

South Carolina United Methodist Advocate

CONNECTING METHODISTS IN SOUTH CAROLINA SINCE 1837



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September 2022

Delegates gear up for November Jurisdictional Conference

UMCSC's Nelson among episcopal nominees

By Jessica Brodie

This fall, large-scale denominational gatherings will resume in-person for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. Jurisdictional conferences will be held across the United States Nov. 2-5, with the Southeastern Jurisdiction's conference slated for Nov. 2-4 at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina.

Its primary purpose will be to elect episcopal nominees and set the scope of missions and ministries for the jurisdiction.

South Carolina's the Rev. Ken Nelson is among the 10 episcopal nominees up for consideration (see full list below). As South Carolina's episcopal nominee, endorsed unanimously by the delegation and elected

as nominee at the last annual conference session in June, Nelson serves as co-chair with Jackie Jenkins of the South Carolina delegation to SEJ, as well as conference secretary and Orangeburg District superintendent for the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

In addition to electing new bishops, the lay and clergy delegates from each conference in the SEJ (32 from South Carolina) will also need to decide how many bishops they

plan to elect.

"That's one of the first items of business," Nelson told the *Advocate*. "How many bishops can we afford, practically—five or three? How many are we electing?"

The Committee on Episcopacy will bring forth a recommendation to the body as to what they believe is an appropriate number, and the body will vote on that matter along with the actual nominees themselves.

See "Jurisdictional," Page 10

Strengthening ties

S.C. mission team roofs church, cements longtime relationships in Zimbabwe



Chris Lindler (center) and Vic Caldwell (back) help the men of Chitenderano UMC carry a truss to the new church.

By Allison Trussell

Nestled in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe is a village named Chitenderano. The people there are joyful, giving and hard working. Between the primary and secondary schools sits a small United Methodist church.

In 2008, the congregation decided they needed a bigger church, and despite not having much materially, they set to work. First a foundation was poured; then bricks were made. Slowly, the bricks became walls. Roofing the building was a cost beyond the congregation's immediate means.

About a two-hour drive away is Old Mutare Mission, founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1899 and home to an orphanage, primary and secondary schools, a United Methodist church and a hospital. In April 2019, a fire broke out at the secondary school, burning through several buildings including the library. Nearly 40,000 books and textbooks were lost along with supplies and furniture.

Robin Landers, a nine-time missionary to Zimbabwe and a member of Union UMC, Irmo, heard about

Photo by Allison Trussell

See "Zimbabwe," Page 12

New love for old church

Church partners with school, other preservationists to restore 1882-era Eccles UMC

By Jessica Brodie

The first time Nancy Platt laid eyes on Eccles United Methodist Church, it was love at first sight.

Platt and her husband moved a few years ago to the rural community surrounding Eccles, northwest of Mount Pleasant, and they were immediately taken with the historic structure.

"It's the cutest thing—it just sings to you,"

Platt said, describing the exterior, which she says is essentially one great piece of longleaf pine.

The Platts soon joined the church and began worshipping each week with the tiny congregation, which comprises about 15-18 people, most of them in their 70s. An elementary school teacher, Platt was intrigued with the history, and soon she started to learn more and more about

the quaint church. Founded in 1881 and situated in the Francis Marion National Forest, it's located at the end of Eccles Church Road, which turns into clay roads that eventually take you way back into forest.

"It would be a lovely wedding venue," Platt said. "It's such a charming, sweet little building."

See "New Love for Eccles," Page 11

Fruitful and connectional

Pastor's ordination project leads to effort that helps five homes in Edgefield County

By Jessica Brodie

One pastor's ordination project has reignited a passion for home repair in the two rural congregations she pastors.

For many years, Johnston and Harmony United Methodist churches,

in Edgefield County, had a vibrant home repair ministry, but as the years passed, enthusiasm waned. But when the Rev. Amanda Richardson became pastor, she began talking with her church members, and an idea began to swirl.

See "Fruitful," Page 11

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

2022 Annual Conference awards honor many across S.C.

The South Carolina Annual Conference has honored clergy and laity across the state with annual awards. The winners are as follows:

Harry Denman Evangelism Award for Laity

The Foundation for Evangelism recognizes one layperson in each conference for responsible evangelism in the local church. This year's recipient is Andrew King, a lay servant at New Hope United Methodist Church, Ridgeville, in the Walterboro District.



King

Michael C. Watson Volunteer In Mission Award for Clergy

This award recognizes clergy who exemplify extraordinary volunteer mission service within the South Carolina Conference. This year's recipient is the Rev. Cynthia Taylor, former pastor of Asbury Memorial UMC in Columbia in the Columbia District. (Taylor is now the pastor of Mount Hebron UMC in West Columbia.)



Taylor

Michael C. Watson Volunteer In Mission Award for Laity

This award recognizes laity who exemplify extraordinary volunteer mission service within the South Carolina Conference. This year's recipients are Louis and Cindy Jordan, members of Bethel UMC, Charleston, in the Charleston District.



The Jordans

Bishop's Five-Star Award

The Evangelism Committee of the Discipleship Area provides an incentive for churches to embrace new ministries each year geared toward growth and outreach. The award enables small and large churches to receive recognition.

This year's recipient is Chapin UMC, Chapin, in the Columbia District, where the Rev. Jody Flowers is the pastor.

Board of Ordained Ministry Scholarships

Several scholarships also were awarded.

Seminary Students Scholarship: This scholarship is awarded by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry to assist in-state students pursuing a program of study leading to a first professional degree. This year's recipient is Christopher Charles Key, a seminary student at Duke Divinity School and pastor of Mays Chapel UMC, Branchville, in the Orangeburg District.



Key

Janie Robinson Thomasson Memorial Scholarship: This scholarship is awarded by the Conference Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry to a member and regular attendee of a United Methodist church, with preference given to members of St. Paul UMC, Clover, and other UMCs in the Rock Hill District. This year's recipients are Mary Thomas Christofaro and Christian Joseph Smrekar. Christofaro is a 2022 graduate of Lugoff-Elgin High School who plans to



Christofaro



Smrekar

study speech language pathology at Newberry College. Her home church is St. John's UMC, Lugoff, in the Hartsville District. Smrekar, a 2022 graduate of Northwestern High School in Rock Hill, plans to business entrepreneurship at Emory & Henry College in Virginia. His home church is St. John's UMC, Rock Hill, in the Rock Hill District.

Bessie Bellamy Parker Memorial Scholarship: This scholarship was created by the South Carolina Conference to honor the memory of the Rev. Bessie Bellamy Parker, the first woman ordained in the former 1785 South Carolina Conference. It provides assistance to female students at United Methodist seminaries or theological schools preparing for ordained pastoral ministry in South Carolina. This year's recipient is Elizabeth Scott Loughran, a seminary student at Candler School of Theology and director of children's ministry at Oak Grove UMC in Decatur, Georgia. She is a native of Greenville and grew up attending Mauldin UMC in the Greenville District.



Loughran

S.C. United Methodist Advocate Scholarship

This \$1,000 scholarship given by the *Advocate* is for South Carolina United Methodist students with an interest in communications, journalism or business and planning to enroll or already enrolled at one of the four United Methodist colleges in South Carolina. This year's recipient is Susann Breazeale, a lifelong member of Grace UMC, Pickens, in the Anderson District and an incoming freshman at Wofford College.



Breazeale

For more on conference award opportunities, visit www.umcsc.org.

Feeding the body and soul Prayers, meals offered at Holly Hill schools

By Martha Rose Brown

Reprinted with permission of The Times and Democrat

When it comes to feeding the body and soul, Holly Hill United Methodist Church decided to put its faith into action at two local schools: Holly Hill Elementary and Holly Hill Academy.

Last week, staff at both schools received blessings in the forms of personalized hand-written prayers, gifts and lovingly prepared meals.

"I'm a firm believer that the church needs to be involved in the community," said Pastor John Elmore, of Holly Hill United Methodist Church.

Between the two schools, there are 105 employees and the church wanted to be sure all employees knew they were appreciated, loved and prayed for by local Christian believers.

Elmore said, "Most people don't know everything that happens in a school."

He noted that until the COVID-19 pandemic began, his wife was a teacher. "I know the ups and downs," Elmore said.

On Aug. 8, church members delivered the hand-written prayers and gift baskets to all staff members at nearby Holly Hill Elementary School.

At that time, the prayer notes and gift baskets were placed on teachers' desks and in other staff members' work spaces – with personalized prayers for each employee.

They provided the same for staff at Holly Hill Academy two days later.

Then on Aug. 11, church members – along with a couple of volunteers from nearby churches – brought a large spread of lunch fare for Holly Hill Elementary School's staff.

"It felt like I was paying it forward," said Hope Hart Brunson, a HHUMC church member who retired from teaching at HHE at the close of this past school year. She taught for 31 years – and 21 of those years were at HHE.

"I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the teachers who were there," Brunson said.

Brunson said she has friends who are teachers at HHE.

Several of those friends sent photos of the prayer notes they'd placed prominently near their desks.

Elmore said the effort to spread support to staff at HHES and HHA



On Aug. 11, church members – along with a couple of volunteers from nearby churches – brought a large spread of lunch fare for Holly Hill Elementary School's staff.

wasn't led by a handful of church members, but by dozens and of all ages.

In total, about 50 church members were involved.

A children's class at the church helped pack up the gift boxes, several adult volunteers made side dishes and more wrote prayers to the schools' staff.

First Baptist Church of Holly Hill Pastor Shaun Daley and Target United Methodist Church Pastor Dave Fields, along with a couple of members of their congregations, also assisted in the efforts.

Elmore said having multiple interactions with the schools helps provide relationships. "There's a trust level. ... I don't believe the story we have to tell is 'Come to us.' It's 'Go to them,'" Elmore said.

"When we go and love people unconditionally and beyond their expectations, they ask you why and then you tell your story," Elmore said.

"Often we tend to be me-centered. When you are selfless with your actions, you get to tell your story," he added.

He said the story is: "Christ tells us to love others and that he loves you."



A guest reader shares "My Voice is a Trumpet" with the scholars.



Scholars gather at the start of the day for Harambee during the last week of Freedom School.



Leaders Carmen White, Carol Singletary and Lar- esha McDaniel say it was great to be back in person.

'Good to be back'

Freedom School enjoys first in-person summer since pandemic

By Jessica Brodie

Freedom School just closed its eighth year of serving students in Columbia at Francis Burns United Methodist Church.

And in appreciation of the first in-person school since the pandemic and after two years of a virtual school, executive director Carol Singletary said, "It's good to be back in person."

Carmen White served as site coordinator this year, leading the limited group of 30 scholars through a socially distanced but inspiring summer of learning and enriching minds with culturally relevant literature and information.

White, too, said it's been good to be back

in person after too long apart.

"It's really hard to deliver this through a screen," she said, noting the scholars seemed to appreciate the learning experience and the new friendships.

A nationwide literacy program started 20 years ago by the Children's Defense Fund, Freedom School is designed to give children a better appreciation of reading through books and discussions that address real-world situations, from race relations to poverty and more. The eye-opening books change yearly and are selected by experts across the nation.

Jesse Caughman, 12, is a third-year participant in Freedom School and said the

people are the best part of the school.

The fellow scholars are just fun to be around," Jesse said.

Chandler Martino, 14, a first-year scholar, came because of trouble with reading comprehension and summarizing problems.

"Now I'm learning so many new words, and I can see a big difference in ELA, like with the five Ws and H—I've really progressed, and it's inspiring me to keep going," Chandler said.

Bryce Martin, also 14, has been a Freedom School scholar for several years now and loves the expectation of success.

"I'm not just a student, not just a kid. I need to be great here because I'm a scholar,"

Bryce said, noting the vibrant energy and excitement is a big draw, as well. "It's like my second home during the summer."

And as for Haleigh Singletary, 8, a first-year Level 2 scholar, for her it is all about the mentoring relationships.

"I love being with Ms. Amaya and Mr. Miles and Ms. Jessica," she said. "There are just very nice people here."

To learn more about Freedom School and the Children's Defense Fund, visit www.childrensdefense.org/programs-campaigns/freedom-schools.

To learn more about Freedom School at Francis Burns, call the church at 803-754-1760.

Back to School Bash helps local kids with shoes, backpacks, more

By Rev. Mallory Forte Nickerson

Almost seven years ago, a group of United Methodist pastors and laypeople committed to helping families in Lancaster County had an idea to help people begin the school year with a little help. They reached out to other churches, both United Methodists and other denominations, as well as businesses and organizations in the community to make it happen.

Since then, the effort has continued to grow, and many churches, local businesses, community organizations and individuals have continued to come together. The sixth annual Lancaster County Back to School Bash was held July 30.

That day, more than 800 students from pre-K to 12th grade were given a new pair of shoes and a backpack with school supplies. Also, 120 children got haircut vouchers.

This year, the Back to School Bash partnered with the Lion's Club in Lancaster to provide free eye exams. Of those screened, many referrals for glasses were offered and at least one surgical case was identified, which will be covered by the Lion's Club as part of their mission.

Belair, Osceola, Pleasant Hill, First-Lancaster, Hopewell and Church of the Good Shepherd UMCs were all involved in collecting donations and volunteering for the bash. Cultivate Health Chiropractic organized a backpack drive to col-



More than 800 students were helped.

lect brand-new backpacks for the event. Shoes and supplies were purchased from the donations received.

At the bash, children and youth are fit for shoes, offered prayer for the school year and their families and given backpacks while supplies last. None of this would be possible without a continued rich relationship with Lancaster County Parks and Recreation, which provides leadership, event space and staff support.

"Need has really driven the numbers this year," said Rev. Mallory Nickerson, event coordinator. "We probably had two-thirds of the people we served lined up an hour before we even opened the doors, which is a good indicator of the financial hardship we are seeing, especially now. Every item we purchased for the event cost around 30 percent more than in the past, which means that is the additional burden on families too."

The Back to School Bash is as much about hospitality and loving neighbors as it is about providing a service. Across the morning of the event, nearly 100 volunteers offered warm greetings and prayers as they also offered a few items to hopefully lighten the burden of hundreds of families in the Lancaster School District.

Back to School Bash partners included Belair UMC, Cultivate Health Chiropractic, Founders Federal Credit Union, Hopewell UMC, Lancaster County Government, Lancaster County Parks and Recreation, Lancaster Lion's Club, Lancaster Rotary Club, Osceola UMC, Pleasant Hill UMC, Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, Residents of Sun City Carolina Lakes, Southern Spirits, The Springs Foundation and Van Wyck Presbyterian Church.

Nickerson pastors Belair and Osceola UMCs.

S.C. Reconciling Ministries Network reorganizes

United Methodists throughout South Carolina continue to work for justice and full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in United Methodist churches. In that light, the South Carolina Reconciling Ministries Network has reorganized. A recently elected coordinating council will call meetings of the entire statewide organization.

The RMN formed in 1984 as a faith-based response to homophobia in the UMC. RMN now spans four continents, more than 1,000 churches and 40,000 individuals.

On its website, RMN on the international level "celebrates that LGBTQ+ persons are a good expression of God's diverse creation." The network exists "to advocate for the affirmation of all God's children in the church and the world."

RMN's mission is to equip and mobilize United Methodists to live into their baptis-

mal covenant by resisting "evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves."

The South Carolina RMN seeks to nurture individual Reconciling United Methodists, small groups and churches in their discerning process. It is also creating methods of sharing information among reconciling communities and churches in South Carolina.

The South Carolina RMN plans to financially support the international body and the conference's Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry. An RMN breakfast is tentatively planned for the 2023 Annual Conference.

For more information about the international organization, click on rmnetwork.org.

To learn more and request membership in the South Carolina RMN, send an email to Lynn Shirley at reconcilingministriessc@gmail.com.

Willimon's latest book releases

This month, Abingdon Press publishes Bishop Will Willimon's latest book for pastors and churches, "Don't Look Back: Methodist Hope for What Comes Next."

A South Carolina native, Willimon takes an honest look at United Methodist post-

pandemic separation challenges.

He also critiques the proposed Global Methodist Church.

Willimon will be presenting his thoughts on Methodist renewal in a number of South Carolina congregations this fall.

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Viewpoints



Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

What have we learned?

From Jurisdictional Conference to the annual meeting of South Carolina's United Women in Faith, it's happening—a return to large in-person gatherings for the first time since the pandemic.

While most of us haven't enjoyed this long-term absence of face-to-face time with colleagues and friends, we can probably agree the time apart has given us a bit of perspective in the pause. Perhaps we're more grateful for little things like round-table chats where we can actually read each other's body language or the feeling we get when the Holy Spirit comes over us while we lift our voices in collective song.

Perhaps it's also given us time to think through some of the emotional dynamics of certain conflicts, whether that's a local church matter, a family relationship issue or a denominational schism. I remember the dread I felt in early March 2020, knowing in two more months I'd be at General Conference in Minneapolis listening to heated clamor from all sides of the debate about human sexuality and where the church stands. (To be honest, the calls for "Split! Split!" reminded me a bit of the Queen of Heart's "Off with her head!" from Alice in Wonderland.) While the forced pause has made some even firmer in their convictions, it's been somewhat of a cooling-off period for others, allowing them a new perspective and even a chance for the Holy Spirit to work something new in their hearts.

Wherever you stand on the future of The United Methodist Church, I invite you to prayerfully consider what you have learned since March 2020, whether your perspective has changed and how you have grown as a child of God as you come together with the rest of God's children all trying their best to do God's work in the world.

God's gift in the pandemic might not only be how we've learned to adapt and work together as a people, but also a helpful pause to calm our hearts, minds and souls as we prepare for this next phase as Methodists.

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The *Advocate* is governed by a board of trustees, an equal mix of clergy and laity, who serve as the official newspaper publisher. Board members serve four-year terms and are eligible to serve two terms. If you are interested in serving on the Advocate's Board of Trustees, contact us today and let us know of your interest: advocate@umcsc.org.

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Bishop's Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

Fullness of life

"When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'"—Matthew 16:13-19 (MSG)

Have you ever been somewhere with children when they spot their teacher? Or maybe you remember being a student and seeing a teacher out in public for the first time. That a teacher has a life apart from the classroom is a ground-shaking moment of realization for most kids.

For me, "Mom and Dad" were the same people many students called "Mrs. Holston and Coach Holston." Some knew my parents in the classroom, others at church and still others out on the athletic field or in many of the other roles they served across the community.

In many ways, it is simpler to think of people as their roles, their occupations or their relation to us. Categorizing people by their successes or failures, ups and downs, by their associations with others or by what we have heard, is the easier path. To envision the fullness of another's life takes effort and intentionality.

In his book, "Just Mercy," author Bryan Stevenson provides immense relief, saying namely, "Each of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done." It is humbling to recognize that every one of us has fallen short at some point. Simon Peter, the very rock on which Christ builds the church, is

also the disciple who denies Christ three times before the rooster crows.

Envisioning the fullness of another's life is complicated.

During these years of living virtually, with so many interactions only through Zoom, text message or email, it has taken even more effort to seek the full humanity in one another. We have literally been putting people in boxes. Now that there are more opportunities for in-person interactions, we face a reckoning with those simplified notions that have developed about others.

Reducing a person to one dimension of their humanity is a trap that we often fall into. In the world of social media where appearance is so highly valued, we forget to never judge a book by its cover, or a person by a singular experience or circumstance.

Father Gregory Boyle, a Jesuit priest, offers a challenge for each of us as a call to focus our attention differently, namely, "Here is what we seek: a compassion that can stand in awe at what others carry rather than judgment at how they carry it."

Imagine a world where we are quick to show compassion. Imagine a life lived in awe rather than judgment. Imagine a focus more on one's "getting back up" than on their "falling down."

Hall of Fame basketball coach John Wooden painted the picture this way, saying, "There is a choice you have to make in everything you do. So, keep in mind that in the end, the choice you make, makes you." We can choose to embody the fullness of life and to seek it in others as well. Just as Jesus inquired of the disciples, who do people say that you are?

What if we offered the world an example of how to live differently? May we be slower to label. Slower to reduce a person to a singular dimension. And quicker to listen. To show God's love, mercy and compassion.

And may our eyes be as awestruck by the image of God in each person whom we meet as a child is to the vision of their teacher in the grocery store.

Letters to the Editor

Why are teachers quitting?

Since January 2020, 600,000 teachers have the quit. This year, 2022, the nation needs 300,000 teachers. My mother taught in public schools for 30 years. My wife taught in public schools for 28 years. Our education is because of wonderful public school teachers. Let's get serious about public education.

It is true that teachers love the kids and are the heroes of our society.

There are several reasons for this crisis. Teachers are asked to perform at low salaries and long hours. Teachers are under pressure because of the pandemic and the threat of gun violence. Politics is getting into education, making it a negative experience. Culture issues are driving teachers away. Fifty-five percent of teachers are leaving the profession because of protests. In Texas, the Bible and the diary of Anne Frank were removed from the library. Racism is still an issue in education.

Education is a right. Education eliminates inequality. "What greater or better gift can we offer the republic than to teach and instruct our youth?" asked Cicero.

"The secret of education is respecting the pupil," said Emerson.

In the November election, voters will be voting for the superintendent of education of South Carolina schools. Vote for the qualified person and not the party.

This is a religious issue and a threat to education. This election is crucial for public schools and freedom of thought. Our founder, John Wesley, believed strongly in education. Jesus was a teacher (John 3:2) and loved everyone, especially children (Mark 10:14).

Thank a teacher and vote.

Rev. John Culp, retired
West Columbia

LETTERS: Readers sound off

From Page 4

A minister's wife

I've always said I'd never be a minister's wife—it's hard, you see. Frequent moves may not be so bad, except for leaving good friends she's had. With adjusting to new people and places she can cope, but will she face scrutiny as under a microscope? She must smile and be friendly and speak to all, even after an unexpected criticizing call. She's expected to attend all church events, with "perfect" children—despite their intents. To support her husband is always a must, whether or not a condemnation is just. Does she participate in church programs while having a job—or not and be branded a snob? Finding a balance is difficult at best, so she must pray and let God handle the rest. A minister's wife must be counted a saint, but being so adaptable is something "I ain't." (P.S. Since today all ministers may not be male, husbands may face similar travail.)

Carolyn Hamby
Liberty Hill UMC, Greer

On division

As time continues on, and the decision about the fate of The United Methodist Church remains in limbo, churches are losing members, all because the leaders of The United Methodist Church are hesitant to decide what to do. Even though many congregations have already decided what would be best for their particular congregation/church, no action can be taken because no decision has been made by the leaders of The United Methodist Church.

What is lost in all of this delay is that many of the smaller congregations do not look at the church as just a church, but as a vital part of their family that is essential to their communities. This procrastination by The United Methodist Church, and specifically the bishops, shows a lack of concern by The United Methodist Church for the needs of the smaller churches and congregations.

It appears to me the only reason for this delay is purely financial and not for the wellbeing of all congregations.

The best analogy for the desired separation of the factions of The United Methodist Church is that it is akin to that of a family going through a divorce with the parties being forced to remain together and the end result being great harm for all parties.

In my opinion, the best interests of all parties would be the total dissolution of the name United Methodist Church and let each congregation decide whether they want to be a part of the Traditional Methodist Church or part of the Progressive Methodist Church. That way everyone will understand what each church stands for in its doctrines and preaching.

Also, this dissolution would happen with each congregation retaining their church property (since the congregation paid for it initially) and all monies and financial responsibilities be for the running of the individual church only.

Since this will dissolve the name United Methodist Church, existing churches would not be responsible for the financial commitments of the defunct United Methodist Church.

This would be the fairest way to solve any and all difficulties of the separation of The United Methodist Church.

In Christ's name.

Jay Schaefer, certified lay speaker
Union UMC, Hemingway

'A Disciples' Hymn'

(8.6.8.6) To the tune of "O God, Our Help in Ages Past"

(The Apostolic Tradition)

1. The faith that Jesus gave his friends
is strong and sure and good.
It is the truth in every age,
and it alone endures.

(The Gospel Call Stories)

2. He called them in the midst of life.
His friends became the twelve.
Recalling ev'ry word and deed,
for beloved Israel.

(The Following)

3. And in his presence they were changed,
as love became the rule.
All that was dark came to the light.
The fight was for their souls.

(The Awful Ending)

4. And when his world came crashing down,
it left them all in ruins.
It shattered every hope and dream.
How could they be so wrong?

(The New Beginning)

5. Then came the news that he was back
and risen from the dead.
Jesus had kept his promises,
and they were still his friends.

(The World Mission)

6. And so the church to ev'ry tribe,
extends the call anew.
Come follow Jesus in our band,
and prove him once more true.

Dr. Phil Thrailkill, retired
Greer



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Stephen Turner

Sin prevention

On Sept. 19, it will be 17 years since I put my feet back on American soil after serving 10 months in Iraq performing convoy security. On that day, I finally felt safe again. I thought all my pain and suffering from the deployment was over.

But as I look back over these past 17 years, I have found that I have had more pain and suffering since I have been home than in the 10 months serving my country.

How can it be that more pain and suffering can occur at home in the United States of America than while serving 10 months in a war zone traveling more 80,000 miles in a Humvee with the constant threat of improvised explosive devices or being shot at?

This is how: The threat is no longer an enemy on the outside who is trying to kill you but an enemy within you that wants to destroy you.

I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder in 2010. I have a 70 percent disability rating with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

What is my battle? I battle depression, anxiety and a brain that stays at a constant state of alert, called hypertensive awareness disorder. My brain stayed at a constant state of alert for so long while in Iraq that it changed how my brain works for the rest of my life.

I take medications every morning and night to help me be the Christ-loving husband, father, pastor and friend I am supposed to be and want to be. But if I am taking medications, then why am I still suffering today? While the medications help a lot, they don't fix everything. There are still times where I struggle with depression and anxiety. Our bodies change as we get older, and with those changes, the medicine and therapies needed change also. I have been highly agitated, very depressed and at times couldn't see myself continuing on this earth. That has all happened in the past year.

I did not receive a Purple Heart because of receiving a physical wound from the enemy, but I carry scars that are within. They still hurt, and they constantly remind me of my past.

Over the past several weeks, I have had several reminders that I am not the only one who is suffering. My unit buried another brother in August because he could not bear the pain anymore and decided to take his own life. We did not know his suffering was to that level, and he did not reach out. Then, two weeks later, I called 911 on a battle buddy because he was saying a lot of things that were concerning me, and then he posted a picture of a gun in his lap. He is fine today, but tomorrow could be another story for him—and every other veteran out there.

While participating in a chat on our unit's Facebook Messenger page, someone posted that suicide was a sin and he should not do it because he would not go to heaven if he did take his life. Now, I'm not writing this to say that suicide is a sin or not. Suicide is the murdering of oneself, and we are taught that murder is sin. That is an open and shut book. I am writing because

we should not be worrying about whether or not someone is going to heaven or not because God makes that decision.

Instead, we should be focused on sin prevention.

Culture today is trying to change how we view things and make many things sound less tragic, or "nicer." One example is the use of the new term, "Making the self unalive." This phrase is now being used instead of "committing suicide." Why? It is believed by some that the phrase "committing suicide" sounds too biblical and commanding, too much like, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (KJV).

But the changing of this makes suicide sound less serious than it really is. If we make something sound less serious, then over time it might become less serious. What would it look like if taking your own life was not that big of a deal?

We as followers of Christ need to make sure that suicide and every other sin is taken just as seriously today as it was when Jesus walked on this earth. If we don't take it seriously, then our battles will only get worse.

The problem we have today is that we seem so focused on the sin and the repercussions of the sin that we don't think about what it takes to win before a battle is even started. God gave us the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, but then he gave us the greatest commandment in Matthew 22:37: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (ESV).

By giving us the greatest commandment, he taught us that we need to fight sin with love. If we love God with everything we have, then we will be able to conquer sin and not have to worry about breaking the Ten Commandments. If you love something, then you will not want to hurt it, and if you don't hurt it, then you will not sin against it.

By loving and showing the love of Christ, we can help fight the battles of sin going through ourselves and others. Think about it: If we show love to that veteran who is struggling, the veteran might not take their life, and by not taking their life, they will not be sinning. If they do not sin, then we don't have to worry about if they are going to heaven or not.

I hear people talking about the 22 lives that are lost each day to veteran suicide. Luckily, the VA reported in 2021 that the daily rate was dropping. It was at 17.1 veterans per day in 2019 versus 18.2 in 2018.

The battles are real, and we as Christians need to step up. The United States of America might not be in a war at this time, but the veterans still are. Let's focus our attention on the preventive measures of sin instead of the sin itself.

If we can do that, then think about how life on this beautiful planet he created would be.

Author's note: Suicide was used as an example for this story, but any sin can be put in its place. The action to prevent it is the same: showing his love.

Turner pastors Salem United Methodist Church, Salem.

SHARE your STORIES

Send stories, photos, calendar items and ideas to advocate@umcsc.org (email preferred) or 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia SC 29203

Summer 2022: A mission success

By Linda Eichenbaum

“Who Can We Be Together?” was the theme for the first in-person gathering for Mission u of the South Carolina Conference in three years, and it was a joyous time for the 100-plus United Women in Faith who attended.

In a period of incredible disruption and uncertainty, in the midst of a devastating pandemic, a divisive political climate and economic turmoil, we are turning to stories of Jesus that have anchored Christian community in challenging times for more than two millennia.

Some of these stories are found in Luke 13.

This year’s Mission u also celebrated 50 years as United Women in Faith (formerly called United Methodist Women).

Spirited and thoughtful workshops explored “Bearing Witness in the Kingdom,” led by the Revs. Thessa Smith and Susan Maddox, and “Who Can We Be Together?” led by Sue Owens and the Revs. Robert Cannon, Jennifer Copeland and Mary Johnson. Youth Study leaders were Debra Schooler and Samoria Session.

Traditional exhibits featured our four conference mission projects, the craft room, the resource room, and stamp trimming. Additionally, this year the Spartanburg Methodist College Fitness Center and Campus Bookstore were available to the ladies, in addition to the excellent in-house meal choices and pastries.

Surrounded by the familiar strains of “Hymn of Promise” and “Great is Thy Faithfulness,” our opening plenary focused upon the blessings of our land that is ever-changing and ever-shifting, giving us—and other creatures and beings on the earth—an infinite number of gifts and lessons. A lovely and peaceful Prayer Room, youthful dancing at one Morning Watch in the Chapel, an inspiring message from Azilee Dickey (member nominations) and a joyous 50th Anniversary Fashion Show highlighted the entire event.

The closing plenary featured Dr. Regina Moore, the new executive minister of the South Carolina Christian Action Council, of which the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church is an active member. An excellent and enthusiastic speaker,



Photo by Caron Cooper

Mission u Dean Vanessa Key (right) and assistant dean Michelline Williams (left) made the day possible.

she emphasized the goals of the SCCAC in expanding the influence of the church into the community.

Holy Communion was served by the Rev. Robert Cannon to the strains of “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” as we said farewell to new and old friends at Mission u.

The craft room proceeds of more than \$1,300, plus the generous mission offering, resulted in several hundred dollars of financial support for Killingsworth, the two Bethlehem Centers (Spartanburg and Columbia) and the Wallace Family Life Center.

The goal of the weekend study was that participants would leave with a bigger and broader vision of the kind of community Christ is calling us to be in times of loss, grief and massive disruption. What is possible with the faith that a multitude of small actions, like seeds, can activate a community’s healing and renewal?

With God’s surrounding presence, lovely people, beautiful weather, magnificent trees on a gorgeous campus, chauffeur-driven transportation, an excellent program and a wonderful message of love, hope and gratitude, who could ask for anything more?

Thank you, Mission u staff and committee, under the very able leadership of Vanessa Key.

Eichenbaum is the South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith Social Action mission coordinator.

New book by Rock Hill DS aims to help people become ‘A Better You’

Improvement is still possible. Years ago, Helmut Schmidt was quoted as saying, “The largest room in the world is the room for improvement.” Schmidt’s quote is timeless, as valid today as it was when it was first offered by him. Over the years, Rock Hill District Superintendent Dr. Anthony Hodge has been motivated by Schmidt’s quote and has sought to embrace its message. As a result of embracing this message, Hodge has written a book he feels can be of some help to anyone personally seeking to improve themselves or could be used as a resource for persons who desire to see changes in the lives of those in their sphere of influence.

Titled “A Better You: Christian Life Beyond Negative Thinking,” the book releases Sept. 3. It will be available through Amazon and Goodreads.

Specifically, the book is a good resource for anyone who has been or continues to be challenged by exposure to negative behavior. Additionally, parents/guardians, local church pastors, Christian counselors, Christian therapists, 12-step group facilitators, family violence intervention group facilitators, military chaplains and prison chaplains can all benefit from having this book at their disposal.

Hodge said the book is designed to assist persons who acknowledge they are operating their lives from a negative perspective but see a need to make changes to a more positive perspective. A number of processes are offered in the book designed to assist persons seeking to have their lives transformed. The



Hodge



processes consist of having or resourcing persons in participating in a 12-Step program or process, interactive use of God’s word, engaging in biblical messages or sermons and by engaging case studies shared in the book with discussion questions.

If a person thoroughly works through the book, he or she will definitely be living a transformed life that is reflective in how he or she engages with others, Hodge said.

When asked what led to the writing of this book, Hodge said that after having his life transformed as a result of everything shared in the book, he wanted to share opportunities for others as well. He said he has personally benefited from participating in

Christian counseling and spiritual direction. He also had the privilege of being in a spiritual mentoring relationship with someone for more than 20 years.

As a local church pastor and military chaplain, he has assisted countless persons over the years and felt led to offer a comprehensive resource to help individuals interested in addressing aspects of negative behavior in one’s life.

“The longer I am blessed by God to live in this life, the more I realize that there are still areas I can improve upon,” Hodge said. “Therefore, I am excited about having an opportunity to share a resource that can aid anyone seeking to embrace the concept that improvement is still possible for anyone.”

He added that he fully embraces what is written in Philippians 3:12-14 (MSG).



Photo by Billy Robinson

Ken Stovall of St. Paul’s UMC in Orangeburg carries debris as Rev. Fred Buchanan of St. Paul’s UMC prepares to cut another limb.

ERTs remove massive downed tree from church members’ home

By Billy Robinson

On Aug. 10 an Early Response Team responded to the home of Carl Strock in Cope near Orangeburg after a recent storm knocked over a huge post oak that was blocking an access road to the home.

A seven-person team comprising three ERT personnel and three others from St. Paul’s United Methodist Church were led by the Rev. Fred Buchanan of St. Paul’s UMC in Orangeburg.

Strock is a member of St. Paul’s UMC.

The team came equipped with big chain-saws to take on the huge oak. The oak was meticulously resting over and partially on a mailbox and hay rake, so the team had to use a lot of ingenuity to get the equipment out without further damaging them.

A very hot and humid day added to the exhausting task.

But within four hours, the task was completed and the driveway to the home opened.

Team members included Buchanan, Carl Strock, Dr. Gene Atkinson, Ken Stovall, Jim Cary, Felix Vazquez and Billy Robinson.

Upcoming ERT training

Are you interested in serving on an ERT mission? Two upcoming classes are scheduled. On Saturday, Sept. 24, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. is an ERT Basic/Renewal class at Faith UMC, 5151 Sunset Blvd., Lexington.

On Saturday, Nov. 5, Saturday, September 24, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. is an ERT Basic / Renewal class at Cornerstone UMC, 2697 Heckle Blvd., Rock Hill.

Basic classes are \$40 per person, which includes a manual, shirt, cap and badge. There is a \$20 fee for renewals, which will run from 9-1. To register for either class, go to <https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration>.

Everyone also needs to do a background check (free) through UMCOR at <https://app.verifiedvolunteers.com/en/Candidates/Account/Register>. (If asked for a code then put in 9x2r4eh. You may or may not be asked for it.) If you have not had COVID vaccines, please bring a mask and wear it as you see fit. Those ill may cancel for a full refund.

For more information: brpraisejesus@aol.com or 803-539-8429.

Immerse to return this fall

Immerse has been referred to as “one of the best kept secrets of the SCMYP.” It is a spiritual event designed to take students and their leaders deeper in their faith.

Throughout the years, students have gathered at Lake Junaluska in North Carolina, the campus of Spartanburg Methodist College and most recently the grounds of Asbury Hills.

What hasn’t changed through these years is the amazing ways the Holy Spirit shows up and transforms the lives of the youth groups who participate in this experience.

In 2020, the Immerse Design Team had big plans to spread the experience of Immerse to a beach Immerse in the summer and a mountain Immerse in the fall. Then came COVID-19.

Now, Immerse is back. Youth groups are invited to join Nov. 4-6 at Asbury Hills for Immerse 2022.

The theme this year is #Influencer. Young people are constantly surrounded by influences from pop culture, peers and social media trends. Immerse organizers want students to take a deep dive and consider what, and who, truly influences them. During this weekend retreat, all will consider how to live a life influenced by the Word and Spirit and live as an influencer for Christ in our world.

The Rev. Cameron Levi will serve as speaker. Pastor at St. Paul United Methodist Church in Saluda, he began his journey as a pastor at the age of 20 and is excited to join for Immerse 2022. As always, Immerse will include worship, breakout sessions and family groups to unpack the #Influencer theme. Registration is now open at www.scmyp.org/immerse.

Answering the call

Gabrielle Collier preaches a sermon at Manning UMC, Manning, July 31 during the church’s Youth Sunday service. Collier is attending Erskine College and plans to pursue a calling into ministry to become a pastor. He spent the summer at Manning UMC as an intern.



Salkehatchie 2022

With great smiles on their faces, hammers in hand and God in their hearts, Salkehatchie Summer Service campers returned to repairing houses after a two-year hiatus because of COVID-19. All 318 campers were vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus, and thankfully, no COVID outbreaks occurred. Campers were eager to work on 33 homes in 11 camps across the state. Roofs and ramps were the majority of work projects.

“I call them the Mighty Eleven because their passion to be God’s hands and feet outweighed the obstacles they faced,” Salkehatchie Board Chair Kathy Hart said.

Hart reported that at the last board meeting, the Salkehatchie Board of Managers voted to remove the COVID-19 vaccination requirement for 2023. Therefore, she said, they expect more camps will reopen next year.

“Before COVID-19, our typical number of campers was 2,500-3,000, working in approximately 45-49 camps. We anticipate a handful of new camps opening in 2023, as well,” Hart said. “The board will still recommend precautions against the deadly virus in all Salkehatchie camp settings, but campers and their families will have to make their own decisions about vaccinations.”

Here are scenes from various camps this summer:



Photos courtesy of Kathy Hart

Volunteers work on a roof during the Santee Camp (Clarendon County) July 9-16.



Volunteers rinse their paint brushes at the Winyah Bay Camp, held June 11-18.



Even painting can be fun; here, some of the work at the Columbia Camp July 16-23.



Even in the summertime heat, volunteers managed to have a great time.



Roofwork was a big part of this home’s repairs.



Rev. Tommy Wilkes pauses during his work at the Bishopville Camp June 25-July 2.



A woman builds the cross for a Union Camp site the week of June 18-25.



Guest Commentary

by Heidi Keener

Salkehatchie first-timer shares her experience

My name is Heidi, I’m 16 years old and going into my senior year of high school. I was asked “What did you like about Salkehatchie?” and the simplest answer is absolutely everything.

Before coming to Salkehatchie, I was told by my youth leaders and people from my church that Salkehatchie would be a life-changing experience and that I would make friendships that would last a lifetime.

I’m going to be honest: I didn’t believe them one bit. I don’t typically like to socialize with large amounts of people that I have met, let alone people I’ve never met.

I was nervous before coming to Salkehatchie, but as soon as I got there I felt loved and accepted into this big family. I genuinely feel like everyone there has become my family. I made some friendships that I feel will last forever, even if we only see each other once a year for Salkehatchie. I feel like we could all pick up right where we left off like it was yesterday. I have never been more overwhelmed with the feeling of love, acceptance and support than I did while at camp.

Another thing I feel worthy of mentioning is what I said as I placed my altar item on the altar on our last day. My altar item was an old broken piece from our homeowner’s mailbox that I had found on the ground. It had his house number on it. Mr. Garrett has made at least as big of an impact on me and my life as we had on his.

I will forever remember Mr. Garrett and all of the tender loving care we poured into not only his home, but him, his heart and his spirit. As I placed my item up on the altar I proceeded to tell my story and how Salkehatchie has impacted me and my life mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

I said something like this: “My altar item is our homeowner’s house number. This really spoke to me not only about how much repairing this man’s house meant to me and him, but about this entire week and how I feel being here has impacted me. Before coming to Salkehatchie I was really struggling mentally and emotionally, and that led to me having a serious lack of faith in my life. I genuinely believe in ‘being in the right place at the right time,’ and that is exactly what I believe happened for me this week.”

Coming to Salkehatchie was one of the best things that has ever happened to me. I now feel happier and more loved than I ever have before, and I also feel an overall sense of contentment. I feel complete, whereas before, when I was struggling with my faith, I felt as if something had been missing from deep within myself. I felt lost.

I still don’t know the road ahead for me, no one does, but I do know that no matter what comes my way I have a family of 30 who will be there to pick me up if I fall down along the way.

I genuinely loved every moment of it, and I cannot wait to come back again next year.



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Matthew Alexander

Being the church

Many people go through stages or moments in life when it is difficult, if not impossible, to make it to the church's campus. But the church is called to a faithful assembly. Recently, 16 people from Grace-Lynnwood UMC, Lancaster, loaded and unloaded from the church bus (with a broken air conditioning unit) to visit five great friends who cannot currently attend church: Betty Jordan, Harold Powers, Mary Sue Byrdic, Macie Lucas and Mira McCants. Their prayer was to bring the church to where they were. "It was such a blessing to see the church live out the gospel in a unique way," said the Rev. Matthew Alexander. "Thank you to Susan, Lonnie, Trina, Priya, Dietrich, Sybil, Rick, Jack, Nancye, Mazie, Edith, Kathy, Rachel, Dale and Donna for participating in the all-church visit."

Around the Districts

Charleston District

Congratulations to the Rev. Mitch and Martha Houston on the birth of their granddaughter. Mackenzie Martha Houston was born July 13. Rev. Houston is a retired elder.

Columbia District

Washington Street UMC, Columbia, has two prints of the church available for purchase. Both are watercolors by Betty Rivers and Betsy Alexander, former members of the church. Contact the church for more information, 803-256-2417 or wsmethodist.org.

The Rev. Frank V. James, pastor of **I. DeQuincey Newman UMC, Columbia**, will celebrate his 70th birthday and retirement Oct. 1 from 4-6 p.m. at Edisto Fork UMC, Orangeburg. The Rev. Edward McDowell will be the speaker. RSVP by Sept. 15 at 803-786-9894.

Greenwood District

The United Methodist Men of the Greenwood District will meet Sept. 17 at **Butler UMC, Saluda**. Activities will begin at 8:30 a.m. with breakfast. Trevor Miller from **Mount Horeb UMC, Lexington**, will be the speaker. Time for planning, expanding and enhancing men's ministry throughout the district will conclude the morning. For additional information, contact Rev. Bob Huggins or Rev. Gerald Clinkscales.



The service opened with a parade of women dressed in white carrying white carnations.

I.D. Newman marks Women in the Pulpit Sunday

COLUMBIA—I. DeQuincey Newman United Methodist Church celebrated Women in the Pulpit Sunday 2022 with all the pomp and circumstances due the occasion.

The service opened with a parade of women dressed in white carrying white carnations representing the 150-plus years the United Women in Faith worldwide have been serving humanity.

During the service, Jacquelyn White was crowned 2022 Woman of the Year for I.D. Newman UMC for her years of service to the church and to the community. White served faithfully as the Administrative Council chair for many years. In addition, she serves as a lay servant, a member of the usher board and a member of the worship ministry.

The unit also recognized three outstanding women who devoted their lives to serving humanity. They are Columbia District Superintendent Dr. Cathy Jamieson, South Carolina State President of the NAACP Brenda Murphy and Phyllis Lloyd Drakeford, a 30-year retired teacher and currently the chair of the Kershaw County Democratic Party. Each of these outstanding women received the I. DeQuincey Newman Spirit of an Activist Award.

This was indeed a day to remember. Drakeford, the speaker for the day, delivered a rousing message that challenged the women to step out in faith as they serve humanity. She reminded all that God is with them as they continue to do his will in every community in Columbia.

Leave A Legacy To Change Lives

The South Carolina United Methodist Foundation
P. O. Box 5087, Columbia, SC 29250-5087
scumf@bellsouth.net



Back-to-School Fun

Beaumont UMC, Spartanburg, hosted a Back-to-School Fun Day July 30. It was a day of fellowship for all who came out. Attendees enjoyed games inside and outside the building. Children enjoyed a bounce house, Slip and Slide, board games, skill games, football and basketball. There was plenty of good food and refreshing drinks to help tolerate the hot temperatures. School supplies also were distributed. "We thanked God for his blessing of great weather, plenty of help to keep things safe and moving and a congregation with hearts filled with love and the desire to lend a helping hand in times such as these," said Annie R. Crocker, pastor at Beaumont UMC.

Photo courtesy of Annie R. Crocker



More than 50 volunteers helped with the Western York Charge's Food Distribution Ministry.

Seeing the Gospel come alive up close

By Dr. Anthony Hodge

Who says that smaller churches can't make a difference? How can a multichurch charge work together for the greater good of others? Just ask the Rev. Donald Love, pastoral leader of the Western York Charge consisting of Sharon, New Zion and Shady Grove United Methodist churches, and he will enthusiastically share with anyone interested that God can use smaller churches to make a difference in the lives of its community residents.

I personally saw for myself what God has been doing through the ministry initiative shared by Love, his parishioners and other volunteers on Friday, July 29, in Sharon.

According to Love, the vision for this ministry came after he began serving the three churches on the Western York Charge. Prior to him being appointed as the Western York Charge's pastoral leader, each of the churches (Sharon, New Zion and Shady Grove) were heavily involved in a feeding ministry program. In seeing their passion to assist others, he was led by God to help enhance what the churches were already doing.

Having previous experience working with Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina, he was able to help expand their individual outreach programs, which have been well received. At present, the ministry has been successful with more than 50 volunteers willingly participating when the ministry is offered to the community.

Prior to the Second Harvest Mobile Food Truck arriving, Love commented that this particular food distribution would be the fourth distribution the Western York Charge has sponsored in the past three years.

Upon arriving in Sharon to visit with Love and his parishioners, I observed that cars were lined up for this ministry initiative and later learned some persons had arrived as early as 6:30 a.m. so that they would be there in time for the 9 a.m. starting time for food distribution.

Along with observing a well-organized community outreach ministry, I was able to converse with surrounding community residents and volunteers. Everyone I spoke with had nothing but positive things to say about this food distribution ministry.

"We are doing what God wants us to do," said Sharon UMC Lay Leader Joe Wix. "People need it, and we know that it is help-

ing people, and we feel good that we are able to help others."

Area residents Glynnis Lowry and Pamela Gilmore said the ministry is definitely making a difference in the lives of others, especially during this time when the price of groceries has increased.

Other area residents agreed.

"I am a single mom, and I love what is going on here. It is a big help," Beverly Beasley said.

Kathy Montgomery added, "I am a grandmother raising three grandchildren and I am glad this ministry is being offered. It definitely helps me."

Kings Mountain Chapel lay leader and volunteer James Kimble said he was glad he is able to assist this much-needed ministry. He said Love previously served as his mentor before he assumed the role of pastor of the Western York Charge, and he has experienced the entire Love family as being good people; he said he is grateful to be able to assist with this ministry.

During my time with Love, his parishioners, community volunteers and residents, I was pleasantly surprised to see and had a chance to converse with another pastoral leader in the Rock Hill District, the Rev. Dan Sullivan. Sullivan, who serves as pastoral leader for Kings Mountain Chapel and St. Paul UMCs, was there with his three children, Clara, Levi and Trey. Each was there to volunteer with this ministry initiative also.

Realizing that the food distribution outreach ministry is a joint venture with several entities coming alongside, Love emphasized that he is grateful for all the volunteers who were on-site assisting with the outreach ministry and thankful for the support offered by the local Food Mart and Food Lion in York who donated shopping carts, water and pastries for the volunteers.

Love said two of the managers from the Food Mart and Food Lion also participated in helping to distribute the food to community residents.

It is obvious that this outreach ministry initiative is needed and appreciated. Love, parishioners of the Western York Charge and surrounding community volunteers partnering with the effort are to be commended.

Indeed, the Gospel came alive for me that day.



New Light and The Woo team up to help band

The Revs. Enrique Gordon (New Light UMC) and Shirley Gordon (The Wesley of Orangeburg Foundation, The Woo) have teamed up in support of the South Carolina State University Marching 101 Band. On Aug. 1, Larry Berry of Davis Toyota of Orangeburg was presented with several items donated by New Light UMC members and The Wesley of Orangeburg Foundation supporters for the band. The items included water, Gatorade, energy bars, granola bars and other non-perishable items.



SMC welcomes students for new year

Spartanburg Methodist College kicked off its 111th year with the annual new student move-in day. Following tradition, faculty, staff and student ambassadors helped approximately 350 students and their families move into their residence halls. "We're a small, family-like campus, so it's only fitting that we all come out to help our newest Pioneers get their things into their new homes for the year," said Scott Cochran, president of SMC. The college is expecting to welcome more than 970 on-campus students this year, with about 550 of them living on campus. They have also enrolled approximately 160 students in their growing SMC Online program.

St. John Summer Camp draws diverse crowd of kids for four weeks of faith, fun

GREENVILLE—St. John United Methodist Church put together an active, fun, faith-based camp at their church this summer, welcoming close to 20 smiling faces for camp each day over the four weeks it was held.

The children ranged from age 4-11, with varying levels of experience with school and summer camp.

Held June 20-July 22 Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., each week of the camp was themed.

Week One was STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math), Week Two was Superheroes, Week Three was Beach and Week Four was Animals. Each week was paired with activities that fit the theme.

The camp director was Jo Underwood, daughter of pastor the Rev. Brian Underwood, with assistance from Rev. Underwood and Associate Director Devon Goodspeed. Jo Underwood is a sophomore at Charleston Southern University and Goodspeed is a sophomore at the College of Charleston.

Volunteer counselors included Aubrey Anderson of Trinity UMC, Fountain Inn, and Hunter Thomson, Alethea Thomson and Sasha Fleming, all of Grace Church. Volunteer aides were Gail Christian, Jackie Ramey and Mary Lou Stoner, all of St. John UMC, as well as local Girl Scout troops.

Underwood said some of the favorite activities included superhero power kebabs, Captain America shield frisbee, Chicken Stew Ball and painting rocks. Each day had a morning and afternoon snack and lunch, with the favorite lunch being pancakes and sausage cooked by Pastor Brian on Fridays.

In addition to tons of outdoor fun, free play and centers, each day had a specific activity.

Monday was art, where three different collegiate art students did engaging age-appropriate lessons with the kids. Tuesday was food creation, where the kids put together a themed snack for that week's theme. Wednesday was chapel, where Liz Harper (Covenant UMC director of preschool children) and Bryce Keely (Trinity UMC, Fountain Inn, youth director) led classic children's Bible stories with games, activities and open-aired Q&As. Thursday was music, with themed dancing and singing from several different sources. Friday was an "in house field trip" where each week featured a guest program for the kids.

"Jo took my dream of a better camp than last year, and with countless hours and many friends accomplished an incredible camp," said the Rev. Brian Underwood.

Week One featured an engineering teacher from a local middle school to do STEAM activities.

On Week Two, the Gantt Fire Department came to represent real-life superheroes



Week Four (above) featured a dog trainer who brought dogs and talked about how to properly approach a dog you don't know. Week Two (below) was all about superheroes.



and teach kids about fire safety. For Week Three, the counselors put together a field day for beach week complete with water games and a water-spraying battle. Week Four featured a dog trainer who brought dogs and talked about how to properly approach a dog you don't know.

Jo Underwood said, "We all had an amazing time and I could not have asked for a better group of kids, nor could I have asked for it to go better. The last day was celebrated with a completion certificate ceremony and pictures with each camper—and lots of ice cream and popsicles, and of course love. Hopefully this can repeat in summer 2023!"

Connections throughout the Greenville area made the camp possible through donations of money, food and supplies coming from St. John UMC, McBee Chapel UMC, Trinity UMC United Methodist Men, Hopewell UMC and Covenant UMC.

"Through the generosity of many, many people, we were able to keep the camp fees very low and provide the campers with an amazing experience," he said. "The love of Christ was conveyed to this diverse group of children, which included one child that only spoke Cantonese (a translation app on the directors phones allowed communication), two that were multilingual (English, Cantonese and Mandarin), and four children who were autistic."

Children who recently lost parents were also part of the camp.



A buzz for Jesus

Manning UMC, Manning, youth enjoyed a bee-themed church retreat this summer. Held July 18-20, the retreat for grades five to eight featured two guest speakers who keep bee hives: Samantha McManus and the Rev. Ken Phelps. Here, middle school kids learn from Phelps how to have a "bee" attitude. The youth also visited Bee City Zoo that week.

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JURISDICTIONAL: 32 clergy and lay delegates from S.C. to go

From Page 1

Voting will continue until the session adjourns, with a consecration ceremony tentatively scheduled for the morning of Friday, Nov. 4.

Long-awaited gathering

This session will be the first time the jurisdiction has gathered in-person since the last regular SEJ Conference, held July 13-15, 2016. At that conference, jurisdiction made history, electing the Rev. Sharma Lewis as its first African-American female bishop. Four other new bishops were elected at that session, with South Carolina's then episcopal nominee Dr. Tim McClendon narrowly missing election. Also in 2016, South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, elected in 2012 and assigned then to South Carolina, was reassigned to South Carolina another four years.

However, because of the pandemic, those four years have been extended.

Now, even though jurisdictional conferences historically are held after General Conference, this year's jurisdictional conferences will be held even though General Conference will not gather until 2024 (date and location not yet released). The UMC Judicial Council, the denomination's top court, ruled that jurisdictional conferences can proceed so the church can elect and assign new bishops.

That's important for the Southeastern Jurisdiction, as four bishops have retired with no new bishops elected to take their place, and a fifth (Bishop James Swanson) plans to retire at the end of December. This has meant four annual conferences are currently being covered by bishops serving in more than one location: Bishop Ken Carter serves both the Florida and Western North Carolina conferences; Bishop Leonard Fairley serves the Kentucky, Red Bird Missionary and North Carolina conferences; Bishop David Graves serves the Alabama-West Florida and South Georgia conferences; and Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett serves the North Alabama and Holston conferences.

Other conferences in the SEJ are the North Georgia Conference (Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson), South Carolina Conference (Bishop Holston), Virginia Conference (Bishop Sharma Lewis), Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference (Bishop Bill McAlilly) and Mississippi Conference (Bishop Swanson).

Nelson's why

In addition to what is slated for the SEJ Conference, the *Advocate* also had a conversation with Nelson about why he has agreed to offer himself as the delegation's nominee, particularly given all the anxieties existing in the UMC right now, from frustration about General Conference postponements to news about churches beginning to disaffiliate from the UMC amid disagreements about human sexuality and other issues.



Alvarez



Austin



Berlin



Bowers



Britton



Coles



Gleaves



Nelson



Shelton



Thomas

Nelson said that moments like this often force us to face our fears head-on and take action, and he feels he has the ability to serve as a "bridge builder" between where we have been as a church and where we are called to be.

"We live in a world and denomination that is utterly broken, and we know it's too broken to fix ourselves, but to me, the good news is God has not left the world or the church alone, and I suspect God is not done with you or me either."

Nelson believes God has a vision of a renewed and redeemed world that one day will be reality.

"The way things are is not the way things have to be," Nelson said. "I feel called to help our church move into a future that is yet unknown, and I'm not afraid of that. I think we are in an opportune moment."

Nelson said a statement by the late Corrie ten Boom has shaped much of his thinking on this: "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."

"That for me has been a point of resilience for me, something I've resonated with: Whatever the future holds, it's the same God holding the future, and our mission hasn't changed. Our call to be in mission and ministry hasn't changed."

He said he personally cannot imagine being part of any other denomination besides United Methodist, and that this conference and denomination quite literally shaped and formed him into the person he is today. Nelson grew up at Epworth Children's Home, a ministry founded by the UMC, and has spent his career as a United Methodist pastor. Ordained a deacon in 1993 and as an elder in 1995, he served 12 years at four UMCSC churches (St. Mark-Mount Zion; St. John's UMC, Aiken; Centenary-Kingsville; and Silver Hill Memorial, Spartanburg) before becoming a congregational specialist in 2007 and then director of Clergy Services in 2014. Today he is conference secretary and superintendent of the Orangeburg District of the UMCSC.

"This is a story of what has God been doing in the church and in my life," Nelson said, noting he is extremely grateful to the people of South Carolina. "I'm living proof that when the church focuses on missions

and ministries, we have the ability to change lives."

Ten episcopal nominees

In addition to Nelson, the South Carolina Conference delegation nominee, there are nine other episcopal nominees up for vote at the Nov. 2-4 conference:

Dr. Iosmar Alvarez (Kentucky Conference delegation nominee) is a Cuban-American pastor and superintendent of the Lexington District in the Kentucky Conference;

The Rev. Sharon G Austin (Florida Conference delegation nominee) is a longtime pastor in the UMC who has served as director of Connectional and Justice Ministries in the Florida Conference since 2013;

The Rev. Tom Berlin (Virginia Conference delegation nominee) was ordained in 1988 and has served as lead pastor at Floris UMC, Herndon, Virginia, since 1997. An author and speaker, he also served on the Mediation Team for the Protocol of Grace through Separation and was part of the Commission on a Way Forward;

The Rev. Sharon Bowers (Holston Black Methodists for Church Renewal nominee) is also the Committee on the Status and Role of Women's nominee. She currently serves as executive director and lead pastor at the University of Tennessee Knoxville Wesley Foundation;

The Rev. Fred S. Britton (Mississippi Conference delegation nominee) is a lifelong United Methodist who serves as superintendent for the Tupelo District of the Mississippi Conference. Ordained an elder in 1985, he has been serving local churches since 1983;

The Rev. Amy Coles (Western North Carolina Conference delegation nominee) has served local churches since 1992 and served as a district superintendent for three districts in Western North Carolina from 2009-2015. In 2015, she became assistant to the bishop. She also is an active participant with the denomination's Connectional Table;

The Rev. Edith Gleaves (North Carolina Conference delegation nominee) has 37 years of experience on the local, district, conference and global levels of the denomination. In addition to her service as a pastor, she served as superintendent of the Harbor

District of the North Carolina Conference. Since 2000, she has served as lead pastor of Ocean View UMC, Oak Island;

The Rev. Connie Shelton (SEJ Clergywomen nominee) is a former communicator who has spent decades as a pastor in the UMC before first becoming director of Connectional Ministries and Communications for the Mississippi Annual Conference in 2013 and then superintendent of the East Jackson District in 2015; and

Dr. Byron Thomas (North Georgia Conference delegation nominee) is a veteran of the United States Air Force who served as senior pastor of Ben Hill UMC in Atlanta from 2013-2021, when he was appointed as superintendent of the Central South District in the North Georgia Conference.

SEJ delegates

The 16 Jurisdictional clergy delegates (elected at the 2019 Annual Conference) are the Rev. Ken Nelson, Dr. Robin Dease, the Rev. Keith Hunter, the Rev. Susan Leonard, the Rev. Emily Sutton, the Rev. Will Malambrri, the Rev. Tiffany Knowlin, the Rev. Karen Jones, the Rev. Tim Rogers, the Rev. Cathy Mitchell, the Rev. Fran Elrod, the Rev. Connie Barnes, the Rev. Mary Teasley, the Rev. Kathryn Hunter, the Rev. Elizabeth Murray and Dr. Stephen Love (alternate the Rev. Sara White).

The 16 Jurisdictional lay delegates are Jacqueline Jenkins, James Salley, Michael Cheatham, Herman Lightsey, Chris Lynch, Martha Fridy Thompson, David Braddon, Emily Evans, Betty Void, David Salter, Valerie Brooks-Madden, Marlene Spencer, Jennifer Price, Tony Watson, Lou Jordan and Doug Coffeen (alternates Marvin Horton and Vicki McCartha).

More information

A draft agenda provided to the *Advocate* by SEJ Secretary Anne Travis notes that bishops will begin arriving at Lake Junaluska Oct 30, with meetings and other preparation continuing until Nov. 1. Heads of Delegation are scheduled as of now to meet Nov. 1 at 12:45 to receive credentials and seating information, and round robin sessions with episcopal nominees are currently scheduled to begin at 1:30 p.m. Nov. 1.

Opening worship is expected to begin at 9 a.m. Nov. 2 in Stuart Auditorium, with Bishop James E. Swanson Sr. preaching and Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett as celebrant. Business is slated to begin at 10:30, with balloting and other business until the evening of Nov. 3, when episcopal assignments will be announced and area receptions held.

The conference is expected to close with consecration of new bishops Nov. 4.

More information on the SEJ Conference, including a schedule, final agenda, housing information and more, will be available at <http://sejumc.org>.

Columbia College welcomes 17 new faculty, new board members for 2022-2023 year

COLUMBIA—Accompanying the recent, rapid growth that Columbia College has experienced, the 168-year-old institution is welcoming an esteemed group of faculty and leadership to start the 2022-2023 academic year.

Seventeen new faculty will assist in furthering the college's mission to "prepare every student personally and professionally for success through liberal arts and professional programs emphasizing service, social justice, and leadership development."

"Columbia College is growing and thriving," said Columbia College Provost Kristine Barnett. "With that growth comes the need to expand academic offerings by adding to our already exceptional team of educators so that we may better serve our student body. I am thrilled to welcome these new faculty members to the Columbia College family as we

seek to equip our students with the tools they need to live lives of impact."

The Division of Arts and Humanities welcomes new dean David McCracken, Ph.D., as well as Jennifer Bailey, M.F.A.; Adam Eddy, M.F.A.; and Atinut Inhajak, A.B.D. The Division of Business, Leadership and Communication will add Ahmet Aksoy, A.B.D., and Renee Just, Ph.D. The Division of Education welcomes Ga Kyung Jeong, A.B.D.; Stephen Kneee, M.A.; Christine Oskar-Poisson, Ed.D.; and Gretchen Whitman, Ph.D. Adrienne Oxley, Ph.D., will continue her service to the college as the new dean of the Division of Health, Mathematics and Sciences and is excited to welcome Avery Dingle, M.D., and Alexandra Szarabajko, A.B.D. The Division of Social Sciences welcomes Barbara Russo, Ph.D., and Alexis Scurry, M.S.W. In addition to the faculty who are joining the

college's academic divisions, Kala Dunn, M.I.S. and Daniel Stevens, M.L.S. have joined the J. Drake Edens Library faculty, and Erin Carlson, 2003, Ph.D., will serve as the director of general education.

The college also welcomes three new members to the 2022-2023 Board of Trustees and the appointment of Ben Rex as the new board chair and Hon. Kaymani "Kay" D. West as board secretary.

Rex is the chief executive officer of Cyberwoven, a Columbia-based web, brand and marketing firm.

"Ben has served the college in many ways over the years, and we look forward to his continued leadership and guidance as we work together with faculty, staff, and students to lead Columbia College into the bright future ahead," said President of Columbia College Dr. Tom Bogart.

NEW LOVE FOR ECCLES: Preservation contractor sought

From Page 1

Fellow church members would regale her with stories of their own history growing up doing Sunday school under the trees by the church, or their annual Mother's Day homecoming, when families would gather from far off, camping out at the church for a huge weekend banquet.

But there's one problem: While beautiful, the old church is now dilapidated and "needs serious TLC," Platt said.

"I asked, 'What are you guys doing with this beautiful building,' and they said, 'We're stuck.'"

They didn't have the needed funds or expertise to undertake the needed repairs.

That's when Platt stepped up. As a teacher, she's well accustomed to grant-writing and offered to look into securing a grant to fund a renovation or restoration project.

She approached Christina Rae Butler, professor of historic preservation American College of Building Arts in Charleston, whose interest in the project quickly piqued.

In the spring, Butler took her sophomore group to the Eccles site and put them to work.

At the end of their time at Eccles, they provided a detailed report of what they felt was needed to get the church back to where it used to be.

Colorful history

The students spent much of the spring semester working at the church, ultimately producing a master-plan document in June complete with historical research, condition assessments and remediation suggestions for the church.

By digging through historical records and working with the structure itself, the students soon discovered the church had been constructed in 1881 or 1882 and then moved to its present location in the 1920s.

A modern church was built on the site in



Photo courtesy of Professor Christina Butler

Students in Professor Christina Butler's Researching and Documenting Historic Properties class, spring 2022, gather in front of the historic Eccles Church, where they spent the semester studying and ultimately recommending a preservation/restoration plan.

the 1960s where parishioners worship today, but after a long period of disuse and disrepair, the original structure simply sits there, with no current function.

Student Andrew Pankratz heavily researched the beginnings of the church, which he reported was "part of the Irishtown Plantation, whose 6,488 acres was the primary residence of Revolutionary War hero Major Isaac Harleston, who worked with Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox."

Pankratz noted that Benjamin Gregg (spelled also as Greig) donated the land for the original meeting house on Aug. 1, 1881, and the church was officially started in 1882, probably as a church plant that grew out of a nearby church.

The circuit rider preacher at the time was reportedly Daniel Archibald Patrick, who would have been between 26 and 30 at the time he pastored at Eccles.

The area was thought to be a center for bootlegging in the 1920s, and since the construction of the new church in the 1960s, the historic building wasn't regularly used.

A plan with priorities

As the conclusion of their report, the students noted that Eccles "is an important vernacular rural church building with many original character defining features and a high level of integrity, having had few modernizations and alterations during its life."

Because it is so intact, and based on the intended use and goals for the building as expressed by the congregation, they recommended not over-restoring the building or modernizing it heavily with new electricity and climate control. Instead, they suggested the church be repaired as needed and preserved overall. This is also a much cheaper option that complete restoration and modernization.

As immediate priority the students listed: Repair the compromised corner post; remove siding on front wall (end well with entry doors) and sister brace stud walls as needed to address slight bow in the wall; and add collar tie or ceiling joists to this end of the building if needed, to help strengthen end wall.

Second steps, as part of overall building preservation: Remove siding from entire façade to allow structural repairs; add flashing and repair cornices as needed; salvage as much original siding as possible and reinstall, beginning with most viewed façade of the building; install new replace-in-kind siding as needed to supplement the salvaged original material; repair historic windows where possible/as funding allows; replace other windows as necessary; repoint brick piers as needed; repair metal roof cladding or replace existing; limewash or use an opaque stain to coat the exterior siding; and repair the exterior doors where possible.

Cosmetic/last steps: Sand and refinish the pine flooring; limewash or paint the interior paneling if desired; and remove concrete steps.

Students reported issues such as extensive rot, heavy wood deterioration, weathering damage and some biogrowth.

Next steps

Now armed with a master plan, they are doing what they can to secure funding for a preservation contractor, including private opportunities via GoFundMe and Donor-Choose, as well as a grant from the South Carolina Conference and a recent \$10,000 donation from MacArthur Lodge 427.

Platt, as well as Eccles' pastor the Rev. James Lewis Sr., said the congregation is enthused about the preservation project and have started a Facebook group to stay organized and foster encouragement and support (www.facebook.com/groups/266805578870292).

If you are interested in learning more about the Eccles Church Preservation, email jwlewis@umcsc.org or connect at www.facebook.com/groups/266805578870292

For more photos of the historic church, visit SC Picture Project at <https://www.scpictureproject.org/berkeley-county/eccles-united-methodist-church.html>.

FRUITFUL: More than 50 volunteers repaired five homes

From Page 1

As a provisional elder, Richardson is required to do what is called a "fruitfulness project," creating or reigniting a ministry in the church or community where she serves. A longtime volunteer with Salkehatchie Summer Service who developed her own passion for home repair ministry when she was 14, Richardson began a series of discussions with a likeminded local Baptist, Joel Jolly, involved with home repair ministry.

"He said, 'I have a few homes you can look at,'" Richardson explained.

With a few others, including South Carolina Conference disaster recovery volunteers Ward Smith and the Rev. Mike Evans, Richardson took a look at the homes. They decided the work was something they could probably do and began to put a plan together.

They applied for approval from United Methodist Volunteers in Mission, secured a congregational development grant through the Greenwood District and began to recruit volunteers and other funding.

This summer, it all came to fruition when Johnston and Harmony UMCs hosted the Edgefield County "Summer Mission Project" July 25-29.

That week, more than 50 volunteers from Johnston and Harmony UMCs were joined by helpers from Leesville, Edgefield, Ninety Six and other communities, restoring five homes all in the name of Jesus.

Richardson called it "connectionalism at its finest."

"It was amazing to see how God just helped it come together, from collaborating with people in the conference as well as in the community and even outside the conference," Richardson said.

Trenton, Edgefield, Johnston and Harmony UMCs pitched in to provide lunch each day that was delivered to the work sites. UVMIM's Early Response Team loaned a trailer to the effort, and even Greenwood District Superintendent Dr. Stephen Love came one day to tour the homes and lend a hand on-site.

Two of the homes belonged to church members, one from Johnston and one from Harmony. The other three



Photos courtesy of Amanda Richardson

A volunteer works on a ramp at a home on Bent Creek.

came through Jolly. Health issues had left one homeowner unable to do extensive exterior work, including yard work, painting, and porch step repair, so volunteers pitched in with paint, weed-trimming, tree removal and woodwork. At another, a doublewide manufactured home, a roof needed replacing as well as repair on two existing decks, while at another they put back steps onto a home that had none, created ceilings in a home that had only rafters, and much more.

Richardson said the work was not only helpful to the homeowners but a blessing to her congregations.

"We're hoping to do this every year now," she said.

Swallowing back tears, she shared how the look on one homeowner's face moved her profoundly.

"Her hope is restored," Richardson said. "To me, that's what doing projects like this is about—that's what making disciples of Jesus Christ is about. It's caring for your neighbor, showing them mercy and loving them."



Greenwood District Superintendent Dr. Stephen Love helps at a site.



Volunteers repair a roof at a home on Paces Creek.

ZIMBABWE: The team also left supplies and COVID test kits

From Page 1

fire, brought it to the attention of her church and found interest for a mission team. The Rev. Lloyd Nyarota, a longtime friend and a member of the Zimbabwe Conference, contacted Landers about a possible mission team and she asked about the fire. While the school buildings were insured, books and supplies were always welcomed.

Nyarota, though, was searching for a team to help Chitenderano roof their church. Because there was interest from the church for a mission team, plans began to be made. It helped immensely that the village was where Nyarota grew up. Fourteen team members, co-led by Landers and Vic Caldwell, signed up for the trip, originally scheduled for the summer of 2021. With the onset of COVID-19, plans were revamped, and the trip was postponed until March 2022. A COVID surge postponed the trip again until July; the change in schedule resulted in the loss of three team members.

Seven men and four women left Columbia July 21 to begin a two-day trip to arrive in Chitenderano. Nyarota joined them in Harare, Zimbabwe, and became the 12th team member.

The team arrived Saturday night and was warmly welcomed by the people of Chitenderano UMC. It truly felt like a homecoming, and not just for Nyarota. After dinner, the team was divided among host families for the night before coming together for worship Sunday morning.

"The community was overwhelmingly excited for us to be there," team member Chris Lindler said in awe.

Caldwell was asked to offer a Sunday school-type lesson to the congregation before the worship service the next morning. The team was aware that the morning's service would end in a harvest and thanksgiving service. Caldwell used Peter's denial of Christ three times to show that even if we deny him publicly, Christ will restore us.

"What a reason to be thankful," he said.

During the harvest portion of the service,

members of the congregation came forward with monetary, agricultural or material offerings. The team gave the church Bibles, a love offering and items from South Carolina.

While waiting for the team to arrive, the congregation, led by the Rev. Honesty Sithole, had decided they wanted a metal roof and preferred professional contractors to install it. A metal roof would avoid the problem with the current church—the wooden timbers have been eaten by termites—and would last longer. Thus, they had taken steps in the weeks before the team's arrival to weld together steel trusses. Following the harvest celebration and lunch, the men of the church and the South Carolina team carried the completed trusses to the new church.

Because the team would be staying at Africa University during the week, the congregation wanted the first truss put up Sunday afternoon so a picture could be taken and the team could participate. Several trusses later, the team left the village for AU.

During the following week, team and congregation members worked tirelessly alongside the professionals to install the roof. When a delay in supplies occurred, the team changed course from the roof to the chancel area, building it up and preparing it to receive a concrete base.

"I appreciated being able to add the chancel area of the church to our project," team member Doug Smith said.

Team leaders had emphasized fluidity to the group, and they learned to adapt with whatever was handed to them.

"How our team was able to adjust to different situations was greatly appreciated," member Stuart Hope said.

In addition, the group was able to build wonderful new friendships with the Chitenderano people and students, who often spent their breaks engaging with the Americans. The Hokey Pokey was taught with much laughter, and timidity was quickly overcome by curiosity. Team members Tim Livingston, a retired principal, and Jim Miller spent part of a day at the secondary school seeing how things were different from and the same as

U.S. schools. The rest of the team spent the same time hiking up Nyakuni Mountain, a holy site for the village. There, they experience God's natural wonder as well as saw cave paintings that are estimated to be several hundred years old.

COVID testing kits were left with the local health clinic and were greatly appreciated by the staff.

At the end of the week, with District Superintendent Tiriwanhu Stephen Magomo and Sithole leading a joyous service, Caldwell and Landers were invited to join them in placing a Bible and hymnbook in the center of the chancel area. The area is marked by bricks that will be left unplastered and will serve as a reminder of this partnership to future church members.

Caldwell and Landers announced to the congregation that money was available to plaster the church both inside and outside. Joyful praise—the team's new favorite hymn, "Praise God, Alleluia"—and tears rose up as hugs were given all around.

"I am humbled," Nyarota said. "I love you folks ... truly missionaries of hope."

The team and congregation recognize the true partnership between Union and Chitenderano UMCs, and it is hoped that the partnership will continue as the church progresses toward completion.

Upon leaving the village for the last time, the team headed to Hilltop UMC in Mutare and visited Ishe Anesu, an afterschool program that has been run for many years in the Sakubva community. The children performed a skit based on the Good Samaritan, and the team left supplies that had been requested, including New Testaments; Bibles donated by Mill Creek UMC's Friendship Circle, Columbia, for high school students; hygiene supplies; and small bottles of hand sanitizers from the conference office.

Books, donated by members of Union UMC, were delivered to Kudakwashe Tagara, librarian at Hartzell High School, as were

textbooks requested by the school. The team delivered supplies to Fairfield Orphanage and was given the chance to interview some of the high school students. Marjorie Rehlander conducted the interviews and was impressed with the students, seeing bright futures ahead for them. While that was happening, the rest of the team played with the children, spoke to their caregivers and asked questions.

The second Sunday of the trip was spent at Bethsaida UMC in Hatcliffe, a community within Harare. Bethsaida was built by three teams, all from the South Carolina Conference. Livingston was asked to preach, and Nyarota translated his words into Shona. Taking his cues from Genesis, Livingston spoke on God being there in the beginning and is there for us today, tomorrow and into eternity. The team was able to meet briefly with Bishop Eben Nhwatiwa Monday morning at the conference offices.

During the team's reflection time, spent in Harare and at Victoria Falls, each member took time to reflect on what brought them to Zimbabwe and the relationships that had been built. Many of them recalled God moments experienced throughout the two weeks and were sorry they had to leave the country.

"The work and worship services were successful and meaningful, but the friendships that were strengthened and relationships that were built are godly," Landers said.

Lora McKinney agreed, calling the worship services amazing and said they left a significant impression.

"A willingness to love without conditions," is how Livingston recalled the people of Chitenderano, and that was echoed by most people. "Seeing their faith in action" was awe-inspiring as was their complete hospitality, said Rehlander.

The team arrived back in Columbia Aug. 5 and was welcomed home by friends and family, including the Rev. Stephen Taylor,

Continued next page



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<https://asburyhills.org/fall-festival>



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SEA ISLANDS CAMP & RETREAT CENTER

Join us on Friday, September 16th from 10am-2pm and see what Sea Islands Camp & Retreat Center has to offer! There will be a Seafood Jamboree open to those who plan to attend.

Please RSVP to the event by visiting our website listed below.
<https://sccarm.org>



The team from Union UMC, Irmo, and leaders of the church gather in front of the completed roof.

Continued

pastor of Union.

Members of the team were Vic Caldwell and Robin Landers, co-leaders; Chris Elvis, Stuart Hope, Chris Lindler, Tim Livingston, Lora McKinney, Jim Miller, Rev. Lloyd Nyarota, Marjorie Rehlander, Doug Smith and Allison Trussell.

Since leaving, the team has heard from Sithole and received pictures that progress continues on the church. Plastering is about done, and air vents have been ordered. Doors will be measured and decided upon in the coming weeks.

Praise God, Alleluia indeed.



Photos by Allison Trussell

Everyone helps to put a truss on the wall of the church before lifting it into place.



Marjorie Rehlander carries a bucket of water from the parsonage to the new church.



Chris Elvis (right) and Stuart Hope (left) spread concrete on the chancel area.



Epworth's Annual Work Day Offering
Sunday, September 11, 2022



Tim Livingston takes a selfie with some of the students from Chitenderano Primary School.

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Party time!

VBS 2022 at Manning UMC, Manning, was held June 13-16.



Food truck fun

The Anderson Circuit enjoyed a food truck-themed VBS this summer, offering "Food Truck: On A Roll For God" June 21-23. Top chefs were Johnnie Brown, Kayla Martin, Janesse Brock, Judy Brown, Shane Whitner, Debra Lee and Lynn Acker. Primary to adult classes were offered, and attendees enjoyed bread to reflect the Scripture for the VBS, "Give us this day our daily bread." All other Scriptures related to how God provides for our daily needs. Also included were the members of Jefferson Chapel AME church along with their pastor the Rev. Billy Cleveland and children from the community. Then, on June 25, the circuit hosted its Community Bible Study with a picnic at Darwin Wright Park on the lake in Anderson. Seven churches were involved.

Photo courtesy of the Rev. Annie Jackson



Photo courtesy of Harriett Brevard

On a roll with God

St. Paul UMC, Camden, held VBS July 18-22 from 6-8 p.m. Attendance on the first day was close to 100 and refreshments were served from a food truck. St. Paul was able to provide well-planned instruction, ample supervision, creative activities and delicious end-of-the-day refreshments for all attendees. The overall theme was "Food Truck Party: On a Roll with God" and provided powerful learning experiences for pre-K through adult learners. A different Bible story was the focus each day to inspire everyone to turn to God for their needs.



Bible fun

Vacation Bible school was held at Pine Hill UMC in Neeses at 6 each evening July 18-21.



Photos courtesy of Eugenia Vicars

Rolling along

St. Paul UMC, Greenville, held a food truck-themed VBS June 12-17, enjoying "VBS Food Truck Party: On a Roll with God." They partnered with Northside UMC again and met at St. Paul UMC, using a hybrid model where the participants each received a bag with crafts and study book to complete at home. They were able to watch the story and song videos on a private Facebook page. Dinner was served each evening. Pink Mama's Ice Cream truck came one night, and all enjoyed ice cream for dessert. The children took part in the opening assembly puppet show with different storytellers each evening, followed by a discussion of the story and how to apply the meaning to daily life. Their mission project was collecting food items for United Ministries, and the offering was used to purchase 21 gift cards for Epworth's Foster Care Program.

South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith

50 Annual Meeting

Embracing Change, Sharing Grace!

Oct. 21-22

First UMC, Myrtle Beach

United Women in Faith, are you ready to inspire, influence and impact our communities and the world God so loves on behalf of women, children and youth? If your answer is yes, then you should plan to join us as we celebrate our **50th South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith Annual Meeting!** This meeting will be held as an in person event, October 21st and 22nd at First UMC in Myrtle Beach.



You will be given an opportunity to come together with your Sisters and Brothers to hear from **Sally Vonner**, our National United Women in Faith Transformation Officer. As the Transformation Officer, she coordinates the organization's strategic focus and ongoing vision to positively impact the lives of women, children, and youth. As a longtime United Women in Faith member, she puts her faith, hope and love into action daily.

Bible study will be led by **Rev. Judith Ann Knox**, daughter of Ann Hough Knox of Bishopville, South Carolina, and the late John David Knox. She is an ordained elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. Currently, she serves as pastor of Trinity UMC in Bennettsville.



Attendees will enjoy singing, praying, workshops, displays, Resource Room, Communion, Memorial Service, adoption of 2023 budget, retirement of officers, election of 2023 officers and receive a keepsake Program Book, all while experiencing fellowship and making new friends in the Marion District.

The hotel listing and registration form can be found at [umcsc.org/women/](https://www.umcsc.org/women/) and in the September Mission Echo.

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



United Women in Faith

October is Pastor Appreciation Month

Celebrate your pastor with a special ad in the Advocate.

- Three sizes (all 5" wide):
 1' tall: \$38
 2' tall: \$76
 4' tall: \$152

Email text to atrussell@umcsc.org or send to 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203.

Deadline: Sept. 10, 2021

Churches will be billed for the ads unless otherwise noted.

Celebrate the Gift of Music and Song in your Church

Your church choir, church music director and praise bands do so much good in your church. Now, you have a chance to honor and thank them for sharing their talents with the Lord and your church family.

Show your choir, music director or praise band that you APPRECIATE THEM with a special ad in the NOVEMBER Advocate.

- Three sizes (all 5" wide):
 1" tall: \$38 • 2" tall: \$76 • 4" tall: \$152

Email text to atrussell@umcsc.org or send to 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203.

Deadline: Oct. 10, 2022

Churches will be billed for the ads unless otherwise noted

The "For the Common Good: Discovering and Using Spiritual Gifts" class gathers for a smile.



2022 Lay Servant Academy draws in-person crowd at Trenholm Road UMC

COLUMBIA—South Carolina Conference Lay Servant Ministries held its 2022 Lay Servant Academy (Train the Trainer) on Saturday, Aug. 6, at Trenholm Road United Methodist Church.

This was the first in-person conference Lay Servant Academy in three years because of the pandemic.

This year's academy was organized by a team from the Conference Lay Servant Ministries Committee consisting of the Rev. Kris Bergmann, Betty Void and Sha'Rome Henry.

At this year's academy, Conference LSM Co-Directors Becky Green and David Salter welcomed the group of lay servants. Henry, Hartsville District LSM director, provided the devotion, titled, "Assembly Is Required." Conference LSM Co-Director David Salter played the organ for the assembled lay servants to sing the rousing hymn, "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms."

The Rev. Cathy Joens, congregational specialist for Anderson and Greenville districts, led the morning session on "Teaching Adults." While the lay servants were in the required morning session, the LSM district directors met in a separate session to discuss certified lay ministry, certified lay speaking and other topics of interest and concern to the directors. Salter, Green, Henry and Lynne Tyner facilitated the directors' discussion.

During lunch catered by Fancy That! Bistro & Catering, and provided by Southern Mutual Church Insurance Company, attendees heard from Jim Ellis, senior marketing agent of Southern Mutual.

The afternoon breakout sessions consisted of "Faith Sharing: Refresh your Witness," facilitated by the Rev. Susan Maddox; "Leading Public Prayer," facilitated by Florence LSM Associate Director Emma Martin; "Ministry with the Forgotten: Dementia Through a Spiritual Lens," facilitated by the Rev. Steve Holler; "Discipleship Begins with Relationship: Creating a Spiritual Growth Plan to see All the People," facilitated by



Sha'Rome Henry, Hartsville LSM director, presents the devotional.

Tony Watson, Greenwood District lay leader; "For the Common Good: Discovering and Using Spiritual Gifts," facilitated by Rock Hill LSM Director Lynne Tyner; and "Soul Reset: Relearning the Rhythms of Grace Through Daily Life with God," facilitated by Orangeburg LSM Director Rosa Kennerly-Dance.

Three of these are new courses for Discipleship Ministries and may now be offered in the various lay servant schools throughout the conference.

The day ended with a closing ceremony and awarding of "Certificates of Completion in Teaching Adults" to those who had attended the entire day.

This year four persons retired from service on the Conference Lay Servant Committee. These four were recognized and given a plaque to honor their years of service to Lay Servant Ministries: David Lovell, former Marion District co-director; Ann Sowers, former Marion District co-director; Rev. Cynthia Williams, former Florence District director; and Bergmann, former Academy coordinator.

For information on lay servant schools throughout the conference, go to www.umcsc.org/lsm/ and find Upcoming Training. Contact information for the district directors will also be found on this page.

Epworth Children's Home

The Center for Independent Living

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of articles about Epworth's journey toward becoming a comprehensive continuum of care and a community-based support network for families that need help maintaining a healthy structure while providing for the children in their care. The first article detailed the traditional residential program.



The Center for Independent Living helps break cycles of financial and emotional dependence and build a future that is freeing and sustainable.

Times have changed in the 126 years since Epworth Children's Home was established as Epworth Orphanage by South Carolina Methodists. The need for diversified services has been demonstrated through observation, research and in responding to the needs of a more complex and mobile society. Lessons learned early in Epworth's history were related to the long-term successes of its residents after they were either adopted, returned home or reached the age of emancipation at 18.

The leaders at Epworth emphasized a solid work ethic, good character, success in school and learning a trade or attending college. Scholarships were established and trade opportunities were made available for residents.

Epworth now operates the Center for Independent Living that builds upon the concept of helping the people it serves break cycles of financial and emotional dependence and build a future that is freeing and sustainable. No longer are young people urged to sign out of care at age 18 unless they have demonstrated an ability to be self-sustaining. Children in state custody were encouraged to sign out of care and state funding ceased at age 18. At Epworth, in the Center for Independent Living, the discharge age was changed from 18 to 21 some years ago and it is currently 23 years of age. An independent living resident must show progress toward educational and vocational goals to remain in care, however.

At age 15, residents at Epworth begin targeted work toward independent living by attending job fairs, working part-time, participating in the Urban League Summer Jobs Program and working through a curriculum that helps give young people some of the life skills lessons that are often learned in a more stable family situation.

The Center for Independent Living is located on Epworth's second campus that is located on Trenholm Road in Columbia. It currently serves foster youth who are 18- to 23-years-old. The center serves as a base from which foster youth are able to continue their education, acquire job skills and work certifications, and transition into the adult world in a safe and supportive community. Included in the center's offering is the op-

portunity to engage mentors, tutors, career counselors and life coaches and eat nutritious meals, in addition to receiving college scholarships that are available to higher education residents.

The most vulnerable time for youth in foster care is the time between the ages of 17 and adulthood. Many youths—because of lack of preparation, positive role models and adequate job skills—fall back into the same cycle that got them into the foster care system to begin with. Epworth majors in long-term success through its Center for Independent Living. There are very few true independent living programs in South Carolina. They are expensive to maintain, and the work is more challenging than the work with some of the younger ages. Epworth's program has been recognized as the program to emulate if an institution is planning to invest in an independent living program.

The next step is to open the second independent living building. The second independent living cottage has been beautifully decorated and is ready for occupancy. This building will double the capacity for the program.

The work is sometimes difficult, but the payoff comes when participants return with a college diploma or a work skills certificate or burst into the building with the "I have a job!" declaration. They know, and the staff knows, if it had not been for the support of the Center for Independent Living, a productive life may not have been in the cards for these individuals.

One of the great things about the independent living program is even after residents have left the program, they can still call their former caseworkers for advice, or share some good news. Former residents often drop by to say "hello," show off their children or attend a church service at Epworth Memorial UMC.

—Rev. John Holler

UMCOR starts menstrual hygiene kits initiative

The United Methodist Committee on Relief and Church World Service have launched a new joint menstrual hygiene kit initiative to provide essential health and dignity products to vulnerable communities across the U.S. The kits will be purchased and assembled by volunteers and supporters, and then distributed by UMCOR and CWS programs.

The joint initiative comes as the U.S. is facing a tampon shortage and record high inflation, making it difficult for many to afford basic necessities, including period products.

"Across our programs we are seeing the impact of high costs making it more difficult for the families to afford household necessities," said CWS President and CEO Rick Santos. "From shelters along the border to local resettlement offices across the nation, immigrants and refugees often arrive with little more than the clothes on their backs. The same can be said for families who have been affected by hurricanes and other disasters. Partnering with CWS and UMCOR to assemble these period packs is a simple way communities can support the dignity and health of those we serve as they rebuild their lives."

"When disaster strikes, the necessities of life become difficult, if not impossible, to acquire. UMCOR has a long history of collecting and supplying relief kits to help provide care for communities experiencing crisis," said Roland Fernandes, general secretary of Global Ministries, which includes UMCOR. "We are thrilled to work now with our longtime partner Church World Service to add menstrual hygiene kits to our relief supplies. Gifts of these and other relief kits will help those in crisis feel supported when they need it the most."

Supplies for the kits will be purchased and assembled by congregations, community groups and individuals and then distributed through CWS and UMCOR programs across the country. Kits are easy to assemble and cost an estimated \$14. Each kit includes one bar of soap, hand sanitizer, travel wet wipes, travel pack of flushable wipes, laundry detergent packs, 10 tampons, 10 sanitary napkins and trash bags.

To sign up or for information, visit <https://umcmmission.org/umcor-menstrual-hygiene-kit>.



Church children and youth help college students

The Children and Youth Ministry at New Covenant UMC, Bowman, led a mission project for the Orangeburg Wesley Foundation (also known as the WOO). The group collected toiletries, nonperishable food items, hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies. These items will help college students at Claflin University and South Carolina State University when they are needed this fall. The children and youth are mentored by the Rev. Sheri White and advisors Linda Mack, Tameka Hodges, Julia Rickenbaker, Taisha Jefferson-Brown and Wanda Shuler. The project was organized in conjunction with New Covenant's Mission Ministry led by Shirlene Void and the Health and Welfare Committee led by Betty Summers. They are looking forward to doing more projects like this in the fall.

Dickey preaches Women's Day Program at Friendship UMC

United Women in Faith at Friendship United Methodist Church are embracing the rebranding of the United Methodist Women and "Turning it Up" for Christ by amplifying their service to the organization, community and God.

On Sunday, July 17, the Friendship Unit celebrated its annual Women's Day Program with guest speaker Azilee Dickey.

Dickey is the current spiritual growth and interpretation leader for the Florence District and an ambassador for Christ. She is also a lay servant and highly active member of Asbury United Methodist Church-Shiloh in Lynchburg.

The theme of the celebration was "Turn It Up: Willing to Change." Her message focused on always giving God our best.

"Whatever we are doing, we need to take it to the next level in our praise, because the only Jesus some may see is the Jesus in us," Dickey shared.

Organizers said the singing was melodic and the program participants did an outstanding job with their assigned tasks. The atmosphere was a blessing to all whether in-person or viewing virtually.

For the first time since the inception



Photo courtesy of Pearl K. Pressley
Dickey is the current spiritual growth and interpretation leader for the Florence District and an ambassador for Christ.

of Annual Women's Day in the 1970s, the women were adorned in blue instead of white. Blue represents heaven. It is calming, peaceful and serene. The ladies wore blue as a symbol of their commitment to be inclusive of all individuals who believe love in action can change the world.

The United Women in Faith of Friendship United Methodist Church are connected spiritual women acting boldly for justice and transformation of communities.

As they say, "We are ready to impact lives."



Members and friends will unload the pumpkins Sept. 17.

Disciples Pumpkin Patch to begin annual missions fundraiser Sept. 17

The pumpkins are coming! That's the word from Disciples United Methodist Church, Greenville, which is gearing up to hold its annual pumpkin patch fundraiser this fall.

This year's harvest of pumpkins is slated to arrive Saturday, Sept. 17.

The Pumpkin Patch at Disciples United Methodist in Greenville annually raises funds for missions by selling pumpkins. The Pumpkin Patch partners with the Navajo Indian Nation in Farmington, New Mexico, helping to grow 1,200 acres of pumpkins each year.

There are big pumpkins and tiny pumpkins and every size in between. There are orange, green, striped and even white pumpkins and gourds of all shapes and sizes.

The Pumpkin Patch will open on Sept. 17 after members and friends of Disciples UMC unload the pumpkins off the truck. The Disciples Pumpkin Patch will be open daily through Oct. 31 from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. except Sunday, when it opens at noon.

This is Disciples' biggest annual fundraiser to benefit United Methodist missions.

Disciples is located at 185 Riley Smith Road in Greenville.



More than 300 students were served through the marketplace.

St. Paul offers free school supply marketplace for community

On Aug. 7, St. Paul UMC transformed their fellowship hall in the west end of downtown Greenville into a marketplace of school supplies (sans price tags).

The supplies were gathered by St. Paul members, as well as collection sites at downtown restaurants and St. Andrew's Episcopal Church.

More than 300 students were served during the day. Each student was allowed to choose their own supplies based on grade-level needs and their own personal preferences. The students also enjoyed picking out four books to keep for their home library and receiving backpack buttons that proclaimed their true identity, "I am a child of God."

Representatives from United Ministries and The Christian Learning Centers of Greenville County joined the St. Paul family for the event to share ways they can walk alongside families to help make this the best school year ever.

WSUMC youth starts little free hygiene pantry for the underserved in church soup cellar

COLUMBIA—Thanks to recent high school graduate Lydia Conte, Washington Street United Methodist Church has opened a "Little Free Hygiene Pantry" in its soup cellar.

Conte's idea was to create a pantry of hygiene products most people take for granted and make them available on a day-to-day basis for those less fortunate. For those partaking of the meals served in the soup cellar, her Little Free Hygiene Pantry is now open.

Along with the Rev. Becky Shirley and others at the church, Conte was brainstorming ideas for her Girl Scout Gold Award project. As she looked back on the many service projects she had enjoyed in the past, she realized some of her favorite experiences had been helping in the soup cellar.

"When I was a young girl, I always loved being in the Mary's Maiden Circle. Filling up bags full of hygiene products for clients of the soup cellar around the holidays was always one of my favorite activities," Conte said. "I knew I wanted to do something to honor the impact that had on me under the leadership of Mary Lide and Kathy Wright. They taught me how to experience the joy of caring for others."

Her idea was straightforward: provide hygiene products year-round for those in need. The soup cellar was a perfect outlet to reach this community, so the idea of the pantry was born. A cabinet that was purchased at a thrift store was refurbished and stocked with 10 different kinds of travel-size hygiene products. Now, diners can browse and take what they need on the way out.

Personal hygiene is so important, not



Donations to the Little Free Hygiene Pantry can be made online at wsmethodist.org/giving, or by visiting the Little Free Hygiene Pantry's Wish List on AmazonSmile.

only for physical health but for good mental health. When personal hygiene declines, it can easily lead to self-esteem issues, which are just as dangerous and damaging for adults as for teenagers.

The soup cellar at Washington Street has been feeding the underserved for more than 40 years. Meals are served weekdays from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Native American Ministries

Life lessons from the Three Sisters garden

For more than millennia, Native American women from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific and from Mexico to Montana have mounded the earth in foot diameters and planted three different varieties of seeds in the same pattern within each circumference.

To this day, this method of gardening is extremely successful for the plants, for the soil and for the people. Modern agricultural science proves this is true.

The Three Sisters, as they are called, are corn, beans and squash.

Legend has it that one icy winter long ago, the people were starving with very little to eat. Three ethereal looking women suddenly appeared in an Indian settlement. The people generously shared their warm fire and a meal even though starvation seemed eminent. The three women were most appreciative. Each woman shared from a bundle each carried. The tall woman in yellow with flowing hair shared yellow kernels. The lady in green with a heart shaped face shared some hard curved speckled seeds. The third woman in orange shared flat white oval seeds. They instructed the women of the village how to plant the three seeds together and said they would have plenty of good food for the people. They also shared that the soil would also be fed and healthy by this way of planting. Then the ethereal women mysteriously vanished into the night. The villagers followed the instructions and were successful. They, in turn, shared this planting method with others.

"Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:9-10 NKJV).

Currently, gardeners who use this method of companion planting can attest to how efficient and productive the Three Sisters can be. Corn is the firstborn, which grows straight with a tall sturdy stem. She is upright and efficient and sets the God-

given template of her existence. The bean is planted next to the corn, growing its heart shaped leaves. The leaves twine around the sturdy corn stem never hindering the corn leaf or developing corn. This middle sister is flexible and adaptable. The bean plant is a fixer. In her roots, she turns nitrogen gas from the atmosphere into mineral nitrogen in the soil, which all plants need to grow and flourish. The squash is the youngest sister and planted on the outer perimeter of the mound. Its leaves provide an umbrella of shade to help hold the moisture in the soil for itself and two older sisters. The prickly squash vine hinders insects and deters small mammals who do not like the prickly vines on their feet.

Nutritionally, corn provides natural carbohydrates, which provides energy. Beans fill a nutritional gap by providing protein. Squash provides beta carotene, a valuable nutrient (Vitamin A) that is an antioxidant and helps with brain function, skin and eye health. While each one is good individually, all three sisters together taste great and are satisfying and balanced.

The Three Sisters reminds us of one of the basic teachings of Native American tradition. Mother Earth and all on and within are part of God's university for us to learn more about him and his creation. We learn from God's creation because, as the Bible says, "The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein" (Psalms 24: 1 NKJV).

In observing the Three Sisters, it is important to know that our own unique gifts need to be used on our life's journey. We can see that growing together in community and sharing our individual gifts with others nurtures and improves the entire body of Christ.

—Catherine Nelson, vice chair of the South Carolina Conference Native American Committee



Photo courtesy of Wendy Zwart

Saving lives, sharing the love of Christ

One of the monthly mission projects at Leesville UMC was to raise money to purchase smoke detectors for those in need in the community. The Batesburg-Leesville Fire Department lifted up the church on Facebook recently expressing deep appreciation for the effort. As they posted, “A big ‘thank you’ to Leesville United Methodist Church for their contribution of \$1,040 toward the purchase of smoke detectors for distribution to homes in our community and to Ed Smith Lumber for securing these smoke detectors at cost in support of this program. It has been proven time and time again that smoke detectors do save lives. Thanks again for the contribution, which will aid in better protecting our community.”



Deacon's Corner

Rev. Emma Murphy

Getting to know Emma

Editor's note: Welcome to the 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, take a moment to learn about the ministry of the Rev. Emma Murphy, one of our newest ordained deacons.

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

Murphy: As I explored my calling to ordination, I was really drawn to the role of deacon. I knew I wanted to pursue ordination and serve in the local church. However, I was also aware that I didn't feel called to preach every Sunday and order the church. Being a deacon allows me to live into my calling in a more specialized way—and I am so thankful for that. One of my friends, Martha Timmons, who is also a deacon, spent many hours with me through my discernment process. Observing the ways she serves as a deacon was very influential in my decision.

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

Murphy: In my current role, I provide care and compassion for our congregation. I am often at one of our hospitals in Columbia or visiting our homebound members. I assist in worship and help oversee our support groups and Stephen Ministry. And one of the most difficult, but most precious, responsibilities is to walk alongside families through grief and conduct funerals. While I do serve alongside our elders and licensed local pastors, my duties are slightly different. One of the main differences is that I do not have sacramental authority, so while I assist with the sacraments, I cannot bless the elements. Additionally, our elders and licensed local pastors will preach often. I am on our teaching team, but I only preach occasionally.

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?

Murphy: I would encourage them to talk to both ordained elders and deacons as they discern their calling. For a long time, I only knew elders and thought that was the only path I could take. It wasn't until I met and talked to other deacons that I felt more connected to my call. I love being a deacon because it allows me to spend more time loving and serving our congregation and community in tangible ways.

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

- Q. Fill in the blank: Vulnerability is ...?
 - A. Sharing my heart
- 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. Honestly? Probably call my mom. She's the best hype girl!
- Q. What is something that people often get wrong about you?
 - A. When people first meet me, they think I'm quiet. They couldn't be more wrong.
- Q. What's the last show that you binged and loved?
 - A. "Stranger Things."
- Q. What is a film that you really love?
 - A. "Pride and Prejudice."
- Q. What is a concert you will never forget?
 - A. Backstreet Boys
- Q. What's your favorite meal?
 - A. Tacos. Specifically from Willy Taco in Spartanburg.
- Q. What's on your nightstand right now?
 - A. A pile of laundry I need to put away.
- Q. Give us a snapshot of an ordinary moment in your life that brings you great joy.
 - A. Fishing on Lake Murray with my husband.
- Q. What is the one thing you are deeply grateful for right now?
 - A. I'm deeply grateful that I am able to do hospital visits again!



United Women in Faith

by Janice Cockfield Eaddy

Embracing change, sharing grace

"No one cuts up a fine silk scarf to patch old work clothes; you want fabrics that match. And you don't put your wine in cracked bottles."—Mark 2:22 (MSG)

We've again answered yes to God's call to mission on behalf of women, children and youth by boldly embracing the next chapter in our organization's 150-plus year journey as United Women in Faith. This is truly an exciting time in the life of our organization. Our new name will enable us to better reflect how we answer God's calling today.

As we commit to even greater inclusivity, action and impact, we must remain as women of passion and power, united by God's love in our mission to support women, children and youth. To support this effort, our new mission statement below was created:

"United Women in Faith seeks to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship and education so that they can inspire, influence and impact local and global communities."

United Women in Faith, are you ready to inspire, influence and impact our communities and the world God so loves on behalf of women, children and youth? If your answer is yes, then you should plan to join us as we celebrate our 50th South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith Annual Meeting.

This meeting will be held as an in-person event Oct. 21-22 at First United Methodist Church in Myrtle Beach.

You will be given an opportunity to come together with your sisters and brothers to hear from Sally Vonner, our National United Women in Faith transformation officer. As



Vonner



Knox

the transformation officer, she coordinates the organization's strategic focus and ongoing vision to positively impact the lives of women, children and youth. As a longtime United Women in Faith member, she puts her faith, hope and love into action daily.

Vonner is a graduate of Southern Methodist University/Perkins School of Theology with an M.Div. and women's studies certification. She previously served as the associate director of Connectional Ministries for the North Texas Conference. She is a member of First United Methodist Church in Grand Prairie, Texas. She enjoys spending time with her young adult children, Wesley and Lessie, as well as reading and traveling.

Bible study will be led by the Rev. Judith Ann Knox, daughter of Ann Hough Knox of Bishopville and the late John David Knox. She is an ordained elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. Currently, she serves as pastor of Trinity UMC in Bennettsville.

Knox earned a Bachelor of Science in psychology and a Master of Education in generic special education from University of South Carolina. She also graduated from Candler School of Theology at Emory University, earning a Master of Divinity with certification in Black church studies and a concentration in church and community leadership and administration.

The SCCUWF Program Committee has planned for an experience you will remember for years to come. Hotel reservations should be made quickly to ensure you have housing for Oct. 21.

The hotel listing and registration form can be found at umcsc.org/women/ and in the September Mission Echo.

Eaddy is the SCCUWF vice president.



Pictured from left are Luci Proctor, UWF member; Krista Davis, activities director; Cassandra Duncan, assistant activities director, and Doris Piper, UWF president.

'Pillows for Pals' project unites Wesley women with residents of nursing home

The United Women in Faith at Wesley United Methodist Church, Ladson, are excited about their newest and latest mission project for 2022, "Pillows For Pals."

There is nothing better than having a comfortable and supportive bed pillow to lay your head after a long day. So when the women of the unit learned some residents of local nursing home facilities don't always have access to comfortable and supportive pillows, the UWF—along with the Wesley church family—jumped into resolution mode.

The UWF collected new, unused bed pillows for several weeks for the residents of Viviant of Hanahan (formerly Heartland) Nursing facility. They collected and donated

a total of 53 pillows to the residents, all blessed by their pastor, Dr. Carlton J. McClam Sr.

On July 12, the pillows were delivered. Those who helped with the ministry effort said that to see the smiling faces of both residents and staff members was simply beautiful. However, hearing the residents ask if they were getting a new pillow, and then seeing the simple excitement in their eyes when they learned they would, was incredibly heartwarming and fulfilling, they said.

Organizers said they have gained a new set of friends, but more importantly a lot more "pals," and they hope this experience will serve as a catalyst for even greater acts of mission and charity.



Resource Center

by Betty Stalaker

New Bible study resources

The following are new Bible study resources available from The Resource Center:

Acts: Awakening to God in Everyday Life (DVD2770WM=) Author: Spoelstra, Melissa. 6 sessions, 23-33 min/leader's guide/participant wbk/2021.

Whether it's because of distractions, busyness or a case of the blahs, we can experience a drift toward indifference in our spiritual lives. We have a need for an ongoing spiritual awakening if we want to become more aware of God's presence and activity in our everyday lives. In "Acts: Awakening to God in Everyday Life," a six-week study of the Book of Acts by Melissa Spoelstra, you will journey with the first followers of Jesus and witness the birth and growth of the early church through spiritual awakening to the power of God's Spirit, message, freedom, grace, mission and direction. From their experiences, you will learn postures that will help you attune your own spiritual heart to experience God's presence, hear God's voice and see God at work all around. This study offers a fresh encounter with God to prepare you to face daily battles, be able to discern the messages of our culture and be ready to share God's love with others always. CC. Age: YAS.

I'm Waiting, God: Finding Blessing in God's Delays

(DVD2772WM=) Author: Roose, Barb. 4 sessions, 15-19 min. each/participant's guide with leader helps/2019.

Do you ever feel like God is taking too long to answer your prayers? Have you ever taken matters into your own hands, only to discover that you've made the situation worse? Waiting on God challenges our faith when the bills are stacking up, our families are falling apart or our dreams feel like they won't come true. We know that God hears our prayers, but it's hard when the clock is ticking, yet he hasn't shown us the answer. In this four-week Bible study, Barb Roose invites us to explore the stories of women in the Bible who had to wait on God, women such as Hannah, Ruth, Tamar and the un-

named woman who suffered for more than a decade with a painful medical condition. If you've felt anxious, angry, discouraged or depressed because God isn't giving you what you want, their stories will breathe fresh hope and practical next steps in your life. As a reforming control-lover, Roose mixes in her personal stories of learning how to wait for God during long seasons of unanswered prayers, family difficulties and challenging times in ministry. Together we will discover that there is goodness and blessing to be found in times of waiting, including a closer relationship with God than we've ever dared to dream. CC. Age: YAS.

Jesus Revealed: The I Am Statements in the Gospel of John

(DVD2775B=) Author: Rawle, Matt. 6 sessions, 6-15 min/leader's guide/book/2022.

Discover Jesus' character through the "I Am" statements in "Jesus Revealed," by pastor and author Matt Rawle. Light. Bread. Shepherd. Life. The Gospel of John uses these and other symbols to paint a picture of who Jesus is. Through the "I Am" statements, Jesus describes himself with rich images, showing us that he is both fully human and fully divine and calling us as his followers. Rawle explores the "I Am" statements in John as works of art that resonate throughout the Gospel and all of Scripture. He shows how these words point beyond themselves to the deep mystery of Jesus Christ. Join Rawle on this journey and experience the profound truth at the heart of the "I Am" statements: that Jesus is light and life, and he calls us to himself and offers us the hope of resurrection. CC. Age: YAS.

Signs and Wonders: A Beginner's Guide to the Miracles of Jesus

(DVD2774B=) Author: Levine, Amy-Jill. 6 sessions, 10-13 min/leader's guide/bk/2022.

In "Signs and Wonders," Amy-Jill Levine explores selected miracles of Jesus in historical and theological context. For each miracle, she discusses not only how past witnesses would have understood the events, but also how today's readers can draw meaning from Jesus's words and actions. CC. Age: YAS.

The South Carolina Conference Resource Center is your connection to DVDs and seasonal musicals. We are here to serve your church family. To reserve resources, call 803-735-8798 or visit www.umcsc.org/resource-center.



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Global Briefs

Exploring how church tensions affect relationships

DENVER—A team of United Methodist pastoral counselors will lead a Zoom webinar addressing "Fracturing Family and Friendships: Inevitable Consequences of UM Splintering?" at 6 p.m. U.S. Mountain time Sept. 20. United Methodist Association of Retired Clergy and Friends, a group that intends to remain United Methodist, is sponsoring the free webinar.

Digital church still needed

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—According to Barna research, about one in every three churchgoers has not returned to in-person worship services since COVID-19 shutdowns ended. With that in mind, Tricia K. Brown offers a few ways to minister to congregation members who have not returned, including tips for digital care.

Leadership Institute set for Sept. 28-30

LEAWOOD, Kan.—The Church of the Resurrection will hold its annual Leadership Institute for clergy and lay ministry leaders Sept. 28-30. Speakers include the Rev. Adam Hamilton, the church's senior pastor; Jo Saxton, leadership coach; and the Rev. Tod Bolsinger, author of "Canoeing the Mountains."

Frederick Buechner, minister and author, dies at 96

RUPERT, Vt.—Frederick Buechner, a Presbyterian minister whose novels and nonfiction books have influenced many United Methodists, died Aug. 15 at age 96. "Listen to your life" was the summary message he had for readers.

Longtime Emory hospital chaplaincy director dies

DECATUR, Ga.—The Rev. G. Robert Gary served five United Methodist churches before becoming director of chaplaincy at Emory University Hospital in 1971. During his 26-year tenure, he grew the department's clinical pastoral education program to the largest in the country. He died Aug. 3 at age 90.

Bishops address misinformation

PLANO, Texas—Bishops are addressing misinformation they say is being spread about the future United Methodist Church as some congregations are considering leaving the denomination. In a letter to the North Texas Conference, Bishop Michael McKee said that United Methodists are not altering their foundational doctrines. Bishop Kenneth Carter provided a resource to the Western North Carolina Conference about addressing misinformation.

Some large Texas churches vote on disaffiliation

HOUSTON—Texas has long been a stronghold of The United Methodist Church in the U.S., but this summer has seen many traditionalist congregations in the state weighing whether to leave the denomination. The Woodlands Methodist Church, one of the denomination's largest, voted Aug. 7 to disaffiliate.

Inflation, gas prices complicate ministries

SISTERSVILLE, W.Va.—High gas prices and inflation are giving rural pastors more challenges in the wake of COVID-19. Donations are down and their paychecks don't stretch as far.

Appalachian Ministry Network celebrates 50 years

WHEELING, W.Va.—The United Methodist Appalachian Ministry Network's 50th anniversary assembly will be Oct. 5-7 and will feature Bishops Cynthia Moore-Koikoi and Thomas Bickerton. For 50 years, members of the network have provided resources and support to hundreds of local churches and ministries serving the people of Appalachia.

Conferences take action on gun violence

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Even as United Methodist conferences deal with mounting church exits and disagreements over LGBTQ inclusion, they are bearing a shared witness on gun violence and urging actions beyond thoughts and prayers.

Asbury writings discovered

BALTIMORE—Writings by legendary Methodist Francis Asbury were discovered by an archivist for The United Methodist Church. The works, found in a manila folder that probably hasn't been opened since the 1960s, include a "state of the denomination" speech. Archivist Rev. Bonnie McCubbin said the notebook was written two days before Asbury's death in 1816.

'Psalms for Black Lives' released

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—A book conceived after the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor offers relevant Psalms, discussion questions and a guide for community and congregational interaction around issues of justice. "Psalms for Black Lives: Reflections for the Work of Liberation" was written by the Revs. Gabby Cudjoe-Wilkes and Andrew Wilkes. The contents of the book began as devotionals for a churchwide fasting experience led by the Wilkes during the summer of 2020.

Church without a building

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The latest Church Is Changing podcast features the Rev. Corey Turnpenny, pastor of Church in the Wild in Windsor, New York. The congregation gathers outside at a camp and retreat center with a mission to care for the earth. The Rev. Beth Estock conducts the interview.

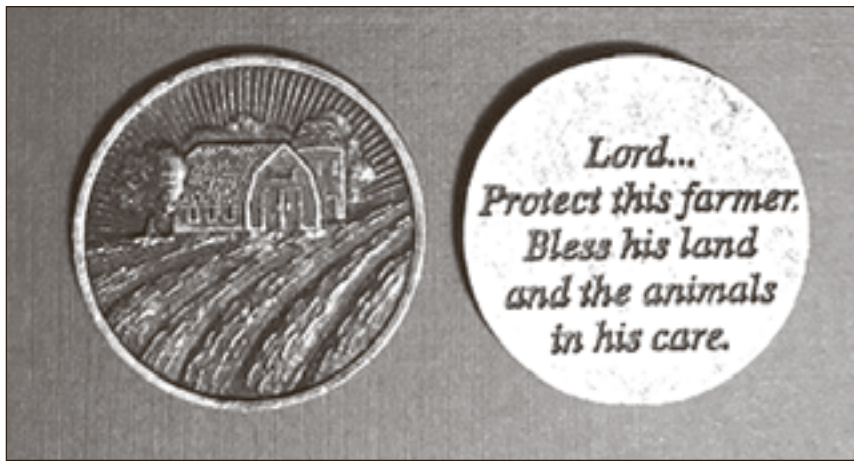
Poll about Jesus raises questions

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Nearly half of those taking a survey on attitudes about Jesus and Christianity said believers are giving and loving. But a significant minority said Christians are hypocritical and judgmental. "I think what (the poll) demonstrates is that we have not done a sufficient job of teaching people who Jesus is and why he's important," said the Rev. David F. Watson, professor of New Testament and academic dean at United Theological Seminary.

Grant applications being accepted

WASHINGTON—Applications are being accepted for three grant programs operated by United Methodist Church and Society. The deadline is Sept. 16 to apply for Ethnic Local Church, Human Relations Day and Peace with Justice grants, which range from \$2,000 to \$5,000. Applicants must be a United Methodist church, district, conference or other affiliated organization, or an ecumenical group or organization with a formal partnership with The United Methodist Church.

—Courtesy of United Methodist News Service



Trinity plans to do a similar service before the spring planting season.

Blessing the farmers

Trinity celebrates Rural Life Sunday

Trinity United Methodist Church, Newberry, celebrated Rural Life Sunday on July 26.

The Rev. Doug Benton led the community service, which celebrated the rural heritage of The United Methodist Church and specifically those who work with and on the land: our farmers. The Sunday was designated to bring people together for prayer and to celebrate the blessings of rural life and the local farmers.

A beautiful service was held centering on several verses in the Bible relating to farming:

“And God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food’” (Genesis 1:29 ESV).

“You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he

may bring forth food from the earth” (Psalm 104:14).

“And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. And he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be full” (Deuteronomy 11:13-15).

At the end of the service, all farmers were called to the altar for a special blessing and were presented with a pocket token with the Farmer’s Prayer on it.

This was the first Rural Life Sunday Trinity has held, and organizers said it was very well received in the community. They plan on doing it again before the spring planting season.



Conference Historical Society

by Dr. Roger M. Gramling

Merger becomes a reality in South Carolina

At the 1966 special called session of the General Conference, the Commission on Interjurisdictional Relations reported on the progress made to date and brought a resolution detailing specifics in regards to transfers and mergers proposing a target date for completion not later than the close of the 1972 jurisdictional conferences.

A minority report by two members from the Southeastern Jurisdiction argued that the report exceeded the authority given to the commission by the 1964 General Conference with objections specifically to the proposed target date. However, the minority report was rejected, and the report of the commission adopted. Thus, the transfers of the remaining annual conferences of the Central Jurisdiction into the regional jurisdictions had been mandated by the General Conference.

As authorized by the 1966 General Conference, the final session of the Central Jurisdictional Conference was held in August 1967. L. Scott Allen was elected as the last bishop of the Central Jurisdiction. Soon he would be transferred into the Southeastern Jurisdiction and assigned to the Holston Annual Conference.

At the 1968 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference, the realigned annual conferences of the Central Jurisdiction lying within the boundaries of the Southeastern Jurisdiction were transferred into the jurisdiction. The South Carolina Conference (1866) joined the Columbia Area under the superintendency of Bishop Paul Hardin Jr.

In anticipation of the transfer and eventual merger, the South Carolina Conference (1785) requested the naming of merger committees to work on the specifics of a merger plan. Under Bishop Hardin’s leadership, the two conferences began to have some joint activities while the merger committees and subcommittees worked on a plan. There were many concerns in addition to race, including the differences in pension rates, minimum salary levels, the difference in the size of the two conferences and funding. The 1866 Conference budgeted based on prior year actual receipts.

In May 1970, the merger committees presented a proposed Plan of Union for review and discussion. Among other items, the plan proposed 15 districts with 11 superintendents from the 1785 Conference and four superintendents from the 1866 Conference and a 75/25 percent ratio on conference boards, commissions and committees. The plan was altered to reduce the number of districts from 15 to 12 with a 9:3 ratio. The ratios would be observed for a period of 12 years.

The proposed plan was approved by the 1866 Conference but was defeated by the 1785 Conference at the 1971 regular sessions of the two conferences.

Bishop Hardin appointed a “Committee

of Six” from the 1785 Conference to prepare modifications. The committee proposed changes setting the ratios at 80 percent/20 percent and reducing the period of observance from 12 years to eight. Also, the superintendents of the 12 districts would not be designated by race.

In September 1971, the 1785 Conference approved the amended plan; however, the 1866 Conference meeting soon thereafter defeated the plan.

A “Committee of Six” from each annual conference met to attempt to reach a mutually acceptable plan. By December 1971, a plan was again reported. The new South Carolina Conference would for the present have 15 districts with four superintendents and districts from the 1866 Conference and 11 from the 1785 Conference. The salaries and allowances of the district superintendents would be uniform across the conference. Effective at the 1974 session of the new conference, the conference would be divided into 12 realigned districts, the number of superintendents having been reduced by attrition.

The Plan of Union recommended to the bishop that after 1975, the Cabinet be composed of nine superintendents from the former 1785 Conference and three from the former 1866 Conference for the remainder of the eight years.

For the first two quadrennia, the members of conference boards, commissions and committees would reflect ratios based on the approximate percentage of conference membership of the two former conferences. Each would elect its own chairperson without regard to former conference relationship. Following the realignment of the districts, one of three of the district lay leader and two associates would be from each of the former conferences where possible. (Until January 1, 1973, all boards and agencies would be composed of all the members of these boards and agencies from the two former conferences.)

The plan provided for a Committee on Implementation to address issues and developments not addressed by the Plan of Union. Also, the bishop was asked to appoint a Continuing Committee on Merger.

On Jan. 27, 1972, the two conferences met in joint session but in a “division of the house” at Township Auditorium in Columbia. Both conferences approved the Plan of Union as modified, thus preparing the way for the final sessions of the two conferences on June 5, 1972, in Spartanburg and the “declaration of union” at a joint service of worship that evening in Spartanburg Memorial Auditorium.

Gramling currently serves as secretary-treasurer of the Conference Historical Society. He is the newly elected president of the Southeastern Jurisdiction Historical Society.



From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

Methodism in Charleston, Part 4

Given its long history, it seems as though Charleston Methodism is always worth one more column.

At the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865, Charleston’s Methodists worshipped at four churches: Bethel, Trinity, Cumberland and Spring Street, though the latter church had been used as a storehouse during the war and was seized by the Union Army afterward. About 500 White Methodists were on the rolls of those three churches, according to the minutes of the conference held in 1866.

Outside of Charleston proper, another 1,000 White and 700 African-American Methodists were part of the Summerville, Cooper River, Walterboro, Black Swamp and Hardeeville circuits and the Summerville Station.

Charleston Methodism had been strongly biracial before the Civil War, but with emancipation, the African-American members of the congregations withdrew. The Northern branch of the Methodist Episcopal Church organized a new Annual Conference, and disagreements over control over church property and where Black Methodists would worship were coming to a head.

At a meeting at Trinity Church, the Rev. T. Willard Lewis rose and shouted, “Brothers and sisters, there will be no galleries in heaven. Those who care to go with a church that makes no distinctions as to race or color, follow me to the Normal School at the corner of Beaufain and St. Philip Streets.” Many of those members no doubt helped organize the congregation that came to be called Old Bethel. That church, still in use today, is no doubt the oldest Methodist place of worship south of Maryland.


During the late 19th century, Charleston Methodism tried to recover from the shock of the Civil War, and most of the White population remained concentrated on the peninsula.

Of course, as Charleston grew beyond the peninsula, the need for churches outside of downtown began to grow. However, one church has its roots in the antebellum era. Francis Asbury would have visited the Methodist society in Mount Pleasant on one of his many visits to Charleston. Around 1799, he helped organize that society. Later, in 1809, James Hibben donated land, and finally, around 1830, the congregation built a building. That structure lasted until after the Civil War. After a period apparently without a building, the members of the Hibben Church built a new structure between 1899 and 1901. That church remained in use until the 1950s, when the congregation moved to their current location. As Mount Pleasant grew, so did the congregation.

Charlestonians crossed the Ashley as well, and growth in the West Ashley area led to the organization of a new church in 1944. A core group met in the summer and fall of 1944, and a special charge conference in October with 125 charter members chose the name “John Wesley.” They formed a building committee, and within two years, an educational building was open. The church then prepared for building a sanctuary, which opened in July 1951. That sanctuary is still in use.

Of course, many other congregations in and around the Holy City have grown up and contributed to Methodism’s story in South Carolina.

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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Such welcome

On June 9, the Friendship UMC United Women of Faith in Florence delivered 38 "welcome bags" to The House of Hope, which opened a tiny home village as transitional long-term housing for homeless mothers and children. The Friendship UWF undertook an ambitious project creating these bags for the new residents of the village. The women received an outpouring of support from the Friendship congregation as they contributed these bags containing toiletries, first-aid kits and candy for the kids. Pictured from left are Mary Lynn Peter, Anna Cribb and Edna Poston, UWF president.

Photo courtesy of Rev. Claire Van Den Berg

Harmony produces two school district superintendents

One small country church, Harmony United Methodist Church, has produced two school district superintendents.

Dr. Billy "Ray" Strickland graduated from Ware Shoals High School in 1972. He enrolled in the University of South Carolina in 1975. He started his 40 years in education at Gray Court Middle School as football coach. In 1971, he moved to Laurens District 55 High School as football coach. During his tenure at Laurens District 55 schools, he served as assistant principal and assistant superintendent. In 2010, he became superintendent and served until 2016 when he retired. He is now the executive director of the Western Education Consortium. His wife, Celitate, was school counselor for Laurens Primary School. He has two sons

and grandsons. One of his sons is now the football coach for Anderson University.

Dr. Fay Sprouse graduated from Ware Shoals High School in 1980. She enrolled at Erskine College in 1984. She started her years as an educator at Ware Shoals Primary, Ware Shoals Elementary School as teacher and Abbeville Even Start director. In 1995, she became principal of Ware Shoals Primary School, and served until 2001. In 2001, she became superintendent of Greenwood District 51. Sprouse has two children and five grandchildren. Sprouse is music/choir director for Ware Shoals UMC. She also serves as music director for Harmony UMC.

Dr. Strickland and Dr. Sprouse were very active in Harmony UMC UMYF as teens.

Obituaries

Jerome Robert Black

WOOSTER, Ohio—Jerome Robert Black, grandfather of Matt Brodie, died July 17, 2022. Mr. Brodie is the Disaster Response coordinator and production coordinator of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. His wife, Jessica Brodie, is the editor of the *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate*.

Funeral services were held July 27 at the McIntire, Bradham and Sleek Funeral Home. Burial with military honors was in Wooster Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to the American Heart Association at www.heart.org; to the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org; or to Wooster UMC, 245 N. Market St., Wooster, OH 44691.

Mr. Black is survived by his wife, Mary Irene Black, two sons, a daughter, two stepdaughters and stepson.

Shirley Ann Blakeney

CHARLOTTE, N.C.—Shirley Ann Blakeney, sister of the Rev. Mary Burnell, died Aug. 5, 2022. Rev. Burnell is the pastor of the Kellybell-Sandy Bluff Charge, Hartsville.

Funeral services were held Aug. 15 at Roseboro's Mortuary and Crematory with burial in Rose Hills Memorial Park, Putnam Valley, New York.

Reece Griffin Jr.

GREER—Reece Griffin Jr., father of the Rev. Calvin Smith, died July 18, 2022. Rev. Smith is the pastor of Dunton United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held July 23 at New Salem Baptist Church, Tigerville, with burial in the church cemetery.

Mr. Griffin is survived by five sons and three daughters.

Jeffrey Thomas Griffis

AIKEN—Jeffrey Thomas "Jeff" Griffis, brother of the Rev. Debra Griffis-Woodberry, died July 19, 2022. Rev. Griffis-Woodberry is a retired member of the South Caro-

lina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Graveside services were held July 23 at Eastview Cemetery, Edgefield. A funeral service was held July 24 at the Faith Center, St. John's UMC.

Memorials may be sent to St. John's UMC, 204 Newberry St., NW, Aiken, SC 29801.

Mr. Griffis is survived by his sister.

Essie Louise McCants

SUMTER—Essie Louise "Lou" McCants, wife of the Rev. Bobby Shaw, died July 23, 2022. Rev. Shaw is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held July 30 at Trinity Missionary Baptist Church with burial in Mount Moriah Church Cemetery, Mayesville.

Ms. McCants is survived by her husband, daughter and two sons.

Michael Robert Meder

FLORENCE—Michael Robert Meder, husband of the Rev. Bette Hedden, died July 23, 2022. Rev. Hedden is the pastor of St. Paul United Methodist Church.

A memorial service was held July 30 at Waters-Powell Funeral Home Chapel.

Memorials may be made to The Cushing's Support and Research Foundation, <https://csrfs.net/support-us/membership/>; or to Tuesday's Children, <https://www.tuesday-children.org/get-involved/donate-now/>.

Mr. Meder is survived by his wife, two sons, stepson and stepdaughter.

Gaynell P. Meredith

WILMINGTON, N.C.—Gaynell P. Meredith, sister of the Rev. Angelia Price, died Aug. 8, 2022. Rev. Price is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church currently serving the Mesopotamia-Asbury Charge, Gaffney.

A graveside service was held Aug. 15 at Forest Lawn Cemetery, Tabor City, North

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.

Carolina.

Mrs. Meredith is survived by her husband, James E. Meredith, and stepson.

Dr. Walter Henry McKelvey

COLUMBIA—Dr. Walter Henry McKelvey, a member of the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Aug. 15, 2022.

Dr. McKelvey was the president and dean of Gammon Seminary from 1997-2010. After his retirement, he served the South Carolina Conference at Mount Carmel and I. DeQuincey Newman charges.

Funeral services were held Aug. 23 at Francis Burns UMC.



McKelvey

Rev. Jerry Leroy Phillips Sr.

LANCASTER—The Rev. Jerry Leroy Phillips Sr., a retired elder in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church and father of the Rev. Lee Phillips Jr., died July 23, 2022. Rev. Phillips Jr. is the pastor of Grace UMC, Union.

Prior to his retirement in 2007, Rev. Phillips served Asbury Circuit, Starr, Murrells Inlet, Ruffin Circuit, Mount Dearborn, Rock Hill-Main Street, McCormick, Shiloh-Zoar and Holly Hill charges. Following his retirement, he served Grace (Lancaster) Charge.

Funeral services were held July 28 at Grace-Lynnwood UMC, with burial in Rock Hill Memorial Gardens, Rock Hill.



Phillips Sr.

Memorials may be made to the American Heart Association, P.O. Box 840692, Dallas, TX 75284-0692; or to Wofford College Office of Advancement, 429 N. Church St., Spartanburg, SC 29303.

Rev. Phillips is survived by his wife, Hazel Phillips, two sons and two daughters.

Rev. Walter Tart

MARION—The Rev. Walter Tart, a retired local pastor of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Aug. 12, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 2008, Rev. Tart served the Asbury-Clio and Latta charges. Following his retirement, he returned to the Latta Charge.

Funeral services were held Aug. 21 at CD Joyner Auditorium with burial in Devotion Gardens Cemetery.

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



Tart

Rev. James Bert Watson

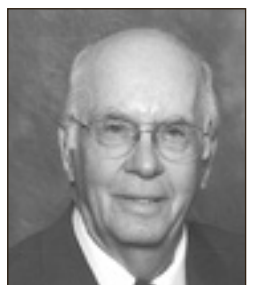
LANCASTER—The Rev. James Bert Watson, a retired elder in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Aug. 4, 2022.

Prior to his retirement in 1994, Rev. Watson served the Twitty, Spring Hill, Aynor, Hickory Grove, Buford and Chapin charges. He served the East Lancaster charge in his retirement.


Funeral services were held Aug. 7 at The Chapel of Burgess Funeral Home with burial in Osceola UMC Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to HOPE of Lancaster, 2008 Pageland Hwy., Lancaster, SC 29720; or to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105.


Rev. Watson is survived by his two sons and daughter.



Watson



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UMC portion of Boy Scouts' bankruptcy ruling approved

A 281-page ruling in the Boy Scouts of America's bankruptcy proceedings indicates that most of the reorganization plan meets the criteria of bankruptcy law and is constitutional.

The ruling approves the United Methodist portion of the settlement, but there are several more matters the BSA must address for the plan to be confirmed.

"The United Methodist settlement sought to put the survivors first and the continuation of safe scouting for present scouts as high priorities," said Bishop John Schol, who chairs the United Methodist leadership team created to support United Methodist chartering associations in the

matter.

The United Methodist settlement includes a \$30 million contribution to the \$2.6 billion survivor settlement; a commitment to hear the experiences of survivors who participated in United Methodist-sponsored troops; a review of all Safe Sanctuaries policies in United Methodist congregations and annual conferences; and the publication of three articles in denominational communication resources about sexual abuse and how to keep young people safe.

The United Methodist settlement is the result of countless hours by the United Methodist legal team, the ad hoc committee, the leadership team, the staff of the General

Commission of United Methodist Men and more than 200 annual conference leaders.

"It was a team effort, and everyone led faithfully and with a commitment to our Wesleyan values and principles," Schol said. "I am also grateful for our leaders of scout troops across United Methodism. In very challenging times, they are committed to lead safe scouting and guide young people to grow in witness and citizenship.

"I am confident that everyone working together with the BSA will be able to address the remaining issues so that survivors will be fairly compensated and one million young people will continue to participate in scouting."

S.C. ELCC offers two scholarships for events this fall

South Carolina Ethnic Local Church Concerns is offering two scholarships for events this fall.

If you are a member of a small-member-ship racial/ethnic church (125 in attendance or less each Sunday), the ELCC invites you to apply for a scholarship.

On Sept. 22-24, the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, will be offering a "Methodism 101 Retreat." Scholarships are available to cover registration (\$125)

and two night's lodging (\$100).

Then, on Oct. 6-8, the Summit on the Black Church will be held at the Florence Center, Florence. The theme is "Healthy Churches: It's Time for a Checkup." According to the Rev. Walter Strawther, conference congregational specialist specializing in African-American ministries, Bishop Jonathan Holston is seeking an emphasis on having lay leadership present at the summit to include lay leaders, S/PPRC chair, United

Methodist Men, United Women in Faith, finance chairs, trustee chairs and more. ELCC is offering scholarships to attend.

To apply for one or all of the learning opportunities listed above, go to <https://www.umcsc.org/advocacy/elcc>.

Appreciation ads available to thank pastor, music ministers

This fall, churches have the opportunity to recognize special people in the church with appreciation ads.

October is Pastor Appreciation Month, and the Advocate is offering a way to celebrate pastors through special ads in the Advocate. Three sizes are available (all 5.088" wide):

- Small (1" tall): \$38
- Medium (2" tall): \$76
- Large (4" tall): \$152

Email text to atrussell@umcsc.org or send to 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203; deadline is Sept. 10.

Then, in November, celebrate your music director, choir or praise band just as they are gearing up for the Christmas season.

As with the above, three sizes are available (all 5.088" wide). Email text to atrussell@umcsc.org. Deadline is Oct. 10. Churches will be billed for the ads unless otherwise noted.

Retirement/Birthday Celebration Rev. Frank V. James



The Rev. Frank V. James, pastor of I. De-Quincey Newman United Methodist Church, will celebrate his 70th birthday and retirement on Saturday, Oct. 1 from 4-6 p.m. at Edisto Fork UMC, Orangeburg. The church is located at 356 Lariot Road, Orangeburg, SC 29115.

The Rev. Edward McDowell, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church will be the guest speaker.

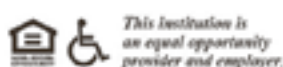
Pastors, you and your congregations are invited to join us. Please RSVP by Sept. 15 at 803-786-9894 or idnewmanumc@gmail.com.

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August

Aug. 30—Basic Church Administration Zoom class, Completing Charge Conference Forms, 7 p.m. Register: www.church-admin.org

September

Killingsworth Special Emphasis Month (UMW)

Sept. 3—Book launch for “A Better You: Christian Life Beyond Negative Thinking” by Dr. Anthony Hodge, Silver Hill Memorial UMC, Spartanburg, 10 a.m.-Noon. Ahodge3@umcsc.org.

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. 10—Connectional Ministries meeting, Trenholm Road UMC, Columbia, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Sept. 11—LSM School (Spartanburg District), Beaumont UMC, Spartanburg, 2-5:30 p.m., \$40. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-Fall-2022.pdf>

Sept. 11—LSM School (Marion District), Zoom, 4-5 p.m.

Sept. 11-13—Fall Revival, “Hope for Tomorrow,” Rehoboth UMC, Columbia, 7-8:30 p.m.

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

Sept. 16—Open House, Sea Islands Camp



Photo courtesy of Enid Jenkins

Giveaway day

Wesley UMC, Ladson, held a free Community Backpack Giveaway Saturday, Aug. 6, from 10 a.m. to noon in the church parking lot. Each backpack included nonperishable food items and travel-sized toiletries. Free sandwiches and chips were also provided. To ensure continued health safety, recipients remained in their car, and volunteers brought the items to them. Organizers said they were able to hand out 70 bags with a goal of only 50 bags. Wesley UMC is pastored by Dr. Carlton J. McClam Sr.

and Retreat Center, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. RSVP at <https://sccarm.org>

Sept. 17—Greenwood District Men N Ministry, Butler UMC, Saluda, 8:30 a.m.

Sept. 17-Oct. 31—Pumpkin Patch, Disciples UMC, Greenville. M-Sat., 9 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sun., Noon-7 p.m. 864-297-0382 or <https://mydisciplesumc.org>

Sept. 18—LSM School (Spartanburg District), Beaumont UMC, Spartanburg, 2-5:30 p.m., \$40. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-Fall-2022.pdf>

Sept. 18—LSM School (Greenwood District),

St. Paul UMC, Saluda, 2-7 p.m., \$25. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Greenwood-FALL-2022-LSM-school-book-list.pdf>

Sept. 22-24—“Methodism 101 Retreat,” Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia. Scholarships available at <https://www.umcsc.org/advocacy/elcc>

Sept. 24—Hartsville District Men N Ministry, Centenary UMC, Hartsville, 9 a.m.

Sept. 25—LSM School (Spartanburg District), Beaumont UMC, Spartanburg, 2-5:30 p.m., \$40. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-Fall-2022.pdf>

Sept. 25—LSM School (Greenwood District), Zoom, 2-7 p.m., St. Paul UMC, Saluda, \$25. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Greenwood-FALL-2022-LSM-school-book-list.pdf>

October

Bethlehem Center, Spartanburg Special Emphasis Month (UMW)

Oct. 2—Florence District Men N Ministry, Wesley Chapel UMC, Lake City, 3 p.m.

Oct. 4—UMVIM, Grace UMC, Columbia, 7:30-8:30 p.m.

Oct. 6-8—Summit on the Black Church, Florence Convention Center, Florence. Scholarships are available at <https://www.umcsc.org/advocacy/elcc>

Oct. 8—Indoor Yard Sale, Washington Street UMC, Columbia, 7 a.m.-1 p.m.

Oct. 8—Annual Men N Ministry Business Meeting, United Methodist Conference Center, Columbia, 8:30 a.m.

Oct. 10—Indigenous Peoples Day

Oct. 13-15—SEJ Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Four Points by Sheraton, Richmond, Virginia. Register: <https://goo.gl/RxQpcW>

Oct. 14-16—Choir Music Weekend, Lake Junaluska, \$105. 800-222-4930 or lakejunaluska.com/choirmusic

Oct. 15—Fall Festival, Asbury Hills, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. 864-836-3711 or retreat@asburyhills.org

Oct. 21-22—SCCUMW 50th Annual Meeting, First UMC, Myrtle Beach, \$40. <https://www.umcsc.org/women>

Oct. 29—Church Bazaar, Zion UMC, Prosperity, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Nelson to preach at Rehoboth fall revival

The Rev. Angela Ford Nelson will be the guest preacher at a fall revival at Rehoboth United Methodist Church, Columbia, this month.

Set for Sept. 11-13 from 7-8:30 p.m., Nelson will preach reflecting the theme “Hope for Tomorrow.”

Nelson pastors New Life UMC, Walterboro.

Host is the Rev. Meegian Gossard, Rehoboth pastor.

All are welcome. For information, contact Rehoboth UMC at 803-788-2220 or office@rumcsc.com.



Nelson

Washington Street UMC plans massive indoor yard sale with USC’s MSN

COLUMBIA—Washington Street United Methodist Church will hold a massive indoor yard sale Oct. 8 from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the church’s social hall. The church is located at 1401 Washington St. in downtown Columbia.

Proceeds will benefit the Active Faith ministry of WSUMC, as well as the Methodist Student Network at the University of South Carolina.

The church is accepting donations for the yard sale on weekdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Sept. 29. Currently, the church is only accepting small, boxed items. Large items will be accepted on Sept. 29-30. No books except children’s books. No clothing or shoes.

Bring donations to the Bull Street entrance and someone will help you with your items. For more information, you may call the church office at 803-256-2417, or email jane@wsmethodist.org.



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Moncks Corner UMC is seeking to hire a Ministry Associate to lead the ministries of youth and evangelism, and to participate in the pastoral ministry with the senior pastor. Religious Studies or some seminary education is desired but not necessarily required. Contact Rev. Randall Haase at Moncks Corner UMC for a detailed job description, 843-761-8547 or rlhaase@umcsc.org.

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by the Rev. Genova McFadden

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Sept. 4 Fearless Faith and “Creative Maladjustment”

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 1:1–2:10

Background Scripture: Same

Key Verse: Exodus 1:17, “But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live.”

These midwives were brave and creative in their resistance to Pharaoh’s command to kill all newborn Hebrew boys. They “feared God,” which in Old Testament language means they revered God. They had a deep faith. This faith, coupled with their creative resistance, moved them to act ethically to save lives.

Dr. Martin Luther King calls this kind of action “creative maladjustment.” He said, “Modern psychology has a word that is probably used more than any other word ... ‘maladjusted’ ... there are certain things in our nation and in the world which I am proud to be maladjusted and which I hope all men of good-will will be maladjusted until the good societies realize ... As maladjusted as Jesus of Nazareth who could say to the men and women of his day, ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you. Pray for them that spitefully use you.’”

The midwives’ fearless faith and “creative maladjustment” had effect for Israel, and for themselves. The midwives became an integral part of God’s activity in fulfillment of the divine promise of descendants and land to ancestral forebears. Perhaps they understood that the boys’ lives were both threat and hope.

Paradoxically, the midwives failed, yet they succeeded! They failed to carry out Pharaoh’s command, yet they succeeded in thwarting his plans to destroy these people whose growth he saw as a threat to his power and sovereignty.

They succeeded in advancing fulfillment of the divine promise.

Wherever one stands on the issue of abortion rights, the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* means that there will be babies born into situations where help may be needed to birth and sustain them in a community of loving people.

Would you or your faith community be willing become “midwives” to some family in need of support and guidance in such situations?

Sept. 11 Celebrating Deliverance

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 15:1–18

Background Scripture: Exodus 15

Key Verse: Exodus 15:18, “The Lord will reign for ever and ever.”

This section consists of a song of praise and thanksgiving to God for deliverance from Egyptian captivity. Though this poem is commonly known as Moses’ song, it is clear that “the ‘I’ of this song is the whole community of Israel, now publicly declaring that its life is rooted in and derived from” Yahweh (*The New Interpreter’s Bible*). The people whom Yahweh “acquired” (v. 16) now lay claim to Yahweh as their one God, unparalleled to any other gods.

The children of Israel recognized, acknowledged and celebrated the power of the Lord.

By this time in the story of the Israelites’ escape from captivity, they have experienced all manner of trials, tribulations and travail on their journey to the Promised Land.

Some might ponder the Israelites’ celebratory and worshipful praise of Yahweh while still in the midst of the exodus and having not yet attained the land of promise. But peoples who have experienced their own “exodus” and “wilderness journeys” know something about praising the Lord in

all circumstances.

This song of praise and its incontrovertible declaration of the reign of the Lord is exemplified in worship in the Black church tradition. People who know something about liberation from oppression, captivity and bondage also know much about celebration and worship of a powerful deliverer. I have heard many a testimony to “God, my strength, my song, my redeemer, my deliverer, God of my father.” They understood that they were worshipping the same powerful and saving God of this passage.

Hence, the Israelites’ celebratory song ends with an irrefutable truth that is straightforward and to the point: “The Lord will reign for ever and ever.”

Name some of the “wilderness journeys” facing the church today. How many of us can celebrate the power and presence of the Lord in the midst of our own “wilderness journeys”?

Sept. 18 “A Way Out Of No Way”

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 17:1–16

Background Scripture: Same

Key Verse: Exodus 17:6, “I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.”

It is probably safe to say that many of us have heard our elders, when talking about past struggles in their lives, speak of having to “make a way out of no way.” Such a saying is a strong statement of faith and demonstrates a resilience of faith that cannot be properly measured, only admired. Here, the Lord “makes a way out of no way” for the thirsting Israelites.

On the road to fulfillment of the divine promise, the Israelites continue to encounter suffering and struggles. They are still in a precarious situation, because they are still moving through the wilderness. Terence E. Fretheim says, “They are stuck between promise and fulfillment.”

For the “lamenting” Israelites, this journey is getting old and tedious. So the complaints mount. Now threatened with thirst and lack of water, they turn on Moses. “Wilderness is no longer a place, but a state of mind” (Fretheim).

Desperate in their need for water, they not only turn on Moses, but they also seem to “test” Yahweh, asking “Is the Lord among us or not?” (v. 7).

Fearing that he will be stoned, Moses goes directly to the Lord. Yahweh’s response is Yahweh’s own presence—Yahweh shows up at the rock by Horeb! In the sight of the elders of Israel.

In turn, the Israelites took another step toward strengthening their relationship with the Lord.

Using “water from the rock” as a metaphor for “making a way out of no way,” where are the signs, places and spaces and acts of hope today where we can find “water from the rock?”

Sept. 25 A Covenantal Decision—It’s A Matter of Choice

Lesson Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:15–20

Background Scripture: Deuteronomy 30

Key Verses: Deuteronomy 30:19–20, “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to

give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

In this passage, God, through Moses, provides the Israelites a clear and succinct message: It is time to make a decision to commit wholly to God and God’s way.

The message here is clear—Israel must make the decision to diligently and faithfully observe the Deuteronomic message: If you and your children love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, walk in the Lord’s way and obey the Lord’s commandments, God will bless you and your children, and you will live, prosper and grow numerous.

“To enter into covenant with the Lord is to make a decision to commit oneself wholly to God and God’s way. That commitment is what the covenant is about and what Deuteronomy is about” (Miller).

In this passage, we witness the Lord’s seeming utter vexation with the Israelites. Exasperated, the Lord acts as a divine parent. The promise is wrapped up in a threat! (Who could blame the Lord, given how hard-headed, stubborn and at times faithless his children have been?) How many parents have resorted to threats, admonitions and strong words to get across a critical, life-enriching message to a child in danger of going astray?

Rather than “chastising,” we would do well to see the Lord’s exhortations as those of a loving parent who desires that his children participate in the fulfillment of the divine promise.

“There is really only one way to find life

and good and well-being, in this world and in any other worlds that may exist. It is the Lord’s way. So choose that way, follow that Lord” (Miller).

We are experiencing a crisis of mental health.

Consider how you would minister to someone contemplating suicide to make a decision to “choose life”?

Works Cited/References:

Christensen, Duane L., *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002.

Clements, Ronald E., *The New Interpreter’s Study Bible: Deuteronomy*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

Fretheim, Terence E., *Exodus Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching—Exodus*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991.

McFadden, MDiv., MSW, LISW-AP, is a retired elder in the South Carolina Conference United Methodist Church. Blissfully retired and living in gratitude, she holds degrees, credentials and titles from several outstanding institutions. She celebrates being a part of God’s creation and continues serving God’s people wherever they are, striving to be a voice for those at the margins, the outcasts, the least of these. She especially finds inspiration, peace and sanctuary in the natural world, and has somehow developed a deep love for gardening.

She is learning to enjoy and take life as it is, and she is free.

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