of the few houses in Blythewood constructed with Winnsboro Blue Granite.

therapy; Dr. Laurie "Mikki" Gay, authorized by the ELCA for clergy and individual counseling; Loretta Harris, employed full time at South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and specializing in trauma and adolescent work; Dr. Don Hillyard, special training in EMDR, CBT, couples; Erin Schuyler, special training in Adlerian therapy for individuals and families; Karly Warren, special training in psychological testing and parenting skills; and Dr. Stewart Greg Young, special training in medical issues.

The clinic offers services at a client's ability to pay and can serve community members as requested. A committee serves as guidance and comprises retired social worker Bo Gallagher, attorney Bob Wood, therapist Pamela Wood, Mayor Michael Ross and the Rev. Scott Smoak, Trinity's senior pastor.



The Rev. John Elmore keeps Ruby entertained and away from "helping everyone" while Michael Hughes, Stephen Wade and Felix Vazquez construct the ramp.

Photo by Billy Robinson

Bowman wheelchair ramp project helps family in need

By Billy Robinson

On March 25, a five-man mission team of the South Carolina United Methodist Conference completed a wheelchair ramp for George and Sheryl Carn in Bowman.

Holly Hill and North United Methodist churches came together to help finance, provide expertise and volunteer labor to complete the project of love. The ramp was one of many that United Methodist volunteers all across South Carolina and the world build to help people out during their times of need as well as the families involved. Without the ramps, every entry and exit is very difficult, unsafe and at times impossible.

This was a typical project with the exception of an overwhelmingly helpful dog named Ruby and the connectional ministry, which brought the project to life.

Ruby is a loveable Irish Setter dog who lives and guards the home location of the ramp with overwhelming love and affection for all. She was the first one to meet volunteers each day and the last one to say goodbye. She was in our faces and up next to us "helping out" all the mission through. Nearing the end of the project, Ruby took off with a box of nuts used on the ends of the carriage bolts to hold the 4x4-inch post to the ramp and steady it. She had already hauled off two pairs of our gloves and several other items. Most we were able to retrieve some even after she had buried them, though I came home with one less pair of good leather gloves.


She grabbed the open box of nuts in her mouth and looked at us as to say, "Look what I've got!" The homeowner and all of our team started gently coaxing her to gently put the box down, but as we approached her, she took off with them without spilling any and ran off and buried them before we could get to her. We never found any of them, and Rev. John Elmore had to ask his wife, Kay, to go to Ace Hardware in Holly Hill and purchase us more.

The connectional side came in when Terrilynn Robinson called me to see if our disaster response ministry with the South Carolina United Methodist Early Response Team built wheelchair ramps for people in need, as she had a friend whose father had Parkinson's disease that had recently confined him to a wheelchair. I replied that we do not as the ERT, but many of our ERT volunteers across the state participate in building ramps and many other wonderful forms of ministry when not on an actual disaster response.


Elmore made contact with the family and found out they were members of Duncan Chapel UMC in Bowman. He coordinated a ramp-building project, including \$1,500 in lumber and materials. The cost and labor were split between the United Methodist churches and family in a wonderful connection of love, care and compassion.

Volunteers from Holly Hill UMC were Elmore and Stephen Wade and from North UMC were Michael Hughes, Felix Vazquez and Billy Robinson.

Robinson is South Carolina UMC ERT coordinator.



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United Women in Faith

by Jane Scott

Celebrating Killingsworth!

Killingsworth Home is celebrating a special birthday this year! For 75 years this house has been a place of refuge for women in transition, a place of safety where women can work toward wholeness, regardless of what brought them to our doors.

Mrs. Corrie Killingsworth had a great idea of starting this “Esther House” in 1947. At that time an “Esther House” was a secure place for women to go when they were far from home and needed a place to live while they found their way forward.

At first the home was filled by young women from small towns in South Carolina needing a place to live as they came to Columbia to work in stores and offices or to go to business school. This was the focus for the first 25 years, but times and needs changed during that time.

In 1972 there was no longer a need for this type of housing for young businesswomen, so the decision was made to open our doors to women who are struggling with life. The focus was changed to offer a community residence for women emerging from crisis. Examples of these crises are substance abuse, incarceration, physical abuse, mental or emotional problems and violence.

At Killingsworth our residents find a place to live at a nominal fee. In return, each woman is to be employed or in training for employment and to make steps necessary for returning to the community able to care for her own needs.

Counselors are available in the home for spiritual support and for mental health. Women are offered instruction in life skills,

writing resumes, budgeting, Bible studies, other spiritual growth activities and more. Assistance in finding employment is offered, and women are enrolled in classes and in support groups as needed. Each woman’s program is designed around her specific needs and goals.

This mission was a project of the Methodist women of the Columbia area in the beginning. As it grew it became a part of the national organization of Methodist women, and this organization and the local units have undergone several name changes over the last 75 years. Today we are called United Women in Faith.

This 75th anniversary will be celebrated in several different ways this year. Later this spring there will be a series of “Spring Teas” held in different locations around the conference. At each event women will be invited to hear the story of who we are, what we are doing and what help is needed to take the program into its next 75 years.

We will also hold our annual Golf Tournament in August, our Holiday Gala in November and “Giving Tuesday” in December. Please be looking for details on all these celebrations as they are announced nearer the events.

A review of our program, our needs list, information on upcoming events and ways to contribute can be found on our website www.killingsworth-home.com or by calling the home at 803-771-6359.

We solicit your prayers for our residents and staff. We invite you to join us as we celebrate the past and raise funds to take this work into the future.



Photo courtesy of Sheryl King

From left are Dayna Arnette, youth leader and Miss Orangeburg Plus; Councilwoman Liz Keitt; Jordan Dixon; Jordasia Dixon; Zy’nasia Dixon; Iysis Dixon; and Mayor Michael Butler.

Free library opens at St. Andrews

ORANGEBURG—On Feb. 21, a group of community collaborators, including Save the Children, St. Andrews United Methodist Church and the Prince of Orange Daughters of the American Revolution Chapter, opened a “free library” to encourage and promote literacy in Orangeburg.

Mayor Michael Butler and Orangeburg Councilwoman Liz Zimmerman Keitt were on hand for the ceremony, along with the South Carolina state lead of Save the Children, Sonia Gass, and Destiny Johnson, lead associate for community engagement.

Save the Children works within communities to enhance educational opportunities and support children and families holistically. It replenishes books to free libraries along with creating “book nooks” in available laundromats and other businesses.

Each community leader spoke about the significance of working together to make Orangeburg a stronger community and the importance of reading among youngsters as a necessity for future success. Former librarian Celia Richardson spoke about the impact of books on students who frequent the library, and Sheryl King shared that DAR is more than just an organization focused on history, but the organization values opportunities of service fostering education and literacy. Also on hand for the ceremony was Dayna Arnette, the reigning Miss Orangeburg Plus and the new communications and youth director for St. Andrews UMC.

This literary endeavor originated when the Rev. Cindy Muncie of St. Andrews heard Destiny Johnson speak at a Rotary Club meeting. Muncie shared information with church members about Save the Children and its community goals. Eager to promote and work with community literacy, the Prince of Orange DAR members of St. Andrews began communicating and working with Save the Children to create the free library on the upper parking lot area of St. Andrews UMC.

Tom Kerr, a member of St. Andrews and Habitat for Humanity, built the box. St. Andrews Youth Group painted the box and later read books to children and guided them in a craft after the ribbon cutting ceremony.

Save the Children, with DAR, will be replenishing the library with new books appealing to early readers and middle school children. Children living throughout the Orangeburg community are encouraged to visit and take a book from the library. These libraries do not want books returned, but kept in homes where families can enjoy the stories again and again.

Epworth Children’s Home

Why our foster care model depends on church support

“Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” *Galatians 6:2*

Foster parents have a unique calling and a unique opportunity to impact a child’s life by providing a safe, structured environment until the state determines if the child can return to their family.

South Carolina has nearly 4,000 children in the foster care system, and most of them are placed in family settings, either with family members (kinship caregivers) or with licensed foster families. At any given time, there is a need for more than 2,000 additional foster families in our state.

Many, many people answer the call to become foster families, complete the lengthy training and application process necessary to be licensed, and receive children into their home to love them as their own children for as long as they have them. Unfortunately, national statistics indicate that as many as half of those families will leave fostering within the first year after being licensed and more leave in the second year.

Why would a family answer the call, invest their time, energy and resources, and then walk away? Research indicates that inadequate training and support are the primary reasons that foster families leave. As Epworth has expanded our services to include statewide foster care, we knew we could not offer quality services without the partnership with United Methodist churches in the communities where our foster families live.

To ensure the best outcomes for the chil-

dren in our care, we need our foster families to stay in the game. Church support plays a vital role in helping our families get through the inevitable challenging seasons of caring for children who have experienced trauma.

Because of United Methodist churches providing meals, clothing, car seats, formula, diapers and childcare, sibling groups are staying together with the same family. Foster parents are agreeing to take additional children into their care. Foster parents have more time and energy to focus on how to support and advocate for the children in their care. Churches are directly impacting the lives of children in care by the support they give families, because this support reduces the frequency of children being moved around within the foster care system.

This year, our United Methodist churches are supporting Foster Parent Appreciation month (May) by partnering with our foster care staff to create a special day for our foster parents. In one area, a church is providing the meal. In other areas, multiple churches are assembling gift baskets for families. In all cases, the families know the churches see them, support them and are praying for them.

Want to be a part of making a difference in the lives of children in your community? You can join the support team for foster families in your area by emailing kjames@epworthsc.org.

Individuals, groups and entire churches are needed to create the web of care for our families.

— By the Rev. Kathy James



Photo courtesy of Rosa W. Kennerly-Dance

Learning and growing

The Orangeburg District of Lay Servant Ministries held its spring training on April 2 and 3 at St. Andrews UMC in Orangeburg. The school provided six courses. Teaching the six courses were Stephon Void (Basic), Diane Williams (Accountable Discipleship), the Rev. Ken Nelson (Preach), Steven Lathrop (UM Polity), Anthony Simpson (Afire with God/Stewardship) and the Rev. Shirley Gordon (UM Heritage). Sixty-two students attended the two-day training and expressed their joy in learning and growing together as all work to help transform the world. The training ended with a worship service, communion and a sending forth. The speaker for the worship service was the Rev. Sheera Yates, pastor of Franklin UMC, Denmark.

Latest book now on sale by Bishop Will Willimon

Listeners Dare: Hearing God in the Sermon



“In five decades of preaching and teaching preaching, I’ve learned to respect preaching as a demanding practice for listeners. *Listeners Dare* is my celebration of the ways in which God gets through to people through sermons. I offer specific help for listeners seeking to get more out of sermons and for preachers who must listen to their listeners.”—Will Willimon

A retired bishop in the United Methodist Church, Willimon currently serves as professor of the Practice of Christian Ministry at Duke Divinity School and director of the Doctor of Ministry program.

See video of Willimon introducing *Listeners Dare*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mISc6x8IVTE>

Available on Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/dp/1791023983/ref=cm_sw_em_r_mt_dp_649K5FC86KVHJCKQ770T

Bluff Road UMC celebrates its annual Women's Day

COLUMBIA—The Bluff Road United Methodist Church local women's unit, United Women in Faith, celebrated their annual Women's Day Sunday, March 27, during morning worship service.

The guest speaker was minister Eleanor Cooper Brown, who is affiliated with Wesley UMC in Moncks Corner. She delivered a powerful word to a full congregation centered around their theme, "Women Empowered by the Holy Spirit: Trusting God on the Journey".

Three women of the local unit received special mission recognition: Dr. Sandra Hamlin for her commitment in revitalizing the local unit and First Lady Jenny Middleton and Marva Riley for their dedication in assisting the congregation using virtual formats (Zoom, YouTube and Facebook) with worship services, Sunday school and Bible study sessions during the pandemic.

Also at the service, Bluff Road UMC's annual Woman of the Year was announced; Christine Huskey was celebrated for dedication to her church and the community.



Bluff Road UMC Woman of the Year Christine Huskey.



Bluff Road women gather for a smile during the event.

Photos courtesy of Kimberly Love Quick



Photos by Lisa Fisher

Food truck rodeo draws strong crowd

Cayce UMC, Cayce, celebrated a successful first Food Truck Rodeo on March 26. Organizers said it was a wonderful community event with an outstanding turnout. Attendees enjoyed great food, entertainment including Cayce's handbell choir and children's activities.



Recertified

Lay Leaders at St. Mark UMC, Greenville, spent three recent Saturdays getting their recertification. The Rev. Michael Maston, who was able to attend their ceremony and share in their accomplishment, asked if he could re-present their certificates at St. Mark among their friends and family. Maston said, "Thank you both, Paul and Ginger Russell, for sharing your faith and offering your leadership resources. On behalf of your family here at St. Mark United Methodist Church, we love you both and are so proud of you."

Around the Districts

Columbia District

Washington Street UMC, Columbia, hosted a special Easter Monday dinner at its Soup Cellar April 18. The dinner, sponsored by the church's Sunday Dinner Mission Team included barbecue chicken, macaroni and cheese, greens beans, potato salad, biscuits and dessert. The church also provided haircuts and reading glasses, and representatives of the Free Medical Clinic and South Carolina Legal Services were on hand.

Washington Street UMC, Columbia, presented a spiritual drama as its Maundy Thursday service. The drama, "In the Upper Room," was held in Threath Hall April 14 and tells the story of the Last Supper. Communion was offered during the performance. A Good Friday Service was held in the church's chapel April 16.

Orangeburg District

Gifts to an endowed scholarship fund established at Africa University in memory of the late Rev. John Wesley Hipp now total more than \$20,000. The bulk of the funds are proceeds from the eighth annual Wespeth-Bishop L. Jonathan Holston Golf Invitational held Sept. 27, 2021, at the Orangeburg Country Club.

Rock Hill District

Friendship UMC, Rock Hill, will hold a Fish Fry May 7 from 4-6 p.m. Fish or chicken plates will be offered.

Spartanburg District

Congratulations to the Rev. Chris and Joy Snelgrove on the birth of their granddaughter. Shelby Grace was born to Mitchell and Andrea Snelgrove on April 1. Rev. Snelgrove is the pastor of Walnut Grove UMC, Roebuck.

Walterboro District

The Rev. Adrienne E. Stokes and **Hickory Hill UMC, Smoaks**, family went the "eggs-tramile" by donation bags of Easter candy to Victory Veterans House, Walterboro. Victory hosted an egg hunt for the first and second graders of Northside Elementary, Walterboro.



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Ruffin Parish still on the move with host of activities despite pandemic

By Clara Hodges

Although the dreaded coronavirus hung around and continued to disrupt lives in 2021, the Ruffin Parish managed to carry out some of the many important projects we had planned.

In February, Black History Month, Buckhead and Hickory Hill United Methodist churches reflected on history of African Americans pertinent to both churches and to the nation at-large. History is important, and we must continue to remember those who gave of themselves and the sacrifices they made years ago. Several of the older saints in both churches have all gone on, and we have to be mindful of the hard work they endured building a foundation both physically and financially.

Back-to-School time quickly came around again in August, and the members of Hickory Hill sponsored a "Fill the Backpack" project where each member was asked to donate backpacks and school supplies.

A number of backpacks were filled and distributed at the Bamberg Farmer's Market the weekend before school started. Many said seeing the looks on the faces of the children and the parents was like watching them open presents on Christmas morning.

Buckhead UMC hosted a community fish fry in September that was well attended. First responders and other emergency personnel from the Ruffin area joined for a short time, and dinners were delivered to emergency personnel in the nearby Smoaks area.



From a fish fry and annual tea to a Thanksgiving carry-out, the Ruffin Parish stayed busy with ministry and outreach.

October brought surprises in the way of what would be called "A Jazz Affair" but actually was a one-year anniversary celebration for pastor Adrienne E. Stokes and her husband, Eddie. The look on their faces were priceless when they walked in and everyone yelled "Surprise!" Stokes enjoys jazz music and mentioned an evening of jazz would be something she'd like to plan. Food, fun and fellowship made for a wonderful evening.

For the annual tea held at Hickory Hill in October, District Superintendent the Rev. Joey McDonald delivered the message that afternoon. In his message he reminded all that when

our cup runneth over, we have to ask the Lord to "Bo-size my cup" so we get everything intended for us and not miss anything.

November brought Thanksgiving dinner at both churches in the form of carry-out. Because of COVID, the sit-down gatherings normally held inside were cancelled. The Sunday after Thanksgiving, the Ruffin Parish hosted "Service in the Park" at Rivers Bridge State Park in Ehrhardt. Stokes conducted regular services, and after services all feasted on hamburgers, fried fish, hotdogs, etc. while playing games and enjoying each other's company underneath the covered shed.

The United Methodist Women closed out the year in December with a holiday gathering in Summerville hosted by Thelma Hudson. All enjoyed games and good food and exchanged gifts in true holiday fashion. Women also took part in a card-writing campaign for a group of ladies housed in a correctional facility out-of-state, sending cards to 55 women just in time for Christmas.

The plan is to continue the campaign so the women can receive mail and know they're being thought of and prayed for.

Ephesians 5:20 reads "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." We all have so much to be thankful for over this last year and up to this present day. The Lord has been good to us, and we thank him every day that he allows us to continue to honor and praise him. We are truly looking ahead and moving forward in 2022.

Lamar holds sesquicentennial community worship services

Pastors and community members from Lamar and beyond gathered at Lamar High School at 3 p.m. Sunday, April 3, for the town's sesquicentennial community worship services.

The Town of Lamar founded in 1872. The 2022 service featured music by Terry Slater, a candidate for South Carolina Teacher of the Year, who brought choir members from Bethany Baptist Church in Lamar. Prayer was led by the Rev. Adrian Allen, pastor of Lamar First Baptist Church.

Dr. J. Elbert Williams, pastor of the Lamar-Ebenezer Charge in Lamar (John Wesley, Sandy Grove and Ebenezer UMCs) read the first Scripture.

Dr. Amy Ciceron, pastor of St. Julian African Methodist Episcopal Church in Jacksonville, North Carolina, delivered the first message. Ciceron's message came from Joshua

4:1-7. A 1989 graduate of Lamar High School, she is a native of Lamar and daughter of the late Calvin Spann and Helen Boston Spann.

A prayer for all people was presented by the Rev. Paula J. Stover, pastor of Lamar UMC, Lamar, and the second Scripture was read by Emanuel Simon, pastor of Bethany Baptist.

Dr. George Fields, retired pastor in the South Carolina Conference of the UMC, brought the second message. Fields served 44 years as an Army chaplain and parish minister and ended his institutional ministry in 1997 with 21 years of service as professor of Old Testament and president of Spartanburg Methodist College. Since his retirement, Fields has continued active ministry with Bible study groups and started a new career preserving historical sites and conserving natural resources.



Dr. George Fields, retired UMCSC pastor, brought the second message.



Dr. Amy S. Ciceron, Lamar native, brought the first message.

Kingstree honors beloved 'Ms. Josette' with surprise spotlight event

KINGSTREE—Josette Jarrett serves as church secretary/financial secretary for Kingstree United Methodist Church in addition to being the children and youth director. In response to the publication in the *Advocate* of the ad Kingstree UMC had placed to honor "Ms. Josette," church leaders declared April 3 as "Spotlight and Honor Josette Jarrett Day" as a surprise to her.

The celebration honoring the "KUMC

jewel," as members call her, occurred at the end of her "children's moment" during the worship service when pastor Katherine Crimm interrupted by reading and then presenting Jarrett the jewel-framed ad. In addition, Salley Jenkinson, church treasurer presented a gift card and a pink blooming orchid from the congregation and a large potted pink hydrangea from the confirmands who joined the church Palm Sunday.

In addition, a video was shown containing wishes from many of her current and former KUMC children and youth as well as current and past Kingstree community youth.

Somehow, her entire family managed to surprise her by being present in the worship service to share in the joy of her surprise celebration: her husband, Ernie, in-laws Billy and Beezie Jarrett, son Kyle Smith

with wife, Lauren, and granddaughter Evie, daughter Katie and her husband Jason Cox, and daughter Winston.

It was all recorded via the KUMC Facebook Live Service.



At far left, during Kingstree UMC's April 3 worship service children's moment, Church Treasurer Salley Jenkinson presents Jarrett—holding her granddaughter Evie—with surprises from the congregation and the confirmands as the children of the church observe. At near left, this jewel-framed ad from the *Advocate* was presented to Josette Jarrett in a special ceremony at Kingstree.

Aldersgate UMC hosts prayer vigil for people of Ukraine

On Saturday, March 19, Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Rock Hill hosted an outdoor community prayer vigil for the people of Ukraine. About 80 people participated in the evening event.

Dr. A. Stephen Holler, pastor of Aldersgate UMC, welcomed guests, and Dr. Anthony Hodge, Rock Hill District superintendent, began the program with a prayer for peace. Several local pastors offered prayers during the program, as well.

Tibi Czentye, a Romanian native, shared his moving story of escaping socialist Romania in 1991 to seek a better life for himself and his young family in the United States. Participants were invited to make

donations to the United Methodist Committee on Relief for the people of Ukraine and to write encouraging words on note cards that will be delivered to the bishop of the Ukraine Methodists.

Phil Suggs, choir director, led attendees in the singing of "Let There Be Peace on Earth" and "This is My Song" and later closed with his solo of "Bozhe Velykyi" (A Prayer for Ukraine).

Since the breezy weather prevented the planned lighting of handheld candles, the leader encouraged the crowd to use the light of their cell phones or flashlights as they prayed silently in respect for the people of the Ukraine.



Photo by Stephen Ballenger
Tibi Czentye, Dr. Anthony Hodge and Dr. A. Stephen Holler gather after the prayer service.



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DEATH PENALTY: Cont'd

From Page 1

In March, state corrections officials revealed renovations were complete on the state's death chamber to accommodate the firing squad, and Moore's execution date was set for April 29.

He was given the choice between the firing squad and the electric chair.

In April, Moore chose execution by firing squad, though he stated he found both options unconstitutional but was forced to make a decision by a deadline.

On April 20, South Carolina's Supreme Court issued a temporary stay blocking Moore's execution. They did not say why they issued the stay, but at issue are a number of challenges, including whether Moore's sentence was proportionate to his crime, the constitutionality of the state's execution methods, the legitimacy of prison officials' claims that they can't get lethal injection drugs, and whether the firing squad and the electric chair are cruel and unusual punishments.

A second death-row inmate, Brad Keith Sigmon, is scheduled to be executed on May 13. Sigmon was convicted of two counts of murder and first-degree burglary in 2002.

Meredith Matthews, community organizer for South Carolinians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, said she is appalled that this state not only legalizes public executions but uses what she calls cruel practices.

"The firing squad is something we see in other parts of world," said Matthews, who grew up in the UMC and considers the death penalty to be a practice not in line with Christianity.

"Spiritually, it's hard for me to reconcile how a state that prides itself on Christian values can then turn around and not offer grace."

Matthews noted that Moore is extremely

remorseful about the crime, which she said was not premeditated murder, as Moore killed the clerk with the clerk's gun and did not bring a weapon into the store. She also noted that Moore is a Black man, yet there was not a single Black person on his jury, and the judge, prosecutor and defense attorney were all White people.

"He's not just 'a death row inmate' but a father, a son, and we need to remember that because it is a reflection on all of us," Matthews said.

Taylor said much the same, noting the death penalty is arbitrary, politically motivated and expensive, but most importantly, not in line with Christian theology.

"There are all sorts of practical reasons why we shouldn't be for the death penalty, but furthermore, as Christians, we should be against the death penalty because we believe no one is beyond redemption," said Taylor, who is interim convener for South Carolinians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. "We are more than the worst thing we have ever done."

Also, she noted, Jesus was executed—we worship an executed God.

"The Bible belt has become the death belt, but there are alternatives to the death penalty where we can restore the image of the person created by God who's done this terrible thing but also really work to heal a family from trauma and prevent these things from happening again."

She said that endorsing the death penalty makes Christians look barbaric, causing people to look askance at our faith.

"The real question we should ask is who would Jesus execute, and the answer is none," Taylor said.

For more on the fight for death penalty alternatives and what the organization is doing regarding Moore's execution, visit SCADP.org.

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NEW DIRECTION: Helping men succeed after prison

From Page 1

four-month program offered by Turn90, which started in Charleston and opened its Columbia location in October. It plans to open a Greenville facility next year.

Turn90 offers case management, cognitive behavioral classes, transitional work and job placement to reduce recidivism by helping people succeed after prison.

"I call it a therapeutic social enterprise," said Amy Barch, founder and director of Turn90, noting she is hoping Turn90's model will become a nationwide example for how to address and conquer long-term prison-release issues and not simply slap a bandage on problems.

"I really want to show that we as a society can do better in helping people succeed after prison," Barch said. "People go in with a whole host of problems—cycles, lifetimes, years of problems—and you can't just address one. We need to do more, and this is an example of what 'more' can look like."

Currently they have an active board of directors and a staff of 12—four in Columbia and four in Charleston (classroom facilitator, case/social worker, print shop manager and flow manager at each), and four doing global infrastructure (communications, sales, operations, and her as executive director). Five of the eight program staffers are program graduates. The board comprises law enforcement, attorneys, business people and others in criminal justice.

Longtime civil rights attorney Stuart Andrews, a member of Trinity United Methodist Church in Blythewood, is one of Turn90's board members and is passionate about the work they do.

"I've been doing criminal justice reform work most of my career, and what was missing in the state was a program that was focused on inspiring formerly incarcerated people to do the work necessary to prepare for successful reentry," Andrews said. "It's an ambitious undertaking that met a dire need."

A real business

Just ask program participant Alex, who calls Turn90 "a lifesaver." Convicted for selling drugs, Alex relapsed after being clean for 22 years and went to jail. He served his time and was out on parole, but then he violated the conditions of his probation and went back in. Before, he had been living in a camper, but while incarcerated, his camper was stolen, so he was homeless.

"Without a place to live, you can't get out, and I needed a job, too," Alex said.

A pastor connected him to Turn90, which helped him find a place to live and a spot in the program. Now, he's rebuilding his life. He got his license back and recently filed his taxes for the first time since 2016.

"It's the best thing that's ever happened in my life," Alex said.

Barch explained that people like Alex are exactly why they do what they do—to help them authentically embrace the programs offered, learn job and life skills and get back on track.

Turn90's program runs daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The men work on behavioral and other skills in class from 9 to 10:45 a.m., then they work in Turn90's print shop the rest of the day, where they participate in a fully functioning high-quality screen-printing business that produces T-shirts, sweatshirts and other garments.

"It's a real business," Barch said.

Barch started Turn90 in 2011 after growing up in what she calls "a very privileged life." She developed a heart for incarcerated people when she did an internship in college, and it changed the trajectory of her life.

She began volunteering at the Charleston County jail teaching restorative justice classes and skills to develop emotional coping, thinking and problem-solving to men, and the effort had so much success that she quit

“
We need to do more, and this is an example of what 'more' can look like.
 ”

– Amy Barch, Turn90

her job and built local support while developing a program model, then called Turning Leaf.

At first an alternative to prison program, they started over in 2016 as a community-based reentry program, focusing on helping men make a successful transition from prison. At their site in North Charleston, they opened the Turning Leaf Print Shop in 2017, providing part-time employment to participants with the most barriers to success. The program transitioned into a full-day program, with 150 hours of cognitive behavioral classes, weekly case management sessions, transitional work in the Print Shop (with the men paid for the entire work day) and placement into a job with a livable wage, benefits and opportunity for advancement. They're doing the same at their site in Columbia and will do it in Greenville, too.

"It's more than filling the gap," Barch said. "It's a genuine bridge."

"The best of Christianity"

After all, the men need help. And as Barch said, there are very few people advocating for this population, and the risk factors are complicated. Also, there is an incorrect assumption that people get adequate resources and guidance when they come out of prison, which is just not the case.

"People getting out of prison deserve help," Barch said. "We truly love our guys and want the best for them."

Andrews believes the program will ultimately enable them to qualify for national funding to expand the model statewide, which is something much-needed.

"The Department of Justice has yet to identify a program they regard as establishing best practices for the reentry of incarcer-

ated people into the community," Andrews said. "We believe based on our experience in Charleston and initially in Columbia that Turn90 can be that model."

For him as a United Methodist, Turn90 represents the best of Christianity.

"It acknowledges the capability we all have for grace and redemption and to turn around our lives with a community of love and support and forgiveness," Andrews said. "That's what the program is designed to do, not only through the counselors and the staff but through each other, the group process, where the men are literally able to support each

other as they're practicing the development of their skills. Through this process, they can recover lives that were cast aside."

Barch wishes there were a host of people passionate about the work they do, but she's content to know that the men of Turn90 are experiencing redemptive, transformative lives one day at a time. "This shouldn't be an anomaly," Barch said. "We provide homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, soup kitchens. Why not this?"

Learn more about Turn90, or inquire about their screen-printing services, at <https://turnninet.com>.

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Sunday, May 8th 2022

Epworth's Annual Mother's Day Offering

UMC AND FUTURE: Continued

From Page 1

Church—what will happen and when.

“What we do know is that the General Conference is postponed until 2024, and the General Conference is the body that speaks for the denomination,” Holston said. “What I am asking all of us to do is to be patient.

“Presently, in *The Book of Discipline*, Para. 2553 exists as a pathway to disaffiliation for churches whose members disagree with the current language in *The Book of Discipline*. Please know that we are monitoring the ongoing deliberations of Judicial Council decisions. If you have questions, we encourage you to be in further conversation with your district superintendent, who has the most recent information available.

“Moving forward, we will communicate about ways that every congregation in our Annual Conference can make the decisions that assist in living into our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

There are a few resources for churches to consider if they are seeking information about disaffiliation.

First, an “Ask the UMC” article titled

“What Should United Methodist Congregations Know about Disaffiliation?” has been released on UMC.org, the denomination’s website, attempting to clarify what they call “a lot of confusion and misinformation in the church about this topic.”

The article includes a number of steps, the first being to have your pastor contact your district superintendent for guidance. Others include familiarizing yourself with the three paragraphs in *The Book of Discipline* pertaining to disaffiliation, which are Paras. 2553, 2548.2 and 2549.3b, as well as following a discernment process facilitated by your district superintendent. Read it at <https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-should-united-methodist-congregations-know-about-disaffiliation>.

A comprehensive article released in February by Heather Hahn of the United Methodist News Service, “Church Court Clarifies Disaffiliation Rules,” also contains a wealth of helpful information. Read it at <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/church-court-clarifies-disaffiliation-rules>.

The *Advocate* will be monitoring court rulings and other information as they are released and report in future editions.



Working together

On Feb 23, Bishop Gary Rivas and Associate Pastor Will Smith of Lyttleton Street UMC, Camden, met with members of the Lugoff Parish: Shiloh UMC, Mount Joshua UMC and Mount Prospect UMC. The purpose was a meet and greet occasion. The discussion was on fellowship, working together in and outside of the churches in the communities and helping each other. Craig Davis of Shiloh UMC, who had this vision, introduced Bishop Rivas. Pictured, Rivas and members of Lugoff Parish gather for a smile: Will Smith, Craig Davis (Shiloh UMC), Rev. DuBose (Lugoff Parish), Rivas, Mary Davis (Shiloh UMC), Anna Moore and Nora Ballard (Mount Joshua UMC).

Laird hired as new provost at SMC

SPARTANBURG—Spartanburg Methodist College has named Dr. Curt Laird as its new provost and executive vice president. Laird was selected following a national search and will take over for interim provost Kris Neely on July 1.

“I am honored and grateful to join Spartanburg Methodist College. I look forward to working with the faculty and administration to serve their amazing students,” Laird said. “I can’t wait to better know the campus community to advance the goals of SMC and its students.”

He comes to SMC from Columbus State Community College in Columbus, Ohio, where he served as associate vice president for academic affairs. Laird brings more than 20 years of higher education experience in faculty and administration roles to the college.

Laird’s depth of experience in faculty rela-



Laird

tions, accreditation and strategic planning impressed upon the search committee his fit for the position.

“It was important to the search committee to identify candidates that had not only the professional experience necessary for the position but also a history of collaboration and leadership to benefit the SMC community,”

said Dr. Kirk Hansen, chair of the search committee and professor of history at SMC. “We were impressed with Dr. Laird’s personality, as well as his commitment to visibility and relationship-building. We are excited to welcome him to campus.”

SMC began conducting a national search for a new provost in 2021, which was postponed several months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Neely assumed the interim provost role in January 2021, replacing Dr. Mark Gibbs, who stepped down to return to the classroom.

Wofford appoints new vice president for advancement

SPARTANBURG—Wofford College has named Calhoun Kennedy its new vice president for advancement after a national search. Kennedy had been serving as interim vice president and executive director since August.

He has 18 years of experience in fundraising and alumni engagement as well as a dozen years of experience in banking, sales and customer service.

“Calhoun has proven himself as a valued member of the college’s senior leadership team,” said Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford’s president. “He has led the college’s advancement team during a difficult period and has ideas for the future that focus on alumni engagement and education.”

During Kennedy’s tenure as interim vice president, he instituted departmental fundraising training and held donor listening sessions. He has improved internal commu-



Kennedy

nications with the advancement team and is leading the team through a thorough assessment of fund agreements, donor reports and best practices.

“I look forward to continuing my service to an institution that I deeply care about,” said Kennedy, a 1989 Wofford alumnus. “This is an exciting time to be on Wofford’s campus, and I look forward

to helping future generations of Terriers experience the college while working alongside alumni, faculty, staff and friends to support all that makes Wofford special.”

Kennedy served as associate vice president and executive director for advancement since 2003. His civic involvement includes service as a trustee for the Hammond School in Columbia, Scoutmaster with the Boy Scouts of America, president of the Palmetto Baseball League and board service with the Spartanburg Area Conservancy.

Mathis steps down as Aldersgate director

Elaine Griffith Mathis is stepping down as executive director of Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry.

Mathis will be leaving the ministry to accept a national outreach director position with School Ministries in Columbia. In this newly created role, she will be responsible for assisting Christians across the country start, sustain and grow Released Time Bible Education programs.

Mathis became the first executive director of Aldersgate in April 2017. Prior to her coming to the organization, it was completely run by the board. During her tenure, she created and molded the position of executive director, taking the organization to the next level with her knowledge and professionalism. With a heart for the ministry and a deep understanding of the

Aldersgate mission, she put the safety of the residents and staff above all else, especially during the worst of the pandemic.

Some of the many highlights of her tenure include leading the ASNM Board of Trustees through a strategic planning process in 2018. This process helped to create three vital workgroups which have grown the work of ASNM immensely. The idea of opening church respite centers grew out of this planning process and just recently has resulted in the opening of AIM (Aldersgate in the Morning), a respite program which opened at Grace United Methodist Church in Columbia this year.

A reception is planned to honor Mathis on May 10 at Grace UMC, Columbia, from 3-5 p.m. All are invited to come and wish her well.



2,221 cans and a lot of excited kids

Townville Elementary Student Council collected more than 2,200 cans of food for the Dickson Memorial UMC food bank in Townville. When they delivered the cans, the students also got a lesson on how the food bank works.

Retired UMCS pastor pens children’s book

A retired United Methodist pastor has published a children’s activity book to teach elementary children about values.

“Grandma’s 25 Cent Words: Making Good Values the Foundation of a Child’s Education and Life” is authored by the Rev. Judith Martin Alford.

Alford said she envisions older youth, those in middle and high school, teaching the children these values through the book. It is biblically based and can be used in youth grounds and Sunday school classes.

Alford is also the author of “The Hands of God” and is currently writing another activity book for children on how to make wise choices.

The book is available on Amazon, at Barnes & Noble and at <https://judithalfordbooks.com>.





Breaking ground

Clafin University held a groundbreaking ceremony March 25 for its new Student Center. Pictured from left are LaKisha Warmack, First Lady of Clafin University; Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack, president of Clafin University; and James K. Lehman Esq., chair of Clafin's Board of Trustees.



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Willie Clark

Keeping Aiken beautiful

The Wesley UMC, Aiken, youth department is adopting a highway in their community in an effort to keep the area beautiful. The commitment is for a section of a highway for a minimum of two years.

MENTAL HEALTH: Stigma, active listening and stress

From Page 1

The second session took a deeper dive into external influences, stress, vulnerability and ways in which thoughts, feelings and behaviors are impacted every day, offering practical methods for how to manage ourselves and others in crisis.

The Rev. Darlene L. Kelley, pastor of Mount Pleasant and O'Neal Street UMCs in the Greenwood District, was one of those from South Carolina who participated in the free seminars.

"Learning about mental health and how to better care for myself and others helps me be a better pastor," Kelley said. "Humans are mind, body and spirit, so understanding more about mental health helps us better care for the people in our churches. The more I know about how the human mind works and how we are all subject to the ups and downs of our humanity, the better equipped I am to take care of myself and to handle the needs and challenges of the people I serve."

The Rev. Weston Pendergrass, pastor of Grace UMC, Greer, echoed her thoughts.

"Taking the mental health first aid training has helped me feel much more confident I'll be able to respond to my community in a crisis, as well as helping anyone better connect with appropriate mental health resources in our community," Pendergrass said. "I encourage anyone—from the pew sitters to the church leaders, from the small group leaders to the youth group leaders—to all consider taking a mental health first aid training."

Session One: Stigma, ALGEE and more

Session One included topics on current mental health challenges and statistics; influences, stress, vulnerability and self-awareness; stigma, discrimination and promoting inclusion; identifying and coping with stress; exploring our own "stress signatures"; and first aid principles to approaching and helping others.

White opened by noting just because someone doesn't have a mental illness diagnosis doesn't mean they enjoy good mental

health, and a continued slip in wellbeing can lead to more serious mental health issues.

What shocked him was realizing that in his country, the biggest killer of men younger than 45 in the UK is suicide, yet many don't like to talk about the problem of mental illness given the stigma and discrimination that often accompany it.

"There's no stigma breaking your wrist skiing, but when something goes wrong with the most complex organ in our body (our brain), everyone gets frightened," White said.

He said first steps include trying to understand we all live in "rooms," and when it comes to helping others through mental health, we need to understand someone else's room and try to look through their window on the world.

"We must get in relationship and develop trust to understand this," White said.

He said sitting down and telling someone "I suffer from a poor mental state" takes courage and bravery, and first we should celebrate that and affirm their self-esteem. Then it comes down to establishing rapport and trust with them, listening without judgment, advice or problem-solving

"Understand them," he said. "Your goal is to bring about a small behavioral change to help them."

White shared the acronym ALGEE for people to use when talking with people about mental health:

- A: Assess for suicide risk
- L: Listen without judgment
- G: Give reassurance and information
- E: Encourage professional help
- E: Encourage self-help and other support strategies

"And if you hear language like 'I wish I wasn't here, I feel you'd be better without me, I feel you're wasting your time,' please, please challenge that," White said. "Say things like, 'No, it's not true, you are needed, are you considering hurting yourself, etc.' Tell them there is help, it's OK, it's no different than going to doctor for a broken wrist."

As he noted, suicidal people do usually put out signals and hints ahead of time, and you can save a life.

Session Two: Laddering up and 'MOREPIES'

Session Two covered personal resilience and staying well; understanding ways in which we can become unwell; an introduction to depression, substance abuse, anxiety and self-harm; risk factors and First Aid for Mental Health interventions; suicide and suicidal crisis; connecting with others; active listening; and understanding common personal barriers to having an effective conversation.

White shared that first aid for mental health isn't about turning people into mental health professionals. It's simply first aid. And one of the biggest things that helps with first aid for mental health is active listening.

Learning to develop active listening skills is so useful when dealing with someone in very deep crisis, including suicide intervention.

"Suicide is a staggeringly huge number," White said.

Improvement of mental health both for oneself and others starts with each of us understanding our own mental fitness and identifying when others are in need.

He offered a "ladder-up" risk assessment for suicide, encouraging people to challenge language that may signal intent, such as, "Everyone would be better off. I'm a waste of space. I just want to disappear."

White noted that challenging doesn't mean saying "No, don't do it," but rather asking them more, asking them to elaborate. It's about spotting signs.

The first step is to address thoughts: "Sometimes when people experience X they have dark thoughts. I want to check in—are you thinking about killing yourself?"

The second step is asking whether they have a plan, such as, "Thank you for honesty. Have you thought about how you'd take your life?"

The third step addresses the means. You might ask, "It sounds like you've thought a lot about this. Do you have what you'd need to do this?"

The fourth is understanding the time frame: "You are so brave to share this. When do you plan to do this?"

White said a huge myth is that challenging suicidal or risk language might "plant the seed" of suicide in someone's mind, but it won't.

"It's not a comfortable question to ask but an important one. The worst that can happen is they say, 'Look, don't be ridiculous, it's a figure of speech.' Or you may have actually stopped a process that may move up the staircase."

White then shared ways we can actively listen, which involves a willingness to understand their perspective, building rapport, increasing my influence in their life and encouraging positive behavioral change.

"It's not just being quiet and waiting for my turn to speak," White said.

He offered several tips using the acronym MOREPIES to improve active listening:

- M: Minimal encouragers (respond with "Uh huh, OK, right, mmmm")
- O: Open questions (not yes or no answers but answers that involve conversation on their part)
- R: Reflecting/mirroring (echo what they say, the hooks or the word with lots of emotional energy, e.g. "I hated the teacher." You might repeat, "Hated ...")
- E: Emotional labeling (it can be helpful to name it, e.g., "You sound X, you look X, you appear X.")
- P: Paraphrasing (using your own voice to clarify and present what you've listened to in a fresh manner)
- I: I statements
- E: Effective pauses
- S: Summarizing

At the close of the seminar, White offered several key takeaways, encouraging participants to remember that the pandemic and other stress triggers affect millions, but we don't always see it.

"Suicide intervention starts earlier than you may think, so challenge any language with empathy and compassion, and start today," White said.

To access the session videos, slides and other information, visit www.wespath.org/tr/firstaidmh. The material is fully available and accessible to all.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE: Holston, Mueller, Dease to preach

From Page 1

brothers and sisters in the larger community remains our top concern," said the Rev. Ken Nelson, the conference secretary who also serves as superintendent of the Orangeburg District. "Holding the 2022 Annual Conference virtually reflects our desire to err on the side of caution during this still-unpredictable pandemic."

This year's Annual Conference again will be an abbreviated online session, instead of the traditional four-day gathering. 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 coordinate participation via Zoom video conferencing and voting on a separate, secure platform. In the spirit of transparency, Annual Conference is open to the public and 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. Bishop Gary E. Mueller, resident Bishop of the Arkansas Conference UMC, will preach the ordination service. 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.

Two virtual training sessions are scheduled for June 1 and June 5 to help clergy and laity understand how to navigate the virtual event, including how to cast votes.

Updated information will be posted over the next month at umcsc.org/ac2022.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Joseph Abram Jr. (retired)

When life's party ends, who's taking you home?

During my teenage years, I felt, and with the agreement of many, I was quite a dancer. Some compared me to my dad when he was at a similar age. There were a few ladies from my dad's days who agreed, though they hastily added, "But you cannot touch your dad!"

When I entered a dance place, I came in with my iconic rhythmic shuffle, finger snapping, smiling with an extended hand, inviting any and all to join me on the dance floor. That is, until my mom cautioned me about the foolish and dangerous potential of my attitude and actions in a crowd that I knew little or nothing about.

Mom suggested I get to know the environment, especially the fellows, and who had claim on whom in order to mitigate conflict.

Later as my broader focus narrowed regarding young ladies to one or two prospects, I understood my mom's advice. I found myself not objecting to the intrusive request of "May I cut in or dance with your girl?" Even though I mostly consented because I may have appeared jealous or insecure, I did not appreciate it in the least.

Therefore, I basically took the stance of the popular song, "Don't forget who's taking you home. So, Darling, save the last dance for me."

Life in some instances is like a big dance party, with some of it exciting and others disappointing. Sometimes while at the party we change dance partners, too much and too often for the wrong reasons. We sometimes feel the need to dance with everyone (be the life of the party) and sometimes to everyone's music (do whatever it takes to fit in, also known as going along to get along).

Then there is always one who doesn't care whether we can dance the latest or at all, or just stand and rock back and forth, or if we are a wallflower. They will stand and rock with us or sit in the corner with us. They just love us for ourselves and are so desirous of our happiness that they won't entrust it to anyone else. That is why that dance partner will escort us to the dance, sit with us during the dance, dance (or rock) with us during the dance, make sure we're not forsaken or left alone during the dance and taken safely home after the dance.

The ultimate purveyor of such love is Mr. Love himself, God. God is love. He loves us to death. Nothing, nor anyone, can separate us from this love. Even though we're allowed the freedom to dance with whomever or wherever we please, he never gives up his desire to give us the abundant life, to get us home safely. He has solicited and deployed an army of Christian soldiers to facilitate this desire. And it's no secret that he is a jealous God and wants our fidelity for our own good.

The premise is elementary—in whoever's embrace we are in when life's party ends, that's who will be taking us home. There is no movement or work in the grave.

Decide today who will be taking you home. It's important that we are dancing with the right partner and, if not, that we change now. It is "the right time to be with the one we love" and who loves us.

Sometimes at parties, the DJ will announce the last dance so we can choose our last partner. However, at the end of life's party, there will not be an announcement, because no one knows when, just that it will come.

If we are dancing with the master, he'll take us to his heavenly home. But if it's the evil one, hell will be our abode.

The choice is before us: Stop dancing with hatred, deceit, lies and injustice. Start dancing with love, integrity, truth and justice.

It's not too late. Make up your mind now. For it is a certainty that we are all going somewhere, because we sure can't stay here. Fools have already decided.



Reflections

by Deborah Len

Created with design

Tessa lay in her bed, musing over the day and thanking God for all the little things that had passed before her eyes. The splendid sights and sounds and smells were almost too much for her 6-year-old mind to comprehend. She felt so alive! It had been her first trip to town.

The day had started with her mother shouting, "Be a good girl and mind your Papa and Nana." Tessa would. She always did. What Tessa never ever could have imagined was she would find delight in a basket of apples. Apples of all shades of red, and even some yellow and green, and some as big as her head (well they seemed that big) and as tiny as her thumb.

She was at the market where her family sold their Rome apples. Tessa only knew about these apples. That was the only kind she had ever seen or smelled or tasted. Now right before her very eyes she saw so many apples she could not count them. After all, she was only 6.

Papa knew the market men, and he quickly set to business of having her uncles help take the apples to their place in the big market. Tessa knew enough to understand this was very important, as her whole family was depending on selling these apples to get enough money to make it till spring. She had asked God to help her family sell their apples this weekend. Tessa stayed near the farm truck with Nana. As others drove into the market area, she heard talk of the Stansell family and their Rome apples. She smiled, knowing that was her family. She was happy and excited to be part of "the best family in the whole county," according to her Papa and uncles.

Tessa and Nana went into the market area to look at all of the things the folks had brought from all over the county to sell this weekend. What amazed Tessa was all the apples. She was allowed to try only six kinds. After all, Nana did not want her to get a tummy ache. Tessa chose. She then took them back to the truck and campsite of her family.

She very carefully polished each one and then took a bite. The small yellow-red one was soooo tart that her mouth drew up, and she spat it out so quickly her Uncle Raymond laughed. The next was a lovely yellow color, and she found it to be sweet and a little mushy. She did not like that feeling in her little mouth. This process continued until she tasted a McIntosh. Oh, sweet heaven. Her mouth had fallen in love with this sweet and juicy and little tart taste. It was so delicious she ate the whole thing before she even knew she had. Oh, no, she thought. What would she do? Rome apples were her family's life.

Tessa had discovered the wonderful idea of variety is good and it is OK to enjoy more than one thing. After all, if everyone only loved Rome apples, no one else at the market would survive the cold winter on the shores of the big lake. Each apple, like each person, had good qualities. Each apple, like each person, had a few blemishes. Each apple, like each person, was slightly different in color.

And each apple, like each person, was exactly created as it was meant to be. Tessa smiled and drifted off into a peaceful sleep.

Let me repeat that last line: Each apple, like each person, was created to be exactly as it was to be. There currently are more than 7,900 apples varieties, each one slightly different than the other, and each apple having a special purpose. There are more than 7.9 billion people, each one slightly different than the other, each one with a purpose and a mission given to them by God.

Next time you are shopping, why not try a Rome or McIntosh or Gala or ... ?

Then smile to the cashier as you leave the store, knowing you are choosing to feel more and see more and therefore be more.

Inspired by Psalm 139:13-14. If you are interested in learning more about being more for our Lord, pray over Matthew 7:7-8 and then Psalm 46:10.

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



From the desk of the Scholarship Committee, Board of Ordained Ministry

April 1, 2022

Dear Colleagues in Ministry:

The South Carolina Conference established in 1991 the South Carolina Conference Seminary Students Scholarship to assist students from South Carolina in pursuing a program of study leading to a first professional degree. Applicants must be enrolled as full-time students at a seminary or theological school of the United Methodist Church to be eligible.

This scholarship over the years has assisted many of our seminarians with the purchase of textbooks, housing, or travel-related costs. As the cost of seminary continues to increase annually, we are asking our South Carolina Methodist Churches to make a generous gift toward the South Carolina Conference Seminary Students Scholarship. It is essential that we continue to support our seminarians and assist them as much as we can with this scholarship.

As you consider your generous gift, please note, the average debt of a United Methodist seminarian is about \$50,000. One writer stated, "Seminarian indebtedness is a roadblock to many people seeking to become ordained clergy."

It is my hope you will consider a generous gift to support the South Carolina Seminary Students Scholarship. Please consider making your generous offering prior to our Annual Conference 2022. Gifts may be sent with your apportionments using activity code 4605-AC Offering Seminary Scholarships. In addition, persons may donate by sending a check to Beth Westbury, The Office of the Conference Treasurer, 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, South Carolina, 29203.

Checks may also be sent electronically at <https://www.umsc.org/apportionments/> and click on the pay apportionments using the Vanco button. If donation is coming from someone other than a church, persons may go to <https://www.umsc.org/donate/> and click the Donate to Specific Missions and Ministries button. It is listed in the "Other Items" group.

Again, thanks for your support!

Sincerely, I am,

Jeffrey Salley

The Reverend Jeffrey Salley

Chairperson, Scholarship Committee, Board of Ordained Ministry



Salkehatchie reboot

What began as an idea to encourage youth to rediscover the power of the "Salkehatchie experience" turned into a multichurch district event. On April 3, Aldersgate UMC, Greenville, joined with St. Matthew UMC, St. Paul UMC and Northside UMC to explore what a week of mission work might look like. Youth visited tables featuring skills like drilling, hammering, sawing and painting and got the chance to create their own pair of work gloves. Representatives from the Lauren's Camp, Union Camp and Newberry Camp shared stories, as did veteran participants from many area churches. For information about hosting your own "reboot," contact Ruth Hughes at rhughes@amcsc.org.

Photos courtesy of Ruth Hughes





Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Robert Cox

Incorporation vs. the trust clause

Recently, I was helping a church with administration best practices when I heard something I had not heard before. The reason the church gave for not incorporating was they believed that when they incorporated the church, they were signing the church over to the conference and they would no longer own their church.

I spent the next half hour explaining the difference between incorporation and the trust clause. Perhaps it would be helpful to explain it again.

What is incorporation?

From the South Carolina Conference, "Incorporation is the creation of an entity (pursuant to the laws of a state) capable of conducting business and otherwise acting as a legal person. In South Carolina, the creation of nonprofit corporations is governed by the South Carolina Nonprofit Corporation Act of 1994 (S.C. Code Ann. §§ 33-31-10, et seq). The South Carolina Secretary of State is responsible for overseeing nonprofit corporations within the state. When a church is not incorporated, it is treated as an unincorporated association."

What this means is that the secular world does not recognize an unincorporated church as a unique entity. It is viewed as an association of like-minded people. If someone wanted to sue the church, they couldn't sue the church itself, but the individual members of it.

Incorporation creates a legal umbrella over the entire congregation, protecting the individual members from lawsuit. Now the church is a legal entity that gets sued instead of the members.

For more details, go to the conference website www.umcsc.org/conferenceforms, and click on the button labeled Incorporation of Local Churches.

What is the Trust Clause?

From General Council of Finance & Administration, "The United Methodist Church is governed by the *Book of Discipline*, which includes rules on how to become a member, how to ordain our pastors, how to organize the church and many other things. One of the rules in the *Book of Discipline* is that the legal documents (the 'deeds') demonstrating ownership of local church property must contain certain language called the 'trust clause.' Essentially, the trust clause states that the local church owns the property, in trust, for the benefit of the entire denomination. The principal reason for this trust clause is to ensure that United Methodist local church property will continue to be used for United Methodist Church purposes.

"The basic idea is that the local church owns the property, but the property can only be used for certain purposes of benefit to the entire denomination. Specifically, the trust clause requires that the property '[b]e used, kept, and maintained as a place of divine worship of the United Methodist ministry and members of The United Methodist Church: subject to the *Discipline*, usage and ministerial appointments of said church as from time to time authorized and declared by the General Conference and by the annual conference within whose bounds the said premises are situated."

The trust clause has been part of Methodism since its inception. Even though a local church may not have this clause in their old deeds, it is still bound by the *Discipline*.

For more information and details, go to <https://www.gcfa.org/newsletter/2020/march/02/understanding-the-umc-trust-clause>

As you can see, the trust clause is getting confused with incorporation. They are not the same, and they do not interfere with the other.

Churches are required by the *Book of Discipline* Para. 2501 and following to have trust clauses in the deeds to the church's property.

Churches are strongly encouraged to incorporate for the purpose of protecting the members and the church. The *Book of Discipline* Para. 150.10 refers to a local church incorporating.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your district superintendent, the conference treasurer's office or me at rlcox@umcsc.org.



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Willie Clark

Community engagement

Wesley United Methodist Church in Aiken has a partnership with Helping Hands, a 501(c)(3) United Way agency that serves as a 24-hour emergency home for abused, abandoned and neglected children in South Carolina. Recently, the outreach ministry donated \$600 to Helping Hands. Wesley UMC says it is engaged in the community to make Aiken County a better place to live.



View from the Pews

by Bill Barnier

Reaching within

Pastor Al landed on an interesting topic at Bible study. He related a story of Simon (Acts 8, 9) from which he asked if Simon the Sorcerer believed.

He reminded us that the Apostles prayed over the believers to receive the Holy Spirit. He then asked three questions: Can you believe without the Holy Spirit? Can you purchase the presence of the Holy Spirit, as Simon offered? Are there church members without the Holy Spirit in their hearts?

I suspect each of us could spend a long time asking ourselves those very questions. Just what does the presence of the Holy Spirit feel like, exactly? Many who claim to have an abiding trust in the truth of our creator describe God only by the outward signs of his existence. "We're here" seems to be the obvious explanation. Belief by default. Ask the question "Why?" and "God only knows" comes up to cover all possibilities. Indeed.

The same can be said of the Holy Spirit. Can we describe the Holy Spirit? How do we know we've taken the next step of faith by allowing the Holy Spirit to be known within our souls? It might be said that describing God and the Holy Spirit is like trying to describe love or a color or a sound. There must be a reference to a point of common knowledge from which to draw a metaphor. The most common answer is simply that we just know.

I lived the bulk of my life in faith in the existence of God but avoided action with that knowledge. I walked away from organized religion because I felt it strayed too far from the simple love and peace of God and the actions of faith through the Holy Spirit. One can see the manipulation and control of church societies in history, which grew for purposes away from the basic tenets of God's will to

serve men. It was easy to "talk the talk," but not so easy to "walk the walk," and I avoided those who did.

Then God brought us to our little Methodist church to renew my faith in what can be done when Spirit puts faith into action. Sadly, it seems the stubbornness of people may mean the split of yet another world church.

But having faith is only part of the answer to the belief equation. You can work in a library and still not learn a thing. We no longer have the luxury of biblical miracles to bring nonbelievers or skeptical believers into the Holy Spirit. Now believers must honestly adjust their hearts to clearly look outward to see the Holy Spirit waiting patiently to be recognized.

With acceptance of the pure light and true sight of the Spirit comes a fullness of action that cannot be denied. The priceless measure of peace, love, security and purpose fills the soul, to give greater meaning and understanding to the vast universe of God. With that light, one can no longer simply believe. Courage in Spirit and humility before God replaces the human excuses for life under the controlling and confrontational rules of men. Memories of lessons and abilities long forgotten become visible in the light of the Holy Spirit.

One then comes to fully understand that anything is possible if our creator wishes it to be so.

We must first be humble and contrite in our view of ourselves before the Holy Spirit can light the miraculous power of our creator within us. Old souls understand!

Speak the words, and they will learn. Live the words, and they will understand.

Barnier attends St. Paul United Methodist Church, Ridgeland.

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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
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- 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



Resource Center

by Betty Stalaker

'The Chosen' and more

"The Chosen" is now available in the Resource Center. "The Chosen" is the first multiseason TV show about the life of Jesus. Created outside the Hollywood system, "The Chosen" allows us to see Jesus through the eyes of those who knew him. In addition, many other resources are available for your church or class.

The Chosen: Season 1

(DVD2758B=) Author: Isaac, Shahar/Roumie, Jonathan. 2 DVDs, 8 sessions, 21-59 min/study guide/devotional bk/2020.

For the first time, the greatest story ever told is presented as a multiseason show. Digging deeper into the backstories and context of the people and events of the Gospels, Season 1 of the highest crowd-funded media project of all time introduces you to people such as Simon Peter, Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, Matthew and Jesus in a way never before seen on film. Age: EMHYAS. CC.

The Chosen: Season 2

(DVD2760B=) Author: Isaac, Shahar/Roumie, Jonathan. 2 DVDs, 8 sessions/37-64 min/study guide/devotional bk/2021.

It's no longer hidden. The word is spreading that Jesus is the Messiah. Increased fame brings growing crowds, new disciples and more miracles. It also brings trouble. Mary is confronted with old demons. The tension between Simon and Matthew explodes. James and John battle their prejudices and fiery tempers. But they all continue to passionately pursue the man they don't always understand but will always follow. Age: EMHYAS. CC.

The Lord's Prayer: The Meaning and Power of the Prayer Jesus Taught

(DVD2739B=) Author: Hamilton, Adam. 6 sessions, 15-17 min/leader's guide/bk/2022.

Most Christians know the Lord's Prayer by heart. We pray it often, at different times

and in different settings. We remember it as the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. But do we really understand and appreciate the meaning and power of its words, what we ask of God each time we pray it? When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, Jesus gave them this prayer. He likely taught it to his followers often, not just one time. He never intended the Lord's Prayer to be a museum piece, framed and placed on a mantel or in a display case. It was Jesus teaching God's people, through his disciples, how to pray. In this study, Hamilton guides us to really know—and really pray—the Lord's Prayer. He explores each of its rich lines and their meaning in the Bible, illuminating what we ask of God and what we ask of ourselves through its words. And he teaches us how to use it as a pattern for our own prayer life. Age: YAS. CC.

The Power of Knowing God

(DVD2757CL=) Author: Evans, Tony. 6 sessions, 9-12 min/wkb/bk/2020.

Evans believes knowing God fully should be everyone's life pursuit. In this highly practical, six-session DVD series based on his book "The Power of Knowing God," he shares his strategy for living victoriously as a child of God. God wants more than a fan club. He wants an intimate relationship with you. Through personal storytelling and in-depth scriptural studies, Evans will equip you with the right tools for success in pursuing a personal and authentic relationship with the Savior that goes beyond church attendance, reading the Bible and attending study groups. Experience the fullness of life when you walk step-by-step with God. Age: YAS. CC.

The South Carolina Conference Resource Center is your connection to DVDs and seasonal musicals. We are here to serve your church family. To reserve resources, call 803-735-8798 or place an order online at www.umcsc.org/resourcecenter

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for their dedicated service to Clemson United Methodist Church.

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Global Briefs

Church workshop planned on dementia

MARIETTA, Ga.—Due West United Methodist Church plans to hold a multifaith and community leaders workshop on serving families facing dementia. The free workshop is set for 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. May 17 at the church, at 3956 Due West Road. Retired United Methodist Bishop Kenneth Carder and other dementia ministry advocates are among the speakers.

Bishop Steiner Ball elected as board president

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry has elected Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball as the president of its board of directors. Steiner Ball—who jointly leads the West Virginia, Western Pennsylvania and Susquehanna conferences with Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi—follows Bishop William McAlilly, whose term has expired. Steiner Ball "brings a wealth of resources and knowledge to GBHEM," said the Rev. Greg Bergquist, the agency's top executive.

Church court faces resolutions on LGBTQ inclusion

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The Judicial Council, The United Methodist Church's top court, released four rulings. Two stem from annual conference resolutions about LGBTQ inclusion. The other two dealt with procedural matters.

Parker exits SBC21; replacement sought

HOUSTON—Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century has announced the departure of the Rev. Nathalie Nelson Parker, the founding coordinator of its young adults program. Nelson Parker has been appointed beyond the local church and will serve Gammon Theological Seminary as Recruitment and Retention Specialist beginning July 1. SBC21 is looking for an innovative, creative and energetic leader for the position.

Zimbabwe United Methodists share bounty

HARARE, Zimbabwe—On the first Sunday in February, the Rev. Daniel Mutidzawanda hauled a giant pumpkin into the sanctuary of Chisipiti United Methodist Church as part of a celebration lifting up the first harvest of the season to God. "What started as a small seed ... has now blossomed into a big act of worship in the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area," said Joseph Mushambi, who initiated the first fruit offering in 2010.

Delegation endorses Christmas Covenant

GLEN ALLEN, Va.—The Virginia Conference's delegates to General Conference have unanimously endorsed the Christmas Covenant, a legislative package submitted to the lawmaking assembly. The proposed legislation would transform central conferences in Africa, Europe and the Philippines into regional conferences and create a U.S. regional conference. The legislation aims to create a more equitable global structure.

Ukrainians may be moved from Russian bishop's area

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Can a Russian bishop effectively oversee Ukrainian United Methodists, given Russia's invasion of Ukraine? Some European United Methodists say no and have proposed a temporary move of the Ukraine-Moldova Provisional Annual Conference from the supervision of Moscow-based Bishop Eduard Khegay. He's strongly protesting.

Ideas for Native American Ministries Sunday

WASHINGTON—Since 1989, United Methodist congregations have observed the third Sunday after Easter as Native American Ministries Sunday—May 1 this year. The purpose is to elevate and support the contributions and voices of Native/Indigenous people in our church. The United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race has compiled suggestions for congregations and individuals wishing to honor native/indigenous people as well as offering a new downloadable infographic.

Bulgaria-Romania United Methodists vote to leave

VARNA, Bulgaria—The Bulgaria-Romania Provisional Annual Conference has voted to leave The United Methodist Church for the Global Methodist Church when that new, theologically conservative denomination begins operations May 1. United Methodist Bishop Patrick Streiff said the disaffiliation vote—as conducted by conference members—was "without legal basis in the Book of Discipline."

Heritage Sunday is May 22

MADISON, N.J.—Heritage Sunday falls on May 22 this year, and United Methodist Archives and History plans to release several resources around the theme of "Splits, Separations and Reconciliations." The materials will look at church splits over the past 250 years, beginning with the original split from the Church of England in 1784. There will be an interactive timeline, online course, podcasts and more.

Providing Ukrainian refugees 'soul care'

ZURICH—United Methodists in countries near Ukraine continue to take care of the practical needs of Ukrainian refugees, finding them safe places to stay and providing food, clothes and other necessities. But they also aim to go beyond concrete support. "Part of what we give is soul care," said Rev. Jessica Morris-Ivanova, a pastor in Shumen, Bulgaria.

Full communion plans with Episcopalians on hold

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—With General Conference delayed until 2024, Episcopalians are forgoing a vote on full communion until United Methodists vote on it first. One concern among Episcopalians is where the future UMC will stand on LGBTQ inclusion.

Hispanic caucus urges bishop be reinstated

PLEASANTVILLE, N.J.—MARCHA, The UMC's Hispanic/Latino caucus has written an open letter urging the suspension of Bishop Minerva Carcaño be lifted while a complaint process in which she is named continues toward resolution. Western Jurisdiction leaders tried to address MARCHA's concerns and explained why the complaint process is confidential.

United Methodists take in Ukrainian orphans

SIBIU, Romania—Children and staff from an orphanage in Kyiv, Ukraine, have been taken in by Romanian United Methodists after a thwarted abduction attempt during their refugee journey. That's one of the stories emerging from Eastern European United Methodists' relief work with Ukrainians, mostly women and children, who have fled their country since the Russian invasion began last month.

—Courtesy of United Methodist News Service

Help others know about the Advocate's communications ministry on Advocate Awareness Sunday May 15

This spring, the *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate* will hold its annual Advocate Awareness Sunday, an effort to introduce United Methodists across South Carolina to the newspaper ministry.

This year's *Advocate* Awareness Sunday is May 15.

The *Advocate* has a number of items for churches and others to share, including

talking points, bulletin inserts, a video and more.

"The *Advocate* is a great way to help churches be connectional and know what is going on in the denomination across the state, but not everyone knows about the *Advocate*," said Editor Jessica Brodie. "We hope our readers will do what they can to spread the word so our newspaper contin-

ues to thrive for future generations."

Founded as the *Southern Christian Advocate*, the *Advocate* was first commissioned by the General Conference of 1836 to be published in Charleston, one of three papers authorized by that conference. Highly respected across the denomination, it is currently the oldest newspaper in Methodism and has won 123 journalism

excellence awards in the last decade.

The *Advocate's* mission is 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. Find the video and other resources at <https://advocatesc.org/advocate-awareness-day>

UMC Bishops gather to chart future of denomination, welcome new leaders

WASHINGTON, D.C.—In the wake of disruptions and postponements because of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the more than 100 bishops of The United Methodist Church will meet once again in a virtual gathering April 25 to April 29 to discuss the future course of the denomination.

The spring meeting of the Council of Bishops will also welcome a new slate of leadership that was elected during the fall meeting in November, including South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, who will serve as secretary.

The bishops from Africa, Asia, Europe and North America will also hear leadership reports regarding ecumenical



Holston

relations, anti-racism, disaster relief and other mission and ministry work around the worldwide denomination.

The bishops will also discuss how to provide greater and more transformative, evangelical and prophetic leadership to the church.

Council of Bishops President Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey noted that the upcoming COB meeting will be filled with moments that "I pray will remind us of the ongoing experience of God's grace and power in our lives and in the life of The United Methodist Church."

Harvey, of the Louisiana Area, who has led the Council of Bishops since 2020, will preside during the Zoom meeting,

offering a final presidential address and handing over the gavel at the end of the meeting to Bishop Thomas Bickerton of the New York Area.

Bickerton, who has served as president-designate, was elected president at the November meeting. Also elected besides Holston and Bickerton was Bishop Tracy Smith Malone of East Ohio Conference as president-designate.

Bishop Bruce Ough and Bishop Sally Dyck will continue in their roles as COB executive secretary and COB ecumenical officer, respectively. Harvey will serve as the immediate past president of the COB.

The first and fifth days of the COB meeting (April 25 and April 29) will be livestreamed on the COB Facebook page ([Facebook.com.umcbishops](https://www.facebook.com/umcbishops)) starting at 9 a.m. Eastern.

Obituaries

Mary Grace Lancaster Brown

SPARTANBURG—Mary Grace Lancaster Brown, wife of the Rev. David A. Brown, died March 29, 2022. Rev. Brown is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held April 2 at Dunbar Funeral Home with burial in Greenlawn Memorial Gardens.

Memorials may be made to Children's Advocacy Center, 100 Washington Place, Spartanburg, SC 29302; or to the Spartanburg Humane Society, 150 Dexter Road, Spartanburg, SC 29303.

Mrs. Brown is survived by her husband and daughter.

Betty Strom Carey

EDGEFIELD—Betty Strom Carey, widow of the Rev. Ira J. Carey, died March 29, 2022.

Funeral services were held April 11 at Edgefield United Methodist Church with burial in Eastview Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to Edgefield UMC, P.O. Box 25, Edgefield, SC 29824-0025; or to Mount Lebanon UMC, 772 Old Ninety Six Hwy., Greenwood, SC 29646-8638.

Mrs. Carey is survived by her two sons.

Sandra Bea Lusby Elkins

INDEPENDENCE, Mo.—Sandra Bea Lusby Elkins, mother of the Rev. Steve Elkins, died April 9, 2022. Rev. Elkins is the pastor of First United Methodist Church, Winnsboro.

A memorial service was held April 16 at Faubion UMC, Gladstone, Missouri.

Memorials may be made to Faubion UMC, 7113 N. Troost Ave., Gladstone, MO 64118.

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

Bobbie Lane Gwinn

EASLEY—Master Sgt. (Ret.) Bobbie Lane Gwinn, brother of the Rev. Roger Gwinn, died April 9, 2022. Rev. Gwinn is the pastor of Arial-Tabor Charge.

Funeral services were held April 13 at Robinson Funeral Home with burial in Hillcrest Memorial Park.

Memorials may be made to the Track Ministry of Welcome Missionary Baptist Church, P.O. Box 325, Easley, SC 29641.

Mr. Gwinn is survived by his son and daughter.

Roger Frederick Hansen

LEXINGTON—Roger Frederick Hansen, father of the Rev. Alisha C. Hansen, died March 22, 2022. Rev. Hansen is the pastor of St. Paul United Methodist Church, Chesterfield.

Funeral services were held April 1 at Caughman-Harman Funeral Home—Lexington Chapel.

William John Hawkins

IRMO—William John "Bill" Hawkins, father of the Rev. Tammy Grey, died April 15, 2022. Rev. Grey is the pastor of Shady Grove United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held April 25 at Shady Grove UMC.

Memorials may be made to Shady Grove UMC, 1918 Shady Grove Road, Irmo, SC 29063.

Mr. Hawkins is survived by his daughter.

Margaret Lewis Hendricks

ANGIER, N.C.—Margaret Lewis Hendricks, widow of the Rev. John Hendricks, died April 15, 2022.

A memorial service was held May 7 at Kipling United Methodist Church, Kipling, North Carolina, with burial in Olive Branch Cemetery, Kipling.

Memorials may be made to the John Hendricks Memorial Scholarship Fund for Laurens District 55 High School Students at United Community Bank, 101 W. Main St., Laurens, SC 29360.

Mrs. Hendricks is survived by her four daughters and son.

David Bland Herlong

AIKEN—David Bland Herlong, brother of the Rev. Edward Herlong, died April 3, 2022. Rev. Herlong is the pastor of Elim United Methodist Church, Lamar.

Funeral services were held April 8 at Shellhouse-Rivers Funeral Home with burial in the Harmony UMC Cemetery, Johnston.

Mr. Herlong is survived by his wife, Carolyn, four sons and daughter.

Rev. Charles Anthony Hutchins

GREENEVILLE, Tenn.—Rev. Charles Anthony Hutchins, a former president and CEO of Epworth Children's Home, Colum-

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.

bia, died March 21, 2022.

Rev. Hutchins came to Epworth in 1973 as associate executive director after serving in a similar position at the Holston Home for Children. He became executive director, later president and CEO, in 1978 and served until 1995, when he retired and returned to Tennessee.

A memorial service was held April 2 at the Rock Church on the campus of the Holston Home.

Memorials may be made to the Ralph Edwin Hutchins Scholarship Fund at Holston United Methodist Home for Children, 404 Holston Drive, Greeneville, TN 37743; to the Charles A. Hutchins Fund at Epworth Children's Home, P.O. Box 50466, Columbia, SC 29250; or to the Charles and Eva Grey Hutchins Scholarship Fund at Africa University, P.O. Box 340007, Nashville, TN 37203.

Rev. Hutchins is survived by his wife, Eva Grey, son and daughter.



Hutchins

Rev. Phil Mace Jones

COLUMBIA—The Rev. Phil Mace Jones, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died April 3, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 1995, Rev. Jones served the Rock Hill-St. John's Associate, Newberry-Trinity, Woodford, Victor, Simpsonville, Batesburg, Charleston-Aldersgate, Charleston-Bethel and Sumter-Trinity charges. Following his retirement, he served the Bethune Harts-



Jones

ville Charge He also served McKendree in Atlanta.

Funeral services were held April 7 at Shandon UMC with a private entombment in Greenlawn Mausoleum.

Memorials may be sent to Wofford College Athletic Program, 429 N. Church St., Spartanburg, SC 29303; to Shandon UMC, 3407 Devine St., Columbia, SC 29205; or to Soule's Chapel Cemetery Fund, 1203 Swintz Court, Gresham, SC 29456.

Rev. Jones is survived by his wife, Gloria W. Jones, daughter and two sons.

Rev. Clarence Dixon Padgett

WAYNESVILLE, N.C.—The Rev. Clarence Dixon "Bo" Padgett, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died March 28, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 1997, Rev. Padgett served the Gethsemane-Trinity, Chesnee, Woods Chapel, Red Bank, Greenville-Christ, Latimer Memorial and Bethel-Ebenezer charges.

A memorial service was held April 3 in the Waynesville chapel of Wells Funeral Home.

Memorials may be given to the American Parkinson's Disease Association Inc., 1250 Hylan Blvd. Suite 4-B, Staten Island, NY 10305.

Rev. Padgett is survived by his son and daughter.



Padgett

Rev. Wallace Grable Page Jr.

BEAUFORT—The Rev. Wallace Grable Page Jr., a member of the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church who served Port Royal UMC in South Carolina upon his retirement, died March 22, 2022.

Funeral services were held March 27 at Carteret Street UMC.

Rev. Page is survived by his wife, Bobbie, and two sons.



Page Jr.



From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

Prelude to Merger

With the words “Lord of the Church, we are united in Thee, in Thy Church and now in The United Methodist Church,” proclaimed in Dallas, Texas, on April 23, 1968, our denomination came into being. South Carolina Methodists became United Methodists.

While that was the only immediate change that the new church brought to the Palmetto State, the events of April 1968 laid the groundwork for major changes in South Carolina Methodism.

As part of the agreement to unite, the Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren churches agreed to eliminate the structures that segregated Black and White Methodists into separate conferences. The move to abolish the Central Jurisdiction had been in the works almost since it was created, and the EUBs were not willing to join until it was gone. The abolition of the Central Jurisdiction satisfied the EUB demands, but it came with no promise from the General Conference of equitable treatment in representation, service on boards or commissions or anything else. Some Central Jurisdiction leaders voiced concerns about losing leadership opportunities that the Central Jurisdiction afforded them. With the abolition of the Central Jurisdiction, the annual conferences in the South had to begin to work on plans to merge.

South Carolina's 1866 and 1785 conferences had already appointed a joint committee on merger. The process was slow to unfold. The *Advocate* did begin to report more on the activities in the 1866 Conference, no doubt an intentional decision that the Rev. McKay Brabham, the editor, made. After 1968, Resident Bishop Paul Hardin Jr. became the bishop of both the 1866 and 1785 conferences, and he talked about both conferences in his columns.

In May 1970, just before the 1866 Conference convened at Claflin University, the first draft of the merger document was presented. The report noted the desire for the merger to be that, a genuine merger, and not an absorption of the smaller (40,000 member) 1866 Conference into the larger (195,000 member) 1785 Conference. The plan also set a formula for board and commission membership, set the number of districts and blocked any changes in the conference standing rules that would undermine the merger agreement for 12 years.

Letters to the *Advocate* from White Methodists throughout the fall of 1970 were generally opposed to merger. When the initial plan of merger was presented to the 1866 Conference in May 1971, it passed, but when the 1785 Conference met two weeks later, they voted to reject the plan. A committee from the 1785 Conference met to propose changes, and a special session of the 1785 Conference was called for September to evaluate options. In September, the 1785 Conference approved a plan of merger with a set of changes. Evidently they did not consult with the 1866 Conference, for a few weeks later, a special session of the 1866 Conference rejected the new plan. They appointed their own committee to negotiate.

In January 1972, a joint session of both annual conferences saw a mutually agreed-on plan of merger adopted by both conferences.

Out of that process, messy as it was, came a plan that was acceptable to both conferences, and with the details ironed out, merger took place in June 1972.

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

What a blessing!

Shiloh UMC, Lugoff, celebrated its 137th anniversary March 20. Here, the Rev. DuBose gives the message. Murphy Belton offered a musical solo, Mary Davis and Brenda Reed read the Scriptures and Anthony Nelson gave the church history.

Photo courtesy of Henry Belton



Conference Historical Society

by Joyce Plyler

The roots of faith and history

For the benefit of *Advocate* readers who may not be members of the Conference Historical Society, I would like to share with you an edited version of the president's message that appeared in the spring edition of the society's newsletter, *The Mark*. By the time you read this, an excellent new leader will be at the helm of the society and I will have moved on to other volunteer roles and will continue my research and writing.

By now, it appears that there are irreconcilable differences in our denomination and the going may not be easy for a while. Let us pray that our strong roots—our history—will sustain our branching and that we can remain connected through the common tenets of our Wesleyan heritage. The wider the branching the more important the roots, as I recently asked historical society members to consider:

Dear Friends and Fellow Methodist Historians,

“Who are we?” and “Whose are we?” are common questions in sermons and for people of faith. I pose them now as foundational questions in determining our mission as the Conference Historical Society within the larger sphere of Methodism.

While futurists speculate on where we are headed, historians seek to know from where we have come. As Christians, we believe that our beginnings are the Word, the I Am, the one true God. As Methodists, we trace our beginnings to the theology of John Wesley. It is a daunting task to know, to really know, both our theology and our history; the two are intertwined but their study is based on different precepts. We do our best to know and understand, but in the end we are often left seeing through the glass darkly. It is not a comforting state for those of us who crave certainty.

Nevertheless, because we have faith in God's ultimate purpose, we can move forward with hope and positivity. To progress according to God's will, it is our sacred duty as historians of Methodism to: 1) preserve our history; 2) educate ourselves and others about our history; and 3) ensure that our history is accurately interpreted. When you think about it, this is our sacred duty about our faith as well—to preserve it, to educate ourselves and others about it and to ensure its accurate interpretation.

The value of our history is profound: we

cannot preserve our faith unless we preserve our history. Each of you, as a member of our Conference Historical Society, helps to carry this sacred burden. I like to think of us as Christians, Methodists and historians, in that order. The fact that each individual enjoys a different aspect of our history gives us the collective strength to tackle broad preservation and educational goals.

Every member is valuable to the society. Our work as historians has probably never been more critical as it is during this era of denominational and cultural shifts. It has caused me to reflect upon the use of names as identifiers because names are a reflection of who we are and Methodism uses many different names. When I married, my husband tolerated my psychological attachment to my maiden name, Plyler, which dates back to the 1700s and is concentrated in the adjacent counties of Lancaster in South Carolina, where I grew up, and Union, North Carolina, where I now live. The name Plyler is common here, and I often get the question, “Are you kin to so-and-so,” to which I typically respond, “Probably so, if you go back far enough.”

As with my kinship to people named “Plyler,” I feel a theological kinship with Christians who descend from Methodism, even if they are not “United Methodists.” In my naiveté I used to think that all Methodists were United Methodists. Now I have a more complete picture of the diversity of denominations with Methodist roots.

A review of our history prepares me for what now appears to be an inevitable division within United Methodism. If that comes to pass, we can continue to rejoice in the strength of our solid foundations. Our roots will remind us of our kinship. As historians, our work will not change. As Methodists, our work will not change. As Christians, our work definitely will not change.

For we are Christians first—it is the name of Christ that will continue to tell everyone who we are and whose we are.

Serving with you in the ministry of memory, Joyce Plyler

If you wish to keep in touch with me, please email joyceplyler@icloud.com. Learn more about the Conference Historical Society and see our new slate of officers at <https://www.umcsc.org/historical-society>

St. Mark holds celebration of women's history

By Patricia Rigby-Charthern

In honor of Women's History Month, the women of St. Mark United Methodist Church in St. George commemorated the extraordinary contributions of women. It was a spirit-filled day of celebration, as ladies adorned in white remembered women from the Bible to all women—mothers, grandmothers, teachers, church mothers, neighbors and all who paved the way and encouraged them to dream and soar.

The impact of women in the past and today continue to affect the present and future of younger and senior women.

The keynote speaker, Patricia Rigby-

Charthern, focused on the topic “The Spirituality of Harriet Tubman” in honor of the worldwide remembrances of the 200th anniversary of Tubman's birth. During numerous interviews, Tubman talked about her deep trust in God, her belief in the power of prayer and the singing of spirituals, all of which helped her to accomplish so much. She frequently stated that she talked to God and he talked back to her, so she depended on him to lead and guide her in all that she did. She served as conductor on the Underground Railroad, risking her life to free enslaved family and others, and as a Civil War scout, spy, nurse, entrepreneur

and supporter of the Women's Suffrage Movement.

Throughout 2022, the world will honor Harriet Tubman for her remarkable courage and bravery. Schools, museums, parks, books, movies, the Combahee River Bridge on Highway 17, a World War II ship (the

SS Harriet Tubman), induction into the Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame and much more are all named in her honor. This woman of faith, her life and legacy, make for a powerful American story.

The Rev. William M. Wrighten is the pastor of St. Mark UMC.



It was a spirit-filled day of celebration, as the ladies of St. Mark UMC, St. George, adorned in white remembered women from the Bible to all women—mothers, grandmothers, teachers, church mothers, neighbors and all who paved the way.

Leave A Legacy To Change Lives

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scumf@bellsouth.net

Mount Pleasant to mark 200th anniversary with Francis Asbury historical 'visit'

By Willie Morris

Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church, located in the northeastern corner of Newberry County and about 12 miles from the city of Newberry, has a long and rich history.

In the last months of the American Revolution, settlers from Virginia and other states came into the area where the church now stands. Some of these pioneers had become acquainted with Methodist preachers and services in Virginia and Maryland, but when they reached the Broad River Valley and made their homes, there were no Methodist churches or circuit riders.

Then in the last days of the Revolution, there came into this wild new land a horseman who crossed Broad River just south of where Peak now stands and continued on to the area where the group of newly-settled Virginians lived. As if in answer to prayer, this man was a Methodist preacher: James Foster. Foster was hard at work doing what he loved, preaching and instructing people in the gospel. He served as a local preacher there until his health failed.

Although Foster did not found Mount Pleasant Church, his efforts were certainly responsible for providing the climate that led to its creation.

Mount Pleasant Church was founded in the year 1822. Before this date, however, Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury found on the western side of Broad River a flourishing Methodist congregation worshipping in "Parrot's Log Church." Perhaps this log church was the forerunner to Mount Pleasant Church, since a family named Parrott was among the early members of Mount Pleasant.

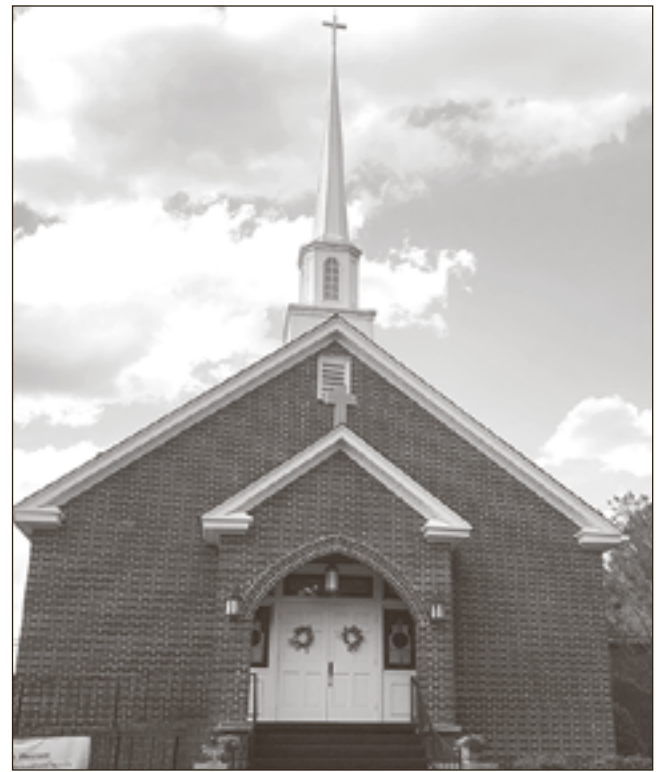
Soon the small congregation undertook to build a permanent house of worship. One source says this church was presumably destroyed by General Sherman during the Civil War. A second building was erected in the 1860s. Tragedy struck Mount Pleasant Church in 1943 when lightning hit the church building and burned it down. A new church—our present church—was completed in 1949.

Over the years, Mount Pleasant Church has been part of several circuits. In 1967, Mount Pleasant Church left the Pomaria Circuit and became a station church. In 1968, The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren joined, and Mount Pleasant became a church within the United Methodist Church. In 2021, Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church was joined with O'Neal UMC; our pastor serving both churches is the Rev. Darlene Kelley.

It has been said that we are so indebted to the past that



The Rev. Bob Borom as Bishop Francis Asbury.



Mount Pleasant UMC was organized in 1822.

we are merely little people who stand on the shoulders of giants. At Mount Pleasant UMC, we recognize that we build upon the labors of those giants who have preceded us in the 200-year history of our church. We thank God for the dedication and service of such people and ask for his guidance in the years ahead.

Mount Pleasant is expecting a visit from Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury, portrayed by the Rev. W. Robert Borom, on Sunday, May 1 at 11 a.m. Asbury steps out of the past from more 200 years ago and comes to life in a dramatic portrayal by Borom. In a stirring monologue, he reminisces about his boyhood conversion, his call into the ministry, his coming to America as a missionary preacher and his experiences during ceaseless travels while preaching and organizing churches across frontier America during the late 1700s and early 1800s. Convinced that his beloved Methodist Church still has a mission to accomplish, Asbury challenges present-day church members to rekindle the flame of early Methodism.

Asbury was born in 1745 in England and died in 1816 in America. He was the first bishop elected by the newly formed Methodist Episcopal Church in America in 1784. It was estimated that Asbury traveled well more than 250,000 miles on horseback during his ministry, thus becoming known as "The Bishop on Horseback" and "The Prophet of the Long Road."

Borom is a United Methodist minister and a graduate of Georgia Tech and Candler School of Theology (Emory University). He has written several historical articles that appear in The Encyclopedia of World Methodism and edited a book on the history of the South Georgia Conference. His Asbury drama has been performed for numerous local churches, annual conference events and other special occasions. A videotape of his drama was produced by Drew University as part of a series on American Methodist History.

Morris is a member of Mount Pleasant UMC, Newberry.

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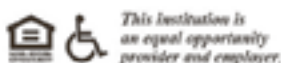
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April

Columbia Bethlehem Community Center
Special Emphasis Month

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

April 30—LSM School (Rock Hill District), St. John's UMC, Rock Hill, 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/lay-servant-training-spring-2022/>

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, St Mark UMC, Greenwood, 2-7:30 p.m. \$30.

May 1—LSM School (Rock Hill District), St. John's UMC, Rock Hill, 2-5 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/lay-servant-training-spring-2022/>

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

May 5—National Day of Prayer



Photo courtesy of Valerie Brooks-Madden

'7 Last Words' service

This year, Bethlehem United Methodist Church in Greenville hosted for the first time a "7 Last Words" Good Friday Service. The service included seven powerful messengers of God's word. The service was filled with words of encouragement and music. The event was well attended, and members from various churches came out to support. Ministers who participated in this program included the Rev. Ernest Burgess, the Rev. Tyrone Westfield, Dr. T.L. Bufford, the Rev. Dexter Cannon, the Rev. Annie Jackson, the Rev. Brenda Washington, Dr. Daniel Hembree, Dr. Amenti Sujai and hosted by the Rev. Redonia Thomas of Bethlehem UMC.

May 7—Fish Fry, Friendship UMC, Rock Hill, \$10. fumcrh@gmail.com or <https://www.friendshipumc-rockhill.org>

May 7—Spring Commencement Convocation, Jonas T. Kennedy Health and Wellness Complex, Claflin University,

Orangeburg.

May 7—WCA's Sixth Global Gathering, Indianapolis, Indiana. <https://wesley-ancovenant.org/morethanconquer-orsgg22/>

May 15—Men N Ministry District Event, Woodland UMC, Rock Hill, 3 p.m.

May 20-22—21st Assembly of United Women in Faith (hybrid), Orlando Conference Center, Orlando, Florida.

May 20-21—SMC Enrollment Days

May 23-27—2022 Carolinas Black Clergy Leadership Retreat

May 30—Memorial Day, United Methodist Center closed.

June

June 5-6—South Carolina Annual Conference, Florence Center, Florence

June 19-24—Music and Worship Arts Week 2022, Lake Junaluska. <https://lakejunaluska.com/events-calendar/music-worship-arts-week-2022/>

June 20—Juneteenth, United Methodist Center closed.

June 24-25—SMC Enrollment Days

Conference men offer new weekly devotional via email

Men N Ministry, South Carolina's United Methodist Men's ministry effort, has started a new weekly devotional project to help men keep the Word of God in the forefront of their lives.

They are sending both a written and video devotional to those on their email list. To sign up for this email list and weekly devotional, send your name and email address to menminsc@gmail.com.

UMCom offers hybrid worship training course to empower churches

Creating Hybrid Worship Services, a newly released online training course, is designed to explore the best practices for offering worship services that engage participants both in-person and online. It is an open enrollment, self-paced course that allows students to register at any time.

The complimentary course is offered by United Methodist Communications, the denomination's global communication agency.

"Hybrid worship is becoming a norm for many church-

es" said Director of Training and Development Jeremy Brown. "Our goal is to help churches identify effective hybrid techniques and highlight tools and skills needed to make hybrid worship accessible to them."

The Creating Hybrid Worship Services course offers lessons on:

- Live-streaming: Learn about the essential components of a live-streamed service including video capture devices, cameras, live-streaming software, and multi-streaming

platforms.

- Teleconferencing options: Learn how to use teleconferencing (including Zoom) for providing hybrid services.
- Online engagement tips and techniques: Learn how to lead remote participants to engage in the worship service and equip team-members to become effective worship moderators.

To register for the course, visit www.ResourceUMC.org/Training.



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

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Open Positions

**St. Luke United Methodist Church,
Hartsville,
Director of Youth Ministries**

The Director of Youth Ministries devises and executes Christian educational programs alongside the Pastor and youth advisory teams. The primary responsibility of this individual is providing meaningful education programs for youth of the congregation, leading to a better understanding of God's will for the church and the lives of the community, while providing support in personal growth through Christ, and the use of spiritual gifts and services to others.

This person should have a personal commitment to Jesus Christ and a demonstrated journey of spiritual growth and development; a basic understanding of United Methodist theology; a working knowledge of Christian education curriculum and resources; experience working with various age levels (6th-12th grade) with an understanding of educational ministries within a variety of settings; ability to conceptualize and articulate a specific task, and recruit, train, and organize laity in the fulfillment of these task; strong interpersonal, verbal, and written communication skills; effective organizational and administrative skills; computer skills; ability to work in a team environment; ability to prioritize and balance multiple projects; and be self-motivated.

For a complete job description or more information, contact Ben Gore, SPRC Chair, at Bennygore64@gmail.com; 843-307-6085; or St Luke UMC, 302 Dunlap Drive, Hartsville, SC 29550, C/O Ben Gore.

Don't miss an issue (and help us save money): Send us your new address!



by the Rev. Daniel Griswold

Stinginess or abundance?

May 1

The Good of Limits

Lesson Scripture: Leviticus 25:1-13

Background Scripture: Leviticus 25

Key Verse: “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: Once you enter the land that I am giving you, the land must celebrate a sabbath rest to the Lord” (Leviticus 25:2).

There is something within each of us that cringes when we learn that there are “limits” to the use of any “thing” that comes into our possession. When I received my first pocketknife as a boy it came with my grandmother’s admonitions on the good uses—and the harmful uses—of that gift. As an adult I realize that the gift of that potentially dangerous item was revocable if I went to my sister and began swinging it about. In contrast, we take that same knife when whittling a block of wood or cutting a rope length to tie up a canoe, and we see the proper use of the gift.

In Leviticus 25 the Lord has a gift for the Israelites and it is the land that they will soon begin to farm and make a living upon. The land would be the sustenance for the communities who would come and worship and seek right relationship with the Holy One, the God who created all that land in the first place.

The proper conditions for that gift were that the land was to be cared for properly and wielded in a way that the common good would be minded well. The key admonition was to allow the land to have Sabbath, or rest so it would produce well; and even more so the entire nation was to have a Sabbath of Sabbath’s at the 50th year when land would return to original owners, debts would be forgiven, and generational poverty could be avoided.

Here we see good limits God has provided for the community that increase yield in that the land does not wear out, the people retain God’s gifts in right proportion and sharing one’s gifts becomes the ethos of God’s people rather than earth- and humanity-destroying hedonism.

What limits from the Lord might we practice now that would increase celebration and the good of our neighbor?

May 8

The Sacrificial Tenth-Part

Lesson Scripture: Deuteronomy 14:22-29

Background Scripture: Full Text

Key Verse: “Every third year you must bring the tenth-part of your produce from that year and leave it at your city gates. Then the Levites, who have no designated inheritance like you do, along with the immigrants, orphans and widows who live in your cities will come and feast until they are full. Do this so that the Lord your God might bless you in everything you do” (Deuteronomy 14:28-29).

Like many, I grew up hearing from my church that the Bible teaches that we ought to give a tenth of all that we financially earn for the support of our church and ministry. This was a given, and I remember the white envelopes on the counter that would slowly diminish as my parents faithfully and often sacrificially gave of what little they had, even while supporting five children.

My wife had not been raised with the same admonitions, having accepted Christ as a teen, and after a few years of marriage, my conscience was bent toward us moving toward giving a tithe to the church we attended while finishing college and later seminary.

The first thought was that we were right on the threshold of poverty and with all the bills it didn’t seem prudent to give a full tenth. I expressed my heart and we prayed

over it, and both decided to try to give in the way the Bible calls us—sacrificially and trusting that the Lord would provide.

I can report that even though we at times have dealt with debt, bills from pregnancy we could not pay and times where we ate at the cheapest market in town, we continued to thank the Lord and we have never regretted supporting the ministries of our local church and the pastors who are supported by the “tenth-parts” of all the people.

Even when our status changed to “clergy” and we had three churches on a charge, we divided the tenth among them equally.

When Moses called the Israelites to give the tenth at the gates, it supported the Levitical priesthood, the widows, the orphans and the immigrants—all those tribes without land to support themselves.

This admonition sprouted from the heart of the Lord in the retelling of the ways of the Law.

How can we as people of the Messiah (and Wesleyan people) “earn all we can, save all we can and give all we can” in the spirit of Christ who literally gave all for us?

Also: Are our churches supporting the tribe-less among us as an outflow of God’s generosity?

May 15

When Suffering and Faith Collide

Lesson Scripture: Job 38:4-11

Background Scripture: Job 38

Key Verse: “Where were you when I laid earth’s foundations? Tell me if you know” (Job 38:4).

Reading the entire Book of Job in one sitting can be a feat, but one well worth the time. The story is set up much like a play with Job appearing to be the main character, but after some foolhardy theological discussions, the tide turns and God takes the center stage and asks Job some very hard questions. Job is set up as an exemplar of humanity, upright and good, without blemish, faithfully serving the Lord.

When the Adversary comes to the Lord in the heavenly court and seeks approval to test Job, the Lord knows Job’s faith and the test begins: Job loses his children, his possessions and his own health. The situation turns into deep grieving as Job wonders why he’d even been born and wonders why God appeared to be distant in the midst of his suffering.

His friends join the grief train, but then begin to seek out Job’s sins and give speeches to convince Job of the evil they had already accepted he must have committed. Surely his heart must have turned from God; otherwise, he would not have been punished so severely. Job then calls for a mediator between God and mankind, one who knows what it is like to be a mere human and can let God know how much we suffer in this world.

The good news is two-parted. The Lord appears to Job and asks “Where were you when I created all things?” Seeing the face of God humbles Job as he realizes how small a place each of us has in the universe.

With the Lord so great and us being part of a vast creation, it would be prideful to think we could make one speech and comprehend the deep pillars of understanding.

Like Job, we can hold to our faith and ask questions when we do not understand at the same time.

How can we practice humility in relation to God’s vastness? What questions do we have that we hope will one day be answered? How does God assure us when we hurt?

May 22

The Hope of the Land

Lesson Scripture: Joel 2:18-26; Romans

8:19-22

Background Scripture: Joel 2:18-30; Romans 8:19-25

Key Verse: “You will eat abundantly and be satisfied, and you will praise the name of the Lord your God, who has done wonders for you; and my people will never again be put to shame” (Joel 2:26).

Joel is both a hard prophetic book to preach from and, in another way, refreshing. It is hard in that it broaches the topic of human suffering from a very real and existential moment in Judah’s history: in an oncoming plague of locusts. The locusts would come and destroy everything that the people depended on for subsistence, and an extended plague would mean complete ruin. Like an army coming to rout the people and send them as exiles into another land, this disaster was all-consuming and would take away the one thing humans need to truly live: hope.

The minor prophet does not leave us sitting in the dust, but rather the Word of the Lord is given, and there is a remedy. Return to the Lord and remember the covenant your ancestors made, and the land would be restored, thus prosperity and peace would be returned and the shame of neglecting the Lord’s statutes would be wiped away.

Sounds a lot like John the Baptist crying “Repent!” I find this call to be a needful thing daily as I fall short often and need divine guidance to be faithful.

The apostle Paul speaking to the Romans enlightens us to the universal labor pains of all of creation subjected to the pain of the curse.

Our rebelliousness as a corporate body and our broken relationship with God has been like an earthquake that has cracked the landscape of salvation and our very relationship with creation itself. Nothing remains good for long when we live in the desolation of our sin. He envisions for us the hopeful future where the “sons and daughters of God” will be revealed and decay will be reversed with true righteous freedom reigning as the relationship with all things is restored.

What relationship do we have to the Lord today, and how can we hear the cries of the land and make peace with God and creation?

May 29

Give a Little, Get a Lot

Lesson Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9

Background Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8-9

Key Verse: “Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart. They shouldn’t give with hesitation or because of pressure. God loves a cheerful giver. Thank God for his gift that words can’t describe!” (2 Corinthians 9:7-9; 15).

Giving is always a tricky subject in communities because the ways we earn our wages seem to us to be an individual affair. I earned the wage by my work with my tools, my land and my know-how. We have a sense of entitlement to decide the fate of our abundance because of the close emotional attachment we have in our work, especially here in America. The issue this presents to the Christian is exactly what Paul is trying to draw out for the wealthy and prosperous Corinthian church. If we hold our hands clenched and do not sow gifts with what we have reaped, we will not receive when we are in need. Turn the coin, and we see that those who sow frequently and generously with their abundance will grow a crop of others, who then give generously as well, and the overall abundance would be available when the time of personal need arrives.

The parable of stone soup comes to mind whenever I hear Paul’s words. That a community in poverty had very little and could not provide a traveler means for a communal meal. He decided to start the meal anyway, with a stone in water, and in a small amount of time curious villagers came out to see the stone soup but would add one ingredient from their meager storehouse. Carrots, potatoes, beans and more. Soon the soup was a real meal, and in the end, the entire community had a great meal to enjoy.

Paul calls us to open our hands, especially to the relief of poverty in our world. The church in Jerusalem was under persecution and had very little. The Corinthian church had more than they needed.

It is up to us to be generously aware of need and to distribute when the call arises. What ways might we have been too stingy in helping others? In what ways can we celebrate our communal generosity?

Griswold pastors North Charleston United Methodist Church, North Charleston.

Thank your children’s ministry staff in the June Advocate

Does your children’s minister go above and beyond what is expected when it comes to cultivating kids in your church? Are you getting ready to kick off your first vacation Bible school in awhile? Or do you just want to give a big “thank you” to the person responsible for tending the youngest of your congregation’s flock?

“We know how important children’s ministry staff and volunteers are to the growth of any church,” said *Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie. “This is a great way to express support and show your children’s ministers their work is valued—and how much they mean to you.”

Three sizes are available for the children’s ministry 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 a children’s ministry appreciation ad in the June edition, email text to atrussell@umcsc.org or send to Advocate, 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203. **Deadline is May 10.**

Churches will be billed for the ads unless otherwise noted. Questions? Call Allison Trussell at 803-786-9486.



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