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August 2022

Bringing the outdoors in

Asbury Hills launches plans for new worship building in Upstate

By Jessica Brodie

United Methodist camp ministry leaders are getting ready this month to start Phase 2 of their master plan for Asbury Hills.

At Annual Conference in June, South Carolina Conference Camps & Retreat Ministries was authorized to begin reaching out to United Methodist churches across the state to fundraise for their capital campaign. The campaign will fund Asbury Hill's new worship center, which would accommodate approximately 400 people and equip the camp to host large groups with keynote speakers who need an indoor space.

Arthur Spriggs, Camps & Retreat Ministries executive director, said this space is something he's been wanting for a while.

"We do so much in the out-of-doors, but one of the things that shocked me was we were never able to attract our own United Methodist women's groups," Spriggs said. "It always bothered me."

They have 300 beds at Asbury Hills and can accommodate large groups, but when he asked why Asbury Hills was not an option for them, he learned it was because of the camp's lack of adequate indoor space. In the off-season especially, many groups prefer to have an indoor venue where attendees can

See "Asbury Hills," Page 13

Lancaster church team helps after flood devastates Tennessee town



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Matthew Alexander

Volunteers Tammy Woods (left) and Evelyn Ofori work on repairing a home swamped by floodwaters in Tennessee.

By Jessica Brodie

By all accounts, Waverly, Tennessee, is a small community. Located in the western portion of the state and established in the early 1800s as a stagecoach stop partway between Nashville and Memphis, only about 4,000 people live and work there. Pictures depict the community as an idyllic area, with a quaint main street and town square.

When devastating floodwaters from nearby Trace Creek ravaged the community last August, the natural disaster made headlines, but attention quickly moved on, and its people were left to pick up the pieces of their battered town with little outside help.

But thanks to the efforts of one South Carolina United Methodist congregation, Waverly residents got some much-needed assistance this spring—and a heavy dose of prayer.

A team from Grace-Lynnwood United Methodist Church, Lancaster, traveled to Waverly April 18-21, partnering with a church there to rebuild four homes, plus help with two wheelchair ramps.

The idea came from Grace-Lynnwood's pastor, the Rev. Matthew Alexander, who served in Waverly before

See "Lancaster Helps Tennessee," Page 12

Even in the heat

After storm hits Camden, ERT disaster responders head to help

By Billy Robinson

Hot temperatures and physically exhausting conditions could not hamper the God-inspired enthusiasm and willingness of eight disaster responders who headed to Camden after a storm caused some downed trees.

On July 9, South Carolina's United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Early Response Team responded to the Camden area, where a recent storm had left a damaged tree on a community center that was recently the Baron DeKalb Elementary School.

There were also three other trees that presented a danger to the facility and needed to be cut down. In addition, there were three pine

trees laying across a fence line in the rear of the property.

The eight-man ERT crew comprised volunteers from within a 200-mile range.

The project was headed up by the Rev. James Smith and others, including his wife, the Rev. Millie Smith, who is the South Carolina Director of Connectional Ministries for the conference.

They are in the process of repurposing the school as a community and outreach center.

The ERT team jumped into its disaster response role and began by using a winch and chainsaws to pull away the big tree that was dangerously resting on an array of windows,

plus the side and top of the facility. Extreme caution had to be taken to prevent further damage. With a surgeon's precision, the damaged tree was removed, and the facility was spared any further damage. Three other trees posing a future danger were then taken down and the fence line cleared of downed trees and temporarily repaired.

The team encouraged each other in the heat and hard work to complete the mission so the facility could be used for a wide variety of future missions.

ERT training classes will resume across the

See "ERT in Camden," Page 12

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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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Hinton Center to offer rural clergy retreat next month

UMCSC's Telley Gadson among speakers for event



Conlon



Gadson



LeMaster-Smith



Opportunities abound to breathe deep on the retreat at the Hinton Center, above.

HAYESVILLE, North Carolina—Rural clergy across South Carolina are invited to a renewal retreat hosted by Hinton Rural Life Center, a retreat and mission outreach agency of the Southeastern Jurisdiction.

Set for Sept 12-14, Hinton aims to bring rural clergy together with the retreat and provide resources and encouragement for those who face the unique challenges that accompany rural ministry settings.

The South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church's Hartsville District Superintendent the Rev. Telley Gadson will lead the retreat along with seminary adjunct professor and local pastor Dr. Jonathan LeMaster-Smith, WNCC; and worship leader Tom Conlon, Virginia.

Opportunities abound to breathe deep, exhale, commune with nature, rest and take in scenic views of Lake Chatuge and the Appalachian Mountains.

Options for this lightly scheduled retreat include morning and evening devotions, conversations on rural ministry topics, meals with

your rural ministry colleagues, campus amenities and area activities, including fishing, swimming, canoeing, kayaking, disc golf, gardening, art and more.

Cost of \$300 includes two nights lodging, five meals, resource leaders and Hinton amenities. You can also extend your stay by contacting Kelli@hintoncenter.org.

Registration deadline is Sept. 1. South Carolina clergy participants can receive one continuing education credit.

"This is a 'do what you need to do for you' retreat," said Rev. Karen Kluever, Hinton's minister of church relations & development.

To register, visit www.hintoncenter.org/retreat.

'Amen Lady'

Sister Hill among honorees for longtime service to Sumter community

On Sunday, June 12, Alive Praise and Worship Center hosted an All-White Affair honoring 10 community leaders for their service to the Sumter community.

One of the honorees was Mount Zion United Methodist Church, Sumter, member Frances D. Hill, affectionately known as "Sister Hill," "Momma Hill" and the "Amen Lady."

The award was presented by her daughter, Karren Hill Gordon.

"She is short in stature at 5 feet, 3 inches, but she has a gigantic persona," said Hill-Gordon about her mother. "The first character trait that comes to mind is her generosity. My mother has always been generous of her time, energy, effort, love and her checkbook. She is the ultimate giver. She is the lady of the people and for the people, for advocacy, counseling and service to help those in need."

One of Hill's community staples is her church Mount Zion, on Loring Mill Road, where she is a dedicated member and serves loyally by supporting its ministries and other local churches in Sumter county.

Another is her help at First Baptist Church on Washington Street, where she served for more than 20 years as a Girl Scout Leader, ar-



Hill stands with her pastor, the Rev. Gwendolyn White, of Mount Zion UMC, Sumter.

iving at 3:50 p.m. every Monday and pouring love and light into so many young girls.

And third is her longtime help at Wateree Community Actions Inc., where she served for 31 years assisting families in need. After her retirement in 2011, she continues to help people all over the community.

Many years ago, as Hill received an award



Hill gathers for a smile with her large family in celebration of her honor.

for outstanding work in the community, Dr. Ruby Johnson wrote about Hill, "Her liberal giving of time, possessions to the many memberships she holds, to Wateree Community Actions, to her church, to the community and to poor people's causes has dubbed her a humanitarian of note."

Now 32 years later, Hill still stands on these principles.

The All-White Affair was hosted by Alive Praise and Worship Center Pastor James Floyd Goodman and his wife, Lady Goodman.

Special musical guests were Houston national recording artist Zacardi Cortez and psalmist of New York Anton Milton.

Claflin gets \$500K from Bank of America to support Center for Social Justice

ORANGEBURG—Bank of America will invest \$500,000 to support the Claflin University's Center for Social Justice and the Pathways From Prison Program.

The Pathways From Prison Program is a historic collaboration between Claflin and the South Carolina Department of Corrections that provides incarcerated individuals in South Carolina access to the university's academic programs. Incarcerated individuals who meet the requirements can earn a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, psychology and organizational management. They can also earn minors and certificate credentials.

Bank of America's investment will support student scholarships; enhance technological resources such as laptops, keyboards, printers, routers and WiFi hotspots. Funding for the partnership will also be used to increase the number of qualified faculty and staff.



The damage was severe.



Gift cards will help people in much need.

Lee Road men team with New Orleans church to help tornado victims

United Methodist Men in two churches in two states collaborated recently to bring relief to victims of tornado damage in New Orleans.

The United Methodist Men at Lee Road United Methodist Church, Taylors, donated \$1,200 in grocery store gift cards to the cause, and the UMMen at Gretna UMC, New Orleans, are distributing those cards to people who have suffered the greatest losses in the area.

Gretna UMC has experience feeding the hungry, and they operate a food pantry in their west bank neighborhood in New Orleans. The UMMen at Lee Road have an ongoing fundraising program selling gift cards, and they decided it was an appropriate time to reach outside their local church to aid people in need in New Orleans.

The importance of ceremony

First UMC holds meaningful service as Howle retires, McMakin takes the helm

By Rhonda Singleton

Throughout its the 103 years of ministry, First United Methodist Church of Myrtle Beach has had 25 senior ministers and 17 associate ministers, the earliest being circuit riders.

These servants of our Lord had many gifts—some being excellent orators, others skilled at nurturing the membership, while others flourished as teachers and supporters. No matter the gift, the length of service or the flair with which the gospel was proclaimed, all these ministers had one thing in common: They were appointed. They cared for our people, loved Christ and encouraged our church to grow.

Much like the milestones of human growth and development's first tooth and first steps, or Christian faith's milestones such as baptism or first communion, a minister's progression through ministry has several special events.

June 5 was a "big moment" kind of day at First UMC. Similar to Elijah passing the mantle and transferring responsibility of leadership to Elisha, the mantle at First was given from retiring pastor Dr. George Howle to the Rev. Joel McMakin.

In a beautiful ceremony led by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, responsibility for guidance and leadership of First UMC was relinquished by Howle and transferred to newly appointed McMakin.

Frequently we allow big moments to rush by, not really being able to take in the magnitude of the present. The symbolism of Howle removing his stole to drape it onto the shoulders of McMakin was deeply moving and affirming to both men and the congregation. Holston then laid hands on these ministers, praying for them and the future of the church and the church universal.



Photo by Winn Singleton

Howle (right) puts the mantle upon McMakin.

Continuity of ministry in any church can be disrupted by ministerial transfers, but much like the very beginning of Christianity, telling the stories of Jesus, sharing faith, teaching people and training disciples is not just the job of the minister. The importance of a service in which we acknowledge a change in leadership helps guide our congregation to continue the preparation and building of the ministry established by the previous pastor.

The ceremony reminds us that we all are called to one Lord, one faith, one hope, one baptism, one God and Father of us all who is above all, through all and in all (Ephesians 4:

4-6). In Corinthians, the apostle Paul further reminds us that we are to share the stories of Jesus, live a life of example and do the work of Christ's kingdom.

While Paul mentored others in preparation for leading their own congregations, he made certain those in his influence knew the truth and spoke with authority and clarity. Much like Paul's oversight process, our conference leaders teach and lead ministers along the way, preparing them for each subsequent step. Some of those steps are particularly significant.

We at First UMC are able to worship and know Christ because of people like Howle and McMakin, who heard the story, believed in its truth and passed it along to others. We are able to know him because of people who would not allow the message of Christ to die. We share the same truths and promises; we share the same sacraments and rituals; we share the same baptism.

As we reflect on and accept the passing of this mantle of leadership, we pray that Howle will find rest from his work and experience a wonderful, fruitful retirement. We pray for his health and well-being as he enters a new chapter of life. We pray for McMakin that he lives a life worthy of his calling; be humble, gentle and patient, bearing up others in love; making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4: 1-3).

We are eager to work alongside McMakin and our associate pastor the Rev. Michelle Louk as they continue the work of being the church at First UMC in Myrtle Beach.

May your transition to Myrtle Beach be filled with immeasurable blessings as we serve together.

Singleton is the church's volunteer coordinator.

Rev. Ellis White Jr. named inaugural recipient of Carol Singletary Community Impact Award

A United Methodist pastor has been selected as the recipient of a new annual award showcasing community impact.

Called the Carol Singletary Community Impact Award and given by Fact Forward, the award is named in honor of Singletary, a United Methodist individual who has devoted her time and talents to improving the lives of young people, families and communities for more than 40 years. Fact Forward, formerly the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, has led an effort to advocate for teen reproductive health since 1994.

The Rev. Ellis White Jr. is the recipient of the inaugural award, presented to him during the organization's Summer Institute.

White pastors Edisto Fork United Methodist Church, Oragneburg.

In the presentation of White's award, Fact Forward noted his long and worthy service to help others. They called him "a champion for all youth; an organizer who strives for cross-sector collaboration to address the social determinants of health that impacts the well-being of youth, families, and communities; a devotion to teaching youth the importance of making a difference through social action; and a person who remains steadfast in the pursuit of justice and equality for all people."

They cited a number of examples of his commitment, including how for seven years his congregation, in collaboration with Kershaw Department of Juvenile Justice, worked to ensure first-time offenders stayed out of the penal system. He has worked in the field of primary and secondary teen pregnancy prevention for nine years, and through his work and ministry, he has been a voice for young people who encounter racism and discrimination of any form. He works closely with the local NAACP branch to address injustices in the community, and he also is instrumental in encouraging voter registration, providing voter education and lending a hand in ensuring that transportation is available for those needing a way to the polls.

Through his work as an organizer, he encouraged his congregation to collaborate with their community to sponsor fundraisers for the organization. For four years, White's congregation sponsored a total of four walk-a-thons and two bowl-a-thons. He participated in several faith leaders' meetings and served as Fact Forward's facilitator for the



White and family gather for a smile.

Tier 2 Faith Listening session.

His community of faith became a strategic partner for Fact Forward because of its willingness to serve the young people and families of their area on a consistent basis.

Another example of organizing and collaboration resulted in the establishment of a medical clinic within their church to provide medical assistance to those not insured and the underinsured of the rural community of Orangeburg County.

His congregation reliably provides 150 food baskets for families at Thanksgiving, and during the pandemic, more than 1,000 food boxes were distributed to local families.

Fact Forward called him a leader who "has a faith that is strong, a loyal and loving family and a supportive congregation."

About Carol Singletary

Throughout Singletary's nearly five decades of service to this state, one constant burns bright: her commitment to helping young people and families improve their lives through education and access to programs and services. Her career in social services began within three months of earning a Bachelor of Arts at Claflin University. She worked the next seven years as a case manager for the Florence County Department of Social Services. The Richland County department was another seven-year commitment to children and families. Singletary supervised the seven-member staff of the Sexual Abuse Unit, who investigated and provided treatment. They also educated the community on recognizing and preventing abuse.

Moving on to the South Carolina State Department of Social Services in November 1987, Singletary was the state director for Youth Programs. She developed the Teen Companion program to address the high

teen birth rates in South Carolina and she worked with each of the 46 local Department of Social Services county directors to implement teen pregnancy prevention programs in each county.

She retired from the department in June 2003, and since August 2003, has played a prominent role in Fact Forward's successful work promoting science-based approaches and programs. She continues to organize and participate in awareness and educational events across the state to engage communities about the importance of adolescent sexual health.

She is a life member of the Columbia Branch of the NAACP and has served in numerous NAACP leadership roles throughout her life. She has been on the Board of Visitors for Claflin University, a mentor for Richland County School District One and served on SCDSS's Independent Living Advisory Committee.

She is also a member of the Advocacy Committee for the Columbia District of the UMC, and volunteers as executive director

for Freedom School at Francis Burns UMC, Columbia. The Freedom School was recognized in May of this year by Columbia College with the Caroline Whitson Corporate Leadership Award.

The Carol Singletary Community Impact Award recognizes an individual or group who has demonstrated a commitment to mobilizing their community to improve the lives of young people in South Carolina.

To qualify for the award, nominees must be residents of South Carolina and must be recognized and known for exhibiting characteristics exemplified by Singletary. These include being a champion for all youth, especially those marginalized by racism and other forms of discrimination; an organizer who strives for cross-sector collaboration to address the social determinants of health that impact the well-being of youth, families, and communities; a devotion to teaching youth the importance of making a difference in their community through social action; and remaining steadfast in the pursuit of justice and equality for all people.

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Viewpoints



Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

'Get over yourself'

My sister, a school counselor in North Carolina, shared a teaching podcast-video with me that dives into the extraordinarily difficult realities experienced by those who teach in public schools today. In the clip I watched, one teacher talked about how she's frequently called upon to break up fights or haul kids to class (or detention) when they get out of line.

"Do they ever give you trouble?" the interviewer asked the heavysset, strong-jawed woman who seemed to exude toughness—the kind of woman you get the impression could roar if the right occasion beckoned.

The woman laughed, a no-nonsense smirk spreading across her face. "Me? No, they know not to mess with me. But there are teachers they know they can mess with."

Those teachers, teachers who seem "soft," almost command disrespect, she explained. "Get over yourself," kids tell teachers like this,

Watching the video, I shot my sister a look. "Is she exaggerating?"

Sadly, Sara told me, she wasn't. Even in so-called good schools, with strong test scores and without the systemic issues that might explain some of the problems, teachers today are all-too-accustomed to dealing with mouthy kids, kids who'd just as soon punch a teacher in the face as they would their classmate.

Yet today as I write this, the words of these kids keep echoing in my mind: "Get over yourself." They fixate in my brain—and along with them, the idea that we are so caught up in the game, the act, the façade, and these kids can somehow see right through it all. They—these life-hardened kids without a proper filter—can see the real us, going through the motions, scared, looking out for ourselves. They can sense who among their teachers has "substance" and who does not, who's a fighter and who's a coward, who will go running and who will stand up in solidarity and fight with them. And it gives me pause.

It's not that a student is justified in being disrespectful to the person in charge, the licensed educator tasked to help students succeed in school (and, ultimately, life). That's not OK. But perhaps there's some truth in the cutting suggestion that we "get over ourselves." That we stop putting ourselves, our safety, our job security, our personal fears in the way of doing what is right for others.

I think about Jesus's story of the Good Samaritan from Luke 10, and how the lesson is that we should always be willing to sacrifice our own personal time and well-being for our neighbor, for in doing so we are genuinely loving others as ourselves.

I don't want to be the kind of person a student stares down and tells to "get over yourself." I want to be the kind of person, the kind of Christian, who others can tell immediately would jump in the fire to save just one more soul. The kind of person who sacrifices self for the greater good, for others. I don't want to be about self at all, but fully about others.

This month, I urge you to think about this: Do *you* need to "get over yourself?" Do we all?

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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Bishop's Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

Learning to grow

"Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith!" (Luke 12:27-28 NIV)

There are many good reasons to prefer artificial flowers to natural ones. The best ones look incredibly lifelike. Even after months in a vase, they are always in full bloom; the leaves never grow limp. They are maintenance-free, requiring no water, no sunshine and no nutrition to keep looking beautiful. Of course, they will never die.

Yet there is one disadvantage to having artificial flowers—they do not grow. They stay the same forever. They will never die because they have never lived.

While there are many good reasons to prefer artificial flowers to natural ones, there is something therapeutic about planting a garden. As the Chinese proverb goes, "Life begins the day you start a garden." It is in seeing the sprouts that emerge from germinated seeds; the care with which those young seedlings are transplanted, watered and tended as they grow. That feeling of the warm soil as you plant. Meticulously watching the weather to know whether or not it will rain. Removing weeds; checking for blossoms. Celebrating the growth over time. Gardening is a process filled with opportunities for both patience and celebration.

By now, in late summer, the seeds that were started in the spring have grown into plants, and the harvest has been plentiful. All the wondering and waiting has paid off.

As so often happens in a garden, there have also likely been surprises. Perhaps you found a watermelon that had grown undetected in a back corner. Or maybe you awoke to find a pest infestation that was certainly unwanted and unexpected. And so it goes, putting in the effort without knowing for certain what the outcome will be.

The work of gardening is humbling. Master gardeners know that you don't actually grow the plants. You can only foster an environment in which growth can happen. You do your work, and the plants do their work. The success of the plant growing requires consistent nurturing of the plant's environment. Gardeners are reminded constantly that we cannot control the results of our labor. Author and leadership expert Bob Johansen has described our reality in such a succinct way, namely, "The future will reward clarity and punish certainty."

Thinking that we can know the future, or what will happen next, often makes us a laughing stock. Consider the last few years. Every time we think we are moving beyond

COVID-19, a new variant emerges. So many plans that we have made have had to be postponed, cancelled or reimagined in order to follow through. Rarely have our plans commenced unchanged. Certainty is not a word often used in these days. Instead, we've had to lean into seeking clarity about what we need to do and where we need to go.

But how do we maintain focus on clarity rather than certainty? We are the people the world turns to for answers about faith. We are supposed to have all the answers. Or are we?

"I don't know" is incredibly difficult for us, as human beings, to admit. But this is the first step to becoming teachable. Being teachable means having a desire to listen, learn and apply. And when we become teachable, we want to be part of conversations to learn more.

Proverbs 19:20 says, "Take good counsel and accept correction – that's the way to live wisely and well." Making peace with uncertainty keeps us grounded so that we can begin to move forward in the way that God is calling us to go, becoming teachable; open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

What looks perfect in the artificial does not often look perfect in a live plant. But the live plant is real. It is living. The secret is in watching it grow, remembering that there is growth happening even when you cannot see it.

In the midst of this season filled with constant pivoting and so many surprising twists and turns, we have sought to maintain our focus on making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Recognizing that the growth of disciples only happens through God's work frees us instead to focus on nurturing the environments within our congregations and our communities. Even with all of the distractions and disappointments in the church and in the world, we can still find clarity about who we are and whose we are as children of God.

Rather than asserting deep, yet incomplete, knowledge, what if we instead were to acknowledge that we don't, in fact, have all the answers? Each one of us has the opportunity to become teachable—willing to listen and learn. Willing to engage in courageous conversations with others. Growth is an indicator of living. How alive are you?

The French proverb teaches us, "Blessed are those who plant trees under whose shade they will never sit." The seeds sown now will be entrusted to the future, may that be tomorrow, next month, next year or in the next generation. May the seeds we plant be those of faithfulness, commitment, integrity, patience and caring for the least of these. We plant these seeds now, trusting, believing and knowing that God is with us, guiding the growth until the time of harvest.

Letters to the Editor

Not so minor

Thank you, Mark Thompson, for your commentary, "Time to Consider a Change" (July *Advocate*). Among other important suggestions: elimination of redundant and unnecessary forms that are never read or used in any constructive way.

One "easy picking": combine annual reports and charge conference reports, which are redundant and, because charge conferences occur at different times each year, often useless

LETTERS: Readers sound off on abortion, pastor decline

From Page 4

and contradictory.

I've failed "retirement" three times and now at age 79 am pastor emeritus at a small but vital congregation in Western North Carolina. My pastor, a single mom serving two congregations, is overwhelmed by complex reports that are literally not used by her or anyone else in local congregations, yet take two working weeks to compile with the help of several lay leaders and yours truly. As a retiree, I fill out a yearly report that is of no use to anyone. What good does it do anyone to report that I led "x" weddings, "y" funerals, taught "z" Sunday school classes, preached "w" times, especially when the reports are not read or compiled or acknowledged. Same with pastors on "special appointment," where I served for 21 years. One year I included several obviously spurious comments and outrageous statistics just to see if anyone read it or would reply or object. Nope! But the box was checked. Accountability? Not hardly!

Minor changes? Not for over-stressed and -worked pastors and laity seeking to be faithful to God's mission! Every moment unnecessarily robbed from ministry, witness, service and necessary self and family care is a sin against God.

The UMC is being forced to rethink how we are to be faithful in a kairos time. Will the moment go by forever?

*Rev. Wiley Cooper, retired
Asheville, North Carolina*

Leaving the church

Sunday is no longer a day of worship for many in America. Since the blue law was eliminated, people are free to shop, to play sports and not go to church. Americans in general are less interested in organized religion than ever before.

"A Gallup poll conducted in 2020 discovered that while Americans belonging to a church, synagogue or mosque had fallen below 50 percent for the first time, the percentage of millennials was a full 30 percentage points lower than those born before 1946. In the Barna study, while 38 percent of pastors said they considered quitting in 2021, among pastors under the age 45, that number rose to 46 percent. This means that what we are seeing now is not just a present reality, but one that will likely accelerate in the future. The American church is facing a season of disruption as more and more pastors consider stepping away from ministry" (Peter Chin, Sojourners).

We are now facing fewer pastors to serve churches. At this past South Carolina Annual Conference (2022), there were just nine elders and two deacons ordained—and 41 retirees. There are dwindling congregations and many beautiful sanctuaries empty. Many of our churches have no children or youth. Five churches closed its doors this 2022 conference.

The Global Methodist church is using the Bible as a "weapon" against God's children (LGBTQ people), and this will divide The United Methodist Church even more in the coming years.

But Jesus told the apostle Peter that the foundation of the church would be built upon a rock, so formula rooted that even the gates of hell would never prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). Yes, there will be exodus of pastors and churches will experience decline, but Christ continues to call his servants, and many will respond to the real word. We pray to Christ for a revival and great enlightenment.

*Rev. John Culp, retired
West Columbia*

On abortion and God

Soon after the United States Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, the Florence Morning News interviewed two local Baptist preachers. One was happy with the

court's decision. The other stated that having studied God's word at Yale Divinity School, he understands that the Bible does not say that abortions are forbidden by God. Well, as the apostle Paul asked, "What does the Scripture say?" Not my answer but God's.

To the preacher who stated that abortion is not forbidden by God's word, I would first ask why God would have even addressed abortion, per se? After all, he addressed it very clearly when he first gave his Ten Commandments. He clearly said that we must not murder anyone, which includes helpless, unborn children. For example, when someone decides to abort a child just before childbirth, isn't that clearly murder?

Following "do not murder," God commanded that we not commit adultery. And Paul preached that all sexual immorality, including adultery and fornication, tells us that God limits faithful sexuality to heterosexual marriage. Don't these prohibitions cover those people who choose to commit sexual immorality with the possibility of becoming pregnant? These are people, single or married, who ignore God's word, saying, "Oh, no problem, if I get pregnant, I'll just have an abortion."

And then, in Jeremiah 1: "The word of the Lord came to me, saying, before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I set you apart." This clearly says that an unborn baby is a work of God in progress. God didn't form children in the womb to be murdered. He has a purpose for each one of them.

Our God is a kind, loving, forgiving God (if we repent and confess), but he is also a God of justice—he means what he said! He gave us his word for a reason: All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

God's word also reveals this warning: "Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin or who worship idols or commit adultery or are male prostitutes or practice homosexuality or are thieves or greedy people or drunkards or are abusive or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

In Malachi 3:6, God tells us that he does not change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. And God also warns us in the Old and New Testaments that those who try to add to or subtract from his word will not enter the kingdom (Deuteronomy 4:2,32 and Revelation 22:18-19).

We must not try to change God's word to approve something that God says is wrong (sinful). We can't do that, no matter how hard we try.

Recall that Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). And John added, "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 John 2:3-4).

I sincerely believe that when Jesus returns to earth to judge each of us for what we did, either right or wrong, he is going to say to some: "Just what part of my word did you not understand? It was so clear." Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!

*Sam Grant, member
Trinity UMC, Darlington*

Thank you, Wes

I "grew up" the summer of 1968 as a young counselor at the South Carolina United Methodist Camp (before it was known as Asbury Hills). I was 18 and looked every bit of 12, maybe 13. I was short (I grew six inches during college) and immature (I still am). My voice had not yet changed; I lost

my high-pitched voice that summer due to yelling to be heard by the youth, and so I started Wofford a few months later almost sounding like a male of the species. I am sure the only reason Wes Voigt hired me was that he was desperate! He had very few male counselors that summer. In fact, if it had not been for the male pastors who gave the camp a week of their time away from their parishes, we would have been extremely shorthanded.

I was struggling to piece together my basic beliefs at that time, and in retrospect, that summer at camp was absolutely vital to my future career as a UM pastor. It was there that I met some people I would spend my life with in our collegial family: George Fields, Richard McAlister, Archie Bigalow, John and Wally Culp, James Ellis Griffith, Eugene Eaddy, Bob Strother, Al Spradley, Bob Tanner, musician Betty Bradham Doll and many others. One evening as I was moving my washed clothes over to the drier, I observed Mike Alexander—our 16-year-old camp dishwasher—talking with camp counselor Betsy Sparrow. He must have been a persuasive talker!

One thing that these pastors uniformly demonstrated to me that summer was that loving people of other races was not something that was being tacked onto the Christian faith in the 60s; it was so vital that without it you don't have Christian faith. Loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves is Christianity.

That summer we built a few of the many trails that are still used at Asbury Hills. Occasionally we would hear a single pistol shot, and we would know that Wes had just killed another copperhead! We found a large den of them as we were clearing the land right next to the dining hall.

After I became an ordained pastor, Wes would see me every year at Annual Conference, making a point of inviting me to return to camp to be a counselor for a week. He either had a poor memory or a heart of grace.

Wes deserves all of the accolades he has been given in establishing our camp. Dolly hasn't gotten nearly as many as she deserves as the manager of the kitchen and preparer of all of the meals. Their children made their own important contributions to our camp. We owe them all our thanks.

These thoughts came to me after I read of Wes' death in the *Advocate*. I wonder how many others besides me found direction for their lives and "grew up" just a bit under the guidance of Wes Voigt?

*Rev. Arthur Holt, retired
Boiling Springs*

The UMC and the Body of Christ

Our current dilemma as the institution of the United Methodist Church is not about inclusion, discrimination, sexuality or modernity. It is about the nature of the Word of God. Is it the inerrant word of the living God? Is it the work of men and subject to cultural and temporal norms of each generation?

As followers of Christ we have an obligation to listen to him. He said, "Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). If we are to believe the Book of John, Jesus is himself the Word. He is eternal, the only son of God who became flesh and lived and taught and healed and died on the cross that we might be reconciled to God. Through his sacrifice, all who believe in him become his brothers and sisters and children of God. Hear Luke 24:46, "And he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and the forgiveness of sins be proclaimed in his name to all nations.'"

If we are to follow that call, how can we teach anything but the inerrant nature of the word of God? I have followed the progres-

sive arguments made in this publication. Not a single one has been based on biblical principle. I read and hear that this is only a dispute over the interpretation of seven or eight texts and that Jesus never said anything about homosexuality. If you believe that, I urge you to read all of Matthew 29. Jesus makes it clear in this passage that marriage is between one man and one woman. He taught that all sexual activity outside the covenant of marriage is sin. He told the adulterous woman he saved from stoning, "Go and sin no more." He tells all his followers in John 14:15, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Read the first few chapters of Romans and the first three chapters of Revelations. They make it clear these issues were present in the first-century church.

I urge all who would follow Christ to take to your Bibles and read God's word. I pray you are doing that already. Also, look at what is being said about the subject on the internet. Look at what Isaac Simmons is producing as an associate minister at Hope UMC in Bloomington, Illinois. Also look at Christopher Yuan's testimony. His family has a powerful story to tell about the transforming nature of God's holy word.

It is by the authority of the word of God that our churches were formed. It is the obligation of all followers of Jesus Christ who live and worship in these churches to uphold that word. We all sin and live in need of grace. Once we accept God's grace, we are supposed to be changed, born again. By the power of the Holy Spirit we cast off the old life and become a new creation, a creation dead to sin but alive in Jesus Christ. We become a part of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is not an institution of men but a work of our father and his only son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the helper his father sent us, the Holy Spirit. By and through the work of the Holy Spirit, all God's people are united in God's love.

*Charles Inglett, member
North UMC, North*

The constitution and the court

If the subject has been worn out and ready for the "circular file" (aka wastepaper basket), we will certainly understand!

Nevertheless, we will opine that we have been surprised at how many people have completely misunderstood the Supreme Court's recent decision on Roe v. Wade. The majority of the justices supported a reconsideration of an earlier decision that had found constitutional protection for abortion in the U.S. Constitution, and lo! Upon reconsideration they found the U.S. Constitution has nothing to say at all with respect to abortion. That should not be a surprise to anyone. The U.S. Constitution also has nothing to say about a very long list of topics. The constitution does say in Amendment 10 that "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." In summary, the original Roe v. Wade decision erred by erroneously ascribing to the constitution a topic it did not address in our U.S. government's "operator's manual," the U.S. Constitution.

The late James T. Cleland (native of Glasgow, Scotland) was dean of the chapel and professor of homiletics in the divinity school during my student days at Duke University. Dr. Cleland worked diligently to make sure his students (all future ministers of the Gospel) understood the difference in two important words from the Greek: exegesis and eisegesis. Exegesis is reading Scripture (or any document) to see what the text actually says; eisegesis, as both Webster and Dr. Cleland define it, is "the interpretation of a text [as of the Bible] by reading into it one's own ideas."



Photo courtesy of Jodie Plyler

Congrats, grads!

Tabernacle UMC, Lancaster, had special graduation events on Sunday, May 22, for their seven high school graduates and two college graduates. The graduates and their families were invited for breakfast that morning. They were also recognized during the worship service and each received a gift from the church. Their honors and accomplishments were listed in a bulletin insert and in the church newsletter. Pictured from left are Avery Plyler, Olivia Vincent, Chandler Bundy, Henlee Sistare, Claire Plyler and Austin Sanchez. Not pictured: Caroline Broughton, Heath Howie and Kristin Willis.

LETTERS: On Roe v. Wade

From Page 5

There is a whole lot of eisegesis going on right now as presidents, politicians, lawyers, columnists, bishops and many others seek to make the Supreme Court decision say something it did not say. The court did not declare abortion illegal; the court did not do anything to end abortion. The majority of the court simply decided upon reconsideration that the original “Roe v. Wade” decision was wrongly decided because abortion is not the business of “the United States” (i.e., the federal government) because the constitution has nothing to say about it. It is an issue for the states (or “the people” of a state if offered to them as a referendum to be decided by the voters).

If the Supreme Court (or any court, for that matter) cannot reconsider prior decisions a court made, that is a serious legal problem. If every decision is cast in concrete, what becomes of the “appeal” process? Do we do away with all the various courts of appeal? Let the one “without sin” be the one to “cast the first stone” if reconsideration is a grievous sin.

Let’s be honest: no one likes to admit that there is someone who is actually smarter than he is. But all of today’s disagreement with the Supreme Court suggests that the founders of the United States of America and those who comprised the Constitutional Convention that gave us the constitution of the U.S. were way ahead of the court’s critics in both intelligence and vision. We are closing in on 250 years of our nation’s founding. Want to make a noise? Celebrate the nation’s longevity.

*Rev. Ted R. Morton Jr., retired
Greenwood*

The real word of God

The response from the UMC General Board of Church and Society concerning the SCOTUS overturning of Roe v. Wade is not a good thing. When these responses are made, I truly hope that it is not the church position upon abortion. It is my position

that as a church we should not have made any statement about this matter.

I ask you these questions: How could anyone support the killing of more than 60 million children? How could we stand against the SCOTUS and their decision? Why can we not support the decisions of the judicial branch of our national government? How can a denomination that can stand for “racial equality” not stand for the “equality” of unborn children of any race or creed? Why do we still allow a certain sect in our church to make statements like this?

Please tell me where in the Bible it says it is OK to kill little children.

Unlike the people that wrote this statement for the world to see in the name of the UMC, I ask, “Why did anyone not consult the Lord and pray before this statement was released?”

Here is what our Lord said about little children: “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

Here is another: “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (Psalm 139:13-16).

This, my brothers and sisters, is the word of God. Not some gibberish talking point from a political viewpoint. We must as Christians and as a church lean into the word, the spirit of truth! This is the only position that we as a church should be concerned with, the position of truth, the position of Christ.

*Rev. J. Tal Windham
Christ UMC, Bennettsville*

Golf tourney to benefit Killingsworth

BLYTHERWOOD—Killingsworth will hold its annual charity golf tournament Aug. 1, with proceeds benefitting the United Methodist home for women once in crisis experiencing transformation.

The golf tournament will be held at Windermere Golf Club, 1101 Longtown Rd. E., Blythewood. Check in begins at 8 a.m., with a shotgun start at 9 a.m.

Greens fee is \$80 individual and \$320 for a four-person team. Registration includes green fee, cart fee, lunch and chances to win door prizes.

To register: www.killingsworth.org/events.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Patrick Taylor

Let’s find immigration solutions for ‘Dreamers’

Reprinted with permission of the *Post & Courier*

Before there was the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, there was Griselda Lopez Negrete Mendez. She entered the United States when she was only 2 years old, and by the time she was a student at Silver Bluff High School in Aiken, she faced the threat of deportation.

Thanks to a supportive and loving community of neighbors, and the intervention of U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., she was able to remain in the only country she knows as home.

A few years after her story garnered national attention, DACA emerged as an administrative effort to temporarily protect immigrant children who were raised in America yet lack legal status that would allow them to stay permanently. As we celebrate the 10-year anniversary of DACA’s announcement, hundreds of thousands of these children are now adults, serving as active contributors to our society and workforce. Yet, the policy is on shaky legal ground and could be struck down at any moment by the courts, putting every DACA recipient at risk of deportation once again.

That would have a big impact here: South Carolina’s nearly 9,000 DACA-eligible residents have \$134 million in spending power and pay \$13.7 million in state and local taxes alone, according to New American Economy, a bipartisan research and advocacy organization.

I am a Christian pastor who believes in the biblical teaching that all Christians are reflected as a single body, and that when one part of that body is suffering, we all suffer with it. As such, I cannot be indifferent to the plight of the many hurting immigrants, including DACA recipients, within our local churches throughout South Carolina.

They are suffering, trapped in a dysfunctional immigration system. Most undocumented individuals are desperate to come into compliance with the law. But this is

only possible if Congress puts aside buzzword toxicity and works together to create a process through which people can earn legal residence — especially DACA recipients and other “Dreamers” who have grown up here. They are commonly referred to as “Dreamers” based on never-passed proposals in Congress called the DREAM Act.

Congress can do this while also better addressing and managing our southern border. A recent poll by the National Immigration Forum affirms that 8 in 10 voters want improved border security as well as an opportunity for undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children to earn legal status. This same poll shows that an overwhelming majority of Americans want these key immigration reforms now — even amid the midterm elections.

Smarter, stronger border policies will lead to safer, more humane immigration and processing. When there is no opportunity for migrants to seek asylum or enter the country legally, we empower cartels who prey on vulnerable neighbors desperately fleeing unimaginable circumstances, and we overwhelm law enforcement personnel and resources.

“I believe it will be a starting point for us to find bipartisan breakthroughs,” Sen. Graham said in 2021 as he reintroduced the DREAM Act, which would offer certainty to DACA recipients and other “Dreamers” — as well as their employers and communities.

This spirit is a reflection of the South Carolina state motto: *dum spiro spero*, “While I breathe, I hope.”

As long as we breathe, I and many others will hold on to hope that more congressional leaders follow Sen. Graham’s example by working together this year for a just and compassionate solution for DACA recipients and other immigrants who have waited for too long for permanent protections and long-lasting reforms.

Taylor lives in Aiken where he pastors Pentecost and Vacluse UMCs and also serves as assistant chaplain at Mead Hall School.



Helping people in need

The Rev. Eddie Thomas and his wife, Corine, gather with the team from a recent Good Samaritans for All People event at a nursing home in Lee County. Good Samaritans held distribution events and a worship service at local nursing homes in June and July, going to Cottonwood Villa and Bishopville Manor June 25 and McCoy’s Nursing Home July 9.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Jim Gunn (retired)

All life is sacred (until it's not)

I was brought up in a Methodist Sunday school where we sang, "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world, red and yellow, black and white; they are precious in his sight. Jesus loves the children of the world." Somehow that message got embedded into my soul. As a teenager, driving the tractor on the family farm, I used to think about neglected, abandoned and abused children, even though I didn't really know children who grew up in such homes. There were probably kids at my school who might have fit those descriptions, but I didn't really know them.

As a junior in college, I served as student pastor to three small Methodist churches in southeastern Kentucky. In the largest of the three there was a woman with six or seven children ranging in age from one to 14. Mrs. S was almost always in church on Sundays. The children would do what kids do in worship—fidget, talk, play or disrupt the lives of adults around them. Occasionally, Mrs. S. would reach around one or more of the kids and grab the hair of one misbehaving and bang his head against the back of the pew. In addition to the large number of kids to manage, she was an epileptic who had seizures from time to time. Members of the congregation were experienced with this part of her life and would assist until the seizure was over.

One Sunday, a member told me that the oldest girl (age 13) had not been to school for a couple of weeks; her brother had already dropped out of school at age 14. I made a house call to see what was up. The house was a wreck—kids in diapers that had not been changed in far too long, furniture so dirty and dilapidated that I didn't want to sit anywhere. The reason the oldest girl had not been to school was that Mrs. S. had been sick and needed help with the youngest three, two of whom were still in diapers. Mr. S. only showed up for a visit on occasion and, it seems, only to participate in making more babies. The rumor around the church was that he was making babies with one or more other women.

When I talked with members of the church it seems everyone felt Mrs. S. was unfit to be a mother and the children were in jeopardy with her inability to provide and care for them. I learned that her mother lived in a nearby town. When I called her mother, she, too, said that Mrs. S. had no business having children and was not fit to care for the ones she had. Everyone seemed to feel that she would just keep having more babies.

I did some research and learned that a family court judge came to this town once a month and would hear a case about abuse and neglect if there were corroborating witnesses to her inability to care for the children.

As it turned out, her mother and everyone in the church decided they could not testify in court as to her fitness as a parent. As I

was the only person willing to describe to the court what I had witnessed, the case was never heard. I graduated from college and left the church for seminary without knowing what happened to those children.

The news about the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade* has made a lot of folks happy that some injustice for poor innocent children might be rectified, and others angry that the individual rights of women might be taken away. I have never believed that abortion is a good form of birth control, but my years in ministry have introduced me to a number of women who made the choice about ending a pregnancy under circumstances that would have been disastrous for a child coming into this world at such a time, and possibly for the woman who made that decision. I also have met women who have had the decision to end a pregnancy made for them by a parent, or by a male in a position of authority whose career or marriage would have been ruined by a pregnancy caused by an illicit or otherwise inconvenient sexual encounter.

My ministry began before *Roe v. Wade*. Among the women and girls I met are these:

- A woman in her 40s who was taken to an abortionist because she became pregnant by her father or brother; she didn't know which. The "back alley" procedure completely destroyed this woman's ability to conceive. She was in constant pain and torment, both physically and mentally. Her ability to trust and relate to men was in such turmoil that she went from one bad relationship to another. And her mother blamed her for destroying the family.

- A young woman in her early 20s who got pregnant at a church-related college by her professor of religion. She chose to fly from the middle of the country to Japan for an abortion. She went alone. I don't know who paid for her trip or the abortion. "Her" decision (was it hers alone, or was it thrust upon her by this professor?) prevented a public relations nightmare for a college and a denomination that would not publicly condone an abortion.

- A 14-year-old girl in a detention center began to cry during a chapel service I was conducting. She was taken back to her unit by one of the two matrons who accompanied the girls to the service. I went to see her after the service was over. She appeared to be about 8 months pregnant and was still upset when I talked with her. She told me they were going to send her to the state mental hospital for her baby to be born. She didn't know if the father of her baby was her father or her brother. I told the female administrator of the conversation when I left for the day and told her I would see the girl the next day. When I returned the next day, the matron told me the girl did not want to see me. Several months later this same girl was among the new admissions I was seeing on

a routine basis. When I recognized her she said, "Why didn't you ever come back to see me?" When I blew up at the administrator, she told me chaplains should not talk about sex with young girls, that I was only to talk about spiritual things. This girl did not have an abortion, but had no say about who would raise or care for her child, and she was denied the pastoral care she needed at that time.

- A 16-year-old girl was admitted to this same detention center. She had overheard some of her girlfriends talking about their first sexual experiences with their boyfriends. She said to them, "Don't your fathers teach you about those things?" When she finally realized her stepfather had been abusing her for the past two years, she refused to go home. Her mother came to visit her one time and asked her to drop the charges. When the girl refused, her mother got up, turned on her heel and said, "You are no longer my daughter!" At age 16 there was no foster care, no adoption possible in the whole city of Chicago. When I asked the caseworker from Catholic social services "why not?" she replied, "We cannot place a 16-year-old sexually active girl in foster care."

There are many other stories that reside in my soul. Women who had abortions for whatever reason, came into counseling to process their grief and their anger at the social judgments that were heaped on them by women and men who proclaim that all life is sacred and precious and that there are plenty of families who would adopt children if given the chance. There are children born to women who never thought about an abortion, but later abused those children physically and mentally because they were a reminder of the man who made hollow promises and didn't or couldn't live up to them.

One boy, about 13, in a group home in St. Louis was a charming and delightful youngster. The group home operated on a token economy system where good behavior, good grades and positive relationships earned points for the occasional weekend pass. One of my students wondered why this young man always managed to pick a fight just before his weekend pass. When I suggested he ask about that, he was told that his mother had two daughters by a man different from his biological father. His father was in prison, and his mother had told him from the time he was 6 or 7 that he was going to turn out just like his father and wind up in prison. On those occasions when he did go home, things were so bad with his mother that he usually wound up back in the group home before the weekend was half over.

There are many abortions where life is

cut short before birth. And there are many, many "social abortions" where life is sucked out a child by the very person who gave them birth.

This piece was written on May 24, after another school shooting with so many lives lost. To call ourselves a civilized society and to permit 18-year-olds to buy assault rifles, to condone the violent, sexist, racist rhetoric in our social media, to promote such in our movies and to glorify violence in the multiple ways we do marks us as duplicitous, dishonest and despicable. To claim that all life is precious and sacred but to continue to permit such violence and mayhem seems to violate our theological and religious values.


It seems we should be very careful what we wish and pray for. Unless, and until, we are willing to hold the men accountable for their wanton abuse of women, and expect them to support and care for the children they father, we should not be angry at women who decide to expel the product of conception forced on them. I don't think we have enough good homes now to accept the burden of raising the children we have already, let alone those who come along because *Roe v. Wade* is overturned.

I am probably naive and simplistic in believing in my Sunday school theology that Jesus loves the little children. My question is: "Do the rest of us love the children, both those who are unborn and those who are aborted midstream?"

The people in these brief stories were in need of pastoral care. In my own limited way, I tried to provide that. Many, indeed most, of these people were in need of public and social policy that serves the need beyond the individual caring of a single pastoral care provider. These persons and many others have taken up residence in my soul.

I do not intend to identify individuals by this manner of sharing, but my heart says these stories need to be heard by some larger audience so they can become part of a larger conversation about how we respond to persons in need.

Gunn is a retired elder from the South Carolina Conference. His ministry was as a supervisor of clinical pastoral education. In South Carolina, he worked in the Greenville Hospital System and then at Richland Memorial Hospital in Columbia. He also worked at Penrose-St. Francis Health Services in Colorado Springs. He retired from full-time ministry in 2009 but did an interim assignment at Banner Desert Medical Center in Mesa, Arizona, from 2011 until 2013. He resides in Apache Junction, Arizona.



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Come and "sit a spell" with us!





United Women in Faith

by Clarice Blakeney

Wallace helps for more than 43 years

Wallace Family Life Center is a mission project in the Wallace community and the Marion District under the South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith. Methodist women have supported Wallace Family Life Center since 1979. Many women, children and youth have benefited from the numerous resources, funds, prayers and manual work provided over these 43 years.

When I attend board meetings and visit to observe the activities and events at the center, my heart is uplifted. I see the huge importance of this mission and the great impact it makes on the present and future families in the area who receive the services provided.

Over the years the mission has stayed the same: to provide educational, cultural, recreational and religious programs to enrich the lives of the people in the community. The progress made in these areas is enormous. Many improvements have been made, and the latest project is a new playground with modern equipment for the children to enjoy. We are thankful for the donations received and will work in stages as we receive monies from units to complete this new endeavor.

Wallace Family Life Center is providing the following programs and activities for the community: A "Bridge the Gap" camp during the summer, an afterschool program during the school year, an adult education program, a food giveaway, a teen mentoring program, mental health services, a Sunflower Garden

Youth Club and community events. Pastor Robin D. Miles, the new executive director, comes to us from Darlington and currently serves Wesley Chapel, Chesterfield, in the Hartsville District. Her background, ministry and passion are her incentive to promote educational opportunities for people of all ages. She is making plans to add the following programs in the near future: a GED program, STEM and STEAM, hands-on learning centers and field trips.

The board members are aware of the immense potential of the mission project in this rural community of Marlboro County, and we strive to assist in every way to show the need for support. It is our desire to show the many ways your help is needed and appreciated. Wallace Family Life Center is extremely grateful for the many people who freely give to the projects, programs and activities that are making a world of difference for so many.

With your continued support, the future will be bright for years to come because of your love and giving spirit.

We invite you to visit, call or send an email for more information about the center. The physical address is 574 Old Wire Road W., Bennettsville, SC 29512; mailing address, P.O. Box 56, Wallace, SC 29596; phone number 843-479-7991 and email address wallace-family.lifecenter@gmail.com.

Blakeney is United Women in Faith representative and board member for Wallace Family Life Center.

Men N Ministry continue efforts to increase discipleship, fellowship

After their spiritual retreat earlier this year and knowing how deeply the concept of faith and fellowship resonated among Christian brothers there, South Carolina Conference Men N Ministry have been working hard to mobilize men through a number of intentional efforts.

They continue a weekly devotional each Monday as a new and different way to reach out to conference men seeking to grow their faith alongside each other. The devotional is available as a video and is being coordinated by the Rev. Trevor Miller.

Also, men in various districts are beginning to gather in their regions to get to know

each other and begin to inspire new and Christ-led action among United Methodist men. The Rock Hill District held their district meeting Sunday, May 15, at Woodland UMC, Rock Hill, with 10 churches represented. The Marion District held theirs Sunday, May 22, at Surfside UMC, Surfside. And the Columbia District held theirs Friday, July 15.

The Hartsville District has theirs next, slated for Saturday morning, Sept. 24, beginning at 9 at Centenary UMC, Hartsville.

To sign up for the weekly devotional or to learn more about the district meetings and get involved, visit www.mennministrysc.org.



Helping a neighbor

Several members of Bethel United Methodist Church, Jackson, along with members of Jackson First Baptist Church recently constructed a ramp for a Bethel church member. The church member recently sustained an injury to her leg, which made it difficult to navigate the steps entering her house.

Photos courtesy of Chris Goodman



Deacon's Corner

Rev. Kathryn Bariou

Welcome back and welcome, Kathryn

Editor's note: Welcome to the newly returning Deacon Corner of the Advocate. We are excited to share with you about the ministry and movement of the Holy Spirit happening in and through the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church's Order of Deacons.

This month, let's learn about the ministry of Rev. Kathryn Bariou, our newest provisional deacon.

What prompted you to become a deacon? Was there anyone or an experience in particular that influenced your decision?

Bariou: I heard God's call to me on the Walk to Emmaus. I was told I had been running from my call, but I disagree. I see where God had been calling but the time was not right. I was not ready, and God knew that. I had been in a time of preparation, and at Emmaus, it was finally the right time. There are many who played a key role in my decision, but my husband was the most influential and the most important. When I told him what God was calling me to do, he responded without hesitation, "Let's do it." It was the last sign I needed to know I was hearing God correctly; God had been preparing him, too.

What are your main responsibilities as a deacon? How do your duties differ from those of an elder or licensed local pastor?

Bariou: My main responsibilities include serving as the Stephen Leader staff member, assisting in both worship services, coordinating Trinity's contemporary service and serving as the staff liaison to the outreach and discipleship ministry teams as well as the weekday preschool board. I see my role as facilitating the ministries of the church by enabling the laity, more so than an elder or licensed local pastor, whose role is more focused on worship and pastoral care.

What words of advice would you give others who might be interested in becoming a deacon, and what do you find to be most rewarding about being a deacon?

Bariou: Don't hesitate to ask questions!

There are so many who are willing to share their knowledge with you. The thing I find most rewarding is watching a program or activity that I have put a large amount of effort into coming to fruition in ways that make new disciples and help grow those around me.

In a format replicating Dr. Brené Brown's Unlocking Us "Rapid Fire Questions," let's get to know a bit more about Rev. Bariou.

Q. Fill in the blank: Vulnerability is...?
A. Being completely open and honest

Q. You're called to do something brave, but your fear is real and stuck in your throat. What's the first thing you do?
A. Take a deep breath and pray

Q. What is something that people often get wrong about you?
A. I am an introvert.

Q. What's the last show that you binged and loved?
A. Supernatural.

Q. What is a film that you really love?
A. "Beauty and the Beast"

Q. What is a concert you will never forget?
A. Crowder

Q. What's your favorite meal?
A. Pizza

Q. What's on your nightstand right now?
A. A very tall "to be read" pile.

Q. Give us a snapshot of an ordinary moment in your life that brings you great joy.
A. Listening to my daughters laugh and giggle with each other.

Q. What is the one thing you are deeply grateful for right now?

A. My family; they have been huge supporters in my journey through school and the ordination process.



Photo courtesy of Chris Goodman

Bethel blessing bags

Several members of Bethel UMC, Jackson, including pastor the Rev. Matt Turner, packed blessing bags for the needy. These bags contain toiletry items as well as socks, washcloths, soap, crackers, hand sanitizer, a New Testament and information about the church. The bags are provided to church members to hand out to needy persons.



Photo courtesy of David Bryant

Supporting Salkehatchie

UMMen from Simpsonville UMC headed to Pelzer recently and set up to feed the Piedmont Salkehatchie Camp (sponsored by Shiloh UMC). Campers enjoyed hamburgers and hot dogs for lunch.



Woodland men give \$1,520 to Mercy House

The Woodland UMC United Mens' Ministry raised \$1,520 from their recent pork barbecue fundraiser and presented all of the proceeds to Mercy House on June 15. Here, Bob James of the Woodland UMM presents the check to Donna Williams, board chairperson of Mercy House. Also included are board members Mary Newlin and Connie Cochrane, as well as the Rev. Emily Sutton of Bethel UMC. Mercy House has been established to provide a safe compassionate home for homeless individuals who are facing end of life and have no support system. The facility is housed in the former parsonage of Bethel UMC. For more information: mercyhouserh.com.



This was the third giveaway event the church has held.



Shepherd's Center hosts free adult Zoom 'summer camp,' other activities

COLUMBIA—The Shepherd's Center of St. Andrews, an all-volunteer, interfaith learning program for active adults 50 and above, is known not just for offering a wide array of classes and activities but also for a long history of giving back to the local community. The center, located at Ashland United Methodist Church, reaches out to serve its neighbors throughout the wider Midlands area.

This year both traditions continue with the center's offering of a free "Zoom Summer Camp" from June 21 to Aug. 25.

Learning, virtual community and entertainment are available through hour-long presentations new to the center as well as some perennial favorites, along with a Movie Lovers' discussion group and bi-weekly rounds of Trivial Pursuit. Details about the camp and free registration are on the center's website: <http://www.shepherdscenterofstandrews.org>.

The camp rounds out a long list of projects undertaken with the local community in mind, from sending in-person center teachers and donating audio-visual equipment to a Columbia assisted-living facility, which will afford residents increased access to outside speakers, to activities undertaken by the center's quilting group, which in the earliest days of COVID-19 made and distributed more than 800 masks to health care workers, grocery store clerks, mail carriers and others.

Quilters also have been active providers of quilts to the Quilt of Valor Foundation, which since 2003 has honored veterans across the nation with tangible, quilted gifts of love and appreciation, representing the



prayers, healing thoughts and gratefulness of their makers. The quilters have also crafted and donated quilts to Midlands organizations including the Department of Social Services, Sister Care, Children's Garden, Epworth Children's Home, Chemo Comfort Quilts, Lowman Home and Karis House.

Every session embraces a community outreach project, most recently a "Snack Pack" offering that provided more than 100 food items plus funds to purchase food weekly for some 70 elementary-school children who are food insecure. The center has also supported a local food pantry and helped sponsor a "Blessing Box," which collects nonperishable food items, toiletries, baby supplies and more that are available for the taking and, anonymously, made available to anyone in need.

For more information: <http://www.shepherdscenterofstandrews.org>.

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John Wesley hosts community giveaway

On Thursday evening, May 19, an 18-wheeler arrived at John Wesley United Methodist Church in Lamar loaded with an abundance of baby diapers, wipes, formula, toilet tissue, paper towels, fans, nonperishable food and an assortment of other useful household items.

On Friday evening, the church's United Women in Faith sorted and arranged all of the items in preparation for a community giveaway on Saturday morning.

At 9 a.m. on Saturday, the doors of the fellowship hall opened to a line of community members waiting to enter and select items to take home. Approximately 100 people entered the doors of the fellowship hall. Parents and children waded through the available items. They filled bags and arms with goodies. There was excitement in the air as one attendee found an aquarium with all of the needed supplies to take home for his grandchildren.

Under the leadership of John Wesley's United Women in Faith President Thomasena Blackwell, and a partnership with Dr. William H. Long of Hartsville, who donated the items for the giveaway, the day was a success. There were many smiling faces and thank yous from the community members who attended.

This was the third giveaway event the church has held, and all of them have been welcomed in the Lamar community.

Pastor the Rev. Elbert Williams was among the smiling faces as he watched his United Women in Faith going about their mission.

Epworth Children's Home

A new day at Epworth

Editor's note: This is the first in a series about Epworth Children's Home's journey toward becoming a comprehensive continuum of care for children and a community-based support network for families that need help maintaining a healthy structure while providing children their care.

Epworth orphanage, as it was once called, was created by the Methodist people of South Carolina in 1896 because of the great need to provide food, shelter, education and spiritual and moral guidance for children whose families could no longer support them. Times were difficult in South Carolina during the late 1800s, but Epworth both survived and provided a home for hundreds of children through nickels, dimes and dollars given by faithful members of Methodist churches throughout South Carolina. In just a few years, Epworth Orphanage became known as a place that provided a structure that included a disciplined routine, a sound work ethic, spiritual formation and opportunities to learn a trade or attend college. During those early years, the population grew from three children to more than 450 children.

Today, Epworth Children's Home continues its original mission of providing a place for children to learn, live and grow at the main campus in Columbia. However, Epworth has expanded its ministry and scope of work to additional communities in South Carolina and is providing a variety of services to children and families that need help in order to stay together and to thrive.

Epworth continues to be a missional outreach agency of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. While Epworth does not receive support from apportionments, it does receive support from individuals and churches throughout the conference. Epworth also continues to be governed by a board of trustees (21 members) who are elected by the South Carolina Annual Conference.

Residential care on the main campus in Columbia has been the largest and longest activity of Epworth Children's Home. For 126 years, children have lived at Epworth and ei-

ther returned to their families, were adopted or graduated into the adult world.

The current residential program consists mainly of children and youth between the ages of 10 and 18 who live in cottages on Epworth's main campus. Normally there are eight children per cottage with two staff members who act as primary caregivers to the children in their cottage. Two additional staff members are assigned to each cottage and help provide for the young people in their cottage in a more specialized manner.

Children are assigned to a cottage according to age and gender. They receive timely health care through the campus health center staffed by a campus physician, a campus nurse and a nurse's assistant. They are also treated by a variety of medical specialists contracted to treat Epworth's residents.

Residents are treated by on-campus licensed counselors and other mental health specialists as needed. Care also includes dental care, eye care and other developmentally appropriate services as needed.

Academic achievement is a major focus, too. The majority of Epworth residents come to campus one, two or more grade levels behind their age group. Epworth employs a director of academic achievement who directs the Barnes Learning Center. The BLC provides certified tutors who work four days per week to provide individual and group tutoring to students who need remedial work and to students who want to excel.

The residential program is operated in accordance with CARE (Children and Residential Experience), a program developed at Cornell University and tailored for children and youth in residential programs. CARE is a proven evidence-based program that incorporates seven principles that, if followed, helps children and youth who have experienced trauma succeed in both the short and long term. The residential program is often referred to as an example of a high-quality group home and as the best in South Carolina by professionals who are referencing model programs.

—Rev. John Holler

Ruffin Parish still on the move despite COVID

By Clara Hodges McFadden

The last couple of years have been difficult for everyone with the coronavirus, and it has been no exception at the Ruffin Parish. But even in the midst of the pandemic, the Ruffin Parish United Women in Faith have stayed strong, as has the rest of the congregation under the leadership of their pastor, the Rev. Adrienne E. Stokes.

To start out 2022, the women continued meeting via Zoom each month and managed to discuss and carry out planned projects on their to-do list.

On March 18, they prepared a spaghetti dinner/lunch for their "adopted" faculty and staff at Bells Elementary School to show appreciation for all they do to care for and teach area children to grow up to be productive adults.

On March 25, a community fish fry was held in the church yard at Buckhead UMC with the United Methodist Men of Buckhead in charge. Although the weather was a little cloudy and windy, all said the good food and fellowship made for a wonderful event. Several of the dinners were delivered to first responders in the Ruffin and Smoaks areas, thanking them for taking care of the neighborhood when called upon.

Next, on March 27, Hickory Hill UMC celebrated "Women in the Pulpit" Sunday, with Kathy Robinson bringing the message for the day speaking on "Forgiveness." As she preached, too many times we're unable to move on in our lives because of things that have happened to us in the past. Some of us have even hung on to situations that happened to our parents, grandparents and other family members that have caused us not to be able to move forward ourselves. Some have suffered from hatred, racism, gossip, sexual abuse and verbal abuse, and we tend to let these things consume us, but we must let them go so that we can move on. As she noted, if we continue to dwell on these things, it blocks our blessings from God.

The year is half over, and Ruffin Parish plans to continue to do God's work in his favor. As the Bible says in Mark 12: 30-31, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your mind, and with all of your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it is this: you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

There is no other commandment greater than these, and Ruffin Parish believes we must be good stewards when doing so.



Photos courtesy of Julie McLaughlin

Almost 300 gather for VBS in Greenwood

St. Mark UMC Greenwood welcomed 298 children and 78 volunteers for its "Monumental" VBS 2022.



Members pack blessing bags filled with a variety of items.



The adopted verse for their blessing bag ministry comes from Matthew 25:40

Blessing of the blessing bags
St. Mark blesses new ministry endeavor

GREENVILLE—After sharing a sermon several weeks ago, "What Do You See," where leaders shared multiple ways how they can serve outside the walls of the church, the response was overwhelming to incorporate a blessing bag ministry into what they do at St. Mark United Methodist Church.

"The Lord Jesus has been at the forefront of this whole ministry," the Rev. Michael Maston said. "From the overwhelming interest, to the donations, sorting and packing as you can see in the pictures, the members truly turned up and showed out."

The adopted verse for their blessing bag ministry comes from Matthew 25:40, "For whatsoever you did for one of the least of these, you also did for me."

Blessing bags are filled with items like bottled water, socks, a small first aid kit, food and a toothbrush and toothpaste donated from a local dentist. There is a resource card provided by United Ministries showing where a person can go to get medical care, shelter, clothes washed or even help filling out a resume, as well as a pre-stamped notecard along with a pen that the recipient hopefully can use to reconnect with a family member.

Maston said there are so many other essential and spiritual items that are truly more of a blessing than money.

"It is with a humble heart that we now present them before the Lord to ask for his blessing to be upon them before we hand them out to the homeless in our area," Maston said. "Lord Jesus, we ask for your blessing to be upon these blessing bags, that they may truly be a blessing to others. May these gifts of essential and spiritual items showcase your love and bring others into a saving and justifying relationship with you. In Jesus' holy name, amen."



Photos courtesy of Mary L. Abbott

Stayahatchie at Lyttleton Street

Thirty-seven youth ages 14 and older from Lyttleton Street UMC, Camden, along with 16 adults, made home repairs to two homes in Kershaw County the first week of June. Improvements included gutting and rebuilding kitchens and bathrooms, plumbing, cleaning, painting, yard work and more. Both homes were also re-roofed by a contractor as part of the mission project. A commissioning service was held the night before work began, with participants being blessed by Bishop Gary Rivas. A midweek service was also held where volunteers were able share some of their experiences, new skills learned and where they had already seen God at work. On Friday night, everyone gathered for a communion service and shared a symbol they would keep as a reminder of STAYahatchie 2022. Above is the house before and, below, after.



Photos courtesy of Clara Hodges McFadden

VBS at Ruffin

On June 21-24, the Ruffin Parish held its Ruffin community corporate vacation Bible school for children and adults on the grounds of the BZS Community Center/Ruffin Rosenwald School and Buckhead UMC. Churches participating were Buckhead and Hickory Hill UMCs, Hunters Chapel and Mount Zion Baptist churches and New Bethel 5 Pentecostal Holiness Church. The theme was "Wilderness Escape: Where God Guides and Provides." Pastor Adrienne E. Stokes of Buckhead and Hickory Hill UMCs started the week discussing fasting, and Sam Drain closed the lessons Thursday with "Unity is Strength." On Friday all gathered at the Community Center for fellowship.



Photos courtesy of Rev. Judy Hames

Craft group at Dickson Memorial

Dickson Memorial UMC, Townville, has a craft room replete with sewing machines, and they bring in guests to teach them new crafts. These bowls are made from clothes line machine sewn together with batik fabric.

Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry - Second Sunday in August



Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry operates three Christian homes for adults with developmental disabilities. Residents are active in the community and are encouraged to be as independent as possible.

Aldersgate does not receive funds from apportionments. The second Sunday in August is designated as Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry Sunday by the SC Conference.

Your support allows us to care for our residents and homes, as well as plan for the future.

Visit aldersgatespecialneedsministry.org to make an online donation.

"Boyd is treated very well," his dad said. "The staff are flexible and supportive. They have his back 100%. It gives me peace of mind knowing my child with special needs is receiving love and the support he needs 24-7."



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Phil Reynolds

Not perfect

There's recent chatter in the media about the possibility of a global famine on the horizon. Also in recent media, the USDA reports that we waste 30-40 percent of the food produced in the United States. Obviously, we are not the best stewards we can be of the gifts God has entrusted us here in the middle of the land that flows with milk and honey.

Another friend from Liberia visited with me again this summer. By the way, Liberia has one of the lowest annual per capita incomes on the planet according to the World Bank. My family has been vegetable farmers for generations, so I enjoy riding my folks around the amber waves of grain and the fruited plain of Lexington County.

At one point on our ride, we came to a staked tomato field. My Liberian friend immediately asked why tomatoes were discarded onto the ground, to which I replied, "Not perfect."

My term, "not perfect," came from a previous visit with another Liberian friend who could not understand why collard greens were left in the field because of insect damage. The visit to the collard field was in January, so the cold weather had killed the insects, but the damage to the leaves was evident. Now, I've been to Liberia, and I've seen their collards. Possibly the worst collard leaves you've ever seen in a U.S. grocery store look better than the best collards you will find in Liberia. With collards or tomatoes, anything less than perfect has little future in the U.S. marketplace, so there's no need to harvest, package and transport a crop that cannot be sold.

My Liberian friend inspecting the tomato field asked if we could walk into the field, so I contacted the tomato grower and we walked about. The very first tomato my friend picked up had the smallest of defective spots, maybe smaller than your smallest fingernail. I tried to explain that the Liberian cold chain for fresh vegetables was virtually non-existent, so a fresh tomato in Liberia would be sold in a day or two, but a U.S. tomato can easily be a month from vine to consumer. The small defective spot on his tomato would only get larger, but he continued to point to the spot as I continued to say, "Not perfect."

He asked if he could eat the tomato, and since we had clearance to be in the field and the crew was harvesting, I knew the tomato was fine to eat after he washed it.

He said it was the best tomato he had ever eaten.

But I said, "Not perfect."

I don't know about you, but I'm glad



Thankfully, Reynolds writes, Jesus will not be like a consumer in the grocery store who picks up tomatoes but leaves the tomato behind because the tomato has a defect.

Jesus does not look at me like we look at tomatoes in the United States. On the one hand, if we were perfect, we would not need a savior. Tomatoes are often discarded because of mold, canker, sunscald, viruses, blight, rot, etc. We need a savior for one reason: sin, which can be defined in one word as selfishness.

Everyone will get to see Jesus even if for a short time. Jesus will not be like a consumer in the grocery store who picks up tomatoes but leaves the tomato behind because the tomato has a defect. Jesus will leave people behind because they did not use their time on earth to build a growing relationship with Jesus.

Jesus had us on his mind before we were born, and we need to have Jesus in our thoughts, words and deeds every day.

As I left the tomato field with my Liberian friend, the words to this song came to mind.

Just common flesh and bones (not perfect)

But I'll prove someday just why I say

I'm of a special kind

When he was on the cross

I was on his mind ...

I was on his mind

He knew me, yet He loved me

He whose glory makes the heavens shine

So unworthy of such mercy

Yet when he was on the cross

I was on his mind.

Reynolds is a retired pastor in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.



Photo courtesy of Rev. Kathy Pryor

What a splash!

Philadelphia UMC, York, held its vacation Bible school June 12-15. The theme was "Splashing with Jesus."

GBCS grants open for application through Sept. 16

The General Board of Church and Society is accepting grant applications Aug. 1 to Sept. 16 via their new online application system at <https://www.umcjustice.org/what-you-can-do/grants>.

Funding is provided through three grant programs:

1. Ethnic Local Church Grants focus on the self-identified needs of ethnic local churches and persons as they address one or more chronic social issues or concerns;
2. Human Relations Day Grants support advocacy and community engagement aimed at uplifting the right of all God's children to realize their potential in right relationship with one another; and
3. Peace with Justice Grants support programs and projects that witness to God's demands for a faithful, just, disarmed, and secure world.

Applicants are asked to provide a program/project summary, budget and supporting documentation including no fewer than two references and a letter from the resident bishop. Complete criteria and required documentation are provided on the application.

Grant awards range from \$2,000 to \$5,000.

None of money can be used to fund individual scholarships, salaries, purchase of equipment, purely administrative costs or direct delivery of services.

Funding decisions for all qualified applications will be made in October and announced shortly thereafter.

Applicants must use the new online application system. If you have previously submitted an application, you must reapply using the revised form.

Only complete applications with all required documentation will be considered.

For questions, email grants@umcjustice.org.



Your help is needed as a volunteer or member. Contact us today. www.alstonwilkesociety.org 803-799-2490 3515 Medical Drive, Columbia, SC 29203

The Alston Wilkes Society is blessed to begin our 60th year of service helping veterans, the justice-involved and the at-risk communities of South Carolina.

Check out our redesigned website: AlstonWilkesSociety.org

What does your time in the Bible look like?



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

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

This 31-day devotional contains:

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

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

Available on Amazon or at Highbridgebooks.com

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LANCASTER HELPS TENNESSEE: 500 homes lost in flood

From Page 1

becoming a UMC pastor. Alexander served at Waverly Church of the Nazarene from 2012-2015, and he has maintained contact with a number of people there. When he learned the town experienced flooding, his heart tugged, and he shared the news with his congregation.

He expected the congregation would begin praying for Waverly and perhaps start a fundraising collection. But when he learned his people wanted to head to Tennessee for a hands-on mission trip to help his former neighbors, Alexander was overjoyed.

“You can imagine how hard it was,” Alexander said, noting that 500 homes were lost from the flood, along with the elementary and middle school—a huge impact on such a small community. Twenty people were killed in the surrounding county from the flooding, and news reports say many structures were flooded with up to four feet of water, with some homes washed entirely off their foundations.

But motivated with a strong desire to help, nine from Grace-Lynnwood—including Alexander—headed to the small community to do what they could. They partnered with Waverly Church of the Nazarene to do flooring, rebuilds and construction on two wheelchair ramps.

Their host church, led by the Rev. Daron Brown and his associate pastor Rev. Mary Forester, provided the South Carolina workers with meals, and the Grace-Lynnwood team stayed at the nearby Camp Garner Creek Retreat Center in Dickson, Tennessee.

Alexander said he was heartened to see his current congregation reach out in Christian love to care for a community he once served and loved.



The team made a difference at four homes.

Before becoming a UMC pastor, Alexander served at Church of the Nazarene in Waverly from 2012-2015, and he has maintained contact with a number of people there. When he learned the town experienced flooding, his heart tugged, and he shared the news with his congregation in South Carolina, who decided to help.

ERT IN CAMDEN: Training for new ERT members is this fall

From Page 1

state this fall, and volunteers are needed who are willing to do everything from running a chainsaw, to carting limbs, running equipment such as skid steers, pulling trailers, providing necessities such as water and rehabilitation to maintenance and demonstrating a caring Christian presence

to everyone. These loving, caring, exciting and fulfilling ERT missions are in need of volunteers and financial aid.

To sign up for a class and volunteer, email brpraisejesus@aol.com.

Upcoming trainings will be listed in next month's *Advocate*.

Robinson is South Carolina UMVIM ERT coordinator.



Photo by Billy Robinson

Ben Tobin (left) and the Rev. James Smith unload a trailer load of debris at the ERT response near Camden.

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ASBURY HILLS: Outdoors concepts to factor into design

From Page 1

hear a keynote speaker while all sitting together.

Learning this opened Spriggs' eyes, and soon he realized not having an indoor worship center was causing them to turn away 11-12 groups a year on average.

"They'll call and say, 'Hey, we want to come,' but it's always, 'Sorry, we can't host you because we don't have an indoor space for 200 plus. We've got the beds and can feed you in our dining hall, but ...'"

Spriggs and Camps & Retreat Ministries' staff and board did the math on what it would take to increase their capacity and realized it wasn't too much of a stretch.

Now, they have plans to build a \$5 million worship center at Asbury Hills. They have already raised \$1.5 million thanks to proceeds from the sale of their Sewee property and also private contributions, Spriggs said, so they are not starting from zero.

The capital campaign will take three years, and they hope to be able to break ground on the new center at the end of that time.

They are calling it a worship-multipurpose building, and they plan to incorporate as much of the outdoors into the design and planning as possible. For example, the doors will be 360 degrees to bring as much of the outside in as they can.

Additional rooms and breakout space are also part of the design.

Spriggs said the center will help by generating additional revenue for the camp, but that is not why they want to do it.

While the extra funds will help create sustainability for long-term camping, at the root is the idea of helping as many people as



These renderings, above and below, show the design concept of the new building.



possible embrace the beauty and accessibility of the outdoors through the conference's Camps & Retreat Ministries.

"Several of our camps around the country closed for good during the pandemic because they didn't have a 'rainy day' plan," Spriggs said. "We were very fortunate we did have an operating reserve that allowed

us to hang on during that tough time."

The new center will help build that reserve even more by creating additional revenue.

The center, as Phase 2 of the master plan, comes on the heels of the camp's Phase 1, which was the building of their swimming pool.

They plan to begin fundraising as soon as possible. Camp ends after the first week in August, and they'll plan to head to churches soon after.

Spriggs said naming opportunities will be available, and the board has been working very hard to make the effort happen.

"It's really been a great summer," Spriggs said.

In addition to the capital campaign, Camps & Retreat Ministries is also gearing up for another exciting venture: the grand opening of their Sea Islands property. They have 60 beds and already hosted their first group there, and they invite all to head to their open house Sept. 16.

For more information on the Sea Islands Open House or on the Asbury Hills worship-multipurpose building, visit <https://sccarm.org>.

SHARE your STORIES

Send stories, photos, calendar items and ideas to:
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Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Mickey Fisher (retired)

Black people in South Carolina

Zealous people of faith have difficulty holding together loyalty to God and respect for the lives of those they judge to be unbelievers. Thus, some of the world's worst crimes and atrocities are committed by people of faith.

A local newspaper recently published a photo of the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. That bomb killed four young Black girls who were at church for Sunday school! The White men who set the bomb, though motivated by hate, declared that their actions were to protect against threats to the White race. Let the absurdity of that sink in: adult men kill four little girls in a Sunday school class, then say that they did it to protect the White race!

The families of those little girls were part of our history from the beginning. They were descendants of those who came to our shores by way of the Middle Passage, the route across the Atlantic favored by slave ship captains. The Birmingham bombing is among the most egregious and cowardly actions intended to stifle the advance of Black people toward social and economic justice. They, the Black people, were a part of our history from the beginning.

Two million were forcefully transported from Africa to the United States by way of the Middle Passage. They were shipped as cargo in vessels with near zero provision for sanitation, food, water, fresh air and exercise. Some were in shackles. Those who died en route were tossed overboard without the benefit of prayers and ceremony. Gadsden's Wharf in Charleston was a prime destination for slave ships plying the middle passage. South Carolina's role in that drama is difficult to overstate. Would it have existed without Charleston's participation? Yes, very likely! But speculation regarding this question sheds no light. It is clear that South Carolina played a major role in enabling the financial success of the slave trade. The same might be said of any city of size in precolonial days. Slavery was widely accepted and practiced. It was widespread in America with markets in Charleston, Boston, New Orleans, Richmond and New York. Each of those cities had a slave market. New Orleans had the largest such market in the country.

A new museum, the International African American Museum, is set to open on the site once occupied by the infamous Gadsden Warf. The museum's mission, stated by its president and CEO Dr. Tonya Matthews, is "to tell the untold, ignored, manipulated, brushed aside and deliberately hidden story of Blacks in America."

That museum has sparked new interest and reflection regarding slavery. A recent program on CBS television included an interview with a man whose parents had been slaves. After the interview, comments by the television personalities indicate that they paid attention. One said, "It makes you aware that slavery was a reality in America just yesterday." Another commented, "Think of yourself driving at night and being ordered to pull over by a car filled with racist bullies." The host of the show remarked, "It must have been terrorizing to hear the screams from the whipping post."

You may wonder, "What is a whipping post?" Some planters set a post in a highly visible location for use in punishing slaves. Those to be disciplined were tied to the post and whipped with a leather lash. Other slaves might be ordered to watch the whipping. It could be a big deal with everyone on the plantation assembled to see it done.

Much of the information in this article came from a review of a book by Clint Smith, "A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America." That book contains some disturbing data. For instance, Smith writes that between 1823 and 1863, on the St. Johns Parrish near New Orleans, 2,200 children died. A little calculation with those numbers indicates that every year for 40 years 55 slave children died on that one plantation.

Could some of those children have resulted from selective breeding? After all, a plantation was just a

large farm. What do farmers do? They breed livestock—cows, pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, horses! With the price of slaves running from \$1,200 to \$3,000 enterprising slave traders could choose to use fertile females to grow their own! One lady said her mother had 16 children, none by the same father. What kind of care do you suppose those children received? Could the type of care or the absence of care have had a bearing on the deaths of so many children? You shudder to think of midwives deciding which newborn lives or dies. Would there be a preference for males over females? Would defective or handicapped newborns be cast aside?

That's just one of the many horrors of slavery. It was no picnic for any who were involved in it: for sure not the slaves and not the runaways who were caught and returned to face harsh punishment; not the slave trader seeking to maximize his profits, not the slave master nor the slave owner and their families; not the overseer and those charged to keep the slaves in line; nor those in charge of keeping the slaves healthy and motivated to work. No one who takes a serious look at slavery would want to have anything to do with it.

That whole period in American history was difficult for everyone! Even the history of that time is a subject of dispute. Some argue that the Civil War (the War between the States, as some prefer to call it) had nothing to do with slavery. Yet documents from Confederate sources make it absolutely clear that the war was fought in support of slavery. Mississippi declared, "Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery." Texas held that America was founded by the White race and that Black people were "rightfully regarded as an inferior and dependent race."

Here in South Carolina, Gov. Benjamin Tillman convened a committee to draft a new constitution in compliance with a federal mandate to affirm allegiance to the United States rather than to the Confederacy. Not surprisingly, the new constitution prohibited Black and White people from using the same water fountains, stairwells and restrooms. Thus, Black people were shut out of employment in the cotton mills being built across the state. They were locked into the poverty into which they were born. Such harsh treatment did not set a new pattern for dealing with Black people. Rather, it confirmed a pattern in place in South Carolina for 400 years.

We in South Carolina were not alone in the nefarious trade. Slavery was widely accepted and practiced. The struggle to abolish it was long and difficult. How did it get established in the Palmetto state? The first slaves came from Barbados to Charleston. They were brought over to teach the natives how to cultivate sugar. That was a failed experiment. South Carolina's soil and climate did not match the needs of the sugar plant. So the planters switched to indigo and rice, commodities that were cultivated and harvested by slaves for export.

The psychology of a slave economy has two main components. First, a whole race of people must be treated as property. South Carolina planters "owned" those who worked for them. Boys as young as 12 years of age were separated from their family and sent to the market to be "sold" to the highest bidder. Second, the slave lost all authority over his/her life. In his history of South Carolina, Walter Edgar, professor of history at the University of South Carolina, writes, "Enslaved people could be tortured: beaten, starved, raped, humiliated, degraded!" That is a strong reminder that slaves had no rights and no access to the courts. Crimes against them were not counted as crimes.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, one White owner beat a slave child to death with a hoe. He walked away facing no legal consequences.

Why write about this now, long after the war and the history that led to it have become ancient history for most of today's citizens? That's the very reason to call attention to this story. We need to know what got us to this time and place.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Tony Rowell

Bear witness

In my opinion, there is one place this side of the Mississippi River that should be on everyone's bucket list to visit before they die. That place would be Cades Cove up on the Tennessee side of the Smoky Mountains.

If you have never been there, I recommend that you go. There is just something cathartic about the place. It soothes the soul.

It's strikingly beautiful with deer, turkey and bear abounding, and in spite of the multitude of cars and trucks that make the loop every day, it is strangely peaceful. However, if true inner peace is what you seek, then you must go beyond the ordinary and hike the surrounding mountains up above the Cove. That is when the place is downright magical. When you get lost in the quiet, a peace descends upon you like nothing you have ever experienced.

My family went there many times when I was a child, and my memories of the Cove are crowded with laughter and joy. I've got lots of stories from the place, some of which I have already told you, but one of my favorites happened when I was a boy, 9 years of age or so. Mom, Dad, Mike, Janie and I were finishing up the loop. It was twilight, and we had made it into the pine forest near the end of the trail. It had been raining off and on all day, so there was a mist in the air that gave the forest a haunting, haunted look.

All of a sudden, brake lights flashed up in front of us, and all the cars stopped dead in their tracks, and then the folks started piling out of their vehicles and wildly running toward something up ahead of us. It would appear that a bear had been spotted, and all the folks who didn't know any better—and a few who did—decided to take a closer look. Well, the bear took offense at having his evening constitutional disturbed. So he decided to find a quieter path somewhere else, and the race was on.

Now being a 9-year-old boy, I wanted to join that frantic mob and see what was going on. But Momma, being older and wiser, stopped me and said, "Just wait."

A minute or two later she started laughing, that breathless laugh of hers, and pointed up in front of us. Coming at us at breakneck speed was that same brave and daring mob that had faced their fears and the elements to chase their quarry just a few minutes before. Only now they were in a frenzy, tripping over one another and themselves, screaming in terror and looking for all the world like they were about to throw up in unison.

It appears the bear had just been funning with those folks. Either that, or it had gotten fed up with the game and turned on the crowd. One way or the other, like a school of herring, the crowd panicked as one, forgot all dignity and generally made fools of themselves right there in front of God and everybody.

In the midst of it all, over and above the commotion and Mom's derisive laughter, I swear to this day that somewhere off in the forest I heard a deep satisfied chuckle echoing amongst the trees.

Right before the traffic started to move again, Mom tapped Dad on the shoulder and pointed to an older man, wearing a worn-out backpack with a nice camera hanging off his left shoulder and a walking stick in his hand. The old man was meandering out of the same woods from which the crowd had so unceremoniously departed. He wasn't running like all the rest. He was at peace, and his pace bore witness to that peace.

With admiration in her voice, Mom said, "He's probably the only one in the crowd who truly appreciated what he saw."

I think that was probably where my love of the outdoors, of hiking and of photography started. The reverence in her voice and the dignity she afforded that old man struck a deep chord in me. I don't know why he impressed her so, nor do I know why I was so impressed by her words, but it was so.

I have been pondering that story for the last little while. The Lord brought it back to my mind for a reason, and while I am no soothsayer, I may have an inkling as to why.

We, as the children of God, have been called upon by our Lord to be examples to the lost sheep that surround us. We are called to lead them from fear and chaos into the light and peace of a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Over the past few years, I question what kind of job we have done. No offense intended, of course, but I fear that many of us have not been the best of examples. I have watched as some Christian leaders reacted in fear and panic instead of faith to the dangers surrounding them, and in turn, those being led by them are fearful and plagued by a faltering faith.

We, as Christians, are called upon to rise above the crowd in faith so that others might see that faith and be heartened by it.

Fear is contagious and destructive, and many will follow their fear into hiding. But when one faithful follower defeats fear through faith, others will follow as well.

Be that person. Be the Christian that leads others from fear and chaos to the peace of Christ. Be the light in their darkness.

Rowell, who pastors Beulah UMC, Gilbert, is also the author of the essay collection "What Would Granny Say?" from the Advocate Press, available at <https://advocatesc.org/store/books/what-would-granny-say>



Guest Commentary

by William R. Robinson Jr.

Pray, pray, pray

It is high time that all Bible-believing United Methodist gather in force to pray, pray, pray. Pray while standing firm on the foundation of God's Holy Word in our United Methodist Church and world.

Some conferences (mainly western U.S.) and organizations continue to try to water down God's Word with a host of members and leadership who are scared to stand on and for the almighty, holy word of God. They cower to a band of people with un-Christian agendas who are well on their way to destroying our Christian denomination, as has happened to other Christian denominations.

We Bible-believers must wake up from our sleepy stance. We must pray for all but especially our United Methodist leadership, from clergy to the Council of Bishops, to stand firm on the word of Almighty God and biblical truth. The *UMC Book of Discipline* remains the same and no wording has been changed. Our "silence" or remaining "neutral" to some signifies acceptance of unholy ways. With love and concern for all, we must unite in prayer, but also come together in one accord and take stances to keep our beloved United Methodist Church truly biblically based and sound.

Waiting on decisions or something to happen does not mean that we sit idly by. Fulfillment in Jesus Christ comes to and through Christians who are on fire with the Holy Spirit carrying out the Great Commission. God states that he will spit anyone who is lukewarm out of his mouth for by doing so they lead many astray (Revelation 3:15-16).

It may appear we are living in the 11th hour of our denomination; however, this is no time to give up and give in. It is time to fight, fight, fight as mighty prayer warriors. God is calling all of us Christian United

Methodists to gather as one in his name and pray all throughout our nation and world. "Where two or more gather in my name, there I will be also," states Jesus (Matthew 18:19-20).

We must unite as mighty prayer warriors, praying in this spiritual warfare of good against evil. We must gather in homes, churches, businesses, fields, woodlands and communities across our nation and world, and pray without ceasing. With a mighty prayer force and loud, boastful voices across our lands "we can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens us" (Philippians 4:13).

Through our turning to God with zeal and faithful determination, we can show the world that we are the biblically based body of Christ. In following the Great Commission, we must reach out and spread the lifesaving, non-watered-down message of God throughout the world for all time. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God to the salvation for everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

Churches across the land, now is not the time to exit, though portions of our beloved denomination appear torn to threads. Now is the time to stand steadfast and pray for revival, righteousness, healing, mending and love for our leaders and everyone with a faith that can literally move mountains.

Christian prayer warriors, let's unite, pray and act to save "our" United Methodist churches and denomination. Let your voices be heard from the depths of the valleys to the tops of the mountains.

Shout and proclaim the name of Jesus while uniting to pray, pray, pray.

Robinson is a member of North UMC, North.



View from the Pews

by Bill Barnier

Would you like fries with that?

Pastor Al, always one to find the humor in everyday things, told us of a recent spiritual event that begged for full public disclosure. (He should know better than to tell such stories to a columnist.) Most mornings, he meets up with several friends at Burger King for coffee. The requirement for an invitation to their table is they must be of advanced years and be Baptists, Methodists and perhaps an agnostic if one is open-minded. They meet to discuss topics of the day and demonstrate a common knowledge of a higher power no matter what outfit they ride for. Politics are not off-limits as long as civility is observed.

On a recent occasion, Pastor Al relayed to the group that he was going in for surgery in the next few days to repair damage around his spine. While no complications were expected, doing such a thing to a man of his advanced experience is risky. If successful, the repair would relieve pain and disfunction to his legs and feet, his most preferred tools of service for Christ.

Being quite fond of the sacred right of anointing, Pastor Al was concerned because time was short and there was no Methodist minister to administer the anointing to him. It must have come to him over Burger King coffee that the only other ordained minister in the group that morning was the Baptist sitting next to him. While the two men are great friends, neither will miss an opportunity to get in a competitive jab. Surely he bowed his head with hand over brow in disbelief of what he was about to do. He put the love of Christ ahead of his own apprehension and hoped God would just smile.

Trusting in the Lord, Pastor spoke up and asked his friend if he would anoint him for his upcoming surgery. Just as quickly as the words were out, the Baptist weighed the importance and value of the request, and the courage Pastor Al must have found to ask, and agreed. Yes, dear readers, it's true. The blessings and power of God almighty were delivered with sacred oil right there in the dining room of Burger King. Order up!

I make light of this because it could only happen to our beloved pastor who is secure in his faith and practical in its revelation.

Despite the humor in the whole situation, it brings to mind a faith and dedication to the values of love and peace all people of God should openly demonstrate, whether at Burger King, Walmart, work or play. Anywhere there is a sincere desire to demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit, the actions of all people of faith should never be delayed or muted. Respect and decorum reflect the importance of such actions.

Jesus performed miracles in homes, open markets and on dirt cart paths. He measured the faith and sincerity of the petitioner, and despite the possibility of prosecution or the judgement of others, acted with absolute purpose.

While we should be aware of perceptions of what we may do so they don't reflect negatively upon us or our creator, we must also act with courage and in faith in everything we do. No doubt the love and sincerity of those two friends before God made the event worthy of declaration from the pulpit and the lectern.

With courage through faith, we can tell the story and learn. Or we can live the story and understand. Fries might be ready, too!

Pastor Al's surgery was successful, and he is resuming his life in service for the Lord. After coffee, of course.

Barnier attends St. Paul United Methodist Church, Ridgeland.



Reflections

by Deborah Len

Intentional

Bob was always relaxing in his comfortable easy chair. Well, that was what Joan, his wife, always thought.

We can see this new marriage might be off to a rocky start.

Bob is a dynamic go-getter by day. He leads a worship team that does two services Sundays and provides a meal to the homeless Tuesdays; on Wednesday there is Bible study and choir practice Thursday. Saturday he helps the church men's group at the local recycling center or at the HandyMan Hutt. Bob looks forward to watching movies and reading on Mondays and Fridays. He calls it his recharge time. From a bird's eye view this seems perfectly valid. Joan does not agree.

How did they meet, you ask? How did this marriage even become part of the thread in Bob and Joan's life? God—only through God. Plain and simple.

Joan had been praying to meet and marry a life partner for more than 10 years. She went to all her church functions and all the young adult trips and mission projects. She just did not find someone with her same zest for life ... until Bob. Bob was at the recycling center with his men's group and she came with a friend from another church to help out. As they say, that was all she wrote. After a whirlwind romance and cute wedding ceremony, ta da! Here they are, married and living under one roof.

This story can have many different end-

ings. The one I believe God wanted was for these two very independent, God-loving and mission-minded people to blend their talents and become one to truly grow God's kingdom.

Fast forward to six months into marriage and Bob is in his comfortable chair—and Joan is bemoaning that he is not motivated to help her or, as she says, "anyone ever at all." Bob intentionally asks Joan to sit with him for 15 minutes. Just 15 minutes.

Something tugs at Joan's heart, and she acquiesces.

Bob has his Bible open to Philippians 4:6. He holds Joan's hand, and he reads aloud, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God."

Joan has tears in her eyes as she listens, and her mind races to accept the truth. Bob is who she had prayed for and who is her life partner. She only has to accept that Bob does things in a way that keeps his mind, body and soul balanced. He truly is leading Joan and the people he helps every day to see God as a friend you can trust with all of your being.

When we are intentional in our daily devotion to God by praying, meditating and reading his word, we will gain the peace that passes all understanding in our hearts.

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

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Carter produces booklet for sale



Fletcher Carter, a retired diaconal minister of the South Carolina Conference and an active member of Virginia Wingard Memorial UMC, Columbia, has produced a booklet titled "I was a Share Cropper's Son Who Moved to Town."

The booklet shares Carter's story from his childhood on a farm and almost dying from diphtheria and to becoming a United Methodist, showing that one can make choices that change their birth environment. Many people encourage one as they make choices that lead to choosing one's life path. The subtitle of the booklet, "Choices Made on Life's Path Determine the Future," is a theme that echoes throughout the booklet.

Carter developed a stewardship program and led churches in South Carolina and across the U.S. in becoming centers of Christian ministry and mission. Many of these churches are featured in the booklet.

To get a copy, mail \$10 (including mailing) to Carter at 2345 Robin Crest Drive, West Columbia, SC 29169.



Photos by MIDAS TOUCH/Linton McCants

Mechanicsville celebrates its graduates

Mechanicsville United Methodist Church's Higher Education and Campus Ministry celebrated their graduates, the Class of 2022, on Sunday, June 12, on the church campus. Above, the graduates gather for a smile. Below, the Rev. Ernest W. Frierson and First Lady Diann Frierson stand with Mae Ruth Cooke in honor of her family donation to the Isaac Davis Scholarship Fund. At bottom is a closeup photo of each graduate. Arswanette Myers, a graduate of Coker University, obtained a Bachelor of Science in sociology with a minor in counseling. She also was on the Dean's List for the 2021 semester. Asad Frierson, a graduate of Crestwood High, looks to attend University of South Carolina toward a career in game design and graphic design. Charena Myers, a graduate of Winthrop University, obtained a Bachelor of Science in business administration and hopes to become a chief marketing officer. Jah'Kualria Montgomery, a graduate of Lee Central High, hopes to attend Francis Marion University and pursue a career as a pharmacist. Jah'Kil Montgomery, a graduate of Lee Central High, looks to pursue a career in the National Guard. Quinten Bradshaw, a graduate of Crestwood High, was active in junior varsity and varsity basketball and has been accepted to North Carolina State University. Quinten plans to pursue a career in the Army. Alaisha Darnell Brown, a graduate of Crestwood High, plans to attend the University of South Carolina-Sumter and pursue a career in filmmaking. And Denzel Jennings, a graduate of Crestwood High, looks to further his career by working in the field of information technology or becoming an entrepreneur.



Arswanette Myers



Asad Frierson



Charena Myers



Jah'Kualria Montgomery



Jah'Kil Montgomery



Quinten Bradshaw



Alaisha Darnell Brown



Denzel Jennings



The Methodist Student Network (Wesley Foundation) at University of South Carolina traveled to Taizé in May to join more than 1,000 other young people.

USC's Methodist Student Network enjoy experience at Taizé in French countryside

"Breath of Christ's loving, Holy Spirit, within each person you sow faith which can only be a very simple trust, so simple that everyone can receive it." —Brother Roger

In the peaceful French countryside of Burgundy, the tiny village of Taizé has become the Christian youth-young adult capitol of the world. The Methodist Student Network (Wesley Foundation) at University of South Carolina traveled to Taizé in May to join more than 1,000 other young people.

Tens of thousands make the pilgrimage to Taizé each year for a time of prayer, silence, Bible teaching and meeting with others from around the world. Founded in 1940 by Brother Roger (Switzerland), it became a place of refuge for many people fleeing death and persecution at the hands of Hitler and the Nazis. Now some 100 brothers (Catholic and Protestant) from 30 countries form an ecumenical community in the monastic tradition. At any time 20 of the brothers are living for several years in challenging and impoverished places in small fraternals in solidarity with marginalized people, such as Bangladesh, Kenya and New York City.

Young people are often drawn to Taizé as it is a fresh and hospitable expression of the church. Questions are welcomed; faith is examined; judgment is withheld. Three times a day the whole community gathers for prayer in the Church of Reconciliation. The worship is a more contemplative style. Simple, beautiful chants in four-part harmony sung in a variety of languages form the mainstay of the worship. There is a Bible reading followed by 10 minutes of silence at each service. There is no preaching, but there is an hour of Bible exploration each day. And everyone has a job to do to keep Taizé running. Some serve the meals or prepare the food. Some clean the bathrooms

or run the snack bar.

Perhaps one of the most enjoyable aspects of the Taizé experience is meeting people from around the world (though there are few from the United States). One of the small groups that MSN students participated in had people from Holland, Belgium, France, Germany, Hong Kong and England. Exploring life and faith from many different perspectives makes one realize how large the church is and how limited one's experience is.

MSN student Matthew Benfield said, "My experience at Taizé will always be a part of who I am. My fear of silence turned into an appreciation for silence. Silence provides the perfect time for reflection and prayer."

MSN's Elsa Compton said, "Taizé is a place where questions are encouraged and people of many backgrounds are able to openly discuss their faith. The brothers are humble and do not pretend to know all the answers ... and cultivate a place for deeper thinking."

MSN's Carter Vaughn said, "Spending time in Taizé pushed me to discover a deeper type of spirituality within myself through individual reflection and community interaction. Taizé allowed me to consider a variety of global perspectives in my readings of the bible and encouraged me to beyond my own understanding of Christianity."

And MSN's Bethany Berry added, "I appreciated Taizé's gentle approach to Christianity. Time spent in prayer with the brothers was very different compared to time spent in traditional American Christian churches. There was no specific message they preached. Instead, time was spent singing, in silence, and hearing Scripture. I think there is a lot to be said for creating a space that allows for individual experiences, while together in unity."



Confirmed

Duncan Memorial UMC, Georgetown, celebrated their 2022 confirmation class recently. At left are the confirmands.

Photos courtesy of KassiJo Farris



Photos courtesy of KassiJo Farris

Summertime fun

Duncan Memorial UMC, Georgetown, youth have been enjoying a number of fellowship opportunities this summer. Above, youth ministry members enjoy an “amazing race” around Georgetown. Below left, Duncan youth enjoy a fiesta night, and below right, youth have a blast at their summer pool gathering.



St. James lauds ‘brothers on the move’

St. James United Methodist Church, Sumter, held its Student Recognition Sunday June 26. The special Sunday recognition was led by Geneva Bowman, Christian education chair; John Willis, church school superintendent; and the Rev. Allen Nesmith, pastor.

Among the students recognized were brothers Victor Jayden Brown and Nicholes Preston Brown, who were featured in the local newspaper and on the school’s website for extraordinary work in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and Future Business Leaders of America.

Jayden and Nicholes attend Alice Drive Middle School. Jayden competed at the Sumter School District FBLA local level tournament and then the state level for the essay competitive event. His speech and presentation on “Exploring Business Issues” won him a first-place medal and the opportunity to compete at the National Leadership Conference in Chicago, Illinois, June 29-July 2. Jayden is a rising ninth grader at Sumter High.

Nicholes, a STEM honor student, participated with his team in a STEM community project that won the National STEM Champion Award from the National STEM Honor Society. The Alice Drive Middle School team collaborated with Continental Tire and Central Carolina Technical College to learn how to do auto-cad programming with 3D



Nicholes Brown (left) and Jayden Brown are dubbed by their church as “brothers on the move.”

printing. The students programmed more than 500 tire gauges. These gauges will be used by Continental Tire to place bar codes on tires. Nicholes is a rising eighth grader at Alice Drive Middle School.

Jayden and Nicholes are the sons of Lauren Wilson and great-grandsons of Nancy Wilson.

Columbia College partners with Graduate Columbia, S.C.

After an ongoing conversation regarding the mutual benefits of a strategic collaboration, Graduate Columbia, S.C., part of the Graduate Hotels® collection, and the Columbia College Division of Business, Leadership and Communication have agreed to work together, creating opportunities for students to connect with a reputable, local business integral

to the city of Columbia.

Graduate Columbia, S.C. will enrich the student experience by providing internships and on-campus presentations for all business students, especially those within the hospitality, tourism and event management concentration. Columbia College will host workshops and professional

development opportunities for hotel staff.

“We are very pleased about this strategic collaboration,” said Dr. Ezaz Ahmed, dean of the college’s BLC.

The hotel will provide an exclusive business perspective to students and interns looking to learn more about the industry.



Church members marched from Washington Street UMC to the State House.

Washington Street, St. Mark march with Moms Against Gun Violence

On Saturday, June 11, members of Washington Street United Methodist Church, along with their brothers and sisters from St. Mark UMC, marched from WSUMC in downtown Columbia to the State House.

They joined hundreds of others to take part in the March For Our Lives. Concerned citizens gathered to show their support for stricter gun laws in the state.

March For Our Lives began in Florida in the aftermath of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in 2018. Since then the organization has grown, and now has hundreds of student-led chapters across the country. In the wake of the gun tragedies in Uvalde and Buffalo, they took to the streets to demand that lawmakers act to save lives.



Photo courtesy of Odean Ralley

Growth in Darlington

Indian Branch UMC, Darlington, celebrated what pastor the Rev. Barbara Segars called “a glorious day” Sunday, June 12, as five people confessed their faith and joined the church and three children were baptized.

Church’s Good Friday service helps bring in-person connection in community

The Greeleyville Parish (Long Branch and Wilson Chapel) hosted a Good Friday worship service for the Greeleyville community April 15.

The festivities were held at Long Branch United Methodist Church. The churches provided a community fish fry and other foods for community members, parishioners and anyone who wished to attend.

The children participated in an Easter egg hunt with an opportunity to play and have fun in a Christian atmosphere. The adults got to sit around conversing and listening to spiritual music. The event was well attended with approximately 45 people in attendance.

The service evolved after parishioners and community members began sharing their concerns about the pandemic. People were tired of being quarantined, isolated and restricted and said they were ready to come back to church. The Good Friday worship service allowed the community and members an opportunity to do so.

The leadership at both churches enforced the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and the state Department of Health and Environmental Control for all participants in worship. Their church attendance is increasing and members are feeling comfortable attending in-person services again.

The highlight of the evening was the Good Friday service. The pastor, Dr. Fred Moore, delivered an inspiring sermon titled “The Cross of Redemption,” focusing on the nine hours from Christ’s arrest, trial, crucifixion and death on the cross.

The Greeleyville Parish plans to continue to find creative ways to serve the community and make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

“Our communities need us (the church) more than any other time in history,” Moore said. “Our church and churches are the pillars of our communities. It is time for the church to re-establish and reconnect with our communities.”



Children enjoy some fun at the church celebration.



Resource Center

by Betty Stalnaker

New Christmas music available

Church musicians, it's time to plan your Christmas music. Listed below are new titles for adults available in the conference Resource Center. Check our website for many other titles for children, youth and adults.

A Promise Kept

(SBK477=) *Composer/Arranger:*
Adams, Craig

From the very beginning, our God has revealed his faithfulness to numerous generations, keeping and fulfilling all of his promises. And of all his promises, the most important promise—the one of redemption and life, of word becoming flesh, of glory and power—was fulfilled in the form of a baby cradled in a manger. Celebrating this promise of taking the humblest of circumstances and turning them into glory is this new heartfelt Christmas musical, “A Promise Kept.” The latest in the Excel Plus series, this musical has been arranged and orchestrated by Marty Parks in his Large Print signature format, which gives vocal accessibility and rehearsal flexibility to any choir.

Adult/33 min./Moderately Easy/SATB. (Lillenas) Listening CD available.

I Call Him Lord

(SBK475=) *Composer/Arranger:* Bolin, John/
Duren, Cliff/Walker, Blake

From Lifeway Worship and the best-selling Let's Sing series comes this worshipful Christmas musical. This musical is a passionate celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, who left his throne in heaven to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. This

worship service includes congregational singing throughout and features treasured hymns, classic choruses and new worship songs. Each arrangement has been carefully crafted for small- to medium-sized choirs, or large choirs with limited rehearsal time, and is complemented by thoughtful narration and glistening orchestration.

Adult/33 min./Easy/SATB. (LifeWay Worship) Listening CD available.

The King is Born

(SBK476=) *Composer/Arranger:*
Adams, Craig

This musical, from the You Can! series of choral resources, is comprised of unison/two-part choral arrangements that are easy to learn and fun to sing. Your choir will enjoy sharing each moment within your community: unforgettable congregational sing-along medleys, soul-stirring anthems and awe-inspiring narration. This Christmas musical has been uniquely arranged for choirs with size and/or time limitations. The combination of treasured carols, classic songs and soon-to-be favorites is complemented by fully orchestrated accompaniment tracks, adding to the incredible impact of your seasonal celebration.

Adult/30 min./Easy/Unison-2 part. (LifeWay Worship) Listening CD and Split-Track CD available.

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

Global Briefs

Church members slain in Ethiopia

GAMBELLA, Ethiopia—A \$10,000 grant from the United Methodist Committee on Relief was announced July 11 after 37 people, including some United Methodists, were killed during an attack in Gambella in western Ethiopia. The UMCOR grant will provide food and hygiene kits and address other immediate needs of people affected by the civil unrest.

How disaffiliation can affect pensions

GLENVIEW, Ill.—The church agency that handles pensions is offering a video explaining how pension plan funding can be affected when churches choose to disaffiliate from the denomination. The video, also available as a podcast, answers questions such as whether clergy pension plans are fully funded and why a disaffiliating church is required to make a payment to the conference it is leaving.

Migrant ministry grants available

ATLANTA—Mustard Seed Migration Grants, inspired by the well-known parable, are available from the United Methodist Committee on Relief to provide up to 50 congregations in the United States with as much as \$2,000 in funding to support one-time, community-based projects that assist refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented individuals and migrants of all types. Applications are accepted any time before Sept. 1 and will be reviewed and processed within a month. Churches that received grants in 2021 are not eligible for the 2022 program.

EPA ruling by Supreme Court criticized

NEW YORK—A June 30 Supreme Court ruling that will limit the ability of the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate emissions from power plants is a major setback in the effort to address the climate crisis, said Elizabeth Chun Hye, faith director of mobilization and advocacy for United Women in Faith. “As women of faith called to steward the earth and care for one another, we are deeply concerned about the court’s low regard for front-line communities,” Hye said in a statement.

State of the Church Report released

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The United Methodist Church has released the 2021 State of the Church Report, which centers on the theme of claiming the denomination’s identity in faith and service to Christ. The report highlights the #BeUMC campaign, which celebrates the life-changing, diverse and global nature of The United Methodist Church. Watch the video at <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/churchwide/the-connectional-table/2021-state-of-the-church-report>.

Bishop responds to Independence Day shooting

HIGHLAND PARK, Ill.—After a mass shooting claimed seven lives and injured dozens of others at a Fourth of July parade, Bishop John L. Hopkins is urging United Methodists to act. “This mass shooting calls us to mourn, pray, remember innocent lives lost and strengthen our resolve to find ways to address the growing epidemic of gun violence in the United States,” wrote the interim bishop of the Northern Illinois Conference in a statement.

Farming ministry helps women prepare for retirement

HARARE, Zimbabwe—More than 60 members of Harare’s Inner City Circuit United Methodist Church gathered recently at the Agriculture Research Trust farm to gain new skills that will help them prepare for retirement. The church-related farming ministry focuses on life skills while encouraging, educating and empowering women to help their families survive.

Bishops bemoan Supreme Court’s abortion ruling

WASHINGTON—Quoting The United Methodist Church’s Social Principles, the denomination’s Council of Bishops released a statement saying the U.S. Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe v. Wade denied the sacred worth of women who face “the tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion.” Council of Bishops President Thomas J. Bickerton noted that the overturning of Roe v. Wade is a call for the church to rise above the fray to offer words of support and hope.

Judge dismisses disaffiliating church’s lawsuit

ST. CHARLES, Mo.—Late June 22, a St. Charles County judge granted a motion to dismiss the lawsuit filed by Morning Star Church against the Missouri Annual Conference. Morning Star Church sought to leave the denomination with property without using the disaffiliation process in the *Book of Discipline*, the denomination’s law book. The county court based its dismissal on the church autonomy doctrine, which holds that issues of church government and doctrine belong to a denomination, not to a state court.

Africa University celebrates 28th commencement

MUTARE, Zimbabwe—The academic achievements of 712 graduates from 18 African countries were recognized at Africa University’s 28th commencement. The graduates were encouraged to imagine their place and role in creating Africa’s future.

Lake Junaluska plans summer worship series

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C.—Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center plans to host outdoor, lakeside Sunday worship services led by inspirational United Methodist preachers from June 26 through Aug. 14 as part of the Summer Worship Series. The services will be at 9 a.m. U.S. Eastern time at the lakeside tent near Stuart Auditorium.

United Methodists continue helping Ukrainian neighbors

ZURICH—A gasoline shortage poses a challenge for distributing humanitarian aid in Ukraine, but United Methodist responders in Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia report that their communities are continuing to help refugees and send supplies into the embattled country as it resists a Russian invasion.

Striving for equity in pastor salaries

DURHAM, N.C.—A study on salary disparities between Black and White United Methodist pastors in North and South Carolina shows that Black pastors make substantially less than their White counterparts. The researchers suggest revenue sharing and moving salary decisions involving pastors out of local churches to annual conferences.

—Courtesy of United Methodist News Service

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Washington Street UMC intergenerational small group discusses LBGTQIA, the church

COLUMBIA—On June 8, the Reconciling Next team from Washington Street United Methodist Church hosted a small group discussion with a taco dinner.

The topic, “Intergenerational Discussion: LBGTQIA & the Church,” came out of a study prepared by University of South Carolina graduate student Alexandra Kauffman that was used at the WSUMC booth at the 2021 Pride Parade last October.

At the Pride Festival 2021, responses were sought to these questions: 1) How did the Christians in your life respond to your coming out; and 2) What is something you wish straight Christians knew?

There were representatives from four churches at the dinner-discussion: WSUMC; Reformation Lutheran, Virginia Wingard Memorial UMC and Chapin UMC. In all, there were 48 people in attendance ranging from age 14 to 85-plus.

The group was split into age groups for the discussion: youth ages up to 18, young adults 18-30, adults ages 30-49 and those 50 and older. The largest group represented were those older than age 50.

Organizers reviewed the responses received, had table discussions and used this information to help to better serve others in the community and in the churches.

After a wonderful taco meal and much discussion, we all felt the love and affirmation of our goals and intentions become clear: to keep the discussion of acceptance and affirmation at the forefront of our minds and hearts.

There is a continuing discussion about meeting quarterly to discuss these goals and any future activities in the near future.



Photos provided by Midas Touch/Terrance McCants

Completing a milestone

Mechanicsville UMC, Bishopville, celebrated their mortgage burning ceremony on Sunday, May 22, on the historic campus of Mechanicsville United Methodist Church. Superintendent of “the heartwarming Hartsville District,” the Rev. Telley Gadson, delivered the challenge to the parishioners of Mechanicsville during this monumental celebration. Mechanicsville was able to complete the milestone of paying off their mortgage under the administration of the Rev. E. W. Frierson.

Obituaries

Nora Cynthia Cylinda Singleton Anderson

KINGSTREE—Nora Cynthia Cylinda Singleton Anderson, sister of the Rev. Pernerva Thomas, died July 10, 2022. Rev. Thomas is the pastor of the St. Paul-Elliott United Methodist Church, Lynchburg.

Funeral services were held July 17.

Mrs. Anderson is survived by her husband, Alex Anderson, son and stepdaughter.

Edward Daniel Bowers

SENECA—Edward Daniel Bowers, brother of the Rev. Michael Bowers, died July 10, 2022. Rev. Bowers is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Graveside services were held in the cemetery next to Lawrence Chapel UMC, Central, July 15.

Memorials may be made to Lawrence Chapel UMC, 2101 Six Mile Hwy., Central, SC 29630; or to the Bill G. Bowers Sr. and Elizabeth F. Bowers Endowed Scholarship Fund, Spartanburg Methodist College, 1000 Powell Mill Road, Spartanburg, SC 29301.

Mr. Bowers is survived by his five brothers.

Ian W. S. Brodie

EDINBURGH, Scotland—Ian W. S. Brodie, father of Jane Brodie Wall, died July 1, 2022. Mrs. Wall is the wife of the Rev. Tom Wall, director of the Wesley Foundation, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

Funeral services will be held in Edinburgh at a later date.

Patricia Ann Gunkel Conway

CHARLESTON—Patricia Ann Gunkel Conway, mother of the Rev. Tommy Conway, died June 9, 2022. Rev. Conway is the pastor of the Kingstree Circuit Charge, Kingstree.

Funeral services were held June 12 at the J. Henry Stuhr Inc. Northwoods Chapel. Burial was held June 13 at Beaufort National Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to the Susan G. Komen Lowcountry, 127 King Street, Suite 205, Charleston, SC 29401; or to Agape Hospice of the Lowcountry, 9301 Medical Plaza Drive, Charleston, SC 29406.

Mrs. Conway is survived by her four sons and two daughters.

Addell Singleton Dicks

COLUMBIA—Addell Singleton Dicks,

mother of the Rev. John Dicks, died June 27, 2022. Rev. Dicks is the pastor of Unity United Methodist Church, Lugoff.

Funeral services were held July 2 at Emmanuel UMC, Sumter, with burial in Hillside Memorial Park, Sumter.

Memorials may be made to Emmanuel UMC, P.O. Box 1203, Sumter, SC 29151.

Mrs. Dicks is survived by her son.

Rosemary ‘Sally’ Gabriele

LORIS—Rosemary “Sally” Gabriele, mother of Barbara Corder, died June 15, 2022. Mrs. Corder is the wife of the Rev. Grady Corder, pastor of the Center-Tanquil Charge, Mullins.

A memorial service was held June 23 at Tranquil United Methodist Church.

Memorials may be made to Tranquil UMC, c/o Gloria Taylor, 3602 Sand Hill Road, Mullins, SC 29574.

Mrs. Gabriele is survived by her two sons and three daughters.

Rev. Mack Goff Jr.

LODGE—The Rev. Mack Goff Jr., a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died June 9, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 1999, Rev. Goff served the Brunson Chapel and Harleyville Parish charges. Following his retirement, he served the Colleton Circuit.

Funeral services were held June 18 at Sykes Savannah United Methodist Church, Ruffin.

Rev. Goff is survived by his wife, Vera, and two sons.

Thomas Lewis Johnson

GREENVILLE—Thomas Lewis Johnson, brother of the Rev. Hal Johnson, died July 7, 2022. Rev. Johnson is the pastor of the Thompson Centennial-Fairfield Charge, Anderson.

Funeral services were held July 21 at Watkins Garrett & Woods Mortuary with burial in Moore’s Chapel, Pelzer.

Mr. Johnson is survived by his three daughters.



Goff Jr.

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.

Georgie Mae Davis Mack

COLUMBIA—Georgia Mae Davis Mack, mother of Carolyn James, died June 9, 2022. Mrs. James is the wife of the Rev. Frank James, a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church currently serving I. DeQuincey Newman UMC.

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

Rev. Edward Lee McWilliams

TAMPA, Fla.—The Rev. Edward Lee McWilliams, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died May 19, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 2010, Rev. McWilliams served the Grace-Columbia; Wesley Memorial, Columbia; St. Paul’s, Ridgeland; and Asbury Memorial, Columbia, charges.

A celebration of life was held July 31 at Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church.

Rev. McWilliams is survived by his wife, Anne, and daughter.



McWilliams

Rev. Grady Watson Mills II

SAVANNAH, Ga.—The Rev. Grady Watson Mills II, a retired deacon of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died March 28, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 2007, Rev. Mills served churches in the South Georgia and Florida conferences and



Mills II

at St. Paul UMC, Florence, as minister of Christian education.

Funeral services were held April 5 at Asbury Memorial UMC with a private burial.

Memorials may be made to Asbury Memorial UMC, 1008 E. Henry St., Savannah, GA 31401; to the American Cancer Society, <https://www.cancer.org>; or to the Savannah Theatre’s Tickets for Troops, 222 Bull St., Savannah, Ga. 31401.

Rev. Mills is survived by his wife, Brenda, daughter and son.

Charles Creg Smith

INDIAN LAND—Charles Creg Smith, a member and secretary of the Board of Trustees of the *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate*, died June 24, 2022.

Funeral services were held June 28 at Pleasant Hill United Methodist Church with burial in the church cemetery.

Memorials may be made to the Creg and Karen Smith Endowed Scholarship, Young Harris College, P.O. Box 275, Young Harris, GA 30582.

Mr. Smith is survived by his wife, Karen, and two sons.

Terrence Irvin Squires Sr.

SUMTER—Terrence Irvin “Terry” Squires Sr., father of the Rev. Terrence I. Squires Jr., died June 17, 2022. Rev. Squires is the pastor of the St. Matthew Circuit Charge, Bishopville.

Funeral services were held June 21 at Lewis Chapel United Methodist Church, Hartsville.

Memorials may be made to Brunson Cemetery, c/o Patsy Watt, 200 McInnis Store Road, Sumter, SC 29153.

Mr. Squires is survived by his wife, Monica Dinkins Squires, and two sons.

Betty Gwen Howle Taylor

HARTSVILLE—Betty Gwen Howle Taylor, mother of the Rev. David Taylor, died June 22, 2022. Rev. Taylor is the pastor of Philadelphia United Methodist Church, Fort Mill.

Funeral services were held June 25 at Wesley UMC with a private burial in Westview Memorial Park Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to the Hartsville Soup Kitchen, 145 E. College Ave., Hartsville, SC 29550; or to Philadelphia UMC, 2764 Pleasant Road, Suite A, PMB 11804, Fort Mill, SC 29708.

Mrs. Taylor is survived by her son and daughter.



A volunteer at a previous festival keeps the pork BBQ warm.



Lots of garage sale items will be available for everyone to purchase.

Labor Day Festival at Beulah to celebrate 33 years this year

By Becky Starnes

SANDY RUN—After a two-year absence because of COVID-19, Beulah United Methodist Church is bringing its Labor Day Festival back Monday, Sept. 5.

It will be Beulah's 33rd year of celebration, and members are excited. They promise the same great food, fellowship and fun for everyone in our community and beyond.

Tickets will be available from a church member, or tickets can be purchased at the door. Guests will be able eat-in or carry out. Bulk sales will also be available.

Serving time is from 10:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m.

There will be a bake sale with delicious desserts to choose from made by the ladies of the church, and there are some excellent cooks.

A garage sale will be conducted from 8:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. in the gym with some good deals. Also, for those who plan to eat in, various musical groups will provide entertainment.

The Labor Day Festival has become a tradition and enjoyed by those living in Sandy Run, as well as surrounding areas. Beulah UMC invites everyone to come enjoy a day of Christian fellowship with great food and music, as well as purchase items from our garage sale and bake sale.

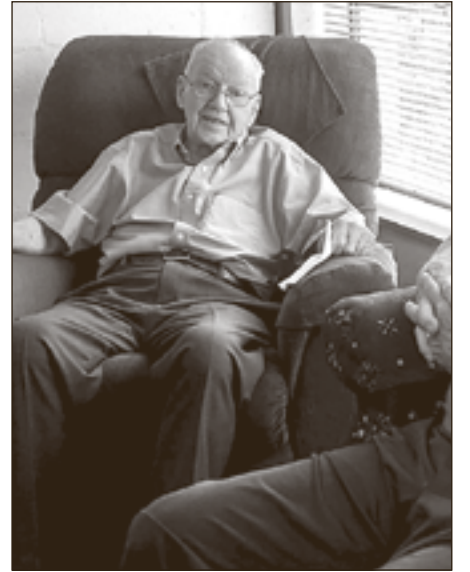
Starnes is festival publicity chairperson.



Trustee chair at St. John turns 101

Robert "Bob" Davis, trustee chair at St. John UMC, Greenville, turned 101 on June 18. Davis is still active in working with the church and maintains the church's flowerbeds and landscaping.

Photos courtesy of the Rev. Brian Underwood



Greenwood District summer mission project helps local pantries, food banks

In an effort to help those experiencing food insecurity, one conference district held a district-wide food drive this summer.

The Greenwood District of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church held the drive June 19 to July 17.

"Why a summer food drive?" District Superintendent Dr. Stephen L. Love and administrative assistant Martha Alewine asked in an email to district clergy. "Food drives should not be just for Thanksgiving

and Christmas. Many of our neighbors live with food insecurity year-round."

All items collected benefitted food banks and food pantries throughout the district. Items collected included canned goods, such as soups, beans, vegetables and tuna, as well as rice, pasta, can openers, flour, sugar, toiletries and household items like soap or dishwashing liquid.

"We pray for all our churches to be stewards of God's abundance toward our brothers and sisters across the district," Love said.

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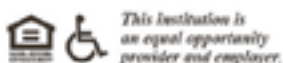
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Mary McLeod Bethune Legacy Festival features actor Lou Gossett Jr. as grand marshal

On Saturday, May 21, the Town of Mayesville held its annual two-day Mary McLeod Bethune Legacy Festival.

South Main Street was lined with cars as people came from near and far to take part in the town's festivities in celebration of Bethune. Mayesville is her birthplace and still has her original birthplace home.

The Bethune festival is the town's way of keeping her legacy alive, celebrating what she created and bettering the lives of all who come after her. The festival has had various guest speakers and parades of grand marshals since the first festival in July 1998, including L. Jonathan Holston, resident bishop of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, who served as grand marshal of the parade in May 2018.

This year's grand marshal was Lou Gossett Jr. actor and philanthropist, Academy Award winner and Emmy Award winner.

Children and adults were all smiles throughout the two-day event. They were enlightened during workshops and walking through history at the Maysville Historical Museum. They danced alongside the bands marching in the parade and harmonized their praises during the gospel explosion.



Rev. J. Elbert Williams (right) gathers with Lou Gossett Jr. and Dr. Evelyn Bethune, granddaughter of Mary McLeod Bethune, as well as others at the festival.

The Rev. J. Elbert Williams was privileged to chauffeur Gossett Jr. and Dr. Evelyn Bethune, granddaughter of Mary McLeod Bethune.

Other notable guests in attendance included retired Harlem Globetrotter Bobby Hunter, Sen. Geral Malloy, Mayor of Mayesville Jerleen Hollaman-Miller, Mayor of Lynchburg Andre Laws, Nephrologist Dr. Pusadee Lilavivath and Ed Miller, 6th Congressional District, of the South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs.



Conference Historical Society

by Dr. Roger M. Gramling

Amendment IX: The Beginning of the End

When the 1956 General Conference convened, it was obvious that the jurisdictional system would be a major issue. A resolution proposed the creation of a Commission to Study the Jurisdictional System itself and to ascertain its effects on the separate jurisdictions.

However, more significant was the adoption on May 3, 1956, of two amendments to the church's constitution, one to Article V, Division Two, Section VIII, which would allow local churches to voluntarily transfer from one annual conference to another and further would allow annual conferences to voluntarily transfer from one jurisdiction to another. Under the terms of the second amendment, Article I, Division Two, Section VIII, the Central Jurisdiction would be abolished when all of its annual conferences had been transferred to the other regional jurisdictions.

The two amendments were grouped together as Amendment IX. Its purpose was to allow and encourage transfers that could voluntarily end the Central Jurisdiction. By April 1958, it had been ratified by the required number of votes in the annual conferences.

The 1960 General Conference in effect reaffirmed Amendment IX as the way to proceed. The Commission to Study the Jurisdictional System offered no plan and recommended no basic change in the jurisdictions. The Central Jurisdictional Conference meeting in July created a committee, known as the "Committee of Five," to continue the study of the Central Jurisdiction with attention to the methods and process by which the Central Jurisdiction may be dissolved.

Given that there were differences of opinion within the Central Jurisdiction, in 1962 its College of Bishops called a meeting to "seek a common mind" on the future of the jurisdiction. The meeting in March 1962 became known as the Cincinnati Exploratory Meeting. Out of the meeting came the proposal that the boundaries of the annual conferences of the Central Jurisdiction be realigned so that each of the annual conferences would be located within the boundaries of not more than one of the regional jurisdictions. Development of such a plan was assigned to a "Committee of Five" whose recommendations were published in a study document entitled "Creative Pursuit of an Inclusive Church."

Among the recommendations was one that the votes on transfer for a local church and an annual conference be effective regardless of the order in which they are taken.

However, by 1964, there were still 17 annual conferences in the Central Jurisdiction and only 30 churches had been transferred out of the Central Jurisdiction under Amendment IX.

In the Episcopal Address to the 1964 General Conference, the bishops made their strongest statement yet against continued segregation. The report of the Commission

on Interjurisdictional Relations proposed no specific plan for the transfer of annual conferences other than the continuation of Amendment IX. Long and intense debate ensued.

The General Conference did encourage the Central Jurisdiction to adopt a plan for the realignment of its annual conferences to facilitate transfers. The General Conference also adopted legislation to address inequalities between annual conferences of the Central Jurisdiction and those in the regional jurisdictions in matters such as pension support and minimum salaries, the beginning of what would become known as the "Pension Equalization Fund" and the "Temporary General Aid Fund." James S. Thomas proposed creation of an "Advisory Council" in each jurisdiction to further discussions that was adopted.

A report by the Commission on Church Union on the possible merger of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church prompted a motion that the Central Jurisdiction structure not be a part of any Plan of Union with the EUBs. The EUBs had indicated that they did not wish to enter into union as long as segregated structures continued to exist. A special session of the General Conference scheduled for 1966 to consider the EUB union also expected a report on the voluntary dissolution of the Central Jurisdiction.

A significant step forward was taken at the 1964 Session of the Central Jurisdictional Conference. A plan developed by the Committee of Five called for the realignment of each annual conference in the jurisdiction so that its boundaries lay within one and only one regional jurisdiction. An amendment accepted by the Committee further allowed any two annual conferences within a regional jurisdiction to merge and form a single annual conference. The South Carolina Conference (1866) became a part of the Nashville-Carolina Area to which Bishop Charles F. Golden was assigned. James S. Thomas was elected a bishop and assigned to the Chicago Area to serve the Lexington Annual Conference.

Several transfers quickly followed. The realigned Lexington Annual Conference, and newly elected Bishop Thomas, were transferred to the North Central Jurisdiction.

The realigned Delaware and Washington Annual Conferences were transferred to the Northeastern Jurisdiction.

The following year the Central West Conference was transferred to the South Central Jurisdiction. Negotiations led in short time to the mergers of the four annual conferences with their geographical counterparts.

Amendment IX had finally been used in a significant way.

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



From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

Methodism in Charleston, Part III

Several years ago, I wrote about the early history of Methodism in Charleston. The Holy City holds so much of the story of the founding of Methodism that I barely got to the end of the 18th century. Some of the earliest congregations on the Charleston peninsula date to the 1780s and 1790s, and church leaders often faced a hostile crowd because of early Methodism's biracial membership and opposition to slavery.

One popular, headstrong minister arrived in 1791 and caused a brief schism in the church. William Hammett, who was a gifted orator and preacher, stirred up the Charlestonians to the point that they demanded Bishop Asbury appoint him to the church there. The bishop had already made the appointments and declined to change them, which was his right. Hammett, however, would not be moved, and decided to lead a flock out of the Cumberland Street Church, or as it was sometimes known, the Blue Meeting House. His members formed Trinity, and the deed made the church Hammett's personal property (a practice that the denomination wisely doesn't permit).

After Hammett's death, the Trinity Church eventually came back into the fold, though they had to fight off a minister to whom Hammett had willed the church, who tried to take the congregation back into the Episcopal Church. In 1816, Trinity returned to the Methodist Episcopal Church. A church started by the Primitive Methodists, St. James, eventually became Spring Street Church.

Not long after the Hammett schism, the remaining members of the original congregation, Cumberland, helped start a second congregation, which became Bethel. That church, which was first built in 1797, served its congregation until the 1850s, when a new structure was built. The old structure, moved across the street and given to the congregation's Black membership, became Old Bethel, which is undoubtedly the oldest Methodist place of worship in continuous use in South Carolina.

Up until the 1840s, Methodist ministers were appointed to "Charleston" and collectively served all of the churches in the city. In one announcement from 1837, seven different ministers preached at no less than 15 services over the course of the week. The four congregations—Bethel, Trinity, Cumberland and St. James—each had three Sunday services, morning, afternoon and night, and a weeknight service rotated between Bethel, Trinity and Cumberland on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday night. Given the small geographic size of the Charleston peninsula, no Methodist in the Holy City had an excuse not to attend a worship service at some time each week.

During the Civil War, the Spring Street Church was used as a Confederate medical storehouse, and at the end of the war, the federal army seized it and gave it to the Northern missionary conference for the use of Charleston's freedmen. The property was returned on the orders of President Andrew Johnson in 1868.

The Cumberland Church, the original congregation, sold its property in the 1870s and built a new church, initially called the Hampstead Square Church, in 1883. A new building for Cumberland opened in 1928.

Annual Conference regularly met in Charleston, and on several occasions, the churches would submit items about their history for publication in the *Advocate*. By the end of the 1920s, five White Methodist congregations operated in and around Charleston: Bethel, Cumberland, North Charleston, Spring Street and Trinity. Most of them had their roots in the late 18th century.

Charleston's 20th century growth would see Methodism expand beyond the historic center.

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

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July

July 21-23—Mission u, Spartanburg Methodist College, Spartanburg

July 26-29—SEJ Historical Society Annual Meeting, South Georgia Retreat Center, Epworth by the Sea, St. Simon's Island, Ga. <https://www.umchistory.org/>

July 30—Food Drive, Bluff Road UMC, Columbia, 9 a.m.-Noon. Christine Huskey, 803-678-7977.

August

Aug. 1—2022 Killingsworth Annual Golf Tournament, Windemere Golf Club, Blythewood, 8 a.m. www.killingsworth.org/events

Aug. 1-4—Festival of Wisdom and Grace, Lake Junaluska. <https://lakejunaluska.com/wisdom>

Aug. 5-7—Hinton YouthLead Academy, Hinton Rural Life Center, Hayesville, North Carolina. <https://www.hinton-center.org/training>

Aug. 6—South Carolina Lay Servant Ministry Academy Train the Trainer, Trenholm Road UMC, Columbia. <https://www.umcsc.org/lsm/>

Aug. 6—Good Samaritans for All People Back-to-School distribution, Old Bishopville High School Football Field, 8 a.m.

September

Killingsworth Special Emphasis Month (UWF)

Sept. 5—Labor Day, United Methodist Center closed.

Sept. 5—Labor Day Festival, Beulah UMC, Gilbert, 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Sept. 10—Good Samaritans for All People picnic, Old Bishopville High School Football Field, 10 a.m.

Sept. 12-14—Rural Clergy Renewal Retreat, Hinton Rural Life Center, Hayesville, North Carolina. <https://www.hintoncenter.org/retreat>

Sept. 16—Sea Islands Open House hosted by SC Camps & Retreat Ministries, Johns Island. More info: <https://sc-carm.org/>

October

Bethlehem Center Special Emphasis Month (UWF)

Oct. 10—Indigenous Peoples Day



Appreciating you

The Canaan-Sand Hill Charge held its first in-person appreciation event for the Rev. Jeffrey Salley on Sunday, May 29. Salley said it was a great way to end year six on the charge. The celebration was held at Canaan UMC.



Photo courtesy of Rev. Mike Vandiver

Clanging for Jesus

Each Sunday at Hebron UMC on the Starr Charge, when the regular offering is received during worship service, all children old enough to walk come down the aisle with the ushers and get a "clang bucket." As the ushers receive the regular offering, worshipers drop coins in the buckets carried by the children. Many said it is a wonderful way to make an impression on children about how important it is to give monetary gifts to God is, and everyone has a smile on their face as they sing the Doxology.

Oct. 21-22—SCCUMW 50th Annual Meeting, 12:30 p.m.

Carolina. <http://sejumc.org/>

November

Nov. 1—All Saints Day

Nov. 6—Daylight Savings Time ends

Nov. 2-4—2022 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference, Lake Junaluska, North

Nov. 11—Veterans Day

Nov. 12—UMW District Officers Training, 8:30 a.m.

In the Districts

Columbia District

Congratulations to the Revs. Cynthia and Stephen Taylor on the birth of their granddaughter. Hensley Joy was born June 20 to Lauren and Daniel Stines and welcomed home by big sister Ronan and big brother Levi. Rev. Cynthia Taylor is newly appointed to Mount Hebron UMC, West Columbia, and Rev. Stephen Taylor is the pastor of Union UMC, Irmo.

Bluff Road UMC, Columbia, in partnership with Harvest Hope Food Bank, will sponsor a food drive July 30 from 9 a.m.-noon. All canned items and dry goods are needed, and monetary donations will be accepted. For additional information, contact Christine Huskey at 803-678-7977.

Spartanburg District

Congratulations to the Revs. Carol and Robert Cannon on the birth of their grandson. Paul Matthias Cannon Haiducek was born June 9 to Sarah Cannon and John Haiducek. The Cannons are both retired members of the conference.



Youth honored for evangelism, service

Ansley and John William, above, both received awards at Manning UMC, Manning, recently. Ansley received the Heart of an Evangelist award and John William the Heart of a Servant award. These are annual flamingo awards given to youth. The flamingo is the mascot for the church because, like a flamingo who stands on one foot, it needs the support of its other foot to go forward.



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by Dr. Phil Thraikill

Lessons learned

Aug. 7
1 Chronicles 22:6-10, 17-19 (22:1-19 preferred)
Lesson 10: "God's First Choice"

The concern for August is nonviolence and peacemaking. Is it possible? Yes. It is to be practiced by the church with sober realism.

None of the deep issues are ever fixed. Ameliorated? Hopefully. Named and addressed for the sake of justice? Sometimes. But fixed? No. New violences always arise from the darkness of the human heart and the encouragements of the Evil One. Sin and evil, hatred and death travel together and spoil everything, including us! We who follow are a minority report that Jesus is the better way, whether the conflict is as small as a slight or as wide as a war. We take the risk of peacemaking in his name. We learn the skills and speak the truth in love.

The horror of killings in Buffalo (racist), Uvalde (children) and Ukraine (two Eastern Orthodox Christian nations) are examples of a fallen, violent world. History is one long battleground; we all leave it feet first. It's also where we live and make our witness to the goodness of peace. We do not build the peaceful kingdom. That is naive and utopian. Only God does that at history's termination, but in the interim we bear our witness and rejoice whenever peace opens a space of tranquility, however provisional.

So with the transition from David to Solomon—whose name echoes the Hebrew shalom indicating comprehensive well-being. But by limiting the focal passage to 1 Chronicles 22:6-10, 17-19, instead of the two literary units, 22:2-16 and 17-19 (each of which begins with "David commanded"), our editors do a disservice. There will be a season of peace for Solomon only because David did the work of warfare and cleared the land of hostiles (vv. 8, 17b). There will be a temple only because David first gathered the foreign craftsmen (vv. 1, 14b-15), provided money and material (vv. 3-4, 14), and called all the leaders to lend their aid (vv. 17-19).

Whenever God makes a move to open a new chapter of divine revelation, the limits of the fallen world are not ignored. God works within limits to set a new trajectory. Hereditary kingship, a brutal understanding of conquest and the limits of a temple centered piety are all retained. Only with

the last king, the one who is himself the new temple and puts all enemies under his feet, will God's peace reign in the new heavens and new earth.

Aug. 14
Matthew 5:9, 38-48 (5:1-10, 38-42, 43-48 preferred)
Lesson 11: "Living Beyond Violence"

Matthew's beatitudes are not the be-happy-attitudes of a self-help preacher. Neither do they mark out eight types of people: the poor, the mourners, the meek. Having healed Jews and Gentiles (4:23-25) in a display of compassion, Jesus takes an elevated seat and describes what the new reality means in a hostile neighborhood (5:3-10). The blessings are eight angles on the same group, his current followers, as overheard by healed outsiders.

The purpose of following is to become like him. This is the life God praises at the end, and now we know who the winners are. Jesus is poor in spirit and radically dependent on the Father (v. 3); he feels grief at the mess around him (v. 4); he is gentle and honest (v. 5); he is ravenous for right relationships (v. 6) and supreme in mercy (v. 7). He, the sinless one, is the only one with a pure heart (v. 8). He heals our relationship with God as the peacemaker (v. 9), and for this receives hatred (v. 10). And if with him, so with his apprentices.

Now if we focus on the seventh, "Congratulations to the peace-makers, for they shall be called God's kids" (v.9), we find two paragraphs in the Sermon on the Mount that expand the idea. The first (5:38-42) forsakes tit-for-tat living and calls on us to do the impossible because we know God. If insulted, offer the other cheek in public to show how vicious they are. If the inner garment you pledged is taken, give them the outer one as well; stand naked as a rebuke to their greed. At the end of a forced mile carrying a soldier's kit, go a second with a smile and shift the conversation. Live with an open heart and purse because you trust in God's steady supply. In the second (5:43-48) we show the family likeness by again doing the impossible: loving enemies, praying for them, aiding those who can never pay us back. We have resources in God they do not know, and it's the only way to mature in love as a disciple (v. 48). Such living cannot be government policy, but if practiced by the

faithful generates potent local revolutions.

Aug. 21
Ephesians 2:11-22
Lesson 12: "Living Beyond Barriers"

Aug. 14, 1945 was "VJ Day." Japan surrendered, and it was my mother's 16th birthday! Her beau borrowed his mother's Buick and planned a dinner and movie. But when they rode into Florence it was a chaos of automotive horns and crowds beating trash can lids. The war was over! Peace had broken out again. They joined in the reverie and missed the meal and the flick. Peace was pure joy and infectious!

There were two tribes in Jesus' world. Jews, and then everyone else: the pagans, the uncircumcised, the unclean tribes with their many deities and loose morals. Paul wrote that they had "no hope" and were "without God in the world." Bleak indeed. The two lived in mutual enmity.

Ever since the call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1), God planned to bless "all nations" through his people. And while there were hints along the way, the fulfillment of breaking down the high wall of hatred came only in Jesus, in his life (v. 17-18) and new-covenant death (vv. 13-16). Soon there would be a third race, the Christians who follow Jesus and welcomed Jew and Gentile into one new people. And while the moral law was kept, all the law taught about Gentiles being outsiders was torn down and rendered obsolete. You can follow a Jewish Jesus and eat ham!

All the Gentiles missed (v. 1-2) was now more than restored (v. 19-22) in Christ. So we work for peace wherever we can, but the only peace that endures into the kingdom is that which comes with shared faith in the full person and work of Jesus. Note the echoes of the Triune God in v. 18, 22. Jesus was coordinated with the Father and Spirit early on.

We are God's extended household (v. 19) and also a living temple resting on the foundation of the apostles (New Testament) and prophets (Old Testament) with every stone fitted and set in alignment with the cornerstone (v. 19-22), and guess who that is?

The peace God gives in Jesus and the Spirit will one day engulf and transform all that is. One rule, one peace, one people, one new heaven and earth, full to the brim with triune love.

Till then every Jew and every Gentile

needs a faithful, loving, consistent witness.

Aug. 28
Matthew 26:47-56
Lesson 13: "Betrayal and Victory"

This paragraph is carefully composed. It opens (v. 47) and closes (v. 55) with references to crowds and weapons. The next inward layer has Jesus addressing his attackers (vv. 48, 53). At the double center is an act of violence (v. 51) and Jesus' life-saving reply (v. 52).

The scene is Gethsemane late Thursday evening, and "one of the twelve" is absent. Judas then shows up with an armed mob hired by the temple hierarchy and ruling elders. His first betrayal is to break rank (v. 47), his second to pervert the greeting of respect and kiss of friendship (v. 48). But Jesus is no mere victim. Only after his command to Judas, "Friend, do that for which you are here," do they seize him.

In an act of solo bravado, a disciple draws his short sword to strike a glancing blow and slice off the ear of the high priest's slave. He missed! He also erred in that Jesus does not need our heroics; he's not so fragile as that. What happens is only what he allows, and his quick words likely saved the man's life, "Put it away. If you live this way, you will die this way," a warning also to the crowds who came "with swords." Forty years later when Titus destroyed Jerusalem, this saying took on new meaning as proverb become prophecy.

Jesus is no violent political rebel (the meaning of thief); his alternative is more radical. Neither does he invoke angels to the rescue (v. 53). Instead, he absorbs hatred, violence, betrayal, slander, injustice, shame and finally death to put them on full display, because in his resurrection he will soon reveal their impotence. They cannot do away with him.

Events happen, and four speeches of Jesus (vv. 50a, 52, 53, 55-56) keep us on track. He is in full cooperation with God's will as echoed in Scripture (v. 54, 56b). There are times when his followers are to willingly absorb suffering in order to display the family likeness and offer the world a startling alternative to vengeance. We call them martyrs. We follow Jesus, speak the truth in love, seek justice and sometimes suffer. We learn the art of living cross-grained to the brutal ways of the world. It is the form of peace we offer.



Photo courtesy of Wendy Zwart

Leesville donates in memory of fallen officer

On May 29, 2022, The Challengers Sunday school class of Leesville UMC hosted a fifth Sunday breakfast for the congregation prior to a special worship service of an Ole Timey Sunday Sing-a-Long. A delicious Southern breakfast was served along with a heaping helping of love and care for a hurting community in memory of Cayce Police officer Corporal Drew Barr, who ended his watch on April 24, killed after responding to a call of domestic violence. Barr's dream from childhood and beyond was to be a firefighter and a police officer. He accomplished both in his short life with much honor. Leesville UMC received donations in his memory to be given to the Cayce Police Department's K-9 Unit. A total of \$1,150 was presented by Tim Jones and Steve Zwart on June 29. Here, Jones and Swart present the check to Chief Cowan for the Cayce Public Safety Foundation.



Photo courtesy of Sherry Villeponteaux

Pentecost Sunday at Pinopolis

On June 5, Pinopolis UMC celebrated Pentecost Sunday. Their sanctuary altar was decorated in true Pentecost spirit by the church worship area leader, Linda Smith. Scripture was read from Acts 2 by interim pastor the Rev. Cooper Stonestreet, followed by a fiery sermon about the Scripture. The church extends deep thanks to Smith, Stonestreet and all worshippers at Pinopolis UMC who made this Scripture come to life that Sabbath.

New era for church and Boy Scouts of America

By Sam Hodges

Reprinted courtesy of United Methodist News Service

The United Methodist Church will continue to partner with the Boy Scouts of America but in a new relationship that should lighten the load for local churches.

That's a message that denomination leaders are working to get across after a difficult two years that has included the BSA's child sex abuse-related bankruptcy proceeding and the pandemic.

"We think that Scouting is important ministry," said Bishop John Schol during a June 16 webinar for United Methodists interested in the denomination's future with Scouting. "We want to do everything we can to grow Scouting through The United Methodist Church."

But Schol and other United Methodist leaders are just as emphatic that The United Methodist Church's partnership with the BSA is entering a new era.

Going away is the practice of local churches serving as chartering organizations for Scouting groups. Instead, churches will have the option of entering into an affiliation agreement. Essentially, they will be promising to provide space and lots of support to Scouting groups, but supervisory responsibility will rest with local BSA Councils.

"We looked for a new vision of relationship," said Steven Scheid, director of Scouting Ministry for United Methodist Men, in a press release. "This one is one that will last for the next several generations."

The UMC and predecessor denominations have been a partner to the BSA for more than 100 years. Many local churches have not only been the headquarters for Scouting troops and packs, but also have recruited and screened adult leaders.

At the end of May, about 6,600 Scouting units were chartered by United Methodist churches in the U.S. The denomination remains the largest partner of BSA programs.

But as recently as 2020, just over 10,000 such chartering relationships existed be-



Scouting has had a strong impact in South Carolina. Here, Woodland UMC's Makai Byrd shows his 2021 Eagle Scout project: enhancing the grounds at a nearby Wesley Foundation campus ministry. Byrd is a Life Scout in Woodland's Troop 109 in Rock Hill.

tween Scouting groups and United Methodist churches.

The pandemic was a factor in the decline, causing some churches to close buildings for more than a year and re-evaluate programming. Scouting groups faced their own COVID-related operational struggles. That was particularly true of Cub Scouts, given that Zoom gatherings with younger kids proved especially hard to pull off, Scheid told UM News.

Another factor was the struggle of the BSA just to survive.

In February 2020, a few weeks before the pandemic gripped the U.S., the BSA filed for bankruptcy over the growing number of lawsuits from men alleging that they had been sexually abused while in Scouting.

As the BSA entered bankruptcy proceedings, seeking to reorganize and carry on, United Methodist leaders formed a committee to represent the denomination's interests

as a longtime BSA partner.

Church leaders have stressed that dealing fairly and compassionately with abuse survivors has been and remains their No. 1 concern. But they also worried about liability exposure for local United Methodist churches that chartered Scouting groups where abuse was alleged to have occurred.

United Methodist leaders expressed frustration with the BSA at points during the negotiations. But late last year, as part of the BSA reorganization plan, United Methodist leaders worked it out for U.S. annual conferences of the UMC to pay \$30 million into a fund for survivors of Scouting-related abuse with the assurance that local churches would be released from liability.

The settlement also committed the denomination to work in concrete ways toward survivors' healing, and to review and enhance safety protocols for children and youth spending time on UMC campuses.

The survivors' fund was at \$2.6 billion even before the United Methodist settlement, making the BSA bankruptcy plan the largest sex-abuse settlement in U.S. history.

A federal bankruptcy judge is still considering whether to approve that plan, which has gathered support from a large majority of survivors and other stakeholders.

"We are anxiously awaiting ... and anticipate a favorable ruling so that the Boy Scouts can continue to reorganize and

continue to serve young people," Schol said during the June 16 webinar, which drew an audience of some 3,500, with 1,500 more registering to watch later.

But Schol, part of the United Methodist Ad Hoc Committee that represented the denomination in the bankruptcy negotiations, said there was no need to wait for a ruling to move forward with redefining the denomination's relationship with the BSA.

Indeed, negotiations on that front have led to the BSA and United Methodist leaders arriving at the affiliation agreement. The key changes include having BSA Councils — not local churches — do leadership background checks.

"The church will not sign off on or approve any adult leadership," Scheid said.

The BSA Councils will have ownership of assets (such as trailers, camping equipment and canoes), while also being responsible for property insurance and providing an Employer Identification Number (EIN) for banking needs by Scouting groups.

Churches signing an affiliation agreement commit to providing meeting and storage space for their Scouting group. They pledge to help with communications, membership growth and fundraising, while also providing spiritual opportunities and support.

The *UMC Book of Discipline*, in Paragraph 256, describes the position of local church scouting coordinator. Under the new relationship, that person will be key to making sure the church truly is in ministry to the Scouting unit.

"We're going to rely very heavily on that local church scouting coordinator," Scheid said.

There will be a standard affiliation agreement to be used by United Methodist churches in all 50 states. Scheid said a facilities-use agreement also has been arrived at for local churches that only want to provide meeting space.

The affiliation agreement — which also clarifies insurance coverage provided by the BSA — was shared with churches by June 30. Now, churches can begin right away to work with BSA Councils and Scouting groups in getting the affiliate agreements in place.

Churches can continue their current relationships with Scouting groups until that happens, but the goal is to have all local churches under new agreements by Oct. 31.

Scheid said United Methodist Men is positioned to provide long-haul support of Scouting as a denominational ministry.

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