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March 2023

## Churches wrap up discernment process, move toward next steps

By Jessica Brodie

Several dozen United Methodist churches in South Carolina are completing the Local Church Discernment Process as this edition of the *Advocate* goes to press, a process created by the annual conference to enable churches to separate from the denomination if they desire.

Announced a few days before Christmas, the discernment process permits any United Methodist church in the South Carolina Conference to pray and then hold a churchwide vote about leaving the UMC if their members believe the denomination has not upheld its stated doctrine

on issues of human sexuality. Churches must complete an intentional, 30-day discernment process; satisfy financial obligations, including all unpaid apportionment giving and unpaid salary and benefits due to clergy; satisfy or transfer of debts and other legal liabilities of the local church; and be in full communication to the district superintendent about all of this, among other steps required. Then, a churchwide vote must be taken before March 1 that indicates two-thirds of professing church members present agree to formally declare the church can no longer continue to function as a UMC.

While it is too early for many of those churches to have voted, many churches have notified the *Advocate* they are participating in the discernment process, while others have voted to steer clear of any paths that might lead to disaffiliation with the UMC.

If a church does vote to leave the UMC, the next step is for the matter to go before Annual Conference this June to vote whether or not to close the local church and transfer its assets to a new entity.

See "Discernment," Page 24

## Revolution returns



Photo by Dan O'Mara

Song brought many youth closer in their faith walk during Revolution. Here, Nancy Daines performs with Stars Go Dim.

### Youth across S.C. head to Columbia for first full-weekend Revolution in years

COLUMBIA—More than 1,000 youth made the Township Auditorium in Columbia "GLOW" for Revolution 2023 Jan. 27-29—the first full-weekend gathering of teen disciples since before the COVID-19 pandemic made such large gatherings

unsafe.

Inspired by the Revolution 2023 theme—"GLOW: God Lights Our World"—youth groups from scores of United Methodist churches across the South Carolina Conference experienced a

powerful weekend of worship and music. They heard and shared messages focused on sharing God's message of love and redemption in a relevant way.

See "Revolution," Page 12

## Aldersgate to open two more homes for special needs adults

By Jessica Brodie

United Methodists are gearing up to open two more homes for adults with special needs this year, in addition to the three they already operate.

Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry is about to break ground on the Sunshine House, a home that will accommodate four men with special needs, near Aldersgate's Rick's House at The Manor in Florence.

"An anonymous person generously donated the amount to build the home, and it is completely paid for," said Kim Thomas, Aldersgate executive director.

Thomas said The Manor deeded Aldersgate the property, and it is separated from Ricks House by a parking lot, so the two will be neighbors. Construction should take five or six months, and they hope to be able to move people in by the fall.

"Once it's built, we have to go through licensing with the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs and fire marshal and such, then we can go ahead," Thomas said.

See "Aldersgate Homes," Page 13

## A warm risk: Opening wide the church doors

By the Rev. Darlene L. Kelley

Most folks thought Mr. Clyde was crazy in a bad way. They were afraid of him, but the brave volunteers in the food pantry gave him a warm bowl of chili and as many hot dogs as he could eat, and he came back the next Saturday and the next. And after a time, Mr. Clyde didn't feel the need to yell as much or bang his overstuffed bags, heavy with want, against the walls and doors and street signs on his way to the church. And after a time, volunteers understood Mr. Clyde was nearly blind, and all his banging and

yelling was fear.

Then conversation turned to the weather, and volunteers worried about Mr. Clyde and his friend, Marion, and Dusty and Dylan, and the young man who never gave his name but was always polite and wiped down the tables and said "thanks so much." They worried many of the folks the food pantry volunteers served on Saturday would be cold, left without adequate housing, sleeping in sheds and under the benches in the park without

See "A Warm Risk," Page 11

## Bluffton campus separates, charters as independent congregation

By Jessica Brodie

BLUFFTON—A thriving satellite church campus in the Lowcountry has reluctantly separated from The United Methodist Church. And while its leadership said no one there saw the division coming, they are pressing on in their work to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world in spite of their lack of denominational

affiliation.

In 2012, St. Andrew By-The-Sea UMC on Hilton Head formed a new church community in Bluffton, a rapidly growing community just west of the island. Led by the Rev. Daniel Burbage under then-senior pastor Neil Yongue, the Bluffton campus was intended to be an extension and mission of St. Andrew—one big church with two

campuses to accommodate the area's westward sprawl.

Since then, the Bluffton campus—dubbed "Bluffton Worship"—began to soar alongside its sister congregation on the island, with more than 200 people in worship, a massive (2,000-person-strong) Christmas Eve celebration, a multiracial

See "Bluffton," 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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#### Back Issues

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

## UMCSC churches participate in African-American Ministry National Day of Prayer

By the Rev. Walter Strawther

United Methodists throughout the South Carolina Annual Conference gathered Feb. 1 to participate in a day of prayer to end violence in Black communities.

The event was part of a larger call from a group called Black Methodists for a Better Future in response to prevailing violence.

As part of the call to prayer, Dr. Dennis Blackwell wrote, "Researchers tell us that African Americans are disproportionately impacted by gun violence. African Americans experience 18 times more gun assaults, 10 times more homicides and three times more fatal shootings than White Americans. The data indicates that on average, Black Americans are killed by guns and 110 or more experience non-fatal injuries caused by guns. In fact, in large urban centers, Black Americans account for 68 percent of the homicides. An intervention to save Black lives is needed."

In South Carolina, there were numerous events held in person with a noon start time, as well as an online offering. In the Lowcountry, the Rev. Connie Barnes coordinated the event held at New Grace United Methodist Church, St. George. In the Upstate, Dr. Sheila Elliot Hodge led the event held at Silver Hill Memorial UMC, Spartanburg. In the Pee Dee, the Rev. Amiri Hooker hosted the event held at Wesley Chapel UMC, Lake City; Hooker's event was held in conjunction with South Carolina Black Methodists for Church Renewal. The Rev. Thessa Smith coordinated the event held at Trinity UMC, Greenwood. And in the Midlands, the Rev. Geneva Stafford organized the event at Francis Burns



The Rev. Thessa Smith coordinated the event held at Trinity UMC, Greenwood.

UMC.

This time of prayer is a call to action. It is an invitation for the church to be the church and oppose the evil of violence in whatever form it takes.

*Strawther is congregational specialist for Columbia and Hartsville districts and African-American Ministry.*

## Lead Like Jesus workshop offered in Greenwood District

Imagine if you will a world where leaders in every walk of life practiced love-based leadership. These leaders lead like Jesus, love their colleagues and followers and strive to take them to where God wants them to go. This love-based leadership can be a reality when pastors and church leaders learn to Lead Like Jesus.

Join with pastors and church leaders for the Lead Like Jesus workshop on March 10 (5-9 p.m.) and March 11 (9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) at Belvedere United Methodist Church, 202 Rhomboid Place, North Augusta. This is an action-oriented, peer-to-peer learning experience that is highly personal yet also corporate

in nature.

Lead like Jesus is a leadership development workshop that exposes common leadership misconceptions and offers a practical model based on the greatest leader role model of all time, Jesus.

What will you gain from participating in this training event?

- Align your heart, head, hands and habits with the transformative leadership model of Jesus;
- Discover the difference between power-based and love-based leadership;
- Learn practical skills for coaching those

you lead;

- Uncover how pride and fear are inhibiting your individual and church effectiveness;
- Establish meaningful goals rooted in your vision and core values; and
- Build daily habits that foster personal growth and drive long-term change.

The workshop will be led by Dr. Jason Zebert, assistant director, Faith Community Formation Office for the Mississippi Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Full details about the workshop are available on the Greenwood District webpage: [www.umcsc.org/greenwood](http://www.umcsc.org/greenwood)

## Jesus' Table food ministry feeds hungry in Boiling Springs

*"If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday."*—Isaiah 58:10

*"If one of your kindred is in need in any community in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor close your hand against your kin who is in need. Instead, you shall freely open your hand and generously lend what suffices to meet that need."*—Deuteronomy 15:7-8

When the Lord speaks to Sue Miller at New Beginnings United Methodist Church, she listens. And so, when the Lord began speaking to her about a meal program that would serve the Boiling Springs community, it felt only natural for her to respond, "Here I am, Lord, use me."

"Feeding people was an undeniable calling from the Lord," Miller said.

Out of this calling grew Jesus' Table, a ministry serving monthly meals at no charge to the community. Attendees at these meals have

grown from a handful to around 50 each time. Regular attendees have become a second family to the Jesus' Table team, sharing life's trials and tribulations over heaping helpings of home cooking. "We started out thinking we would provide a hot meal for those in need, but have learned over the last year that this ministry really addresses so much more than physical hunger. We quickly learned this ministry would feed emotional hunger and loneliness as well."

While there has often been a shortage of funds available to meet these needs, no one has ever gone without. God has met the needs, as only he can, each and every month since Jesus' Table served the first meal in November 2021.

Other members of the church and community faithfully provide food and financial assistance to keep this ministry moving forward, a blessing for the Jesus Table Team.

"I have been blessed by this ministry, and every member of the team feels exactly the same," Miller said. "It is a blessing to be a blessing!"

## Deadline is March 1 for Advocate college scholarship

Scholarship applications are being accepted through March 1 for the South Carolina United Methodist Advocate annual \$1,000 college scholarship.

The scholarship is for South Carolina United Methodist students for the 2023-2024 academic year who are planning to attend or is attending one of the four United Methodist colleges in South Carolina: Claflin University, Columbia College, Spartanburg Methodist College or Wofford College.

Students ideally will have an interest in communications, journalism or business.

Required are an application with an essay, a college or high school transcript, and a letter from the senior pastor of the applicant's home church or a college chaplain confirming the applicant is a United Methodist and describing their participation.

Learn more and download the application at <https://advocatesc.org/scholarships>

For questions, email [jbrodie@umcsc.org](mailto:jbrodie@umcsc.org).

## Denman nominees sought

United Methodist Annual Conferences are invited to receive nominations for The Foundation for Evangelism's 2023 Harry Denman Evangelism Awards.

The award recognizes lay, clergy and youth whose exceptional ministry of evangelism—expressed in Word (what), Sign (why) and Deed (how)—brings people into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ. The Harry Denman Evangelism Awards were established in 1980 and have been presented to more than 3,000 individuals in at least 50 current or former United Methodist annual conferences.

The awards are named for Harry Denman, noted lay evangelist and Christian leader, who believed that each person must live their call to make disciples of Jesus Christ through relationship, mission and faith-sharing. He once said, "Today ... the only way we can see Christ is to see him wrapped in a person. ... We need to become a package of love, a package of faith, a package of Christ."

What distinguishes a Harry Denman Evangelism Award recipient is the commitment to consistently introduce others to the good news of Jesus Christ in all ministry settings.

Their ministry is exceptional for the number of new Christ followers who credit encounters with this person as critical in helping to start or reignite their faith journey.

Apply at <https://foundationforevangelism.org/harry-denman-evangelism-award/>

# Epworth receives major DOJ grant

Epworth Children's Home has been awarded a \$600,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to create a strength-based, trauma informed program for people between the ages of 18 and 25 years of age. The program will offer a robust array of services consisting of professional, vocational, behavioral health and assessment services, as well as transportation, linkage and community support and assistance with other concrete needs.

The overall goal of the new program will be to promote self-sufficiency and independent living skills for youth who have a high probability of becoming homeless and/or eventually intersecting with the justice system. The goal is also to produce a replicable blueprint that can be implemented in other areas.

This grant is one of six that were awarded for this purpose nationally.

The program will primarily serve youth who have a history of foster care involvement, child poverty, child abuse or neglect, human trafficking, juvenile justice or substance misuse.

Eligible youth will be referred by the South Carolina Department of Social Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, the Richland and Lexington counties solicitors offices and the Richland County Sheriff's Department. A requirement of participation in this program is youth commitment to pursuing higher education beyond the high school level, vocational training, or youth who are preparing for employment or military service.

This new program will operate under the umbrella of Epworth's Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing, will connect with Epworth's Center for Independent Liv-

ing and will be created in three phases in addition to a pre-implementation phase. During the pre-implementation phase a design team will develop a detailed implementation plan and evaluation crosswalk to provide a structured continuous monitoring system of program implementation and client progress.

The three phases of the program will be the orientation and assessment stage, the action stage and the aftercare stage.

When an individual demonstrates completion of goals and mastery of skills, the individual will be formally discharged from the program, but may continue to receive after care services for a six-month period to ensure that long term goals are met, and the client is able to live a productive lifestyle.

Individuals will also have the opportunity to participate in faith formation activities. Faith formation and spirituality has been shown to be a positive protective factor that not only improves well-being, but also has been correlated with the reduced likelihood of foster youth engaging in high-risk behaviors and future substance use.

Epworth Children's Home was awarded this competitive grant because of its history for innovative and high quality of services and because of the great need for such services in South Carolina. Studies including the United Health Foundation 2021 Health of Women and Children Report linked from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services indicated South Carolina ranked 44th in child victimization, 47th in child poverty, 40th in general educational success, 44th in nutrition and physical activity for children, 44th for food sufficiency for children and 45th for general physical health of children.



## Mount Zion reaches beyond walls

The pandemic has afforded Mount Zion UMC, Sumter, the opportunity to begin online ministry through conference call and Facebook worship. Mount Zion was challenged to see how they could stay connected with the congregation during this unusual time. As a result, the church has been able to reach out to people all over the United States. They expanded this outreach by organizing an evangelism and outreach ministry to the homebound and unchurched online. There are many individuals who are homebound, either from health infirmities or other circumstances, that make it difficult to go out of their homes. The church developed and implemented postcards inviting persons to join the Sunday worship, weekly Bible study/Sunday school and a monthly older adult book study. Online conference call worshippers are contacted to determine needs, and prayers are offered. This is a great way to spread the good news of Jesus Christ and various ministries at the church. Through this effort and a grant from the Belin Trust, this outreach ministry has allowed the church to reach out to California, New York, New Jersey, Florida, Louisiana, Virginia, Texas and other countries as well.

# Deadline is April 3 to nominate for 2023 Annual Conference awards

It's time to nominate outstanding clergy and laity in the conference for awards to be presented at the 2023 South Carolina Annual Conference.

The deadline is April 3 for nominations. Awards to be given are as follows:

### Bishop's Five Star Award

The purpose of the Bishop's Five Star Award is to provide an incentive for churches to embrace new ministries each year geared toward growth and outreach. Small and large churches receive recognition.

### Denman Evangelism Award

The Denman Evangelism Award, established in 1980 by The Foundation for Evangelism, honors pastors and laypersons for responsible evangelism in the local church.

### Barbara Boultinghouse Bridge Builder Award

The Barbara Boultinghouse Bridge Builder Award is given to a person or organization in the S.C. Conference who has built bridges

of understanding by promoting equity and inclusiveness without regard to race, gender, age, handicap or economic condition.

### Michael C. Watson

#### Volunteer in Mission Award

The Michael C. Watson Volunteer in Mission Award recognizes clergy and laypersons who exemplify extraordinary volunteer mission service within the S.C. Conference. The award is sponsored by the Board of Global Ministries.

### Joseph Benjamin Bethea Distinguished Service Award

This award is presented to a person who has performed outstanding service in working for racial justice. Laity or clergy of the S.C. conference are eligible.

All nominations must be submitted by email. Forms for nominations can be downloaded at [umcsc.org/awards](http://umcsc.org/awards). Nominations for any of the above awards must be emailed to [dseals@umcsc.org](mailto:dseals@umcsc.org) by April 3.

# How do you measure the church?

It was the second week of December and the beginning of one of the busiest seasons of a pastor's year. Pastor Jamie McDowell of Hopewell United Methodist Church in Westminster had just walked into a local restaurant, Eva's, for breakfast.

As he sat down at the table, a friend from a different denomination joined him. A conversation began that included small talk about shared business interests. Eventually the conversation turned to church.

When Jamie asked how church was going, the response he received was, "I have not seen the growth I hoped for."

Jamie then questioned, "How do you measure the growth of a church? Is it by the butts in the pews or the lives touched?"

The other gentleman conceded the point and affirmed his church touched many lives through outreach.

Jamie returned to his day job and put the conversation into the back of his mind. But that conversation would pop to the forefront many times over the next few weeks. Later that same week, a couple came into Jamie's day job. While talking with them, Jamie shared one of the outreach areas Hopewell assists with: the Utica community and Patsy Davis. They immediately wrote out a check as a Christmas donation to help Hopewell with that mission.

That Sunday Jamie and several members of Hopewell were blessed to go purchase many items for the Utica community with these funds. They were able to purchase a new microwave for Patsy and enough canned goods to overload the register at the big-box store.

The following week, a member came in with another check. This one was twice the first check. A local business-owner had heard Hopewell was involved in outreach and wanted to help. He gave this check for the purpose of being used wherever it was needed. In the meantime, several others made anonymous donations to help locally this season.

All of this allowed Hopewell to help with groceries for a family, a power bill for another, Christmas gifts for another and food for another. This also allowed for several donations to other facilities to help families in need.

As the whirlwind of giving was settling down, the weather was just getting started. A record-breaking low temperature was setting in. It would not be fit for man nor beast outside. After a flurry of phone calls and meetings, it was discovered that not only would the homeless shelter be open to provide for those people who needed warmth, but another small church in the county would also help, knowing they may not get any new members, but they would be fulfilling the call to love thy neighbor.

Knowing that many people now had options, Hopewell turned its attention to animals. Almost 30 bags of pine shavings were picked up from Tractor Supply. As the upcoming winter weather approached, these were passed out to various homes, homeless encampments and businesses throughout the county. This offered the opportunity to speak to many about the role animals play in God's creation.

Overall it was a blessed Christmas with a simple answer about how to judge the impact of the church: Not by butts in the seat, but by lives impacted in every way.

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# Viewpoints



## Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

### The world is watching

**E**motions are running high across the annual conference these days as God's people wrestle with decisions and how best to serve the Lord during a time of deep uncertainty. What's happening to The United Methodist Church? What will happen to *my* local church?

After years of change because of a pandemic, not to mention issues of racial disparity, economic hardship and so much more, having to address basic decisions such as which denomination a church should (or shouldn't) belong to can be exhausting and polarizing.

Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ have been going through the difficult task of understanding God's will as their churches engage in the Local Church Discernment Process (see article, Page 1). Other churches are not going through this process, but are troubled nonetheless by theological questions, financial concerns and a general feeling of doom and gloom.

The other day, I was at a doctor's office for a checkup when the technician and I started to chat about faith. When I mentioned I was United Methodist, she winced.

"Oh, y'all are going through a time of it, aren't you?" She shook her head, referring, of course, to the headlines blanketing most cities in America about the ongoing schism in the UMC over issues of sexuality and more.

She's right—it's a tough time for us in the church. But hasn't it always been? We are "children of the light" (John 12:26), tasked to share the Gospel in a broken, dark world filled with division.

As we all engage in this difficult work, let's remember one thing we can do in the midst of it: We can represent that light well. We can step up as loving, kind, compassionate followers of Jesus and seek conversation and humanity even with those we disagree with. We can honor our role as "ambassadors of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20) whether we're speaking with a stranger at a doctor's office or engaging on social media with people on the opposite side of the political spectrum.

As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

Let's be good representatives of our faith in spite of what our denomination is going through. Remember: The world is watching.

### Letters Policy

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



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## Bishop's Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

### They that dare

*"For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. For we live by faith, not by sight."*—2 Corinthians 5:1-7 (NIV)

**O**ur senses connect us with our surroundings. Through our senses, we experience what the world offers. And yet, we do not all experience the world identically. We do not all long for the exact same scents or sounds. Two of us can view the same painting and see different images, or attend the same concert and hear the music differently. Relying only on our senses limits us. As followers of Christ, we were made for more.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that they were made for an eternal house not built by human hands. As people of God, we are made for more than the limitations of what this world can offer. The life of faith is to be lived beyond simply what can be seen with our human eyes. God calls us to walk boldly with Christ as we live out God's call on our lives, trusting, believing and knowing that God is with us, even when we can't see the way ourselves. Trusting in what you can't yet see pushes you to look beyond the present circumstances, recognizing that this one moment is part of a larger story.

Pilots learn in their training the importance of focus as the directives to aviate, navigate and communicate are ingrained in their reflexes. Over and over again they practice this, so that at every takeoff, they are ready to land, even though they can't know what circumstances will meet them in the sky. They have to fly the plane; set their bearings and don't lose sight; then, call home afterwards. There is no room for fear or doubt when the plane is in the air.

If you are not careful, fear and doubt will creep into your thoughts, and you'll live your whole life in survival mode. You can fall into the trap of relying on yourself instead of trusting God. Then your life is lived only within the bounds of what you can see; you are captive to the limitations of your own imagination.

In survival mode, you have an inclination to catastrophize. To assume the worst will happen. To be so stuck in one moment,

overestimating the potential danger and underestimating your ability to cope. Falling into the pattern of relying on yourself, terrified of what might happen if the outcome you hope for is not achieved, does not leave room for God to work. This mindset leads instead to fear, the opposite of faith.

Martin Luther King Jr. describes the life of faith this way, namely, "Faith is taking the first step, even when you don't see the whole staircase." Dare to rely on God so completely that you can begin without knowing with certainty exactly where the path might lead. This ultimate reliance on Christ is the beginning of faith. Trusting that the Lord knows when you will need strength to cope, and believing that God will supply you, just in time, for whatever lies ahead.

When you walk the life of faith, you thrive instead of just surviving. Walking by faith is to trust, believe and know that God is with you as you move forward in confidence. When we walk by faith and not by sight the Spirit begins to work through us. When we cast aside the fears that hold us hostage, God works within us to make us the people that we need and ought to be.

Walking and living by faith means moving ahead with confidence even when you can't see around the next corner. It takes a great deal of courage to live a life of faith. Trusting in God is the ultimate testimony to our faith. When we dare greatly, it is the difference between thriving and surviving.

The first Christians didn't worry about fear when the Holy Spirit entered them; they did what God called them to do. That's exactly the example that we, the people called Methodist in South Carolina, need to follow in our own lives.

We don't know what battles lie ahead, but we do know that God will provide. We don't know what the future holds, but we know with blessed assurance who holds the future. Focusing on what we do know and entrusting our lives to the Savior we do know is to set our bearings, even when the flight is turbulent. With our hearts and minds focused on God, we seek the same level of faith and discipline shown by those early Christians: to stay calm, stay the course and stay connected. Listening for the Holy Spirit's leading, following where that same Spirit leads us and telling the story of God at work in our lives.

If you knew where you are going; that's not faith. Following where God leads requires enough humility to admit that you can't get where you need to be on your own. Daring to follow God will lead you to more than you could ever ask or imagine. And afterwards, you tell the story, as someone who has lived and experienced life fully in Christ.

So dare to walk by faith and not by sight. And find the fullness of life that is available when you thrive instead of merely surviving.

## Appointment Changes

Bishop Jonathan Holston has announced the following changes of appointment:

Effective Jan. 22, 2023

Greenwood District: Ridge Spring Charge: Tim Jones (LP) (1/2)

Effective Feb. 1, 2023

Charleston District: St. Stephen Charge: Libby Murdock (SY) (1/2)

Charleston District: All Saints Charge: Marvin Taylor (SY) (1/2)

Effective Feb. 10, 2023

Florence District: St. Paul, Morrisville: James Pressley (SY) (1/2)

## Remember: We are not God

I am very disturbed in soul, as are many others, by the division in The United Methodist Church. I am concerned that the division is of humans, not of God. The admonition, "Love your neighbor as yourself," is followed by the good Samaritan story. Remember, the "good Samaritan" was the outsider, and the people who passed by were the "religious" leaders. Rather than bring the outsider in, we are separating from them!

In *Disciplines 2023* (Jan. 27, page 44), the devotion author is Joel Bengbeng, elder in the Northwest Philippines Annual Conference of the UMC, a place that has known and continues to know much discrimination. Those who experience discrimination, or even worse, invisibility, see the discrimination when those who oppress do not. I ask you to consider a prayer from brother Cosme Haban given after intense discussion of the split in our denomination at a conference in the Philippines: "Almighty God, bind us closer in the midst of our differences. We pray that no child of yours will be discriminated against because of who they are. Give us a bigger vision and wider embrace, lest we oppress others. Create in us hearts wide enough to accept and love without discrimination as shown by your Son Jesus Christ. In his name we pray. Amen."

May we all pray to do as God wills and remember we are not God.

Mary Lou Edens, retired deaconess  
Main Street UMC, Abbeville

## Faith in a world of uncertainty

July 2021 was the hottest month ever recorded on earth. That is a quote from "The Nature Conservancy Magazine" for winter 2021. It was on a photo spread showing houseboats floating on Lake Oroville in California 300 feet below where the waterline was just a few months ago. That's one more undisputed sign of climate change.

Scientists tell us that the oceans are likely to rise more than six feet within the foreseeable future. Some low-lying islands have already been flooded over. Land that once grew grass and trees and crops is now under water! That's disturbing news for big-time farmers whose fields produce our food.

Most of us see climate change as a future worry, something looming on the horizon that causes some concern, but is easy to push out of mind. It is likely to remain a future worry until it hits us in the pocketbook.

Farmers, leaders of the military and some few politicians see it as a current economic issue that will only get worse. The consequences of a warming world—melting ice caps, frequent fires, intense heat waves, along with rising sea levels—are already upon us. The worst of the economic fallout remains in the future for us here in South Carolina. That may be a very brief future because the climate of tomorrow is rapidly becoming the climate of today. Climate change is real, but it is not new. Moses, the children of Israel and every generation since their day has been faced with climate change. Clearly, we are not the first generation to deal with unseasonable wind and rain, heat and cold.

Atmospheric changes were built into the design for creation. Could it have been climate change that made our original parents mindful of their nakedness? Perhaps!

Once they munched on the apple, Adam and Eve had to go to work and that meant worrying about the weather. It expanded their conversation with questions such as: Will tomorrow be wet or dry, hot, cold, breezy or calm? What should we wear? How can we remain without clothes in this weather? We live in a world of uncertainty, but climate change has become a certainty. What does it mean to live by faith in this kind of world? It means what it has always meant: putting our trust in God and living responsibly.

Rev. Mickey Fisher, retired  
Greer

## What's the hurry?

The wisdom of the plan of disaffiliation developed by Bishop Holston and our con-

ference leaders using Para. 2549 is that it has no "sunset" clause ending its usage. Churches can pursue this process in 2024 or 2025 as easily as they can right now. So I have to ask churches considering taking this action, "What's the hurry?" Wouldn't it be wonderful if we all just took a deep breath and waited upon God to see what God can work out with us and for us?

Rev. Arthur Holt, retired  
Boiling Springs

## Just wondering

I am just wondering, what if the representatives at General Conference several years ago had voted to maintain and sustain the traditional stance of The United Methodist Church rather than taking the progressive position. It is very likely the church would have lost individual members. It is unlikely the church would have lost entire congregations with hundreds of congregations across the country standing in line to exit this grand old traditional Christian denomination that has been such a bastion of faith in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit for more than 200 years. Just wondering.

Rev. Franklin D. McCoy Sr., retired  
Abbeville

## The issue is power

And just when you thought it could not get worse, it has! They say, "You are our brothers and sisters in Christ," but then they say, "But if you leave us, we will take your church accounts ... your savings ... your sacred places of worship." Good thing these are Christians, not pagans!

OK, I have gone too far; it is my nature. Correction—not all, just 10 percent. Call it a "tithe." Interesting about this word—it can also mean a "contribution," a "charity," a "good will gesture." Regardless, without this "gift," you cannot leave. On the other hand, this word can also mean a "tax." Government doesn't blatantly take your money; they "tax" you. Good thinking; "tithe" sounds a lot better than "tax," doesn't it? Much like a "good will gesture," a "gift" we relinquish to government so as to keep from going to jail. Correction again—not "all," just 10 percent of your home ... say, a bedroom, a kitchen.

Still another possible word for this "tithe" would be "ransom," but even hostage-takers prefer not to call it that; they would prefer a "settlement." The point is that they don't want everything; they "just" want, say, 10 percent. In the case of a large family, maybe your youngest child. In the case of a small family, maybe an arm or a leg. "Just" 10 percent.

And surely, without a doubt, all churches can afford this. Good thing they just want a "tithe" and not a "penalty"! Surely, all churches have money enough to pay, don't they? This would not be a hardship, or a set of handcuffs, would it?

And I wonder about the cemeteries associated with all these churches, especially the small struggling churches. I wonder: In the years to come when these churches cease to be, will the UMC take care of those cemeteries? Will they cut the grass? Will our leaders and bishops bring flowers? Will the UMC honor these sacred places?

I don't believe all this is about the LGBT question alone; to me it has never been "the" issue. The issue is power; this all could have been avoided if bishops had granted local churches more consideration in choosing their ministers. The truth is we have always had gay ministers; we just didn't make an issue of it. We have had good ones, and like every other group, bad ones also. Maybe I'm just clueless, but in my experience, I have never dealt with a church that wanted a minister moved because he or she was gay.

And finally, I cannot but take my hat off to those people who, for years, made impassioned speeches and sent touching letters urging us all, in the name of Jesus, to make room at the table for those who were different from us.

Aren't these the same people who today are shouting, "If you don't like it, get out!"

Rev. Cy Rogers pastor  
North Anderson Charge, Anderson



## Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Tim Reeves

## Different sandboxes

I think we're getting it all wrong in how we, as a denomination, are looking at the ongoing breakup/separation of The United Methodist Church.

The vast majority of things I read, things I hear and see, all seem to concentrate on the negative aspect of local churches leaving the denomination. "Woe is us; the sky is falling!" seems to be the mantra driving the rhetoric, arguments, discernments and disaffiliations.

I think that's the wrong approach.

Instead of concentrating so much on the negative, let's turn this breakup/separation coin over and see the many positives that will be birthed in this process.

We need to first realize the breakup is real; it's here; it's now. And it's going to take at least a couple years to "birth" the new Methodism brands. I understand that birthing, whether in nature or in a denomination, is not a pretty nor painless process. As a former farmer who has seen hundreds and hundreds of births, plus a father who was witnessed the births of four children, I can testify that birthing is not the most wonderful of sights to behold.

That doesn't mean birthing is bad, though, because the beauty of the results far, far outweigh the ugliness of the birth process. We need to turn our vision to the future and to glimpse what God has in store for Methodism, rather than single-mindedly concentrate on the clouded, tumultuous present.

I know this is controversial, but I believe God is actively involved in this UMC breakup. For nearly 50 years, God has been watching us, the people known as United Methodists, as we've fought, kicked, scratched and inflicted damage upon one another through the wrestling matches known as general and annual conferences. I've attended five of the last six general conferences and nearly 30 annual conferences. I've seen the spiritual and emotional devastation wrought by both the liberal/progressive camps and the conservative/traditional camps against each other and also against those of us caught in the middle as collateral damage.

Watching all that in dismay, I believe God is saying, "Enough is enough. Children, it's time to go your separate ways." Since we can no longer play together in the same, single sandbox known as the UMC, I firmly believe God will help us build different sandboxes.

This is not a bad thing!

On one side, I see a new predominately liberal/progressive Post-Separation UMC (PSUMC), which will be able to operate fully without the constraint or conflict from conservative/traditionalists that now fully engulfs the denomination. The PSUMC will be (finally) able to remove all language from the *Book of Discipline* it deems harmful or hateful. It will be able to institute more liberal theologies and progressive programs that have been held in check (or halted altogether) by conservative/traditionalists. The PSUMC can become the welcoming and affirming denomination it wants to be without the institutional and regulatory burdens placed upon it by conservative/traditionalists.

On the other side, conservative/traditionalists will be free to follow their own consciences, either to the Global Methodist Church or other conservative/traditional-leaning denominations. They can also go

independent and build their own local church sandbox.

All these sandboxes will continue to be Methodist-oriented; we'll all be able to share Wespath services; we can all continue to support missions like United Methodist Committee on Relief, United Methodist Volunteers in Mission or other wonderful ministries that cross denominational boundaries. We will all be free to pray for one another's mission and ministries, again, across denominational sandbox boundaries. We will stop the in-fighting that has caused so much internal dissension in the UMC and prompted many people (from both sides) to leave the UMC and the Methodist umbrella. We can live out our callings from God without acrimony, accusations, animosity and bitterness toward one another. We will be able to "better love" each other because we won't be forced to live with one another anymore.

These are good things. These are positive things. These are things that can help us expand and broaden our missional outreach so we can reach more people of more diverse backgrounds and theological thinking. The original Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation would have allowed us as a denomination to accomplish a grace-infused birthing process.

We can and will be better separate than we can ever be together with all the continued fighting and hostility toward one another that is certainly going to continue if we force ourselves to remain together. I will not judge either side as being more righteous, more holy, more spiritual than the other. That's not my nor anyone else's judgement to make.

However, I do believe this kind of breakup would be more pleasing to God, will bring more glory to God and help us make more disciples for Jesus Christ than the constant, continued infighting that has dominated our denomination for these past several decades.

That's why I believe a considerate, Christian-infused, gracious exit is the only way for the current UMC to achieve this goal of separate sandboxes. Yes, it won't be easy. Yes, it won't be painless. Yes, it won't be embraced nor accepted by all. We all know that, and that's OK!

We are all free to respond to how we believe in this time of breakup. We must remember, though, history shows that breakups in Christian churches overwhelmingly tend to produce better results than forcing anyone to remain in a place in which they don't believe anymore.

So let's be like Abraham and Lot, Paul and Barnabas, Peter and Paul and the dozens of other examples of breakup/separations we read about in the Bible. Let's begin a new day and a new era with fresh, new brands of Methodism to offer to a world that is so desperately in need of Methodist-based good news like that.

As John Wesley so eloquently pointed out many years ago, "(Methodists) believe that all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God ... we believe the written word of God to be the only and sufficient rule both of Christian faith and practice ... we believe Christ to be eternal, supreme God ... but as to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think."

We can still think alike on numerous things, but we simply can't live together anymore. God bless.

Connect @advocatesc





## Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Joseph Abram Jr.

### It's crying time, again

Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet because of his lament over the fact that what he preached did not seem to find hearts in which to be hidden. Folks have lovingly dubbed me the crying preacher, because if I am moved, very rarely do I take to the aisles to shout or dance. However, in those situations, there is a struggle to hold back the tears and unashamedly, I add, I usually fail.

I also will be the first to add that the tears do not represent some special spirituality but rather who I am in my temperament. I cry sometimes when I am happy, sad and even mad, and when someone else is going through moments of the same. And yet, in all the moments of tears, I do not recollect a day when I did not smile or have reason to laugh. Someone pointed that out to me with, "I bet you will laugh during a homegoing service!" I smiled and said, "I have already. One day as I exited a church en route to the burial site, a friend shared a special moment and the tears stopped, we shared a big laugh, and then as I resumed my journey, the tears returned."

It seems of late I have been given more reasons to shed sad and mad tears, even if my smiles dominate. Every time I hear of little people with bright futures having their precious lives cut short—leaving loving parents, siblings, family and friends grieving over plans unfulfilled and dreams unrealized—my tears flow. News of the almost-daily killings of unarmed Black men and women, for the unavoidable crimes of driving while Black (under the guise of a broken taillight), sleeping in the supposedly security of their bed, or so afraid for their lives, forgetting to say, "yes, sir!", I cannot help but cry.

Again, when I see a teenager, who takes a long gun, travels miles to the place where he shoots and kill other teenagers and his excuse is, "I feared for my life!" For his crime, he gets an invitation from the head of state, as if he had just won the national or Olympic shooting championship.

Even again, I see a young man who visits students, in the mid of night at another institution, and allegedly stabs four to death while they sleep, walk into a courtroom escorted (except to open the door for him) without ankles and hands restraints, as if he were to be a guest speaker at a community event.

I cried. These were definite not happy tears. They were for the sad reality that in this land, where all men are deemed equal and justice supposedly is blind (that devil is peeking), the guilty are often treated far

better than the innocent based solely on the color of skin and/or economic condition.

Lately, I watched in horror a video showing another young unarmed Black man being literally treated worse than a rabid dog and beaten to death. He was bludgeoned to death while crying for his mother's assistance. Those scenes are always hard for a caring soul to see and hear, but this time, it was especially hard, at least for me. This time, the initial perpetrators were Black like me, and I could not find any way to mitigate the effect of what I saw and heard.

When George Floyd was strangled to death, with a knee upon his neck while crying for his mother, I could see me in the helpless victim's plea in a nation wherein nobody seemed to care for folks like me. However, this time, I saw and heard what I pray and hope to never see and hear again. I again saw in the victim's plight mine, and in the victim, me, but I also saw the assailants' aggressions as mine. I could not shake the images of anything that I saw and heard. I saw me, lording over my brothers and sisters with my newfound positions of authority, forgetting completely from whence I came. And all those who were beaten (Black, Brown and White; Catholics, Muslims, Protestants and Jews; gay and straight) just like these gangsters were beating this unarmed, weak and hopeless brother—to death, for us!

They did not die so we can have some special favor, but only that we would have no less opportunities for pursuit of happiness, respect and our welfare. These are inalienable rights that others enjoy in this land. They did not die so that the oppressed could become the oppressor, but so that all men can be free. They did not die so we can do to others what they have done to us, because if we did, it would be "tit for tat" for eternity.

However, if we would only accept the Scripture's admonition to do unto others as we wish it done unto us.

While lamenting over my brothers' transgressions, I was reminded that they may not be my brothers, for whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, sister and mother (Matthew 15:12). And that the devil's children are like their father. He loves evil and so do his children. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44).

I smile again today with the certainty that the Lord has been our help in ages past, and is still our present help. Amen.

## Guest Commentary

by Samuel J. Grant Jr.

### Bishops and God's word

On Nov. 3, 2022, the *Advocate* released an article online stating that Dr. Robin Dease had been elected the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church's third bishop (see <https://advocatesc.org/articles/dease-elected-bishop>). She was quoted as saying, "I want to be transparent: I do not believe homosexuality is a sin. I do believe that same-gender-loving persons can love and marry. I also believe they can be called by God, ordained and serve our churches well."

I was disappointed in Dr. Dease's remarks but not surprised. I recall her days as district superintendent of the Hartsville District, which includes the UMC that I attend.

I wish to respond to Dr. Dease's remarks. In doing so, I wish to share some supportive Scripture that we normally don't hear in church during our "feel-good" sermons. As the Apostle Paul asked, "What does the Scripture say?" Scripture, God's word, is what counts!

Paul wrote that "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Since all Scripture is inspired by God, if Paul said it, God approved it. Therefore, if one wants to know the truth, he/she searches Scripture for it, as the Bereans did.

God, who inspired all Scripture, never changes (Malachi 3) and is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13). Because God doesn't change, his word doesn't change.

God warned us not to add to or take away from his word, and, if we do, we will not share in the Tree of Life (heaven) (Revelation 22, Deuteronomy 4).

All of us have sinned, and the penalty for that sin is spiritual death (eternal separation from God) (Romans 3:23, 6:23). We must keep in mind at this point that sin is sin is sin, whatever it may be—even stealing a penny! God hates all sin.

"If a man practices homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman, both men have committed a detestable act" (Leviticus 20:13). The same point is made in Romans 1 regarding both men and women.

In speaking to Christians in his first letter, John clearly explained that the obvious difference between one who is born of God and the children of the devil is if the believer sins, he/she confesses it to God (agrees with God that the sin was wrong) and seeks God's forgiveness to restore fellowship with God (1 John 1:8-9). Sin separates us from and breaks our fellowship with God (Isaiah 59:2 and John 9:31). John says that the children of the devil (unbelievers) continue to practice sin because God's seed does not abide in him. (1 John is so informative for believers and unbelievers.)

Then, along comes Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9-12: "Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. You say, 'I am allowed to do anything'—but not everything is good for you. And even though 'I am allowed to do anything,' I must not become a slave to anything."

What must one do if he/she is guilty of any sin—be it stealing a penny or practicing homosexuality? Jesus gave the answer in Luke 13:3: "Unless you repent [turn away from sin] you will perish [in hell]." John added, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). And Paul gives assurance, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

What did Paul have to say about bishops? "For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he[she] has been taught, that he[she] may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict" (Titus 1:7-9 NKJV). This seems to be very straightforward—that bishops should be faithful to the word of God.

In his sermon "Things God Hates," on Aug. 24, 2011, Billy Graham said, "We in the church have failed to remind this generation that while God is love, he also has the capacity to hate. He hates sin, and he will judge it with the fierceness of his wrath. This generation is schooled in the teaching about an indulgent, soft-hearted God whose judgments are uncertain and who coddles those who break his commandments. This generation finds it difficult to believe that God hates sin."

God is a God of justice; he means exactly what he inspired to be written.

Well, throughout Scripture, God has warned us that there will be many false teachers and preachers who will try to mislead us into believing what is false or only half of the truth. In his concern and compassion for us, Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and the narrow road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). One day when we stand before Jesus to be judged, won't it be awful if he asks, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46)

So, who are we to believe concerning the matter of homosexuality—God's word or, in this case, the word of a bishop? We can't have it both ways. Paul seems to answer that in 2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV): "Study to shew [show] thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing (interpreting) the word of truth."

One additional thought—last year, a retired UMC preacher wrote to the *Advocate* saying, "There are religious leaders known as Global Methodist Church who want to split apart the UMC over the fear of the LGBTQ people." Nothing could be further from the truth! The Global Methodist Church is not afraid of anyone, but welcomes everyone. Its members will come together to worship God and will teach and preach the truth according to God's word, the Holy Bible—rightly dividing the word of truth.

We are living in a perilous time. We know from Bible prophecy that the "Day of The Lord" will not happen until the apostasy occurs first (a climatic falling away from the faith). Are we in that time now?

Let's just keep on praying for God's will to be done in everything, not just in our church. We can be assured that God's true church will win the final battle.

Praise God!

*Grant is a member of Trinity UMC, Darlington.*

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# SMC launches 'Pioneer Promise' scholarship program

Spartanburg Methodist College is reducing one of the most significant barriers to a college education—cost. Its new Pioneer Promise Scholarship gives high-achieving high school graduates free tuition fees and books at the college, rewarding them for their academic success.

“SMC has always been about providing a quality college education to all students and doing everything we can to eliminate the barriers to earning a degree,” said Ben Maxwell, vice president for enrollment at SMC. “With the Pioneer Promise Scholarship, we’re trying to eliminate cost as a barrier for top students.”

All South Carolina high school students who achieve a 4.0 or better grade point average and are eligible for the South Carolina LIFE Scholarship qualify for the Pioneer Promise Scholarship at SMC. The scholarship covers all remaining

charges for tuition, fees and books after a student’s other grants and scholarships have been applied. That means students who live on campus would pay only for their housing and meal plans. Students who commute to campus would attend at no cost.

Students can keep the scholarship through all four years at SMC as long as they maintain their LIFE Scholarship eligibility.

“We continue to seek ways to help students pursue higher education with as little financial burden as possible,” said Kyle Wade, director of financial aid and enrollment services. “We work with students and their families to identify all the scholarships, grants and other financial aid available to them.”

The Pioneer Promise Scholarship is another tool SMC uses to help pave the way for more students to earn their degrees.

The college’s full tuition scholarship has rewarded high school graduates with a 3.0 or better GPA and LIFE Scholarship eligibility with free tuition for several years. The Pioneer Promise increases that reward for 4.0 GPA students by also waiving fees and covering the cost of books.

The scholarship is available for in-person students. SMC will begin awarding the Pioneer Promise Scholarship to eligible students starting school in the fall of 2023.

SMC’s bachelor’s degree programs, launched in 2019, continue to grow. More students are seeking the value of a liberal arts education, which provides a broader range of specialization. They also benefit from SMC’s unique Camak Core professional development program, providing the soft skills and workplace-ready training employers are seeking, as a required part of their degree.

# Columbia College ranks in U.S. News and World Report 'Best Online Programs'

COLUMBIA—Each year, U.S. News and World Report Best Online Programs rankings are released for future college students to use as they determine what is next for them on their academic journey.

For the 2023 academic year, Columbia College was ranked 52 in Best Online Master’s in Criminal Justice. The institution was also included in the Best Online Bachelor’s Programs, Best Online Bachelor’s Programs

for Veterans and Best Online Master’s in Education rankings.

To determine the 2023 rankings, the report evaluated more than 1,800 different institutions of higher education to assess each university’s overall quality of education.

Columbia College is especially proud to be newly ranked in Best Online Bachelor’s Programs for Veterans, which speaks to the level of commitment and dedication put

forth by faculty, staff and administration in order to achieve these and other milestones. After years of transformational transition and change, Columbia College is actively building an engaged community of academic and programmatic success.

“Each year, it is uplifting to witness the concrete evidence of a job well done through rankings like these, but the true inspiration I experience is working day in and day out

alongside the faculty and staff that make this success happen,” Columbia College President Dr. Tom Bogart said. “Their commitment to the growth and development of our students and our institution is what drives this success. The best is yet to come.”

Columbia College said it is very proud of each of these rankings and will continue to pursue excellence for its students, faculty and surrounding community.

## Youth awards at Manning

Manning UMC, Manning, held its annual youth awards during the worship service on Jan. 22. The youth group’s mascot is a flamingo, and the trophies are always in the shape of flamingos.



Photo courtesy of Jodie Plyler

## Tabernacle supports college students

Tabernacle UMC, Lancaster, prepared goody bags for the seven college students in their congregation recently. The effort was sponsored by the United Women in Faith. The full congregation donated goodies and small gifts to be given to the college students for Valentine’s Day. Tabernacle has students attending Columbia International University, Coastal Carolina University, the University of South Carolina and USC-Lancaster.

# Tabernacle UMC surpasses goal for food pantry donations

Tabernacle United Methodist Church, Lancaster, set a goal for the four Sundays prior to the Super Bowl to collect 300 non-perishable food items for the local food pantry, HOPE in Lancaster.

Sponsored by the youth department, the collection included canned goods, grits, peanut butter and jelly, and many more items over the four-week period, all donated by the full

congregation.

On Sunday, Feb. 12, the youth counted all the items and also collected monetary donations for the food pantry after the worship service.

In all, there were 428 food items and \$285 collected to support the work of HOPE in Lancaster Inc.



Youth at Tabernacle UMC in Lancaster far exceeded their goal in collecting non-perishable items for the local food pantry.

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## United Women in Faith

by Maureen Thomas

### Support that heals, restores and empowers

In 2014, the Board of Directors of the United Methodist Women, now known as the United Women in Faith, launched the Legacy Endowment Fund Campaign, setting a goal to raise \$60 million. During the campaign's history, communities of UWF across the globe raised more than \$34 million. The campaign phase ended in December 2020, yet there is still a lot of road ahead of us to reach that ambitious and yet reachable goal.

With an additional \$25 million to raise, fundraising and promotion must continue beyond 2023. The fundraising captured under the heading of a Sustaining Phase, Building on our Success, began in 2021. The Sustaining Phase builds on the accomplishments achieved during the campaign's history strengthening that momentum with a range of activities to generate the additional \$25 million. With additional gifts received in and beyond 2022, the UWF will have access to financial resources used to deepen and expand its mission to transform lives and ignite change in places far and near.

The Legacy Endowment Fund is a permanently invested endowment that will forever be a source of income for United Women in Faith, providing the assurance the UWF can provide the life-affirming, compassionate care and support that heals, restores and empowers populations of women, children and youth in the years and decades to come.

The South Carolina Conference set a goal for 2022 to raise \$10,000, and we were delighted to report at our annual meeting in October that we reached our target. However, when the end-of-the-year report came out the total contributions were \$16,899.34. We are truly grateful for the women, family, friends and neighbors who supported this effort.

We look forward to continuing support through Legacy Builders, Planned Giving, the 1869 Society or the Day of Giving. No amount is too small.

Thomas is Legacy Liaison for South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith.



## Deacon's Corner

Rev. Maggie Cantey

### Getting to know Maggie

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. Maggie Cantey, our newest approved deacon for ordination.

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

Cantey: I was called to youth ministry when I was 15. Becoming a deacon felt like the next faithful step in answering that call.

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

Cantey: I am currently leading United Youth, a youth group made up of youth from seven local churches in Spartanburg. It's a unique privilege to get to work with seven other pastors and many volunteers who care deeply about the youth in their churches. I see my role as a deacon as teaching the youth, providing opportunities for youth and volunteers to lead and assisting families with faith formation inside the home.

#### 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?

Cantey: The community of deacons in South Carolina are some of the most compassionate people I have ever met. When I have faced obstacles in ministry, they have listened, supported and helped me find solutions. If you're interested in becoming a deacon, reach out! We would love to welcome you.

In a format replicating Dr. Brenè Brown's

#### Unlocking Us "Rapid Fire Questions," let's get to know a bit more about Rev. Cantey.

Q. Fill in the blank: Vulnerability is:  
A. Necessary!

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. Any time I'm stressed, worried, or fearful, I repeat Psalm 94:18-19 to myself. It reminds me that I can do hard things.

Q. What is something that people often get wrong about you?

A. I look younger than I am, so people are often surprised that I'm the youth pastor and not one of the youth!

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

A. Can I say Bluey? It was with my daughter.

Q. What is a film that you really love?

A. "Room for One More."

Q. What is a concert you will never forget?

A. Penny and Sparrow—they were talented and funny!

Q. What's your favorite meal?

A. She Crab Soup from Lee's Inlet Kitchen

Q. What's on your nightstand right now?

A. Two or three water cups (I felt convicted and just took them to the sink).

Q. Give us a snapshot of an ordinary moment in your life that brings you great joy.

A. Last time my husband got a haircut, our 1.5-year-old touched her hair then repeatedly said, "DaDa uh-oh!"

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

A. The way that God is working in United Youth.



Good Samaritans has served South Carolina for 28 years, with 22 of those years based in Lee County.

## Good Samaritans hosts Christmas and Thanksgiving giveaways for people in need

Good Samaritans for All People, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Lee County, annually provides food, gifts and toys for those in need during the holiday season.

This holiday season, giveaway events were held Nov. 21, Dec. 17 and Dec. 20.

For the Thanksgiving event, 136 families were provided free turkeys and hams along with all of the fixings. These families were able to enjoy a complete family dinner that otherwise might have not been available to them.

The Christmas event covered a two-day period with 684 families being served. People in need were given bags of fruit, other food items, toys and gifts including many bicycles. Some needed items were supplemented to fulfill the specific needs of each family. Eight pastors from eight local churches along with many of the members of their congregations assisted with these events. One local pastor traveled to Boone, North Carolina, to pick up furniture that was needed and distributed to a family in

need immediately when it arrived in Bishopville.

After the event on Dec. 20, there were many calls from others in need of food, clothing and toys, and 10-25 more individuals were served daily all the way up through Christmas Eve.

Also, during this holiday season, Good Samaritans held events at three local nursing homes. In addition to a time of joyful song and worship, each resident was provided gifts and needed items such as blankets.

Good Samaritans is managed by the Rev. Eddie Thomas and his wife, Corine. Good Samaritans has served the people of South Carolina for 28 years, with 22 of those years based in Lee County.

Good Samaritans thanks the many partners that made these holiday events a reality. In addition to the volunteers, many local churches, businesses and organizations made financial and in-kind donations. A special thanks goes out to the Hartsville District of The United Methodist Church for their help.

## Native American Ministries

### Native American Ministries Sunday set for April 23

In accordance with the *Book of Discipline*, Para. 816(6), "Native American Ministries Sunday shall be observed with an offering, preferably on the Third Sunday of Easter (second Sunday after Easter)."

This year, that date will be April 23. The Native American Committee provides speakers for Native American Ministries Sunday, thus making this date the most requested date. With limited number of speakers, this date books sometimes a year in advance providing this special Sunday throughout the entire year. Pastors or Native American Representatives simply have to call and set up a date that matches both the church's schedule and NAC's speakers.

It is one of the six Special Sundays in the *Discipline*. We are not an outside agency asking to come into your church. We are part of this conference. All offering monies are sent directly to the conference office with 50 percent remaining in conference to support the NAC.

The purpose of Native American Ministries Sunday is to provide education about American Indian tradition, culture, spirituality and inclusion in our conference. Even today, American Indians are often questioned if we worship the same God or if we are going to do something "strange" if we come and speak at your church. We address these myths and stereotypes, explore American Indians history, explore Native spirituality and identify the obstacles facing American Indians today. We also provide updates about NAC actions including outreach, education and ministry.

If it is your church's first time, we have a set first Sunday message presented by our committee. However, after that first Sunday presentation, we have a number of other Sunday messages including traditional storytelling, tribal histories, connections between God and Native Americans, Native Americans and Christianity, relationships with nature and more.

All of these are free. Honorariums are welcome to offset travel costs.

We also offer Native American drum, Keepers of the Word, with drumming along with a message. This is the only one that costs since it requires several drummers. The cost is \$150 plus the mileage costs for two vehicles. It may include an overnight cost or need depending on the distance. A drumming request can only be made after a church has that set first Sunday message.

All speakers arranged by our committee are approved by the conference. However, a church may elect to get their own American Indian speaker. If he or she is not a United Methodist pastor or certified lay speaker by this conference, you must obtain permission from your district superintendent for this person to speak.

Let's live by open hearts, open minds and open doors. Schedule a Native American Ministries Sunday for your church. Our primary mission is, "To make the invisible visible." Please help us with this mission.

To arrange a Native American Ministries Sunday, contact Z. Tracy Pender, Native American Chair, 803 905-5672 or tracypender@hotmail.com. The easiest way to make contact is via email because of Pender's work schedule.

Connect @advocatesc







**Warm hearts**

Jeremiah UMC, Hemingway, donated more than 30 coats to the Boys and Girls Club of Hemingway recently. Here are some of the coats they contributed.



Above, Tabor (left) and St. John members show off their collected stuffed animals.

**Ruffin Circuit's stuffed animal drive helps children in community**

The Ruffin Circuit—comprising St. John, Bethel and Tabor United Methodist churches—conducted their annual stuffed animal drive in December.

All the stuffed animals gathered were distributed in two different ways. The first collection of new stuffed animals was given to children who have a variety of mental and physical challenges. The stuffed animals offer them a new “partner” to love, cherish and communicate with.

The second group of stuffed animals

was given to the local fire department.

The firefighters keep a collection of stuffed animals when responding to a house, apartment or trailer residence fire throughout the year. The family and the children may have lost everything in the fire, but the firefighters can pass out a new stuffed animal to the children to help ease the loss of their belongings.

“It’s such an easy thing to do with such long-lasting effects,” said the Rev. Larry Stocker, pastor of the Ruffin Circuit.

The ministry served seven schools and more than 4,000 children.



**Gilbert UMC ‘steps out’ through shoe ministry effort**

GILBERT—Gilbert United Methodist Church has adopted Sole Stepping ministries as a new way to reach out and support the local community. Sole Stepping is a certified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides new shoes and socks to elementary school students in Lexington County.

Shoes are often the most visible sign of poverty. With one in five children living in poverty, that’s a reality that impacts every school district in America. The simple gift of a new pair of shoes can positively change a child’s world.

Along with several other churches, the ministry served seven schools and more than 4,000 children. The schools served were Congaree Elementary School, Red Bank Elementary School, Riverbank Elementary School, Batesburg-Leesville Primary School, Centerville Elementary

School, Saluda Primary School and Saluda Elementary School.

Gilbert UMC offers a special thank you to the volunteers who helped work all these schools: Stacey Ashley, Gale Hunnicutt, Megan Jaco, Debbie Keisler, Kathy Hiltquist, Jack Cunningham and Barb McQuillin.

Gilbert UMC also sponsored a “Sock It To Me Sunday” where members brought new socks to donate, as well as a continuing collection of old shoes for recycling.

Since 2016, Sole Stepping has provided more than 10,000 pairs of shoes to elementary school children in the Midlands of South Carolina.

For further information and to get your church involved, contact the founder and coordinator of Sole Stepping, Kara Jefferson, at 843-826-1189 or online at <https://solestepping.com>



Bethel members cuddle their stuffed animals before donating them to children in need.



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**Show your Church Administrative Professional your appreciation with an appreciation ad in the April Advocate**

In April, you have a chance to honor and thank your church’s administrative professional(s) for their hard work.

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 1" tall: \$38 • 2" tall: \$76 • 4" tall: \$152

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 or send to 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203.  
 Deadline: March 10, 2022

Churches will be billed for the ads unless otherwise noted

## Around the Districts

### Anderson District

**Mount Sinai UMC, Anderson**, gave mission funds to the Salvation Army. The Anderson Circuit has a community Bible study by conference call with five other churches. Donations collected during the year are given to local charities. In 2022, recipients were Haven Rest, AIM and local food banks.

### Charleston District

Congratulations to the Rev. Robert and Cindy Harper on the birth of their grandson. Chambers Kates Falkner was born Feb. 1 to Rebecca and Will Falkner and welcomed home by Harper. Rev. Harper is the pastor of Knightsville UMC and Stallville UMC, Summer-ville.

### Columbia District

Congratulations to Tammy and Eddie Fulmer on the birth of their grandson. Joshua Adam Fulmer Jr. was born Dec. 31 to Josh and Brittney Fulmer and welcomed home by big sisters Grace and Hannah. Mrs. Fulmer is the assistant to the director of Connectional Ministries.

**Mill Creek UMC, Columbia**, collected \$225 for its food pantry during Souper Bowl Sunday, Feb. 12. The church served a lunch of vegetable soup and grilled cheese sandwiches following the morning service.

**Washington Street UMC, Columbia**, will host its Lenten Lunches and Services on Wednesdays beginning Feb. 22 and running through March 29 beginning at 11:45 a.m.

### Orangeburg District

**Clafin University, Orangeburg**, held a celebration to honor Dr. Robin Dease, 1992 Clafin graduate and newly elected bishop to The United Methodist Church, Feb. 17 in the James and Dorothy Z. Elmore Chapel. Dease is appointed to the North Georgia episcopal area of the UMC.



Winners Rick and Joyce Crimminger share a laugh during the game.

## St. Luke youth raise funds through The Newlywed Game and Dinner

On Sunday evening, Feb. 5, St. Luke United Methodist Church, Lancaster, celebrated Valentine's Day with The Newlywed Game and Dinner. This was a fun evening for all as the church gathered to celebrate love.

Just like in the old game show, one spouse would exit to the sound proof room, a room with a closed door in the back of the fellowship hall, and the other spouse would be asked questions and write the answers down on a piece of poster board. Then the other spouse was brought back in and asked to guess the correct answers. Participants said it was a fun time as the spouses, some who have been married for many decades, could and could not guess the correct answers.

Dr. Steve Shugart, former pastor of St. Luke, was the Master of Ceremonies for the

evening. Shugart's dynamic personality and positive energy kept the evening going with plenty of smiles and good humor.

The event was hosted by the St. Luke UMC Youth with the leadership of youth directors Holly and Brandon Craig. The event was a fundraiser for the St. Luke UMC Youth Group, and the turnout was excellent. The winners were Rick and Joyce Crimminger, who are not exactly newlyweds but were victorious nonetheless. They won the prize of a \$30 gift card and a big heart-shaped box of chocolate candy.

The current pastor, the Rev. Barry Allen, says he continues to be amazed and delighted by the unity, vitality and creativity St. Luke UMC demonstrates in the many ministries, events, services and outreach projects the church carries out for the glory of God.

### Brodie speaks at book brunch

*Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie spoke to the United Women in Faith reading program at a "book brunch" at Bethel UMC, Spartanburg, Feb. 14. She spoke about her writing as well as the 16 titles currently available through the *Advocate's* publishing arm, the Advocate Press. Here, Brodie shares a moment with Maureen King. For more on the Advocate Press or to purchase books, visit [www.advocatesc.org/books](http://www.advocatesc.org/books).



On the back row, several St. Luke UMC youth monitor the game and keep score.

## Bethel celebrates Christmas with Angel Tree and other events

SMOAKS—Under the leadership of Rev. Walter Harley and First Lady Elaine Harley, members of Bethel participated in several Christmas rituals in 2022. These included Advent services, the Hanging of the Christmas Greens and an Adorning of the Chrismon (Christmas) Tree Service. Additionally, the pastor and first lady's collaborative effort with members at Bethel went toward a community outreach initiative to ensure that children had a happy and bright Christmas through the church's Angel Tree ministry.

On Nov. 6, Pastor Harley called for members to provide names of children within the community or surrounding areas to support in the Angel Tree ministry.

Shirley M. Bryant obtained names of children from the Varnville Housing Authority in Hampton County, where she worked.

The Angel Tree ministry brightened the lives of more than 30 youths in Hampton County. The name, age and Christmas wish of the youth was placed on a decorative card, which additionally was assigned a number. The card was placed on the Angel Tree.

On Sunday, Dec. 11, Harley allowed time for interested



Church members, a Housing Authority representative and Pastor and First Lady Harley participate in the Angel Tree ministry.

members to pull a name from the Angel Tree. Participating members were responsible for purchasing the gift.

First Lady Harley recorded the pertinent information from the card and name of the member holding the card.

The Angel Tree gifts were presented to Diane Washing-



First Lady Elaine Harley and Diane Washington of the Varnville Housing Authority talk with the congregation. (Pastor Walter Harley is in the background.)

ton of the Varnville Housing Authority on behalf of Bethel UMC, SMOAKS, and the gifts were then given to the youth.

God's love through the joy of giving and receiving was truly a blessing for all members and children who participated in the Angel Tree ministry.

# A WARM RISK: Helping people in the coldest time of year

From Page 1

sturdy walls and windows to keep out the frost, and folks worried.

So, the pastor made a phone call to the Methodist mayor of Newberry, Foster Senn, and he made a few phone calls, too. Pretty soon the donations started to pour in, and the church and the community went to work and prayed and marveled at the generosity and compassion of the community.

And on a night when we read the story about no room at the inn, we were able to open our hearts and our church basement to any who needed shelter. Temperatures dropped, the wind howled and at times freezing rain pelted the wet ground, turning the grass into tiny, glistening shards, confirming predictions by the National Weather Service of a record-breaking cold front. But inside the church, it was a warm and cozy Christmas with cots, bulky with donated pillows and blankets lined up against the wall and a kitten sleeping in a carrier by the door.

"I didn't see my family," chair of the church council Lewis Lee remarked, beaming. "I was here at the church, helping take care of folks, but somehow it was just the best Christmas ever."

Lee and his wife, Nancy, were among the many volunteers who cooked, cleaned and provided entertainment for more than a dozen souls at the O'Neal Street Warming Center on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Indeed, the warming center stayed open for the three worst days of the holiday storm. Mary Beth Heath and Monica Stinson fed all the guests and worshippers Christmas Eve dinner and, along with a handful of other volunteers, did the lion's share of the kitchen duties, feeding guests and volunteers three meals a day for three days. No one went hungry, and no one was cold.

Not long after the new year began, Mr. Clyde landed in the



Photo courtesy of the City of Newberry

Members of O'Neal Street Church and Newberry Helping Newberry were recognized and thanked by city council for the warming station they opened during some of the coldest nights of the most recent holiday season.

hospital with pneumonia and told the nurse he would have died if the O'Neal Street United Methodist Church hadn't taken him in.

"That's my grandmother's church," the nurse replied.

A young soldier on his way to serve in Iraq found himself out of money and stranded away from home. When he called the sheriff's office, he found a ride to the church's warming center. With the help of local city councilwoman Jackie Holmes, the soldier was able to contact his commanding officer and secure passage to his assignment, but not until he returned to the church to volunteer.

It wasn't a Christmas full of beautiful pageants and breath-taking cantatas; it was a Christmas of service, of serving and loving the least among us, and it made a young woman working hard one night at the hospital proud to be a Methodist again. It made a soldier return to help care for others.

It made for one of the best holidays the church could remember, but it wouldn't have happened without the courage to take risks.

"I know it's what Jesus wants us to do," confessed Patsy Mays, lifelong Methodist and 90-year-old member of the church, "but I am a bit worried."

She was not alone in her concerns. Opening the doors to the community takes courage and cooperation. There are risks involved, and it would be difficult for any church to do this alone. Fortunately, we were incredibly supported in our mission by everyone from the mayor and city council members to law enforcement, town officials and average folks willing to give. It took a village, as the saying goes—lots of people working together to take care of the community's most vulnerable.

Moreover, the work didn't stop when the temperatures improved. Stephanie Thanabouasy, from Newberry Helping Newberry, and retired mental health care provider Heather O'Dell followed up with care plans for each of the guests who stayed at the church, and their work yielded great success.

One man agreed to substance abuse counseling and residential treatment. Others have addressed health and housing issues that will have long-term effects on the quality of their lives, and consequently, on the quality of life in the community.

The O'Neal Street UMC opened a warming center during the winter's coldest days, and it opened up a myriad of possibilities for the church and for the community. Relationships and friendships were forged, and plans for a better Newberry were inspired, all by those who came together to help warm a few souls.

*Kelley pastors Mount Pleasant and O'Neal Street United Methodist churches. The names of those who stayed at the Warming Center have all been changed to protect their identities.*

# BLUFFTON: 'We're seeing God work in incredible ways'

From Page 1

Easter service with a local African-American congregation, an active food relief effort and the confirmation of more than a dozen young people last year. They have been leasing space in a retail plaza and had jointly purchased 10 acres of already-paid-off prime real estate where they were actively planning to construct their permanent location.

But last year, days before finalizing a loan to begin construction of that location, the deal was halted, and the church began a strategic churchwide planning process that quickly shifted to exploration of the viability of the Bluffton campus, including a hard look at finances. While the two campuses always intentionally shared a budget (part of its original "One Great Church, Two Front Doors" concept), church leadership began looking at separate financials for each. Ultimately the newly formed strategic planning committee decided operating two campuses was too expensive to be sustainable.

In October, the St. Andrew Church Council voted to separate the two churches.

St. Andrew Church Council Chair Sarah Coffin called it a largely amicable separation stemming from financial concerns.

"The decision was primarily based on the inability of St. Andrew to continue to financially support both the Bluffton and Hilton Head churches," Coffin said. "Both parties felt the agreement was fair, and enables Bluffton to have a chance at being successful in continuing their outreach while minimizing the financial impact to SABTS."

David Deis, a member of the negotiation team who also served as the Bluffton Building Committee Chair, said they were able to reach a separation agreement out of necessity, despite a rushed timeframe.

"Both congregations received some benefits that will allow all of us to move forward. In the process, both congregations felt the pain and consequences of separation."

However, Deis said, the separation was accomplished "despite a nearly total lack of support or participation by the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist



In spite of the separation, the churches said they hope to work together in the future.

Church."

"The New Bluffton Worship remains committed to reaching out to St. Andrew By-The-Sea to maintain a relationship that has a mutual interest in spreading the love of Jesus Christ"

The Walterboro District did not respond as of press time for a comment on the matter.

Bluffton Worship Lay Leader Jeff Jones, a member of St. Andrew since 2004 who helped launch the Bluffton campus, said he believes both St. Andrew and the Bluffton leadership did what they felt was right, though he doesn't believe the split was solely about finances.

As Jones wrote after the church vote, "I have served on church council since 2006 and the last 10 of those years as the Bluffton steward. After we moved to get the Bluffton mission up and running, I have never been in a meeting where the troubles of Bluffton Worship finances were discussed. No one has ever said to me, 'The Bluffton mission is too expensive and we need to find ways to cut costs.' You would think as Bluffton steward, it might come up: 'Hey, Jeff, we need to look at that rent. We need to take out the children's center. We need to talk about staff costs.' Not one conversation. No agenda

item to ask if we could make a plea to raise our giving. Never."

Burbage said the 10 acres they originally purchased for \$650,000 appraised at \$4.3 million. He said with the sale of the land, St. Andrew could have been financially solvent for many years.

Regardless, it was clear it was time for the two to separate, whether because of finances or other issues.

After the vote, Burbage said, the initial plan was for him to stay on as an associate pastor at St. Andrew through June, presumably to guide Bluffton through the process.

"The church council decision was that we could either become our own church within The United Methodist Church or become an independent church," Burbage said.

But shortly after the vote, things changed.

"(We were told) there was no interest from the conference for the 200-plus people from Bluffton to be a United Methodist congregation," Burbage said. "We were also told that because there was a church council vote, the Bluffton campus, in terms of the *Discipline*, no longer existed as a ministry, and was likened to the closing of a day care."

With no choice to be a UMC, Bluffton Worship had to decide whether to shutter completely or become an independent church.

Then, weeks later, things changed again, and Burbage was informed he and his family would be moved in two weeks to one of three locations across the state—and that he had two days to decide if he would comply. Burbage was also informed he would no longer be compensated or receive benefits by St. Andrew in the new year.

His leaving meant Bluffton would be left completely without pastoral leadership at a time when they arguably needed it the most—and during the holidays, with an already-scheduled Christmas Eve service on the calendar and a host of other commitments they were trying to honor as people of God.

Burbage said the Bluffton campus already felt like his baby, as he had shepherded it since the beginning. But instead of turning his "baby" over to a new parent, leaving it

at such a critical time violated his personal ethics and conscience.

"It felt like leaving my baby out to die," he said.

Ultimately, Burbage reluctantly surrendered his credentials as a United Methodist pastor and is pastoring the now-independent church for the foreseeable future. Bluffton staff member Monica Barricks also chose to remain with the congregation.

Today, the church has chartered as "The New Bluffton Worship." It is in the midst of applying for its 501(c)(3) nonprofit status and has quickly raised—in just three or four weeks—\$400,000 to operate, plus another \$300,000 in pledges. That's far beyond its regular annual budget and enough to give its membership hope for a viable, God-ordained future so it can continue operating as a church and continue making disciples for Jesus Christ.

Coffin said the two congregations will collaborate on their Christmas Grace mission going forward, as each campus brings strengths to that mission.

As for the 10 acres of property the island and Bluffton campuses of St. Andrew purchased together, it is now for sale and has been appraised at \$4.3 million. The property stays with St. Andrew in trust for the annual conference, and Bluffton is slated to get \$300,000 from the pre-existing building fund.

They will receive no monies from the sale of the property, Burbage said.

"The whole thing has been incredibly disappointing to me. I never in my life imagined turning in my credentials," Burbage said, calling the separation "painful and hard" on himself, his family and on the Bluffton church.

Jones echoed that, noting, "Everybody felt hurt."

But Burbage and Jones said they remain hopeful about what God has in store for The New Bluffton Worship.

"God has been really good," Jones said. "Everything that has happened has become a blessing, and we are much healthier now than we were before."

"We're seeing God work in incredible ways, including financially."

# REVOLUTION: 'A great reminder of what God can do'

From Page 1

Chris Lynch, a congregational specialist for the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, said it was heartening to see youth from across the state making a first-time commitment or recommitting their lives to Christ.

"After a couple years of shifting how we provide an event for young people, this was a great reminder of what God can do when young people gather to worship and be challenged in their faith," said Lynch, who

leads South Carolina Ministries with Young People.

Each year at Revolution, students respond to God's call and make it known that they want to explore a call to ministry. The event includes resources to help them consider their first steps along that pathway to serving God and others.

"It is powerful to watch as our youth experience The United Methodist Church in connection," Lynch said. "At Revolution, youth and their leaders witness firsthand the amazing picture of The United Method-

ist Church in action through worship and mission."

The youth spent much of Saturday engaged in fellowship, games and service at Epworth Children's Home. Teens from Bethel UMC, Spartanburg, dedicated most of their afternoon to refreshing an Epworth playground by spreading a new layer of mulch.

Keynote speaker Nathalie Nelson Parker—an educator, author and UMC elder—challenged the youth to consider how they can be used as instruments spreading God's light in a world of darkness.

Christian pop band Stars Go Dim, whose members have strong roots in the UMC, returned for a second consecutive year to lead worship in a powerful, engaging way.

South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston helped close the moving weekend of worship and service by leading communion on Sunday morning.

Many pastors and youth leaders who brought their youth groups to Revolution 2023 shared how refreshing and life-giving the weekend was to them and their youth as they continue in ministry post-COVID.



Photos by Dan O'Mara

More than 1,000 youth and their leaders pack the Township Auditorium in Columbia.



The Praise Dance Team from Union UMC, Irmo, performs before the crowd.



Bishop Holston chats with Melissa Williams of the Darlington Cooperative Parish.



Nathalie Nelson Parker brings a word about bringing light in the darkness.





Youth groups from scores of UMCs across South Carolina experienced a powerful weekend of worship and music.



The youth spent much of Saturday engaged in service (above left), games (above right) and fellowship at Epworth Children's Home.

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Red Bank UMC youth, along with their pastor and first lady the Rev. Walter and Elaine Harley, enjoy some quality time at Revolution.

Photo courtesy Evella Nesmith

# ALDRSGATE HOMES: One in Florence, one in Columbia

From Page 1

Aldersgate is also in the process of purchasing a home in the Coldstream area of Columbia. As of press time, their offer to purchase had been accepted, and they anticipate closing by the end of the month. They are not certain yet whether the home will be for men or women, but it will accommodate four people with special needs.

These two homes are in addition to the three others Aldersgate operates: Rick's House, along with one called "The Oaks" in Orangeburg at The Oaks that accommodates six men and one called "Columbia Builder's Care Home" in Columbia near Epworth Children's Home that accommodates six women.

Thomas said the houses are part of Aldersgate's mission to provide quality homes in a Christian environ for people with special needs that enables them to be as independent as possible.

"There is a really vast need for homes for people with special needs in our state," Thomas said. "We have a lot of aging caregivers that aren't going to be taking care of their loved ones with special needs. We're hoping as we continue to grow we will be that next 'home away from home' for people and give their families a sense of relief and peace knowing their child or brother or sister is living in an environment like home, and one that is Christian."

Currently, she said, some adults with special needs are able to live with relatives, but as those relatives age, situations change. The South Carolina's Department of Disabilities and Special Needs keeps a critical residential list, and people with special needs can be placed wherever there is a vacancy, but Aldersgate is one of only two that offers a Christian living environment.

"Our Christian aspect and high quality of care is what sets us apart from others in the state. Our folks go to church, they're active in the churches," Thomas said, noting some Aldersgate residents work at Meals on Wheels, the local food bank, or volunteer at Epworth.



Above is the lot at The Manor in Florence where Aldersgate's "Sunshine House" will be built thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor. Below, Aldersgate is also in the process of purchasing this home in the Coldstream area of Columbia.



"They are just really active and engaged in the community."

Also exciting for Thomas is the potential for still another Aldersgate home in Columbia—this sixth one on the property of Grace

United Methodist Church on Harbison Blvd. in Columbia. Aldersgate is working

“  
There is a really vast need for homes for people with special needs in our state.

—Kim Thomas,  
Aldersgate executive director

”  
with leadership both from Grace and from Christus Victor Lutheran next door, and all are eager about the possibility. They are currently seeking approval from the Harbison Association.

Thomas said that while no funding is needed for the Sunshine House in Florence, donations are welcome for the Columbia home and for all the Aldersgate homes in general, whether monetary, furniture items or everyday needs such as paper towels.

“And prayer is huge,” Thomas said. “Not everyone is in a position to give financially, but praying we're good servants with the Lord's money and make good decisions in serving our people, those are definitely appreciated.”

For more on Aldersgate, visit <https://www.aldersgatespecialneedsministry.org>

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## Guest Commentary

by David Bryant

### Beyond here there be dragons

I recently watched a video titled “Jesus Prepares His Disciples,” the first segment in Francis Chan’s “Jesus’s Farewell Message” series. In the video, Chan implored us to understand the magnitude of God and his love for you.

Not to nitpick, but in an effort to put this in personal perspective and corporate relevance, I’m not sure that was Jesus’s goal or, at least, his objective. I would rewrite the statement to read “others”—that is, that we understand the magnitude of God and his love for others, no “althoughs” or “however’s” and certainly no “we love but we don’t . . .”

Hmm. Why is this so hard? Why are we willing to engage in a denominational conflict that pits friend against friend, family against family, congregation against congregation and, yes, weaponizing Jesus and the Holy Spirit against each other.

Why?

Perhaps fear places a barrier to progress. What a novel thought! Perhaps fear creates a line we simply cannot cross. A place where we say, “I love you, Jesus, but this I can’t do, farther than this I can’t go . . . I won’t go.”

It’s a conundrum based in Scripture and the human condition. We know that God visited 10 plagues on Pharaoh before the Israelites were freed, but did you know they wanted to stop, turn around and re-embrace slavery rather than follow 10 times also? Many chose, even while looking across Jordan, to stay where their comfort zones were challenged no further.

It is precisely when we reach this point of fold, call or raise that we redefine Christian love as checklist adherence to the law, and we call it “faithfulness.” Then, we impose these conditions on others and call it “righteousness”—effectively blocking out Jesus and the Holy Spirit as we block out compassion and devotion in the name of obedience.

This is when and where we adopt the Pharisaic Dilemma, concrete adherence to obedience as our substitution for fear. This is when we write on our spiritual maps, “Beyond here be dragons!”

But faith dictates we step into that fear. Faith!

I personally believe—after great grief, anger, arrogance, bombast, denial, contemplation and, finally, even prayer—that our greatest corporate fear is that if we get this wrong Jesus will no longer love us. It’s the fear that divides us; allows us to engage in disinformation, distortion and hyperbole; that makes us cling to “scriptural purity” to select Scripture only.

I would hope that, once the dust has settled on disaffiliation and separation, The United Methodist Church will see the duplicity in labeling as exceptional one special condition it believes conflicts with “Christian teaching” and either removes mention of homosexuality altogether (likely) or expands the exclusions to include an all-inclusive list of sins, qualifications and conditions. These might include adultery, active alcoholism and drug addiction, pedophilia, child/spouse abusers, as well as pride, envy, wrath, gluttony, lust, sloth and greed (unlikely).

Because the UMC has continued to struggle with the issue of human sexuality rather than draw an arbitrary line at this singular issue (and two additional issues that are in direct opposition to “traditional Methodism”), I plan to stay in The United Methodist Church, preferably in my home church, attempting to step forward in trust and faith seeking justice with the love of mercy and the humility of knowing my sins, conditions and character defects are burden enough without presuming to tell God who he may or may not use in ushering in his kingdom.

I take ownership of the acknowledgment I may be wrong. But, for me, the reward of being labeled “woke” outweighs the risk of being asleep and missing the lesson of Gethsemane, knowing Jesus will still love all of us just as he does now . . . even if the dust never settles. And even if there really be dragons.

*Bryant is a member of Bethesda UMC, Easley.*



## View from the Pews

by Bill Barnier

### A new view

Seven years ago, I began this column with the idea that I may offer a new twist to the award-winning pros in the *Advocate*. A small voice, if you will, from the quiet ones in the pews every Sunday.

A lot of holy water has gone under the bridge in that time, some of it carrying away participation and memberships in churches.

When we first accepted the fellowship and guidelines of our United Methodist church, we were impressed by the involvement of the congregation in community service, youth programs, care for the elderly and poor and the overall upbeat attitude of many giving hearts. It became “home.”

Yet there was an underlying sore quietly irritating the fabric of the ecumenical world. The participation in organized religion was declining. The reasons were (are) many and answers few. “God will work it out as He wishes” was the common sentiment. All the while, membership numbers decline and unrest in ranks continues. A rising cry that people quit listening to God and differing opinions of the founding rules was boiling to the surface. Leadership in all manner of worship was being challenged to devote time and resources fighting the tide of change, both from within and outside of their organizations. It had been going on for years. The church world was consuming itself.

And the humble petitioner in the pews looks to higher authorities for answers.

As world populations increase and a new world order of equality, uniformity and obedience again takes root, the ease in which control is possible was demonstrated in the form of a biological Armageddon from China. The effect was so severe that it caused many thinking people to assess their life path, to seek guidance or solace in churches with locked doors, from leaders already burdened.

Assaults on the core of their organizations, operating in a world of increasing greed and hate, caused many of those faithful to simple walk away. The damage may be irreversible.

Today, many of those who remain faithful to the connection they find within their church pews are quietly wondering what the future will look like. The lines are being drawn and redrawn as long-serving conservative leadership is being challenged or rendered ineffective by the unrelenting pressure of a well-organized and expertly executed plan to change the rules. They wonder if it would be better for them to take their faith and their worship in time and tithe away from the place they no longer recognize.

In fact, that is exactly what thousands of Methodists and hundreds of churches are doing right now. Patience waiting for solutions to the bully actions of others is coming to an end. The dam of loyalty is leaking badly.

Once a repair is no longer possible, because management waited too long, there will be no way to salvage the structure. Certainly, waiting another 18 months for a chance to again find some reason to avoid resolution portends a death knell.

It’s unfortunate that Christians of all parties forgot the foremost advice of Christ, who asked us to love one another as we love ourselves, and as he loves us.

It may also be a manifestation of his last words before he commended his spirit to his father: “Forgive them, for they know not what they do.” All sides must find a way to back off to neutral corners with the intent to seek a common place to live together under God. Asking for more prayer to find the way is like asking directions when you have a proper roadmap in your hands. And God sheds one more tear of disappointment.

*Barnier is a member of St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, Ridgeland.*



## Guest Commentary

by Glenn Williams

### Another Civil War?

South Carolina desired to secede independently in 1851—a new country surrounded by The United States of America. There was a vote, and the proposal was defeated by a very slim margin.

The state definitely had reasonable grievances against the North, as the unfair tariffs put a burden on “us” but not on “them.” “We” also did not want anyone to criticize our right to own human beings. The United States’ views concerning “us” just didn’t suit “us.”

South Carolina’s congressmen seemed to have a problem with civil debate (i.e., Brooks-Sumner debate) and compromise. In 1861, South Carolina again took the lead on secession and was followed by the rest of the South. The worst war in modern history ensued, and “we” lost.

However, I contend that worse than the war would be the next century of continued segregation related to the atrocity of a deeply rooted, church-condoned institution: slavery. The church became, and still is, the most segregated group in the United States.

Ironically, the South is taking the lead again on another secession from the already-segregated church. In addition to evidently only being comfortable in a “White” or “Black” congregation, the next group that must leave are the homosexuals. The secessionists will profess their love and welcome for all people, but get real—what gay person is now going to want to attend “their”

church?

OK, now we have a White, straight, Bible-believing Christian church. Where will the segregation stop? What about divorce, alcoholism and addiction, gluttony, cursing and greed? Jesus is scratching his head in dismay.

There is a major difference between the South seceding in 1861 and the Global Methodists and others seceding today. No one will die, at least physically. Humans, sinfully, like to associate with those who are like them—physically and politically. Jesus tells us that attitude is wrong. He gives us this vision of heaven: “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands” (Revelation 7:9).

There will be no bigots or racists in heaven. There will be Jesus-believing homosexuals, divorcees, drunks, addicts and every other redeemed sinner, of which I am eternally grateful. Let’s admit: We are all sinners, and we don’t have a chance for eternity except by the saving grace of Jesus Christ. What would Jesus do? Scripture is clear that the church is supposed to be one body, and welcome and love all sinners.

Segregation will never be the solution.

*Williams is a member of Main Street United Methodist Church in Greenwood.*

## McClendon ‘Breakdown’ series to help clarify UMC conflict



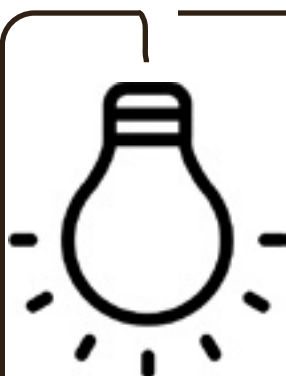
McClendon

In an effort to share his perspective on the current conflicts in The United Methodist Church, one South Carolina UMC pastor has written a series of blog posts titled “Breakdown” that to-date number eight reflections.

The Rev. Josh McClendon, pastor of Pisgah UMC, Florence, said he wrote the posts to be a resource for people.

“In the face of our denominational woes, the most common refrain that I hear from Methodists everywhere is that they feel uninformed,” he said.

The series can be found at <https://joshmcc.wordpress.com/2022/05/27/breakdown-an-introduction-1-x>



## Did You Know?

The *Advocate* offers a free one-year subscription to anyone who joins a United Methodist Church in South Carolina. Send us your new members’ names and addresses and the name of your church and we’ll get them started on becoming more informed about our conference and our church: [atrussell@umcsc.org](mailto:atrussell@umcsc.org)



## Guest Commentary

by Dr. Dan Randall

### Open letter to traditionalist friends

**A** tearful binding and loosing ...” We’ve journeyed together for some time, my friends. I am grateful for your companionship. We come now to a fork in the road. We may choose different paths. If this is where we part ways, know that I honor our common humanity and recognize our many common ideals.

As we stand together, maybe for the last time, our guidebook in hand—the sacred texts, pieced together over a millennium by various authors in various styles, cryptic, ancient, full of dated cultural references, prone to contradictions and yet filled with profound truths—contemplating the path we will choose, I grieve the loss of a church family that has embraced a theology and an ideology that is inconsistent with my own.

I am also reminded of how often throughout the history of the Christian church we, the body of believers, have found it necessary to reconcile the words in our Bible with our emerging understanding of the human condition and our natural world.

Rabbis in the ancient world compiling the Talmud called this process “binding and loosing,” examining the sacred passages and determining exactly how that translates into action day-to-day as we go about our lives, what is permissible and what is not. The process was critical in determining how the original Hebrew laws were interpreted and enforced—everything from how many steps are appropriate to take when retrieving water on the Sabbath, to how much intermarriage is acceptable, to what foods to eat. The process continued into the New Testament era, resolving disputes over items such as whether new Christians needed to become Jews before they could become Christians. Would they have to be circumcised? Should Christians observe Jewish law?

We’ve generally come to accept that Christians don’t need to become Jewish, although our Bible still contains the Old Testament and its teachings. Consistent with human nature, we shamelessly cherry pick. We recognize and attempt to observe the Ten Commandments, but not most of the other laws. We cling to the Shema, but give mostly lip service to the sabbath. Some proverbs we like and some psalms strike a chord. We love to put Micah 6:8, “Seek justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God” on T-shirts and our social media feeds, but we choose to ignore many of the Old Testament teachings on caring for the earth and its creatures.

Since the post-Civil War era, it is universally accepted that human slavery is an abomination despite not being specifically prohibited, likewise with polygamy except in a few rogue sects. It is also universally accepted that charging interest on loans is an acceptable practice despite being specifically prohibited, and divorce and remarriage has become commonplace. Many mainstream denominations recognize the role of female leadership and allow ordination of female pastors despite Paul’s words in the epistles. We frown on stoning people, especially for things like adultery, and we no longer assume disease, tragedy and low socioeconomic status to be a direct result of sin and God’s disfavor. Throughout human history, we have always had to engage our human judgment in making decisions about how to live and worship and serve in a way that is pleasing to God.

Jesus’ teachings helped provide great

clarity in many of these areas. His ministry and actions demonstrated the compassionate nature of God and highlighted to us and to religious leaders of his day that devotion to legalism can transform over time into practices that violate the spirit of the law and obscure the more important aspects of living in community and living in relationship with God as God’s chosen people.

This process of binding and loosing continues into our current post-modern era through current practices of exegesis. Scholars examine Scripture, take into account the original historical context of a passage, the audience, any bias or agenda imparted by the cultural lens through which the author viewed the issue, Jesus’s teaching on the issue or related issues and, of course, the limitations inherent in a pre-scientific understanding of the world. Then, we apply our post-scientific understanding of theology, the natural world, genetics, human behavior, microbiology, medicine, meteorology, etc. Considering sacred passages in this way, we can make more informed determinations of how to apply biblical teaching when we “bind and loose” that are, hopefully, more consistent with the nature of God and more accurately reflect the intended message.

Within the Methodist tradition we call this process the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, divining God’s will for our actions and our canons through consideration of Scripture, reason, tradition and experience. Pastor Adam Hamilton simply refers to this as reading the Bible “literately—not literally.”

In many instances with difficult Scripture passages, we in the faith community have been quick to achieve consensus among a majority without controversy. In matters related to human sexuality, that has not been the case. Debate has raged within the Methodist denomination since the General Conference of 1972, and it has led to the polarization we are experiencing today. All parties expressly agree with Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16 that “all Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness.” It is in the interpretation of six specific passages of Scripture related to human sexuality where views diverge into a more traditional and a more progressive perspective.

Traditionalists prefer a more conservative, more literal reading of the text and attempt to stake out the moral high ground, pointing out that the language in those six passages clearly prohibits homosexuality. However, the “binding and loosing” in regard to those passages seems arbitrary and motivated more by personal distaste and homophobia than logic when we consider the views held by this same group of traditional theologians on the interpretation of Scripture relating to food laws, charging interest on loans, using a rod to discipline children, stoning adulterers and divorce and remarriage. The traditionalist view on these issues aligns with the more mainstream view shared by progressives as no longer relevant to our current religious practices despite being expressly allowed and encouraged in Scripture. Similarly, traditionalists and progressives both consider the Bible’s permissive stance on slavery and polygamy as inappropriate given our modern understanding of human rights and marital ethics.

Perhaps the most egregious example of the double standard at play relating to human sexuality is the agreement in both

campus on ordination of female pastors. Scripture passages referring to silencing women’s voices in the church and excluding them from leadership roles far outnumber those referring to homosexuality. Yet, despite clear wording to the contrary, the traditionalists are able to recognize that women have proven themselves to be capable, competent church leaders, both in biblical time and in the modern era, and allow for the ordination of female clergy. This undermines any rational argument for their conservative position on scriptural authority where it relates to the six passages in the Bible that refer directly to homosexuality rendering it not only hypocritical, but null and void.

This false piety and selectively mindless approach to reading of the Scripture amounts to a dangerous brand of kindergarten conservatism that is tailored to forwarding a specific agenda and designed to erect and defend artificial boundaries that marginalize an entire subset of believers while tacitly ignoring the fact that their own religious practices interpret Scripture in ways that contradict the original reading of the text when it suits their interest.

For progressives, “binding and loosing” with regard to human sexuality hinges on a number of issues. First and maybe foremost, our 21st-century understanding of genetics, the biological basis of behavior and human growth and development, have led us to a point where we can reasonably state that same-sex attraction and gender identity is not usually a choice. We can debate how much is biologically determined and how much is a result of early social and environmental influences, but for the individual, at the age of sexual awareness, it is not generally a choice. You love who you love, and you feel most comfortable occupying a certain gender role from an early age. Given the abundance of Scripture that speaks to all human beings as being made in God’s image, worthy of his love, knit together in the womb, fearfully and wonderfully made, going so far as to number the hairs on our head, there is generally no question about the sanctity, dignity and worthiness of the individual or of God’s overwhelming love for each of us.

There is also generally no disagreement on the matter of humans being created to be in a loving relationship with one another and with God, and that much of the human experience—the depth, breadth, purpose, personal fulfillment, emotional and spiritual health—depends on those healthy relationships. Furthermore, given that the individual is acting on natural inclinations imparted to him or her by creator God, can the individual be held accountable for attractions that seem unnatural to heterosexual individuals? Should individuals who experience same-sex attraction be denied the life-sustaining benefits of intimate relationships? Should they be discriminated against and denied leadership roles in the church because of how they are made? Can we be condemned or penalized if it’s not a choice?

Progressives believe not. Progressives have come to believe the six passages related to homosexuality reflect a pre-scientific

paradigm that may have seemed appropriate to more primitive cultures, when slavery and polygamy, misogyny and infanticide were the norm, but not today.

Second, it is easy to embrace a conservative reading of Scripture when discussing the matter within a forum in an abstract sense. It is entirely different to sit across the table from an individual with whom you have a close relationship and discuss sexual orientation and gender identity. More often than not, the conversation is marked by angst, frustration, anger and desperation; stories of prayerful intervention to be delivered from their torment; confusion as to why they are the way they are and feelings of isolation, loneliness and exclusion. Suicidal ideations are all too common. To hear from a trusted spiritual advisor that you are perverted, sinful, willfully out of step with God’s plan for your life and sentenced to either a life of living in sin that will never be sanctioned by your church community or sentenced to a lonely existence devoid of an intimate relationship with another human being, is punitive in ways inconsistent with the nature of God. The words of the Shema should ring clearly in our ears: “Love the Lord God with all your heart, soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.”

When confusion, desperation, isolation has a face and name and sits among you at worship, it becomes our responsibility as a church to be for them the love of Christ and to help them live into the calling on their lives, regardless of whether or not we understand or agree.

We have had the occasion to sit around the table with friends and their children and share in this struggle. We have visited them in the hospital after suicide attempts. We have watched them eventually find their place in this world, overcome prejudice and discrimination and begin to thrive. I do not have grandchildren yet, but as I consider the choices before us as a denomination, it is clear to me that, regardless of my personal experience and my lack of understanding of all the issues at hand, I could never be a part of a church that would not fully welcome and embrace any future grandchild of mine that struggled with any of these issues.

Paul’s sentiment, “now we see in a mirror dimly,” seems very appropriate to us still today as we try to live into the true nature of God’s will for our lives and determine the canons we observe in our worship.

A thoughtful, informed reading of the Bible, considering all the influences of the cultural lens, audience, agenda and translation of the original author, as well as the example of Jesus and our understanding of the natural world, is the only way to reconcile the confusing, contradictory, sometimes violent and potentially misleading passages contained within. One day we will see clearly. In the meantime, when left to our limited human understanding, let us gravitate toward the example of grace, inclusion and reconciliation that Jesus set for us during his ministry. For if we get something wrong, let it be the theology part, not the “love your neighbor” part.

*Randall is a member of Advent UMC in Simpsonville.*

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## Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Tony Rowell

### 'If you can't say something nice ...'

Many, many years ago, before the gray hair, before the weathered lines, before the yellowing teeth and the bad knees and shoulders, I was a boy. And one of the things that amazes me as I grow older is how many memories of my boyhood remain untarnished and vigorous in my mind.

Most of them come from the time I spent with Granny and Grandpa Tharpe down in Panama City, Florida. You see, I spent my summers with them, and they were special—I mean truly special people. I was one generation removed from them, my mama being their firstborn, and the times I had with them and the lessons I learned from them I cherish more than silver or gold. For good or for bad, who I am today has a lot to do with the gentle and sometimes not so gentle raising of my mama and myself by that gracious couple.

When I was a boy, up until about age 12 or 13, my family moved every couple years or so as a result of my father's job as an engineer with General Electric. By 1970, my 12th year, when we finally settled in Lexington, South Carolina, we had moved seven times. One result of such wandering is the inability of putting down much of a taproot in any of the places where we lived.

In my personal opinion, for a child to grow up strong and steady, roots are necessary. With that philosophy in mind, I was blessed to spend my summers in the well-tended soil found on the corner of Drake Avenue and West 17th Street in the blue-collar section of Panama City. Maggie and Clayton Tharpe lived there, and I can think of no better place for a young boy to be when putting down roots.

One of the countless memories I have of those times took place on an Indian summer afternoon. It was hot—I mean devil's breath hot—but that didn't keep me from hunting mullet off of the Dead Lakes dam just outside of Wewahitchka. On that particular day, Granny and Grandpa had awakened me at 4 a.m. to go fishing down at the dam. Back then I didn't mind such foolishness. I was 10 or 11 years old, and I lived for Wednesdays, early morning or otherwise. You see, on Wednesdays we would always go somewhere fishing—weather permitting, of course.

Grandpa was a milkman for the Borden Dairy company, had been all his life, and Wednesday was his day off. Well, actually he had Sunday and Wednesday off, but Granny reserved Sunday for church in the morning, and dressing up to no end in the afternoon so we could wander all over the countryside visiting this cousin and that cousin and this aunt and that uncle. But Wednesday was a different matter altogether. On Wednesday we would always head out in search of fish and quiet. On this particular day, we were headed for the dam.

The best I can recall, we arrived at the dam just before the crack of dawn. Granny always liked to outrun everybody else. You see she had a favorite spot down by the spillway at the end of the dam, where the water whirled around a little bit and made sort of an eddy. She would settle down there with a couple of poles out, one with a cricket and one with a worm. During Catawba worm season, she'd set out three poles, and when the mayflies came around she would set out four. What she was doing was trying to figure out what the fish were in the mood for on that particular morning. When she figured it out, she set out no less than four poles pointing in all directions with the anointed bait. And heaven knows that woman could fish. If she didn't catch anything, you may as well go home.

Now my Grandpa was a little antsy, and in turn wasn't one to sit and watch a cork all day

long, especially if there were largemouth bass around. Well, sometimes if we were down near Willis landing sitting on a johnboat out on the Four Brother's River, he would put a couple of poles out, but he would always be casting over them on the off chance that there might be a big old bass lurking under a log close by.

On this particular day, Grandpa was in the mood to wander, so he grabbed his rod and reel and headed off down the dam, casting over the side and running a jig just over the spillway and a little past the riprap where the water was always restive. He said that was the place the big ones like to stay; and just like Granny, if Grandpa didn't catch a bass or two, you may as well forget it.

Well, all things have to come to an end, and around sundown Grandpa brought me the bad news that we had to go. I was at the far end of the dam when he found me, and as we were walking to the other end and back to the car, he asked me to carry his rod for him, which I gladly did. It was like carrying Arthur's Excalibur to me.

As we walked, I screwed up the courage to ask him if I could try his jig for a minute. He thought for a second, and with a little smile he said, "Sure."

And I had no sooner cast that thing into those uneasy waters when a six-pound bass grabbed it and took off for home, scaring me to death. It took a struggle, I mean a world-class wrestling match, but finally I got that monster on the shore. To a 10-year-old boy, a six-pound bass is a monster.

I will never forget the feelings of triumph and pure unadulterated joy catching that fish brought me, but that is not what I remember the most from that day. What I remember most are the words of my grandpa on the way back home.

After we had piled into the old Plymouth with me settling down on the back seat to sleep, we headed down that long straight road to Panama City. I was worn to a frazzle, and just before my lids closed for the third time and I went under, I saw Grandpa look over at Granny and say, "I was really proud of that boy today. For a minute there I thought he was gonna give up, but he didn't. He kept at it and got it done. I think we might make a fisherman out of him yet."

Now I know that simple statement might not seem like much to you, but to a 10-year-old boy who loved and admired his grandpa more than any man alive, before or since, that passing sentiment of acceptance and appreciation was nothing less than a blessing. Those words spoken in that quiet loving voice became part of the fabric of my being, a part which has held firm to this day.

Simple lesson here: Let's build one another up with our words in the coming year.

We live in a harsh world filled with unforgiving and sometimes malicious, hateful rhetoric. As the children of God, we are called upon to be the alternative to this world and its ways. If we speak to one another in love, we will be a balm to this world; and the Lord knows that this world could use it. If we give into our lesser selves, we will simply blend in with the destructive din and become part of the problem.

The power of words to build us up is as great, as is the power of words to destroy us. We, the children of God, are called to build.

So as my granny would say, "Let's be sure to watch our mouths in 2023."

*Rowell pastors Beulah UMC, Gilbert. He is also the author of "What Would Granny Say? And Other Somewhat Embellished Memories" from the Advocate Press. You can buy it at <https://advocatesc.org/store/books/what-would-granny-say>.*



## Guest Commentary

by Deborah Len

### God with us always (Part 1 of 6)

*Editor's note: This is the first in a series of articles that comprise a faith-based short story by the author.*

Clank, clatter, crash, boom, bang. "Oh, no!" I shouted as all the dishes above the refrigerator fell to the kitchen floor. Now I will be late to work—again. Why do I try to do so much before I go to work? All these thoughts ran through my mind.

Hi, folks. I am Ken. I live in my Grandma Dot's old house. I inherited it when she passed two years ago. This is a great old house. As they say, it has "good bones." The wiring is a bit sketchy, and the plumbing still has some of the old cast-iron pipes. The foundation is solid. This house has been through a few small earthquakes and several hurricanes.

Today is the first work day of a new year, and I decided to get up early and start really cleaning out spaces in the house to just bring it into being mine. So, in an effort to not be late to my job as a chemical engineer, I opted to leave the mess on the floor and high-tail it to work.

When I got home that night, the mess of broken old tea pots and odd bits of cake platters and assorted bowls big enough to bathe a child were still on the floor. Yes, I live alone, and there are no elves, or fairies or pixies, hiding in the broom closet to clean up my messes. I bent down to pick up some of the unbroken dishes ... and I saw an envelope.

It had three names on it: Kenneth (that's me), George (my first cousin, Dad's brother's son) and Daniel (my first cousin, Dad's sister's son). We boys were raised in the area and we were great friends for years. Grandma Dot baked the best pies, and we would

devour one of them every Sunday. We were all the same age, all born in 1953. Odd how things happen.

Here I stood with almost 40 years of memories washing over me. It is 1992, and I am 39 years old, yet we boys have not talked to each other since George went to Vietnam. I was in college at Drexel and Daniel was studying at Wesley Seminary in Washington.

Now what do I do? It seems there will be some things I will have to make peace with, as well as find my two cousins. Make peace with so much since 1973.

Odd that my first thought was not to open the letter. My nature as an engineer is to be logical. Maybe less than Spock. A smile came across my face as I remembered us cousins watching Star Trek on television together.

Peace that passes all understanding, Grandma Dot would say every Sunday. That is what you three boys need. She also would say we needed some Jesus in our hearts. We then would get a yummy dinner and pie. She made us sit and listen to her read the Bible. We ate our pieces of pie as she read.

Personally, I did not really care a hill of beans about her reading. All I wanted was the biggest piece of pie. She always would come back to Proverbs 21:23. She would look at each one of us and say, "Guard your mouth and tongue. Remember, once you say something it can't be taken back."

She also would remind us to not tell everything we see to anyone who would listen. To be polite and listen eagerly to others.

Grandma Dot thought listening was the best skill ever. It was in Matthew 11 somewhere. Now, where was my Bible that I got from her in 1971? To be continued.

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



## Clergy Care

by the Rev. Jonathan Harris

### Simple tools for focusing your energy

I shared in last month's *Advocate* that most of us have only three to five high-energy hours each day (what Carey Nieuwhof calls your "Green Zone") in which to do our best, most important work. Studies show that the average person takes up to 25 minutes to re-focus after even the shortest of interruptions, like an alert on your phone.

Given the number of distractions you likely face, I have devoted this installment to sharing some tools and habits that can help you minimize distractions and take advantage of your few high-energy hours each day.

Turn off phone notifications: According to Nieuwhof, most people touch their phones around 2,600 times a day. Talk about a distraction! To help me with this, there are only two types of notifications I have not muted on my phone: calls and texts. Everything else probably isn't an emergency and, therefore, doesn't get to intrude on my Green Zone.

Unsubscribe from email lists: You get thousands of emails. Some of these are important, but most are not: The store that sends you promotions every other day because of a purchase you made three years ago. The weekly newsletter you never read. The organization that sends you three emails a week for some reason you still haven't figured out. Just as you might go through your closet once a year to weed out the clothes you're never going to wear, take a few minutes to unsubscribe from those

emails that do not further your priorities in life and ministry.

BlockSite: Do you spend too much time scrolling through social media, reading news articles, or checking football scores for no reason in particular? Install BlockSite on your phone and then create a "Block List"—a list of sites and apps you know will distract you when you need to be productive. You can block a site or app 24/7 (as I have done with Facebook and ESPN) or for a particular day/time of the week (as I have done with my email on Saturdays and Sundays so I don't check that on the weekends during family time). This free app is available on Google Play and the App Store. For more information, visit [BlockSite.Co](http://BlockSite.Co).

Notebird: It takes energy and time to keep track of the pastoral care needs of a congregation and to communicate those needs to other pastors, staff, and laity. Enter Notebird, an app that makes it simple to pre-schedule pastoral care and receive reminders. This tool is available starting at \$10/month at [notebird.app](http://notebird.app).

These are a few distraction-busters and energy savers I have discovered that have helped me make the most of my Green Zone each day. What would you add to this list?

*Harris pastors Mount Zion UMC in Central. This article, along with other support tools for clergy, can be found at <https://www.umcsc.org/clergycare>*



# A celebration of merger

## Excerpt from Cannon's presentation at Granville Hicks Leadership Academy

By the Rev. Carol Rexroad Cannon

*Editor's note: The following is excerpted with permission from Cannon's presentation about the merger of the 1785 and 1866 conferences, given at Claflin University Jan. 27.*

I did not grow up in the South Carolina Conference. I grew up in Missouri Methodist Church in Columbia, Missouri, when Dr. Monk Bryan was pastor. I joined the South Carolina Conference in 1982 when I married a seminary classmate, the Rev. Robert Cannon.

I remember Dr. Bryan's exuberance when he returned home from the Special General Conference held in St. Louis in 1970. We were no longer Methodists—we were United Methodists. That meant we had joined together with the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

I had no idea what the formation of The United Methodist Church meant for Methodists in the South. I had never heard of the Central Jurisdiction. I did not know that Black and White conferences would have to merge.

I didn't even know that when I moved to South Carolina in 1982. It was not mentioned in my Methodist history classes in seminary. I wonder how many United Methodists today know that history.

Today, I celebrate the merger 51 years ago of the 1785 Conference (predominantly White) and the 1866 Conference (predominantly Black). I give thanks for the leaders in both conferences who prayerfully, intentionally and passionately worked to develop a plan for merger that would succeed.

I praise them for resisting the sentiments against merger, both within the church and in the larger society. For this was done in the midst of the court-ordered desegregation of the public schools. Desegregation was so strongly opposed in South Carolina at that time that many Whites formed their own private schools, explicitly stating they were segregationist academies. That was the prevailing culture when the merger committee met.

The Joint Committee on Merger was established in 1966-1967. Its purpose was "to draw up a fair and equitable plan for the merging" of the two South Carolina Conferences of the Methodist Church into the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. There were 80 members of the committee, 39 appointed by Bishop Charles Golden of the 1866 Conference and 41 appointed by Bishop Paul Hardin of the 1785 Conference; 54 were clergy (all men), 22 laymen and eight laywomen.

According to the Foreword, "Almost every provision of [the] plan [underwent] repeated debate, discussion, amendment and refinement . . . . There [were] numerous adjustments, changes and compromises on

both sides to arrive at the first 'proposed plan of merger.'"

The 1866 Conference met on May 24, 1971, and passed it 241-9 (96 percent). Two weeks later, the 1785 Conference met June 7-11. After much debate, it was defeated 432-528. The two major stated reasons against the plan were 1) White resistance to racial inclusiveness; and 2) racial quotas.

Hardin then appointed a "Committee of Six" from the 1785 Conference to draft a modified plan. It proposed that the racial percentages of elected members to conference boards, commissions and committees be changed from 75 percent White and 25 percent Black to 80 percent White to 20 percent Black. The time frame for these ratios to last was decreased from 12 to eight years. Furthermore, these ratios were also now "suggested," not "mandated." The other change was that the superintendents of the 12 districts would not be designated by race. A special session of the 1785 Conference passed this alternate plan in September 1971; shortly thereafter the 1866 Conference met and rejected it, almost unanimously.

A "Committee of Six" from each annual conference was then formed to come up with a mutually acceptable plan. After much discussion, the ratio for the elected members to conference boards, commissions and committees reverted back to 75/25, reflecting the racial composition of the newly merged conference. However, the time frame remained eight years, and the ratios were still suggestions, not mandates. Instead, delegates were recommended to "follow their consciences on secret ballots to maintain the balance." Furthermore, the chairpersons of the boards were to be chosen "on the basis of merit, not racial quotas."

Additionally, the new South Carolina Conference would initially have 15 districts with four superintendents and districts from the 1866 Conference and eleven from the 1785 Conference. Two years later, the newly formed conference would be divided into 12 realigned districts, the number of superintendents having been reduced by attrition. The ratio of nine superintendents from the 1785 Conference and three from the 1866 Conference was to be continued through 1980.

With the General Conference deadline for merger looming, the two conferences met once again in January 1972. The 1785 Conference passed the reworked plan of merger with a 70 percent favorable vote; the vote in the 1866 Conference was 68 percent in favor of it.

In reporting this, I want to note that the 1866 Conference made all the concessions to this so-called compromise. For the sake of merger, the Black Methodists were willing to make major sacrifices. I salute them

for that.

I now want to comment on two particular features of the Plan of Merger that ultimately was approved. First, it is significant that from the outset, the racial composition of the Cabinet reflected the racial composition of the merged Annual Conference. This was not true in all the merged conferences in the Southeast.

For instance, in 1992, 20 years later after merger, Bishop Bill Morris of Nashville was elected to the episcopacy and assigned to the Alabama-West Florida Conference. Morris was the first African American to serve on that conference's cabinet.

In contrast, by that same year, South Carolina had had 20 consecutive years of one-fourth of the district superintendents being Black, six cross racial appointments, a Black director of the Conference Council on Ministries, and a Black conference lay leader. We were also celebrating the return of Bishop Joseph Bethea, a native son of the 1866 Conference, for a second term as our bishop.

That is a sign of the success of the South Carolina Plan of Merger and cause for celebration.

I cannot speak for how Black churches felt in 1972 about having a White district superintendent, but I have a testimony from a White church, Trinity UMC, Bamberg. This recollection comes from Dr. Mike Watson, a member of that congregation who was also a member of the Conference Joint Committee on Merger.

It is his account of Trinity's first charge conference in 1972 with their new Black district superintendent.

"You would think that a person like me would not be shaken up by this at all. . . . But this was my church! Several of the long-time members had threatened to 'quit the church' with the advent of integration of the conference. Also, I was concerned for the minister who would be coming. From what had been said, I didn't think that the meeting would be very pleasant for him, at all.

"I was very tense as we all assembled in the Fellowship Hall and awaited his arrival.

"At precisely 7:30, a nicely dressed, small Black man walked in and introduced himself to the chairman of the administrative board and took a seat. The chairman opened the meeting and went through the routine business and turned the meeting over to the D.S.

"He began by saying that he should introduce himself first, as no one knew him. Then he told us where he was born, and that he was the youngest of seven children and that his father was 70 years old when he was born. Then he said, 'In fact, you might say he was a Black Strom Thurmond.' (As an aside: The previous year Sen. Thurmond

was 68 when his son Paul was born.)

"With that, all of the suspicion, tension, hostility, resentment and ill-feeling exploded into laughter. This small Black man completely won over his audience with one sentence. The meeting went smoothly from that point. He demonstrated that he was a competent professional. When the meeting was over, he was warmly greeted by most of those in attendance. When he left, Rev. Granville Hicks had an invitation to return and fill the pulpit at Trinity at a definite date in the immediate future."

I realize not all Black superintendents had such positive initial meetings with White congregations. However, I wanted to share that story, because it speaks of the character of the man for whom this Leadership Academy is named.

I want to lift up one other feature of the Plan of Merger. That is related to compensation for clergy in the newly merged conference.

Both the minimum salary schedule as well as the annuity rate for pensions for the merged conference were to be uniform for all members of both former conferences. This is notable, for the average salary in the Southeastern Jurisdiction in 1951 was \$2,655; it was \$1,092 in the Central Jurisdiction. This means that the average salary of White pastors in the Southeast was almost 2-1/2 times greater than that for Black pastors throughout the United States. This data is from 1951, 21 years prior to merger, but it is still significant. This implies a major accommodation on the part of the members of the 1785 Conference to make clergy compensation the same for all ministers.

However, in anticipation of this issue, the 1964 General Conference had passed legislation creating the Temporary General Aid Fund. Its purpose was "to provide grants-in-aid to raise the level of pensions and minimum salaries . . . assist the Annual Conferences . . . receiving transfers from the Central Jurisdiction where major differences in annuity and minimum salary rates are involved." The S.C. Plan of Merger specifically states that the General Church was to be asked to provide monies from that fund to make up the difference in the minimum salary rates of the 1785 and the 1866 Conferences.

Thus, the 1785 Conference was not as generous as it might have first appeared.

In 2000, the General Conference discontinued the Temporary General Aid Fund. Since that time, the South Carolina Conference has provided entirely from its own funds equitable salaries across the board for all clergy members.

*Cannon, a retired United Methodist elder, now lives in Hendersonville, North Carolina.*

## Quick delivers MLK Day message

The Florence Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People ended Dr. Martin Luther King Day with an Annual Commemorative Celebration at Majority Missionary Baptist Church in Florence.

Dr. Martin Luther Quick, pastor of Cumberland United Methodist Church was the keynote speaker.

Quick was born in Bronx, New York, a day after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. After his mother saw the smoke from the riots, she named him "Martin Luther" after Dr. Martin Luther King.

Quick delivered a powerful and dynamic message, "See It Through." He used the Scripture Genesis 37:18-20 to captivate the audience and to bring them to their feet. "Kill the dreamer, but not the dream" was the focal point of his message.



Quick, who was born the day after Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated and was named after him, delivered the message, "See It Through," at the Florence NAACP's MLK Day celebration.

## UMCSC offers seminar to stop embezzlement

Local church leaders will have an opportunity to attend a seminar designed to help them prevent embezzlement, how to spot it and what to do about it.

"Protecting Your Church from Embezzlement" is offered by The South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church April 15 from 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at Central UMC, Newberry.

Conference Treasurer Beth Westbury and other lay and clergy leaders will present on numerous topics.

This seminar (0.5 CEU) is designed for pastors, finance chairs and others responsible for keeping safe the resources God has provided to our local churches. The \$25 registration fee covers all materials and lunch.

Register by April 10 at <https://www.umcsc.org/treasurertraining>.



## Conference Historical Society

by the Rev. Meredith M. Dark

### This far by faith

**H**ave you ever heard the song “Traveling Shoes”? At Asbury United Methodist Church, now located in Clio, member Mary Liza McLeod came in the doors singing this song. Her voice lifted high would motivate the congregation to sing with her, “Got on my shoes, Lord, Got on my traveling shoes.” And everyone singing with her would be in harmony.

Asbury UMC was named for Bishop Francis Asbury, who traveled parts of South Carolina and is known to have traveled to Marion and Marlboro counties. There is a fascinating YouTube video that Art Fennell made of the rich history of Asbury UMC: “Asbury: This Far, By Faith.” You can watch it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ITMDdeNh4k>

For 150 years, Asbury UMC has been worshipping, enjoying fellowship and believing in the risen Christ.

Fennell explains that the history of Asbury UMC is well documented and much of it is housed at the Marlboro County Courthouse in Bennettsville. In 1871, five men—Andrew Thomas, James McRae, Moe McRae, Alfonzo McRae and Killis Wright—bought one and a quarter acres of land from Lt. Alan Ease, a Civil War veteran. The land was located near Hagan Pronged Creek. Asbury Church Historian Joseph Kinney believes the church started before 1871. The congregation had been worshipping under a brush arbor prior to a building being built. The Rev. Sandra Stubbs, current pastor, explains that a brush arbor is where people gathered together before an actual church building could be built. The people cut trees down and created an arbor, or shelter, to shield themselves from the elements.

In 1938, the original church building burned to the ground because of a brush fire that was set to clear the surrounding land of overgrowth. It was then that God raised up a new generation of church men who came together to rebuild the church: Fred McLeod, Russell Kinney, James Arthur Fennel, Talmadge Stanton and Jim Woods. Jim Woods owned a sawmill, which became essential to the rebuilding of the church. It took two years to rebuild the church.

In the interim, the congregation worshipped at the Dunbar Colored School, a two-room school where the children of the community were educated to the eighth grade. In the video, Asbury Historian Nan Fleming shows her mother Oneda Jamison’s graduation certificate from the State of South Carolina given to her May 9, 1930.

The members of Asbury UMC decided to relocate the congregation to Clio from the Dunbar community. One of the main reasons for the move was the difficulty of traveling down the dirt road on which the church was located. The church tried communicating with the Department of Transportation to get the road paved. However, the church could not get the right of way for the paving. The new Asbury UMC is located on Church Street in Clio.

When the congregation decided to move, they left the former building on foot and marched down the dirt road in Dunbar to the new location on Church Street in Clio. The walk was approximately three miles. Church member Marion Smith described the feeling of that day as “exuberant as a Martin Luther King Jr. march.” If there was a church member who could not participate in the walk, he or she rode the activity bus.

The historical video of Asbury UMC gives hope to all United Methodist churches in that it reminds us of how far so many “have come by faith.” I encourage you to take the time to watch the video and to learn about the history of one of our South Carolina Conference churches. Imagine what you can do to tell the story of your church.

*Dark is president of the Conference Historical Society. To learn more about their work or how to get involved, email her at [mmdark@umcsc.org](mailto:mmdark@umcsc.org).*

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## St. Andrew By-The-Sea UMC hosts free event, ‘First Children in S.C. School Desegregation’

Dr. Julius Scott Lecture Series event is March 4

HILTON HEAD ISLAND—On Saturday, March 4, at 10 a.m. the Bridge Builders Committee of St. Andrew By-The-Sea United Methodist Church will host a free in-person event with refreshments following.

Dr. Millicent Brown, educator, author, civil rights leader and lifelong community advocate, will be speaking on “First Children in South Carolina School Desegregation.” Brown is co-founder and project director of a national initiative to identify the “first children,” like herself, to desegregate previously all-White schools, as part of the Somebody Had to Do it Project.

Brown has held a variety of history and museum related faculty positions and serves as consultant for numerous museums and historic sites and social justice programs in North and South Carolina.

“We are honored to have Dr. Millicent Brown as our guest speaker at the Dr. Julius Scott Lecture Series Event,” said Sue Yearwood, chairperson of the Bridge Builders’



Brown

event. “We appreciate her coming from Charleston and bringing her expertise and thoughtful leadership to our community.”

Bridge Builders’ purpose is to ensure that goals and objectives related to racism and inequality are grounded in Scripture, to explore and better understand the causes and extent of racism and inequality, to help educate others

on the issues of racism and inequality and to develop and promote systems for addressing and overcoming racism and inequality. The lecture series, named after one of its founding members and lifelong civil rights advocate, the late Dr. Julius S. Scott Jr., is one way the group collaborates with other community organizations by sponsoring and coordinating community-wide seminars and conferences.

The church is located at 20 Pope Ave., Hilton Head Island. To RSVP to the event, email [standrewbythesea@gmail.com](mailto:standrewbythesea@gmail.com). For more information about St. Andrew By-The-Sea UMC, visit [www.hhiumc.com](http://www.hhiumc.com).



## From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

### Women’s work 100 years ago in the South Carolina Conference

**M**ethodist women in South Carolina have been undertaking mission work as part of a conference organization for nearly 150 years. These women, whether in the 19th or 21st century, have raised funds for domestic and international mission work using the structure that our connectional system provides.

This month, I want to share some of the activities of the Woman’s Missionary Society of the South Carolina and Upper South Carolina conferences from 100 years ago this month, March 1923.

The Missionary Society Page in the *Advocate* is full of reports of the activities of the local organizations, and each week featured reports of a few districts. In the first week of March, *Advocate* readers learned about a meeting of the Hemingway society, where they heard from the head deaconess of the Wesley House, a type of Methodist community center, in Louisville, Kentucky.

The next week, readers learned about the work of the Shandon and Washington Street auxiliaries in Columbia. Shandon reported that it had eight circles, and the members had agreed to increase their budget from \$400 to \$1,000 in the next year. Washington Street had over 100 women as members, with two meetings (one social and one literary) each month. Membership in Washington Street’s seven circles was determined randomly so to allow more members to get to know different women. They hoped to help organize a Wesley House in Columbia, which readers had learned about in a previous issue of the *Advocate*. Members at the Edgefield Church heard from a missionary to China who was in the U.S. during her furlough year about her work as a teacher.

Charleston District reported on the organization of a new society at Ebenezer Church in Yemasee. Marion District reported on the work of the society at Dillon, which had 95 members and was reading about the church’s missionary work. Those women were also raising funds to carpet the church. The Marion District secretary also visited Miller’s Church to try to increase their membership and participation. The Conway church reported that Rev. and Mrs. Cyrus Dawsey were visiting from Brazil to bring a message about their work. Interestingly, the women at Conway reported that they held their July and August meetings at Myrtle Beach since so many of their members had summer homes there.

One of the state leaders explained to readers why the society raised money for expenses within the conference, and why they should support it. While the society’s officers did not receive any pay, they did have expenses, such as stationery and postage, printing costs for district publicity material, travel expenses to state and national meetings, and other organizational expenses. I’m sure most conference volunteers today understand these costs!

Readers saw the call for the conference society meeting in Orangeburg in April, with a request from conference president Mrs. C. F. Herbert to elect delegates to the meeting at once. The editor reminded the local units that the entertainment committee had to work hard to house and feed all of the delegates, so advance notice of who would attend was appreciated.

At every level, women of South Carolina’s Missionary Society focused on domestic and foreign missions as well as on improving their own churches. A hundred years later, their work continues.

*Stone is archivist for the South Carolina Conference and Wofford College. Read his blog at [blogs.wofford.edu/from\\_the\\_archives](http://blogs.wofford.edu/from_the_archives).*

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## Global Briefs

### Podcast episode looks at new anti-racism series

WASHINGTON—In an episode of “Expanding the Table,” the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race’s podcast on anti-racism, staff members discuss the agency’s newest resource series, “What Is?” The series looks at the definition and evolution of terms such as accent bias, colonialism and gaslighting.

### Agency adds exec for mission engagement

ATLANTA—A strategist tasked with broadening the missional engagement of United Methodist Global Ministries has been hired. The Rev. Deanna Stickle-Miner has been a board member of the agency for more than 10 years and leaves a position as director of mission and justice in the West Ohio Conference. Stickle-Miner said she will bring an open, collaborative leadership style to her new role.

### More disaffiliation questions answered

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Ask The UMC, a ministry of United Methodist Communications, continues to receive questions related to local church disaffiliations. In Part 9 of its “Is The United Methodist Church Really ... ?” series, the team tackles more inquiries related to Paragraph 2553 and the appointment of clergy who wish to stay with The United Methodist Church after their churches disaffiliate.

### Campus shooting shatters community

LANSING, Mich.—“Ash Wednesday has come early,” said Michigan Conference Bishop David Bard at a prayer vigil less than 24 hours after a mass shooting at Michigan State University shook the state. Donning a Michigan State University Spartan tie, Bard stood in solidarity with those gathered and pointed to the ritual of marking foreheads with ashes in the shape of the cross that many Christians will participate in as the Lenten season begins.

### Earthquake update from Turkey and Syria

ATLANTA—The death toll from an earthquake in Turkey and Syria has surpassed 40,000, said Muzaffer Baca, vice president of the International Blue Crescent Relief and Development Foundation. Baca spoke to the United Methodist Committee on Relief on Feb. 14 to brief the relief agency on efforts to help survivors. UMCOR issued a solidarity grant to International Blue Crescent to help provide tents, heaters, blankets, warm clothes, food and first-aid kits to those who have been displaced.

### Disaffiliation shouldn't result in lost history

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Church archivists worry that congregations disaffiliating from The United Methodist Church will fail to make arrangements to preserve the papers that tell their story. The key to preserving records is to reach out to the conference archivist, said Ashley Boggan, top executive of the United Methodist Commission on Archives and History.

### Online divinity degrees approved

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Divinity master degrees earned exclusively online have been approved by the University Senate for the 13 United Methodist seminaries and Asbury Theological Seminary. The University Senate reviews the educational institutions for “institutional integrity, well-structured programs, sound management and clearly defined church relationships.” The policy change is effective immediately.

### Share your thoughts on communication ministry

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The research team at United Methodist Communications wants to understand church members’ attitudes, behaviors and perspectives around the work that the communications agency does for the denomination, including current resources. The team has created a questionnaire that should take about 10 minutes. The results will help guide the strategic work of the agency. Questions can be sent to Teresa Faust at tfaust@umcom.org.

### UMCOR continues earthquake response

ATLANTA—The United Methodist Committee on Relief continues to work with its humanitarian partners to aid earthquake survivors in Turkey and Syria. UMCOR has released initial solidarity grants to International Blue Crescent and Forum for Development Culture and Dialogue to help provide shelter, food and first aid kits to those who have been displaced. Winter weather and a cholera outbreak are complicating the response.

### New resource connects Lenten practice, anti-racism

WASHINGTON—“Faithful Lent: Connecting the Practices of Lent and Anti-racism” is a new Lenten resource from the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race and is intended for congregations to use in a small-group setting. The purpose of the study is to make explicit connections between the traditions of Lent and the work of anti-racism.

### Methodism overdue for becoming ‘woke,’ author says

CHAPEL HILL, N.C.—The Rev. William B. Lawrence embraces a controversial word and lays out the history of racism within Methodism in his new book, “When the Church Woke.” Lawrence—a church historian who also has been a pastor, district superintendent, seminary professor and theological school dean—talks with Sam Hodges about the book.

### Audio-visual interns sought

MACON, Ga.—College students wanting to learn about the audio-video world are encouraged to apply for a summer internship with GNTV, a United Methodist-related ministry. Applicants should have a background in audio production, sound reinforcement, video image magnification, video capture, video editing or presentation graphics. Summer interns should expect a significant amount of travel. Deadline to apply is March 13.

### California United Methodists join opposition to border wall

SAN DIEGO—Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank of the California-Pacific Conference and several United Methodist clergy joined business leaders in a letter addressed to President Joe Biden, urging his administration to reconsider plans for two 30-foot walls to be built through Friendship Park, where the border cities of San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico, meet.

### Church brings health services to rural community

RUSAPE, Zimbabwe—More than 300 villagers were able to access a variety of free health services near their homes thanks to Runyange United Methodist Church. The outreach included medical and dental services, counseling and a spiritual revival program to nurture the soul.

—Courtesy of United Methodist News Service



### Lots of love

Members of the Myrtle Strange Circle of the United Women in Faith at Manning UMC, Manning, packed Valentine's Day care packages for the local nursing home. Here, they gather with their goodies Sunday, Feb. 12.



by Betty Stalnaker

## Resource Center

### Time for Easter music

If you have not reserved your Lenten Bible study, the Resource Center still has numerous titles available. Listed below are a few. Check our website for additional studies and Easter musicals, too.

#### God the Savior: Our Freedom in Christ and our Role in the Restoration of All Things

(DVD2735B=) Author: Frazee, Randy. 8 sessions, 11-17 min/study guide/2021.

Throughout the Bible, we find two parallel dramas unfolding. There is the lower story, which describes the events from our human perspective. But there is also an upper story, which reveals how the events unfold from God's perspective. The goal of God the Savior is to introduce you to these lower and upper stories as told in the New Testament. As you read these stories—featuring characters such as Mary and Joseph, the 12 Disciples, John the Baptist, Mary Magdalene and the central figure Jesus Christ—you will see how God has been weaving our lower story into the greater upper story that he has been writing. CC. Age: YAS.

#### In the Footsteps of the Savior

(DVD2788EA=) Author: Lucado, Max. 6 sessions, 20-21 min/study guide/2023.

Join Max Lucado on an inspirational journey through the hills, the dust and the homes of the Holy Land. Discover, with new eyes, God's heart for his people and his deep love for you. In this video Bible study, you and your small group are invited to journey through Capernaum, Galilee, Bethany, Jerusalem and more. As Lucado weaves together insights from his own travels to Israel with teaching from his bestselling books, he will guide you to walk where Jesus walked and ponder the promises he made. God has more in store for you than you can imagine. Age: YAS.

#### Savior: What the Bible Says about the Cross

(DVD2677EA=) Author: deVega, Magrey. 6 sessions, 7-11 min/leader's guide/bk/2020.

The cross is the central symbol of the Christian faith. But what exactly did Jesus do to save us from our sins? Why was the cross necessary, and what does it mean for us today? Here, deVega faithfully describes the need for reconciliation between humankind and a holy God through Jesus' death on the cross. The Bible uses many images to understand the meaning of Jesus's death and resurrection, and deVega guides us through these images to achieve a richer understanding of the Christian faith. By exploring the mystery of salvation through the cross, we can deepen our love for God and others and strengthen our commitment to follow Jesus. CC. Age: YAS.

#### Seven Words: Listening to Christ from the Cross

(DVD2678EA=) Author: Robb, Susan G. 6 sessions, 10-11 min/leader's guide/bk/2020.

Examine the last seven words of Christ on the cross this Lent. The most difficult part of Lent is, of course, contemplating our Savior on the cross: the physical pain, the humiliation and the undeniable injustice. Our hearts break. It's natural to try to avoid the reality of how Jesus died, but it is from the cross that Jesus shows his deepest love for us. As Jesus draws his final breath and utters his last words, it is then that his deep trust in the Father and his divine glory are revealed. In “Seven Words,” Robb looks at Christ's final words from a biblical and historical perspective, showing how we can find life and hope in them. CC. Age: YAS.

#### Witness at the Cross: A Beginner's Guide to Holy Friday

(DVD2756EA=) Author: Levine, Amy-Jill. 6 sessions, 12 min each/leader's guide/bk/2021.

Experience Holy Friday from the perspective of those who watched Jesus die: Mary his mother; the beloved disciple from the Gospel of John; Mary Magdalene and the other women from Galilee; the two men, usually identified as thieves, crucified with Jesus; the centurion and the soldiers; Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Jews and Romans, friends and strangers, the powerful and the powerless, the hopeful and the despairing. Here, Levine shows how the people at the cross each have distinct roles to play in the Gospels. For each, Jesus has a particular meaning and message, and from each, we learn how those meanings and messages cross the centuries to any who would come to the cross today. 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/resourcecenter](http://www.umcsc.org/resourcecenter)

## Sen. Shealy to keynote brunch supporting Paths to Wholeness

ORANGEBURG—Sen. Katrina Shealy will be the guest speaker at Paths to Wholeness's Signature Brunch, set for Saturday, March 11, at 10 a.m.

With the theme Bloom from Within, the event will be held at Orangeburg Country Club. Cost is \$50.

Paths to Wholeness Inc. is a nonprofit organization founded by the Rev. Minnie

Anderson, a United Methodist pastor and a survivor of domestic abuse.

"My hope for Paths To Wholeness lies in its ability to help incarcerated women who have been abused become self-sufficient citizens while reducing recidivism," Anderson said. "Through the love of God and the support of my community, I am a survivor of domestic abuse. My aspiration is that each

woman in our program will experience the same love and support."

The organization provides rehabilitative services to formerly incarcerated women from all counties in the state of South Carolina through a transitional home. The one-year program utilizes evidenced-based curriculums to offer an enriched multi-generational approach to rehabilitation. They are the only

transitional home in the Midlands that offers this type of program. Each woman's experience is coupled with various services from community agencies who partner with us to offer the best program possible.

Sponsorship opportunities at the brunch are available. To learn more, visit <https://pathstowholeness.org> or contact Anderson at 803-937-6359.

## Hearts 2 Hands hat ministry at Bethlehem a success for 2022

The ladies of "Hearts 2 Hands" hat ministry at Bethlehem United Methodist Church in Manning closed out 2022 with their best year ever. They produced 1,939 hats, either knitted or crocheted.

Bethlehem's hat ministry has given away more than 5,000 hats since they organized in 2019. This includes 615 military hats and 739 newborn hats to McLeod Health Clarendon for all their babies. They have made hats of all sizes, from

premature babies to adults, male and female, in a rainbow of colors.

The local hospital, McLeod Health Clarendon, recently requested that Hearts 2 Hands knit or crochet "Angel Baby Blankets" as part of their ministry to the facility.

As well, Hearts 2 Hands has recently partnered with the Wyboo Crafters to assist them in making neck scarves for United Ministries of Clarendon County for their clients in

need.

Beginning in 2023, Hearts 2 Hands shipped 200 new hats for (preemies to teens) to Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center in Baltimore, Maryland.

The Hearts 2 Hands group knits or crochets each week on Mondays from 2-3 p.m.

They share coffee and welcome visitors from the community to join or to visit.



### Happy 100th

United Women In Faith of Mechanicsville UMC sponsored a birthday celebration for Mrs. Jessie B. Isaac on Jan. 29. Held in the church's Fellowship Hall, members celebrated her 100th birthday with her family in attendance. Seated with the family are Carrie L. Gass (left) and, standing at right, President Mae Ruth Cooke. "Mrs. Jessie" was all smiles. Organizers said they pray for many more years of longevity for her.



### Seniors get 'Love Buckets'

The Nurture, Outreach and Witness—NOW—Ministry at St. James UMC, Sumter, joined forces to celebrate their seniors. The NOW Ministry prepared love buckets for senior members aged 75 years and older. Diane Cato, nurture chair, came up with the idea to work together as one unit to nurture seniors with love items that they would enjoy. At right, Mrs. Lillie White, the eldest "mother of the church" at 92 years old, receives her love bucket from Cato. Above, other recipients (from left) were Marian Willis, Nancy Wilson, Elizabeth Butler, Zenobia Owens and John Willis. Not pictured: Bonnie Carty, Alberta Green, Ann Hough, Warren Tention, Lottie Spencer, Isabelle Thomas, Louis Watkins, Charles Willis, Fannie Wilson. Pastor Allen Nesmith was on hand to honor the recipients.



## Obituaries

### Virginia Shockley Abercrombie

WOODRUFF—Virginia Shockley Abercrombie, widow of the Rev. Frank Abercrombie, died Jan. 4, 2023.

Funeral services were held Jan. 6 in the Bramlett United Methodist Church Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to Bramlett UMC, Ramp Fund, 2043 Bramlett Church Road, Gray Court, SC 29645; to Cornerstone Baptist Church, 9480 Highway 221, Woodruff, SC 29388; or to Spartanburg Regional Hospice Home, 686 Jeff Davis Drive, Spartanburg, SC 29303.

Mrs. Abercrombie is survived by her two daughters.

### Dr. John Moore Bullard

SPARTANBURG—Dr. John Moore Bullard, a member of the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church who taught at Wofford College for 40 years, died Feb. 11, 2023.

Funeral services were held Feb. 25 at Central UMC with burial in the family plot

at Evergreen Cemetery, Charlotte.

Memorials may be made to Central UMC, 233 N. Church St., Spartanburg, SC 29306; or to Wofford College, c/o Development Office, 429 N. Church St., Spartanburg, SC 29303.

### Bobby Gene Etheredge

BELVEDERE—Bobby Gene Etheredge, father of the Rev. Angela Etheredge-Erwin, died Jan. 30, 2023. Rev. Etheredge-Erwin is the pastor of Shiloh United Methodist Church, Gilbert.

Funeral services were held Feb. 2 at Summerville Cemetery, Summerville.

Memorials may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, 140 Stoneridge Drive, Columbia, SC 29210.

Mr. Etheredge is survived by his son and three daughters.

### Rev. Fladger Levon Hucks

GALIVANTS FERRY—The Rev. Fladger Levon Hucks, a retired elder of the South Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Feb. 10, 2023.

### 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.

Prior to his retirement in 2004, Rev. Hucks served the Bailey Memorial-Sandy Springs, New Zion Charge, Sandy Springs-Zion Charge, Aiken-St. John's Associate, and Tranquil-Center-Spring Branch charges.

Funeral services were held Feb. 10 at the family cemetery. A singing celebration was held Feb. 25.

Memorials may be made to Pisgah UMC, P.O. Box 654, Aynor, SC 29511.

Rev. Hucks is survived by his wife, Darlene, two sons and two daughters.



Hucks

### Lois Ann Christopher Nicholson

EASLEY—Lois Ann Christopher Nicholson, widow of the Rev. Joseph Robert Nicholson Sr., died Feb. 5, 2023.

Funeral services were held Feb. 8 in the chapel of the Robinson Funeral Home-Downtown, with burial in Greenlawn Memorial Park.

Mrs. Nicholson is survived by her three sons.

### Bobbie Sue Dawkins Robinson

GREENVILLE—Bobbie Sue Dawkins Robinson, mother of Gwendolyn Drummond, died Feb. 4, 2023. Mrs. Drummond is the wife of the Rev. James Drummond, pastor of New St. Luke United Methodist Church, Travelers Rest.

Funeral services were held Feb. 12 at Springfield Baptist Church with burial in Resthaven Memorial Gardens.

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

# Appreciation ads available to thank church administrative professionals

This spring, you have the opportunity to recognize administrative professionals in your church with appreciation ads.

April 26 is Administrative Professionals' Day, and churches can celebrate their administrative staff and volunteers through special ads in the April *Advocate* newspaper.

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](mailto:atrussell@umcsc.org) or send to 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203; deadline is March 10.



## “It was as if God had told me: It’s time to move.”

*A testimonial by Betty Anne Smith, Resident of The Manor Senior Living*

### Please introduce yourself.

I’m Betty Anne Smith. I was raised in Kingsport, Tennessee, and I’ve lived in Florence well over 50 years with my husband, Henry. We have two grown children who live in Savannah and Charlotte, and I’ve lived at The Manor for four years now.



### How did you first become introduced to The Manor?

I came to some Alzheimer’s classes that were offered by The Manor. It was a six-week session; we came once-a-week for six weeks and I learned a lot about the disease, which my husband had been diagnosed with several years before.



### How did you know it was time to make a move?

I realized I had taken over all of the household duties, all of the financial duties, had hired somebody to take care of the yard, and I had to watch constantly where Henry was. I knew. One morning I woke up and it was as if God had told me: It’s time to move. And so within a week we had put down our deposit on a Patio Home. We waited three months to move in because it was a lot getting rid of 40 years worth of stuff in the house we had been living in!



### How has the move been?

It has been a wonderful move for us. I wanted to come here while Henry could still be with me, get to know people, be familiar with the place, and he did! He was with me in the Patio Home for three years ... more than three years. He was able to stay in the Memory Care unit at The Manor five times before he actually moved over there, so we both became familiar with the procedures and the things that go on over there.

### How was Henry’s transition to Memory Care?

He moved in May. It has been a successful move. At first, he kept wanting to come home, but sometimes it was to go to his childhood

home, sometimes it was here, sometimes it was where we lived for 40 years. And he still occasionally says he’s coming home but I say, “No, you’re going to stay here,” and he’s fine with it! In fact, last week he said, “You know, it’s kind of fun here!”

### How did you react emotionally to moving Henry into Memory Care?

It was hard. It was hard to make that decision to know that we would not be living together anymore, I mean, we had our 55th anniversary this week, so, that’s been hard. I think I miss him the most when I go to bed at night and he’s not in the bed with me. But I make sure

that I go over there every day I’m in town and spend some time with him; sometimes twice a day. But it was also a great sense of relief. I just knew that when he was over there, he was in a contained space and everything had been made safe in that area.

### What is your day-to-day life like?

My day-to-day life is: I like to get up in the mornings and go for a walk on the beautiful grounds we have here. There’s lots of things going on here at The Manor. I take part in an exercise class twice a week and really enjoy that. We have someone from the community who comes in and teaches. And I go to the lecture that Francis Marion provides for us each semester. I carry on my life as I wish. I have a lot of things I love to do. I like to knit, watch TV, I like to read, and I’m on the computer a lot. I teach Sunday School for kids and I really like doing that.

### What advice do you have for someone who is considering a move to The Manor; specifically someone whose spouse has Memory Impairment/Alzheimer’s?

My advice is: look toward the future ... don’t ignore the fact that the disease is here. Do everything you can with your spouse. If you can move to a place where your responsibilities are lessened so that you can spend more time with your spouse, I highly recommend it, and it was really nice that Henry has gotten to know so many people at The Manor. People come up to him and speak and say, “Oh we’re so glad to see you,” and he’s got some quip back for them. That wouldn’t have happened if we hadn’t moved here prior to his really needing to go into Memory Care.

### Any final thoughts or words of wisdom?

Come out and visit, pray and talk to people who are in similar situations. Don’t wait, it is the thing to do, you won’t regret it! It is a wonderful place to live.

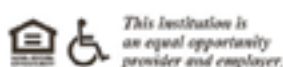
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## February

*Black History Month*  
*UWF Special Emphasis Month:*  
*Wallace Family Life Center*

- Feb. 24—2023 S.C. MenNMinistry Golf Tournament, The Spur at Northwoods Golf Course, Columbia, 10 a.m. shotgun start. Register: Kenny Bingham, 843-246-8398 or kbingham42@yahoo.com
- Feb. 24-25—Men N Ministry Retreat, Mount Horeb UMC, Lexington
- Feb. 25—UWF Social Action Workshop #4, virtual, 10 a.m.

## March

*Women's History Month*

- March 1—UWF Presidential Scholarship Applications due
- March 1—A Service of Music, Lenten Lunch and Service, Threatt Hall/Chapel, Washington Street UMC, 11:45 a.m. (lunch); 12:30 p.m. (service). \$8 lunch.
- March 3-5—Theotokos Confirmation Retreat, Hinton Rural Life Center, Hayesville, N.C. Register: <https://hintontheotokos.org/about-theotokos-1>
- March 4—Protecting Your Church from

Embezzlement Seminar, Trinity UMC, Bamberg. Register by Feb. 27: <https://www.umcsc.org/protect/>

March 4—"First Children in SC School Desegregation," Dr. Julius Scott Lecture Series Event, St. Andrew By-the-Sea UMC, Hilton Head, 10 a.m. RSVP: [standrewbythesea@gmail.com](mailto:standrewbythesea@gmail.com). <https://hhiumc.com>

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

March 8—Rev. Becky Shirley portrays Mary Magdalene, Lenten Lunch and Service, Threatt Hall/Chapel, Washington Street UMC, 11:45 a.m. (lunch); 12:30 p.m. (service). \$8 lunch.

March 10-11—Lead Like Jesus training event hosted by Greenwood District, Belvedere UMC, North Augusta. Register by March 3. <https://www.umcsc.org/greenwood/lead-like-jesus-training-event/>

March 12—Daylight Savings Time starts

March 15—A Service of Music, Lenten Lunch and Service, Threatt Hall/Chapel, Washington Street UMC, 11:45 a.m. (lunch); 12:30 p.m. (service). \$8 lunch.

March 17—St. Patrick's Day

March 17-19—Theotokos Confirmation Retreat, Hinton Rural Life Center, Hayesville, N.C. Register: <https://hintontheotokos.org/about-theotokos-1>

March 18—UMVIM Early Response Team basic/renewal class at Faith UMC, Lexington. Register at <https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration> 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Everyone also needs to do a free background check through UMCOR at <https://app.verifiedvolunteers.com/en/Candidates/Account/Register> (code if needed is 9x2r4eh).

March 18-19—LSM School (Orangeburg District), St. Paul UMC, New Ellenton, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. (Saturday); 3-7 p.m. (Sunday) \$35 <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Orangeburg-District-Lay-School-March-2023-1.pdf>

March 19—LSM School (Greenwood District), First UMC, Laurens, 2-7:30 p.m. \$30 <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Greenwood-District-LSM-Registration-Form-for-Spring-2023-classes-1.pdf>

March 22—Rev. Becky Shirley portrays Pilate's wife, Lenten Lunch and Service, Threatt Hall/Chapel, Washington Street UMC, 11:45 a.m. (lunch); 12:30 p.m. (service). \$8 lunch.

March 23—United Women in Faith Legacy

Fund Day of Giving

March 24-26—Theotokos Confirmation Retreat, Hinton Rural Life Center, Hayesville, N.C. Register: <https://hintontheotokos.org/about-theotokos-1>

March 25—Craft and Vendor Fair, New Beginnings UMC, Boiling Springs, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

March 27-30—UWF Mission Trip

March 29—A Service of Music, Lenten Lunch and Service, Threatt Hall/Chapel, Washington Street UMC, 11:45 a.m. (lunch); 12:30 p.m. (service). \$8 lunch.

## April

April 3—Deadline, Annual Conference Awards

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

April 7—Good Friday; United Methodist Center closed.

April 9—Easter

April 15—Protecting Your Church from Embezzlement Seminar, Central UMC, Newberry. Register by April 10: <https://www.umcsc.org/protect/>



# Classified Advertisements

## Announcements

The Child Development Center at St. John's UMC, Anderson, SC, has closed its program. All furniture, infant cribs, toys, books, outside playground equipment, office machines, refrigerators, etc., are available. Prices are negotiable. Contact Sterling Allen at [srallen@bellsouth.net](mailto:srallen@bellsouth.net) for a complete list of items.

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To place your ad, contact Allison at 888-678-6272 or [atrussell@umcsc.org](mailto:atrussell@umcsc.org).

Classified ads are \$19 per inch tall. Web site ads are also available ([www.advocatesc.org](http://www.advocatesc.org)). Deadlines are the 10th of the month for the following month's paper.

## Open Positions

### Faculty Position in Preaching and Worship

Hood Theological Seminary (HTS) invites applications for a full-time, tenure-track faculty position in Preaching and Worship at the Assistant or Associate Professor rank. Primary responsibilities include offering required and elective courses in preaching and worship in both the Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry programs, advising and mentoring students, administratively overseeing the Seminary's weekly chapel service, conducting relevant research/scholarly activities in the field, and offering meaningful service to the campus and community. Minimum qualifications include Ph.D. or DMin. by August 2023, potential for excellence in classroom instruction, willingness to work collaboratively with colleagues, and commitment to the Seminary's institutional mission. As HTS also offers both hybrid and online course delivery, experience and/or certification in online instruction is desired. Semester teaching load is two courses in Track I (each course meets Mon., Tu., Wed., or Thu.) that are repeated in Track II (Fri. night or Sat.; i.e., four courses, two preps). Position involves advisement of Doctor of Ministry professional projects as needed.

Please send letter of application, curriculum vitae, single page statement of teaching philosophy, and three letters of recommendation to Rev. J. Frances King at [jking@hoodseminary.edu](mailto:jking@hoodseminary.edu). Deadline to submit application is March 31, 2023.

Hood Theological Seminary, founded in 1879 and located in historic Salisbury NC, is sponsored by the A.M.E. Zion Church, and has a diverse faculty and student body. In 2013 the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada reaffirmed HTS's accreditation for ten years. In 2014 the University Senate of the United Methodist Church reaffirmed HTS's place on its list of approved seminaries.

## Open Positions

### Director of Music Ministries – Part Time

Grace UMC in Pickens is seeking a **Director of Music Ministries** to plan and lead a diverse music program that includes all age groups and both traditional and contemporary music.

This position oversees all aspects of the music program including rehearsals; collaborates with pastor to select music consistent with the worship service; collaborates to utilize creative resources for contemporary worship; oversees the music during worship services; and organizes and conducts periodic special music events.

Requirements include an active and strong relationship with Jesus Christ and a passion for ministering through music; experience and excellent skills in overseeing/leading/conducting adult choirs, handbells, contemporary music teams and children's music programs; and a Bachelor's degree or higher in music preferred or equivalent background and experience.

Salary is commensurate with experience.

Contact Linda McKenzie, SPRC chair, 864-918-4384 or [lmckenzie@bmbfirm.com](mailto:lmckenzie@bmbfirm.com).

St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Orangeburg, S.C., is accepting resumes for a **choir leader**, who is also excellent with the piano, to grow our music program. Please send resume to St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 1356 Amelia St., Orangeburg, SC 29115, or email to [iva@stpaulsorangeburg.com](mailto:iva@stpaulsorangeburg.com). The salary will be negotiated based on experience.

### Organist/Accompanist - Part-time

Grace UMC, Pickens, is seeking a part-time organist/accompanist to provide musical support during worship services.

Responsibilities include playing the organ and/or piano as needed for all worship services and overseeing the repairs and tuning of the organ and pianos.

The position requires an active and strong relationship with Jesus Christ and a passion for ministering through music; and experience and skill playing the organ and piano as an accompanist for worship services. Experience and skill playing other instruments is a plus.

Salary is commensurate with experience.

Contact Linda McKenzie, SPRC chair, 864-918-4384 or [lmckenzie@bmbfirm.com](mailto:lmckenzie@bmbfirm.com).

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# Jesus is the key to understanding

by the Rev. Kempie Shepard

## March 5 Sharing in Jesus's cup

**Background Text:** Matthew 20:17-28  
**Key Verse:** "Whoever wants to be great among you, will be your servant. Whoever wants to be first among you, will be your slave" (Matthew 20:26-27).

Jesus and his disciples are beginning their journey to Jerusalem. Passover is approaching. But the disciples, having not listened closely, didn't realize this was no regular holiday celebration. Something bigger and important was about to happen. So it is with our lives: They don't go the way we expect, envision or plan. So it happens to the disciples.

Jesus is about to die—as he had told them three or four times. And in the midst of all this here comes the mother of Zebedee's sons, James and John, asking a favor. It's interesting to note that she was Jesus's aunt, his mother's sister, Salome. What favor did she want? She wanted her sons to be Jesus's special assistants—one on his left and one on his right. It reminds me of when we pray to God for our team to win, to be number one. Only God designates who will be "at the right or left hand of Jesus."

Jesus then offers us hard sayings. Being a slaver, being a servant to others—those are just two of many. Lent is a good time for us to listen and re-examine Jesus's words. It is also a good time to think about servanthood. How we define "servanthood" and are we willing to humble ourselves. It is a good time to ask ourselves: Will we do anything to be number one? Are we willing to follow Jesus—even to death—without proving our point that we deserve the best?

## March 12 The source of Jesus's authority

**Background text:** Matthew 21:23-27  
**Key Verse:** "When Jesus entered the temple, the chief priests and elders of the people came to him as he was teaching. They asked, 'What kind of authority do you have for doing these things? Who gave you this authority?'" (Matthew 21:23).

"Who told you you could do this? Why are you doing it this way? Who gave you permission to do this? 'By what authority' are you doing this?"

"Because I'm your mother" or dad or teacher or boss. "Because I'm older than you." Yes, it's true. Many people tell you what to do. Yes, too many people abuse their authority and use it for selfish means: personal satisfaction, to go up the career ladder or just to be in charge. Authority. It is somewhat a threatening word. Therefore, we have to consider who uses authority in the proper way and who doesn't. Who uses authority to abuse people or put people down? Who uses authority to help and encourage people?

So we find the chief priests and elders deciding to trick Jesus by putting him in a situation in which he would condemn himself. They didn't care about "truthful" answers; they only wanted to turn the people away from Jesus. He was too popular. So they asked him: "What is your authority for doing these things?" and "Who gave you this authority?"

Jesus, knowing that they had no desire for the real truth, in turn asked them a question. Jesus frequently responded with a question as his answer. "You answer me and I'll answer you." So Jesus then asked about John the Baptizer's authority. "Did it come from heaven or humans?"

Caught in a dilemma for answering, they replied, "We don't know." So Jesus ended the discussion with the response that he wasn't telling them what kind of authority he had.

Frequently, we have to decide whose au-

thority we can trust and whose we will trust. Whose authority will we commit ourselves to? Isn't that part of the dilemma we are facing now in The United Methodist Church denomination? "By whose authority" are we responding to? How do we determine who is an authority to listen to and to believe? How is Jesus influencing or guiding our decisions? Are we following in the footsteps of Jesus—even to the cross? Are we listening to what Jesus wants us to do?

We are on the way to Jerusalem—to the cross. Is Jesus the authority of our life?

## March 19 What do we owe the emperor?

**Background Text:** Matthew 22:15-22  
**Key Verse:** "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God" (Matthew 22:21).

Now we find the chief priests and elders trying again to trap Jesus. Jesus, not being intimidated by them, responds by continuing to teach, and to teach with parables, stories with a lesson. So the chief priests and elders gather some of their disciples and send them to Jesus. They greet him with comments that are supposed to be complimentary. They think by building Jesus's ego up, they will sway him to their side.

After the compliments, they pop the "trap" question: "Does the Law allow people to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" The Law refers to the Mosaic law that Moses received from God in oral and written form. You know, you can't help but admire Jesus. He knows what they're up to but he shows no signs of irritation or anger. (Don't I wish I could respond like that—put people in their place and not use any angry tones?)

"Why do you test me, you hypocrites?" (Now I don't take that to be a compliment myself.) That word "hypocrite" is highly provocative in this day and time. Now is when the study of Greek comes in handy. The word "hypocrite" actually comes from Greek drama and refers to masks worn by an actor to differentiate characters. Get it? "Two faced"—trying to lead others astray. Jesus, as usual, never answers with "yes" or "no." He gets a coin and responds, "Render to Caesar what is his (his picture is on the coin) and unto God the things that belong to God."

Now, none of us likes paying taxes. And it's that time of year, isn't it? None of us pays taxes with extreme joy and happiness. Taxes. "Render unto Caesar"—the government. But what about God? What belongs to God?

God has created us in God's image. We belong to God. What does God want from us? Do we honor other "things" more than God? What is God asking us to give?

We are in the season of Lent. What are you giving up for Lent? Hopefully we will give up some thing or things that will make us becoming better disciples and followers of the way that leads to eternal life.

## March 26 Great expectations

**Background text:** Matthew 22:34-46  
**Focal passage:** Matthew 22:41-46  
**Key verse:** "What do you think about the Christ?" Matthew 22:42

On reading the title of this lesson, I immediately thought of the Charles Dickens book by the same title, "Great Expectations" (1860-61). It was the 13th novel written by Charles Dickens. It is the story of Pip, an English orphan boy, who rises to wealth, deserts his true friends and becomes humbled by his own arrogance. The message is about affection, loyalty, conscience—things that are more important than social advancement, wealth and class standing. Sounds a lot like the teachings of Jesus to

me. So we find ourselves in a deep need to study Scripture more closely and not listen to the "words of people." What does the Scripture say to us? It's not about proving facts or points of view. It's about the message to us, bringing us hope and closeness with God. I discover no matter how many times over the years I read a passage or passages, I always gain something new that applies to my life. Age, experience and study have a lot to do with that. Life experiences give new meaning as we read again and again what Jesus is trying to tell us, show us, guide us on our way.


"What do you think about the Christ? The Messiah? Whose son is he?" Jesus knew when he asked the question they would respond, "David's son." The Pharisees, along with other Jewish people, readily identified the Messiah as a kingly figure, a descendant of King David. He would save them all, take over their rulers and put them in charge.

Great expectations. Is that what we also expect when we claim we want Jesus to return? How can the Christ be David's son if David regarded him as a superior human being, as his "lord"? David called the Messiah, his descendant, "Lord." But the main question for us is, "What kind of Messiah/Christ do we believe Jesus is?"

The purpose of the writers of the Gospels is to open our hearts and minds—us, the readers, to truths about Jesus. The truths they, the Gospel writers, encountered in being his disciples. Jesus is the key to understanding the books of the Bible. How do we learn more about Jesus? Through Scripture, sermons, hymns, creeds, books friends, prayer, faith and trust.

What do we expect the Messiah/Christ to do? What are our great expectations?

*Shepard serves Marshall Memorial and Ebenezer UMCs, Anderson.*



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# DISCERNMENT: Any vote to leave next heads to AC2023

From Page 1

## 'On to S.C. Annual Conference'

A group called the South Carolina Traditional United Methodist Lay Leadership Group has organized to discuss current issues in the UMC, how to educate their congregations on these issues and, now, how to help each other through the discernment process. According to Becky McCormack, lay leader at Chapin UMC, Chapin, they started last summer with about eight people representing four churches. Now they have close to 250 people from more than 100 churches involved.

While many of these churches are not pursuing discernment or disaffiliation, the group notes that more than 30 churches are currently engaged in the Local Church Discernment Process. Some have already held their churchwide vote, while others are slated to vote Feb. 26 and 27.

Grace Community Church in Fort Mill is one of these churches. Gregg Johnston, Grace's lay leader, said his church began their 30-day discernment period on Sunday, Jan. 8, and concluded Feb. 6. At their charge conference Feb. 13, he said, they voted unanimously to separate from the UMC.

"On to S.C. Annual Conference," Johnston told the *Advocate*.

Andy Harmon, lay leader at Pond Branch UMC, Gilbert, told the *Advocate* his church is in a discernment period for separation, and their vote is slated for Feb. 26.

The Rev. Webb Belangia said Mauldin UMC, Mauldin, began a 40-day period of discernment on Jan. 9, holding seven "town hall" type meetings prior to this period of discernment and one town hall meeting during this period.

Beth Ramsey, lay leader at Mount Vernon UMC, Hickory Grove, said her church is also participating in the discernment process, though they are struggling with the financial obligation required, which she said is extraordinarily difficult for small churches.

"Our church is in a very traditional setting," Ramsey said. "We believe in the Bible and believe that the *Discipline* as it stands right now is in keeping with our Christian values. I know that amicable separation is the best for everyone so that we can get on with the work that Christ has set before us instead of all the discord we see."

Several of the larger UMCs in the conference, including Mount Horeb UMC, Lex-

ington, and Chapin UMC, Chapin, are also in the process, as are some of the smaller churches, such as Bells UMC, Abbeville.

## Staying United Methodist

A few churches have decided they will not engage in the discernment process. Bethel UMC, Charleston, pastored by the Rev. Susan Leonard, told the *Advocate* that at last month's church council meeting, the leaders of Bethel voted not to pursue discernment and disaffiliation.

"I know that we needed only to vote should there be a desire to discern disaffiliation and needed to do nothing if this was not a path we wanted to pursue," Leonard said. "However, with a commitment to a church that is inclusive of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters, leaders here desired to express that as our intention by voting not to begin a discernment process at this time."

She added that because there is so much misinformation circulating, Bethel is hosting a Sunday afternoon churchwide event at 4:30 on Feb. 26 called "The Future of the UMC: Fact or Fiction." Leonard, who is also a South Carolina delegate to General Conference, will offer context and clarity around the issues of church discernment, disaffiliation and what it will mean to stay United Methodist in a potential "post-separation" church.

As well, the church council at Union UMC, Irmo, passed a resolution Jan. 21, which reads, "The Church Council of Union United Methodist Church hereby resolves that Union UMC will not enter any process that will lead to disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church."

It also adopted a Statement on Inclusion in January 2022 noting, in an effort to live out the greatest commandment as taught by Jesus (Luke 10:27), they "believe that all persons are of sacred worth and dignity as part of God's creation and demonstrated by the ministry of Jesus Christ. We therefore welcome all persons into the life and ministry of our congregation, without regard to race, color, national origin, ethnicity, age, status, socioeconomic condition, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, or faith history."

## Waiting for now

Still other churches have decided to wait. The Rev. Bill Masciangelo, pastor of Smyrna UMC, Moncks Corner, said Smyrna has decided to wait until the findings of

ing God's way forward for their church. But, Kanipe said, "We are not currently in the conference's discernment process."

## About the Local Church Discernment Process

The process was developed by the Trustees of the Annual Conference and the Extended Cabinet, which noted it was needed because there was no other pathway to exit the denomination for churches that agree with the existing human sexuality language in the UMC *Book of Discipline*. (Currently, the *Discipline* states that, while persons of homosexual orientation are persons of sacred worth who need the ministry and guidance of the church, the UMC "does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.")

While the 2019 General Conference added Para. 2553 to the *Discipline*, it only applies to those churches that disagree with the *Discipline's* current language on human sexuality.

You can read about the full process at <https://www.umcsc.org/discern>.

## Is your church discerning separation?

If your church is discerning separation, has voted to leave (or to stay) in the UMC, or is otherwise discussing or addressing this issue, please reach out to the *Advocate's* editor, Jessica Brodie, at [jbrodie@umcsc.org](mailto:jbrodie@umcsc.org) or at Advocate, 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203.

The *Advocate's* mission is to connect United Methodists by independently reporting relevant news, engaging readers, providing a forum for dialogue and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We help give voice to churches and individuals in every corner of the state, with a commitment to excellent journalism and making sure all viewpoints are heard in a Christian and prayerful manner.

“  
The big topic continues to center around the punitive costs to leave for small, rural churches.  
”

– Rev. Bill Masciangelo, Smyrna UMC, Moncks Corner

2024 General Conference before making any decision.

"But the big topic continues to center around the punitive costs to leave for small, rural churches," Masciangelo said. "We can't afford to leave if we wanted to' is what we hear, including Smyrna. All we can do is hope the criteria is reduced. You don't want a church who wants to leave to stay for the wrong reasons."

He also noted the topic of cemeteries further complicates matters, as some people will stay in a church no matter what because their close relatives are buried in that cemetery.

The Rev. Smoke Kanipe said that Shandon UMC, Shandon, is prayerfully discern-



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