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A post-separation UMCSC: Now what?

By Jessica Brodie

Nearly two months after Annual Conference voted to allow 113 churches to separate from the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, questions abound: Which pastors left? How much did the conference receive in funds? And what's next?

Few of these answers are available as of press time.

The somber and historic vote, held June 6 just before 3 p.m. on Day Three of the 52nd session of Annual Conference, enabled the

churches to leave the denomination officially. Some will remain independent, while others are deciding now whether to affiliate with another denomination, including the newly formed Global Methodist Church. The 113 churches comprise almost 12 percent of the 958 total churches in the conference come from every one of the 12 districts in the conference.

Each church that left first had to go through a conference-authorized Local Church Discernment Process, including a

churchwide vote, as well as handle a number of financial obligations.

These financial obligations include a tithe of 10 percent of the appraised value of all church property and liquid assets; all unpaid apportionment giving for the prior year, as well as for the year of closure up to the date of the Annual Conference vote to close the church; an additional 12 months of apportionment giving; all unpaid salary and benefits due to clergy appointed to the church; a withdrawal liability equal to the

church's proportional share of any unfunded pension obligations; and other financial considerations and legal liabilities of the local church, such as the disposition of any debts, loans, leases, endowments, foundations and cemeteries.

The discernment process was open to churches who believe the UMC has not upheld its stated doctrine on issues of human sexuality, which is that homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teaching."

See "Post-Separation," Page 24

Preserving the past

Trinity gets \$750K civil rights grant to restore historic sanctuary



Photo by Jessica Brodie

The Rev. Eddie Williams, Dr. Barbara Bowman and Patricia Lott stand outside Trinity's historic sanctuary, which has received its fourth large restoration grant.

By Jessica Brodie

ORANGEBURG—It's been the host of leaders from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Thurgood Marshall to Roy Wilkins, and the headquarters of so much of Orangeburg's valiant civil rights movement in the 1960s.

But Trinity United Methodist Church, Orangeburg, has been deteriorating over the years, the effects of weather and time tak-

ing a toll on the historic structure.

Now, thanks to another sizeable grant from the National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund's African American Civil Rights program, Trinity UMC is poised to begin Phase Four of their multipart facility improvement plan, restoring the sanctuary's stained-glass windows, repairing the roof, upgrading the

See "Preserving the Past," Page 14

'We can't not do this'

Clergy couple prepares for long-term Hungary mission

By Jessica Brodie

One South Carolina clergy couple is taking a tremendous leap of faith, selling all their possessions to become missionaries for Jesus 5,000 miles away.

The Revs. Weston Pendergrass and Chrisie Reeves-Pendergrass, along with their young son, Samuel, and their dog, Tramp, are actively raising funds to move to Hungary with One Mission Society, an evangelical, interdenominational faith mission. Members of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, the Reeves-Pendergrass family served in the Greenville District until June 30, Weston at Grace UMC, Greer, and Chrisie as associate at St. Matthew UMC Greenville. Now they are under appointment to extension ministry and have temporarily moved to New Mexico to live with Chrisie's parents while they raise the rest of the funds needed for their relocation.

"It's a huge leap of faith, and we're still figuring out so many things, such as what we're doing for health insurance," Chrisie said. "But we felt God was calling us to fund this full-time, and my parents had the means to let us move in with them."

It was clear: Their time was now.

See "Hungary Mission," Page 15

Surprise kidney transplant answers prayers of conference staffer

By Jessica Brodie

On the final day of Annual Conference, as South Carolina United Methodists were gearing up for a new year in the life of the church, one woman was waking up in a hospital bed, thanking God for a new lease on life.

On June 7, Stephanie Ponds Henry—health benefits specialist for the annual conference—and her husband, Sharome, got the answer to a prayer they'd had since 2019, when Henry

discovered she had Stage 4 kidney disease.

Henry got a healthy kidney, courtesy of an organ transplant.

Six weeks after the successful operation, she's praising Jesus and looking forward to her next chapter, free from dialysis and with plenty of energy to advocate for others walking the road she's now departed. If her doctor clears it, she hopes to return to work Aug. 1.

"I am good!" Henry laughs as she recounts

her progress since the emergency drive to Charleston in early June, after she got the call she'd been awaiting. In many ways, she said, it was like having a baby. It's taken about six weeks of recovery, but she's hydrating, eating healthily, getting enough rest and having regular check-ups.

She's feeling grateful—and blessed.

See "Kidney Transplant," Page 12

Salkehatchie, Promise Neighborhood partner to repair two Lancaster homes

By Jessica Brodie

LANCASTER—One Salkehatchie camp teamed up with a neighborhood improvement program to help residents get much-needed home renovations, all in the name of Jesus.

Lancaster Salkehatchie partnered with Lancaster Promise Neighborhood June 11-16 to tackle two major house projects in that community. Part of the statewide Salkehatchie Summer Service effort, Lancaster Salkehatchie

was one of 30 camps this summer bringing more than 900 youth, young adult and adult volunteers together for a weeklong mission event to repair and rebuild homes for people in need, many of them living in poverty situations without the ability to fund the work on their own.

Lancaster Salkehatchie repaired two homes this year—the Twitty home and the Threatt home.

See "Lancaster Salkehatchie," Page 14

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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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Blessings beyond measure

Man who escaped Liberian rebel forces shares testimony as church celebrates Wesley's birthday

By Jessica Brodie

ORANGEBURG—Wynston Doe isn't able to count his blessings—for him, there have been far too many.

From miraculous checkpoint pass-throughs to facing down a gun pointed at him more than once, Doe was just a boy when rebel forces overthrew the government in Liberia, his nation of birth and the place he fled forever 20 years ago.

But even in the hardest of times, his father imprisoned and killed and his neighbors dying all around him, "Through it all, I learned to trust in Jesus."

That's the word offered by Doe, a Liberian American now a member of St. Andrews United Methodist Church, Orangeburg.

Doe's testimony came June 28, at an ice cream social thrown by St. Andrews in honor of Methodism John Wesley's 320th birthday.

A packed crowd came to enjoy birthday cake and ice cream sundaes as they heard the inspiring faith testimony of one man who escaped rebel forces in Liberia with his life—and who now has much to say about what it means to keep faith even in the most trying of times.

'War kept coming'

Doe's story began in 1980, when a military coup d'état brought down the government of Liberia, where his family was employed. Just a kid then, Doe lived in a small city with his parents, four brothers and a sister, and he distinctly remembers the fear coursing through his home as his father was requested to report after the overthrow.

"My mom cooked him his favorite meal, and he promised to come back that night," Doe recalled.

To their delight, his father returned and for the next nine years worked for the new government, enjoying relative peace.

"But war kept coming," Doe said.

Food became scarce, and they began to stockpile cash and other provisions. His mother had passed away during this time, and some of Doe's older brothers had moved out and started families of their own.

Then Doe's life changed forever. As killings escalated all around him, finally the family made the decision to go into hiding, and eventually, to escape. Their surname, Doe, happened to be the same as the president, even though they were no relation, so he started using his mother's maiden name, Wilson.

As they walked toward refuge, they would encounter checkpoints. But not everyone made it through.

"People were shot on the road as they walked. They killed those who didn't pass.



Photo by Jessica Brodie

Wynston Doe, a Liberian American, is now a member of St. Andrews United Methodist Church, Orangeburg.

Doe's family paused to pray, and as they did, he recognized a rebel soldier he knew—a man who was fully aware he was "a Doe," not a Wilson.

Doe's heart pounded—what would the man do? He knew the family well, having stayed at their home for a time thanks to the generosity of Doe's father. But times had changed, and now the man clearly had a role with the rebels.

"You! Tall man! Step out of line with your family!" the soldier ordered them.

Fear gripped him, but they did as they were told.

"Open your bags," the soldier ordered.

Finally, he uttered the words that filled their family with relief: Let them go.

They crossed the checkpoint—alive.

Danger continues

But even in their new place of refuge, the danger persisted. Once, recovering from malaria, he was sitting in the sun when three men approached, one with a gun.

"Aren't you Mr. Doe?" one asked, recognizing him from the university where Doe had taught prior to their escape.

"No, I'm Wilson. I have a doppelganger," Doe insisted.

One day, everything changed. Armed soldiers confronted Doe's father, discovering his identity. His father admitted he was the man they sought.

Before his arrest, he asked to pray with his children.

"He put his hand on my head," Doe said, eyes filling with tears. "He said, 'I want you

to promise me you'll take care of your little brother and sister henceforth."

Doe promised.

It was the last time he would see his father. Rebel forces took his life.

More close calls

Years passed, and Doe returned to his hometown with his younger siblings. Much had changed in the time they had been gone, and their house was looted and wrecked, even the ceiling.

Doe had also become a parent to his brother and sister, keeping his promise to his father to take care of his siblings like his own in spite of his young age.

He was shocked at the animosity held by his neighbors, people who used to be so friendly and who now took things that had been theirs.

One night, after a lengthy time without food, Doe was able to secure some rice from a friend, and he brought it home. His siblings rejoiced at the food, and they got so loud their cries attracted the attention of some soldiers passing by.

The soldiers knocked at their door, demanding to know what was happening.

Doe pleaded with them in their native language, seeking an alliance. One pointed his gun at Doe—then let him go.

Another time, he encountered another soldier—only to discover it was one of his own older brothers. That brother was able to warn them of an impending attack.

Eventually, they fled their nation for good, escaping first to Ghana and ultimately to the United States, which Doe has called "home" for almost 20 years.

Through it all, Doe shared, his blessings have abounded. Today they are so numerous he can't even begin to count them.

But more than anything, he's learned to rely on Jesus, understanding that all is ultimately made right in Jesus's name.

'Whole and holy'

The Rev. Ken Nelson also spoke at the birthday celebration, lifting up the work of Wesley and the impact the Methodist movement has had on places around the globe, including Liberia, where Doe was raised in the United Methodist church.

"But there are people in the world who have yet to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ," Nelson said, urging people to remember Wesley's call to make the world their parish, not only their local community.

"Jesus makes a difference in making people whole and holy," Nelson shared.

Cumberland embraces technology in new ways

FLORENCE—COVID-19 has forced many organizations to pivot their strategies and adapt to a new normal. As part of this, Cumberland United Methodist Church has embraced digital evangelism (called e-vangelism) to connect with members and reach others online during the pandemic.

Initially hesitant about digital evangelism, the church used conference calls to conduct church business during the pandemic. However, through social media and Zoom, Cumberland discovered new ways to reach its community, including Bible study on different platforms.

Lillian T. Adams, a 93-year-old member, taught Sunday school for decades; in fact, the church named her class the Lillian T. Adams Bible Study class after her. During the pandemic, the class met every Saturday at 4 p.m. and averaged eight attendees weekly.

Recently, the class decided to return to having Sunday school in the church and adopted a hybrid model for in-person and online to ensure everyone was included and to attract more people. Cumberland's embrace of digital evangelism enabled them to connect with people of all ages, including those previously unable to participate in in-person services. The church found new ways to reach its community, and its members are excited about the possibilities of e-vangelism.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Cumberland remains committed to the church's mission of spreading the word of God. The church adapted to new technologies like Zoom, continuing to serve its community during these difficult times.

According to pastor the Rev. Martin Quick, the church's digital ministry has been a game changer, enabling the church to connect with people



Photo courtesy of Rev. Martin Quick

Through social media and Zoom, Cumberland discovered new ways to reach its community.

who may not have attended in-person services.

"We have seen an increase in attendance and engagement since launching our digital ministry," Quick said. "It has allowed us to connect with people who may not have stepped foot in our church otherwise."

Other local churches have contacted Cumberland to learn from their innovative approach.

"We are thrilled to have the opportunity to share our experiences and help other churches embrace digital evangelism," Quick added.

As the pandemic's impact lessens, Cumberland continues to lead the way in bringing people together and providing hope and guidance to those who need it most, both online and in person.

Camps and Retreat Ministries: A lasting impact

By Lillian Williams

Ask any United Methodist youth what comes to mind when “summer” is mentioned, and a response of “summer camp” is often given.

In South Carolina, there are three United Methodist camps for youth to attend: Asbury Hills, Camp Providence and Sea Islands.

In 2022, \$319,000 in South Carolina Conference apportioned funds was designated toward the support of these three camp programs. Some activities that these programs offer are arts and crafts, archery, cycling, swimming, excursions and ziplining.

Camps and Retreat Ministries Director Arthur Spriggs believes camp is important today more than ever.

“Camping is no longer a nicety—it’s a necessity for today’s kids,” Spriggs said. “Learning community is something that has been forgotten, and it is something that has to be relearned in our isolation.”

As he noted, in today’s hyperindulgent society, it is easier for children to remain inside and lose touch with nature. Children who attend these summer retreats return

home with a newfound appreciation for their earthly surroundings.

The transformation is incredible to see, he said.

“My favorite part has always been ... watching a kid that’s hesitant about getting out of the car and then literally in tears on the last day of camp not wanting to leave,” Spriggs said.

Asbury Hills, Camp Providence and Sea Islands all offer year-round programs for ages 7-17. Asbury Hills is located in Cleveland (near Greenville), Camp Providence is located in Anderson and Sea Islands is located on Johns Island in the Lowcountry. In addition to their year-round programs, these camps offer weeklong experiences, day camps and partial-week camps. For college students interested in summer employment, they also offer opportunities to create bonds with campers as camp counselors.

Occasionally throughout the year, these camps also host events open to the public. For instance, Asbury Hills holds a fall festival where they serve apple cider and other fall treats as an opportunity for fellowship within

the community.

Three years ago, these camp traditions were put to a halt because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was extremely difficult.

“We closed in 2020,” Spriggs said. “Interestingly enough about 17 percent of all camps around the country disappeared, never to be seen again. A lot of organizations—whether it’s scouting, secular and Christian camping altogether—ended up selling their properties just to sustain their organization.”

But this didn’t happen to South Carolina Camps and Retreat Ministries.

“We were very fortunate to have had reserved funds that allowed us to retain our year-round staff,” Spriggs said.

After the pandemic, their numbers were low, and they started slowly.

“We only agreed to take on 50 percent capacity to see if we could handle that and not have any outbreaks,” Spriggs said.

When this was successful, they were able to increase it to 75 percent capacity.

“This year, we go full-speed-ahead with 100 percent capacity,” Spriggs said.

Spriggs said if a child is given the opportunity to go to a summer camp, they should seize the chance. Lasting impacts, friendships, cognitive skills and relationships with God are developed or strengthened by attending a retreat. The lifelong impact it can have on a child is remarkable.

Spriggs said he doesn’t think he was called to camp and retreat ministry but rather born into it.

“I wanted to go to camp as a kid, [but] I was a welfare kid, so I couldn’t afford to go,” he said.

But at age 8, he got a scholarship to go to camp.

“I’ve been camping ever since,” Spriggs said.

South Carolina Camps and Retreat Ministries board said the importance of paying apportionments, which help these programs, can give a child a gift they will be able to cherish forever.

For more information about South Carolina Camps and Retreat Ministries, visit <https://sccarm.org>.



Photo courtesy of Minnie Green

Fun and fellowship

Clark UMC’s Senior Community Ministry, Sumter, debuted new ministry T-shirts recently as they gathered to celebrate the birthdays of some of their members. The ministry meets twice a month to include Bible study. Their pastor is Sarah Johnson.

Credit union expands membership to disaffiliating churches who remain Wesleyan

By Jessica Brodie

COLUMBIA—Churches and their members who disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church will be able to remain part of the annual conference’s credit union if they affiliate with another Methodist or Wesleyan organization.

That’s the word from Andy Cox, president and CEO of the South Carolina Methodist Conference Credit Union, who said their board of directors approved in May an amendment to their bylaws allowing this. That change has also been approved by the South Carolina Office of the Commissioner of Banking as of mid-June and is effective immediately.

The South Carolina Methodist Conference Credit Union has been in existence since 1955 with a mission to serve the financial needs of the United Methodist community across South Carolina.

But as news of disaffiliating churches in South Carolina began to circulate, Cox said the board began to explore how they could move forward and serve God’s people in the midst.

With the change, a church (or church member) who separates from the UMC can become a member of the credit union as long as it affiliates with another Method-

ist or Wesleyan denomination, such as the Global Methodist Church.

Those who choose to go independent are not eligible.

“This is a way for us, from our missional standpoint, to bridge that divide in a certain way and be inclusive of everybody,” Cox explained.

He said those who are already members can remain a member regardless of their church affiliation.

“Once you’re a member, you’re always a member as long as your account is in good standing,” Cox said.

Credit union chair Dr. Roger Gramling said the effect of the change was to enable the credit union to “continue to serve those in the future whom it could have served in the past.”

“The purpose of the amendment in the near term is to offer the services of the Credit Union to those persons and local churches who may have chosen to disaffiliate from the South Carolina Conference but who may in time choose to remain a part of the wider Methodist or Wesleyan Family,” Gramling clarified.

For more on the credit union, which offers savings, loan, life insurance and other options, visit <https://www.scmccu.org>.

New ‘Dinner Church’ effort in Hartsville area to launch thanks to \$10K FOE grant

By Jessica Brodie

HARTSVILLE—A new effort to reach out to unchurched people in the Hartsville area is getting a much-needed grant from the Foundation for Evangelism.

The Hartsville District Cooperative Parish is among 51 churches selected to receive an Equipping the Local Church grant to launch an experiment or initiative to share the Gospel, tell their faith stories and invite others into a relationship with Jesus alongside a local faith community.

The parish’s effort is called Dinner Church and is an effort to reach 18- to 45-year-olds in a nontraditional setting, said Dr. Reginald Lee, supervising pastor of the four churches comprising the Hartsville Cooperative Parish: St. John UMC, Lamar; Wesley Chapel, Hartsville; New Providence UMC, Darlington; and Tabernacle UMC, Hartsville.

Lee said they are hoping to launch the effort in mid-September and have already received the grant funds, totaling \$10,000.

They are seeking a site and plan for it to be at a coffee shop or restaurant—what Lee calls a “neutral space” that will be “seeker friendly.”

As Lee says, “The truth is, our churches are barriers for evangelism in the 21st century.”

Many people experience fear and anxiety about stepping into a traditional church setting, so a nontraditional space can help ease them into church without the emotional baggage.

The service will be an eclectic one, not a “normal” Methodist service with all the

liturgical rituals, making sure to include a time for fellowship, dinner and building community.

It will be intentionally multicultural and multiethnic and advertised as such to people in the Darlington and Florence communities.

“We’ll keep the format simple—gathering, grace and meal,” Lee said. “Near the end, a message, and before the message, good music that will change from week to week, contemporary gospel, traditional gospel, hymns, etc.”

Lee said the idea grew out of a trip to Atlanta he and others in the Hartsville District Cooperative Parish took with Dr. James Friday to spend the weekend with the Net Church, a new multisite church in Gwinnett County. One of their four campuses started a dinner church, and the Hartsville District Cooperative Parish team was inspired.

“It’s a simple model, and we hope to design ours similarly,” Lee said.

The Foundation for Evangelism grant recipients are from nine Wesleyan-tradition denominations across 24 states.

Other projects range from children’s after school programs to experiments with local community participation.

The Foundation for Evangelism is a Wesleyan-tradition grant-making organization located at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. Chartered in 1949 by Dr. Harry Denman, then the General Secretary of the Board of Evangelism of the Methodist Church, and a group of visionary laymen, it was designed to “diffuse the blessing of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

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Viewpoints



Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

Lives changed—times six

We've tried hard to raise our kids in the Lord, and when I signed our entire family up for Salkehatchie Summer Service this year, I expected the experience would awaken a heart for missions in some of them.

But I wasn't expecting the personal, intimate awakening it had for them. That, well ... that was something else entirely.

"My whole life, I've been praying to God, but now I'm praying to God," one of them shared on the drive home as we reflected.

"Every devotion was like it was handpicked just for me—exactly what I'd been praying about," another shared.

"These people were praying and praying someone would come along and help them. We got to be their answered prayer," shared a third.

Their responses staggered me.

As editor of the *Advocate*, I've wanted to go to Salkehatchie since I learned about it 13 years ago, but the demands of young children always prevented it. My husband was blessed to grow up in South Carolina, and he was raised going to Salkehatchie since age 14, and I always said when our kids were old enough we'd sign up.

This year, that finally happened. Our youngest turned 14, and so the six of us—me, my husband, and our four teens aged 14, 15, 16 and 17—said "yes."

Yes, in this heat. Yes, on a roof. Yes, despite shifting jobs and time off work and challenges on how to board our dog and who'd feed our cats all week. Yes to it all.

Two of our kids are decidedly not adventurous, frightened of spiders and leery of bugs in general. One was chastised for missing football training. One struggles with major mental health issues and migraines. And me? Well, let's just say I'm not 16 anymore. It's been awhile since I've gotten on a roof.

Still, we persisted, and the six of us rolled up to the Santee Camp in Manning July 8 with enough hand tools to stock a small hardware shop.

What followed was a week that changed our lives forevermore, and one we pray we will be able to repeat year after year, eventually with our grandkids and great-grandkids.

The boys slept in one room, the girls in another, and the six of us divided among three different sites. Two did flooring and other interior work. Two resingled a roof and built a handicap ramp for a homeowner who'd recently had a stroke. And two of us headed to "my" site, reroofing Mr. Charles' home.

Challenges abounded all week. Unaccustomed to working in 90-degree weather on a rooftop, I was struck with a two-day migraine that had me worried I'd be of no use whatsoever. But by Thursday, I'd bounced back and learned to shingle, and on Friday, I celebrated completing a whole column of ridge caps with my new friend and co-volunteer Raeligh—not to mention relearning how to use a nail gun.

Even though she had to take frequent breaks, my daughter celebrated, too. Dizziness meant she couldn't get on the roof, but she cut shingles all week and carted trash to the street. We all served as we could, and it all made a difference.

See "Brodie," Page 5



Bishop's Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

Strengthening the soul

"Moses used to take the Tent and set it up outside the camp, some distance away... Anyone who sought God would go to the Tent of Meeting outside the camp. It went like this ... whenever Moses entered the Tent, the Pillar of Cloud descended to the entrance to the Tent and God spoke with Moses. All the people would see the Pillar of Cloud at the entrance to the Tent, stand at attention, and then bow down in worship ... And God spoke with Moses face-to-face, as neighbors speak to one another ... Moses said to God, '... You tell me, 'I know you well and you are special to me.' If I am so special to you, let me in on your plans ... ' God said, 'My presence will go with you. I'll see the journey to the end.'—Exodus 33:7-14 (NIV)

In this fast-paced, instant gratification culture that we live in, there is an underlying pressure to prove our worth and produce immediate results. YouTube videos and highlight reels expedite the process of growth and transformation in order to skip straight to the excitement of the finished product.

A person's weight loss journey is depicted in only two photos, side by side for comparison. An entire home can go from cluttered to organized in seconds, and a mural is painted in a day. An Olympian's lifetime of hard work, dedication and sacrifice is reduced to a brief interview with a few selected photos flashing on the screen.

There is a desire to race to the end. To achieve the "happily ever after" and have a beautiful story to tell.

But what if the process matters more

than the results? What if the journey has a bigger impact than a specific destination?

As followers of Christ, our call is to be faithful—to be focused on Christ rather than focusing on what society claims it means to be successful. When we reorient ourselves in this way—turning toward Jesus—we can release the pressure to follow a specific narrative.

In leading the Israelites out of Egypt to the land God had promised, Moses' journey was anything but direct. The 40-year trek included many instances of "recalculating" and "rerouting." And yet, throughout the generations, in the midst of setbacks and detours, sickness, challenges and anger amongst the Israelites, Moses prioritized time for prayer—for talking with God.

Moses reoriented himself toward faithfulness.

In order to lead others to Christ, we must first be in relationship with Christ ourselves. We must be confident in who we are and whose we are as children of God. This confidence comes only from spending time with God, from reorienting ourselves toward faithfulness.

We know ourselves when we know God. And when we know God, we know our worth. When we know our worth; when we are reoriented toward faithfulness; we no longer have to prove ourselves to the world.

When you don't know what to do or where to turn next, turn to God. When your next steps are unclear, turn toward God.

The journey continues.

Updated ministerial appointments coming soon

Last month, the *Advocate* ran a list of ministerial appointments made at Annual Conference and include any changes announced at conference.

We indicated with a strike-through those churches who voted to separate from the UMC as approved at conference.

We had hoped to reprint the perfected appointments in our August issue, but as of press time July 21, these were not complete.

We hope to print these in the September edition.

Corrections

In the guest commentary, "Real Conversations," by Sarah-Kate Gravely (July *Advocate*) we identified Gravely as director of Christian education for an incorrect church. We should have said Gravely is director of Christian education for Washington Street UMC, Columbia.

Also, in the ministerial appointments (July *Advocate*), we accidentally put a strike-through through the wrong Smyrna UMC in the Marion District. We mistakenly struck the Smyrna that is a part of the Bennettsville Parish as the church that is leaving, but that church is not leaving. They are still very much a part of the UMC. The Smyrna that left was listed as TBS, and fell just below Shiloh UMC, pastored by Barbara Webster.

We apologize for these errors and, as always, strive to set the record straight.

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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Our Mission

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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Letters to the Editor

Separation

At the beginning of conference, we were all together singing and praising God. This would be the last gathering before the vote to separate. Separation is painful and hard to understand. Our bishop was emotional and compassionate yet helpless to change the outcome. Longtime friends will be gone, and the church will never be the same.

Delegates asked for prayers, and there were expressions of care and concern. There was very little joy on one side of the aisle.

The separation is now real, and we pray for Christ's guidance in this difficult time. Nothing will separate us from the love of Christ.

Rev. John Wesley Culp
West Columbia

Reflections on saintliness

A while back, in celebrating the bicentennial of Methodism in America, one of our bishops asked, "What is God calling us to be and do as we embrace the future?" The good bishop went on to say, "Our calling is to demonstrate that God still makes saints."

That's true, but have you noticed that dealing with saints can be difficult? Some are just a pain in the neck. Ask any pastor's spouse about that.

What does that tell us? It says that sainthood does not cancel out one's humanity. Saints remain limited in the ability to understand and cope with life and with people. The difference between saints and the rest of us is that saints are better at dealing with routine frustrations and troublesome situations.

Anyone can and most people do appear saintly at times. But true saintliness is not a sometime thing. It cannot be put on and taken off like shoes or a hat. Sainthood functions as an interior attitude or it does not function. It is like a bad cold or the measles. We either have it or we don't.

The great thing about saintliness is that it is contagious and runs in families. Fortunately, the lack of saintliness is treatable. It does not require hospitalization and can be dealt with within the family. All it takes is a little TLC: tender, loving care. Well, maybe more than a little TLC depending on the severity of the case.

The key thing is that it can be treated without injections or foul-tasting medicine. We are not stuck permanently with a life-limiting preoccupation with self.

Rev. Mickey Fisher
Spartanburg

A sensitive time

A very special thanks to Bishop Holston for his thoughtful and caring way of conducting Annual Conference. Also, thanks to the *Advocate* for the coverage prior to Annual Conference.

My prayers and thoughts are with the bishop and Cabinet during this sensitive time.

Rev. Ron Pettit
Orangeburg

BRODIE: United in Christ

From Page 4

All of us enjoyed games and camaraderie and what it looks like to be a team in Christ. For that's exactly what we were—not only a team of volunteers or a family team, but a team of Christians ready and willing to stand up and say "yes" to however God wanted to use us. Whether that meant serving as a cook or a runner, a trash-hauler or hammering shingles on a blisteringly hot roof, we said yes.

On Friday evening, the night we shared our symbols from the week, I was struck as I watched volunteers aged 14 to 70-plus stand before our group and reflect on how Christ was able to use them. I shared, my husband shared, our kids shared, and everyone else did too, laying our items one by one on the altar before we sat down.

One young woman held up a nail from her home site, and her words have remained with me all week, even as we go to press on this month's edition.

"This nail looks small," she said, "and

alone, it's not much."

We can pry it up with a hammer, or a crowbar, or push it out with a shovel.

But put that one nail together with the others, and look what happens—it holds a roof together. It holds a house together.

United with all the other nails, it is strong and mighty and oh-so-capable.

Today, I reflect on what that signifies here in The United Methodist Church. Each of us reading this is one single person. On our own, we have purpose and worth, and perhaps we do some good things.

But put us together with others, all working together for one purpose, and look out, world! Look and see what we all can do together as God's church in the mighty and powerful name of the Lord. With Christ, our impact is tremendous.

Salkehatchie is on our calendar for next year, and every one of my kids is excited about it.

So am I.

Thank you, Lord. However you need, send me.



Thank you, sir

Bishop L. Jonathan Holston (right) presents a plaque to Holbrook Platts, outgoing chair of the conference's Committee on the Episcopacy.



Guest Commentary

by Dr. Mark E. Thompson

Where have all the elders gone?

Annual conference is over. The big news was the vote for 113 churches choosing to disaffiliate. Full disclosure, I believe that disaffiliation is a mistake, but that boat has sailed. I do hope and pray that our church will create a way for reaffiliation for those who choose to come back no matter what their reason.

However, this event provides a unique opportunity for our conference to positively adjust the alarming ratio of those retiring and those entering our ministry as full elders.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: One third of all elders in our conference are retirement-eligible. Last year, we had 957 churches and 341 ordained pastors. After the conference, those numbers have no doubt changed, though not likely for the better. However, nothing was said or done about these issues at annual conference. The numbers speak for themselves: Our conference retired 35 elders, and we ordained 13. For the last three years, the average of retired to ordained pastors is about 3:1. It's obvious that this is an unsustainable situation, yet it seems to be the elephant in the room: We need more ordained pastors.

It is time to get serious about recruiting and supporting our pastors. Yes, at conference, we gave out a couple of \$6,000 awards to students. In 1993, the annual cost for tuition for Duke Divinity School was \$7,000. Today, the annual cost is roughly \$27,000, and this is just for tuition. With the rising cost of basic needs such as housing, food, health care and transportation, a student's minimum annual need lands somewhere around \$45,000, more if they have a family. Thus, a four-year Master of Divinity program costs a seminarian roughly \$200,000. No doubt, \$6,000 shaves off some of the burden, but look at the numbers. It's a small contribution toward a need that is increasingly large.

As my last commanding general said, "Chaplain, if you bring me a problem, you better bring me a solution." (My wife, who is now my commanding general, says the same thing!) So here it is.

First, nobody likes to view the church as a business. We prefer to see it as a ministry, a calling, a vocation. But our ministry, calling, vocation requires a business element to keep it up and running. It is also a business. And, as a business, in the name of good stewardship, the time has come to reallocate our resources: our clergy and our physical assets.

Years ago, when travel was more difficult, to increase accessibility to a broader base, we planted churches all over the state, some only a few miles apart. But this is 2023. Is it good stewardship to have four or five UMCs within a 20-minute drive from each other, many with attendance of 10, 20 or 30, and many of them unable afford a full-time minister? Even if they could afford to keep their doors open, we clearly do not have enough ordained pastors to fulfill the need. Though it is tradition for the conference to provide a pastor, there is no *Book of Discipline* mandate to do so. At one time these churches truly provided a vital ministry. And yes, they are still providing a ministry for those attending. But again, is this good stewardship?

Second, we need a recruiter—who represents the S.C. Conference and is responsible for visitations and presentations—to visit all of our 13 seminaries and any seminary identified as a feeder school for our conference.

Hard fact: To recruit effectively, you need something to offer. A solid offer would include realistic assistance with school debt repayment, paid each year by the conference, incrementally increasing for every year the pastors remain in the conference. I suggest we consider a starting offer of up to \$20,000 per year, terms and conditions subject to discussion at our next conference.

The skeptics will ask how this proposal will be funded. By my calculations, the advance apportionments collected by the conference from the 113 disaffiliating churches lands around \$240,000. In addition, the amount collected for the 10 percent value of assets will be several millions of dollars. As wise and forward-thinking stewards of these funds, I am calling on the leadership of this conference to put together a team to research this issue and develop a workable plan for recruiting, as well a realistic and compassionate plan to evaluate the viability of maintaining churches that have no realistic possibility for growth.

Looking at last year's numbers from the churches in the conference, that should be around 300 churches. And yes, I understand that this is a complicated and painful process, especially for churches with cemeteries. Selling those properties and creating an endowment to fund the recruitment plan as well as a line item in the yearly budget is a place to start.

Yes, this is a difficult situation for our conference and the United Methodist Church. But if we do nothing, the situation will not magically fix itself.

Thompson is a retired U.S. Army Chaplain.



Photo by Matt Brodie

Strong laity, strong churches

Conference Lay Leader Barbara Ware gives the report of Lay Leadership on Monday afternoon, June 5, at Annual Conference, calling it "an honor" to serve in her position. She also introduced the groups executive team, Lisa Fusco, Cassie Watson and Jeff Fogle, all on stage with her.

There was so much news from Annual Conference 2023 that everything did not fit in the July Advocate. Therefore, we are running some more items and articles that were left out. For more on Annual Conference, visit <https://advocatesc.org> or see the July Advocate.



Photo by Matt Brodie

'Stewards of the vision'

The Rev. Millie Nelson Smith, director (above), and the Rev. Ross Chellis, convener, gave the report of Conference Connectional Ministries, detailing the wide variety of things they do to be stewards of the vision of the annual conference: making disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world. Nelson Smith said they take their job very seriously. She lifted up the four areas of Connectional Ministries, which are advocacy, lay leadership, discipleship and outreach, as well as the work of the staff and the congregational specialists who work hard to resource local churches. She also announced winners of the annual conference awards (see Page 7) and announced the conference scored in the higher 90th percentile in all areas of a two-year disaster recovery evaluation conducted. "I'm honor to serve as your director of Connectional Ministries," Nelson Smith said.



Photo by Matt Brodie

Nominations approved

The Rev. Joseph James gives the report of the Committee on Nominations on the first day of Annual Conference business, June 5. He noted that with the extension of the 2016 quadrennia, the election cycle for members of conference boards, agencies, councils and committees is delayed, and terms of office that were supposed to end in 2020 have been extended until the 2016 quadrennia ends in 2024. "We're starting all over with all our quadrennial boards and agencies next year," James said. Anyone interested in serving can go to <https://www.umcsc.org/applicationfornomination>.



Photo by Matt Brodie

Truly changing lives

The Rev. Michael Bingham, pastor in the Greenville District, takes a moment of personal privilege on the floor at Annual Conference. He sincerely thanked the body for their support for campus ministries, offering his own story of how his daughter lost her way as a college student and one day showed up at the door of her Wesley Foundation. There she was loved and quickly invited to join their leadership team. "It changed her life," Bingham said, noting she graduated cum laude last month and just accepted a job as communications director for an emergency food bank in Valdosta, Georgia. "Don't ever think your apportionments dollars go to waste or are just thrown away," Bingham said. "You cannot know the blessing to the lives ... the prodigals brought home. I give glory to God, and I thank you."

Compassionate inclusion

Leonard shares journey in perspective with other Reconciling Christians

By Jessica Brodie

FLORENCE—South Carolina Reconciling Ministries from across the state had the chance to gather during Annual Conference at a breakfast before business on Day Three of the event.

The packed event of the group—an unofficial caucus of the UMC that works for full affirmation of all of God's children, including LGBTQ+ persons, in the church and the world—was held at Homewood Suites by Hilton.

After a welcome from the Rev. Warren Ashmore, the group joined in a litany of inclusion written by Lee Roper.

"May God give us strength to keep our voices raised in support of our sisters and brothers who have been excluded and marginalized," the litany said in part. "May God give us compassion, a striving toward acceptance of a brother or sister even when we strongly disagree with them."

Then the Rev. Susan Leonard, pastor of Bethel United Methodist Church, Charleston, shared her 30-year journey from what she described as "love the sinner, hate the sin" to a person who advocates for full inclusion.

Leonard said her remarks come on what will be a significant day for the South Carolina Annual Conference—a day when many churches would be leaving the denomination over sexuality differences.

"I want to acknowledge there is a lot of pain in the room and a lot of hope in the room and a lot of love for Jesus in the room," she said. "And while we are not organized to say 'what's next' or 'how do we mobilize to be lighthouse churches' or to stay UMC ... I hope we will find ways to continue the conversation so we don't just drift but, with intention, plan, strategize and mobilize for The United Methodist Church of tomorrow."

Leonard shared how often, when our blood pressure is high and it comes down, or we are carrying extra weight and it comes down, perhaps we might say we are healthier, leaner or stronger.

"Today is a day we will bless and release," Leonard said. "And I pray by God's grace there is a healthier, leaner, stronger body of a welcoming and inclusive church."

Leonard shared how she came of age in the 1970s and 1980s. A lifelong United Methodist raised in Memorial UMC, Greer, who went to seminary and became an ordained elder in the church, she eventually found herself at a place of disconnection over "love all" versus "love the sinner, hate the sin."

Then she was appointed to a small church in a textile community in the Greenville District where she came to know many young people at nearby Furman University—including a young man who became a friend.

When he graduated, he asked Leonard to share a walk with him, and on that walk he

opened up, through tears, about his walk as a Christian while being a gay man.

He was the first of many gay Christians she would come to know, and the relationships she built and the stories shared helped her shift her perspective on sexuality and sin. For before she was influenced by a book or podcast or anything else, she was—like many of us—influenced by a person.

Today, Leonard said, "I do not believe that to be born with a same-sex attraction and be in a committed, monogamous, respectful, mutually affirming relationship falls in the category of sin."

And to anyone who knows themselves in their God-given essence to be part of the LGBTQ+ community, she said, "I honor you."

She said three major points that shape her view on sexuality and Christianity today. First, of the entire library of Scripture, there are only six passages used to condemn homosexuality—three in the Old Testament and three in the New—and those passages don't square with reason.

Jesus, before he ascended, said he has much more to tell us but he cannot. After all, Leonard noted, we weren't even asking the questions back then about same-sex marriage or other sexuality-related questions that we face today. But Jesus said he would leave behind the Holy Spirit who would remind, teach and shape us.

"I'm so thankful the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And his name is Jesus," Leonard said. "And before there was a book, there was a person—the preexistent Jesus, who said 'let us make humans in our image' and 'you are very good.'"

Second, the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) is clear about where we need to veer when we do not understand. The priest and the Levite were good, law-abiding people who erred on the side of the Law, crossing the street when they encountered a bloody, broken man rather than touch him and become "unclean." But the Samaritan who helped the wounded man chose compassion, love and mercy over the Law, and Jesus said he was more of a neighbor to the man than the others.

This parable clearly tells us, Leonard said, that "Jesus elevates not the Law but compassion." We must do the same.

Third, Leonard said, the ethic of love emulated by Jesus is the most important thing we need to uphold.

"Let's stick close to that person Jesus, and I am confident with the help of the Holy Spirit we will continue to make our way to all the bruised, broken and bloody," she concluded. "And by God's grace, we'll be the hands and feet and heart of Jesus. Amen."

For more on South Carolina Reconciling Ministries, email reconcilingministriessc@gmail.com.



Photo by Matt Brodie

Daycare work-arounds

Some parents got creative this year when it came to childcare and Annual Conference. The return to an in-person gathering did not include a return of the conference-provided daycare for children of the lay and clergy attendees. Some listed the help of spouses and relatives if they were available, some who could afford to do so hired nannies—and others brought a full setup to keep their very young children occupied during session. Here, the Rev. Meg Cook brought headphones, a small table with chairs, movies and games for her 3- and 4-year-old sons so she could carry on the business of AC without daycare.



The Rev. Tony Rowell said being a Christian is sharing the Gospel “whether you’ve got a hammer in your hand or a syringe.”



Ward Smith is given the Michael C. Watson Volunteers in Mission Award, presented to him by Jennifer Parker.

Photos by Matt Brodie

‘On fire for God’

Rowell keynotes as UMVIM missionaries gather at AC2023

By Jessica Brodie

FLORENCE—Missioners active with South Carolina United Methodist Volunteers in Mission gathered at Pisgah United Methodist Church June 6 for an off-site Annual Conference gathering.

After lunch and a devotion from the Rev. Mike Evans, the crowd heard a word from the Rev. Tony Rowell, longtime missioner who took his first UMVIM trip more than 30 years ago.

“UMVIM completely changed my perspective on life,” said Rowell, the pastor of Beulah UMC in Gilbert, who noted that he wouldn’t trade a minute of his experiences. “I went from a self-centered, self-seeking individual to a self-centered, self-seeking individual with another viewpoint on how I should be.”

That evolution continues to this day, he said.

Rowell remembered a conversation he had with the late Dr. Mike Watson, South Carolina UMVIM founder, when he had the opportunity to ask Watson why he cared so much about UMVIM and mission work.

Rowell was surprised to learn Watson’s focus was less on the outward mission but on the inward change within the life of the missioner.

“He said, ‘My dream isn’t necessarily to go out into world make big changes,’” Rowell said. “My dream is this organization goes deep into heart of the missionaries and

changes them.”

It was about using missions to create Christians who are on fire for God.

Looking around the room, Rowell said, truly this is reflected in those gathered at the luncheon.

“A lot of y’all are fanatical,” he joked.

But that is what often happens when you serve without expecting anything in return.

“That’s when you understand what being a Christian is—it’s going out and sharing the Gospel ... whether you’ve got a hammer in your hand or a syringe.”

After Rowell’s message, UMVIM Treasurer Jennifer Parker announced the recipient of this year’s Annual Conference Michael C. Watson Volunteer in Mission Award as Ward Smith. Involved in Salkehatchie Summer Service since he was 14 years old, he went on to serve as a site leader, assistant camp director, camp director, and today still serves in this capacity. He spent a number of years also serving at the Henderson Settlement, United Methodist mission institution in Kentucky. In all he does, Smith truly exemplifies extraordinary service, she said.

“He shares the love of Christ with tangible acts of service,” she said, presenting Ward with the award to much applause.

The gathering finished with a short business session.

To learn more about South Carolina UMVIM, visit <https://www.umsc.org/outreach/volunteers-in-mission>.



Photos by Matt Brodie

Christian homes for adults with special needs

Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry hosted a free barbecue lunch during Annual Conference for all attendees on the grounds of one of their homes in Florence for special needs individuals: Rick’s House. Held Monday, June 5, attendees had the opportunity to tour the home, which houses four adults with special needs. Above, residents and their families enjoy the breeze as guests enjoy the barbecue. For more on Aldersgate, visit <https://www.aldersgatespecialneedsministry.org/>



Photo by Matt Brodie

Representing South Carolina regionally, globally

Delegation Chair the Hon. Jackie Jenkins invited South Carolina’s elected delegation to General and Jurisdictional conferences to join her onstage as she delivered the delegation report to Annual Conference Tuesday, June 6. “Join me in saluting this awesome group,” Jenkins invited as the room applauded. Jenkins informed the body of their work at the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference, electing three new bishops including South Carolina pastor Dr. Robin Dease, now appointed as bishop of the North Georgia Conference of the UMC. South Carolina is represented by 32 people elected in 2019—half clergy, half laity—who represented the conference at SEJ. Of these, 16 (half clergy, half laity) will also represent South Carolina at General Conference, scheduled for April 23-May 3, 2024 in Charlotte. “We will keep you informed,” Jenkins pledged.

Annual Conference awards 2023 outstanding clergy and laity

Every year, the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church presents awards for a number of honors: the Bishop’s Five Star Award, the Denman Evangelism Award, the Barbara Boultinghouse Bridge Builder award, the Michael C. Watson Volunteer in Mission Award and the Joseph Benjamin Bethea Distinguished Service Award.

This year, the Rev. Millie Nelson Smith announced the names of the award recipients at Annual Conference.

Awardees are as follows:

Bishop’s Five-Star Award, which is presented to churches that embrace new ministries geared toward growth and outreach.

The 2023 recipients are Belin Memorial UMC in Murrells Inlet (Rev. Will Malambri, pastor); Bethlehem-St. James UMC in Johns Island (Rev. Pattie Gordon, pastor); Centenary UMC in Moncks Corner (Rev. Darlene Moore Richardson, pastor); Grace UMC in Columbia (Rev. Rett Haselden, pastor); Herbert Memorial UMC in Georgetown (Rev. Charles Wilbanks, pastor); Kellybell UMC in Hartsville (Rev. Mary Burnell, pastor); New Life UMC in Walterboro (Rev. Angela Ford Nelson, pastor); New Webster UMC in Wadmalaw Island (Rev. Pattie Gordon, pastor); O’Neal Street UMC in Newberry (Rev. Darlene Kelley, pastor); St. James UMC in Spartanburg (Rev. Andrew Wolfe, pastor); and the Trinity-Harris Charge in Greenwood (Rev. Thessa Smith, pastor).

Joseph Benjamin Bethea Distinguished Service Award is presented to persons (clergy, laity, youth) who have performed outstanding service in working for racial justice.

The 2023 recipient is Shelby Henderson, a member of New Harmony UMC in Seneca.

Michael C. Watson Volunteer in Mission Award is presented to persons (clergy, laity) who exemplify extraordinary volunteer service beyond the local church.

The 2023 recipient is Ward Smith, a member of Mount Hebron UMC in West Columbia.

Barbara Boultinghouse Bridge Builder Award is presented to person or organization for promoting equity and inclusiveness without regard to race, gender, age, handicap or economic condition.

The 2023 recipient is the Rev. Elizabeth Murray, associate pastor for youth and young adults at American Church in Paris.

The Harry Denman Evangelism Award honors pastors and laypersons for responsible evangelism in the local church.

The 2023 recipients are the Rev. Corinthia Mack (clergy), pastor of New Market UMC in Hartsville, and Judi Landin (laity), a member of Bluffton UMC, Bluffton.

Information about nominations for next year’s awards, including forms, can be downloaded at <https://www.umsc.org/awards>.



Photo by Matt Brodie

Learning the ropes

For those attending Annual Conference for the first time as a lay delegate, two New Lay Member Orientation sessions were held Sunday afternoon before the start of the event. Here, laity listen as leaders explain some of the necessary information.

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AlstonWilkesSociety.org

LaMotte to perform at New Beginnings

BOILING SPRINGS—Author and musician David LaMotte will perform in concert at Boiling Springs Saturday, Sept. 16, with an evening of music and stories.

The concert begins at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$30, and children 10 and younger are free.

LaMotte's professional life has taken shape across more than 3,000 concerts and speaking events, 13 albums, three books, 50 states and five continents. The Boston Globe writes that LaMotte's music "pushes the envelope with challenging lyrics and unusual tunings, but he also pays homage to folk tradition," while BBC Radio Belfast lauds his "charm, stories, humour, insightful songs, sweet voice and dazzling guitar ability." LaMotte's most recent release, "Still," spent seven months in the Top 40 on the FAI Folk Radio Charts, and



LaMotte

his song "September Me" was the #1 folk song in September of last year.

Eighteen years into a successful music career, LaMotte walked away from the microphone for two years to pursue a master's degree in International Studies, Peace, and Conflict Resolution from the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, as a Rotary Peace Fellow. His new book, "You Are Changing the World Whether You Like It Or Not," was released in July on Chalice Press.

Attendees will have the opportunity to talk with him after the performance.

Boiling Springs UMC is located at 210 Rainbow Lake Road, Boiling Springs, SC 29316. For more information, contact the church office at 864-599-1303.

Rock Hill Men-n-Ministry event blesses many

Who says a vision can't be caught? The men and community residents in the vicinity and beyond the Western York Charge will say otherwise.

When Pastor Donald Love shared his vision of desiring to get the men of the Western York Charge involved in something they would enjoy, it inspired many.

This was evidenced Saturday, June 10, at New Zion United Methodist Church in Smyrna.

The seeds Love planted blossomed, and persons from near and far experienced an impactful event. Even in his absence because of health concerns, Love was able to greet the participants of the event and led participants in prayer as they prepared to enter a time of worship, which included songs from the Black Singers. They also heard a testimony from a community resident who shared how God continues to bless him in the midst of all of his struggles over the years.

Trevor Miller shared a message of inspiration as he gave examples of what God does in helping remodel our lives. He said God wants to transform and renovate each of our lives.

Miller posed a rhetorical question that gave all participants something to consider during and beyond the event: Where does



Men gathered for prayer, song and a good faith message.

God need to speak to you to do some transformation and renovation in your life?

Marvin Horton, president of the South Carolina Conference United Methodist Men in Ministry, said he was glad to be a part of the day's activities. He said God gave Love a vision, and it came to fruition.

"This is really about helping people come together, and this event has done just that," Horton concluded.

Everyone in attendance was grateful Love acted on the vision God gave him to share with the men of the Western York Charge and other community residents in his sphere of influence.

Around the Districts

Columbia District

Congratulations to the Rev. Mel and Melissa Arant and Rev. Athon and Edith Arant on the birth of their granddaughter and great-granddaughter. Magnolia Rose Arant Garcia was born July 13 to TSgt. Trey Arant and Laura Arant Garcia. Rev. Mel Arant is the director of Clergy Services. Rev. Athon Arant is a retired pastor.

On May 20, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wesley UMC, Columbia, cooked hot meals for the homeless, and members walked throughout the downtown Columbia area, handing out the hot plates to the homeless women and men in our community.

Greenwood District

Congratulations to the Rev. Emil and Mary Lou Finley on the birth of their fifth grandchild. Alexander Lucas Lezcano was born May 4 to Jennifer Finley-Lezcano. Rev. Finley is the pastor of Soule Chapel UMC, Waterloo.

Hartsville District

Congratulations to the Rev. Rachel and Cameron Headden on the birth of their son. Charles Cameron Headden was born June 21. Rev. Headden is the associate pastor of Trinity UMC, Sumter.

First UMC, Cheraw, held a Life Line Screening June 20. More than 30 preventative screenings were provided to the community. Life Line plans to return this winter.

Rock Hill District

The Rock Hill District held a worship/appreciation service for Donald Love via Zoom June 26. Members of the Western York Charge, where Love is serving, as well as family members joined in the service.

Spartanburg District

Unity UMC, Union, is in the process of closing and would love to know that some church could use their UMC hymn books, choir robes, paraments, baptismal font, pulpit cross and candlesticks. They also have a large set of the Cokesbury hymnal and "The Faith We Sing." Email Mary Nichols at msnichols@umcsc.org if interested.

Charge Conferences Zoom set for Aug. 30

Basic Church Administration is preparing for the Charge Conference season.

On Wednesday, Aug. 30, at 7:30 p.m., a Zoom class will be offered on preparing for the local charge conference.

Points that will be covered include a detailed walk through the forms required; where to find the information needed to complete the forms; who is responsible for completing the forms; and how to complete

the forms and print them out.

This class is especially for new pastors, pastors in their first year of a new appointment, membership secretaries, financial secretaries, treasurers, SPRC committees, trustees and church council chairs.

The Zoom class is free, but registration is required. Go to www.church-admin.org/registrations. For questions and more information: Rev. Robert Cox at rlcox@umcsc.org.



A classic car show was one of the highlights.



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Nick Lyerly

Two churches work together

When Bethel UMC, Marion, needed a place to worship, First UMC of Marion made their chapel available to the church members. Bethel UMC has been worshipping at Marion FUMC since last year. Bethel's sanctuary was closed last fall because it needed renovation and cleaning. They are hoping to be back in their sanctuary at some point in the near future. "The church members at FUMC have been very kind and welcoming to us," said Bethel church member Clayton Sellers. The Rev. Anthony Alford is the pastor of Bethel UMC.

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Photo courtesy of Tanesha Anding

Such joy

The JOY Sunday School Class at Shandon UMC, Columbia, celebrated the 60th anniversary of its founding on Sunday, May 21, with a luncheon in Player Hall. The theme was Diamond Jubilee, "Camp Meeting Style." More than 100 members and guests enjoyed a picnic-style lunch and gospel singing. Ariel Barker sang "My Tribute," "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho" and "Amazing Grace." All attendees sang "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "This Little Light of Mine" (while waving light-up diamond rings) and "I'll Fly Away" (while waving old-fashioned handheld fans). Plants were presented to original founding members Donna and Major Pearman, Sonny and Leanne Jarrett and Gessner Dunn and her late husband, Bill. President Al Moses gave a brief history of the class from the last 60 years. A great time was had by all, who said they look forward to year 61. Above, members gather for a smile.



Guest Commentary

by Christina D. Ness

Looking for God

I went to church today looking for God and he wasn't there.

I visited my late grandmother's church to honor her memory for her birthday. I went to sit in her pew at her beloved country church to fill her seat in her stead, a spot she had graced so faithfully throughout her life. I went with grief looking to leave some of my sadness behind, replacing it with hope, love and the peace I have not been able to muster since her passing but hoping to find it in church. Her church, with its simple structure and big blocked stained-glass windows that supply me with a beautiful memory—a rainbow of light shining on her skyward face raised as she listened to the joyful noise created in the little sanctuary.

I went to visit this church with a heavy but hopeful heart. Hopeful to experience God's love as I had in my visits before.

God wasn't there. What was there was anger, doom and a type of sadness I can't describe. There was palpable ego filling the space rather than the Holy Spirit. You see, this Sunday happened to be the last Sunday this congregation recognized itself as United. They took pictures throughout the service to proudly chronicle their separation, to celebrate their departure from what they feel is a church that's abandoned Scripture. They acted as though they had all of the answers, but it seemed like I was witnessing a slow-motion car crash. It felt off. The air was devoid of holiness.

After a sermon of pulpit banging and hellfire, the altar was ceremoniously stripped, the lights turned out and the door locked to symbolize the death of this church.

I felt like Jesus hung his head when the spotlight highlighting the cross was switched off.

I do not understand how we, all of us under the umbrella of Christianity, cannot appreciate that we are all working with the same text but coming to different ends. Interpretation allows for different perspectives. My God is love, grace and mercy. My God is a God who sees us where we are and shows us where we could be. My God says to not judge, to not hate, and above everything to do our best to love immeasurably. The god of this church was preparing for battle, bracing for the hell that was just around the corner for everyone who believes differently than them. Their god had been cobbled together with the sharp parts of Scripture and the stories that sting, telling themselves they were being persecuted because they were on the right track and the devil had made its way into the church. They felt, it seemed, that they were saving themselves from a train off its tracks. There was an urgency, a panic, a service laced with fear that culture had hijacked the UMC. There was no sweet spirit to speak of.

The slogan "open doors, open hearts, open minds" is true to Scripture, and to me those doors are only cracked and need a little push. But I recognize my life experiences have shaped my perspective differently than their own. There should be no confusion over the directive to love your neighbor. No caveats. No exemptions. Love. Your. Neighbor.

I appreciate that for some, their opinions are absolutes, but why burn down the church when you could simply walk out the door? Splitting The United Methodist Church is allowing your prejudices to control your faith, which means you're driving, not Jesus.

Ness attends church in Roebuck.



Guest Commentary

by Deborah Len

God with us always (Part 5 of 6)

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

It is Memorial Day weekend. Wow! Who would have thought me cleaning out a cabinet would in a few short months change the lives of "three musketeers."

Daniel and George will arrive soon to my home. My home! That thought puts a lump in my throat. Since January, I have had the master bedroom redone to include a bath. That way the house has two full bathrooms now. I also had a powder room and a laundry room added off the kitchen. The washer and dryer are now in their own little nook, and a toilet and sink are in there also. The room is quite cozy. Yeah, it still looks like a bachelor lives here. But thank you, Grandma Dot, for giving me this house that is now becoming my home.

The last time I saw my cousins was in the summer of 1973. No, they did not come to Grandma Dot's funeral. They had their reasons, and it was not my business to be nosy and pry. Oh, snap, crackle, and pop! Once again, Grandma Dot had influenced me to guard my tongue. Romans 1:29-32 came to my mind: Do not be full of all sorts of evil or envy or be a gossip. Yes, I have been reading the New Testament. It occurred to me that if I wanted a better life than I had to go to the foundation.

Oh, my heart is pounding. I see a car turning into the driveway. What in the

world? It is George driving a Porsche! Daniel owns a good Ford Taurus. This seems already odd to me. My mind spins: How in the world can George, who barely works regularly, afford a Porsche? God, help guard my tongue. Grandma Dot, you are still in my mind.

The greetings went smoothly and my cousins have their bags unpacked. Daniel's wife and children are coming on Sunday after church. One of the children is going to recite a poem in church. Here we go getting out steaks to grill on this Saturday night.

Our bellies full and dishes done, we sit around the kitchen table.

George says, "Why am I here?"

Daniel says, "To visit with your family."

George then monopolizes the conversation about how he was all that and the prize in the Cracker Jacks. He apparently rose to high ranks in the army. He retired last year and gets a pretty good pension. He drives his Porsche and his Harley and on and on and on. Never once does he take a breath and acknowledge that Grandma Dot was dead.

I feel sad for him for some odd reason.

"The letter," I say.

The floor is all mine, and I am sweating so much. Why does a letter from my Grandma Dot give me such anxiety?

I open the letter and start to read aloud.

"Dear Boys ..."

(To be continued next month.)

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



Guest Commentary

by Hugh McCown

What we need to know

This letter is addressed to the "know-nots," those people who really don't know. Please don't hang up—I'm not addressing your intelligence.

You might be a very smart individual; you just don't know what is going on in our country. The reason is often your phone, your iPad and your friends.

The purpose of this letter is to make you a "trans"—that is, transfer you from the "know-nots" to the "knows."

I will begin your edification by sharing with you a big surprise I got last week while rummaging through an old file cabinet—a letter I had written to the *Advocate* in 2015. This letter contained a proper solution for the Methodist church's quandary over sexuality.

The letter said, "First we must undertake two very important jobs, clean house and disciple our laypeople. By clean house I mean remove from membership those who are committed to amending God's word (1 Corinthians 5:13). I am specifically referring to the article in the April 2015 *Advocate* where a group of church members submitted a resolution that requests that the verbiage found in the *Book of Discipline* that states the UMC does not condone the practice of homosexuality be deleted. My *Book of Discipline*, 1984 edition, also states on the same page that sex between a man and a woman is only to be clearly confirmed in the marriage bond."

It continued, "The problem we are discussing can best be summarized by quoting from my Disciples Study Bible commentary, 1 Timothy 1:3-7, 'The Church's greatest danger comes not from those who oppose Christianity, but from those who want to modify Christian beliefs to suit cultural values, political doctrines and popular superstitions.'"

In his book "Are We Yet Alive?" Bishop Richard Wilke writes, "Those who want to rewrite the Bible using their current philosophical or sociological perspectives do us a great disservice. Too many people have spent too many years painstakingly poring over too many manuscripts guided by too much Holy Spirit for us to tinker with the texts now."

After seven-plus years it's obvious the letter didn't convince enough people to make a difference. So I'm going to stick with the letter's purpose: to provide you with enough information so that you will make your own decision. (You are accountable to God, not to the bishop, not to the district superintendent and not to the pastor.) I will attempt to emulate Jesus's teaching style. He used parables that normally make one point. I will use stories to show that very important people can make horrendous mistakes. The stories will include our founding fathers plus some of our country's history. Why? Because the founding fathers were very talented men, they were Christians (the majority), they were courageous and they were smart. And another small fact, they designed and executed the creation of the greatest nation the world has ever seen.

The first parable occurred in 1962 when six Supreme Court Justices ruled that the Bible and prayer could not be allowed in public schools—it was unconstitutional. This was their interpretation of the Constitution, but it was a lie. There was nothing in the Constitution that prohibited this school activity; in fact the First Amendment protected this freedom. The Constitution only allows the Supreme Court to interpret—not to amend laws, not to write new law.

What can our country's history share with us? The New England Primer was used in our public schools for more than two centuries, and it contained Bible Scriptures for the children to memorize. It was preceded by the Bible. What did our country's existing laws have to say? The authoritative statement regarding education from the period

of the American founding is contained in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. The third article of the Northwest Ordinance declares, "Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall ever be encouraged."

The Northwest Ordinance is still included as the third item in the U.S. Code. Alongside the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution of the U.S., it is one of the four organic (meaning still alive) laws of the U.S..

For the second story, it happened as a result of musing over the seven-year-old letter. I wondered if Bishop Wilke was still alive. Going to DuckDuckGo, I discovered an article he had written in 2019. The title was "Gay Daughter Sent Bishop Back to Scriptures." As a layperson I certainly am not going to critique the bishop's article, but I will share a couple of paragraphs out of the eight-page article. Quoting Wilke's paragraph verbatim, "So keeping this understanding in mind I took each passage that addresses homosexuality and examined its context. I looked at the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, which has been used over the centuries to claim that homosexuality is a sin—the so-called 'sin of Sodom.' The angry townspeople were eager to rape and humiliate the strangers who were visiting Lot."

Quoting Wilke's second and concluding paragraph about Sodom: "But I think it is fairly easy to see that the sin was not homosexuality but rather the townspeople's violent inhospitality to strangers."

What does the Bible say? Genesis 19:3-5, "But he (Lot) insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. They called to Lot, 'Where are the men that came to your house tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.'"

What does the Bible also say? Jude 7, "In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire."

What did our Founding Fathers have to say? Quoting from the commentary found in The Founders Bible, "The act of homosexuality was so shameful that James Wilson (a signer of both the Declaration and the Constitution and placed on the Supreme Court by George Washington) would not even discuss it publicly. It was indeed 'that horrible crime not to be named among Christians.' Because the Bible was clear on the issue of homosexuality, the Founding Fathers were equally clear in their opposition to it, American law similarly reflected its repugnancy—a position maintained until 2003, when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down these state laws. But well into the 20th century, American courts had regularly used the phrase 'that horrible (or sometimes, abominable) crime not to be named among Christians' when addressing homosexuality."

In summary there is a word that jumps out of the two stories: interpretation. It's true some Scripture in the Bible requires interpretation, but it's not needed the multiple times God talks about the homosexual issue in both the Old and New Testament. Our Founding Fathers agreed on the clarity.

However, just like the Supreme Court and the bishop, this didn't prevent our church's leadership and many pastors from jumping in with their interpretations—and this has been going on for more than seven years.

McCown attends Shiloh UMC.

Five scholarships awarded by United Women in Faith

The 2023 Presidential Scholarship of the South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith has been awarded to five deserving future leaders: Mya Barr-Cook, Spartanburg District; Adrienne Brockman, Greenville District; Olivia Fogel, Walterboro District; Juliana Lundgren, Greenville District; and Anna O’Cain, Walterboro District.



Barr-Cook



Brockman



Fogel



Lundgren



O’Cain

accomplishments thus far in their young lives are amazing. South Carolina UWF said they are so blessed and thankful for these inspiring young women and their families.

The Presidential Scholarship Award began in 2017 and, including the five this year, 25 have been awarded.

Gifts to the scholarship are accepted on behalf of all members of UWF in South Carolina and should be forwarded to the conference treasurer.

Each recipient expressed their sincere appreciation and are so grateful for this opportunity.

Each scholarship is awarded to financially assist young women with their higher education needs.

The goal with the scholarship is to recognize future leaders and provide support

through prayer and financial gifts.

Scholarship Committee Chair Ruby Hannah, South Carolina Conference UWF treasurer, receives the applications post-marked no later than the March 1 due date. The scholarship committee then makes the

decisions based on a combination of grade point average, leadership and community service and United Women in Faith and church involvement.

All the applicants were outstanding, intelligent and dedication Christians. Their

Columbia College forms trauma-informed partnership with Alston Wilkes Society

COLUMBIA—In recent years, Columbia College has established itself as a national leader in trauma-informed education and practices. The Division of Education offers a Master of Education in trauma-informed education as well as a certificate through the Institute for Building Resilience through Trauma-Informed Practices.

In June, the Alston Wilkes Society became the first community organization in South Carolina to be certified by Columbia College as a Trauma-Informed Practices agency.

“At Columbia College, we understand that trauma is underdiagnosed, undertreated and overrepresented, and its impact is pervasive,” said Columbia College Provost Dr. Kristine Barnett. “This institute champions the use of trauma-informed practices and equips individuals and organizations to build resilience through their work in the world.

“It is our hope that other organizations are able to see and appreciate the work of the Alston Wilkes Society and seek out opportunities for other organizations to utilize trauma-informed practices as well.”

The institute was created in order to prepare leaders to heal wounds, build resilience, and promote social justice. As part of the

origin of the institute, former president of Columbia College Dr. Peter Mitchell and Program Chair for Social Work Dr. Shirley Huisman developed an all-encompassing list of expectations, competencies and initiatives that an organization must complete to be certified as a TIP agency.

After years of preparation, training and implementation, the Alston Wilkes Society successfully completed the program that included training for staff.

“Becoming the first nonprofit agency in South Carolina to be certified by Columbia College as a TIP agency is significant to the Alston Wilkes Society and to those we serve,” said President and CEO of Alston Wilkes Society Anne Walker. “As we continue on our path of achieving best practices at the Society, earning this certification ensures our continued reputation of providing ongoing quality services for over 61 years. We sincerely appreciate Columbia College working with us to reach this historic milestone.”

Columbia College will continue striving to build resilience through trauma-informed education and practices. For more information or to become a partner, contact provost@columbiasc.edu.

SMC program recognized for innovation

SPARTANBURG—National education data science and research firm Encoura awarded Spartanburg Methodist College a 2023 Recognition of Achievement award for innovation for the college’s Camak Core professional development program.

“It’s an honor to be recognized for our efforts to make sure that our graduates are fully prepared to transition from college to the workplace,” said SMC President Scott Cochran. “Providing them the soft skills they need to integrate into the workplace, in conjunction with the top-notch education our faculty provides, gives our students a leg up as they start their careers.”

The Eduventures Innovation Awards were presented at Encoura’s 2023 Eduventures Summit in June. The awards program was created to recognize and showcase the achievements of individuals and organizations that share the company’s vision for innovating to improve outcomes in higher education.



Photo courtesy of Ernestine McCaskill

Kicking off summer with Promotional Day

Sandy Grove UMC, Jefferson, held a Promotional Day service June 4 for all children graduating from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade. The event was sponsored by the chairs of the church’s education committee, Peggy Hood; children’s ministry committee, Lloyd Harris; and youth ministry committee, Pat Collins. The congregation celebrated with the students after the service with a cake and ice cream party. Sandy Grove’s pastor is the Rev. Marion Loretta Cooper.



VBS fun in Manning

Manning UMC, Manning, held a food truck-themed vacation Bible school this year. It was held June 5-8.

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Photo courtesy of Lavone Breland

‘Let Your Little Light Shine’

Hickory Hill UMC held Student Recognition Sunday June 25, lifting up 1 Timothy 14:12. With a message based on “Let Your Little Light Shine,” the Rev. Adrienne Stokes brought a message for students ages 3 to adult seminarians—including for herself, as she recently graduated magna cum laude from Hood Theological Seminary. “Because you are small you are great in God’s eyes,” she preached. “So let your light shine. Do not let anyone look down on you. You are enough. You are leaders, speakers and hard workers. Be caring, kind and respectful. Love others through your actions, not just words. ... Remember that you are a child of God.”

Harleyville Parish hosts Community Health & Fun Day

DORCHESTER—On June 10, Harleyville Parish's Lay Servant Ministry partnered with Medical Ministry Inc. to honor the memory of one of their own, Monique Pringle-Williams.

Pringle-Williams, a lay servant, passed away in 2020.

Medical Ministry Inc. is a free mobile medical clinic that serves several counties in South Carolina.

Church members and members of the Dorchester Community came together at Morris Chapel United Methodist Church for a day of free fun, free food and free health resources. Food was provided by the United Methodist Men; their grill was loaded with hot dogs, hamburgers, sausages and chicken. Not to be outdone, United Women in Faith added the side dishes of macaroni-and-cheese and coleslaw. Banana pudding and strawberry shortcake rounded out the meal.

The Food Bank Ministry offered free food distribution to everyone and a yard sale with lots of donated items to give away.

The Dorchester County Fire & Rescue unit was on hand for the children, giving tours of the unit and playing games. A huge jump castle and face painting were onsite, and everyone, young and old, received their own red fire hat to



Pringle-Williams



Medical Ministry Inc. provided glucose testing, blood pressure checks, reading glasses, diabetic information and more.

take home. Medical Ministry Inc. provided glucose testing, blood pressure checks, free reading glasses, diabetic information and fresh fruits to sample.

Several vendors were also on the grounds. Shear Blessings by Monica provided free haircuts. The South Carolina Navigator Program was available to assist with information on available resources in the area. A Mary Kay representative gave free skin care information and samples. 4LIFE, The Immune System Co., provided steps to balance mind, body and soul. They also had free samples of Transfer Factor



smoothies.

A representative from the Affordable Connectivity Program helped those in need of affordable internet service and more.

The day included drawings for several cash prizes and a slow cooker. More than 150 people attended, and each took home a goodie bag of memories from the day.

Morris Chapel Lay Servant Ministry Team Norma Smith, lay leader, along with lay servants Brenda Smith, Andra S. Ladson, Ethel Williams, Annie Washington and Dora Hartwell sponsored the event.

Native American Ministries

Lacrosse: America's oldest team sport

Lacrosse is America's oldest team sport. It dates back to as early as A.D. 1100. It was played by the Haudenosaunee in what later became areas of New York and Canada.

Upwards of 1,000 men played in a single game. The sticks were made of wood with net baskets or pockets on the end. The nets were formed by deer sinew, while the balls were either a rock wrapped in deer hide or rolled-up deer hide.

Playing fields could be miles long and games could last for days. Names for the game differed by nation (or tribe) and generally were a description of the action taking place. Examples include literal translations of "little brother of war" or "men hit a rounded object."

To the Native population, it was much more than a game. It was played to settle disputes or could prepare nations for war. It could also be a social event between tribes. Trading between nations could coincide with the game itself. It is also a medicine game. It was given by the Creator to heal the sick, make peace among nations and to have fun. There are no referees, no boundaries, no equipment other than the ball and stick and no time clock.

Many nations include it in their origin and creation stories. It is a fabric of their culture and its origin predates Earth. In other tribes, it was originally played between winged animals and land animals. The spirits and physical characteristics would pass on and be highlighted by men later.

In Quebec during the 1600s, French missionaries were introduced to the game. They named it lacrosse because the sticks reminded them of the bishop's crozier (or cross), which was carried during religious ceremonies.

Initially, the colonists could not com-

pete with the Natives. They then "civilized" the game by adding rules and started club teams. The first non-Native lacrosse club was organized in Montreal in 1856. George Beers established rules that replaced open fields with boundaries and limited the number of players on each side to 12.

In "Lacrosse: The Creator's Game," Beers gave insight to a non-Native view on Native players:

"Lacrosse and the wind for running, which comes as natural to the redskin as his dialect, has to be gained on the part of the paleface by a gradual course of practice and training. All Indians are not good players. But I never knew one without an aptitude for the game."

As lacrosse grew in popularity in North America, Native and non-Native teams traveled to Europe for exhibition games. The Haudenosaunee were recognized by the French as Iroquois. Ironically, the name was originally Iroquois and was given by the Algonquin to mean Irinakhoiw (real snakes) and the French added "ois," which is a Gallic suffix.

In 1859, Canada declared lacrosse as its national sport, changing both the meaning and intention of its native identity. In 1867, the National Lacrosse Association was formed. Two teams vied for the first national title. Caughnawaga Nation defeated the Montreal Lacrosse Club.

NYU and Manhattan College played the first collegiate game in 1877, 22 years before the first collegiate basketball game. In 1880, all Native teams were barred from championship play because they were labeled as professional. Native teams had to charge money to fund their travels. This denies the amateur status required for national play. Meanwhile, non-Native teams recruited Native players

as ringers. A ringer is a person who is highly proficient at a sport and is brought in to supplement the team. Light-skinned Native are chosen and told not to speak in their Native tongue.

In "Roots: Exploring the History of Lacrosse," Oren Lyons gives the difference between cultures. He was an all-American goalkeeper at Syracuse, is a lacrosse hall of famer and is an Onondaga Faithkeeper.

"When you talk about lacrosse, you talk about the lifeblood of our Six Nations (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora)," Lyons wrote. "The game is ingrained in our culture, our system and our lives. Anthropologists come here and stay for a year and think that they understand our life and our religion. If you can't understand the language, you'll never get it right. I've been here my whole life and I am still learning. But when I die, I'll be buried with my goalkeeper's stick."

In "Spirit of the Stick," Lyons cites more difference in Native Lacrosse: "The first game we play in the spring is for the game itself. It is much more than a game and needs to be played with a wooden stick. The more popular and mass-produced plastic stick is referred to as a Tupperware stick. There is nothing spiritual about plastic."

In "Lacrosse Onondaga Nation," Alfred Jacques tells how much a stick means to its handler. He is an Onondaga stickmaker.

"You are born with a stick (first given to a baby in their cradle) and buried with a stick,"

Jacques wrote. "When you pass on to the spirit world, you will play with your ancestors. The Creator will be there and there will be a game for you. Lacrosse does not end here. It goes on."

Jacques was self-taught, learning from his father at the age of 12.

It takes 10 months to make each stick, from the time a tree is selected to the stringing of the stick.

Box lacrosse, or indoor lacrosse, started in Canada in 1930. It promoted business for ice hockey arenas during the summer months. Box lacrosse is played at a quicker pace and is more physical. The Haudenosaunee added box lacrosse but played it with the original Native philosophy.

Although lacrosse declined in popularity during wartime, it remained in the Native population as strong as always. In "Lacrosse: Onondaga Nation," Lyons retold a comment he received from Roy Simmons, the head coach at Syracuse from 1931-1970.

"If it wasn't for the Onondaga Nation continuing to play the game during wartime, the game might have become lost," Simmons told him. "All the men had gone to war and the colleges were not playing it. Natives continued to play even while serving their countries."

Onondaga players are never paid for play. The Onondaga call their game Dehontsig-waehs, which means "they bump hips."

Part Two will cover postwar lacrosse and the women's game.

Greenville women celebrate scholarship recipient

The Greenville District United Women In Faith is excited to announce that one of their own young ladies has received the South Carolina United Women in Faith Presidential Scholarship for 2023: Adrienne Juleva Brockman.

They said they are proud of Adrienne and the ladies from her church, St. Matthew UMC, Taylors, for being mentors for this awesome young lady.



Adrienne Brockman

Adrienne attended Eastside High School in Taylors. At St. Matthew, she joined the children's choir at age 3 and committed her life to Christ at age 12. She has been accepted into the Honors College at North Carolina A&T University, where she will study architectural engineering.

Thankful for this scholarship, she states, "Rest assured, I will always continue to serve my community."

Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry Sunday ~ 2nd Sunday in August



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

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

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

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

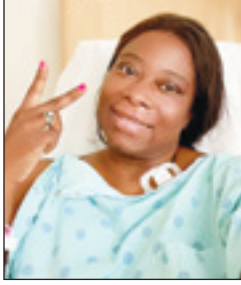
Visit aldersgatesnm.org to make an online donation.



KIDNEY TRANSPLANT: 'God is good all the time'

From Page 1

A whirlwind
The events almost feel surreal. Henry had been at Annual Conference with her husband, adult daughter and grandbaby, singing with joy during the evening worship service. After, they went to a late dinner with a pastor-friend from the



Henry, post-transplant

Rock Hill District. That's when she got the call that would change her life forever. It was the hospital, calling to let her know there was a potential kidney. She had received two calls like this before, but this time was different. The hospital said there were two kidneys potentially available—and Henry was No. 2 on the list. "Just keep your phone volume up and stay by the phone," she was instructed. After prayer and an anointing with holy oil, the Henrys retreated to their hotel room. Then, at 4:08 a.m., she got the call she'd

been praying for: "Can you get here by 6:30?" the woman asked her. They rushed to pack and get their car loaded, alternating between rushing around, crying tears of joy and praising God. It was so early the windshield wasn't fully defrosted, and in their haste, her husband ran over a curb pulling out of the parking lot and flattened two tires. "He was so upset," Henry recalled. But the Rev. Mel Arant—her husband's boss and director of Clergy Services—offered up his truck for them to drive to Charleston. The drive was a blur.

"I will be on medicine the rest of life so my body doesn't reject it as a foreign body, which is normal with a transplant. But I had my stent removal last week, and one doctor said he's never seen numbers so good from a transplant patient right after surgery. Mine took a week! That's how I know God is in the middle of all of this." Her theme verse is Romans 8:28, which she's been able to experience over and over during her process: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (NIV).



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"We were speeding, of course, with our hazards on," Henry said. "We had a two-hour window to get there, and it was a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Florence to Charleston." But they listened to gospel music all the way down, nervous and happy, and by God's providence, made it to the hospital at 6:33 a.m., just in time. Henry was fearful of the surgery. The last time she'd had an operation was two decades ago, when she had a caesarean section giving birth to her daughter. But all the staff was kind and reassuring. During preparation for the surgery, she saw a younger Hispanic woman and an older man. Later, she found out all of them got organs from the same donor, a 15-year-old girl who'd passed away earlier that evening. Her kidney arrived on a helicopter from Charlotte, and it was a perfect match. "It's bittersweet," Henry said, knowing someone lost a child, yet that child had the thoughtfulness and generosity to take steps to become an organ donor before her death. "No teenager thinks like that. They usually just think, 'I want to get my permit or my license' and that's it, so the fact that this young lady was mature enough and caring enough to say, 'I want to be a donor,' I feel as though aside from making sure I am doing everything I can for myself and my family, I want to take care of my kidney to the best of my ability because she sacrificed her life."

'God is in the middle'
Henry's recovery has been surprisingly fast. She was out of bed by the second day, and by the fourth day she was making TikTok videos. "With a deceased donor kidney, it can take a while for the kidney to wake up, but luckily, no extra dialysis was necessary," she said. "It was awake." After a week of checkups, Henry has been recovering at home, and her doctor reports that she is "healing great."

While she will need regular doctor visits for a while, and she has a compromised immune system because of the transplant and necessary medications, "I'll be able to do a lot of things I was not able to do before." She's especially eager to continue her work as an advocate for kidney disease and kidney failure. She and Sharome want to start a donor partnering program, and they are researching how to make this happen. "I found out if a person doesn't have a caregiver, they're not even considered for a kidney transplant list, and there are so many people out there who don't have anybody to help. They're doing dialysis at a care center, and they'll be on dialysis until God calls them home," Henry said. Henry said she is tremendously grateful for her husband, who she said hasn't left her side during the entire experience and has been a phenomenal caregiver. And for his part, her husband said he wants nothing more than to acknowledge the goodness of God. "I am a barrel of mixed emotions," he said. "I am grateful and overjoyed at what God has done! Our God is awesome. I am relieved and feel that weight lifted, and a little more free to serve." He said he is overjoyed and excited to see what the Lord is going to do with his wife and their family. "We have work to do," he said. "God is good all the time, and all the time, God is good. Thank you, Lord! All praise and glory belongs to God." The Henrys are hoping to start a pathway to get people to sign up to be care partners for these people so these they can get on the transplant list and have a chance at a new life. Watch the *Advocate* for more information on this. "There's a lot of work God has for me to do," Henry said. "The fight is not over, and having this kidney gives me more strength to advocate for this disease."

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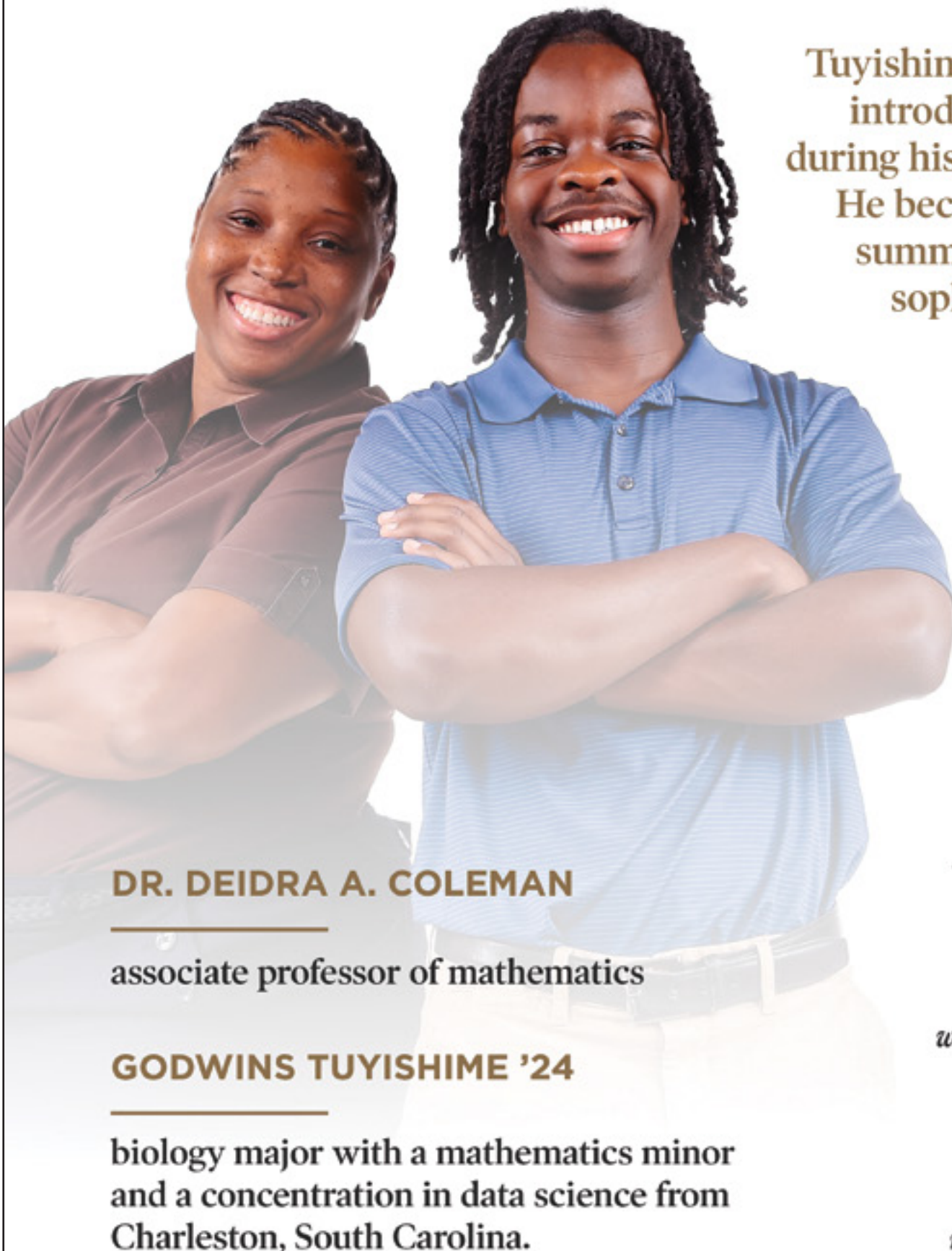
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Tuyishime met Coleman in an introductory statistics class during his first year at Wofford. He became a member of her summer research team as a sophomore and spent his junior summer with a bioinformatics company. This year, he's back with Coleman as a researcher and team leader.

DR. DEIDRA A. COLEMAN

associate professor of mathematics

GODWINS TUYISHIME '24

biology major with a mathematics minor and a concentration in data science from Charleston, South Carolina.

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Where thought leads. **To enlightenment.**

LANCASTER SALKEHATCHIE: Pitching in to help neighbors

From Page 1

The Twitty home is located in the Promise Neighborhood zone; the Threatt home is not in the zone but nearby. Salkehatchie provided the building supplies and laborers for the effort, while Promise Neighborhood provided food and purchased everything on the homeowners' wish list, such as new bedding, outdoor chairs and a welcome mat.

"It was a really good experience," said Susan Hagins, Lancaster Salkehatchie co-director with her husband, David.

Coming back for the first time since the pandemic, they had to dust off their list of houses to repair, Hagins said, and they discovered a lot of people had passed away or moved from the area. But partnering with Promise Neighborhood helped them identify homes in need.

One of the homes was in an area that often experiences much crime, with a drug house within walking distance and two condemned houses across the street. But they enlisted supervision from local police, plus much prayer, and in the end, they were able to shine a light in a community that often experiences much darkness.

"We don't know what seeds of hope we planted there," Hagins said, noting one woman has since reached out to her for help. "People walked up and down all week, saw the name of our church on the bus, saw the name 'Salkehatchie' on the side of our cars."

The Rev. Sh'Kur Francis, a United Methodist clergyman who serves as director for Promise Neighborhood, said the experience was transformative.

"Love is the foundation of any neighborhood," Francis said. "Partnering together and putting that love into action and literally transforming the lives of others was such a blessing."

Holly Craig, an adult leader for the Twitty home, has been a Salkehatchie volunteer for so long she can't remember when she started. Used to being a runner, this was the first time since high school that she has worked all week on a site, and she said her experience sparked that "Salkehatchie magic" for her once more.

She and the others on her team did a number of projects on the home, including replacing two storm doors, rescreening and reflooring the back porch, replacing window panes, painting the kitchen and some cabinetry, adding a backsplash to the counters, running piping off the back of the house and digging a trench so water could run around the house, among a number of safety measures. Volunteers also handwashed the vinyl siding on the entire home instead of pressure washing it, as the siding was so old they were afraid pressure washing might ruin it.

"It was an opportunity to serve and be his hands and feet and get down and get dirty," Craig said. "It just fills my cup when I can do that for others."

Craig said every Salkehatchie volunteer had the oppor-



At left, volunteers with Lancaster Salkehatchie work on the Threatt home. At right, the Twitty home gets a hand-washing.

tunity select a symbol for the week that represented Salkehatchie for them. She selected a piece of the backsplash that she worked on.

I can be a perfectionist, but we're working with a house where the walls are not square, trying to line it all up, and several spots you had to line up were really like a puzzle.

The challenge for her, she said, was to force herself to step back and focus not on the imperfections but the whole project. The homeowner, Princess Twitty, had been born in that house and lived there all her life, and she was so grateful for the help.

"Ms. Twitty, she loved it," Craig said. "God's in all the details, too, but it just reminded me that it's all about the big picture."

Sadie Ferguson, an adult volunteer at the Threatt house, is also a longtime Salkehatchie volunteer, having served for more than 15 summers on houses. Their home involved reflooring the front living area so the homebound homeowner, Donnie Threatt, could enjoy the big picture window while he recuperated in his hospital bed, as well as renovating the guest bathroom, replacing rotted flooring and adding a working toilet and vanity for Threatt's wife, Frances. They also painted and added vinyl siding on the gabled porch where there had been none.

Sadly, Threatt passed away just as this article was going to press, but Ferguson said he got to move his hospital bed into the new space and enjoy three weeks of sunlight, enjoying the scenery outside, instead of being cooped up in a dark back room with only a television to watch.

"He was in so much better spirits and got to sit up for the first time in six months to look out the window," Ferguson said, noting Threatt and his wife were incredibly grateful for the repairs.

That's exactly why she takes off work and gives her time every summer to volunteer with Salkehatchie—because of the love and hope it gives to the homeowners, many of whom feel forgotten and unloved.

"Every little tiny thing we did brought tears to her eyes because she felt like somebody cared about her," Ferguson said. "There are so many people who feel nobody cares about them, and this is letting them know they are worth helping."

Landon Gurley worked on the Threatt home with Ferguson and said he genuinely enjoyed the work. It was his first year as a Salkehatchie volunteer, and he says he can't wait to return next year and continue to help.

"It was a great use of my time," Gurley said. "I got to help somebody who really truly needed it, and I felt good doing it because I was with my friends and having fun and doing something good for someone."

Lauren Carnes, also a first-time Salkehatchie volunteer, has the special distinction of being the fourth generation in her family to do Salkehatchie. She said it felt great to help others through this work.

"I love helping people, so this was just right up my alley," Carnes said. "It just makes me happy to know that the work I have done gave someone a better home to live in."

The homeowner, Princess Twitty, said she feels beyond blessed by the assistance and truly loved interacting with the volunteers, who she said were so kind and respectful.

"Oh, Lord, how I appreciate it. I'm just so happy I don't know what to do with it," she told the *Advocate*, laughing. "Sometimes I do nothing but just stand there and look at my kitchen! Those kids did a wonderful job."

For more on Salkehatchie or to get involved, visit <https://www.umcsc.org/salkehatchie>.

PRESERVING THE PAST: 'It's been amazing to see it now'

From Page 1

electrical system and doing a host of other things to keep this physical remnant of great history alive and well for decades to come.

"It's been so exciting to see," said the Rev. Eddie Williams, pastor of Trinity since 2020 who came onboard midway through the renovation project.

Williams, along with Trinity's Board of Trustees Chair Patricia Lott and Dr. Barbara Bowman, sat down with the *Advocate* this summer to share plans for the facility, celebrate the new grant and reflect on all the work that has been accomplished over the years.

Williams and his wife were married years ago at Trinity, and to be able to return mid-project and help with some of the work has been a blessing.

"When I started, they were just taking the windows out. It's amazing to see it now," Williams said.

Four large grants since 2018

As the church experienced moisture, air conditioning and electrical issues, church leaders started exploring grants and other means to pay for need repairs and renovations. While many grants existed for ministry undertakings, few at the time existed for brick-and-mortar projects like Trinity's.

But in 2015, they were able to secure a \$25,000 grant from the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, which

the church matched to fund an architectural assessment of the facility.

"Ours is a historical building, so we were limited on who we could hire to do the work," Lott said, but they finally were able to select their firm—The Boudreaux Group, in Columbia—and begin the process.

They received their first large grant, \$500,000, from the National Park Service in 2018. That sum, along with \$100,000 additional funds contributed by church members, installed central heat and air conditioning in the church's education building, installed a new fire alarm system, and upgraded the church's electrical system.

In 2019, they received their next NPS grant, again for \$500,000 supplemented with \$100,000 from church members, which began restoring the church's historic and much-beloved stained-glass windows, as well as tackling more building and masonry restoration from ongoing water damage.

The stained-glass windows were important not only to Trinity and its members but to the UMC as a whole; Bowman and Lott said the church is thought to hold the record in the South Carolina Conference for the greatest number of stained-glass windows, and many were donated in memory or in honor of past church leaders who played a significant role in expanding God's kingdom in Orangeburg and beyond.

The third grant was received in 2022, again for \$500,000 supplemented with \$100,000 more, and that work is going on

now, including continued restoration of the windows and structural waterproofing.

The latest grant, announced in June, is for \$750,000 to continue the stained-glass work, including repointing, as well as to upgrade the electrical system and repair the roof.

"It was hard work," Bowman said about the process it took to write the grants, which she, Lott and others on the church's grant committee took on.

"But it's important to people," Lott added. "A few members remember when this church was being built."

'Imperative'

Trinity, which began construction on its current sanctuary in 1928, was completed in 1944 and is on the National Historic Registry. The church was established in 1866 and build its first sanctuary in 1870, four blocks southeast of the current structure.

Bowman said the church played a huge role in the city's civil rights movement. Not only did well-known civil rights leaders speak there, but it was a hub for people to regroup, eat and gather.

"People would have marches downtown, go to jail, then come back to Trinity and eat here," Bowman said. "The congregation was very, very supportive of it, and the pastor then was the president of the NAACP."

While the church was always well-maintained, age creates problems, and Trinity members are grateful they were able to

secure the needed funds to do such restoration.

"Stained glass is almost a thing of the past," Lott said, noting they have something precious to care for, something many churches don't have anymore. "The windows are dedicated to members and families."

Now, they said, the windows are able to shine light into the sanctuary brilliantly, and it's easier to read all the historic names on them.

"You can better see everything," Williams said.

Work on the education building is now complete, they said.

And they all look forward to witnessing the completion of Phase Four, and being a part of all the exciting work the church will continue—now and into the future.

Speaking in June as he announced the recipients of the NPS Historic Preservation Fund's African American Civil Rights grants, Congressman James E. Clyburn said the continued dedication to preserving the history of African Americans in South Carolina and beyond brings him great pleasure.

"It is imperative that we continue to protect and celebrate the places, people, and stories of one of the greatest struggles in American history," Clyburn said.

To learn more about the NPS Historic Preservation Fund's African American Civil Rights grants, visit <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/african-american-civil-rights.htm>.

HUNGARY MISSION: 'It's exciting even if it is scary'

From Page 1

Building trust, banding together

Both of them will serve in Budapest, Hungary's capital city and the hub for OMS's regional headquarters, encompassing Europe and the Middle East. Weston will be the disciple-making coordinator, building his own team and working with partner congregations to help them go deeper with their membership.

"Much like in America, you have people who go to church, just show up, worship and don't do anything else faith-related," Weston said. "It doesn't change their hearts and lives."

He will use a Wesleyan-based curriculum called "Banding Together," based on Methodism founder John Wesley's bands, to help encourage small group formation and other ways to live life as Christians. He will also develop a team to work with congregations and train leaders upon request.

He said there are a number of partner congregations there already, many of them United Methodist but also some Baptist, Seventh-Day Adventist, Church of Christ and nondenominational. While there is a heavy Catholic presence, the majority are considered "nones" (not affiliated with any religious organization), partly because of the remnants of the Soviet influence. The Republic of Hungary began in 1989, and Soviet troops were didn't fully withdraw until June 1991. This is the first generation there to live in freedom.

Chrisie will serve as the community impact coordinator, actively helping the team have a positive impact on the country and overseeing English ministries so Hungarians can better grasp the language and secure good jobs. The team is currently renovating a donated building and turning it into a preschool, which meets a great need as there are not enough preschools, but preschool education is required.

"Mostly it's about building trust in the community," she said.

Also, as they are the only pastors on the OMS team there, they will serve as the team and region's pastoral leaders. As Chrisie said, they will be "caring for those who care for others."

A winding road

Their path from pastor to missionary was a circuitous one. Chrisie felt called to be a missionary at age 17, inspired by her youth director and his wife who had served in Thailand and helped her understand there was a world beyond America.

"We learned about Heifer International and World Vision and Crop Walks, and I got really into it and discovered a heart for people who lived a totally different way from me," Chrisie said, sharing how she began go-



The family hopes to move to Budapest in January if they are fully funded.

ing on mission to places of extreme poverty, such as among the Navajo in New Mexico, where she was raised.

She studied foreign language in college assuming her life would gravitate toward missions, but then she was called on a different path, ultimately attending Duke Divinity School and becoming an ordained elder in the South Carolina Conference of the UMC.

But her hunger for missions never subsided.

"And now the two calls have converged," she said. "I'm still very much going to be a minister, just not serving in the local church."

For Weston, however, it was entirely different. He said he never felt called to mission work.

"It was a resounding no," he said. "I didn't feel that call, I did not want to leave the United States for a very long time, I was very adamant I would not leave the United States to live, and it was not until a few years ago really that I was even open to that idea."

But when his wife shared that missions was something she had felt called to since she was a teenager, he said, "I felt I should be open to the discussion."

Finally, he entered into a week of prayer. The answer took some time to emerge.

"I wasn't told 'no,' and I wasn't given a reason not to pursue it," he said.

So they meandered along, inquiring and learning as they went, and ultimately, Weston began to feel a leading—a "push," as he calls it—to stay on the missionary path. Soon they felt a direct steer to serve on the continent of Europe. At first they sought an opportunity within the UMC's General Board of Global Ministries, but with no opportunities open in Europe, they explored other organizations.

And when they found Weston's position first, that was the final moment of clarity.

"That really affirmed the call," Chrisie said. "He was the one who'd been reticent, but his job was the one that showed up first!"

Now they're eager to finish the last steps, hoping to raise final funds and be able to move in January. They need to secure roughly \$10,000/month of recurring giving, or the equivalent in annual gifts, to be considered "fully funded."

To live and be like Jesus

Chrisie said what strikes her about their opportunity is that Hungary is a post-Soviet nation, and their path to Christ is a beautiful thing to be involved with.

"At our July 4 service, I was listening as we were all singing 'God Bless America' and talking about how much God loves America, but the truth is that God loves them, too. God doesn't love them any less," she said.

They will be living and working among a people who didn't experience the same level of freedom Americans experience—they didn't have freedom of religion or freedom of press, and they knew if spoke up about a leader it could be deadly.

"God calls us to see these people, but they're often forgotten," Chrisie said. "There are parts of Hungary that don't have any water, and villages where no one has ever met a native English speaker. They're deeply skeptical and distrusting of outsiders because they have been promised all kinds of things, and many missionaries have not upheld these promises."

They will need to work hard to gain the trust of the people.

They will also need to learn Hungarian—a language the State Department considers to be the most complex for English speakers to learn.

"We'll never master it," Chrisie said. "One team member has been there 12 years and is only now able to lead in a purely Hungarian worship service."

But that is one of the things God is asking of them—to model incarnation, to live among the people there, to live and be like

Jesus.

Living into Scripture

Their first six months will be spent in intensive language classes for half the day. They plan to live in an apartment in Budapest, and Samuel will attend the International Christian School of Budapest, an English-speaking school geared toward an Americanized education system and toward college, as he has certain needs the Hungarian education system might not be able to accommodate.

"This way he will be in a familiar school style, will start learning Hungarian, will know some of the kids there and will feel more like what he's used to," Weston said.

Right now he's homeschooling until they move to Budapest, and they said he's looking forward to the experience.

"He's so excited," Chrisie said.

Between now and January, they are fundraising full time, meeting people, talking with churches, trying to gain monthly supporters and getting people to subscribe to their mission newsletter.

They sold nearly all of their belongings when they left South Carolina—their cars and most furniture, only keeping basics.

That was a liberating experience, Weston said.

"It was really so nice to get rid of our stuff and be free from it all," he said.

Chrisie added, "It also felt like that passage from Scripture, 'How do you get into the kingdom of God? Sell all your things and follow me.' There comes a time when you have to really live into that."

A need, not a question

While they said on the surface it looks like the experience is costing a lot—they have uprooted their life to live in a country they only visited for six days and where they know just 10 people, they don't know the language or the culture, and they left churches they love and who love them—they said it wasn't a "can we do this" but an "I must."

"We can't NOT do this," Chrisie explained. "It was almost like a need to do this, to answer this call, to be obedient in this way, to see God's people and see God's face in a different place and work alongside people whose names I don't know, whose stories I haven't read yet, but who are also called to interact in my life. It meant I had to leave a lot behind, and it completely changed my life, but I couldn't not do it."

Weston agreed. "It's exciting even if it is scary."

To learn more about the family's mission to Hungary, visit <https://onemissionsociety.org/pendergrass-reeves>, where you can sign up for their newsletter, donate and learn other ways to support them. They are also happy to speak at any church upon invitation.



Photo courtesy of Kathy Beatty

Faith opens doors to La Iglesias Centro Cristiano

You never know when God is going to open a door. In the tradition of Pentecost Sunday, God opened the doors of Faith UMC, Lexington, to a new Hispanic ministry. La Iglesias Centro Cristiano heads to Faith UMC for weekly Hispanic worship services each Sunday afternoon. The idea for this service was brought to Faith members' attention at their Easter egg hunt. The pastor and his family approached the Rev. Hope Morris about the possibility of using their building to start a new Hispanic service in the Lexington community. She presented the idea to the trustees, and on Pentecost Sunday, they had their first service with 24 in attendance. Centro Cristiano de Columbia currently worships in Northeast Columbia and wanted to expand to the Lexington area, as it is a growing community with an increasing Hispanic population.

Memorial donates \$35K to help ETC

Memorial United Methodist Church, Greer, has been working closely with the Evans Training Center for some time.

With the tag line "prodigals restored," ETC is a 40-week-long residential faith-based program for men who are ready to make radical and dramatic changes to their lives.

Memorial hired the men of ETC to do their landscaping around campus and have had them speak to various groups at the church. Recently the mission committee met with them to decide how to help them further reach their goals of building a brand-new center in Lyman so they will be able to help more men and families go through their program.

Memorial decided to give them a \$35,000 donation to put toward building one room at their new facility. Memorial strives to support local missions in their community.

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Singletary award goes to Marlboro Coalition for Family Enrichment

Fact Forward has awarded the Carol Singletary Community Impact Award to Coalition for Family Enrichment in Marlboro County.

The organization said the recipient of this annual award is a champion for youth, is an organization that strives for cross-sector collaboration, has a devotion to teaching youth and remains steadfast in the pursuit of justice and equality for all people.

Fact Forward said members of the Coalition for Family Enrichment have given hundreds of years of service to the life and well-being of children and their families. As well, they have not only strived to have cross-sector collaboration but exceeded their efforts. The coalition has worked in the five communities of Marlboro County and are partners in the towns of Wallace, Blenheim, Clio, McCall/Tatum and the city of Bennettsville.

Fact Forward noted the the Coalition for Family Enrichment demonstrates a devotion to teaching youth through an Implementation Grant received from Fact Forward in



Fact Forward said the coalition remains steadfast in their pursuit of justice and equality for all.

2021. The funds were used to work with several communities of faith: Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church; Asbury, Old Clio and Trinity United Methodist churches; and the Community of Grace Church for the implementation of the curriculum "Making a Difference."

The coalition is preparing to implement Phase II of "Making a Difference" this August with the young people

at Macedonia Baptist, Asbury UMC and the Community of Grace faith communities. Because of the positive responses from the youth, parents and the community, the coalition believes the value of what was achieved needs to be duplicated.

Also, Fact Forward said that through their sponsoring of a movement called "Come to the Table for Children," the coalition remains steadfast in their pursuit of justice and equality for all by ensuring that the focus is never taken away from the needs of the young people within their community and beyond.

"Come to the Table for Children" is a movement that addresses needs beyond now. They are preparing young people to be citizens of the world who will pledge to focus on the positive and be empowered to use their voices.

The Coalition for Family Enrichment consists of strong women of faith who refuse to take no for an answer. Because of their faith, they have been able to move the unmovable.

Leesville hosts boxed fan drive

Summers can be hot in South Carolina. Now imagine not having air conditioning in your home, something many people experience.

To help the elderly and needy, Leesville United Methodist Church served the Batesburg-Leesville community through donations of electric box fans.

Leesville members donated the fans Saturday, June 17, from 9 to 11 a.m. Forty-six fans were given out by members, along with officers from the Batesburg-Leesville Police Department.

"We pray this mission project will be a blessing to the elderly and other families in need of relief from the heat this summer," Wendy Zwart said.



Leesville members donated the fans Saturday, June 17.



Photos courtesy of Wendy Zwart

ERT pitch hoppers quickly put to use

CORDOVA—South Carolina United Methodist Volunteers in Mission's Early Response Team recently purchased 20 pitch hoppers. Bought for \$118 each through the help of individual donations to the ERT, they were picked up for future distribution to ERT trailers and put into use June 13 in Cordova after a huge pecan tree crashed into a steep pitched roof of a home.

While the Rev. Fred Buchanan started cutting up the pecan tree and Misty Vazquez with a homeowner and neighbor hauled off debris, Felix Vazquez and Billy Robinson used the pitch hoppers. In conjunction with rope harnesses to secure themselves and provide a platform to work off of, they were able to patch the roof in three damaged spots.

Then they helped cut up the rest of the tree.

ERT may eventually purchase two more for each trailer. They are for use on shingled roofs, have a limit of 250 pounds and must be used in conjunction with safety harnesses.

ERT will conduct hands-on training with all team members before they are actually used.

For more information on ERT, email Robinson at brpraisejesus@aol.com. To support their work, make checks out to UVMIM-ERT and send c/o Tammy Fulmer to 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203.

The ERT also did three one-day team missions in South Carolina recently: in Greenwood, Cordova and North.



ERT member Felix Vazquez hammers on the roof as the Rev. Fred Buchanan chainsaws below.

United Methodist men exhibit neighborly love by fixing up woman's home

SALUDA—Rebecca Etheredge and her husband, Willie M. Etheredge, were pillars of the United Methodist church in Saluda and together raised 13 children. When Etheredge's husband died several years ago and all her children left home, keeping up the yard and renovations on her home became overwhelming for her.

Last December, two Methodist men—John Glenn, from Main Street UMC, Greenwood, and Dr. Ken Mufuka, from Trinity UMC, Greenwood—visited her. To hear Etheredge tell the story, one would think she almost called the sheriff on the two brothers, one White and one Black.

"They were acting up, taking measurements of my windows and asking me ques-



Etheredge stands outside her home.

tions," she said.

In May, they turned up with a crew of other men. To cut a long story short, her neighbors stopped and noticed something: The new double-glazed tinted windows reflected the sun from the inside out, and neighbors could not help but see this new thing that had happened at Etheredge's house.

Whether by intention or not, they had not seen Etheredge in her rose patch for a long time. So the neighbors stopped by.

Etheredge is a feisty woman, but for the first time, she was seen wiping away tears, speechless.

"God has given me a new house. He has done this new thing for me," she said as she

shared the news of God's mercy with her neighbor, Foster Bird.

Etheredge said she is extremely grateful to the United Methodist Men who showed her such neighborly love.

"I want to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude for the generous gift that you have given me," she told the men. "Your kindness and generosity have been truly invaluable, and I will be forever grateful for all that you have done. It is often said that when we pray, God hears more than our words, answers more than our requests and gives more than we can imagine, but always in his own time and way.

"You have truly made a difference, for which I am so grateful."

Epworth Children's Home

Honoring Ken Nelson

Ken Nelson was born in Beaufort as the fourth of five children in 1968. His birth mother died when he was 5, and what followed for Ken was a time of physical and sexual abuse. When he was 10 years old, he was placed at Epworth Children's Home.

Nelson stated, "My Epworth family took me in during one of the darkest times of my life. They not only provided for my earthly needs, shelter, food and education, they nurtured me. They lifted me up, made sure that I knew that I was a unique child of God, a person of sacred worth. My time here at Epworth called forth in me my God-given potential and worth. While living here I experienced the love of God that refused to let me go. This experience filled me with a sense of gratitude that compelled me to share the faith and work of Jesus Christ with others. It was during those years at Epworth that I first experienced my call to ministry. Ten years after I left this loving home, I was ordained a deacon in The United Methodist Church."

Nelson has now served as a minister in the South Carolina United Methodist Annual Conference for more than 30 years. During these years he has emerged as a caring pastor, dynamic preacher, a trusted and meticulous administrator and a humble servant of God who brings a deep and abiding faith along with the gift of neighborly compassion to every situation.

Nelson was elected to serve on the Epworth Board of Trustees at the 2023 Annual Conference, and so it is with gratitude for his excellent service in the South Carolina Annual Conference and his election to the Epworth Board of Trustees that the Ken Nelson Fund is being established in the Epworth Children's Home permanent endowment through a generous gift from anonymous donors.

If you would like to honor him while simultaneously strengthening Epworth's work with children and families in South Carolina, you are invited to contribute to the Ken Nelson Fund at Epworth by designating your gift to be

invested in this named fund. Proceeds from the fund will be used to support the work of Epworth in perpetuity.

Nelson lived at Epworth from the age of 10 until he graduated from high school. He then graduated from Newberry College and Duke Divinity School. He was ordained as a deacon in 1993 and as an elder in 1995. He served for 12 years as a pastor of four South Carolina churches and for seven years as a congregational specialist. He also served for two years as assistant dean and director of religious life at Duke University Chapel. He currently serves as the Orangeburg District superintendent and as the secretary of the South Carolina Annual Conference.

He continues to bless numerous committees, boards and agencies with his wisdom and boundless energy, so we say, "Thank you, good and faithful servant."

For additional information about the Rev. Ken Nelson Permanent Fund, contact Lisa Fusco at 803-256-7394 or lfusco@epworthsc.org.

Lee Road to partner with Prince of Peace on joint mission efforts

TAYLORS—On June 14, Lee Road United Methodist Church welcomed the Prince of Peace Catholic Church for an ecumenical “Service of Love and Friendship” at 7 p.m.

Lee Road was instrumental in helping Prince of Peace when its community started, allowing its Catholic neighbors to use the Lee Road campus for Mass on Sundays and Christian education on Thursdays.

This occurred from 1975-1979 while the acreage of Brushy Creek Road was purchased and the new Catholic church was built.

It all started with the friendship of the Rev. Mickey Fisher, pastor of Lee Road at that time, and the late Msgr. William Croghan, Catholic priest, who knew each other from serving in the Rock Hill area previously before being moved to the Taylors area.

Additionally, Lee Road had a talented visual artist, the late Gordon Sweetman, who designed a “Covenant of Friendship” stained-glass window with symbols of both churches, a duplicate of each is still a treasured part of both campuses.

Lee Road pastor Rusty Godfrey and Prince of Peace’s Christopher Smith presided over the ecumenical service with moving remarks and memories shared by retired pastor Fisher and Gary Hediger (Prince of Peace) about that exciting time of active friendship between the two congregations.

The highlight of the service occurred when Lee Road Missions Chair Debbie Gant and Michael Sandifer, Prince of Peace pastoral associate for adult faith formation, announced new joint missions in which the two churches would partner: a fall collection of winter coats, scarves and gloves and a Christmas “Boxes of Joy” mission.

A reception was held following the service in the social hall.



The Revs. Chris Smith and Rusty Godfrey smile by the Covenant of Friendship window.



Michael Sandifer discusses the new joint mission during the event.



United Women in Faith

by Jan Fleming

Bethlehem Center in Spartanburg

Bethlehem Center in Spartanburg finished spring and the school year on a high note. I would like to highlight a few of the ongoing programs and give an update on the new programs and classes that began last fall.

The Senior Wellness Program, Sew to Sow, continues to grow in participants (27) and make a strong impact with their projects in and around the community. With the help of donations from local and conference units, they knit hats for children at the center, blankets for those in assisted living and caps for the cancer center in Spartanburg, to name a few. The goal is to expand this program by enrolling new members and striving to provide more health-centered activities. Spartanburg Regional has hosted several wellness courses for the seniors also, including CPR and diabetes prevention and intervention.

The food assistance program has now partnered with Hub City Mobile Farmer’s Market, and they are providing fresh produce to members of the community. A local Food Lion store is now donating to the physical food pantry. Three local restaurants and University of South Carolina-Upstate continue their donations. On average, 35-40 kids are fed daily and more than 650 meals a month.

On the education front, the Bethlehem Center now has a partnership with the Spartanburg County Adult Learning Center. Starting in the fall they will have programs that offer a GED and a high school diploma at the Bethlehem Center. Currently, there are 60 enrolled in youth services, and early education enrollment at 38, serving 31 families. The Highland Early Learning Center is enjoying its new facility and received a four-star rating from Quality Counts. They celebrated the end of the year with a 4K graduation.

A new incentive for the children this year was adding the Bethlehem Center Store and Game Room, where kids can purchase items such as small toys, candy and other Bethlehem bucks earned from showcasing 10 core values along with completing daily and

weekly reading goals, turning in distracting devices, helping others and more. This has been a great tool and reward for the students.

The Bridge Builders group consists of young men who meet two times a month and are mentored by various professionals. Spartanburg Mental Health visited the after-school program using different strategies and activities to motivate the youth. The Ubuntu Institute for Community Development continues to visit the center to read and engage 5K through first grade, and this program will also continue through the summer.

Patrena Mims and staff continue to fulfill their mission statement: to support, strengthen and inspire individuals and families as well as to facilitate opportunities for personal and community advancement. They continue to grow their partnerships (now including Clemson Extension, Wofford, Milliken and Regensis) in the community, along with utilizing grants to maximize staff, improve playground equipment and determine where their local resources are most needed.

Local units in Spartanburg have supported the summer program by supplying food items for kick-off parties, snacks, ice cream and art supplies for summer day camp kids. Please continue to support S.C. missions with your gifts, time and talents. There are so many ways to reach out to the centers to volunteer. Work teams, youth groups and men can assist in projects, building and grounds and host a Great Day of Service at the center.

Without UWF fundraisers supporting missions with gift cards, and collections through our conference events, we could not continue to have quality programs and staff in these communities. We know giving is an important part of our mission.

Assisting with physical, spiritual and daily basic needs to those who are in vulnerable communities is putting our faith, hope and love into action.

Fleming is mission representative for South Carolina Conference UWF.



Neighbors helping neighbors

St. John UMC, in south Greenville, has launched a new mini library and food pantry at their church. Brian Underwood said it was a vision of the congregation to help people who are struggling in the South Greenville community. Many people from all over the area have donated books, and nonperishable foods are next.

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Resource Center

by Betty Stalnaker

Have you seen 'The Chosen'?

The first three seasons of "The Chosen" are available in the Resource Center. "The Chosen" is the first multiseason TV show about the life of Jesus. Created outside of the Hollywood system, "The Chosen" allows us to see Jesus through the eyes of those who knew him. Reserve a copy for your next Bible study.

The Chosen: Season 1

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

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

The Chosen: Season 2

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

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

The Chosen: Season 3

(DVD2819B=) Author: Isaac, Shahar/Roumie, Jonathan.
8 episodes. 53-99 min/study guide/devotional bk/2023.

"Come to me ... I will give you rest." In Matthew 28:11, Jesus promises rest to his followers—but that doesn't mean there won't be trouble along the way. In Season 3 of "The Chosen," Jesus sends all 12 disciples on their first mission, and they face new fears as well as entrenched, old ways. Each one faces his own unique burden, too: Matthew's estrangement from family, Little James' unhealed disability, Simon Z's unresolved past and Simon and Eden's marriage crisis, just to name a few. Meanwhile, scores of newcomers like Veronica and Jairus desperately seek Jesus for relief from crushing crises and heavy-handed authorities, religious and Roman. Thousands ultimately converge on Jesus, first to argue then to listen. But as his preaching extends to the next day, they find themselves in a new predicament—far from home, famished, and without any food to eat. Until a little boy with five loaves and two fishes shows up. Re-engage with the can't-stop-watching Gospel-based TV series that's got the whole world talking about Jesus. In the emotional third season of "The Chosen," Jesus delivers the most life-altering sermon in history—resulting in more followers and more enemies. Age: EM-HYAS.

New for children:

Friends and Heroes Series 1-3

Author: Friends and Heroes Productions. 21 DVDs/39 stories,
25 min each/access to supplemental materials/2017.

"Friends and Heroes" uses creative storytelling and high-quality animation to teach, entertain and inspire children through exciting adventures and life-changing Bible stories. Your kids will love the excitement, action, suspense and humor in every video episode and learn important lessons about courage, faith, hope and much more from timeless, powerful Bible stories. Boys and girls will be thrilled by the first-century adventures of Macky and his friends, and their lives will be changed forever by the powerful Bible stories shared in each episode. Kindergarten to sixth grades. Age: PeE.

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

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Global Briefs

Church court sets timeline for docket

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The Judicial Council, The United Methodist Church's top court, plans to post the docket for its fall session on or about July 29. Electronic submission of petitions for declaratory decisions and bishops' rulings of law were due July 15. The deadline for briefs will be Aug. 28 and reply briefs on Sept. 7.

Climate change hits home for churches

DEAL ISLAND, Md.—"Eroding History" is a 26-minute documentary that shows the impact of sea level rise on two historically Black United Methodist churches on the Chesapeake Bay as well as a church graveyard that is in danger of washing away. Multi Dimension Independent Film Festival has posted the documentary online for free for a limited time.

Bishop Dease speaks at national Scout meeting

ATLANTA—North Georgia Conference Bishop Robin Dease was the keynote speaker at the Duty to God Breakfast at BSA's national meeting. A special patch was designed for the event with Bishop Dease's name and The United Methodist Church's Cross and Flame.

More details announced for bishop's trial

PASADENA, Calif.—The Western Jurisdiction announced on its website that the church trial to adjudicate the complaints against Bishop Minerva Carcaño is scheduled for Aug. 21-25 at First United Methodist Church in Pasadena. Bishop Alfred W. Gwinn, a retired bishop from the Southeastern Jurisdiction, will preside over the trial. The *Book of Discipline* declares that church trials "are to be regarded as an expedient of last resort" and opens the possibility of a just resolution at any point.

Special Olympian sails away with bronze in Berlin

MACON, Ga.—James Thigpen sailed into Special Olympics history, winning a bronze medal for the U.S. at the 2023 World Games in Berlin. The win earned Thigpen hero status at his home, Wesley Glen Ministries, a residential community for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities that is supported by the South Georgia Conference.

4 tips for church social-media effectiveness

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—For most churches (even low-tech churches), the key to increasing your effectiveness with social media is the people sitting in your pews. The Rev. Jeremy Steele offers four ways churches can leverage people to increase impact.

Survey looks at online, in-person services

WASHINGTON—About a quarter of U.S. adults regularly watch religious services online or on TV, and most of them are highly satisfied with the experience, according to a new Pew Research Center survey. At the same time, Americans tend to give higher marks to worshipping together in person.

Renewable energy grants available

NEW YORK—United Women in Faith groups are encouraged to apply for grants of up to \$3,000 for renewable energy projects. Applications are being accepted now, and the first grants will be announced in August. Applicants to The Office of Economic and Environmental Justice should carefully consider the amount of funding needed and document in detail the budget and rationale for the request.

Bishops pledge to continue dismantling racism

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church is pledging its ongoing dedication to anti-racism work, both within the church and in our communities. A revival of the Dismantling Racism campaign, launched in June 2020, will strengthen efforts to recognize racism as a sin and challenge unjust systems of power and access.

Group condemns rights abuses in Philippines

GENEVA—The World Council of Churches' central committee released a statement on the human rights situation in the Philippines. The central committee affirmed the work of The United Methodist Church of the Philippines and other members of the country's National Council of Churches. The central committee also condemned extrajudicial killings and expressed condolences to the families of victims.

Tech helps university reduce food waste

MUTARE, Zimbabwe—United Methodist-related Africa University has found a high-tech solution to reducing food waste. Students place orders for breakfast, lunch or dinner on a digital platform. Bonaventure Ndorimana Dining Hall uses the order to guide how much food is cooked per service, assess what meals are best sellers and inform purchase orders.

Faith leaders decry high court ruling on affirmative action

WASHINGTON—In response to the June 29 decision made by the U.S. Supreme Court regarding affirmative action, leaders of four United Methodist general agencies—Board of Church and Society, Commission on Religion and Race, Commission on the Status and Role of Women and Board of Higher Education and Ministry—released a joint statement expressing their opposition to the decision.

Group names Bishop Dyck to leadership role

GENEVA—Bishop Sally Dyck, ecumenical officer for The United Methodist Church, has been named a moderator of the World Council of Churches' Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration. The ecumenical group's central committee elected leaders for six commissions.

International ecumenical group marks 75th year

GENEVA—The World Council of Churches celebrated its 75th anniversary with an ecumenical celebration June 25 at Saint Pierre Cathedral, recalling the organization's founding three years after the end of the Second World War.

Church-run camps help kids read

WILSON, N.C.—The Duke Endowment's 10-year-old investment in teaching youngsters to read appears to be working at churches. West Nash United Methodist Church is among the congregations that have offered the literacy camps. The summer literacy program also focuses on wraparound services for the kids to address other unmet needs.

—Courtesy of the United Methodist News Service



Conference Historical Society

by the Rev. Joseph D. Kovas

A preacher made a difference

A favorite book from my dad's library is his copy of "Called to Serve: United Methodist Ministers of South Carolina 1991." Each entry is the story of a pastor who has touched lives in every appointment served.

When I was preparing to graduate from Duke Divinity School, I waited with excitement for news of my first appointment. In March 2021, I received the letter from my district superintendent congratulating me on my first appointment to St. Paul United Methodist Church of New Ellenton in the Orangeburg District. After reading the letter, I realized I would now have my own biography entry. My story would begin with the people of St. Paul UMC, New Ellenton.

During my first Advent at St. Paul, I researched my church's history to find out the pastors who came before me. I earmarked my dad's 1991 "Called to Serve" and had it on display on the dining room table in the parsonage during an open house party after church. As I spoke with congregation members about their former pastors, I heard so many rich and beautiful stories about how God had used these pastors to touch and bless their lives, church and community. Inspirational stories of the ministries of James E. Alewine, Benjamin B. Barnes and Ray K. Smith fill me with courage as I step fully into the life of ordained ministry in the church.

The Rev. David E. Nichols states in the foreword, "Every biography is a story of joy and sorrow, or gain and loss. Each story carries with it the component of all our lives. We are born and we were called and we serve."

Each biography represents a story of how God summoned those who would serve as pastors, prophets, teachers and counselors for God's people. Throughout our history, South Carolina Methodists have published directories and biographies of pastors that have contained a record of their lives and ministry.

While visiting a book store in Aiken, I found a copy of "Twentieth Century Sketches of the South Carolina Conference M.E. Church, South" published in 1914 by the Rev. Watson B. Duncan. Many of the pastors in this book were born in the mid to late 19th century. One of the major differences between the 1914 and 1991 directories is the format. The 1991 directory contains a list format of pastor's credentials and appointments in chronological order. The 1914 biographies were written in a narrative format.

An example comes from the Rev. Geo W. Davis. Davis was described in his biography as "an excellent preacher and pastor." The biographer goes on to state, "There is a vein of humor which often appears in private, and sometimes in public, but it helps rather than hinders the effort of his earnest messages." We thus receive a glimpse into Davis' personality and his preaching. Unless you know the pastor, you do not receive this information from the later biographies.

Another biography in the 1914 "Sketches" that caught my eye was that of the Rev. John Wesley Bailey, born in Spartanburg County on May 28, 1869. Bailey attended Emory College for academic studies. He married Miss Anna M. Baird of Oconee County, Georgia, on July 14, 1892. In his biography, it states "Mr. Bailey was reared by a true Christian woman after the good old Methodism type, who prayed and shouted the love of Methodism indelibly into his young heart." After reading Bailey's biography, I need to update my clergy profile and include the influence of my own Methodist mother.

The Rev. Henry B. Hardy's story describes both his conversion and his call to preach. Hardy was interested in government studies and wanted to pursue a government position. There was a revival service at Old Bethlehem

Church in Saluda. Hardy was enrolled in a Sunday school class, and his teacher prayed "earnestly for the young man's conversion." According to his entry, "At midnight on a hot August night, he [Hardy] closed his book and retired. In a few moments he was happily converted. He immediately felt the call to preach, but tried to evade the duty by teaching school." Hardy finally yielded to the call to preach after teaching school for four years.

Each pastor's story and biography reveals how God called them to the ministry, used people to bring them to answer the call to preach and used their gifts in his service.

According to Dr. James H. Carlisle, who wrote the introduction to the 1914 "Sketches," the book is like a large family album. Even though pastors move from place to place, they discovered the joy of forming relationships with other pastors and families and enjoy seeing their closest friends at Annual Conference each year. Dr. Carlisle makes the statement, "In many sections of our State, once a year, hundreds ask with anxiety, 'Who is our new preacher?'" These directories gave Methodists the opportunity to find out more about the pastor they were receiving.

Today, if your church wants to research a pastor, all they have to do is use the power of Facebook and find out everything there is to know. Pastors can also do the same for churches in the digital age even after receiving the official church profile from the district office.

These conference directories and biographies reveal the beautiful stories of how God's servants have been summoned to serve and preach and where they have been sent through the practice of itineracy. In each community, church and appointment, preachers have made a difference in the people's lives. Each pastor blesses his or her community by leading people to Christ, baptizing, teaching the Word of God and visiting people from house to house. At some point along our journey, God sent someone into our lives to teach us the love of Jesus. Perhaps God sent you a Methodist preacher to change your life for the better in Jesus Christ.

There will be days where we ask, "Are we making a difference at all for God's kingdom?" But I am encouraged by the stories of God's servants who have come before us. They witness to us that God touched our lives by sending someone to teach us about the love of God that is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5) and that we are sent into someone's life to make a difference.

Just when you think your ministry is fruitless, God will show you why you were sent—to proclaim good news to the poor and to the sick and to the captive (Luke 4:18-19). Let us be encouraged by the saints who have come before us and who serve as mighty inspirations for our service to God.

When my father, the Rev. Kenneth J. Kovas, came into the ministry, he received a letter from the Rev. Bryan Crenshaw, arguably one of the most respected pastors of the conference of his generation. Crenshaw shared with my father, before he was sent to his first appointment to the Lodge, Adnah and Williams Charge in the Walterboro District, that the greatest appointment in the conference is the one you are serving.

As we receive new pastors across the state and as churches welcome new leaders, may God's grace open our hearts to see the wonders of the Lord's Kingdom in new places and in new people. May our pastors see that the greatest appointment in their journey and biographies is the one they are serving now.

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

Historical Murray UMC recognized by Dorchester County Council

SUMMERVILLE—The Dorchester County Council recently adopted a resolution, 23-19, recognizing Murray United Methodist Church of The Summerville Parish.

Murray UMC has been in existence since 1864 and has weathered slavery, lynchings, cross burnings, Reconstruction, Jim Crowism, the rise and fall of the Ku Klux Klan, the Great Depression and the civil rights movement, to name a few of the calamities they had to endure on their road to their 159th anniversary.

Even though Murray UMC has gone through many hardships, it has brought positive change to Summerville and to Dorchester County. Their first place of worship was in bush harbors and later in a wood-frame edifice built on land supplied by the Murray family (slaveholders).

Murray was named after a member of the local Murray family who provided the congregation's first place of worship. The first church at this site was later brick-veneered and still stands. In the mid-1970s, members began building a new church south of the old one. After several years of work, it opened for worship in 1977 and remains in use today.

This year, Murray qualified to receive a historical marker from the South Carolina Department of Archives & History.

By the 1910s, members built a wood

frame church at this site. They also opened Murray School, a public school for local Black children. It was later known as Murray Branch and located one mile north on Mallard Road. The school closed in 1953.

On June 19, Resolution 23-19 was adopted in recognition of Murray's high-level accomplishments and longevity. The resolution recognized the church on their 159th anniversary and on the unveiling of their historical marker.

Murray has been making disciples of Jesus Christ for 159 years and has continued to survive amidst its highs and lows. It has been able to meet each challenge and continue to move forward in its quest for righteousness. Though the cast of characters may change with time, they seem to be dedicated to the sayings of their founder John Wesley: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."

Former pastor the Rev. Lillie K. Davis extended deep thanks to Church Historian Sam Tucker for help and dedication in helping to bring Murray's history alive and to the forefront. Also, she thanked Lessie Robinson, who supplied private historical documents.

To watch the ceremony, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xhxxKzn4VY>.



From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

William Capers: A complicated life

I've written about Bishop William Capers before, often noting the many hats the first South Carolina Methodist elected to the episcopacy wore. Teacher, editor, pastor, missionary and leader of the group that helped split Methodism over slavery in the 1840s, William Capers led a complicated and influential life.

He was born in 1790 in St. Thomas Parish, Berkeley County, and grew up in the rice lands of Georgetown County. He studied for a time at South Carolina College, leaving to study law privately with an attorney. No doubt his studies and his legal training would help him years later, but his attendance at a camp meeting brought this son of the Lowcountry into the Methodist Church. Soon he felt a call to the ministry and joined the South Carolina Conference in December 1808 before his 19th birthday.

Capers was ordained elder in 1812 at Bethel, Charleston, by Bishop McKendree and appointed to Wilmington. He then served in Charleston, Orangeburg, Columbia, Savannah and Milledgeville before becoming a missionary in the conference "and to the Indians," giving him a taste of 19th century mission work. He was named the presiding elder of the Charleston District before he was 40.

Capers had grown up surrounded by slavery and was himself a slaveholder, which by 1828 was becoming more controversial in the North. While he was being considered as the American representative to the British Methodist Conference, one of the bishops told him privately that he preferred someone else because Capers owned slaves. However, the other bishops insisted, and Capers was chosen. He sailed for England in June 1828, visiting Liverpool and London and spending time with most of the great British Methodist leaders. The conference itself lasted from July 30 to Aug. 18. His biographer notes the British had warm feelings for Capers partly because of his social graces and partly because some of the stronger anti-slavery movements in Britain were a few years in the future. In total, Capers was away from Charleston for six months in his trip.

On his return to South Carolina, Capers became superintendent of the missions to the slaves in the Lowcountry. Several planters visited him, inquiring about the Methodist Church's willingness to minister to the enslaved persons on their plantations. Capers was not interested in undertaking these duties himself but promised to find someone to serve. It must be said that the missionaries were at best paternalistic in their attitudes, and Capers himself wrote in 1836, "We regard the question of the abolition of slavery as a civil one ... and not a religious one at all." He also wrote, "We believe that the Holy Scriptures ... do unequivocally authorize the relation of master and slave."

It should therefore come as no surprise that as a delegate to the 1844 General Conference, Capers led the faction that defended Bishop Andrew on the question of slavery. His speeches were, in the words of a historian of the day, "A vindication of the Southern view of the question." When the Southern conferences withdrew, he joined them, and in 1846, he was elected as a bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He and Robert Paine were the first two bishops elected by the new denomination, and they were consecrated by bishops Andrew and Soule, who had been elected before the separation and who had chosen to adhere to the Southern church. He served throughout the region for eight years. Since the church had only four bishops, and 19 annual conferences, that kept each of the bishops busy traveling.

The life and work of a bishop took its toll on Capers, and just days after his return to his home from presiding over the Florida Conference, he was taken ill and died, three days past his 65th birthday. He did not live to see the nation split in the way the church had split.

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

'Because I wasn't working on the stoves'

Panama missionary shares experience of God working through her in unexpected ways during trip

By Allyson Reid

From Feb. 25-March 5, members of the Rock Hill District United Methodist Volunteers in Mission team traveled to Santa Fe, Panama. Team members included myself, Ken Hudson, Paul and Lisa McDaniel, Gregg Morris, Ashley Phillips and Elizabeth Smith.

The Rock Hill District UMM team is a construction team. A few make a living in various building trades, but the majority comprises people who come with some knowledge, but more critically, willing hands.

We traveled to the town of Santa Fe, a small mountain town of 3,200 people in the highlands of Panama, to work with missionaries David and Cindy Ceballos. David is a retired pastor and Cindy is a retired nurse. They have served in the mission field for more than 25 years, 14 of those in Panama. They now head Mission Panama, hosting numerous teams to serve the region of Veraguas, Panama, by providing spiritual pastoral care, medical clinics and education, economic development programs, construction efforts and more.

We worked at an *albergue*, a respite center. It's a place where people who live in the jungle can come into town while receiving medical attention. They can stay there for free while they are being treated for some medical condition. They often come with their whole family, including children.

This *albergue* had eight rooms and a common kitchen area. The rooms are small, about the size of a modest full bathroom or walk-in closet. Each room is furnished with two bunkbeds, some with thin mattresses, some without. The only possessions the people have are what they carried with them.

The kitchen area is mostly open-air. It has waist-high walls and is covered by a tin roof. This is a bit deceiving because it seems

the smoke can just escape from all sides, but it doesn't. The smoke just lingers. It gets trapped by the roof and drifts throughout the living area, causing health issues.

Our objective on this trip was to build stoves, a two-fold mission. The stoves would provide an improved area for cooking but additionally, since the people traditionally cook over open flames, the stove's chimney would allow the smoke to be carried away.

Stove building is a process. Day One was spent getting familiar with the materials and learning the steps. I am not a team leader and do not have a great deal of building knowledge, so my approach was to let those with more experience create a plan. Then I would come in with my willing hands to help make the plan happen.

But I started not to feel so well. I needed to go back to my room quickly! I spent the remainder of Day One in my bed, and I was devastated.

By the next morning, I had made a full recovery. I got up ready to do some work, ready to build a stove. But when we got to the jobsite, I was lost. Everyone had a task and knew exactly what they were doing. This kind of stove building is a process. You must go in order and stick to the process step by step. And there was no room in that for me.

I struggled for a bit trying to force my way in, trying to find something productive to do, but instead, all I found was that I was getting in the way. And again, I was devastated.

So I took a step back and sat and watched—and I'm sure I pouted a bit.

Then something beautiful happened.

Out came the kids. They were unsure, yet curious, full of wonder about the strangers now here in their space.

Because I wasn't working on the stoves, I was able to focus on these kids, to love on

them, to show them attention. We laughed, we played and we shared a bit of God's love through giggles, games, smiles and hugs.

Because I wasn't working on the stoves, I was able to assist with vacation Bible school. Another member of our team, Elizabeth, coordinated three days of VBS. She used paper dolls to tell a story in English, and our host missionary David would translate into Spanish. Then we would do a craft that went along with the story. The kids absolutely loved this. They loved the crayons and the glue sticks and the construction paper—all of it.

Because I wasn't working on the stoves, I was able to go along on a shopping trip to the co-op. We purchased rice, beans, lentils, spaghetti, tomato sauce, canned tuna, spices, box milk, flour, sugar, salt, oil, soup, coffee and soap, enough for 25-30 bags. We were also able to get some fresh fruits and vegetables for the folks at the *albergue* at that time.

When we got back to the hotel, we made four food bags to deliver that afternoon for the families currently there. Because I wasn't working on the stoves, I got to help with the delivery of the four food bags. I saw smiles from mothers who needed to feed their babies. I saw smiles from babies who recognized a little love being shared between newfound friends.

Because I wasn't working on the stoves, I got to help pass out some donated clothing that we were able to bring to Panama with us. I watched a little guy immediately strip down in the yard because he was so excited about a new outfit and couldn't wait to wear it. I saw young girls in sweet new dresses grinning from ear to ear.

Because I wasn't working on the stoves, I got to visit with a young man who was still at the *albergue* since our last trip in 2019. This young man and his brother have called

the *albergue* home for several years now while his mother has been treated for a brain tumor. He remembered our team coming years before. He was still using the benches and table we made. And no doubt he remembered the love that we shared that one week in 2019. I came away from this visit with a renewed energy and renewed confidence in what we were doing. Sometimes it's easy for me to question what can be accomplished in a week. Although a week can seem so short, this was a reminder to me that a week can be important—relationships can be made, connections can be built and love can be shared.

Because I wasn't working on the stoves, I was able to experience so many new things—things that I may have been able to do on past trips. Those opportunities came because things did not go according to my plan. But God's plan is always better; always perfect.

Other members of our team were able to build three stoves at this *albergue*. They were also able to repair one up the street. To break the stoves in and demonstrate how they worked, we cooked up a hotdog lunch for the people at the *albergue*. It was a big hit.

My favorite Bible story is about the feeding of the 5,000. The day was getting late, the disciples wanted to send the folks away because there was nothing to eat, and Jesus basically told them to go get some food. The disciples made their way through the crowd and came back with a little boy's lunch: five loaves and two fish. More than 5,000 people were fed that day.

The reason I love this story so much is that it reminds us that we are only called to bring what we have to God. God takes our offerings—no matter how meager they may seem—and he can work the miracle. If we use the gifts God has given us, he will work out the rest.

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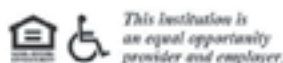
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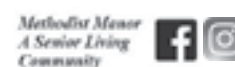
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AU graduates its largest class ever

On June 10, Africa University graduated its largest class to date. More than 950 students from 19 countries received degrees. More than 60 percent of the new alumni are women.

One graduate is Sandrine Ishimwe of Rwanda. Studying business management in the College of Business, Peace, Leadership and Governance, she credits AU with opening her eyes and opening doors to new possibilities.

"I learned to mix and mingle with different nationalities," Ishimwe said. "I learned different languages through my classmates and friends. I learned teamwork, working under pressure and integrity. On top of that, Africa University taught me honesty in everything."

Ishimwe would love to manage a business where she can implement the skills that she honed at AU and promote Pan-Africanism.

The 29th graduation ceremony was marked by firsts. Collins Prempeh from Ghana, the first deaf student from the Institute of Theology and Religious Studies, graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity degree. In addition, the first doctoral cohort of six received the Ph.D. in Peace and Governance from the College of Business, Peace, Leadership and Governance.

The 2023 graduating class hailed from Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.



Honoring mothers

On Mother's Day, the United Women in Faith of Sandy Grove UMC, Jefferson, presented gift bags to all mothers in attendance. Nannie Mae Seegars was given a beautiful plaque. Mother Seegars is 91 years young and the mother of 13, as well as the mother of Sandy Grove UMC. Her hobbies are traveling, adult coloring, washing dishes and attending church. When work projects going on at church, Mother Seegars is there, encouraging the church we are never too old to still be helpful. The pastor of Sandy Grove UMC is the Rev. Marion Loretta Cooper.

Photo courtesy of Ernestine McCaskill

Obituaries

Elizabeth Peterson Bacote

DARLINGTON—Elizabeth Peterson Bacote, sister of the Rev. Patricia Bowman and the Rev. James Peterson, died July 6, 2023. Rev. Bowman is the pastor of Pageland United Methodist Church, Pageland. Rev. Peterson is the pastor of Wesley UMC, Florence.

Funeral services were held July 13 at St. James UMC with burial at Faith Memorial Gardens.

Doreathea W. Bailey

FLORENCE—Doreathea W. "Dee" Bailey, the Florence volunteer coordinator for the Committee on the Annual Conference and a member of the Florence District Board of Congregational Development, died July 6, 2023.

Funeral services were held July 15 at Salem United Methodist Church. Burial was held July 17 at Florence National Cemetery.

Henry Berry

AIKEN—Henry Berry, father of the Rev. Jennifer Campbell, died July 15, 2023. Rev. Campbell and her husband, Joel, are co-pastors of the Edisto Charge, Cope.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

Jessie Mae Cook

BISHOPVILLE—Jessie Mae Cook, mother of the Rev. Raymond Cook, died June 15, 2023. Rev. Cook is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held June 22 at New Haven UMC with burial in the church cemetery.

Mrs. Cook is survived by her two sons.

Luella Royal Daniel

BRANDON, Fla.—Luella Royal Daniel, grandmother of Mollie Grooms, died June 12, 2023. Ms. Grooms is the administrative assistant for the Rock Hill District.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

Ms. Daniel is survived by her daughter and son.

Nancy Scoggins Floyd

SPARTANBURG—Nancy Scoggins Floyd, widow of the Rev. W. Harvey Floyd Jr., died June 11, 2023.

Graveside services were held June 15 at Greenlawn Memorial Gardens.

Memorials may be made to Bethel United Methodist Church, 245 S. Church St., Spartanburg, SC 29306; or to Spartanburg Regional Hospice Home, 686 Jeff David Drive, Spartanburg, SC 29303.

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

Margie McFarland Gadsden

CHARLESTON—Margie McFarland Gads-

den, widow of the Rev. Benjamin Gadsden, died May 25, 2023.

Funeral services were held June 2 at Mount Carmel United Methodist Church.

Memorials may be made to Mount Carmel UMC, 95 Cooper St. Charleston, SC 29403.

Mrs. Gadsden is survived by her son.

Charles Lauchlan Hayes

ATLANTA—Charles "Chuck" Lauchlan Hayes, husband of the Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe, died July 4, 2023. Rev. Henry-Crowe is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

A funeral mass was held July 14 in the Cannon Chapel of Emory University.

Memorials may be made to Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Greggs Pantry, 2560 Tilson Road, Decatur, GA 30032.

Mr. Hayes is survived by his wife and five children.

Janice Brown Hendley

LEXINGTON—Janice Brown Hendley, sister of the Rev. Don Brown, died July 6, 2023. Rev. Brown is the pastor of Hopewell United Methodist Church, Simpsonville.

Funeral services were held July 21 at Boiling Springs UMC.

Memorials may be made to Boiling Springs UMC, P.O. Box 84055, Lexington, SC 29073.

Ms. Hendley is survived by her daughter.

Mack Arthur Lewis

COLUMBIA—Mack Arthur Lewis, brother of Doris Seals and Gwendolyn Etheredge, died July 11, 2023. Mrs. Seals is an administrative assistant in Connectional Ministries. Mrs. Etheredge is the wife of the Rev. Ernest Etheredge, a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held July 18 at Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church with burial in the church cemetery.

Mr. Lewis is survived by his daughter.

Cloie Lucilla Mack

ST. STEPHENS—Cloie Lucilla Mack, widow of the Rev. Robert Mack, died May 30, 2023.

Funeral services were held June 6 at Jerusalem UMC, Cross, with burial in the church cemetery.

Mrs. Mack is survived by her five brothers and two sisters.

Dr. Marshall L. Meadors III

ANDERSON—Dr. Marshall L. Meadors III, son of the late Bishop Marshall "Jack" Meadors Jr., died July 17, 2023.

Funeral services were held July 23 at St. John's United Methodist Church, Anderson.

Dr. Meadors is survived by his wife, Jennifer.

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.

Eugene O. Olsen Jr.

SUMMERTON—Eugene O. "Gene" Olsen Jr., father of Dana Atkinson, died June 2, 2023. Mrs. Atkinson is the wife of the Rev. Rick Atkinson, pastor of the Elloree Charge, Elloree.

Funeral services were held June 7 in the chapel of Stephens Funeral Home with burial in St. Paul Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to A Second Chance Animal Shelter, P.O. Box 607, Manning, SC 29102.

Mr. Olsen is survived by his wife, Kenny Coleman Olsen, two daughters and son.

Edith Elaine Johnson Peterson

CHESAPEAKE, Va.—Edith Elaine Johnson Peterson, wife of Adrien Peterson, died June 24, 2023. Mr. Peterson is the son of the Rev. Patricia Bowman, pastor of Pageland United Methodist Church, Pageland.

Funeral services were held July 1 at the Greater St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, Waycross, Georgia.

Mrs. Peterson is survived by her husband, daughter and parents.

Addie Belle Little Rushing

LANCASTER—Addie Belle Little Rushing, mother of Peggy Usher, died June 2, 2023. Mrs. Usher is the wife of the Rev. Eddie Usher, pastor of the Kershaw Charge, Kershaw.

Funeral services were held June 6 at White Springs Baptist Church with burial in Lancaster Memorial Park.

Memorials may be made to White Springs Baptist Church, 1249 Grace Ave., Lancaster, SC 29720.

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

Jerry Smith Jr.

BISHOPVILLE—Jerry Smith Jr., father of Claudine Jackson, died June 12, 2023. Mrs. Jackson is the administrative assistant for the Hartsville District.

Funeral services were held June 16 at St. Mark Missional Baptist Church with burial in Piedmont Cemetery.

Oleather Antoinette Smith

HUGER—Oleather Antoinette Smith, sister of the Rev. Cindy Shaw, died July 2, 2023. Rev. Shaw is the pastor of Bethel United Methodist Church, St. Stephen.

Funeral services were held July 8 at Stewart Chapel UMC with burial in Lavance Cemetery.

Ms. Smith is survived by her son and father.

Rev. Harry Robert Stullenbarger

PAWLEYS ISLAND—The Rev. Harry Robert Stullenbarger, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died June 24, 2023.

Prior to his retirement in 2001, Rev. Stullenbarger served the Columbia-Main Street Associate, Laurel Bay, Summerville Circuit, Cameron, New Zion, Herbert Memorial, Pamplico, Fair Lawn, Bethany, Moncks Corner and St. James-Spartanburg charges. He served the Greeleyville-Lane Charge as a retired pastor.

A memorial service was held June 30 at Pawleys Island Presbyterian Church.

Memorials may be made to Spartanburg Methodist College, 1000 Powell Mill Road, Spartanburg, SC 29301-5899; or to Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry, P.O. Box 5781, Columbia, SC 29250.

Rev. Stullenbarger is survived by his wife, Dixie Stullenbarger, and two daughters.

Katie Ruth Scott Webb

PENDLETON—Katie Ruth Scott Webb, widow of the Rev. Benjamin Webb, died June 8, 2023.

Funeral services were held June 17 at Pendleton United Methodist Church with burial at Bethel UMC Cemetery.

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

Rev. Isaac Wayman Wilborn Jr.

ELLOREE—The Rev. Isaac Wayman Wilborn Jr., father of the late Lewis Edward Wilborn, died June 25, 2023. Mr. Wilborn is the husband of Constance Wilborn, director of Lay Servant Ministries, Charleston District.

Funeral services were held July 3 at Campbell Chapel AME Church, Bluffton, with burial in the Browning Branch Cemetery, Elloree.

Memorials may be made to the Ella C. White Memorial Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 21284, Hilton Head, SC 29925; or to the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, RE: Reverend Isaac W. Wilborn Jr. Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 23019, Hilton Head, SC 29925.

Vermell Williams

BAMBERG—Vermell Williams, mother of the Rev. Eddie C. Williams, died July 12, 2023. Rev. Williams is the pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church, Orangeburg.

Funeral services were held July 18 at Mount Zion UMC.



Stullenbarger

August

- Aug. 5—Lay Servant Ministries Academy, Washington Street UMC, Columbia, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
- Aug. 13—Aldersgate Special Needs Sunday
- Aug. 20—Safe Sanctuary Training, Anderson District, First UMC, Easley, 2-5 p.m.
- Aug. 30—"Preparing for Charge Conference" class offered by Basic Church Administration, Zoom, 7:30 p.m. Free, but registration required: <https://www.church-admin.org/registrations/>.

September

- September 15-October 15: Hispanic Heritage Month*
UWF Special Emphasis Month: Killingworth
- Sept. 4—Labor Day; United Methodist Center closed.
- Sept. 5—UMVIM, Grace UMC, Columbia, 6:30 p.m.
- Sept. 9—Connectional Ministries meeting
- Sept. 10—LSM School (Spartanburg District) I, 2 p.m.-5:30 p.m. \$40. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-Fall-2023-Final.pdf>



A birthday celebration

On June 25, the Lamar Ebenezer Charge celebrated the birthdays of their pastor, the Rev. J. Elbert Williams, and lay servant, Lillie Stephens, at the Capital City Club, Columbia. Every three months, the charge has decided to celebrate all who have birthdays that quarter. A buffet lunch was served. The members-only club is located on the 25th floor of the BB&T Building in downtown Columbia. A great day was had by all after morning worship.

Sept. 16—David LaMotte Concert, New Beginnings UMC, Boiling Springs, 7 p.m. \$30. For more information, 864-559-1303.

Sept. 17—LSM School (Spartanburg District) II, 2 p.m.-5:30 p.m. \$40. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-Fall-2023-Final.pdf>

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Sept. 24—LSM School (Spartanburg District) III, 2 p.m.-5:30 p.m. \$40. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/SPARTANBURG-DISTRICT-LAY-SERVANT-SCHOOL-REGISTRATION-FORM-Fall-2023-Final.pdf>

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Sept. 30—"A Day of Growing in the Spirit," Marion District Men N Ministry Event, Surfside UMC, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Register: 843-246-8398.

October

September 15-October 15: Hispanic Heritage Month
UWF Special Emphasis Month: Bethlehem Center, Spartanburg

- Oct. 9—Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Oct. 20-21—SCCUWF 51st Annual Meeting, St. John's UMC, Aiken
- Oct. 31—Halloween

November

- Native American Heritage Month*
- Nov. 1—All Saints Day
- Nov. 2—All Souls Day
- Nov. 5—Daylight Savings Time ends
- Nov. 7—Election Day
- Nov. 11—Veterans Day

Marion men to meet Sept. 30

SURFSIDE BEACH—Marion District Men N Ministry will host "A Day of Growing in the Spirit" next month.

The event is slated for Saturday, Sept. 30, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Surfside United Methodist Church, Surfside Beach.

A light lunch will be served.

Clergy and lay speakers will present "Six Characteristics that Lead to Spiritual Maturity and Effective Discipleship."

Keynote speaker will be new Marion District Superintendent the Rev. Steven Lee Brown

For more information or to register: 843-246-8398. Surfside UMC is located at 800 13th Ave. N., Surfside Beach, SC 29575.

Whaley Street hosts Native American VBS

A Native American vacation Bible school was held the last four Sunday evenings in July from 5 to 6:30 p.m. at Whaley Street United Methodist Church in Columbia.

The Native American Committee of the South Carolina Conference shared their knowledge, ministry and message of hope with three churches who came together in a combined VBS, titled "Following the Good Road."

The three churches were Whaley Street, Mill Creek and Heyward Street.

The theme for each Sunday was as follows:

- July 9: Educational information
 - July 16: Keepers of the Word Drum worship experience
 - July 23: Crafts
 - July 30: Storytelling
- Music and supper were included in the program each night.



Photos courtesy of Joyce R. Saylor, secretary

Congratulations from Calvary

Calvary United Women in Faith and the Calvary United Methodist Men of Calvary UMC, Swansea, recently presented scholarships to students at Swansea High School. At left, Calvary United Methodist Men awarded two \$1,000 scholarships at the 2023 Swansea High School Senior Awards Ceremony. Sammy Fogle (center), vice president of the UMM, presented the scholarships to Gabriel L. Butler (UMM Memorial Scholarship, left) and Cyndal B. Dibble (Billy Etheredge Scholarship). At right, Cottia C. Taylor, a 2023 Swansea High School senior, received the Calvary United Women in Faith's Linda J. Williams Memorial Scholarship. The \$2,000 scholarship was presented by Calvary UWF President Joyce Saylor at the 2023 Swansea High School Senior Awards Ceremony in May. From left are Calvary UWF vice president Sharon Hensley, Taylor and Saylor.



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by Dr. Phil Thraillkill

Aug. 6

Rahab's plausible truth

Focal Passage: Joshua 21:1-14

Background Text: Joshua 21:1-24

Key Verse: Joshua 2:11-12, "And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any man, because of you; for the Lord your God is he who is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now then, swear to me by the Lord that as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign . . ."

Like Miss Kitty on "Gunsmoke," Rahab ran a boarding house and brothel in her apartments on the walls of Fortress Jericho. That her family is present gives the impression she was the madame, not one of the girls (vv. 12-13). It's an ugly business, where men were sated and slaves used and tossed like Kleenex. Wherever persons are disposable (porn), no one is seen as bearing "the image of God" with inherent dignity.

I've known five women involved in the sex trade; all were molested as young girls. Two came to faith, one married. I baptized their children. Jesus' good news was, "You're not a throw-away. You're mine." One became a United Methodist pastor. Two others vanished.

Joshua 2 is a tale of espionage leading to an assault against Jericho and the death and burning of all humans and animals, a holocaust. When God intersects history, here to give his people a homestead, the conventions of ancient war are in play. Its horror was not Hebrew; it was done this way by all. Scene 1 (v. 1a) is the plan. Scene 2 (vv. 1b-7) shows how Rahab lies to conceal two Mossad agents. The police believe her and rush off on an empty errand, duped by her "false flag" (v. 7).

When it's dark, Rahab goes to the roof and confesses her new faith. She predicts the future of her city and its lands (vv. 8-9). She recites the Exodus (v. 10a) and early conquests (v. 10b). She alerts them that everyone is terrified and makes her case, "I'm now one of you. You must swear to protect my house." Yes, but she must do three things: hang the red escape rope out her window when the attack comes, lock everyone inside and keep the secret (vv. 17-20). She offers a plan of escape (vv. 15-16, 22), and the two spies rappel down the city wall. After three days they report to Joshua (vv. 23-24). It's actionable intelligence.

I recently sat for three hours next to a murderer who'd spent 20 years on death row, where he came to Christ.

"Pastor Phil," he said, "I saw 21 men march to their executions. Guess what? I told every one of them about Jesus."

If God used Rahab and George (alias), there's no one who can't be used by God. Not even me!

Aug. 13

Solomon: the realities of human kingship

Focal Passage: 1 Kings 11:1-13

Background Text: Same

Key Verse: 1 Kings 11:10, "And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord commanded."

The crimes and friends of Jeffrey Epstein and Harvey Weinstein fueled the rage of "MeToo." Both are "sons of the covenant"

who followed Solomon. One is dead; the other in jail. They who treated women as disposable are now disposed of.

This drama plays out in a "pornified" culture that mocks self-control in favor of unbridled expression, including, I predict, the eventual return of polygamy to the church. Imagine your new pastor meeting the SPRC with Wife 1 and Wife 2, one of whom is a Woke, the other Wiccan. A Lutheran bishop praises polyamory; British Methodists sanction shacking as pre-marriage. An epigram of P.T. Forsyth resonates, "Unless there is within us that which is above us, we shall soon yield to that which is about us."

Solomon ended poorly. Not because he was not warned (Deuteronomy 7:4-7, 17:7), lacked religious experience (v. 9), or did not have a great, if flawed, model in David (vv. 4, 6, 12-13). He acted as a "player" by making marriage with the nubile royals of six nations (v. 1). But with dowries came deities, world views and finally temples that are "abominations," meaning vile things God hates (vv. 5b, 7), including child sacrifice (Leviticus 18:21, 20:1-5). Women as playgrounds and disposable children indicate advanced idolatry.

He went from monotheism to polytheism, from wisdom (1 Kings 3:9) to foolishness (v. 7). Pride and lust led to multiple idolatries, giving God's people religious pluralism from a rotten ruler. The real alternative to ethical monotheism is not atheism but lush polytheism.

The old king coasted on divine patience, living the Hugh Hefner dream until it ended with a verdict from above (vv. 11-13). God's first two appearances were hopeful (1 Kings 3:1-15, 9:1-9), not the third. He would be disgraced, but the memory of his father David and his devotion preserved (v. 13)

The faithfulness of our current wedding liturgy is clear. The preface announces the goodness of creation, that God "created us male and female for each other," followed by the pairing of "husband and wife," both singular! The second is that Christian marriage presumes the faith of both "as acknowledged in your baptism."

It's hard to build a house on two foundations. Just ask Solomon. To "wholly follow the Lord" (v. 6) is discipleship.

Aug. 20

A mother's persistence

Focal Passage: Mark 7:24-30 (31)

Background Text: Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30 (31)

Key Verse: Mark 7:28, "But she answered him, 'Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.'"

Can human personality be breached? Yes. What Orkin does for vermin, Jesus did for demons. I was on mission in Honduras. My job was sterilizing instruments and packaging meds. The lead dentist sent me a woman along with a translator. Her neck, face and arms were laced with thin white scars, each about three inches long, and we conducted a brief interview. At 13 her uncle took a machete to her because she refused him. Now in her mid-50s, she hadn't slept through the night in four decades

I asked if I could pray and hold her hand. She nodded and closed her eyes. I invoked the Spirit and prayed for the healing of trauma. Then, on a hunch, I leaned close and spoke just above a whisper, "Spirit of fear, go in Jesus' name." She opened her eyes and spoke excitedly. The translator looked

at me, "The fear," she said, "it is gone!" I thought, "What just happened? Is this in the UM package?"

The coastal ports of Tyre and Sidon were Gentile and full of pagan temples as outlets for demonic powers (1 Corinthians 10:20). There Jesus went with his team for a retreat (6:30-32), but his fame preceded him (v. 24). Into their dwelling burst a desperate mom with a demonized daughter, a diagnosis foreign to us, but one Jesus agreed with since he operated in the visible and invisible realms with ease. Perhaps the entry was the child's dedication at a temple (either before or after birth), a common practice even today and very dangerous. The mother wanted this ugly presence removed. Jesus' curt reply (v. 27) is often misread, some of our own even accusing Jesus of bigotry and racism.

What Jesus does, rather, is to voice the then-typical Jewish view of Gentiles: as despicable as snarling curs fighting over garbage in the streets. It's a God-given test, a bump back. That she then addresses him smartly as "Sir" and turns the image to her advantage displays how clever and unyielding is her trust (v. 28). And when he says, with divine knowledge, "the demon has (already) left your daughter," it's an exorcism at a distance, just as with some healings (Luke 7:1-10). And when she obeys his command to go (v. 29), she finds it so (v. 30). Jesus dusts the demons, never met one he liked!

Verse 31 ends the scene with a return that again highlights Gentile territory (the Decapolis). Jesus is a world Savior, not just an ethnic Messiah. He's not a bigot and leaves a witness behind, as with the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:1-20). Signs and wonders accompany frontier missions. I've seen them.

So do not mess with the occult or idolatry.

And if you build a house of sin, do not be surprised if someone comes to live in it!

Aug. 27

The tragedy of Judas

Focal Passage: John 13:21-30

Background Text: Same

Key Verse: John 13:27, "Then after the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, 'What you are going to do, do quickly.'"

With classic Christianity, though not the gospel of self-help, the church has a sober view of all image bearers. It's our Article

of Religion VII, of Original or Birth Sin: "Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually" (*Book of Discipline* 2016).

It's true of me, of the Virgin Mary, of the best you know, of all disciples of Jesus, him alone excepted (1 Peter 2:22, Hebrews 4:15). Not as bad as it might be, but systemic and consuming. Newborns look innocent because helpless, but symptoms soon appear. We ought never be surprised at our deceptions and malice, especially in large groups where evil is public policy (e.g., American slavery, Nazi Jew-hatred).

Judas' treachery is all the worse since he inhabits Jesus' inner circle. Like all, he was a battlefield and lived on one, Satan ever-circling, a lion seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8, Luke 4:13). I've watched a lioness work the grassy plains of Kenya, and she is expert.

Judas was being groomed in vice (12:4-6), but his motives are obscure. Jesus was Plan A, but if that failed, Plan B is to be implemented, which we see in 13:1-35 as a whole (not just vv. 21-30). John writes at two levels: visible (a meal, foot-washing, speeches) and invisible (the speech and acts of Satan).

So where do ideas come from? From above (the Lord)? From within (the human psyche)? From below (the Evil One)? Yes, but the notion that "now is the time" is infernal (13:2). Judas receives signs of friendship. The washing of feet (13:12-17) was for all, the feeding of what became the Eucharist (v. 26a) was his alone. He does not fail through lack of grace, but with a willful heart. He is inwardly distanced from Jesus.

With outward show and inner rejection a door opens, and "Satan entered into him" (13:27a), a possession without exorcism, "and it was night" (13:30). With 11 frail, bewildered men remaining, Jesus teaches on the glue that bonds him to them and them to "one another" (13:31-35). Doctrine is important, disciplines matter, worship is critical, but the inward surrender of devotion and mutual love is our only protection. Love binds.

Thraillkill is a retired elder in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

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POST-SEPARATION: 'We're just trying to be careful'

From Page 1

The Rev. Mike Wood, chair of the Conference Board of Trustees, said his board is scheduled to meet Aug. 8, and the amount of funds from these churches and whether or how to legally release this information is on their docket. The conference chancellor, Kay Crowe, has been out of town, and they want her to weigh in on what and how to release the information before they act.

"We're not trying to keep anything a secret," Wood said. "We just want to be sure we're correct. We've never done something like this before."

Wood said that was also the case with the release of the names of the churches who

wanted to separate; those names were kept in full confidence until the day of the vote, June 6, to preserve the integrity of the voting process.

Wood said the process was "not a rubber stamp process," and some churches required three to four meetings to make sure all their obligations were met before they were officially added to the final 113 that were approved to separate.

"We're just trying to be careful with what we do," Wood said.

Wood noted there will probably be no final decision as to disbursement of funds when they meet.

"That will be a process," he said.

The Rev. Mitch Houston, chair of the

Conference Council on Finance and Administration, said CF&A has no information on this dollar amount.

"CF&A has no report on how much each church gave," Houston said. "That is the trustees' information if they choose to release it."

Houston said he has requested that the trustees meet with CF&A to discuss funds to help with the transition.

"But ultimately it is the trustees' call," Houston added.

As for pastors who wished to leave the UMC in the wake of the separations, they had until June 30 to turn in their credentials.

However, Rev. Mel Arant, coordinator of clergy services, said the names are not public.

"Clergy status is a personnel issue and, therefore, the identities of all clergy who enter the withdrawal of membership or discontinuation of relationship processes remain confidential until after their presentation in the business questions during the

Clergy Session at the next scheduled Annual Conference," Arant explained.

As for what's next, Bishop L. Jonathan Holston has repeatedly called for United Methodists in South Carolina to join him in prayer as the church waits for General Conference, slated for May 2024 in Charlotte.

General Conference is the highest legislative body in The United Methodist Church. It usually meets once every four years to revise church law, adopt resolutions and pass plans and budgets—including the question of whether the church wants to modify its existing language on human sexuality, which has been up for debate the last several sessions. Lay and clergy delegates from every conference in the UMC—including eight South Carolina laity and eight clergy—attend and vote on the matters.

To view the list of the 113 churches that separated from the South Carolina Conference, go to <https://advocatesc.org/articles/churches-separate>.

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