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May 2023

Gearing up AC2023 set for June 4-7

By Jessica Brodie

Annual Conference organizers are gearing up for an event this year that will embrace increased reliance on technology as well as streamline new procedures for a more efficient, engaging gathering.

Set for June 4-7 at the Florence Center, this is the first in-person Annual Conference held since 2019. The 2020, 2021 and 2022 annual conferences were held virtually because of the pandemic.

The Rev. Mel Arant, assistant conference secretary, said this year's gathering will bring an opportunity both to celebrate new opportunities and to mourn things that will never be the same—namely, the loss of friends and colleagues over the past three years from COVID-19, as well as the coming separation of some colleagues and church families many have shared ministry with for decades.

But, Arant said, "Annual Conference also represents an opportunity to take a step into the future by adopting technology, processes and activities that we learned during the pandemic. We are integrating them with our own traditions, while at the same time letting go of some of the ways we used to do some things."

Electronic voting and materials

One of those new things is electronic voting. All electronic voting will utilize lay and clergy members' personal electronic devices. Clergy and lay members will need to bring a smartphone, tablet or laptop capable of connecting to a Wi-Fi network and accessing the internet in order to vote. Arant said if any difficulties in voting occur, paper ballots will be available.

Also this year, pre-conference packets and video reports will only be available online.

Arant said that at previous in-person annual conference sessions, organizers have provided a hard-copy pre-conference packet of materials—mailed ahead of the gathering—and a hard-copy registration packet on-site.

But this year, one hard-copy annual conference packet will be available to lay and clergy members upon their arrival at the Florence Center. The packet and video reports will be posted online by May 1 at <https://umcsc.org/ac2023>.

The conference will mail, in a bright orange envelope, name badges and voter credentials to all lay and clergy members who register online. Members will present these at the Florence Center in June to receive their printed packet and a badge holder.

"By consolidating these materials into one packet and not mailing them, we are saving on printing and postage costs," Arant explained.

See "AC2023," Page 12

A lifesaving exchange

United Methodist pastor and parishioner part of living kidney donor chain



The Rev. John Kronz donated a kidney as part of an eight-person living kidney chain, ultimately enabling his parishioner Bonnie Fanning to get a kidney herself. Here, the two gather after the surgery.

By Jessica Brodie

NORWAY—A United Methodist pastor and a member of one of his churches were part of an eight-person living donor chain that enabled four people to get a lifesaving kidney transplant recently.

The Rev. John Kronz, who pastors St. John's and Lebanon United Methodist churches in Norway, in the Orangeburg District, has long felt a nudge to be a kidney donor.

"I thought about doing it for a while, one of those things that popped up when I first got my driver's license

and they ask you if you want to be an organ donor when you die," Kronz said.

But while it's something he knew he wanted to do one day, he never felt a big push to do it until he learned one of his church members, Bonnie Fanning, needed a kidney.

While Kronz discovered he and Fanning were not a match because they do not have the same blood type, he learned about a program through the Medical University of South Carolina, a kidney donor chain.

See "Kidney," Page 24

S.C. helps after tornadoes devastate Mississippi

By Jessica Brodie

A dozen members of South Carolina's United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Early Response Team headed to the Black Hawk/Winona area of Mississippi April 11 to help people after a swath of tornadoes left lives and homes shattered.

Multiple tornadoes swept through the

Southeast on the evening of March 24, ultimately claiming the lives of 26 people in Mississippi and Alabama with many more injured and widespread damage to homes, businesses and farmland across the region.

South Carolina's "Team Alpha," led by the Rev. Mike Evans, spent four days doing ERT work in

the area, making repairs and doing all they could to help people connect with God in a time of deep and devastating loss.

Evans said ERT members also spent time sorting through fields of debris with survivors, helping them find something for the families to

See "Tornadoes," Page 13

Churches grow more vocal about staying or leaving UMC

By Jessica Brodie

In six weeks, a number of United Methodist churches in South Carolina will go before Annual Conference to have their vote to leave the denomination approved by the body.

While information about these churches is being kept confidential by the conference until June—including the total number of churches and the church names—some churches have been vocal about their decision to leave. Still others have been just as vocal about their decision to stay in the

UMC, citing a commitment to disciple-making regardless of differences.

Conference offers help

For those South Carolina United Methodists who would like to remain with the UMC but their local church has voted to separate from the denomination, conference leaders have released a set of resources.

See "Churches," Page 14



Hours/Location

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

Accuracy Policy

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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.

Second books by Holt, Void released by Advocate Press

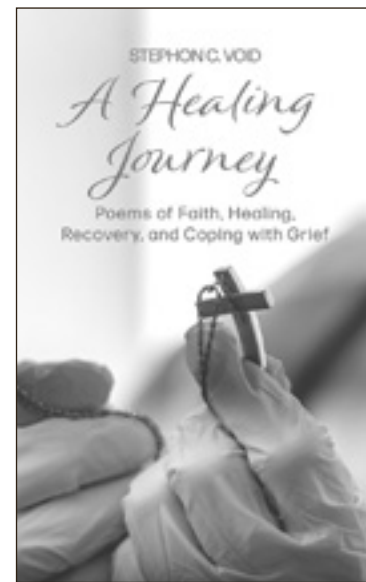
The Advocate Press has released two new books for sale this spring, one by a United Methodist pastor and the other by a United Methodist lay servant.

"People of My Journey," by retired pastor the Rev. Arthur Holt, is his second book with the Advocate Press. In his second book of reflections, Holt shares about the people of his journey and how they impacted him, steering him ever-closer to Christ, love and the transformative power of grace in our lives.

"A Healing Journey: Poems of Faith, Healing, Recovery, and Coping with Grief" is also the second book published by the Advocate Press from Stephon C. Void, a nuclear magnetic resonance technician at Claflin University and a certified lay servant at New Covenant United Methodist Church, Bowman. In this collection of faith-based poetry, Void reflects on his journey of healing as he navigates life as a patient, caregiver, son, and follower of Christ. Many of the poems reflect the pain he wrestled with as his father battled terminal cancer, as well as the peace he ultimately achieved



Holt



Void

as a child of the risen Christ.

"This is the book that we have needed," Dr. Safiyah Fosua said about Void's collection. The Rev. Janice L. Frederick-Watts called it "a beautiful work," while the Rev. Sheri Yvette-Base White called the poetry "thought-provoking."

Of Holt's book, Rev. Kim Strong said he highly recommends it. "One of unique blessings of being a United Methodist minister is the opportunity to bless and be blessed by a myriad of congregations over our lifetime," Strong said. "Rev. Holt shares the people and experiences that shaped his life and theology in a humorous and uplifting way."

This brings the total number of titles published by the Advocate Press to 18. Founded in 2017, the Advocate Press has a mission to produce books of interest to South Carolina United Methodists on matters of faith and to amplify regional voices and those that advocate for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

Both books are for sale as a paperback and ebook on the *Advocate's* website at <https://advocatesc.org/books>. They are also on Amazon.



Photos courtesy of Kim Thomas

Sunshine House breaks ground

Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry broke ground March 28 on its newest home for people with special needs, Sunshine House. Sunshine House, which will accommodate four men, is located near Aldersgate's Rick's House at The Manor in Florence. Anderson District Superintendent Steve Patterson officiated the groundbreaking, and Florence District Superintendent Terry Fleming attended along with Aldersgate board members, residents, and other supporters, including Manor Director Teresa Reich, architect Hal Fuller and contractor Jason Singletary. Sunshine House will be the fourth Aldersgate home the ministry operates. Aldersgate's mission is to provide quality homes in a Christian environment for people with special needs that enables them to be as independent as possible. For more information: <https://www.aldersgatespecialneedsministry.org>

Washington Street to host walking civil rights tour

COLUMBIA—On Sunday, April 30, from 4:30-5:30 p.m., the Racial Justice Action Team mission team at Washington Street United Methodist Church will partner with Columbia 63: Our Story Matters to host a guided civil rights walking tour of Main Street.

The tour takes visitors on a journey of some of Columbia's noteworthy and moving civil rights stories.

Currently, eight markers and various other installations serve as reminders of pivotal inci-

dents that occurred along Main Street.

The walking tour will begin at the African-American monument on the Sumter Street side of the Statehouse grounds. The tour will leave from there, and everyone will walk down Main Street where the tour will end at City Hall on the corner of Main and Laurel streets.

This walk is approximately seven blocks and will last approximately one hour. The starting point is also symbolized by a green marker on the interactive tour map featured on <https://www.columbiasc63.com>.

www.columbiasc63.com.

After the tour, all will gather in Boyd Plaza in front of the museum on Main Street for refreshments and conversation.

All are welcome regardless of registration. However, if you and your loved ones know for certain that you are interested in joining this tour, contact Nancy Whittle at ncwhittle@aol.com to register. Early registration will allow the team to bring enough guides so everyone will be able to hear the history and enjoy the tour.

Conference continues Safe Sanctuaries trainings in May

This month, training sessions will continue in districts across the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church to help local congregation better understand and live out their Safe Sanctuaries policies.

Each district will host "Safe Sanctuaries Best Practices," an opportunity for local churches to have their policies evaluated to ensure they align with our commitment to make United Methodist congregations safe places to live out God's call.

Recommended attendees for district trainings are pastors (who will receive Clergy Services credit), trustees, Staff-Parish Relations Committee members, children and youth coordinators, church council chairpersons and lay leaders.

Once district training is completed, specially trained Safe Sanctuaries experts will be available to come to a church to help train all persons

who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults, as well as church council, staff-parish, trustees and other members.

District trainings were held in April in the Orangeburg District, Charleston District and Greenwood. The Greenville District will have theirs April 30 from 2-5 p.m. at St. Matthew UMC, Greenville.

May trainings are as follows: May 6, Rock Hill District, 9 a.m.-noon, location to be determined; May 7, Columbia District, 2-5 p.m., Lexington UMC, Lexington; May 13, Walterboro District, 9 a.m.-noon, location to be determined; May 20, Charleston District, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. via Zoom conference call; and May 21, Spartanburg District, 2-5 p.m., Silver Hill UMC, Spartanburg. The Anderson District plans to hold their training Aug. 20 from 2-5 p.m. at First UMC, Easley.

For the latest district training schedule, go to <https://www.umcsc.org/safe>

A faith connection

Campus ministries help Methodist students balance school, spirituality

By Lillian Williams

Transitioning into college can be a difficult adjustment for incoming students who are learning to balance work, education and their faith. The South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church financially supports this mission through the payment of apportioned giving. For the 2022 year, the conference allocated \$655,023 of its apportionment budget for campus ministries. In 2023 the amount is \$672,729.

In nine of South Carolina's colleges, there are established United Methodist presences found in campus ministries. Also known as Wesley Foundations, these campus ministries across the state are Charleston Wesley Foundation (The Citadel, Charleston Southern University and College of Charleston), Furman Wesley Fellowship, Clemson Wesley, The Greenwood Wesley Fellowship, Methodist Student Network (University of South Carolina), Wesley Foundation at Francis Marion, The Wesley of Orangeburg, Winthrop Wesley and

Coastal Wesley (Coastal Carolina).

The universal principle exhibited by all these programs is forming connections with United Methodists on campus, as well as impacting the lives of others by spreading the love of Jesus Christ. These are accomplished through weekly meals, Bible studies, worship services and community outreach.

In the last 10 years, more than 60 people were called to ministry because of campus ministries in South Carolina, and members participated in more than 200 national and international mission trips.

Not only that, but they help create an opportunity for fellowship and genuine friendship.

"Many students find acceptance for the first time," said Steve Simoneaux, the director of Clemson Wesley. "Many students check out other groups or sit in dorm rooms alone. ... This is the first time that they have found true friends, a true community."

This connection is fostered through a variety of activities,

such as weekly movie nights at Winthrop Wesley, pancake suppers for the homeless at the University of South Carolina's Methodist Student Network or sports tournaments at Clemson Wesley.

Not only are these programs welcoming to United Methodists, but to all people regardless of their faith background. Joining a campus ministry can provide a first religious experience for some students, or simply a new expression of one for others. It can be illuminating in many ways.

"We have others who grew up in different faith traditions who were told that they couldn't be a minister because they were female. [When] they show up here on a Methodist campus ministry, they realize that being a female does not preclude you from going into ministry," Simoneaux said. "They have doors open to them that were not open in other places."

For more about the conference's campus ministries, visit <https://www.umcsc.org/campus-ministries>.

Dulce continues to improve thanks to support from UMCSC, others

South Carolina United Methodists are among those praising God this month after the successful bone marrow transplant received by young Dulce.

Dulce, 10, received the transplant to aid her battle with Fanconi anemia, a rare genetic bone marrow disorder that is a form of aplastic anemia. A transplant is the only treatment for the disease.

Dulce and her family came to know Dr. Luke Rhyee, a South Carolina United Methodist pastor who leads a medical mission called Healing Guatemala in the Chuisajcaba, Guatemala, region, where they live.

She received the transplant in late March at a hospital in South Korea after South Carolina United Methodists and other Healing Guatemala supporters stepped up with the necessary funds.

Dulce was being discharged from the hospital as of press time. She will live with her mother in an apartment in South Korea for the next nine months for her twice-weekly post-surgery checkups.

Rhyee said Dulce is doing well and her platelets continue to rise without additional transfusions.

United Methodists in South Carolina helped fund Dulce's trip to South Korea for her bone marrow transplant, the only treatment for her disease.



Photos courtesy of the Rev. Tom Wall



Opening eyes

The Methodist Student Network, the Wesley Foundation at USC, served nearly 2,000 people in their optometry and medical clinics in Ecuador over spring break in March. The team served on the coast in Pedernales, in the lowlands at an indigenous community and in an Andean village at altitude of 11,500 feet. The three doctors saw many conditions and illnesses. But often health education and compassionate listening was the most important medicine to dispense. Instead of giving ibuprofen for headaches, often the advice to drink more water is all that is needed. Particularly gratifying is seeing people who are vision impaired and sometimes legally blind with a huge smile on their face and sometimes tears rolling down their cheeks because they are seeing again (or sometimes for the first time) after many years of frustrating blurriness. Students also made home visits to get to know families and their living situations and pray with them. Without such solidarity, service can become patronizing. Though many lives were touched and improved, many of those with good vision had their eyes opened in wonderful and challenging ways.



Salkehatchie registration continues

Registration continues this month for Salkehatchie Summer Service, which resumes in June with 38 weeklong camps after three years of hiatus because of the pandemic. Here, two volunteers from last year's Bishopville camp pause for a smile. Volunteers must be at least 14 years old, and all adult volunteers must do a background check. Cost is \$250 per volunteer and covers the cost of shingles, building supplies and other materials. Lodging and meals are included. Founded by the Rev. John Culp, Salkehatchie began as an initiative 45 years ago to give youth, serving alongside adults, a taste of serving God with their own hands and feet by helping poor people in the state with home repair. To register or learn more, go to www.salkehatchie.org.

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Viewpoints



Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

Christians first

While we still think the South Carolina Conference should be more candid about which churches have voted to leave the denomination and how many churches they comprise, we do appreciate a new effort this annual conference has started: resourcing people who wish to stay United Methodist.

In our front-page article, “Churches Grow More Vocal about Staying or Leaving UMC,” we share about that effort, titled Engaging Possibilities, which is designed to help South Carolina United Methodists who would like to remain with the UMC but their local church has voted to separate from the denomination. Found at <https://umcsc.org/engage>, the resources are a step in the right direction.

While the Find-a-Church tool doesn’t differentiate between churches who plan to stay in or leave the UMC, it is a helpful way to find other churches in a local community. And the “new expressions” of church concept is refreshing, as many people are indeed seeking new ways to be God’s church in a changing world.

However, we’d love to see this effort go deeper, perhaps mimicking the “lighthouse congregations” concept embraced by the North Carolina and Western North Carolina conferences (see Page 14). While we love the idea of starting or developing new churches, we also have a lot of existing United Methodist churches who would like to welcome new members with open arms. Sharing the names of churches who are deciding to stay in the denomination and nurture those feeling displaced would be helpful in a time of uncertainty.

We respect the decisions of churches who have voted to leave the UMC, as well as those who are committing to stay. After Annual Conference, we should have a better idea of the impact this annual conference is facing.

For now, let’s unite in prayer as we remain strong in representing the Lord and drawing others to him—even, and especially, in a time of flux.

Yes, we are Methodists. But we are Christians, first.

Letters Policy

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



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

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Bishop’s Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

Enduring hope

“This is what the Lord says: ‘When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,’ declares the Lord, ‘and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,’ declares the Lord, ‘and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.’”

—Jeremiah 29:11-14 (NIV)

I want to ask you a simple question: How do you define hope? Margaret Wheatley, in her book, “Finding Our Way,” helps us remember the motto of South Carolina, *dum spiro spero*—“while I breathe, I hope.”

For many of us, we define hope as a feeling of expectation. For some of us, hope is a desire for certain things to happen, while others believe hope is a feeling of trust. How do you define hope?

This word is used to encourage and inspire, to stir up the gifts inside of us. Hope invigorates and revitalizes our dreams. Hope is a four-letter word.

The late Bishop Desmond Tutu described hope as being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness.

For me, to hope is to hang on to the promises of God. Hanging on to the promises of God gives us the stamina to overcome adversity. Overcoming adversity enables us to pursue God’s truth, and that pursuit of God’s truth leads us toward the acquired skill of enduring patiently.

Whether we recognize it or admit it, we put hope into everything we do. And if we

have it, we have the capacity to lose hope, too. People can let you down in the blink of an eye.

Our Scripture reference reminds us that the Israelites found themselves in a time of fear and despair; chaotic and hopeless in exile. Hope was not appealing to them; in fact, it was likely profane to them. They were possibly thinking: How can God’s exile be liberation? How can God’s defeat be the greatest victory? How can the future they hoped to avoid be their source of joy? Maybe they were asking: Is this as good as it can get?

As we prepare for the approaching 2023 Annual Conference, some of you may be asking these same questions. This season in our church has been filled with uncertainty and strife. But what if, as native South Carolinian singer and songwriter Laura Story has proclaimed, what if the trials of this life are God’s mercies in disguise?

So often in our lives, God’s vision for our future turns out differently than we thought. Jeremiah reminded the Israelites, and we can hear it too, that in order to get to God’s promised future, first we’ve got to go through some things. How do you know healing without being sick? How do you know you are able without having to try? To get to where God needs you to be, you’ve got to go through some stuff.

No matter what is going on around us, we can’t forget who we are and whose we are. Don’t let the distractions keep you from the mission and ministry God is calling you to.

Our quest is not to be God, but rather to lead people to God. Let’s let God do what God does.

What God has done over the centuries has proven God’s self to be true. God will do what God needs to do, and if we let God live in us, then God will use us to make a difference in the world.

Letters to the Editor

Questions

The United Methodist ministers who are leading churches away from The United Methodist Church will still have their pensions and retirement benefits from the UMC. The United Methodist Church has been good to these ministers who are leaving. Many of these ministers are near retirement and will benefit greatly from the retirement program. They leave behind the churches they convinced to leave the conference.

Who is making the biggest sacrifice, the church leaving or the minister who is retiring? These ministers will not be responsible for these churches who leave the UMC system. Who will?

A big question for churches of all sizes and location who are struggling is having a minister to serve the congregation. The UMC system guaranteed a minister for each church and each minister to have a church. Who is going to be responsible for these appointments? There will be years before the Global Methodist Church establishes itself. The word is there are many disagreements already in the policies and beliefs. There is always a possibility that the Global Methodist Church will split again over beliefs. It is more than just the homosexual issue.

There is an old saying: “jumping out of the frying pan into the fire.”

When Jesus was arrested, the disciples fled. The question is will the leadership of the Global Methodist Church really care about the small churches or the church that is really struggling? Will qualifications of a minister be reduced? Who is going to replace the system we have in the current UMC? Just as the disciples fled, responsibility will vanish.

Pray to God that God will provide spiritual leadership in these years of turmoil and grief. Congregations will hurt over these actions.

The Global Methodist Church is questionable and fragile. Ministers move on and die. The United Methodist Church will survive. Congregations need to remain United Methodist.

Christ is the same as yesterday, today and tomorrow. Christ lives and loves everyone.

Rev. John Culp, retired
West Columbia



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Cy Rogers

The circus of separation

If there is one thing clear about this circus of separation, it is not that the progressives haven't expressed their arguments and displeasure or that the traditionalists haven't done the same, but it is that both sides have forgotten the center, where, incidentally, I believe the real church is.

Why has this happened? It has happened because the people at the center have remained quiet, hoping this spectacle will simply go away; as some claim, "We have no skin in the game!" Unfortunately, this is what the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church thought before losing from one-third to one-quarter of their members. We could lose more!

Why did this happen? Because, as in our country today, when people at both extremes know nothing else but to shout and demand, no one really listens. Today, United Methodists at both extremes have been so focused on winning, so focused on being heard, so focused on being right that we, the people of Babel, no longer hear one another, or understand one another, or respect one another.

We are churches, but no longer the church.

So first, while neither side says separation was the goal, it was the natural result of how they approached this issue—a duel with handguns is much more likely to produce casualties than a duel with words. In our case, both sides approached this issue with cannons.

And then, fear consumed both sides. Unlike Jesus, who was willing to give up everything to achieve something greater, these two groups gave up nothing to order to achieve much less. Fear causes us to strike first rather than to talk or understand; it claims to be the high road, but it travels the low road; and like some of the Pharisees, it looks religious, but it manipulates and it schemes. Fear at first punishes, then it becomes self-destructive. In order to win, both sides have forgotten what it means to be Christlike in their differences.

And it grows; ask the people of those denominations I mentioned. Ask them as to who "won" in their battles. As the people in the center pretend nothing is wrong, and as the leaders at the fringes continue to argue and manipulate, so too grows our anger and denial. A lesson

from physics and the conservation of energy: what goes in eventually comes out. When angry, judgmental and hurtful words and action lie within the hearts of the combatants, is it any wonder that what we have today is nothing less than a circus?

Finally, is there anyone delusional enough to believe there will be a "winning" side in all this? Did one side "win" the Un-Civil War? As one president claimed, was the mission ever "accomplished" in Afghanistan?

So here is the point. With the right leaders (and you and I are to blame for this), we still could be one church today. If we required our leaders to be pastors rather than politicians, this would have never happened. If churches stopped paying apportionments, I have no doubt that a short time, our bishops, if their salaries depended on it, would find a "new way."

I still haven't given up, I probably never will. But it has become a circus, hasn't it?

Rogers pastors Sandy Springs and John Wesley UMCs, Anderson.

LETTERS: Readers sound off on difficult decisions, more

From Page 4

Freedom from self-absorption

Henry Nouwen has a little book titled "The Path to Peace." A blurb on the front cover by a fellow named Dan Wakefield declares that book to be "the most inspiring spiritual guide of our time." That is high praise for such a small book!

On the very first page, Nouwen writes that he is experiencing "a deep inner emptiness." That is a shocking confession by a man noted to be one of the more insightful and caring writers of devotional literature. Prior to joining the faculty at Harvard, he taught at Notre Dame and Yale. He was at the top of the faculty at Harvard and gave it up to move to Daybreak, a residential community for mentally handicapped people in Toronto, Canada. At the time he wrote his little book, he had been pastor to those people for seven years.

If a man at the top of the academic and publishing ladder in devotional literature is fraught with "a deep inner emptiness," what chance do we mere mortals have in our striving for spiritual depth and inner peace? We can't all go to Daybreak.

Most medical doctors would want to check our vital signs and refer us for treatment by a behaviorist (once called a psychiatrist). He or she would want to rule out any physical cause of the problem, test for anxiety, put us on a diet and exercise regimen and send us home with a mild sedative for mood control.

An infection might require an antibiotic. Chronic fatigue could require what we used to call a tonic, a beverage with magical restorative powers. If it is a sore muscle, the treatment might be a massage with a healing balm or lineament. If it is just boredom with life and self, the doctor might say take up an active sport, join a social club or try going to church.

If all this seems trivial for treatment of serious emotional problems, the idea is to treat problems before they become serious. Another way to say it is "Adopt preventive measures. Eat well. Value rest time. Seek good company. Be mindful of and responsive to the needs of others."

The big test is to get free from self-absorption. That requires an outward orientation rather than an inward orientation. That is not easy to achieve, but there is no alternative that works that does not risk addiction to

medication.

Rev. Mickey Fisher, retired
Spartanburg

No wonder

It is very disheartening to read disparaging comments from pastors and laity in the South Carolina Annual Conference toward those who are wishing to disaffiliate. As Christians, we should be able to say, "Go in peace." That is what a gracious exit is, isn't it?

There have been differences in theological leans for years, but when General Conference voted on issues, the delegates made up of half clergy, half laity passed the legislation that our denomination would use. The bishops who vowed to uphold the *Book of Discipline* were expected to do so. However, when we look back on what has transpired in recent years, it reveals a disturbing trend.

In 1996, 15 bishops openly declared their defiance of the *Book of Discipline*. At General Conference 2004, there were more bishops and delegates who stood with demonstrators who were allowed to march in and disrupt the proceedings. The plan in 2008 was to divide up into regions so everyone could do their own thing and still be called "United." Annual conferences voted that one down.

In 2012, an effort was made to create a set-aside bishop to supposedly keep wayward bishops in check, but delegates refused to increase the top-heavy power of the Council of Bishops. At Portland in 2016 the tactic was to create a Commission on a Way Forward to craft legislation for a special session of General Conference to be held in 2019.

Highly influenced by a number of progressive bishops, this would supposedly end the division on the subject of ordination and marriage. Once again, the delegates voted to remain true to Scripture, and the Traditional Plan was passed.

In 2020, a diverse group of bishops and other leaders came up with a proposal that would allow traditionalist congregations to form a new denomination, called "Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation." Unfortunately, because of the postponement of General Conference 2020, this was never passed, and many of those involved backed out from their support of it.

Since then, we have seen individual bishops choosing to offer a way out through Para. 2553, but some have changed their minds and put a "pause" on the process. Thankfully, our bishop is a man of integrity and is allowing churches in South Carolina to use Para. 2549, which does not have a deadline of

December 2023.

There has been much chaos, as more bishops have outright defied the *Discipline* in the consecration of new bishops. Even delegates to recent Jurisdictional Conferences have made it clear that they are all about making progressive changes to the *Book of Discipline* in 2024. No wonder many traditional churches are ready to leave this time-consuming dissension to focus on making disciples.

Cindy McClendon, member
St. John's UMC, Aiken

Remembering the fire

I want to thank Emily Cooper for her tribute to the outreach and missions of College Place United Methodist Church (June 2022). I have a memory of mine to add to the story.

I was a junior at Columbia College in February 1964 when Old Main and several dorms burned in a horrible fire. Two saintly ministers, our president Wright Spears and College Place pastor Eben Taylor, saved us with their kind hearts, deep faith and quick thinking. An iconic photo in *The State* newspaper showed us girls, with coats over our robes and caps over our curlers, stunned and weeping in the sanctuary of College Place Methodist Church.

The congregation nurtured us that night, and their generosity continued. Sunday school rooms became classrooms, offices were used by our professors and the sanctuary was used for weekly assemblies and chapel services. Staff and neighbors took students into their homes, and a bed was added to each remaining dorm room. The Class of 1964 graduated on schedule.

Thank you, College Place (United) Methodist Church. Well done, good and faithful servant.

Robin Clark Nicholson, member
Cayce UMC, Cayce
Class of 1965, Columbia College

Clarifying

Over the past months, St. Andrew By-The-Sea has remained focused on our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ using the gifts we have been given. As with many other churches, we have been faced with difficult choices during these turbulent times. Through prayerful thought, consultation and consideration, and while remaining Christ-centered, we have made those choices concerning our local missions.

Unfortunately, recent articles in the *Advocate*, as well as letters to the editor have misrepresented the challenges and decisions

with inaccuracies and incomplete information regarding the history of the relationship between St. Andrew By-The-Sea and what is now The New Bluffton Worship. Sadly, emotions overtake conversations sometimes and the facts become blurred.

St. Andrew launched an extension campus in Bluffton in 2012. For over 10 years, St. Andrew By-The-Sea and the South Carolina Conference provided financial support for our Bluffton campus. Unfortunately, we were no longer able to maintain our level of financial support and were faced with a decision. Without sufficient increases in contributions, it became apparent that St. Andrew By-The-Sea would not be able to continue our extension without jeopardizing the financial viability of our Hilton Head campus.

The evaluation and eventual decision to end the mission was not taken lightly by SABTS. Ultimately the conference evaluated the needs in our area and made the difficult decision not to grant our mission in Bluffton a charter. As part of this decision, in keeping with their commitment to our elders, the conference offered Rev. Burbage appointments to other UM churches in the conference.

While those attending the Bluffton campus are now an independent congregation, we at St. Andrew By-The-Sea value our friendships that were made over these past years. We worked with Bluffton leadership to reach an equitable separation, which both groups endorsed. To date, both churches have met all the commitments as part of the separation. In fact, we continue our collaboration with support for Bridge Builders and other programs such as Christmas Grace as a shared mission.

Difficult decisions, whether they be closure or separation, are never easy, and it was with Christ as our guide that we faced those decisions and found a path forward. We at St. Andrew By-The-Sea remain focused on our work in the name of Christ and are willing to work with all our Christian family in our community. It is our earnest hope and prayer as we look forward to the work ahead that all the churches in our community flourish in the coming years, spreading the Good News of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Sarah Coffin, chair, church council
Floyd McKeag, chair of trustees
Kim Likins, chair SPPRC
Joe Kerr, lay leader

Rev. Frank Lybrand, interim senior pastor
Bob Dietz, finance chair
St. Andrew By-The-Sea UMC, Hilton Head



Photos courtesy of Kenny Bingham

Help4Kids sends bags of food, clothing and other supplies to families, while Backpack Buddies distributes food to approximately 3,000 children every Friday throughout Horry County.

Surfside steps up support for kids' food, clothing needs during Lent

SURFSIDE BEACH—Surfside United Methodist Church held a food drive for Help4Kids and Backpack Buddies this Lenten season.

The drive ran Feb. 22, the first day of Lent, through April 9, Easter.

Help4Kids/Backpack Buddies is a 100 percent volunteer organization that relies solely on donations. They provide food, clothing, shoes and school supplies. Going to school prepared helps children learn and be better able to finish school and go beyond the cycle of poverty into which they were born. Children should have the opportunity to grow and be a child for as long as they can while receiving the basic needs as all other children. Help4Kids sends bags of food,

clothing and other supplies to families as needed. Backpack Buddies distributes food to approximately 3,000 children every Friday throughout Horry County. Backpack Buddies supplies children with nutritious, child-friendly, self-serve food designed to be put in a backpack and feed a child over the weekend. This program is in dire need of food right now.

There is much success with the backpack program. Parents have expressed their appreciation, and volunteers say it is exciting to see the faces of the children when their weekend food bag is added to their backpacks.

The church, under the direction of Mike and Sandy Rockmore, along with several volunteers, have taken five truckloads to them so far, with at least one more truckload to

go, and maybe more as the church has abundantly and graciously donated to help these kids. While the church donates to both groups throughout the year, members decided this was a worthy cause to go above and beyond with their help this year.

Help4Kids/Backpack Buddies expressed their gratitude for Surfside UMC's efforts.

Volunteers said it's always a great thing to be able to help children with something as important as being able to eat all weekend. People so often don't know what others go through as they are busy living their own lives.

Help4Kids/Backpack Buddies also accept gift cards from local grocery stores, or checks made out to Help4Kids.

Epworth Children's Home

Women's Day Observance

Years ago, Mother's Day had a distinct flavor. It often involved an ill-cooked breakfast with dads and children trying to do something special for Mom by taking over the kitchen for the morning. Children tried to be extra well-behaved in order to give moms a good start to the day. Children dressed for Sunday school and church and tried not to complain too loudly when the hairbrush caught a tangle in their hair.

It was a big deal in church. Mothers were recognized in a variety of ways. Children's choirs sang sweet songs. In some congregations, men wore flowers in their lapels. A red flower signified a mother who was living, and a white flower signified a mother who had died.

To many, Mother's Day was a warm and fuzzy day where everyone, from preachers to politicians, honored women who shouldered the day-to-day tasks of rearing children.

Times have changed. The roles of women have changed, and Mother's Day has changed. It no longer feels like a national holiday. It has a different flavor now.

Mother's Day at Epworth Children's Home has always been different. Mother's Day at Epworth does not bring smiles and pleasant memories. It is often a reminder of broken promises and shattered dreams. This day is sometimes a time of longing and loneliness.

At Epworth, Mother's Day is not observed as it is in many congregations and families. At Epworth it is observed as "Women's Day." The focus is on what it means to be a woman in the eyes of God. It is a day that looks forward to what God calls a woman to become and on the gifts of hope, forgiveness and forming new dreams.

On Mother's Day, there is a missional offering that goes to support others in need and a message that God calls women (and men) to share resources as part of the walk as a woman of God.

Oh, and what does Epworth do on Father's Day? Epworth observes "Men's Day" and focuses on what it means to be a man of God.



Photos courtesy of Laura Whitley

Sixty-nine women were present at the Sea Islands Camps and Retreat Center beside the river for a day of singing, fellowship, catching up and worship.

Charleston women gather to learn about 'Sowing Seeds of Peace'

JOHNS ISLAND—On Saturday, March 11, the Charleston District United Women in Faith hosted their "Day Apart" Retreat: "Women in Mission: Sowing Seeds of Peace."

All said it was a wonderful experience. Sixty-nine women were present at the Sea Islands Camps and Retreat Center beside the river for a day of singing, fellowship, catching up and worship. After so many meetings on Zoom, they said this was a refreshing experience.

The Rev. Shirley Gordon, director of the Wesley Center in Orangeburg, presented a dynamic message on the theme. She shared how after planting seeds, whether seeds planted in the fertile soil or the word planted in the souls of children and youth, nurturing is imperative. Gordon asked the questions: Is the "soil" of your church fertile ground for nurturing its members? Are we teaching our little ones and the youth about Jesus? Is our life day by day a model for these creatures Jesus said to allow to come to him?

The spiritual growth coordinator, Pearl Foster, and her planning team ensured the retreat was successful. Each member of the team was instrumental in making sure attendees were comfortable, fed and able to enjoy worshipping God and his beautiful creation. Thanks also go to Diane Ford and the Sea Islands Cluster for serving as host-



The women were able to donate a love offering of \$572 to Sea Islands Camps and Retreat to be used for scholarships.

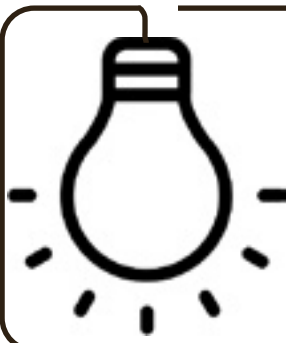
ess and providing the funds for lunch.

Organizers encourage anyone who has not had the pleasure of visiting Sea Islands Retreat to take a picnic lunch and plan to have lunch on the grounds. The drive will be worth the trip, they said.

As a result of attendees' generosity, they were able to donate a love offering of \$572 to Arthur Spriggs, director of Sea Islands Camps and Retreat, to be used for scholarships.

Spriggs was an honorary member of the UWF on March 11.

Overall, they said it was a lovely day of worship, fellowship and growth.



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Still going strong

Parish Nursing Health Care Ministry of the Orangeburg Circuit

By the Rev. Annie H. Sistrunk

The Parish Nursing Health Care Ministry of the Orangeburg Circuit is going strong and making a difference within the community.

In 2021 the Parish Nursing Ministry of the Orangeburg Circuit began with a fifth Sunday service event, which consisted of a health fair and presentations from medical experts. The inaugural event was blessed with the attendance of Dr. Milner. Dr. Milner was willing to be a part of another event in 2022 with an update on COVID-19 and the flu season.

Under the leadership of S. Elaine Leonard, we have continued to be viable in the work of health care for our churches and community. We have addressed many medical and community ailments that have been detrimental to society. We have worked diligently to keep our members updated with various guidelines for continued safety from COVID in order that we may stay in our sanctuaries physically and spiritually.

We encouraged each congregation to obtain purifiers to help with sanitizing our sanctuaries and maintain a clean environment. We also inspected each church building to make sure any necessary adjustments were corrected. We have followed the guidelines as set by the Centers for Disease Control and encouraged our members to update COVID shot records on a continuous basis. At each fifth Sunday health awareness service, we have been blessed to have nurses come to give COVID shots.

Also, the Hon. Pandora Jones-Glover addressed probate court information for our ministry. We have brought in doctors to address other health ailments that are hurting our community, especially African Americans. We also received information from a



S. Elaine Leonard speaks on Heart Healthy Sunday at St. John United Methodist Church.

chaplain at our local hospital concerning the choices one must make for our loved ones when they are unable to speak for themselves. We addressed making decisions for loved ones on the verge of death and how we can handle funeral arrangements beforehand. Sometimes we wait until it happens, but preparations before it happens make it easier and sometimes less expensive.

We have continued to make our fifth Sunday services health-informative for all in attendance. Not only did we have a medical expert at our service, but we also addressed domestic violence with a presentation from CASA/Family Systems. CASA is a private, not-for-profit organization serving Bamberg, Calhoun and Orangeburg counties whose primary focus is providing prevention, advocacy and intervention to individuals and families who have been affected by sexual assault, family violence and/or child abuse and neglect.

At our first health presentation for 2023, the parish nursing ministry was blessed to bring heart health information to our circuit. Not only did we have a presentation from a cardiologist, Dr. Green B. Neal, but we also had testimonies from members within our congregations. These members survived heart attacks, undiagnosed heart ailments and more. One member was told to have his wife drive him to the hospital for necessary attention. Who can survive such events? Only those who receive the necessary medical care from specialized doctors with heart knowledge.

Dr. Neal's presentation was important and addressed heart concerns that made me think about what could have happened to my husband that caused his death. To hear the term "widow maker" really hit home for me, and listening to Dr. Neal and the testimonies from survivors opened my eyes to what I may have missed during the last

Know your numbers

If you are not already stepping into a healthy lifestyle, please begin by making sure you know your numbers. The following information can help you maintain a healthy heart:

- BP=<115/75
- Blood sugar fasting <110 mg, two-hour post meal <140 mg and bedtime
- LDL <100, Optional 70 mg
- Total cholesterol <160
- Triglycerides <70 mg (African Americans)
- HDL >40 mg men and >50 women
- If heart disease, LDL <60, HDL > mg

few days of his life.

We also were able to give updated COVID shots to 19 individuals and four influenzas shots. Our partner, the Zeta Eta Chapter of Chi Eta Phi Sorority Inc., assisted our heart-healthy event by giving blood pressure checks.

On April 30, the Parish Nursing Health Care Ministry will present Health Sunday at 10 a.m. at Mount Nebo United Methodist Church, 1919 Kennerly Road, Orangeburg, SC 29118. We will be focusing on kidney health for this event. It will be presented by the Parish Nursing Health Care Ministry partnering with the sorority and sponsored by the Kidney Foundation.

At a time like this in our denomination, it is important to know ministry is still alive and strong. There is so much uncertainty, but our connection to one another is still viable.

Advocate awards Wofford rising freshman Clara Gramling with \$1,000 college scholarship

The *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate* has selected Clara Gramling, a rising college freshman, as the newspaper's 2023 college scholarship recipient.

Gramling plans to major in business and will receive \$1,000 from the *Advocate* toward her studies at Wofford College in the 2023-2024 academic year.

The *Advocate's* scholarship is for students who are South Carolina United Methodists and who are planning to enroll or are already enrolled



Gramling

at one of the four United Methodist colleges in South Carolina: Claflin University, Columbia College, Spartanburg Methodist College or Wofford College.

The scholarship is available to students with an interest in communications, journalism or business.

Gramling, who comes from a family of Methodists, has been an active member of Gramling United Methodist Church, Gramling, all her life. She served as the youth representative on the

church council for a number of years and has participated in a number of the church's mission projects, including Senior Day, the Back to School Bash, National Night Out and the Magi Star ministry in local schools.

Her pastor, the Rev. Rick Brown, called her a "born leader" in his recommendation letter.

The application process for the *Advocate* 2024 scholarship has begun, with a deadline of March 1, 2024.

To apply or for more information about the *Advocate's* annual college scholarship: <https://advocatesc.org/scholarships>.

A reflection by Clara Gramling

Journalism can have a direct impact on faith and ministry. Journalism can allow individuals to share their faith stories and experiences with others. Whether in articles in print and digital media, sharing stories with others is important.

Making a difference in my community wherever I end up is important to me. I come from a family of Methodists. Not only have I been raised in a local Methodist church, but both of my parents were also raised in the Methodist Church. My parents are very involved in the church, serving on committees, teaching Sunday school, past youth leaders and so on. My grandparents are also Methodist, and my grandmother was a delegate to Annual Conference for many years and then was fortunate enough to be elected to serve at General Conference.

Three of my great-grandparents were involved in the Methodist church in South Carolina serving as delegates to Annual Conference or being involved with the United Methodist Women. I served as the youth representative on our church council for a number of years and have participated in several mission projects of the church as well.

Although I was baptized and confirmed in the Methodist church, it wasn't until the COVID-19 pandemic hit our country that I really began to grow in my faith. Whether the pandemic or just my age at the time, I am not sure, but I know that during that time, I felt a real calling. Since churches were closed and social gatherings were prohibited during the pandemic, I began to watch services online and enjoy uninterrupted time with my family. As things returned to "normal," I began to participate in Bible studies and discussions with my friends about our faith. I had the opportunity to serve several different mission opportunities in my community and see how God was working in our small town. I began to see the importance of surrounding myself with people who love the Lord, want to serve Jesus and who truly walk in the way that He would want.

I have enjoyed growing in my faith and helping to lead others to Christ. I am excited that I will be able to travel on a mission trip this summer to Honduras to share my love for Christ and bring others to him as well.

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Columbia College announces Dr. John Dozier as 21st president

COLUMBIA—Dr. John Dozier has been tapped as the 21st president of Columbia College.

On April 20, the Columbia College Board of Trustees announced the appointment. He will assume the role July 17.

Dozier draws on more than two decades of experience in leadership positions at a range of colleges and universities to lead Columbia College into the future. As the institute community and equity officer at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, chief diversity officer and senior associate provost at the University of South Carolina, and president of Kennedy-King College in Chicago, Dozier has proven leadership skills, complemented by a passion for building caring communities in higher education.

“Columbia College has called me home, and I cannot be more humbled or grateful,” Dozier said. “The college is poised for a bright future, and I’m honored for the opportunity to be a part of its growth.”

“With a committed faculty and staff and a student body marked by innovation and community service, I’m excited to see where we can go together.”

Chair of Columbia College Board of Trustees Ben Rex said Columbia College has great momentum and is positioned for growth.

“After a dynamic presidential search process led by Cathy Adams and Vivia Fowler in partnership with Witt Kieffer,

we are proud to announce the appointment of Dr. Dozier. His wealth of experience and passion for the mission of Columbia College will empower our community as we continue to impact the world through the lives and experiences of our students and graduates.”

Dozier received his Bachelor of Science in marketing from South Carolina State University and was presented a Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2015. He went on to earn both a Master of Business Administration and a Doctor of Education degrees from DePaul University in Chicago. His wife, Victoria, holds a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering from the University of South Carolina and Master of Business Administration degree from Belmont University. From 2011 to 2020 they owned and operated The Language Buzz, Columbia’s first world-language learning center.

In addition to his extensive experience in higher education, Dozier has deep roots in the Columbia community.

A graduate of Columbia High School, his sister, Renata Brown (1997), is an alumna of Columbia College.

As president, Dozier said he will strengthen connections with the community he loves and continue building strong, productive relationships between the college and its neighbors.



Dozier



Submitted by Rev. Joseph D. Kovas

A good foundation

The 2023 confirmation class of St. Paul UMC, New Ellenton, attended a confirmation retreat at St. Simon’s Island hosted by Epworth by the Sea March 3-5. During the retreat, St. Paul’s youth and counselors participated in worship services and seminar classes. In addition, the youth group visited historical sites connected to John and Charles Wesley’s missionary trip to Georgia that included Fort Fredericka and Christ Church Episcopal. The youth and counselors said they had a wonderful and soul-filling time during the weekend. Everyone on the bus ride back to New Ellenton asked, “When can we go back to Epworth by the Sea?”



Springtown UMC

Springtown honors women’s stories to close out history month

By Vasilisa C. Hamilton

SMOAKS—“Women Who Tell Our Stories” was the theme Dr. Norman A. Brown selected to close out Women’s History Month Sunday, March 26, at Springtown United Methodist Church in Colleton County.

Musicians Quenton Atterberry and Warren Randolph set the scene by accompanying Springtown’s Praise Team Choir in performances of “We’ll Understand It Better By and By,” “I Go To The Rock,” “You Fight On” and, especially for Women’s History Month, Whitney Houston’s hit song, “I’m Every Woman” (It’s All In Me).

During his inspiring message, Brown highlighted the stories of prominent women in the Bible, including Mary, mother of Jesus; Elizabeth, mother of John The Baptist; and Sara, wife of Abraham, whom God made the “father of many nations.”

Margalene Irvin and Torsha Anderson performed an encouraging, empowering skit during the children and youth moment.

Vasilisa C. Hamilton, Annette Hodges and Latonya Smoak presented stories about Houston as well as Coretta Scott King and Ketanji Brown Jackson.

They shared about Houston’s meteoric rise to the top of the gospel and pop music charts; high school valedictorian King’s classical piano education and college career prior to her involvement in the civil rights movement and marriage to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; and Jackson’s early career as a journalist and researcher at Time magazine before she enrolled in Harvard Law School, eventually becoming a Supreme Court associate justice.

Of Houston, it was noted that “paying tribute to Houston” does not glorify her alleged battle with “drug addiction, her sometimes turbulent marriage to ex-husband Bobby Brown, or any other potential moral failings she may have had, for God sometimes uses imperfect people. And we all fall short.”

Springtown UMC, which celebrated its 157th year March 19, strives to be a church that empowers God’s people to serve the present age for the building of God’s kingdom.

Its ministries include men’s, women’s and children and youth ministries; a food bank ministry; and a greeting-card ministry.

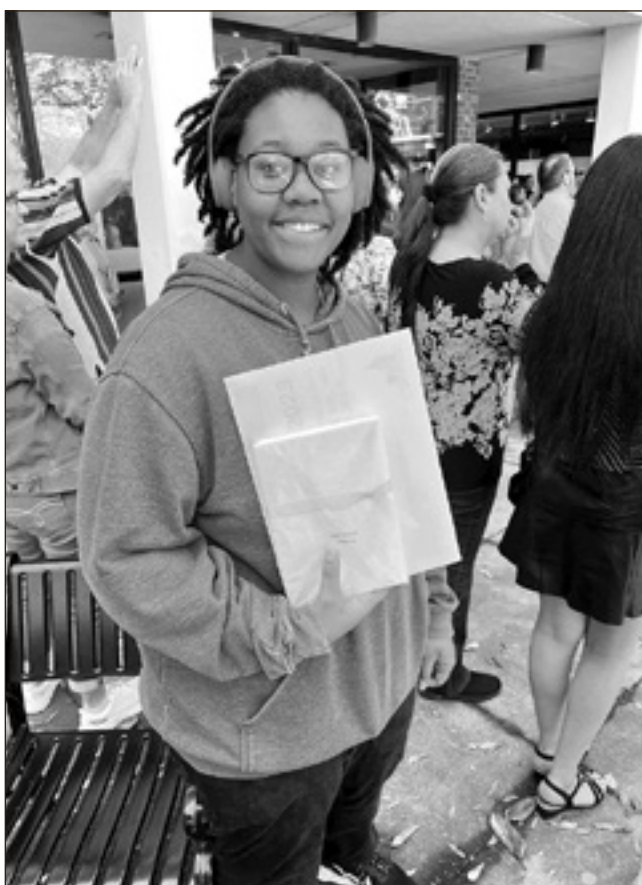


Photo courtesy of Ernestine McCaskill

An artistic gift from God

Congratulations to Sariah G. Caldwell of Sandy Grove UMC, Jefferson, where the Rev. Marion Loretta Cooper is the pastor. Sariah’s self-portrait was entered by her teacher, Ryan Roth, at the Fine Arts Center in Greenville into an art competition at Converse College against students across the upstate of South Carolina. Sariah won first place in the drawing portion of the competition. Sariah is the granddaughter of Donald and Ernestine McCaskill.

Langley celebrates Palm Sunday with hands-on worship

By Becky Cook

LANGLEY—Langley United Methodist Church is an established family-oriented red brick church with a beautiful tall white steeple, which seems to point directly to heaven as we grow in love. The building exists in the middle of an antiquated cotton mill community in South Carolina. All the mills have closed, but the peaceful Horse Creek—the reason the area was selected in the 19th century—still flows.

This is the place cotton farmers could bring their produce to have it spun and dyed to create the finished product of modern loomed cloth. This place and this building is where Jesus began his work in my life. My memories go back before words existed in my vocabulary.

I remember the characters who have woven this church into being. My Lily was one of those characters.

For me, “Lily” was so much more than a majestic white trumpet flower associated with Easter. Lily was my father’s mother, a woman who lost her husband before Daddy was born. She always taught Sunday school and gave me two cookies every Sunday to quiet me as various pastors attempted to bring us to a place where we worshiped God as Jesus taught. Lily, who would later be known as Grandmother, was strong and tender.

As this Eastertide of 2023 rolled around, the old and new of this church collided. This church—which is not this quaint building but her people—experienced a unique event on Palm Sunday. We experienced hands on-worship via an unlikely source.

We experienced the Holy Spirit through the presence of a donkey.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit shows up in very unexpected ways. Our church is very eclectic. We have a variety of political views. We are somewhat racially diverse and come from many different places and backgrounds. Our jobs vary; there have been pastors, doctors, lawyers, chemists, pharmacists, executives, accountants, policemen, nurses, teachers, insurance providers, singers, musicians, dancers, emergency medical technicians, postal workers, coaches, professional athletes, firemen, delivery personnel, administrative assistants, homemakers, day care providers, cardiac technicians, surgical technicians, radiology technicians, mill workers, circus performers, mechanics, computer technicians, sales representatives, cosmetologists, farmers and many others who have come from and to this gathering place.

I list all these specifics to tell the story of a Palm Sunday donkey who our Lord used just as he has and continues to use varieties of people. He used a variety of people on this Palm Sunday and placed Daisy the Donkey directly in the middle.

As I pondered Palm Sunday this year, I thought about what happened to Jesus the last week of his life in human form. I thought about the Jewish holy men and all of humanity he tried to teach. I thought of the fig tree, which did not bear fruit, and the money changers he cleared from the temple. I thought of his friends Lazarus, Mary and Martha who he brought from death and unrest into peace. Like all these different members of our church, there were many different stories happening during his last week. Then he sent for a donkey.

This year, we at Langley also sent for a donkey.

I texted a friend who is an animal whisperer. Donna Jean Drannon is working to establish an animal petting service. I knew she had a sweet-natured donkey. We planned a breakfast to celebrate Palm Sunday and wanted to draw in the children to practice a song and the processional before the Palm Sunday worship service.

We prayed, and it was like I just knew we needed a donkey. Most of the church



Leanne and Vince Evans share a moment with Daisy the Donkey.

thought I had lost my mind. The older folks just shook their heads. It barely passed the administrative council. We marketed it as “photos with a live donkey.”

On Palm Sunday at 9:30, Donna, her fiancé and her granddaughter arrived. Unbeknownst to us, so did a worship service like none we had ever experienced.

We finished breakfast and made our way to the backyard behind the fellowship hall. Pastor Graham Bennett commandeered three apples, which had been sliced as a part of our fruit course for breakfast. These apples were passed out to feed Daisy, the worship conduit. We intended to get a group and individual photos. My childhood friend and professional photographer, Norwood Bodie, awaited camera-ready, and Donna’s granddaughter led the donkey in peaceful circles as Daisy nibbled grass.

Then she stepped up to Daisy.

Our fellow worshiper Leanne Evans, who attends our church, is a pastor working as a Ugandan/Kenyan ministry counselor. Leanne is blind. Her husband, Vince, held her hand and escorted her to Daisy. As Leanne touched the donkey’s head and ears, the donkey bowed its head. Leanne’s face began to change as if she thought about how that donkey had willingly served our Lord. Leanne began to weep, and so did many others who stood around the caution ribbon boundary. It was as if a dove descended in the form of a donkey and spoke: that we in all our differences should know the humility and willingness of this lowly animal who carried Jesus’s mother to Bethlehem, then 33 years later carried Jesus to Jerusalem to declare his kingship—not of this world but of eternity.

As Leanne finished, we all made our way to line up next to the woods for the group photo. Many folks missed the picture because of disabilities or being busy. Many of us missed the full experience.

I almost missed it until it was nearly over. Many were moved through reading the story of the cross, which is a marking on most donkey’s backs. Donna shared a poster of the fable/parable of the willing donkey of Jesus’s Passover. Donna said all the difficulties of transporting a donkey on an early Sunday morning were more than worth it as she watched Leanne’s experience with Daisy. Many described it as like watching a worship service from heaven.

The adage of the mustard seed faith, which can move mountains, has been joined with another saying. The humility and willingness of a donkey in a time of differences and confusion can bring about Christ’s kingdom among us all. We must open our hearts and eyes to see God’s spirit move in the most unlikely times and circumstances.

Nichols speaks at I.D. Newman’s Women’s Day Celebration

COLUMBIA—The United Women in Faith of I. DeQuincey Newman United Methodist Church celebrated its annual Women’s Day Celebration March 19 during morning worship.

This year, as in the past, this annual event was celebrated along with I. DeQuincey Newman UMC’s Committee on Status and Role of Women Women in the Pulpit Sunday.

This year’s theme was “Mosaic of Faith: We Are All Part of God’s Story,” and the speaker was the Rev. Shirley Singletary Cullen Nichols of St. Stephen UMC in Orangeburg. Nichols shared how everyone has a story to tell, and we must share our story with others to draw them to Christ.

Since 1989 during this annual event, the local unit selects a woman of the church to be recognized as the Woman of the Year. This year’s Woman of the Year was Mona McFarland, a longtime member who grew up in the church; her parents were chartered members of the church.

McFarland currently serves as church financial secretary, secretary of United Women in Faith, member of the gospel choir and worship liturgist.

The United Women of Faith presented the Spirit of an Activist Award to Nichols and recognized three former recipients—Dora Cooper, Janie Tuggle and Louise Williams—by hanging their portraits in the



This year’s theme was “Mosaic of Faith: We Are All Part of God’s Story,” and the speaker was the Rev. Shirley Singletary Cullen Nichols.

Esther K. Witherspoon Fellowship Hall in recognition of their longtime service and dedication to the local unit and the church.

Each guest and member were given a teacup with a tea bag attached that stated, “You are TEA-rrific,” thanking them for attending the annual event.

The Rev. Frank V. James is the pastor.



Bethesda-Cades United Methodist Church celebrated Women’s History Month with the theme, “Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories.”



Bethesda-Cades celebrates Women’s History Month

By J.S. Cooper

LAKE CITY—On March 19, Bethesda-Cades United Methodist Church celebrated Women’s History Month with the theme, “Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories.”

The church was adorned with royal blue and white. Our pastor, the Rev. Shawn V. Chestnut, introduced the Rev. Mary Ann Snowden, guest speaker.

Snowden’s subject was “What Is Your Story and Have You Been Redeemed?” Her message highlighted the lives of three redeemed women in the Bible: Hannah, the widow woman and the woman with the issue of blood. Their stories have impacted the lives of women throughout the ages.

The morning message was powerful and inspirational. Mattie Nesmith, a lifelong member of Bethesda-Cades, was honored as our Woman of History. During her active years, Nesmith served in many capacities. Most notably, and the one she is proudest of, is her many years as coordinator of youth and children ministries. Nesmith has a legacy of stories shared and to be shared for generations to come.

Following worship service, cupcakes with royal blue frosting were shared with the congregation.

May we all ask: What is your story and have you been redeemed?

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Proceeds from the tea room and craft sale will impact many charities, including Epworth Children's Home, Bethlehem Center, Wallace Family Life Center and Killingsworth.

First IOP hosts first tea room since pandemic

First United Methodist Church, Isle of Palms, brought back their annual tea room and crafts boutique this March.

After not being able to host the event since 2019 because of the pandemic, the United Women in Faith and their "Crafty Ladies" excitedly led this much-beloved and eagerly anticipated community ministry.

Held March 8-10, the menu included fresh shrimp salad

served with a choice of fruit or a croissant; chicken salad with fruit or croissant; tomato bisque or Lowcountry okra soups with corn muffins; pound cake with homemade whipped cream and strawberries; cheesecake with or without strawberries; and turtle cheesecake.

Proceeds from the tea room and craft sale will impact many charities, including Epworth Children's Home, Beth-

lehem Center, Wallace Family Life Center, Killingsworth, the United Methodist Committee on Relief fund and local Charleston area charities.

The event was a big success and brought veterans of the tea room together with new volunteers to produce what organizers called "an amazing opportunity of fellowship, faith and faith in action," as UWF supports numerous charities.



Anchored in the Lord

The United Women of Faith unit of Wesley UMC, Johns Island, celebrated their annual Women's Day March 19 during their morning worship, the first in person since the pandemic. Their theme was "Anchored in the Lord" and the messenger was Certified Lay Servant Betty Chavis Jones, of Wesley UMC, Pinopolis. Jones delivered a passionate message that was clear and concise. Attendees were treated to an all-female choir who rendered numerous songs, including "I'm Blessed," with several standing and clapping. Many of the participants were women who are seldom in the pulpit but did an exceptional presentation. The culmination program was presentation of the donations received for the district-wide hygiene and health kits mission project. The Rev. Doris Bright is pastor, and this is the home church of retired former district superintendent the Rev. Lillian Washington.



Photo courtesy of Rosa Kennerly-Dance

A journey with Christ

New Light UMC in Orangeburg had a new experience Good Friday as three couples took members on a journey with Christ. They shared the journey that Jesus took into the city, where he was hailed by many in the crowds. The couples were the Rev. Stanley Ritter and Dr. Renee Ritter, the Revs. Cheryl Johnson and Lee Johnson, and the pastor of New Light, the Rev. Enrique Gordon and his wife, the Rev. Shirley Gordon. The pastors preached brief messages that got right to the point. Scriptures used during the service were Luke 23:31 and 43, John 19:26-27, Matt 27:46, John 19:28 and 30 and Luke 23:48. These couples were able to tie their messages together so well that the congregation felt like they were traveling with Jesus to the crucifixion. From left are the Lees, the Gordons and the Ritters.



Thank you, Mr. Gossett



New Hope UMC, Jonesville, recently honored Marion Gossett Jr. upon his retirement as long-time finance chair. Pictured from left are Abby Benfield, Melissa Gossett, Gossett Jr. and Pastor Fran Love. Also pictured is Henry McGinnis, who was received into membership the same Sunday at New Hope.

Around the Districts

Columbia District

Congratulations to Sharome and Stephanie Henry on the birth of their granddaughter. Nova Amora Walker was born April 7 to their daughter, Nora. Sharome is the executive assistant for Clergy Services, and Stephanie is the insurance specialist for Health Benefits.



United Women in Faith

by Angela Allen

Getting and being hope

The South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith Membership Nurture and Outreach Committee is very excited to hold our Come Together Be Together event via Zoom.

This is a free event that will be held Saturday, May 20, at 10 a.m. Preparations and plans are well under way for a lively, inspiring time of fellowship and friendship for all.

Our selected theme this year is “Get Hope, Be Hope.” The Columbia District will host this fun gathering for all.

The link will open at 9:40 a.m.

With everything we all have experienced lately, we decided that we all need to “Get Hope, Be Hope.” Our fun event for all ages will include a passionate keynote speaker, the Rev. Mary L. Johnson from the Columbia area. Johnson is a native of the Sumter area and has served in many different capacities on many different committees and boards. Her motto is, “Lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

We are delighted to have her for our event in May. The welcome and greetings will kick off at 10 a.m. All attendees will hear the inspiring message as one group before attending one of four workshops for additional



Rev. Mary Johnson

learning, fellowship and fun. Workshops are as follows:

- “Eating the Rainbow for Ultimate Wellness”: This workshop will teach attendees how to eat for energy and vitality. Chef J will demonstrate how to create a balanced plate with delicious and colorful foods.

- “I am Woman Keep me Safe”:

This workshop, led by Brittany, will show attendees tricks and tips in today’s environment on safety and social media hurdles.

- “Recycle and Sustainability: Going Green”: Led by Jes, this workshop will focus on techniques to help the environment and the community.

- A Bible study on “Get Hope, Be Hope”: Led by Becky, this study will inspire and encourage all to be the hope and share God’s hope with all.

Surround yourself with hope. Feel free to make your Zoom full of hope colors and themes. I can’t wait to see what hope looks like through your eyes.

We look forward to our morning together as we put faith, hope and love into action. See you on May 20.

Online registration is available at <https://tinyurl.com/scuuf-ctbt23>

For questions: 864-680-9029 or Angela.Allen@charter.net



No Man Left Behind Training

The Hartsville District United Methodist Men held a No Man Left Behind training April 15 at Aldersgate UMC, Sumter. Seventeen men from nine churches attended the training. Chris Rondeau, area director of Man in the Mirror, conducted the training. No Man Left Behind is a process for discipling men. Gregg Riley said the goal is to encourage and support men as they move toward becoming biblical men and discipling-makers. The men plan to stay connected and supportive of each other as they implement No Man Left Behind in their churches. The next UMM District Event is set for Saturday, June 10, at New Zion UMC in the Rock Hill District.



Rev. Angela Johnson

Deacon’s Corner

Getting to know Angela

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. Angela Johnson, a member of the South Carolina Order of Deacon serving in the North Georgia Annual Conference as a cross-conference appointment.

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

Johnson: Between 2007-2008, I really struggled with my call and what God wanted me to do. The Revs. Ken Nelson and Narcie Jeter influenced my call to ministry. The Rev. Jeter truly impacted my life during my college days at Winthrop. I am forever grateful for her light, love and faith.

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

Johnson: I currently serve as an associate pastor at Northside United Methodist Church in Atlanta (Buckhead area). My main responsibilities include connecting the church to the world through missions. Currently, we partner with more than 20 nonprofits as we address hunger and housing in Metro Atlanta. I oversee our pastoral care ministry and our counseling center. On Sundays, I serve as a liturgist or wherever needed. My duties do not differ much from elders unless it comes to Communion. Nevertheless, I am grateful to serve alongside elders and local pastors in the journey.

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?

Johnson: A wise campus minister once told me, “Angela, if you could do anything else, go and do it. However, if you feel that God is calling you to do something, do what God is calling you to do.” Words of encouragement/advice: 1) Have fun and practice self-care; 2) connect with people; 3) spread the love of Christ; 4) know your community; and 5) make disciples.

In a format replicating Dr. Brenè Brown’s Unlocking Us “Rapid Fire Questions,” let’s get to know a bit more about Rev. Johnson:

- Q. Fill in the blank. Vulnerability is:
- A. Hard for all of us. When a person is vulnerable, it is an act of trust.
- 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. Confidently look at myself in the mirror and say, “You got this, Angie.”
- Q. What is something that people often get wrong about you?
- A. My passionate spirit can sometimes be confused with anger.
- Q. What’s the last show that you binged and loved?
- A. “Beef” on Netflix
- Q. What is a film that you really love?
- A. “The Photograph”
- Q. What is a concert you will never forget?
- A. India Arie
- Q. What’s your favorite meal?
- A. Pizza, salad and wings from Blue Moon Pizza
- Q. What’s on your nightstand right now?
- A. A remote, Michelle Obama’s book, my devotional, a picture of my husband and a lamp.
- Q. Give us a snapshot of an ordinary moment in your life that brings you great joy.
- A. On March 25, my church completed a Habitat build. It brought me great joy to celebrate with the homeowner and my church family.
- Q. What is the one thing you are deeply grateful for right now?
- A. My amazing parents and my wonderful husband.

Golf tournament to help Killingsworth

Play some golf and help a United Methodist ministry in May.

On Monday, May 8, the Killingsworth Annual Golf Tournament will be held at The Windermere Club, Blythewood. Check-in begins at 8 a.m. with a shotgun start at 9 a.m. Cost to play is \$80/individual and \$320/team, and sponsorships are also available.

Contributions will assist Killingsworth, a unique community residence for women who are emerging from crisis situations. The home currently has an opportunity to enhance its one-on-one counseling sessions as well as personal financial development for its residents. The goal is to increase the retention rate of new residents and the success rate of those transitioning out on their own.

To register or for more information, go to <https://www.killingsworth.org>

Pocket prayer quilts: Still blessing all who make and receive them

By Crystal Barrs

In October 2021, I shared information about a pocket prayer quilt ministry at Good Shepherd United Methodist Church, Lancaster, which we started inspired by quilts I saw at Osceola UMC, Indian Land. Since then, I have sent out instructions about how to make these powerful quilts that provide hope to so many. My hope is that the rewards people receive from doing this ministry will bring years of joy beyond all measure.

God’s hands are in all things beautiful, and through Jesus, we provide the hope and love that is part of every prayer, stitch and cross that goes into making the quilts.

I have had the pleasure of being part of miracles through this ministry. One example is a husband and wife, who each received a pocket prayer quilt. They were heading to the hospital to visit his sister who was bleeding internally, and the doctors could not find where the bleeding was coming from. The husband and wife placed their pocket prayer quilts on the chest of their loved one, placed their hands upon the quilts and proceeded to pray over her. She came home from the hospital that weekend much improved.

Another person who received a pocket prayer quilt had to give up her vehicle and cancel her insurance because it was too costly. A few months later, I saw the woman

once more and was delighted to learn she had been given a vehicle and now had money to resume her insurance; she was so grateful and excited to be back on track with her life. She let me know she still had her pocket prayer quilt and was grateful for all her prayers that had been answered.

These tiny blessings have lifted up many people, providing God’s amazing healing power through the hope and prayers we continue to pray for all who have received pocket prayer quilts. I thank God he has led me to this ministry and the warmth and strength from the positive, loving ways of our Lord that he fills my cup so it runs over and makes me be a better person for the greater good of humanity.

We never know what someone else is facing, however trivial it may seem. When God gives you the desire to reach out with a smile or hand to help someone hurting, please don’t hesitate to pray for that person. Be mindful of your surroundings. God is with us, and he wants us all to be beacons for his lost sheep. That is what he would have us do. Follow Christ and feel the joy from knowing you are doing his will.

Barrs is a member of Church of the Good Shepherd UMC, Lancaster, and president of Rock Hill District United Women in Faith.

AC2023: Six non-separation resolutions, plus much more

From Page 1

Business to include budget, separating churches, resolutions

The theme for this year's event is "Seeking a More Excellent Way: Breathe and Believe, Hewing Hope."

Conference will address a reduced budget for 2024, ordain and commission approximately 20 new clergy members, honor 26 retirees and remember a number of clergy and spouses who passed away over the last year.

This year's event will also have members vote on a host of churches that elected to separate from the denomination. No decision has been made as to how any resolutions involving separating churches will be addressed by the annual conference, nor has the conference released the names or total number of these churches.

"To protect the integrity of the Local Church Discernment Process, the trustees of the Annual Conference, who oversee the fulfillment of the requirements to separate, are treating information about local churches participating in

the process as confidential until it is complete," said Dan O'Mara, conference communications coordinator.

The churches had the opportunity—if their members believe the denomination has not upheld its stated doctrine on issues of human sexuality—to go through the Local Church Discernment Process this winter and vote by March 1 on whether to separate from the denomination. Those churches with a two-thirds majority, and who satisfy financial obligations, debts and other legal liabilities, will go before AC2023 this June.

Members will also have the opportunity to vote on six resolutions that do not involve separating churches—one addressing gun violence, one opposing the death penalty and four from Reconciling Ministries of South Carolina, an official caucus related to the UMC.

(See article below.)

Other highlights

Other highlights of this year's event as are follows: Ordination and commissioning of new clergy will be

combined with a service recognizing retiring clergy. This Service for Commissioning, Ordination and Retirement will be held the opening night of Annual Conference, at 7 p.m. Sunday, June 4, to make it easier for people to attend because it is a weekend night instead of during the week. Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball, resident bishop of the UMC's West Virginia Conference, will preach.

The Tuesday 5 p.m. Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving will be preached by the Rev. Tim Rogers, Marion District superintendent, to honor those clergy and spouses who passed away over the last year.

The opening worship service Monday at 9:30 a.m. will be preached by South Carolina's Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston.

"This is an opportunity to recognize our shared call, with prayers of blessing for each pastor, layperson and congregation who will be pursuing God's call in the way they best understand it," Arant said.

Lay and clergy members who plan to attend must register by May 21 at <https://www.umcsc.org/2023acregistration>.

Six other resolutions to go before AC in June

Beyond the resolutions anticipated from churches who voted to separate from The United Methodist Church, Annual Conference members will have the chance to vote on six other resolutions at this year's annual conference.

Four of these are from South Carolina Reconciling Ministries, an official caucus of the UMC that works for full affirmation of all of God's children, including LGBTQ+ persons, in the church and the world. They are:

- Support for removing all discrimina-

tory policies and harmful language related to sexual orientation from the *Book of Discipline*;

- Support for the establishment of the government necessary to allow each region to design ministry for its particular contexts and be more effective in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world;

- Support for and amplification of the LGBTQIA+ delegates' call to justice and empowerment for the LGBTQIA+ community and for responsibility as United

Methodists to do good, do no harm, and stay in love with God; and

- Expression of respect and gratitude for those who have voluntarily stepped away from positions of leadership as they journey away from membership in the UMC.

The Conference Connectional Ministries' Advocacy area and South Carolina Board of Church and Society is proposing a resolution urging South Carolina United Methodists to prayerfully address gun violence in their local context, including background checks and gun purchase

restrictions.

And Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church and the Rev. Amiri B. Hooker submitted a resolution calling for South Carolina United Methodists to unequivocally oppose the death penalty.

These resolutions are expected to be included in the conference packet that will be available at <https://www.umcsc.org/ac2023> by May 1, as well as on the *Advocate* website at <https://advocatesc.org>.

Other resolutions can be brought on the floor of Annual Conference.

Native American Ministries

Honoring the Creator with music from a Native flute

By Kathy Hart

"Praise him with the tambourine and dancing; praise him with strings and flutes!"—*Psalms 150:4 (NLT)*

Since the fourth grade, I have played a silver orchestral flute, learning my scales, proper figure placement, breathing techniques, music theory and practicing so much that I had to put it down for years, only to pick it back up when I was much older.

Then I heard Cathy Nelson play her Native flute at a Native American Representative training. As much as I love the sweet tone

of my flute, my disappointment is that my flute cannot make the haunting and soothing sound of a Native American flute. It is like you can hear the gentle sound of the wind. A peace falls over me. Why is that?

Scholars believe Native American flute-playing originated sometime between 300 B.C. to A.D. 300 in the American Southwest. Made from bone and river reed, ancient Native flutes have been found in Arizona and Utah. However, there is growing evidence that Native Americans were playing flutes throughout all of North America. Early

European explorers, like Captain John Smith, described in his 1607 writings that the Native American flutes were made of reed and played like a recorder.

The Native American flute is crafted from various woods, bone, reed, clay, bamboo or cane with six finger holes designed to fit the size of the player's hand. This is very different from the metal levers and pads of the modern metal flutes. Like the modern metal flute, the sound of the Native American flute is produced by the positioning of the lips and breath. The big difference is, instead

of blowing across the mouthpiece of a metal flute, the Native flute player blows into the instrument at one end like a recorder, forcing breath into two chambers: one for collecting the breath of the player and a second that creates the sweet sound.

Many wrongly claim that playing the Native American flute served only as a courting function for Native men. However, for Native people, music is like breath itself, a vital part of existence. Native people embrace music to honor the Creator. The Native flute is played by both men and women.

Although customs and practices differ between cultures and tribes, the music of the flute remains the most common among them all. Today, Native flutes are played in ceremonies including weddings, tribal gatherings and worship.

Hart is a member of the Native American Committee.



Epworth's Annual Mother's Day Offering
Sunday, May 14, 2023



Cathy Nelson is a Native American flute player.

TORNADOES: Black Hawk UMC completely destroyed

From Page 1

hold onto in their grief.

“This was definitely a different type of call-out,” Evans said. “There was nothing to tarp, so we picked up debris and did chain-saw work.”

The team stayed at Moore Memorial United Methodist Church in Winona, and four people from the UMC in Missouri joined the 12 from South Carolina to help.

Evans sent the *Advocate* a photograph of all that was left of Black Hawk UMC—a few brick steps and some posts.

The pastor and his wife also lost their parsonage in the tornadoes, telling Evans they watched their house blow away above them as they huddled in their car in the garage.

Evans said the church plans to rebuild.

A second team from South Carolina was supposed to help the week after, but the ERT phase of disaster recovery ended earlier than expected.

ERT Coordinator Billy Robinson lifted up thanks to the volunteers and others who make these ministries possible.

“From prayers, to donated hours and finances, coordination, supplies, having our back, looking out for each other as family, it is all so vitally needed,” Robinson said.



Unlike other responses, there was nothing for ERTs to tarp, Evans said, so they picked up debris and did chainsaw work.

To get involved with South Carolina’s Early Response Team, email Robinson at brpraisejesus@aol.com.



Four people from the UMC in Missouri joined the 12 from South Carolina to help.



A few brick steps and some posts were all that was left of Black Hawk UMC.



The pastor and his wife watched their house blow away above them.

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Team members picked through debris to help families find items to help them grieve.



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CHURCHES: Resources available for those choosing to #BeUMC

From Page 1

“Engaging Possibilities,” found at <https://umcsc.org/> engage, is designed to serve as a starting point for those in search of a new place to worship.

Resources include:

- A link to the UMC’s Find-A-Church tool, which identifies local UMCs based on a ZIP code or address;
- Tools to begin the process of transferring church membership to another congregation or temporarily to a UMCSC district; and
- Opportunities to learn about new expressions of church in the South Carolina Conference.

The UMCSC team developing Engaging Possibilities, led by the Rev. James Friday, director of Congregational Development, and the Rev. Millie Nelson Smith, director of Connectional Ministries, will continue to identify needs of those searching for a new church home and additional resources to address those needs.

“Whether you are an individual or a group of people searching for a new church home, we will be there for you during this transitional and prayerfully transformational time,” Friday said. “As you consider your next faithful steps, specific pathways among which you may choose will continue to emerge as the conference, districts and local churches come together to reflect The United Methodist connection at its best.”

Leaving

For those churches who wish to leave, it is unclear whether they plan to join another denomination or remain independent. Many have not yet voted on this next step and are in a time of discernment about it now. Others have already determined they plan to remain independent and not affiliate with a denomination. As of press time, the *Advocate* knows of 54 churches who plan to leave of the 958 total churches in the conference (see list at end of article).

The Rev. Al Shifflett said the charge he pastors, the St. Paul-Tillman Charge in the Walterboro District, not only voted to separate from the UMC but to remain independent. They plan to call themselves St. Paul Methodist Church and Tillman Methodist Church, keeping the name “Methodist” in respect to John Wesley.

Waiting on General Conference

Other churches have voted not to pursue disaffiliation from the UMC. Some have said they are hopeful the UMC will pass more inclusive language at General Conference 2024 regarding sexuality, while others are hoping the UMC will continue its current stance. Currently, the UMC *Book of 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.”

Bethel UMC in Charleston, Union UMC in Irmo, Smyrna UMC in Moncks Corner and Shandon UMC in Shandon have all told the *Advocate* they plan to wait and not consider disaffiliation until after General Conference.

Staying UMC

Still others are voicing their stake in the UMC definitively,

Is your church staying in the UMC? Or has your church decided to leave? Contact Editor Jessica Brodie at jbrodie@umcsc.org or 803-807-0018.

such as Washington Street UMC, Columbia.

In a release circulated April 10, the church council of Washington Street issued a statement that they are committed to remaining part of the UMC.

“We do so with the strong expectation that the 2024 General Conference will amend the *Book of Discipline* by removing all harmful and prohibitive language relating to LGBTQIA+ persons, and thus allow the ordination of LGBTQIA+ clergy and marriage ceremonies for LGBTQIA+ couples performed by UM clergy and/or conducted in UM churches. These amendments to the *Book of Discipline* will enable the UMC to reflect the inclusive love of Jesus Christ more faithfully and more fully live out its motto of ‘open hearts, open minds, open doors.’ Washington Street UMC continues to be a welcoming and affirming space for all of God’s children, including our LGBTQIA+ siblings.

“Our congregation will also be a safe harbor and place of healing for persons whose churches are separating from the UMC.”

Washington Street further noted they voted this way to affirm that their congregation is committed to being and making disciples of Jesus Christ above all else.

“We agree with our founder, John Wesley, that God’s love and this denomination are big enough to include everyone and that we can work out our differences better while being together and ‘agreeing to disagree’ as we seek to contextualize ministry for today’s world,” the statement added.

A number of resources abound for churches wanting to “stay UMC” or learn more about what this might look like.

Ask the UMC created a series of frequently asked questions, which they compiled on a webpage titled “Ask The UMC Series: Is The United Methodist Church Really...?”

Several other resources are also available, including a campaign titled #BeUMC that strives to help people reclaim their United Methodist identity.

Resources include the following:

- Is The United Methodist Church Really...?: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-series-is-the-umc-really>
- BeUMC: <https://www.umc.org/en/who-we-are/our-people/beumc>
- Committed to The UMC: <https://www.UMC.org/committed>
- UMC’s Discipleship Ministries: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org>
- Fresh Expressions, a subset of Discipleship Ministries: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/equipping-leaders/fresh-expressions>
- Resource UMC: <https://www.resourceumc.org>
- That We May Be One: <https://twmbo.org/>
- Adam Hamilton: A Future with Hope: <https://vimeo.com/734455031>
- Beginning Again, A Guide for Remaining in the UMC: <https://www.umc.org/-/media/umc-media/2023/02/17/21/27/beginning-again-guide-v3.ashx?la=en>

Who are the churches who have voted to separate?

While the list is incomplete, here are the churches on the S.C. Traditional Methodist Lay Leadership Group list who have voted to separate from the UMC:

Aldersgate UMC, North Charleston, Charleston District
 Bells UMC, Abbeville, Anderson District
 Bethel UMC, Andrews, Marion District
 Bethel UMC, Oswego, Hartsville District
 Bethlehem UMC, Union, Spartanburg District
 Beulah UMC, Camden, Hartsville District
 Buncombe Street UMC, Greenville, Greenville District
 Catawba UMC, Catawba, Rock Hill District
 Cedar Swamp UMC, Kingstree, Florence District
 Chapin UMC, Chapin, Columbia District
 Concord UMC, Bishopville, Hartsville District
 Covenant UMC, Greer, Greenville District
 Cypress UMC, Ridgeville, Walterboro District
 Dalzell UMC, Dalzell, Hartsville District
 Earle UMC, Andrews, Florence District
 Ebenezer UMC, Hemingway, Florence District
 First UMC, Hemingway, Florence District
 Foster’s Chapel UMC, Jonesville, Spartanburg District
 Grace Community UMC, Fort Mill, Rock Hill District
 Lebanon UMC, Eastover, Columbia District
 Lewis Chapel, Sumter, Hartsville District
 Liberty Chapel UMC, Florence, Florence District
 Lyman UMC, Lyman, Spartanburg District
 Mauldin UMC, Mauldin, Greenville District
 McLeod Chapel UMC, Rembert, Hartsville District
 Millwood UMC, Kingstree, Florence District
 Mount Vernon UMC, Hickory Grove, Rock Hill District
 Mount Vernon UMC, Greeleyville, Florence District
 Mount Horeb UMC, Lexington, Columbia District
 Mount Tabor UMC, Ridgeville, Walterboro District
 Mountain View UMC, Taylors, Greenville District
 New Zion UMC, New Zion, Florence District
 Pinopolis UMC, Pinopolis, Charleston District
 Pisgah UMC, Florence, Florence District
 Point Hope UMC, Mount Pleasant, Charleston District
 Pond Branch UMC, Gilbert, Columbia District
 Reidville Road UMC, Moore, Spartanburg District
 Salem UMC, Salem, Anderson District
 Sharon UMC, Greer, Greenville District
 St. Andrews UMC, Easley, Anderson District
 St. Matthew UMC, Bishopville, Hartsville District
 St. John UMC, Rembert, Hartsville District
 St. Mark’s UMC, Sumter, Hartsville District
 Trinity UMC, Alcolu, Florence District
 Trinity UMC, Andrews, Marion District
 Trinity UMC, Ridgeville, Walterboro District
 Walnut Grove UMC, Roebuck, Spartanburg District
 Wayne UMC, Georgetown, Marion District
 Wesley Chapel UMC, Union, Spartanburg District
 Zoar UMC, Greer, Greenville District

Additional churches (these notified the *Advocate* directly):

Cattle Creek UMC, Rowsville, Orangeburg District
 Roebuck UMC, Roebuck, Spartanburg District
 St. Paul UMC, Ridgeland, Walterboro District
 Tillman UMC, Tillman, Walterboro District

Lighthouse Congregations offer hope amid schism

By Sam Hodges

Excerpted from the UMNews

Morganton, North Carolina, is in the Blue Ridge Mountains, about a four-hour drive from the Atlantic Ocean. It’s not exactly lighthouse country.

But the First United Methodist Church of Morganton is a Lighthouse Congregation, and so proud to be one that it just hung a big outdoor banner announcing the fact.

“Through this, our congregation has some very important things to offer in the life of The (United Methodist) Church,” said the Rev. Dana McKim, senior pastor. “We can be a sign of hope.”

Lighthouse Congregations declare themselves to be solidly United Methodist — and a safe, supportive place for people who mean to stay in the denomination after their local church has voted to leave.

The North Carolina and Western North Carolina conferences have been the incubator for the idea, and it’s taken hold in both. The North Carolina Conference, hard hit by

disaffiliations, has had 72 churches become Lighthouse Congregations in recent months. The Western North Carolina Conference has 46, with others exploring becoming one.

Other conferences—including Arkansas, Western Pennsylvania and Kentucky—are beginning similar programs and using lighthouse imagery or a close variation.

McKim says First United Methodist in Morganton is well along in living up to its lighthouse designation, finding various ways to help United Methodists who are feeling a bit lost.

He tells of a woman who once belonged to the Morganton church but relocated two hours away and was on the losing end of her new church’s vote to disaffiliate. She recently called McKim and asked if she could move her membership back to First United Methodist in Morganton.

“When I said, ‘Welcome home,’ the woman broke down into tears,” McKim said.

The Lighthouse Congregations idea

emerged as conferences began to consider how to minister to people whose churches were leaving under Para. 2553 of the United Methodist *Book of Discipline*.

That provision, approved by the 2019 General Conference, recognizes The United Methodist Church’s longstanding internal dispute over LGBTQ inclusion. It lets U.S. churches exit the denomination with their property, provided they have at least a two-thirds congregational vote in favor of disaffiliation, obtain their annual conference’s approval and meet certain financial requirements.

By UM News’ tally, 2,095 churches have so far received annual conference approval for departure under Para. 2553. Others are lined up to go, and there will be special, disaffiliation-focused annual conference sessions through the end of 2023, when the provision expires.

When the pace of disaffiliations quickened last year, conferences recognized that there would be many people in exiting congregations who want to stay United

Methodist, and who might be needing guidance and pastoral care.

The Rev. Steve Harper, a retired pastor helping with the Florida Conference’s post-disaffiliation response, had the idea of finding churches that were strongly United Methodist and would agree to be a resource and place of refuge. He had a metaphor in mind, too.

“I thought, ‘Well, we could create some lighthouse churches in each district to keep people from crashing and not knowing what to do,’” he said. “My wife has a beautiful picture of a lighthouse in one of our rooms, and that might have had something to do with it.”

There’s been a lot of annual conference cooperation in the wake of disaffiliations, and the Western North Carolina and North Carolina conferences ran with Harper’s concept, formalizing it into Lighthouse Congregations.

Read the full article at <https://www.um-news.org/en/news/lighthouse-congregations-offer-hope-amid-schism>



Conference Historical Society

by the Rev. Joseph D. Kovas

Celebrating 51 years of merger in South Carolina

The year 2022 marked the 50th anniversary of the merger of the 1785 South Carolina Conference and the 1866 South Carolina Conference, which formed the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church in 1972.

The anniversary of the merger was celebrated at Claflin University Jan. 27, 2023, during the Granville Hicks Leadership Academy. During the weekend, Marilyn Gibbs Drayton, director of the Hubert V. Manning Library at Claflin University, and the Rev. Larry D. McCutchen, interim university chaplain, presented to the Granville Hicks Leadership Academy the history of the 1866 South Carolina Conference and how Claflin University was instrumental in the conference's history and ministry.

In the 50th anniversary of merger, we celebrate the Methodists of the Palmetto State who have led lives of service to their communities, state, nation and world, and who were formed in the 1866 South Carolina Conference.

Dr. John J. Seabrook, the Rev. Dr. Hubert V. Manning and Dr. Henry N. Tisdale were prominent Claflin University presidents who were remembered during the Granville Hicks Leadership Academy for their gifts of leadership to the university and their community. Each president was a graduate of Claflin University. Claflin throughout its history has produced people of extraordinary character and achievement. Graduates such as Robert Charles Bates, who was the first African-American man to be certified as an architect, and Dr. Leo F. Twiggs, who was an internationally known artist and the first African-American man to receive a doctorate from the University of Georgia, are among the many alumni who were shaped and formed by the university and the ministries of the 1866 Conference.

Bishop Joseph B. Bethea, Bishop James S. Thomas and Bishop Ernest W. Newman are among the alumni who called Claflin home and who were elected to serve as episcopal leaders of the denomination. In November 2022, Claflin University celebrated being the alma mater of a fourth episcopal leader when Bishop Robin Dease was elected to the episcopacy at the Southeastern Jurisdiction meeting held at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina.

The 1866 Conference grew up with Claflin University, which was founded in 1869 and has served as the home where many successful and faithful servants of God have been formed for service and ministry. In addition to Claflin University's alumni, the 1866 Conference has produced extraordinary leaders who have made contributions to the church and society. The Rev. Isaiah DeQuincey Newman, a renowned member of the South Carolina Conference, was a leading civil rights activist in the state and the first African-American state senator elected in South Carolina since Reconstruction to represent Chester, Fairfield and Richland counties in the General Assembly. Judge Richard E. Fields of Charleston was a member of Centenary Church and was an extraordinary lay leader in the conference and served as a trustee of Claflin University. After Judge Fields served as a municipal judge, he was appointed to serve as a South Carolina Circuit Court Judge.

The celebration of our conferences' merger continued as the Rev. Carol R. Cannon presented to the Granville Hicks Leadership Academy based on a copy of the "Proposed Plan for Merger of the South Carolina Conference (1785) South Carolina Conference (1866) of the Southeastern Jurisdiction The United Methodist Church Revised March 1, 1971." She obtained a copy of the "Proposed Plan for Merger" from her relative, Dr. Ralph A. Cannon, who served on the Committee of Merger. Under the leadership of Bishop Paul Hardin, Bishop Charles F. Golden and a host of dedicated laity and clergy, a plan was created to bring two conferences together to form a new South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. As I studied the list of laity and clergy who

helped to bring the two conferences together, I am truly humbled to have a connection with a few of the individuals. Bishop Hardin and the Rev. Bryan Crenshaw are from my hometown of Chester and were shaped and formed for ministry by the people of Bethel UMC. Little did I realize in my youth how many extraordinary giants of the church were shaped in the light of my home church's stained-glass windows. In the current appointment where I serve, I discovered that the Rev. Benjamin B. Barnes, who served St. Paul UMC in New Ellenton from 1970-1977, also served on the Committee of Merger during his appointment at St. Paul.

Jan. 27 was truly a day of celebration of our conferences' 50th Anniversary of Merger. It was a day where we celebrated not only the people and leaders of the 1866 Conference who also helped to lead the newly formed South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church, but it also was a day where we remembered our broken past and how racism divided our Methodist connection with the Central Jurisdiction. At the very end of the academy, McCutchen shared with us the wisdom of the phrase "Lest we forget." If we do not remember our past and where we have come from, we may be doomed to repeat the sins of the past and we will be unable to participate in the vision of the future God is seeking to create in our own day and age by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If one takes the time to study the history of the merger, he or she will observe that there were many conversations and meetings that took place before the merger of the two conferences in 1972. It was in these meetings where the hard work of reconciliation took place between our two conferences. For more information on the merger committee, take the time to reference Cannon's article published in the March 2023 *Advocate*.

In one of the Committee on Merger meetings, Newman stated the following: "Brothers and sisters we have problems—big problems. They stem from the racism that was so apparent at the last session of the Annual Conference. ... How can we reconcile the world to Christ Jesus if we cannot achieve reconciliation among ourselves?"

Newman's words named the sin of racism that separated Black and White Methodists in South Carolina for generations and asked a prophetic question that is still relevant today for ministry.

In the "Proposed Plan of Merger: Revised March 1, 1971," the Committee on Merger shared this message of hope: "Our history we cannot escape and our differences as a people we cannot ignore, but of greater significance is our bond in Christ. Out of a past of separateness, the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church seeks to serve the demands of the present age. As people of God, we respond in love to His Word and His will as we seek our way in a new church."

Although the 1971 proposal was not the final plan approved for the merger, its preamble bears witness to the faithful work of a generation of Methodist laity and clergy who strove to overcome racial barriers and to create a unified conference in the Palmetto State for God's kingdom.

The people and stories of this generation of Methodists inspire us to seek ministries of justice and reconciliation in our local communities, conference and world. These stories fill us with courage to sing aloud joyfully in the Holy Spirit the words of Franny Crosby: "This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long. This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long."

This is our story of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, and I am honored and humbled to sing praises to my Savior all the day long as a South Carolina United Methodist.

Kovas serves as vice president of the Conference Historical Society and is the pastor of St. Paul UMC, New Ellenton.



A 'heart' for people

Trinity UMC, Newberry, recognized February as American Heart Month during their church service Feb. 19. This was the 10th year Trinity has supported the fight against heart disease. Congregants were asked to wear red, and information was handed out on heart disease and stroke prevention. Harriet Stevenson, communications chair, gave a brief talk about the importance of not hesitating to start hands-only CPR and using an AED (defibrillator), if nearby, when someone collapses from cardiac arrest. Trinity has two AEDs. One came through a grant from Self Regional Hospital in Greenwood and the other was donated by a church member.



From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

S.C. Methodism enters the '70s

Last year, I noted that 50 years had passed since the merger of the 1866 and 1785 South Carolina Conferences into a new, racially integrated conference. Though that union took effect in 1972, true merger would be an ongoing process.

By May 1973, some of the details were still being discussed. One of those involved the number of districts that the new conference would include, and at the heart of it, the role of the district superintendent. The merger plan called for combining the 11 districts of the 1785 conference and the four districts of the 1866 conference into 12 new districts by 1974.

Readers of the *Advocate* in May 1973 saw two proposed maps. A task force came up with one map that reflected the direction in the plan of union, placing around 50 to 55 charges in each district. However, the task force also submitted a second map proposing 14 districts of around 40 charges each.

The *Advocate's* editorial found strong arguments for each map: "If these persons of essential leadership responsibility are to continue to fulfill the duties of this office as presently envisioned, primarily, that of an administrator spending much time at the desk or on the road going from charge to charge, it is our judgment that 12 districts are sufficient. If, on the other hand, we are to grasp the emerging role of the superintendent as that of an enabler, counselor and senior elder with responsibility for continuing education, training and consultation, a greater number of districts is a must."

To expect the superintendent to be a leader rather than an administrator required smaller districts.

The conference's new bishop, Edward L. Tullis, continued the practice of his predecessor in writing a weekly column detailing his activities. One week he wrote about attending the Council of Bishops meeting where they held their first-ever open-to-the-public session.

"Openness is the word for the day, and I believe this practice of an open meeting will become a part of our regular sessions," the bishop wrote.

He also noted the privilege of attending the National Symphony Orchestra's performance of Mahler's Resurrection symphony, which he felt especially appropriate during the Easter season.

Another of the bishop's columns noted several events that took place at the conference's colleges in April and May. The new bishop was busy giving commencement addresses, which he did at Columbia College on May 4 and at Claflin University on May 14. He also noted a visit to Candler to meet the South Carolina students there, an event organized by our own Dr. Roger Gramling, who was then a student. And, on April 12, Bishop Tullis took part in the installation of Dr. Joab Lesesne as Wofford's ninth president.

The *Advocate* printed a summary of President Lesesne's inaugural address, in which the new president both defended academic freedom as practiced at Wofford and also for strengthened ties with the church: "I believe one of the most important contributions a church-related college can make to the church is to put forth forcefully the informed Christian alternative in the world of competing ideals. ... Students who attend Wofford will leave to live in a pluralistic world. In America, religious and philosophical creeds are legion. Our students must be helped to develop their faith to live in that world, a faith which understands diversity and a faith that has had the fullest opportunity to mature."

The issues that South Carolina Methodists struggled with in the 1970s remain with us today.

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



Painting rocks with a mission

Manning UMC, Manning, members painted rocks recently that will be distributed around their community. Underneath each rock is a sticker with a QR code, and people who find the rocks can scan the code and be directed to a secret place on Manning UMC's website, where they can receive a special message. Here, Manning's pastor, the Rev. David McManus, shows church youth how the QR codes work.



Guest Commentary

by Hugh McCown

The last big question

If you are a Methodist, you should be excited that a resolution has been reached between the "Revisionists" and the "Bible Readers." It's hard for a church to be a good church if there is internal strife going on inside the church.

The homosexual issue has been going on for a very, very long time, and there is one question that I have been continually asking and never gotten an answer. If it is OK to live in a homosexual lifestyle, do the two natural sexual sins, adultery and fornication, get a pass also?

In an effort to reveal what we think the answer should be, I will share what Dennis Prager had to say about the seventh commandment (do not commit adultery), which can be found in his book "The Ten Commandments." Copied verbatim, he writes, "The best way to protect the family: There is an old joke about the seventh commandment. Moses came down from Mount Sinai,

and announces: 'I have good news and bad news. The good news is I got him down to 10. The bad news is that adultery stays.'"

What I had never heard about the seventh commandment that gives it much more significance is that it helps to protect the family. When God was sketching out some of the last details before he struck the match that gave us the Big Bang, he had to choose a planet for habitation. His favorite galaxy was the Milky Way, and our earth was just about the right size to accommodate his people up until the end times. He wanted his people to be happy, so that meant they had to be civilized. He chose the family unit as a building block for his earthly civilization.

In addition to being civilized, we also needed a book of "guidelines for living" in order to be happy.

So he gave us the Bible.

McCown attends Shiloh UMC.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Arthur H. Holt

Accuracy about disaffiliation

We have become accustomed to the use of exaggerations and half-truths in debates in American politics and society. We often see one party in divorce proceedings try to paint the other party in the worst possible light in order to win custody and property rights.

Now this is happening in the disaffiliation process in our denomination. Things are being said about the future of The United Methodist Church that are just not true.

The leaders of the North Georgia Conference recognized this, and for that reason they have placed a freeze on disaffiliations for now. Their official statement reads, "Many local churches have been misled about the disaffiliation process and have been presented with information about the process, and about The United Methodist Church and its leadership, that is factually incorrect and defamatory. We have significant concerns about this misinformation and are well aware that it has the potential to do irreparable harm."

As I have heard the arguments being used in this process in our conference, it is obvious these same untruths are circulating here.

One of the things that is now obvious is that someone or some group has written a "disaffiliation play book" that is being used in many of the churches seeking to disaffiliate. This appears to be a well-orchestrated and well-coordinated effort from outsiders. The people at www.stayumc.com tell us, "Many Wesleyan Covenant Association/Global Methodist Church leaders are sharing talking points designed to portray the remaining UMC as engaging in theological drift by abandoning biblical authority, questioning the resurrection of Jesus Christ, forsaking our doctrinal standards, promoting an open canon and other similar things. These are strawman arguments typically based on some extreme anecdote."

Recently elected Bishop Tom Berlin of the Florida Annual Conference says it this way in his "Celebrate UMC" presentation: "I have attended a lot of meetings of people who are committed to the future of The United Methodist Church, and their clarity around our unchanging doctrinal standards in Section 3 of the *Book of Discipline* is resolute."

So if you hear someone citing the abandonment of classical Christian doctrines as the reason for disaffiliating, you may correct this untruth.

Churches are also being told that there is the probability that a bishop will force churches to receive a "drag queen" as their pastor against their wishes. I hope that you all are well aware that no appointment is ever made without consultation between the cabinet and the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee of the local church. In South Carolina, we've talked about cross-racial appointments since the 1980s, and very few of these appointments have ever been made. None of

these appointments have been forced upon pastors or churches because that is not how our bishops make pastoral assignments. Appointing female clergy in our conference remains a challenge also, in spite of the fact that we began these appointments way back in 1956. This is a smokescreen argument.

This disaffiliation fear is exaggerated and unfounded.

There are complaints about what is being taught in our divinity schools. It is true that some schools are more liberal and others more conservative than other institutions, but isn't that a good thing? Shouldn't our future pastors be encouraged to study new theological ideas that they may have to address in their future appointments, as I did in 1969 when my Wofford Interim Class studied the "God is Dead" theology? Neither the Wofford faculty or administration believed or taught that God is dead, but they encouraged us to study this and make our own decisions. In a couple of years, that radical theology itself was dead.

Sometimes independent student groups do things that the school gets blame or credit for. Streaking across campus buck-naked was practiced at Wofford College in 1968, but the administration was not blamed.

"Strawman arguments" or "smokescreens" are being used to shelter congregations from having to admit that disaffiliation is actually about one and only one issue: homosexuality. The debate is about how we in the church should respond. For 50 years, ever since the words "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching" was put into our *Book of Discipline*, that has been the debate.

A half-century ago also coincides with this statement from the American Psychiatric Association in December 1973: "Last week-end, the Board of Trustees of the American Psychiatric Association approved a change in its official manual of psychiatric disorders. Homosexuality should no longer be considered a psychiatric disorder."

Today that same organization states, "The American Psychiatric Association supports same-sex marriage as being advantageous to the mental health of same-sex couples and supports legal recognition of the right for same-sex couples to marry, adopt and co-parent."

Some of us are ready to move ahead with full inclusion based upon 50 years of medical and psychiatric science; some of us are not.

I grew up hearing the Civil War "strawman argument" that the war was really about "states' rights." But we all know better now. It was about one thing and one thing only: slavery. Let's honor the Lord by being honest with our members. Disaffiliation is about one thing: homosexuality. Let us not dishonor our Lord by telling lies about each other.

Holt, a retired elder, lives in Boiling Springs.



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Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Joseph Abram Jr.

My country, where 'tis thee?

What I find interesting of late is the questions in a supposedly national polling. The pollsters ask, "Do you think the country is on the wrong or right track?" The answer is, purportedly and overwhelmingly, "On the wrong track."

So these bright, intelligent folks deduce that the current president is the culprit, whose decisions to push for a government that is representative of the people that make up its citizenry and that laws and policies are to be fairly dispensed without favoritism. So it would seem to me that it would be fool-hearted to do otherwise, especially in a democracy.

And if this is a democracy, we need to do some redefining. When an insurrectionist is a patriot, and thousands can break into an American shrine, attack and kill guards, defecate on floors and walls, legislators have to flee for their lives ... and it is called a peaceful demonstration. When a proven habitual liar is considered the godly one and our only hope. When elected leadership sworn to protect and defend the U.S. Constitution sides with sworn dictators and U.S. enemies abroad (or domestically). Or when we sit idly by or actively defend such conduct.

To all this, one must ask, "America, land of the pilgrim's pride, land where our fathers died, where are you?"

What kind of democracy is it that will not allow all its citizens to vote? Some would probably argue a felon should not be allowed to vote. However, I will point to the fact of the inconsistency in the law, which was designed to imprison one but allow another to go free on a technicality (many times, just mere skin tone or economics). Today, many are being removed from voting rolls who do not have criminal records just for control (as some recorded conversations have proven). Others have been eliminated by simply making it more difficult to participate, rather than making it easier. Voter suppression has intensified lately because of misinformation of alleged voters' fraud, which is being debunked daily, but no one seems to care about truth. One would think that persons of supposedly mental superiority would not be so easily duped by blatant lies, but the adage "You can't tell a book by looking at the cover" rightly applies.

It's also noted that, "If a fool keeps his/her mouth shut, that fact might escape notice, but an open mouth will, inevitably, reveal the size of one's brain."

It seems that the more outrageous, more egregious, more hateful we become in our speech and actions, the greater our personal appeal and potential to be elected. So as a result, the thief is guarding the bank, the fox oversees the henhouse, the wolf watches over the sheep without disguise and notorious crooks oversee the nation's secrets, while the good-intentioned folks comfortably sleep in the assurance that their number has not been called yet.

We can rest assured that it will be, because that kind of rot in the nation's soul is sure to

spread like any bad apple allowed to remain in the barrel. Freedoms that were enjoyed and celebrated for 50 years are being stripped away. Personal freedoms, that included the left-outs and marginalized, are waiting in the wing for a bias court to pronounce their fate. Surely, unless we awake, our number is coming up, whether in our day, our children or our grands' day.

Today, there is a campaign to whitewash history. After we were dragged to this shore, among dead bodies aboard overcrowded boats, building this country with our blood, sweat, tears, prayers and loyalty, some think it is fitting we be treated as though we never existed.

I respectfully submit it did not work before and will not again. If this nation does not yet understand, I'll explain: just as with an individual's life, all that a nation has been through helps make it what it is today. Leave any part out of the equation and it will change its ending. Wise men and women, like any nation, recognize, appreciate, learn from and celebrate the past—the beautiful, ugly and indifferent.

But like noted in Scriptures, "Dog returns to its vomit and the hog to its wallow (Proverbs 26:11). They will keep returning to the things that made it sick and dirty as though they will be able to make right what will always be wrong.

God has always been an invisible helper in our plight, and it should not be surprising that after all we have been through, we are still standing. Others, more powerful than us, would have been brought down, and I will confess that we have been there, too—down to our knees. While down there, we have taken those moments to pray and have been assured that "God will never leave or forsake us" and that "he has brought us too far to leave us, and he still blesses those who bless us."

Today, we are more resolved, despite our rejection, to remain the moral conscience of this supposedly God-fearing nation to save ourselves and our beloved nation from self-inflicted wounds. It is impossible to be leader of the free world from the rear of the pack, and a godly nation cannot be built on hate.

I remind us that we are inextricably linked. I cannot hurt you without hurting me, and you cannot hurt me without hurting you. If any of us are not (whatever), the others of us are not, either.

There is another fact from our past that we do not often share, or even consider: that even though it was meant for evil, God has turned it for our good. We are now linked forever, at least biologically and physically. Your grands are mine and mine are yours, for both our foreparents' bloods run in their veins. Yet, greater still, the blood of Jesus has linked all who were and will be, washed beneath its flow, and we can no longer justify wrong one toward another.

America, the world is watching and waiting, and so is God.

Abram, a retired elder, lives in St. Matthews.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Jonathan Harris

'Whether you stay or go, please remember my foster children'

Over one year ago, my family became a foster family. We have raised someone else's children as our own, giving them a loving, safe environment to grow and thrive while biological family members work toward creating a safer, more stable environment for children back at home.

Being a foster parent might just be the hardest endeavor my wife, children and I have ever taken on. Yet it makes a huge difference.

It is also something we could not do without the help of Epworth Children's Home.

The licensing process to become a foster parent is long and tedious. A representative from Epworth's Upstate office walked us through the entire process. She sent us information and links for every single training we were required to complete. She took the time to learn about our family and gain an understanding of what types of children we could best support.

When the Department of Social Services put out a need for a home for two siblings from several counties away, it was the team at Epworth's Upstate office who advocated for their placement with us. Had these siblings stayed in their home county, they would have been separated. Epworth knew who we were and communicated with DSS to help keep them together by bringing them to our home.

Once the children were placed in our home, it was Epworth that sent welcome baskets to our foster kids to help them feel more welcome in their new, strange home, along with two new car seats donated by a United Methodist church in South Carolina that we needed for the younger child.

Each month the children who are in our care receive visits from people from the DSS system, such as their DSS caseworker and a court-appointed guardian ad litem. These are caring people who are overworked, underpaid and underappreciated. I am incredibly grateful for them. However, to children in foster care, it can be hard to open up to these people. To them, these are the people who took them from their family, or who they perceive as keeping them from their family. Against that backdrop, it is understandable that children in foster care would struggle to open up to these visitors.

Do you know who our children will open up to? Our Epworth case manager. She visits every month, and the kids actually look forward to it! They open up with her about their hopes, fears and aspirations. She works with them to set goals and then offers us support as foster parents to help them work toward those goals.

I could go on about the trainings and support groups Epworth provides to us and other foster families throughout our state, about how our Epworth case manager arranged for respite care for us at a time when fostering was becoming overwhelming, and how Epworth has helped us locate providers of much-needed services for the children in our care.

My point is this: At a time when some churches are disaffiliating from the denomination and others are remaining, Epworth is a vital ministry that I believe we can all agree needs all of our support. Epworth provides safety and support to children who are going through circumstances no child should have to go through. Children who have never heard of a General Conference, disaffiliation or the *Book of Discipline*. Children who just know that they are safe, loved and cared for because of the services and support they receive from Epworth.

Whether your church remains United Methodist or not, remember that your church's faithful support of Epworth is what allows my foster children to have a caring case manager—the only visitor to whom they have warmed up. It allows me and my wife to have the resources we need to do the hardest work of our lives. It provides a safe, stable living environment for the 5-year-old who has come to call me "Daddy" and the teenager who finds joy singing in the church choir and volunteering in our local community. During hard times, they have received much-needed support through your church's generosity.

Whether your church continues to be United Methodist or not, I pray your church's support of my foster children and so many others throughout the state will continue. That is something I hope we can all agree on.

Harris pastors Mount Zion United Methodist Church, Central.

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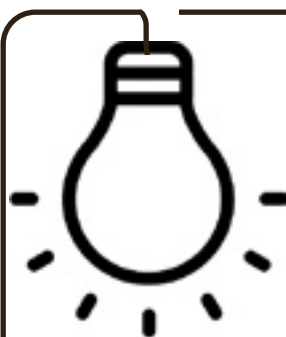


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Palms and praise

Palm Sunday worship featured palm-waving and praise at Manning UMC, Manning.

Thank you for your service

Zion United Women of Faith, Prosperity, co-presidents Marcia Miller and Janie Morris presented special recognition pins recently to Dr. Terry Fellers (left) and John Wolfe for outstanding service to others. Dr. Fellers spearheaded Zion UMC's food pantry, which has served hundreds of families in the area. Wolfe was honored for his many years of mission work in Honduras. Zion's pastor is the Rev. R. T. Bowling III.



Guest Commentary

by Freida Gray

Reflection from a longtime Methodist

I am struggling to understand how the Methodist church has gotten to this point. I am from a small Methodist church. I have been there all my life (a long time). My great-grandfather gave the land the church is on, and my grandfather and his brothers built the first church. It has been rebuilt since then. It is coming upon 175 years old.

I never thought the wonderful Methodist church would be going through what we are facing right now. Why is so much damage being done to our Methodist beliefs?

We have a *Discipline* that all pastors, district superintendents and bishops agreed to follow when they entered their positions. We have God's written Bible. How do we disagree with God's one true word?

God has to be so heartbroken. Those two books are being changed. It's like God's words aren't true anymore. Things change in our lives, but God's true words remain the same. No one has the authority from God to make changes in his true words.

In the Old Testament, prophets tried to stop idol-worshippers and turn people toward the one true God. What we love the most shows our idols. Trusting and obeying God offers life's highest calling and greatest blessing. Turning away from God brings devastating consequences.

In 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, kings were doing their own thing. They did not obey God. They wanted to do things their way and not God's way. God let them make that choice, but that choice comes with consequences. God gives you time to change from your evil ways, but judgment comes if you don't change to his way. Those who reject God and his son Jesus will face judgment, while those who turn to him receive grace and mercy. God's plans cannot be changed by human opposition. Each of the

kings paid a price. Some were killed, some received leprosy and others were destroyed with their people.

God deserves all our worship. We cannot change the things God wants us to live by. God is good, but he does destroy when you go against him.

God's promises cannot be broken. No one has authority to spurn God's grace and abuse his compassion. We try to take over things that God gave us. It's like we are trying to see how much God will put up with. Like the old saying, "Don't play patty cake with the devil," we know sin fascinates before it assassinates. Sin will swallow us up. It starts like what is happening in our churches, and people will be punished because they aren't doing God's will.

We are great sinners, but we have a greater Savior. May we love God so passionately that nothing appeals to us that displeases God. God longs for our repentance. God always accomplishes his purpose, overruling what people intend for harm. I feel we are betraying God. He gave us the ability to have this guidance, but we are changing it.

God is no stranger to betrayal. He will always pursue us to get us back in the right direction. This world tries to do things their way, we turn on each other when this happens. God commanded us to love each other genuinely and patiently. God never overlooks wrongs done to his people. We know accountability is coming. Judgment awaits all who go against God and delight in the mistreatment of his people. Sometimes God shakes us up to wake us up. So please, see that these changes are destructive to our church. Make God proud by dropping all of this hurt and pain it is causing. If you don't give God the top position in this problem, he will deal with those who are causing the trouble. Save yourself from making this

mistake and let God put our churches back together.

Let's look at this story: There was a very good man named Amos who loved God greatly. He tried very hard to get his people to follow what God asked of them. He wanted them to love everyone and do God's will. He was really upset that they would not listen to him. He talked to God, and God told Amos, "I have got this. I will handle this." So God sent locusts to eat the people's food and destroy everything they had. They did not know what to do. They were scared. Amos told them, "Turn to God and ask for forgiveness from him." Some did, most didn't, so they died.

This is what will happen to those who are changing things against God's will. God has this! He knows how he will handle this. My church is going to stay faithful to God. We will do whatever he wants us to do. We believe our Bible and *Discipline*. We support those books given to us by God. We are asking you to stop this sin now and let the churches continue as they always have been. I truly believe if you don't stop destroying God's churches, God will destroy you. God is in control, no matter what is happening. If you disagree, that is between you and God, but don't tear up the Methodist churches to get things your way. God can be upset with you for your beliefs, but totally angry for your part in destroying our churches. You are accountable to God and ultimately will face his judgement. God is holy and just—the righteous judge of all people.

God seeks people who genuinely express their love for him through heartfelt worship and love for others. He brings down the proud but exalts the humble. God justly judges all who persist in sin, but gives life to all who humbly seek him. Any violation of God's Holy Law deserves death (Genesis and Romans). When we are tempted to think God is unfair or unjust, we need to remember that God's standards and not our own determine what is right.

In Exodus, God warned Israel that lack of covenantal faithfulness as his chosen people would lead to his judgment. You are his chosen leaders. God expects you to make the right decisions for his church. Are you making the right decisions?

Israel sinned toward God by disobeying his moral law and rejecting him as God. He grieves our sin and rebellion. God offers us an opportunity to choose life and seek good. He would love to stop his judgment over salvation. You cannot hide from God. He knows everything about you. Even believers can place far too much value on personal comfort and ease. We fail to see suffering as God's loving plan for our spiritual growth.

People today do not think much about their accountability to God. We do know every human ever born will stand before God. Are you helping others go in the right direction to meet God or sending them down the wrong path? God puts people in positions to speak for him. God has placed us at the point in time and space he has intended. I want to be a speaker for God about our churches. I can't tell you what to do, of course, but I can warn you of how God deals with bad decisions about his church. As 2 Chronicles 7:14 says, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will heal their land (or churches)."

Mixing the Bible with New Age religion won't get you to heaven. Jesus Christ is the only way, the only truth and the only life. No one can get to the Father but by him. Stop mixing this worldly garbage with the work of God. God sees right through you. Galatians 6:7-8 says, "Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh will reap destruction, whoever sows to please the Spirit, from Spirit will reap eternal life."

I am not preaching to you. You already know this but are not thinking about it. I just want what's best for everyone, but most of all our churches. I love being a Methodist, but I love God first. If you continue to destroy The United Methodist Church, God will deal with you. Bishops are in a position to do God's will for our churches. Fight for our beliefs. We depend on you.

God chose you to be a leader, so be a good leader. If this happens in the UMC, you lose your authority. God can't trust you anymore to do his will. God always keeps his promises. You can count on that. You are making the decisions, so make the decision that is best for you and our churches. If you don't, God will take care of it. God's work will be done no matter what happens. He is giving you time to change your ways, so what do you do? God's righteousness always prevails. You are doing evil in the eyes of the Lord.

In closing, I give you a benediction from God. Hebrews 13:20-21: "Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep. Equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Gray is a member of Liberty Hill United Methodist Church, Greer.



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Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Tony Rowell

Having a smoke with Momma

When I was 13 years of age, the Rowell clan lived in a couple of single-wide mobile homes way out in the woods a few miles outside of Lexington. The older trailer house was for my brother Mike and me, and the newer trailer was for Mom and Dad and my little sister, Janie. Mary and I are still on that land living in a cozy little log cabin. Unfortunately, we are no longer country folks; the city has invaded the frontier, much to our dismay.

Well, back at that time I was a curious sort of kid, and to satisfy my curiosity one day, I was rummaging through some drawers in Mom and Dad's trailer when I ran across a pack of cigarettes. My momma was one to smoke on the sly, and I knew it, but I had never found her stash until that day.

Now at no time have I ever been accused of being the sharpest tack in the pack, and my first foray into theft did nothing to change the world's opinion on that matter. You see, I stole one of Mom's cigarettes; and then instead of walking out into the woods to give it a try, I lit it up in the bathroom of an 8- by 66-foot trailer somehow thinking I wouldn't get caught.

I got caught.

When she caught me, however, much to my surprise, my momma didn't get upset at all. What she did was to follow her little brother's example from years before when he mixed up some buttermilk and Alka-Seltzer and told his 4-year-old nephew (i.e., me) that it was beer and not to tell my momma. I didn't tell my momma, but I did take a crack at the beer and that was the last alcoholic beverage I have ever tried.

Well my momma, like her mother and her brother before her, chose the co-conspirator

path to solve her young son's newfound smoking problem.

She invited me to come sit out on the porch with her to have a smoke.

She took the cigarette I had away from me because it was hers and only fit for a woman (her words, not mine), and then she went inside to get a "real man's cigarette." Same brand of cigarette—she just cut the filter off.

She sat there on an old lawn chair with a nasty little grin on her face puffing away while she watched me smoke that entire thing. To help her cause, she would insult my manhood whenever I paused. And after only a short while in her company, I was a beautiful shade of green.

I discovered that afternoon that smoke tastes good only on the way down and I have never lit anything up since.

My momma arose from a long line of Solomon's when it came to problem-solving and young'uns. Like her momma before her, she relished giving you just enough rope with which to hang yourself.

I have been searching for a deep, hidden meaning in this story. As with most of my stories, I felt compelled to tell it, but for what purpose I'm not sure.

Sometimes the Lord does this to me. He gives me a story, usually a really good one, and leaves it at that. In the past I would have tried to manufacture a God lesson in all of this, but not this time. I'm going to leave that up to you. Good luck.

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 3 of 6)

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

I have not slept well since the letter popped into my view weeks ago. Grandma Dot has been in my dreams. Hearing her repeat over and over to "mind your manners and behave like you are a child of the one true God" has left me pondering my life.

Back then I seriously thought she was some kind of sweet and good pie-making whimsical lady. Never would I believe that her words would pop into my head at 39 years old.

Finding myself at odds with sleep, I turned to what I knew best, which was whiskey. Not the right answer, as I had only one good kidney. The other one was messed up when I was 10. Little did I know that jumping off the roof of the chicken coop on a dare would end up with my kidney permanently kaput. That is why I never got married. It seems the girl of my dreams did not want to be with a man with permanent kidney damage that ended in the bad kidney being removed. My two cousins were not matches to donate a kidney, so the doctors just took out the damaged one and told me it might work. Here I am, years later, fit as a fiddle—minus a kidney and my one true love. C'est la vie.

This thought process brings me to reach out to find Daniel. Now, Daniel always hung on every word Grandma Dot spoke. It was like her words were honeysuckle nectar on a warm April day. Daniel was the first to get to the Sunday school room and the last to leave. He loved learning about God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit. He was the only one of us boys who listened in church more

than squirmed and snickered.

In our senior year of high school, Grandma Dot gave all three of us a Bible. George and I would really have enjoyed some good old money. We had girlfriends. Movies and candy and popcorn were not cheap. But Daniel leapt for joy over his NASB version of the Bible. Being a young man of 18, little did I realize that Grandma Dot had really given us the foundation for our lives.

Daniel went to college and studied history. He wanted to be a history teacher in the most annoying way ever. I remember him talking about how he would inspire his students by wearing costumes to enhance their learning. George and I laughed out loud at Daniel. A lot!

Daniel is now a head preacher or minister or some such at a church north of where we grew up. It might be Presbyterian or Methodist; I really and truly have no clue at all. Daniel is married and has two children. He met his wife in college and started going to church with her family. She was, to my best memory, a nice girl who had a good family. Daniel did well for himself. He told George and me at our high school graduation party if we would just listen to God talking to us, we would be better off than just doing foolish stunts to get the girls' attention. Oh, so late did I learn that lesson.

I shake my head as I realize more and more Grandma Dot was right, and now good old George had his moments of clarity of thought also. Yikes, what's happening to me?

Let me see if I can find the Christmas card and envelope they sent me. I know he would have put a return address on it.

(To be continued next month.)

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



View from the Pews

by Bill Barnier

Now and then

Most people are collectors of something. My wife collects canes and walking sticks, but only if they have a story attached to them. I've collected a variety of things over the years, as attested by the many boxes in the storage spaces. Most of the saved items are reminders of people and places we've been blessed to know in a life of knowledge and discovery.

Of late I've returned to memories of grade school in the 1960, where we learned to pen in cursive using Scripto fountain pens. A recent rise in the return to pen and ink has fed my small addiction to owning a few quality modern ink pens because antique bladder pens are beyond my means. I even own a dip pen made of glass.

Another collection I add to frequently is of quotes and sayings of significant meaning or inspiration to me. The internet is full of what people say. I've shared with you some of those quotes as a way of fostering your own thoughts of God, life and love. Gems of wisdom still come around now and then.

In a recent quote from Elon Musk, he put his own twist upon an often-repeated bit of wisdom. "If you died tonight your employer would fill your job by the end of the month. Don't get so busy making a living that you forget to make a life." This sentiment can apply to so many of us who work too much or carry sad memories and grief long after the event has passed. We can become so focused on what is in the mirror of our life that we miss looking forward to the wonders and challenges that Holy Spirit provides us.

A most recent addition is a quote from Desmond Tutu: "There comes a point where we need to stop pulling people from the river. We need to go upstream to learn why they're falling in." The reverend struck at the core of why

secular religion is declining. I believe he would also point out those river travelers who are aboard boats of non-denominational churches, open-air worship, mind-body spiritual connections and the boats of love, hope and charity without secular tie. He might also mention that the recorded history of most brands of secular religious practice are not without shameful chapters and failures.

Of course, there is enough written and discussed on these subjects to fill libraries. My take is closer to the thought of the distractions that draw us away from our core connections to the Holy Spirit—be that work, play, or selfish conflict—are of unholy potential. Our human nature is such that we will always take the path to what pleases us unless we work to alter our goals and values for a future in a divine kingdom. Our conventional view of time itself forbids do-overs, though physics and old souls suggest otherwise.

Somewhat contrary to generations who may have chosen to follow the wrong path are those who understand what is asked of them and quietly make a life trying to please God, not men. An example is a wonderful teacher. Adjustments to the traditional worship community must be carried out with thought and compassion. After all, worship should be very personal and subjective, and it either has little value or is priceless depending upon the belief of the practitioner. Open arms, open minds and open hearts, demonstrated through action guided by God's wishes are what will correct our future. Change is upon us, but it must be as the Holy Spirit guides us through meditation and prayer.

Lifeboats are filling fast!

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



Go fish!

Manning UMC, Manning, held a youth fishing tournament April 17. Here are glimpses of the fun.





Photos courtesy of the Rev. Rusty Godfrey

Above is a foot-washing, while below is a dramatization of the Last Supper.



Lee Road and St. Mark UMCs share Holy Week services

TAYLORS—Two sister churches in the Greenville District continue their historical friendship and connections under the leadership of the Rev. Rusty Godfrey (Lee Road United Methodist Church) and Dr. Thomas Bowman Sr. (St. Mark UMC).


For Maundy Thursday, the churches met in The Bridge at Lee Road for a moving service that included a dramatization of the Last Supper, Holy Communion and foot-washing. The men in the Last Supper drama included Will Moseley (Jesus), Darren Rickenbacker (Peter), John DeVore (James the Greater), Jeremy McPeters (John), Anthony Parker

(Andrew), Kevin Sawyer (Bartholomew), Marty Cook (James the Lesser), Scott Morrison (Judas Iscariot), Gene Turner (Thaddeus), Ralph Belcher (Matthew), Phil Whitlock (Philip), Carlton Henderson (Simon the Zealot) and Jimmy Gaddy (Thomas).

“It was definitely cool to be a part of this instead of just hearing about it. It made it seem more real to me,” said performer McPeters, age 18.

For Good Friday, the two churches met at St. Mark (the “9-1-1 Church”) for a solemn service with a powerful message from Bowman titled “The State of Forgiveness.”

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Global Briefs

National Day of Prayer service planned

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C.—Lake Junaluska, a United Methodist conference and retreat center, plans to hold a National Day of Prayer service at 10 a.m. U.S. Eastern time May 4. The service will be one of many held throughout the U.S. on this annual day of prayer. This year’s theme is “Pray fervently in righteousness and avail much,” based on James 5:16b.

Helping to ‘Imagine Peace’ during Eurovision contest

LIVERPOOL, England—The Liverpool Methodist District, in partnership with The Salvation Army and other ecumenical groups, is organizing a week of prayer, worship, creativity and fun for the Eurovision Song Contest 2023, under the banner “Imagine Peace.” Eurovision 2023 is being held in Liverpool on behalf of Ukraine, last year’s winner. Online opportunities to participate are being developed for the May 9-13 events.

Bishop comments on shooting at birthday party

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.—Words do not come easily after the deaths of teens at a birthday party, writes Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett after the April 15 mass shooting in Dadeville, Alabama. However, she also notes that words are important. “Words we pray. Words Jesus spoke in The Sermon on the Mount. Words calling for action,” she writes.

Ecumenical group calls for ceasefire in Sudan

GENEVA—The World Council of Churches, which includes The United Methodist Church, is calling for an immediate ceasefire as violence continues between the Sudanese army and a paramilitary group in Sudan’s capital, Khartoum. The violence has killed at least 100 people and injured 1,100 more. Many people—including staff of the Sudan Council of Churches—have been trapped in their workplaces because of the fighting.

Older Adult Recognition Day resource available

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Each year, United Methodist congregations are invited to observe Older Adult Recognition Day in May—the same month the U.S. observes Older Americans Month. To help church leaders plan an Older Adult Recognition Day, ENCORE Ministry director Richard Gentzler compiled a free downloadable resource containing Scripture passages for sermon ideas, suggested hymns, prayers, Psalter readings and a litany.

Malawi church continues response to Cyclone Freddy

BLANTYRE, Malawi—More than a month after Tropical Cyclone Freddy romped through the southern Indian Ocean, survivors continue to mourn the loss of loved ones, homes, churches and entire communities. United Methodists are partnering with the government and others to meet immediate needs and plan for long-term recovery.

Bishop offers resources to advocate for gun reform

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Following the deadly shooting at The Covenant School, Bishop William T. McAlilly is urging United Methodists to join together in a letter-writing campaign to elected officials to advocate for gun reform legislation. He and the conference have put together tools for writing letters.

Insurance program sees quarterly gains

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The United Methodist Insurance Program has announced results for the first quarter ending March 31. The program has more than 150 new customers. In many cases, these ministries saw savings over their previous insurance, the United Methodist Insurance Program said.

Black clergy, laity share perspectives on church’s future

ATLANTA—Asked for their perspectives of United Methodism’s future, more than 650 Black clergy and laity from every jurisdiction in The United Methodist Church listed three top concerns facing the denomination: discrimination and racism; inequities in appointments and salaries; and lack of young adults in church leadership. They responded to a recent survey by Gammon Research Institute, part of Gammon Theological Seminary.

Grant for Black history preservation offered

MADISON, N.J.—Congregations and researchers working to preserve the history of African Americans in Methodism may apply for the Bishop Forrest C. Stith Grant until May 31. The \$5,000 grant may be used by congregations to recover, preserve and/or present their histories or by individuals doing historical research or projects. Funds may not be used for equipment or researchers’ salaries. The grant is offered by The African American Methodist Heritage Center.

Retired pastors step up amid disaffiliations

JONESBORO, Ark.—United Methodists who want to remain with the denomination are in need of leadership in the wake of disaffiliations over sexuality issues, and retired pastors are putting their golden years on the back burner to help. Three formerly retired United Methodist clergy reflect on their decision to return to ministry.

Rare Hebrew Bible to be exhibited at SMU

DALLAS—A rare, 1,100-year-old Hebrew Bible will be on exhibit April 18-20 at Bridwell Library, part of Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. The Bridwell exhibition marks the first public appearance of the Bible in the U.S., following recent exhibitions in London and Tel Aviv. The Bible, known as the Codex Sassoon for its 1929 purchaser David Solomon Sassoon, will be on auction at Sotheby’s in May and could fetch between \$30 million and \$50 million.

Lighthouse Congregations offer hope amid schism

MORGANTON, N.C.—Lighthouse Congregations declare themselves to be solidly United Methodist and offer a safe, supportive place for people who mean to stay in the denomination after their local church has voted to disaffiliate. The designation has caught on, especially in the North Carolina and Western North Carolina conferences, where many church websites now sport the Lighthouse Congregation logo.

187 churches sue North Georgia Conference

MARIETTA, Ga.—The North Georgia Conference is facing a lawsuit jointly filed by more than 180 of its churches and another filed by one church. The lawsuits respond to the conference’s hold on disaffiliation amid what conference leaders called widespread “defamatory” misinformation.

—Courtesy of United Methodist News Service

Resources available for Advocate Awareness Sunday on May 14

Advocate Awareness Sunday is slated for May 14, and now is the time to begin plans for how your church will share information about the *Advocate's* ministry.

Advocate Awareness Sunday is an effort to introduce United Methodists across South Carolina to the newspaper ministry of the *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate*.

You can hold your *Advocate* Awareness Sunday on May 14 or any day that suits your church.

Why share about the *Advocate*? At 187 years old, the *Advocate* is the oldest newspaper in Methodism and still going strong. And, in this time of misinformation and worry about the church, it's more important than ever. But many people still don't know about the *Advocate*, though they should—for the *Advocate* is a great way to help churches and individuals be connectational and know what is going on in the denomination across the state and around the world.

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

newspaper in Methodism and has won 123 journalism excellence awards in the last decade. The *Advocate's* mission is to inform and connect South Carolina United Methodists by independently reporting relevant news, engaging readers, providing a forum for dialogue and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. All news is welcome from all viewpoints and perspectives.

Resources are available at <https://advocatesc.org/advocate-awareness-day>:

- Informational blurb to copy/paste into your bulletin
 - A brief video (watch on YouTube or Vimeo, or download from Vimeo)
 - Speakers
 - Subscription envelopes
 - Bulletin inserts to download, print and pop right into your Sunday bulletin (5 1/2 x 8 1/2-inch two-up)
 - Talking points for you to read to your church
- Email *Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie with questions at jbrodie@umcsc.org or call 803-786-9486 ext. 338.

Obituaries

Pauline Armstrong

BRANCHPORT, N.Y.—Pauline Armstrong, mother of Terry Armstrong, died March 30, 2023. Mr. Armstrong is the husband of the Rev. Shawn Armstrong, pastor of Leesville United Methodist Church, Leesville.

Funeral services were held April 4 at Branchport UMC with burial in Branchport Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to Branchport UMC, 3376 Guyanoga Road, Branchport, NY 14418.

Mrs. Armstrong is survived by her husband, Robert C. Armstrong, son and two daughters.

Rev. Mary Susan Ashworth

CHARLOTTE, N.C.—The Rev. Mary Susan Ashworth, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died April 7, 2023.

Prior to her retirement in 2018, Rev. Ashworth served Rollins Center, Emory University and the Trinity-Enoree, Blacks-

burg-St. John, Central Associate, Cross Anchor, and East Lancaster charges.

She also served as chaplain of Converse College from 1994-2002.

Funeral services were unknown at press time.

Beatrice McGirth

HUGER—Beatrice McGirth, sister of the Rev. Nathan Smalls, died March 27, 2023. Rev. Smalls is the pastor of Mount Carmel United Methodist Church, Charleston.

Funeral services were held April 2 at Azalea Drive Church of Christ, North Charleston, with burial in Sunset Memorial Gardens, North Charleston.

Ms. McGirth is survived by her two daughters.



Ashworth

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.

Barbara Ann Newell

MARION—Barbara Ann Newell, grandmother of Cyndi McCown and mother of Lou Jordan, died April 8, 2023. Mrs. McCown is the wife of the Rev. Bill McCown, pastor of Lake City United Methodist Church. Ms. Jordan is the director of the Francis Marion Wesley Foundation.

Funeral services were held April 12 at First UMC with burial in Rose Hill Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to First UMC, P.O. Box 155, Marion, SC 29571; or to the American Cancer Society, P.O. Box 11796,

Charlotte, NC 28220.

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

Edith Evans Rivers

LAMAR—Edith Evans Rivers, mother of the Rev. M. Loretta Cooper, died March 29, 2023. Rev. Cooper is the pastor of the Sandy Grove-Mount Elon Charge, Jefferson.

Funeral services were held April 4 at Sandy Grove United Methodist Church with burial in the church cemetery.

Mrs. Rivers is survived by her son and two daughters.

Syble M. Spain

BRENTWOOD, Tenn—Syble Spain, widow of Bishop Robert Spain, died April 1, 2023.

Funeral services were held April 7 at Brentwood United Methodist Church.

Memorials may be made to Siloam Health, Syble M. Spain Memorial Fund, 820 Gale Lane, Nashville, TN 37204.

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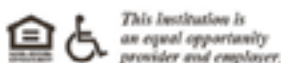
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April

- April 28—Drive 'n' Drop for Foster Children, Washington Street UMC, Columbia, Noon-4 p.m.
- April 29—Drive 'n' Drop for Foster Children, Washington Street UMC, Columbia, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
- April 30—LSM School (Marion District), First UMC, Dillon, 2:30-8 p.m. \$30 <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Marion-District-Lay-School-April-2023-1.pdf>
- April 30—Safe Sanctuary Training, Greenville District, St. Matthew UMC, Greenville, 2-5 p.m.

April 30—Camp Sunday 2023

April 30—Guided Civil Rights Walking Tour of Main Street (Columbia), 4:30-5:30 p.m. Begins at the African American Monument on the Statehouse grounds (Sumter Street side). Register: Nancy Whittle, ncwhittle@aol.com

May

Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month

May 5—Cinco de Mayo

May 6—Safe Sanctuary Training, Rock Hill District, TBA, 9 a.m.-Noon

May 6—World Labyrinth Day observation, Central UMC, Spartanburg, daylight hours.

May 7—Fundraiser Concert for People of Ukraine featuring String Time Duo, Washington Street UMC, Columbia,



Photo courtesy of Wendy Zwart

'Ten Plagues of Egypt' Escape Room

Blood, frogs, flies and boils—and those weren't even the worst of it. Twenty-eight youth and friends were treated to a night of fun with four escape rooms about the 10 plagues of Egypt described in the Bible's book of Genesis. Through various puzzles and activities, the youth learned the cause of the 10 plagues and what they were. They learned of Pharaoh's stubbornness and the consequences that followed his decisions. They found evidence in the Bible to prove the plagues really happened. There was a fun photo booth to capture the moments with the teams. A delicious pizza supper followed, and to top it off, ice cream with "the 10 plagues" toppings. The boils were the favorite among many! The evening was hosted by the Challengers Sunday School Class of Leesville UMC. Pictured here is one of the teams.

7:30 p.m. Love offering is appreciated.

May 8—Safe Sanctuary Training, Columbia District, Lexington UMC, Lexington, 2-5 p.m.

May 8—Killingsworth Annual Golf Tournament, Windermere Golf Club, Blythewood, 9 a.m. shotgun start

May 9, 11, 16 and 18—LSM School (Charleston District), Zoom, 6:30-9 p.m. \$20. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Charleston-District-LSM-Spring-2023-Classes.pdf>

May 13—Safe Sanctuary Training, Walterboro District, TBA, 9 a.m.-Noon

May 14—Advocate Awareness Day

May 14—Mother's Day

May 14—Mother's Day Offering, Epworth Children's Home

May 20—Come Together Be Together hosted by Columbia District UWF, virtual, 10 a.m.

May 20—Safe Sanctuary Training, Charleston District, Zoom, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

May 21—Safe Sanctuary Training, Spartanburg District, Silver Hill Memorial UMC, Spartanburg, 2-5 p.m.

May 22-26—Carolinas Black Clergy Leadership Retreat, Kingston Plantation, Myrtle Beach. Register: <https://www.umcsc.org/cbclleadershipretreatreg/>

May 29—Memorial Day; UM Center closed.

June

June 4-7—Annual Conference, Florence

June 5—BBQ lunch, Rick's House, Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. RSVP: asnm-sc@att.net

June 6—UMVIM Annual Conference Lunch

June 10—Strengthening Men for the Ministry, New Zion UMC, Smyrna, 9 a.m.

June 14—Flag Day

June 18—Father's Day

June 19—Juneteenth; UMC center closed.

June 24—UWF Charter for Racial & Environmental Justice Event, virtual, 10 a.m.

Carolinas Black Clergy Leadership Retreat set for May

MYRTLE BEACH—The 2023 Carolinas Black Clergy Leadership Retreat is gearing up once more. Set for May 22-26 at Kingston Plantation Resort, Myrtle Beach, the event will feature Nathalie Nelson Parker, Romal Tune and Juanita Rasmus as featured speakers. South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston is

scheduled to attend, as are Bishop Tracy S. Malone (East Ohio), Bishop Ken Carter (Western North Carolina), Sharma Lewis (Mississippi) and Frank Beard (Illinois Great Rivers).

The theme is "This Is Us," and the cost is \$150 for clergy and \$100 for laity (in-person). An online component will

be offered for \$75/person, and a spouse cost is \$75. Cost is for the event as well as a dinner Monday at the Original Benjamin's Calabash Seafood and a lunch Wednesday. Lodging is separate and must be booked with the resort.

For questions, email tfulmer@umcsc.org. To register for the event: <https://www.umcsc.org/cbclleadershipretreatreg>

Washington Street to host fundraiser concert for people of Ukraine

COLUMBIA—The Active Faith Mission Team of Washington Street United Methodist Church will sponsor a special fundraiser concert for the people of Ukraine Saturday, May 7, at 7:30 p.m. at the church.

The concert will feature String Time Duo, a world and classical duo with ties to Ukraine. The proceeds will directly benefit the people of Ukraine through both Charlotte for Ukraine, a nonprofit organization based in Charlotte, North Carolina, as well as the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

There is no charge to attend, but reservations are recommended given limited seating. Seating is first-come, first-served. A love offering or donation is greatly appreciated.

To reserve a seat, visit <https://wsmethodist.org/ukraine>.

String Time Duo was formed in 2021 by award-winning musicians Angelina Reed (domra) and Marina Alexandra (guitar).

Alexandra was born in Ukraine, where she began her guitar studies at the age of 6. In 1996, she immigrated with her family to the

United States, and in 1998, she was awarded a scholarship to earn her Master of Music at the University of South Carolina. She is one of the founders of Charlotte for Ukraine and its executive director. She has released three albums: "Timeless Enchantment," "A Moment of Magic" and "Americas from North to South." Her albums received high praise from such prestigious music magazines as Soundboard, Classical Guitar (UK) and American Record Guide.

Reed (domra) has toured the world as a

soloist with the Andreyev Russian Folk Orchestra of St. Petersburg, Russia, performing with them at Carnegie Hall's 100th anniversary. A virtuoso of the three-string domra, she holds a master's degree in performance and teaching music from Gnessin Institute of Music in Moscow. She holds the titles of Laureate of All-Russian National Competition among professional domra players (Nizhny Novgorod, 1990) and is a laureate of the international "Cup of the North" competition (Cherepovets, 1992).



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First United Methodist Church in Clover, SC is seeking full-time employment for a Director of Youth and Christian Education.

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by the Rev. Arthur H. Holt

Keeping Sabbath

May 7

Collective Work, Collective Rest

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 20:8-11

Key Verse: Exodus 20:8, "Remember the Sabbath day and treat it as holy."

When it comes to the commandment concerning the Sabbath, we Christians—especially those who are biblical literalists—have a huge problem! Moses commanded us to worship God on the seventh day of the week, Saturday. Unless you are a Seventh Day Adventist or a member of the Judaic faith, it is unlikely you have ever literally obeyed this commandment. Meanwhile, our Jewish neighbors have faithfully observed the commanded Sabbath for almost 4,000 years. Maybe we Christians have done better with the other nine commandments (or maybe eight? Who will give me seven?).

The first Christians were faithful followers of the Law of Moses; nevertheless, they very quickly decided to change their day of worship from the Sabbath to "the Lord's Day," Sunday. The old Sabbath Day was designed to honor God's day of rest following God's creation of the world. The new Lord's Day honored the day that God raised Jesus from death. Early Christians reasoned that nothing could ever top the empty tomb. Creation paled into insignificance when compared to the resurrection of Jesus. Every Sunday soon became an occasion to celebrate Christ's resurrection, and it still is.

Dr. John Benjamin Bedenbaugh of the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary told us most Christians don't appreciate just how powerful a witness to the empty tomb this change in worship days is. He dared us to try to persuade our churches to change their hour of worship, much less the day of worship, especially if this meant going against centuries of tradition.

Nothing quite shouts "He is alive" more than this change from worshiping God on Saturdays to worshiping God on Sundays.

I'll look for you in worship on the next Lord's Day.

May 14

Sabbath as a Place in Time

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 23

Key Verses: Psalm 23:1-3, "The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing. He lets me rest in grassy meadows; he leads me to restful waters; he keeps me alive."

Back in 1981, Bishop Roy Clark must have thought I was overqualified to be a pastor because he appointed me not to one church, but to three. Leaving the security of being the associate pastor at Union United Methodist Church in Irmo, I was nervous about being the only pastor of Bethlehem,

Gassaway and Shiloh churches in Saluda. A lot of pastors gave me advice, but I will never forget what the Rev. Enoch Finklea said: "Always remember that you are a shepherd. You can drive goats, but you must lead sheep."

Following Enoch's advice, I worked diligently on relationships with my "sheep," knowing that if a strong bond of trust was built, they would be more likely to follow this shepherd into fields of service and nurture.

Psalm 23 is full of nurturing images—resting in green pastures, walking beside quiet lakes, feeling the restoration of the soul. Sometimes when I am exhausted from struggling to make a difficult decision, I receive guidance from God and find God's path for me. And who hasn't journeyed into a low point in our lives where we face an illness that might take our lives or the life of someone we dearly love?

How grateful we are then for God's presence with us. I've also made a few enemies in this life, and God has helped me find ways to turn those enemies into friends.

Often I have been in a church, in the presence of shepherds and sheep, when I have experienced God's nurture and rest. It is wonderful to be led by love and not driven by fear. When you find a church that nurtures your soul and helps you in times of loss, you will want to be there every time the doors are open.

May 21

Keeping Sabbath

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 12:1-14

Key Verse: Joel 2:26, "If you had known what this means, 'I want mercy and not sacrifice,' you wouldn't have condemned the innocent."

My friend the Rev. Chad Davis grew up in a very strict church. His pastor often preached about Sabbath rules. People who broke them were resoundingly condemned. Little boys who played baseball on Sundays were also objects of that preacher's ire.

Once, after another such sermon, Chad headed for the ball field as usual, but this time he decided those other boys could jeopardize their eternal destination if they wanted to, but he would just umpire.

One thing I remember from my childhood is that we noticed what others did on Sundays, either looking down on them or admiring them. It was fun keeping score, seeing who was breaking which rules. It also was fun for Jesus' opponents to keep score of his Sabbath activities.

One Sabbath, Jesus and his disciples were enjoying a pleasant walk through a field, and they plucked a few heads of grain to

chew on as they walked. When the Pharisees scolded them, Jesus pointed out that their hero King David broke a few rules when he was hungry. Even the priests who work in the temple on the Sabbath break rules.

But what really upset Jesus was the fact that they were nitpicking over minor infractions of the rules while ignoring something truly important: the presence of the Son of God in their midst. God loved the world and had sent Jesus, but the Pharisees were so busy tabulating sins that they didn't recognize who he was. And when Jesus did something that only Jesus could do—healing a man's paralyzed hand—all the Pharisees saw was another rule being broken.

Finally, Jesus said something that put the cart behind the horse: The Sabbath was created for the benefit of God's people, to give them a day of rest and renewal.

May 28

Celebrating Sabbath

Lesson Scripture: Luke 4:16-21

Key Verses: Luke 4:18-19, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

My parents did a pretty good job of teaching me to brush my teeth. I still have a few real teeth left, but I mostly chew with implants, bridges and crowns now. They did much better in establishing my Sunday routine. Our family's custom was to go to church every Sunday.

Bethel in Spartanburg gave me an RSV

Bible when I was promoted to the third grade class at church, and the teacher expected me to bring it every Sunday so I would learn to find all the books of the Bible.

The experience Jesus had in his home church shows us he had spent many hours studying the Bible scrolls. He knew how to locate his favorite passages. But Jesus didn't ground his ministry in Scripture alone; he claimed that the Spirit that descended upon him at his baptism had given him the mission he was announcing that day, a mission that was not at all what the people expected or appreciated.

The first thing we notice is the aim of his ministry—the poor, prisoners, those lacking the ability to see or understand and the oppressed. Jesus announced that he would be giving himself to those who have been overlooked and forgotten by religious communities and society. His ministry would even include sinners. His approach would be as a proclaimer of good news. He would not be a preacher who heaped a load of guilt on these people to make them feel worse about themselves. Instead, he would preach the good news that he was inaugurating a wonderful new day, a time when God promised to accept them just as they were.

Those who received his ministry were radically transformed into new creations becoming people who were restored, loved and made whole.

Holt is a retired pastor whose charge conference membership is at Central UMC in Spartanburg. He is also the author of two books from the Advocate Press: the newest, "People of My Journey," and "What I Have Come to Believe." Both are available at <https://advocatesc.org/books> or on Amazon.

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KIDNEY: A way to honor Jesus

From Page 1

A donor chain pairs people willing to give a kidney with proper matches. Because Kronz wanted to donate a kidney for Fanning, she was able to be part of that program, getting a transplant from someone else who donated a kidney in the eight-person chain of donors and recipients.

After their surgeries in early February, pastor and parishioner are both doing well and recuperating nicely, and both said they feel extraordinarily blessed to have been through this experience.

“It feels like one of those things Christians ought to seriously consider,” Kronz said of kidney donation. “Christ gave of his body for us, and we have the opportunity to do the same.”

He said the donors and recipients all had the opportunity to remain anonymous, but all of them decided to meet, which ended up being one of the most beautiful parts of the experience. The same day of his surgery, he was able to get up and walk around the hospital to meet the others.

“It was a wonderful thing.”

All of the donors and recipients had surgeries within a couple of days of each other; his was Feb. 2, while Fanning’s was Feb. 1.

For him, he said it wasn’t a difficult experience. He spent a day doing medical tests about a year ago to make sure he was healthy enough to be a donor. While it can take years to line up appropriate matches, his experience was relatively fast. Two weeks before Christmas, he got a phone call saying the program had been able to match up enough donors and recipients for a surgery that winter.

He worked with his district superintendent, the Rev. Ken Nelson, to accommodate his leave of absence, lining up enough guest preachers to cover both of his churches, and then he began the emotional preparation, talking to family and friends.

The surgery itself was smooth, he said.

“This was not a horrible, painful experience at all,” Kronz said, “only a little inconve-

nient to set aside a couple weeks to recover.”

He can’t lift heavy objects for a couple of months, but he’s been back at work for more than a month and doing great.

As for Fanning, she’s overwhelmed with gratitude, not only for Kronz’s generosity but for all of the people who were involved.

She had been on dialysis a couple of years when her pastor approached her, as she said, “out of the blue” about whether she was interested in having him donate a kidney for her.

Fanning was shocked—and so honored.

While dialysis wasn’t painful, it was exhausting and difficult to endure. Others had tried to help her by donating a kidney, but they were not able to donate because of health reasons.

She remembers the day she got the call from MUSC, Dec. 12, telling her they had a match. “It felt like Christmas, New Year’s and my birthday all rolled into one!” she said.

Her kidney ultimately came from a man who runs a restaurant in Saluda whose daughter went into renal failure during her pregnancy and needed a kidney. While he wasn’t a match for his daughter, Fanning said, he still wanted to help. His daughter ended up receiving a kidney from someone else in the eight-person donor chain. Kronz’s kidney went to a father of three living in Charleston.

“It just makes me feel wonderful,” Fanning said about the experience. “I’m so overwhelmed. I can’t imagine giving someone else an organ!”

She said the day the recipients and donors got to meet was incredibly joyful.

“Like the Bible talks about ‘peace beyond understanding,’ that day there was joy beyond understanding. All of us were just touching each other, saying, ‘I’m so thankful for you,’” she said. “Christ gives us that ability to give and receive.”

Kronz said he hopes sharing their story will inspire other people to consider this.

“Life sends us difficulties and inconveniences, but for the benefit of this, it was relatively small in comparison,” he said.

For more on kidney donation, visit <https://www.kidney.org/transplantation>.



Photo by Austin Bond

He is risen, indeed!

Belin Memorial UMC’s seawall cross, in Murrells Inlet, was adorned in flowers for Easter Sunday, expressing the joy of the resurrection for all to see.

Appreciation ads available to celebrate your children/youth ministers

This June, you have the opportunity to celebrate the children and youth ministers in your church with appreciation ads.

In June, many churches begin vacation Bible school season, as well as a host of stepped-up children and youth programming during the summer months. Through appreciation ads, you can express your gratitude to these men and women who work so hard to help the young people in your church draw closer to Christ.

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