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October 2023

2022 and 2023 apportionments from separating churches dispersed

By Jessica Brodie

Many ministries across the South Carolina Conference got a happy windfall in a season of what is, for some, financial uncertainty.

In September, the conference treasurer's office dispersed apportionments collected from the 113 separating churches, which were recorded in a lump sum in August. These went to any entity approved as part of the conference budget.

The 113 churches, all of which had gone through the Local Church Discernment Process given disagreements with the denomination's handling of human sexuality issues, had each

voted to leave The United Methodist Church. In June, the annual conference formally approved their separation.

Part of the requirement to separate involved the churches paying all of their 2023 apportionments, any past due apportionments from 2022 and six months of 2024 apportionments.

In September, the treasurer's office dispersed some of this: the 2022 apportionments, totaling \$376,614.89, which was recorded as a prior year apportionment payment, and the 2023 apportionments, totaling \$2,111,047.11. The latter amount was recorded as a 2023 apportionment payment. Westbury

said some churches made payments on 2023 apportionments prior to separation, while some did not.

The 2024 apportionments have not yet been dispersed, though that dollar amount, \$1,329,085, was recorded as an apportionment prepayment in August. Westbury said it will be recorded as an apportionment payment in 2024, most likely recorded in January or February.

Westbury said she thinks the 2024 payments will be dispersed in March.

See "Apportionments," Page 13

S.C. ERT responds after Idalia batters region



Photo by Dan O'Mara

Billy Robinson helps cut away a huge oak tree blocking access to Holly Hill UMC in the Orangeburg District.

By Jessica Brodie

Eighteen South Carolina disaster missionaries headed to South Georgia in early September in the aftermath of Hurricane Idalia.

By then a Category 2 storm, torrential rains from the hurri-

cane caused widespread flooding, uprooted trees and destroyed buildings in Valdosta, Georgia, prompting a call for assistance from South Georgia United Methodist Conference's Disaster Response team.

See "ERT After Idalia," Page 12

Foster in Hope

New ministry at Hopewell bolsters foster families with much-needed support

By Jessica Brodie

SIMPSONVILLE—Forget what curiosity did to the cat. At Hopewell United Methodist Church, curiosity is launching what was once a fledgling foster care ministry into a massive endeavor. And it's changing hearts and lives one relationship at a time.

It all started when one pastor, the Rev. Don Brown, started wondering what the church could do to help foster families.

Brown, who is in his seventh year as pastor of Hopewell, was aware of the great need for foster services in South Carolina, particularly in Greenville County, which has second largest number of children in foster care in the state. Many of the children who enter foster care come from tragic situations—abuse, neglect and narcotics on the part of their caregivers—but many foster families are not equipped to offer them long-term care in spite of their best intentions. Recruiting the families is one thing, but retaining them is tough. It's hard work and can be isolating, especially for those families who don't know how to navigate the system.

See "Foster in Hope," Page 11

Next-level care

Methodist-founded clinic in Guatemala expands services thanks to hospital licensure

By Jessica Brodie

QUETZALTENANGO, Guatemala—People in Guatemala's western highlands will soon have better access to much-needed medical care, including surgeries.

Healing Guatemala's Hospital Bethesda, a medical ministry founded there by physician and United Methodist elder Dr. Luke Rhyee, is now officially licensed as a hospital.

"The hospital license will take Bethesda to the next level," Rhyee told the *Advocate*, noting that before, they were licensed as a family medical clinic and a dental clinic, which meant they could only provide outpatient medical services.

The hospital license will allow them to expand their medical services greatly and help even more people than before.

Right now, Rhyee said, Hospital Bethesda has a family medicine clinic, an internal medicine clinic, a general surgery clinic, an obstetrics and gynecology clinic, a pediatric clinic, an orthopedic surgery clinic, an ophthalmology clinic, a clinical laboratory, a radiology department, a physical

therapy clinic, a pharmacy, a surgery suite and an inpatient ward. A dental clinic is also onsite.

They received the license May 27 and plan to begin surgeries and hospitalization services this month. As of press time, Rhyee said they have a cesarean-section candidate who might be the first patient to undergo a general anesthesia at Bethesda.

"And most likely she and her baby would be the first patients to be hospitalized," Rhyee said. "I think we should prepare a gift for the baby and the mom. I am so excited!"

In November, the hospital is expecting a computerized axial tomography scanner, or CAT scanner, and other medical equipment.

"The hospital license means for me that Healing Guatemala is moving another notch toward the goal through Hospital Bethesda, which is the holistic healing of God—physical, social and spiritual healing, although Healing Guatemala has a long way to go," Rhyee said.

See "Guatemala Hospital License," Page 11



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The *Advocate* encourages readers to submit for publication items of interest to South Carolina United Methodists. There is no charge for running items involving activities or announcements. Items should be submitted as far as possible in advance of the event's date or the date of requested publication. Since there is no charge for these items, they appear in the newspaper on a space-available basis. Deadlines are the 10th of each month for the following month's paper.

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

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The *Advocate* strives to produce error-free news reports. When mistakes occur, it is our policy to correct them as soon as they are brought to our attention. To request a correction, call Jessica Brodie at 803-786-9486, ext. 338 or 803-807-0018, or email jbrodie@umcsc.org. In the event of errors in advertisements, the *Advocate* will be responsible only for the space occupied by the actual error. The publisher assumes no financial responsibility for omissions.

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Regionalization legislation petitions submitted to General Conference

CHICAGO—Proposals surrounding regionalization efforts within The United Methodist Church reached a new milestone.

During an Aug. 19 meeting, The Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters unanimously approved a worldwide regionalism legislation for submission to General Conference. This legislation was also supported for submission by the Connectional Table at its July 13 meeting.

The regionalization legislation aims to provide equity throughout the regions of The United Methodist Church with the intention of decentralizing the influence of the United States on General Conference.

Emphasizing the United Methodist theology of connectionalism, it provides for contextualized ministry and mission throughout the church.

As noted in the worldwide regionalism legislation submission, eight petitions are to be submitted to General Conference. These petitions create Regional Conferences around the world. In regions with a Central Conference, the Regional Conference will replace the Central Conference. In places without a

Central Conference, a Regional Conference will be established. These petitions also establish the rights, duties, power and privileges of the Regional Conferences. These petitions give Regional Conferences legislative powers so that they can be more nimble and increase their missional impact in their region.

It also includes the creation of The United States Regional Conference, comprising the five jurisdictions. This plan includes the creation of a committee of the General Conference for U.S. regional matters, as well as the Interim Committee on Organization to organize and plan for the establishment and functioning of a new United States Regional Conference. Both the legislative committee and the organizing committee will dissolve at the first Regional Conference of the United States.

In the same spirit of connectionalism, this legislation was made possible thanks to the collaborative work of the writers of the Christmas Covenant, Connectional Table and The Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters to arrive at the current legislation.

“Our proposed legislation is about relevance, equity and trust. To be more relevant

to the people in our various contexts, we need freedom to shape our churches accordingly. To become a truly worldwide church, we need to do away with inequity,” said Bishop Harald Rückert, co-chair of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters. “To stay together as a connectional church, we need trust rather than detailed regulations. The concept of regionalization promotes the mission of our United Methodist Church—through relevance, equity and trust.”

“Regionalization is a way forward to keep the UMC alive and relevant in a worldwide context, said Bishop Ciriaco Q. Francisco, co-chair with Rückert of the Standing Committee. “It addresses the mandate of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:18-20, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations.’ It keeps us connected in mission as we proclaim the gospel in our respective context. Faith is the foundation of our mission as we go and make disciples of all nations.”

The legislation will be brought forth for voting at the postponed 2020 United Methodist General Conference to be held April 23 to May 3, 2024, at Charlotte Convention Center in Charlotte, North Carolina.

New Find-A-Church updates help local churches reach seekers

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Local United Methodist churches have an opportunity to share what their church is all about with those who are searching for the right church home. Thanks to new, expanded search options on UMC.org's Find-A-Church online directory, visitors can filter results to identify a church that matches their needs and preferences. But first, churches need to update their profiles to make that information available.

“United Methodist Communications has added some new features that require churches to add additional information to make sure their congregation is well represented on the site to help attract those looking for a church in their area,” said the Rev. Joe Iovino, director of member communications. “We encourage church leaders to take advantage of this avenue for welcoming visitors into their congregation.”

Find-A-Church now offers churches the capability to post a welcome video, share an events calendar and showcase various ministries. They can also include information about worship styles, online worship links, social media channels, accessibility services and more. The new format is easier to navigate and more mobile-friendly.

Beyond the basic church listing information, Find-A-Church relies on churches to provide the more personalized information that helps seekers choose a church. Updating a Find-A-Church profile couldn't be simpler. United Methodist Communications offers a series of tutorial videos that goes through the process step-by-step.

One reason for churches to take the time to update Find-A-Church is that it has a high Google search ranking due to the high number of visitors to the site—an average of 1,000 each day.

“Sometimes, churches don't see the benefit in updating their Find-A-Church profile, but it really does pay off,” said Shelia Mayfield, director of global communication technology development. “If people don't know the church's web address and they do a Google search, chances are the Find-A-Church directory will rank even higher than the church's website.”

“It works especially well during special seasons such as Advent and Easter,” Mayfield added. “Right now, we are in the midst of vacation Bible school. If a church has those services, it behooves them to add the information to their Find-A-Church profile because it will rank higher in the search results and people will see that information first.”

Mayfield says that churches that don't have a website can use Find-A-Church instead by purchasing a domain name through United Methodist Communications.

“Churches that have a low budget and don't feel they have the technical expertise to manage a website can redirect the domain name to their Find-A-Church profile and then just update their profile page,” said Mayfield.

To learn more, visit <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/update-your-find-a-church-profile>.

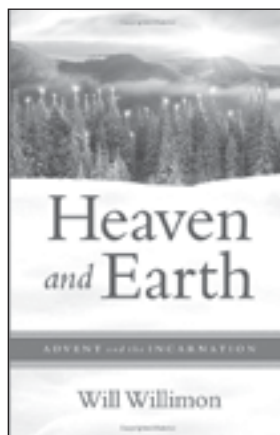
Willimon releases Advent Study

South Carolina Methodism's Will Willimon has just published “Heaven and Earth: Advent and Incarnation” with Abingdon Press.

“This book is my effort to talk with Methodists about one of the most interesting and certainly core beliefs of our faith: the Incarnation,” Willimon said. “God not only loves us but, in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, becomes one with us. God has turned to us as one of us. This study, designed to be used in churches, small groups and individual reflection, is my attempt to talk about the Incarnation in a biblical, accessible way.”

Willimon, a Greenville native, is professor of the practice of Christian ministry, Duke Divinity School, and a retired United Methodist bishop.

“There's a video that can accompany a congregation's study of the book and a study guide as well,” he added. “I'm already planning of having Zoom visits to a number of South Carolina Methodist congregations in the coming months. I hope many will adopt this book for study and reflection in your church.”



‘Our Single Legacy’

St. Mark UMC to host Singles Symposium Oct. 7

TAYLORS—St. Mark United Methodist Church will host an event for all single adults, whether never married, divorced, widowed, single parents or dating couples.

Called Singles Symposium, “Our Single Legacy,” the event will be Oct. 7 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The cost is \$20 and includes breakfast and lunch.

Interactive sessions, networking, door prizes and a special workshop for singles ages 19-39 will be held. The young adult discussion will address topics such as romantic relationships, human sexuality, single parenting and professional development.

Breakout session facilitators will focus on biblical spirituality, finances, mental health and wellness.

Single adults from all ages, denominations and locations are welcome.

Speakers include Dr. Carlton McClam Sr., Kris Swiatocho, Min. Wanda McWilliams, Dr. Raymond Nichols and Tobe Sizemore.

Register via Cash App at \$SaintMarkThe911 or at <https://wallet.subsplash.com/ui/embed/5BVWTJ/> or mail payment to: 911 St. Mark Road, Taylors, SC 29687.

Appreciation ads available to thank church music ministers

In November, celebrate your music director, choir or praise band just as they are gearing up for the Christmas season with cantatas and other special musical events.

Three sizes are available (all 5.088” wide):

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

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

Churches will be billed for the ads unless otherwise noted.





The team worked for five days there.



People got health care as well as Bibles.

Grace UMC's medical mission to Bolivia helps 500 in the name of Jesus

By Janis H. Collins

On July 21, a team of 12 medical team members sponsored by Grace United Methodist Church in North Augusta left Atlanta for a nine-day Southeastern Jurisdiction United Methodist Volunteers in Mission trip in Ancoraimes, Bolivia.

Because of the pandemic, it had been five years since we have been able to travel to Bolivia, and we found so much need and many changes.

Ancoraimes is a village that sits at 13,000 feet on the edges of Lake Titicaca. They had waited for us to come since 2020, and we were met with much celebration and by the bishop of the Bolivian Methodist Church, the Rev. Medardo Vedia Gutierrez. Gutierrez told us the indigenous people had almost given up hope that medical aid would be available to them.

The team worked for five days seeing a total of approximately 500 patients who lined up at our gates beginning in the middle of the night for a chance to see our doctor, dentists and eyeglass group. As each patient left our clinic with the medicines needed, we also gave out Bibles, sunglasses, eyedrops, warm hats and toothbrushes. They left with their hope restored that they are a people who matter and who are loved because our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ loves them, whose hands and feet we sought to be throughout the week.

Collins honored

While in Bolivia, Janis Collins was honored with an appreciation award for her 29 years of missional service to the Bolivian people, which was given by Bishop Gutiérrez personally in Bolivia. Once the team returned home, a slideshow of all the work done and recognition was given to Collins in Grace's Aug. 13 11 a.m. worship service. Grace wanted to honor her and let the congregation know about the award she received in Bolivia.

Grace also let Collins and the congregation know she had been nominated for the Michael C. Watson Volunteer Appreciation award, even though she was not the winner. A copy of that award essay was presented to her that day.

Grace members thanked Collins for her continued commitment and support of leading Grace UMC to care for the least of these and making Christ's love known to the Bolivian people and all people wherever.

As always, the team returned feeling we had received more than we could possibly give, and with hope of our own that we can continue to be the hands and feet of Jesus as we reach out to others in need.

Team members included Ryan Collins, Joey Maroney, Trinidad Rice, Sawyer Jackson, Scott Jackson, Ryan Hendrick, Scott Collins, Jim Goettl, the Rev. Ashley Buchanan, Katie Krishon, Lisa Shull and Janis Collins.



Lare holds his certificate surrounded by family as well as a number of friends from his New Generation Sunday school class at Shandon UMC, Columbia.

Photo courtesy of Beth Barry

Interfaith Community Services honors longtime service of Marvin Lare

COLUMBIA—Interfaith Community Services of South Carolina Inc., one of the Advance Special Ministries of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, honored the Rev. Marvin Lare with a special certificate of recognition Sept. 7.

In addition to his work as a UMC pastor and as founding executive director of Interfaith Community Services, Lare has a long history of social activism nationally and in South Carolina.

Beth Barry, Board-Staff Liaison and Midlands Area Coordinator for Interfaith Community Services, began the recognition by sharing the mission and vision of the organization. Interfaith's mission is to be a united faith community improving the quality of life in South Carolina by working together to build strong families and healthy thriving children. Their vision is to convene, educate and coordinate faith and other community partners to build strong families and strong communities.

Members from six downtown Columbia churches began meeting in 1967 in the offices of the Methodist Advocate and drafted a proposal in January 1969 to establish an ecumenical Columbia Urban Service Center to "offer a diversified program of building neighborhood centered social welfare and related services to the center city of Columbia."

The Oliver Gospel Mission became the center of the new organization's operations.

Barry noted that Lare served as Interfaith's director for approximately 17 years, starting in 1969. He came to Interfaith after already having a notable history as a civil rights champion and social activist, including participation in planning and strategy sessions with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and others in Selma, Alabama, as they prepared for the voting rights march to Montgomery.

After arriving in South Carolina, Lare quickly became a leader working for racial equality and social justice on both local and

state levels. He has written several volumes of "Champions of Civil and Human Rights in South Carolina." With his vision and leadership, Barry shared, the organization set priority action efforts with local churches initially identifying their highest priorities as drug abuse, school integration, aging services and the needs of the homeless. From 1971-1978, they operated a drug response program with a crisis telephone hotline and walk-in center. Treatment services were developed, including a halfway house and a methadone maintenance clinic operated with the Richland County Health Department. Eventually the drug response operation merged with the alcohol treatment programs to form the current Lexington-Richland Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council.

Other major programs included the creation of Meals on Wheels from 1975-1977 when it was transferred to the Midlands Council on Aging; the Summer Food Service Program, a federally funded, state-administered program that reimburses providers who serve free, nutritious meals and snacks to children and teens in low-income areas when school is not in session; the founding of the Cooperative Ministry with First Presbyterian, Main Street United Methodist, Trinity Episcopal, Washington Street United Methodist and First Baptist churches to establish a collaborative method of assisting those in need while preventing the duplication of services; helping to found the first hospice in the state at what is now Prisma Health Richland; and helping the Child and Adult Care Food Programs.

Barry shared that in 1986, Lare resigned to become the executive director of the South Carolina Institute on Poverty and Deprivation and Joanne Emerson was hired as Interfaith's second director. She served for 21 years and was followed by Marga McKee.

Interfaith Community Services is housed at St. Mark UMC, Columbia.



Photo by Allison Trussell

The Rev. Millie Nelson Smith (left), director of Connectional Ministries, recognizes longtime staffer Gail Corn, who is retiring in September after many years of work in the conference.

Connectional Ministries sets course for hopeful future

By Allison Trussell

COLUMBIA—Meeting for the first time since the pandemic, Connectional Ministries gathered Saturday, Sept. 9, at Trenholm Road United Methodist Church.

With a devotion based on Joshua 5:13-15, the Rev. Millie Nelson Smith, director, offered a hopeful look to the new future in which Connectional Ministries and the conference find themselves.

"God is not done with us yet," she reminded the group. "We are on holy ground but must trust God for everything. ... God wants us to be victorious!"

She encouraged the four areas—Advocacy, Discipleship, Laity and Outreach—to look at the ministries that are working and those that aren't in their area. Perhaps, she suggested, it is time to look outside the box and do things differently.

"Our mission remains the same despite the separations," she said. "We still have leaders, communities, churches and people to engage and connect."

The Rev. Cathy Joens and Chris Lynch spoke on the upcoming plans for Safe Sanctuaries and youth. Four ministries of the conference were highlighted with speakers: Killingsworth, Church and Community Workers, Dementia Care Ministry and Epworth Children's Home.

Gail Corn was recognized and honored for her many years of work in the conference. She will be retiring at the end of September.

Connectional Ministries will meet again Feb. 17, 2024.

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Viewpoints



Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

Spirit, lead me—and lead us all

Autumn is just beginning to blanket the South, tendrils of cool breezes whispering their promise here and there—this season is over, and the next is on its heels.

In many ways, it reminds me of what is going on in our churches right now. After an unsettling time of discernment and separation, with many wondering what's next and where to turn, our next steps have become increasingly clear—we are to press on in faith together as we all engage in God's work in this world.

Like the sweeping winds of autumn, God's Spirit is blowing upon us all. A fresh wind guiding us forward, it beckons us toward new and exciting opportunities.

Throughout this paper, you'll see so many stories about exactly this, from the vibrant new foster family support ministry at Hopewell United Methodist Church in Simpsonville (Page 1) to a new partnership spearheaded by Virginia Wingard Memorial UMC, West Columbia, to help their local elementary school in the name of Jesus (Page 8).

When the Lord God breathed life into the first people, we transformed from the dust of the ground into living flesh made in the image of the Almighty (Genesis 2:7). On the day of Pentecost, God breathed again, and the Holy Spirit filled the disciples, a Spirit alive in each one of us today (Acts 2:1-4).

That breath, that Spirit within us all, spurs us on to a bright tomorrow, a tomorrow filled with new ministries and new hope, awake and refreshed and ready to do all the Lord calls us to do.

Jesus told his disciples to pick up their cross and follow him (Matthew 16:24). Today we have that same command. Let's pick up our crosses and follow our savior, shouting out an invitation to everyone in our midst: Come! See! Experience the living God for yourself.

Together, we are alive in Christ and filled with the Spirit of God. Like autumn invigorates us for earth's fresh new season, let's allow the Holy Spirit to do the same in our lives as followers of Christ.

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.



Bishop's Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

Choose hope

"Come, behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. 'Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations; I am exalted in the earth.' The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."—Psalm 46:8-10 (NRSV)

We serve a mighty God! The Alpha and Omega. An invincible ruler. The one to whom nothing is impossible. Indeed, we serve a mighty God.

And yet, the reality of this broken world is that there are times when the seas of life get rough and chaos seemingly presses in on every side. In these moments of urgency and confusion, the temptation is to "do something" and to act quickly, to lean on your own understanding rather than putting your hope and trust in God.

But no matter what life throws at you, you've got to have hope.

The psalmist proclaims the glory and power of God with a direct reminder to "be still." We are not simply being still and wondering what will happen. In the stillness, we exercise hope—trusting, believing and knowing that God is with us.

Hope is not a naïve notion that nothing bad will ever happen, but it is the knowledge that the sun will rise again, and life will go on. You will make it to the other side of the storm.

Our God is the God that speaks order out of chaos. Our God calms the seas, and our God is our refuge. We have only to surrender ourselves to the power and might of Jehovah to find the courage and hope our souls need for the journey.

And once you surrender, when you are finally still, it is then that God does the work of transformation: recalibrating trust, increasing hope and helping you to see with the eyes of Christ rather than through your own imperfect vision. Nothing has to be forced; in fact, you cannot actually force transformation anyway. Our job is simply to show up, be still and make space for God to do the work of transformation within our souls.

Surrendering to God gives us clarity about the most faithful next step. Surrendering to God heightens our awareness of the voice of Jesus over the cacophony of noise the world produces. Surrendering to God allows us to prepare for our role in God's chosen future.

For God does not call the equipped; God equips the called. Hope is trusting that God will prepare you.

We cannot control the surrounding circumstances of our lives, but we can choose intentionally to live with hope, trusting the future to Jesus Christ, our sustainer and caretaker of our souls. Choosing hope is recognizing that even though you can't change the current, you can always adjust your sails.

When we choose daily to live with hope, God works within us to make us the people we need and ought to be. We might not have all the immediate answers, but we will have clarity of purpose and motivation to take the next faithful step—seeing clearly that we do, indeed, serve a mighty God.

Letters to the Editor

Faith not fear

In his inaugural address in 1933 during the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." There is so much fear in our church members today. There are words and actions that are creating fear in churches.

In Matthew 24:10-11, the Scripture warns us, "At that time many will turn away from the faith and betray and hate each other and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people." This is happening in our churches.

1 John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love." It goes on to explain, "We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. Whoever loves God must also love his brother" (v. 19, 21).

It is time for the believer to have faith. As 1 Corinthians 13:2 says, "If I have faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

A Christian lives with love, not hate. A Christian lives with faith, not fear.

In times as these, we believe the words Jesus said: "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22).

*Rev. John Culp
West Columbia*

Elsie's need

This is a happy story with a happy beginning and a happy ending. And in this story there are three winners.

This past March, Elsie called our office and shared with one of our office people her problem: She had no heat and her unit was not repairable. She did not have enough money to buy a new unit, and she didn't have enough income to make monthly payments either. She asked did we know of any source that could help her with her need.

At this point the story really gets good. Statistically, there would be a 99.9 percent chance that Elsie would be told, "No, we don't know of any sources that can help you." But that did not happen. Elsie was told, "Let me look around and see what I can find."

Because of our employee's compassion and love, she would not let go. She kept stirring the pot, and as she shared the story, she got contributions. Finally our manager said he



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LETTERS: Readers sound off

From Page 4

would make up the difference. And Elsie got a brand-new HVAC system.

There were three winners—three happy winners, Elsie was happy, the contributors were happy and God was happy because God’s people are supposed to help people in need.

In summary, why did I share this story with you? Well, first of all, because it is a happy story, and secondly, because of Elsie’s story, our company decided to give away a heating system every fall and a cooling system every spring.

We hope we can do this as long as our company remains in business.

*Hugh McCown, member
Shiloh UMC, Piedmont*

A poem: ‘How Tender the Hand’

How tender the hand that forms the frame
Of Christ the babe in the secret place—

In consubstantial mystery,
So beautifully and bitterly,
The Father sculpts his wondrous face.

How soft the gaze that contemplates
That child so small, so delicate,
Though whips shall soon disfigure he—
How tender the hand.

Does sorrow or a turn of grace
For èen a moment cross his face?
How woeful the deed,
How soft the gaze,
How tender the hand.

(Excerpted with permission from the author’s second published book, “Notes from the Hem,” a collection of Christian poetry and prose.)

*Autumn Leigh Waite
Bluffton UMC, Bluffton*

Bishop Holston releases statement on 60th anniversary of the March on Washington

On Aug. 28, the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington, South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston released a statement:

“Sixty years ago today, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke passionately from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial about transforming ‘the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.’ These breathtakingly aspirational words are often overlooked in Dr. King’s ‘I Have A Dream’ speech before more than 250,000 people during that initial March on Washington on Aug. 28, 1963. They are sandwiched between Dr. King’s well-known litany of dreams, and his hope for ‘the day when all of God’s children will be able to sing with a new meaning, ‘My country, ‘tis of thee, sweet land of liberty ...’

“Symphony of brotherhood’—a dream in itself, driven by Dr. King’s unyielding faith that ‘we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.’

“That dream—that desire for a dream—is still with us today. To be sure, we have made progress over these 60 years; but, all too often, we idle, we stall, we slide back. Just this weekend, we saw one of those backslides, when one man’s hatred for Black people resulted in the shooting deaths of three people in Jacksonville, Florida.

“We grieve these, the latest in an ever-growing, horrific line of victims of gun violence, and we mourn the members of our own community who have been victims of hatred over the years. We pray for the family, friends and loved ones of all whose lives have been lost due to hatred and violence, and we ask God to surround those affected with comfort, healing and peace.

“Twelve years before Dr. King shared his expansive dream, the poet Langston Hughes asked, ‘What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?’ A

dream deferred, yes, but that desire for a dream lives on.

“Our faith that ‘joy comes with the morning’ sustains us on the path to the fulfillment of Dr. King’s dream. Today, we must not only renew this message of hope, but act on it—each in our own hearts and in our own families, and together in our own communities.

“So, how do we act on this? First, we open our eyes to the realities of injustice in the world, acknowledging that we have a personal and collective responsibility to put our faith into action.

“Second, we recognize that the experiences of others may very well be different from your own, and that we can learn so much by talking and listening to one another rather than speaking in sweeping generalities. If we are willing and open, we will grow.

“As we reflect on this broadening perspective, the opportunities for action will come into focus. If you want to make a difference, you can’t do it from the sidelines.

“Here in the South Carolina Conference, we have developed resources for those churches whose members want to have honest conversation about the pain of discrimination and racism and how we move forward together. Our Response to Racism (<https://www.umcsc.org/endoracism/>) is designed to help tear down the walls that divide us and build bridges of reconciliation between all of God’s people.

“The more we are willing to learn, share, listen and grow, the more we reflect the light of God’s love into a hurting world.

“As we reflect today on the six decades that have passed since the inaugural March on Washington, we know, like Dr. King knew, that it is our faith that enables us to breathe and believe, hewing hope amid seeming despair. Please join me in praying that love will be vigilant and truth will be bold.”



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Amiri Hooker

Where are our flagship churches?

Historic flagship African-American churches have been anchors for preserving cultural identity and heritage within their communities. These churches have safeguarded and celebrated Black church customs, artistry and history through worship services, traditional music and civil protest.

Traveling around the Southeastern Jurisdiction as the SEJ Black Methodists for Church Renewal coordinator, I see how many of these flagship churches have gone away or are on life support. In the book, “I’m Black. I’m Christian. I’m Methodist,” by Vance P. Ross, senior pastor of Central United Methodist Church, Atlanta, It caught me off guard when he stated that Florida has one Black church with 200 worshippers and no United Methodist Black presence in Orlando, one of its largest and most populous cities. Los Angeles has one Black church with more than 200 in worship. Among others, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Newark, Detroit, Cleveland and Cincinnati can all boast that they are not the homes of one United Methodist Black church with 200 or more in worship.

As the name suggests, flagship churches were strong, typically downtown churches that worshiped more than 200 and were safe havens for organizing protests, community gatherings and educational initiatives that empowered African Americans to challenge systemic discrimination and demand social equality.

Many ask where Black church leadership was during the Black Lives Matter movement during the summer of 2020 and the COVID-19 anti-police brutality uprising in 2021 and 2022. The hard reality was that these churches, which were social justice headquarters, had gone by the wayside.

Flagship Black churches had pastors who actively engaged with the community and were better positioned to advocate for positive change. These community-engaged pastors recognize that the well-being of their congregants extends beyond the spiritual realm. They understand that individuals face various challenges in their daily lives and strive to provide holistic support. Whether offering financial advice, facilitating job training programs or collaborating with community organizations, these pastors aim to uplift their congregations in every aspect of life.

In 2016, Dr. Norman Brown presented “Resolution for an Assessment and a Plan of

Action for the African American Historical Methodist Flagship Churches of the South Carolina Annual Conference.” When he did so, there was a real hope that we would have a conversation about rebuilding these vital Methodist portals for community transformation.

Seeing Wesley Chapel in Lake City as it emerges out of the COVID-19 pandemic with a more vital attendance and more financially secure raises a question: Is The United Methodist Church willing to invest in its historic African-American churches at a level that will allow them to return to the community engagement and civil rights work that made Methodism famous?

We must also ask if we are training pastors to focus only on their congregations versus the community they were appointed to serve. Yes, we have been doing the Strengthening the Black Church Summit and Black Methodist for Church Renewal pieces of training for years, but has it reached needs?

The conference has also given small grants to ethnic ministries. But in a day and time when a carton of eggs costs \$3.49, \$10,000 in seed grants will not repair infrastructure and fill pantry shelves. We need to look at making grants in the \$45,000 to \$75,000 range to have a real impact.

In conclusion, the importance of flagship Black churches in the African-American experience cannot be overstated. Their historical significance as bastions of resilience, empowerment and cultural identity reverberates through time. The time is now to use recently gained resources and restore these bedrock discipleship centers in our communities.

These churches—like Wesley Chapel, Florence District; Mount Sinai, Anderson District; Old Bethel, Charleston District; Wesley, Columbia District; Cumberland and Mount Zion, Florence District; John Wesley and St. Matthew, Greenville District; Camden First, Trinity and Emanuel, Hartsville District; Wesley, Marion District; Trinity, Orangeburg District; Wesley, Rock Hill District; Silver Hill Memorial, Spartanburg District; and Springtown, Walterboro District—are too essential to the salvation of the world to become inverted or empty.

Hooker is the pastor of Wesley Chapel UMC, Lake City. He is also the author of “Preaching in the Midst Of,” from the Advocate Press, which you can find on Amazon or at <https://www.advocatesc.org/books>.



Photos courtesy of Olisa Ashford

Freedom School comes to Journey

Journey Church, Columbia, is now a Freedom School site. They held their first year of Freedom School this summer and had the opportunity to serve 30 scholars in grades three to five. Here, the scholars gather for a smile.





Guest Commentary

by David Bryant

Changing the Bible?

I just don't agree with changing the Bible."

Hm. The statement is currently popular in memes, conversation and disaffiliation appeals, and it raises a few hard to answer questions: What, exactly, are "they" trying to change? Who are "they"? What is the proposed replacement?

It's enchantingly hard to argue with the logic without positioning oneself for ridicule as a non-Bible-believing "woke" heretic. Nonetheless, let's try.

The Bible in use prior to English language translations was the fourth-century Latin translation known as the Vulgate of the Roman Catholic Church. In those days, common folks were not allowed to own a Bible, nor could they have read it in Latin, if at all. Attempts to translate the Bible into English and make it more available to common folks would lead to revisionist interpretations and politicized translations and versions that continue through the King James Version, the Authorized King James Version and the New King James Version until today.

The Wycliffe Bible is believed to be the first English-language Bible and was translated from the Latin Vulgate in 1384. The Gutenberg Bible was the first Bible printed using moveable type but was, again, the Vulgate printed in Latin in 1455. The first English language Bible credited with coming directly from the original Hebrew and Greek texts was the Tyndale written in 1525. The next major evolution came with The Great Bible. Still prohibiting personal ownership, the Great Bible was distributed directly to Anglican (Church of England) churches. The Great Bible was printed in the mid 1500s and emphasized the primacy of the Church of England over Catholicism, allowing King Henry VIII to divorce his wife, marry his mistress and declare himself to be the head of the church by virtue of being the reigning Monarch—circumventing and defying the Pope.

Next, in 1560, came the Geneva Bible. The Geneva Bible introduced numbered verses as well as margin commentaries and scriptural cross references. The Geneva Bible was largely influenced by the earlier work of Tyndale with the commentary reflecting the Puritan beliefs of John Calvin and became known as the "Bible of the Protestant Reformation." With the ending of the Protestant Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church would approve an English-language Bible, the Doway/Rheims version, in 1609.

Finally, Protestant leaders petitioned King James I to fund a Bible less biased toward Puritanism, more reflective of the Church of England, eliminating margin notes that criticized the growing and profitable slave trade and condemned the King's "divine right" to rule. Thus, the 1611

KJV that many people today revere as the "gold standard" of Scripture was largely the result of a politically motivated, revisionist endeavor.

Today, according to the YouVersion Holy Bible app, there are 2,995 versions of the Bible in 1,984 languages.

The "I don't agree with changing the Bible" statement simply doesn't hold water. The Bible is, and has been, changed—either subtly or significantly—with every new translation and version. It's actual meaning and application is constantly evolving as our knowledge, experience and traditions lead to new, more insightful understanding. The statement is much more a veiled accusation that anyone who disagrees with what the Bible literally says (versus what the Bible means) is denying God's "word" as stated in Scripture.

The argument should revolve around what "God's Word" (Jesus) meant and means. Frankly, it's dangerously close to idolatry of the words of Scripture in defiance of God's Word: Jesus.

I believe an interesting exercise for churches in currently discernment would be to:

- Divide randomly into Sunday School size groups;
- Choose one of the four Gospels;
- Divide each group into two parts;
- Have one group read the chosen Gospel from the King James Version and the other from an accurate yet easier-to-read version (i.e., the Common English Bible or New Living Translation);
- Have each group answer preselected questions of how their version answered the questions and did it differ in any way from what they previously believed the Bible said. If so, how?
- Have each group present their answers to the entire group.
- Discuss any differences between the groups' responses.

I believe such an exercise would reveal the disparity between the literal words of Scripture and God's Word as revealed through Scripture, consistent with John Wesley's approach to understanding Scripture.

I also believe the real statement being made is not, "I just don't agree with changing the Bible," but "I just don't believe in change/changing."

Thus, this relegates the Bible to static laws and archaic prose rather than a living document necessary and complete for salvation and insisting on compliance with a false doctrine of salvation based on the works of obedient conformity rather than grace through faith.

Bryant is a member of Bethesda United Methodist Church, Easley.

Coming soon: New mental health compilation from the Advocate Press

Mental illness statistics are alarming, and the National Institute on Mental Health estimates more than one in five U.S. adults were living with a mental illness in 2021—that's nearly 58 million people.

According to the National Institutes of Health, globally, nearly 15 percent of young people ages 10 to 19 experience a mental health disorder. Numbers are even worse since the COVID-19 pandemic, and many say we are facing an unprecedented mental health crisis. The suicide rate is climbing, and availability of counselors, psychiatric care, and other resources is in woefully short supply. Many insurance plans don't even cover mental health care.

But there is one bright spot: More people are becoming increasingly vocal about mental and emotional health.

The Advocate Press is hoping to help with that. Next month, the Advocate Press will release a new book, "Darkness to Light: Finding Jesus in the Valley of Mental Illness."

Compiled and edited by *Advocate* Editor Jessica Brodie, the book is a collection of personal stories that offer a look at their mental health journeys of a number of people, sharing in many cases how faith played a major role in their healing journey.

"Whether you are struggling with your own mental and emotional health or you are supporting someone who is, I hope these stories offer hope and inspiration in what can be a dark, dark world," Brodie said about the book. "Together, we can journey from darkness to light ... the light of Christ."

The Advocate Press is the publishing arm of the *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate* newspaper. Launched in late 2017, the Advocate Press has a mission to produce books of interest to South Carolina United Methodists on matters of faith and to amplify regional voices and those that advocate for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

With this newest book, the Advocate Press is excited to offer 20 titles. Shop online and learn more at <https://advocatesc.org/books>.



Forever Young at Disciples

On August 19, after much planning, a group of talented members at Disciples UMC, Greenville, put together a fun evening of music from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s called Forever Young. Food, dancing, Cha Cha lessons, vintage candies and decorations, and many guest appearances made for a fun night. There were approximately 40 people in attendance, many new members, so it was also a chance for all to get to know Disciples' new minister, the Rev. Narcie Jeter, better. And who knew her husband, Mike, is quite the musician? Above left, Nancy Sinatra (Tammy Mathena) made a guest appearance, singing "These Boots Are Made For Walkin'." Patty Hammond is on keyboard. Above right, Sonny and Cher (Steven Mathena and Tammy Mathena) performed "I Got You, Babe" with Hammond on keyboard and Dave Murtaugh on drums. Below left, Fonzie was also in attendance (Lance Walden and Diane Wilson). And below right, Dr. Cheryl Gwyn performed a Beatles piece on the harp.



Activities that help

Members of Manning UMC, Manning, got together recently for an Operation Christmas Child activity day. Activities included making bead dolls and bracelet kits for an upcoming packing party.

Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Mickey Fisher

Acknowledging slavery in South Carolina

In the early days of America people were bought and sold as commodities. Members of the Red and Black race were literally put up for sale to the highest bidder. Some Whites were in a milder form of slavery. They offered themselves for hire for a fixed amount of time after which they were free to seek other employment or to launch their own business. During their time of indentured service, they were at the beck and call of their employer.

Blacks were identified as less than fully human and subject to “ownership” by masters who put them to varieties of work in the field, in the homes of the masters, in industries and at times hired them out to other masters. They had no civil rights, but some were treated as valuable assets because of their labor. Their dignity as persons and families was seldom honored as worthy of decent housing and humane care.

They were valued for economic reasons only.

Prevailing attitudes among “enlightened” slave owners was that a healthy slave was a better slave.

The treatment of aged and infirmed slaves was a mixed bag, depending upon the “humanity” of the owner. The quality of food, the amount of rest and free time allowed the slave were the measure of humane treatment. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, observed South Carolina slavery and labeled it the “most vile” he had seen.

For a careful and through treatment of slavery in South Carolina see Chapter 5 in Walter Edgar’s “South Carolina: A History.” The title of that chapter is, “More Like a Negro Country.” It documents the origin of slavery in the state, the growth of a Black majority, Black resistance and the patterns of intimidation by the White majority to keep Blacks in line.

Edgar writes: “When blacks reacted in an insolent or mischievous manner, whites clamped down. This, in turn, led to further black resistance. The colony entered into what appeared to be a never-ending spiral of action and reaction.”

Today we are appalled that a whole race could be judged to be inferior and denied the dignity of respect and affirmation by the community of which they were a part. Unfortunately, that is not something out of the past nor something rare in human history. It continues to be a painful reality besmirching the corporate and private life of citizens in nations the world over.

Three words in the first sentence of the paragraph above (dignity, respect and affirmation) were seldom if ever used with reference to slaves in precolonial South Carolina. What follows is an attempt to affirm the dignity and respect of Black people who have been a part of my upbringing.

I grew up in an all-White community, at-

tended all-White public schools, graduated from two all-White colleges. The Supreme Court ruling that declared racial segregation in public schools to be unconstitutional came after I finished high school. In athletics (high school football and golden gloves boxing) I never competed against a Black opponent.

Even in matches against boxing teams from the Donaldson Army Airbase in Greenville, South Carolina, and the 82nd Airborne team at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, I was paired against other White boxers.

In professional ranks Black and White boxers were in the ring together. Joe Lewis, the Brown Bomber, carried the weight of the nation in his match against the German heavyweight Max Schmeling.

In baseball the Brooklyn Dodgers brought Jackie Robinson into the major leagues. He endured abuse from the all-White fans, but his great skill as a player and his winsome personality won the day and opened the game to other gifted Black players.

Today baseball is an international game with players from many nations. Professional football, basketball, soccer, tennis and other sports have followed suit.

Of course, money has been the big motivating factor in the movement toward racial integration in sports! No matter the motive, we are at a much better place today regarding race relations than we were just a few years ago!

We have definitely made progress. Yet, as is often said, “We still have a long way to go.”

Gadsden’s Wharf in Charleston was a main destination for slave ships plying the Middle Passage. South Carolina’s role in the Middle Passage drama is difficult to overstate. It is clear that the Palmetto State played a major role in enabling the financial success of the slave trade.

The same might be said of Boston and New York. Slavery was widely accepted and practiced in many nations.

The struggle to abolish it was long and arduous!

South Carolina’s first slaves came to Charleston from Barbados to instruct Blacks and native Americans in the cultivation of sugar. That was a failed experiment because neither the soil nor the climate favored sugar as a money crop. Thus, South Carolina farmers switched to indigo and rice, crops cultivated by slaves.

There is a new factor that is likely to further South Carolina’s movement toward greater affinity between the races. That factor is the new African American Museum on the site of the former Gadsden’s Wharf. Its opening has been delayed by difficulty in raising money to cover operations.

Fisher, a retired elder, lives in Spartanburg.

Washington Street UMC to host indoor yard sale

COLUMBIA—Washington Street United Methodist Church will hold an indoor yard sale on Saturday, Sept. 30, from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The event will be held indoors in the church’s social hall. The church is located at 1401 Washington St. in downtown Columbia.

Items for sale will include small furniture, lamps, antiques and collectibles, costume jewelry, household items, small electronics, CDs, DVDs, seasonal decorations and more. Donations are also being accepted through Friday, Sept. 29, at 3 p.m. They are not accepting clothes, shoes, car seats, TVs or books.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Tony Rowell

The destination

I keep an old television with a DVD player attached to it down in my workshop to keep me company. As a rule I stick a movie in there or a “Hogan’s Heroes,” and once in a while, I’ll put an old “Andy Griffith” in and listen to Barney rant and rave for a while.

The other day I was down in the shop working on this and that, and I put an Andy in. As I watched the opening credits with Opie and Andy walking down that old dirt road chucking rocks in the lake, my mind went nostalgic, as it often does, and it hit me that that was my life during the summers when I was a kid.

I am a contemporary of Opie, you see. Old Ron Howard and I are close in age, so in actuality, when I was a kid, my life was not all that different from Opie’s.

During the summer months when I was with Granny and Grandpa, I walked those old Southern dirt roads down on the Panhandle, kicking cans, chucking rocks and getting into all sorts of mischief.

I fished whenever I could and played whenever I couldn’t, and in the evenings, if a ball game wasn’t on, I would sit on the old front porch and occupy myself somehow. Yes, there was life before video games and satellite television.

Sometimes I would just go out on the carport and sit silently beside my grandpa finding comfort in the glow of his Pall Mall cigarette. Listening to the night sounds and watching the toads make their way to the cool concrete for the night, I was content and at peace.

I slept on the old front porch throughout the summer. It had jalousie windows, for those who know what I’m talking about, and the bed was a door, laid flat, with makeshift legs and a bit of cushion on it. Hard as a stone, but familiar, so I rested easy on it.

I would lay out there on Thursday nights and listen to “Dragnet.” You see, Granny’s next-door neighbor, Irene, was hard of hearing, and she kept her TV loud and her windows open. So when I heard “Just the facts, ma’am,” I would sit up and enjoy the show. It was a treat.

On Sunday afternoons, we went visiting. We would take off to Cottondale, Chipley or Crestview to visit great aunts and uncles, first, second and third cousins, and old friends. Being a child, I hated it then, but I miss it now.

Now that life has gotten so busy that visiting is out of style. That just dropping by to say “hi” is an imposition instead of a pleasure. That sitting on the front porch in the cool of the day can’t seem to be tolerated by many folks anymore without some electronic gadget in their hands to distract them.

I know I am sounding old, a little crotchety and way too nostalgic, and perhaps that is the case; but I miss the days when life was gradual, and relationships, real relationships, were cherished. To quote Merle Haggard, I kinda long for the days when “Coke was still cola and a joint was a bad place to be.”

When I was a bit younger, I would not have understood what I have just written. At that time I was in the midst of life, with children to raise, a career to tend to, schedules to keep and adventures to take. I would have never understood had I told myself then that running through life at a hundred miles an hour doesn’t augment life; it diminishes it.

A laser focus may get you to where you want to be, only to have you discover that you left what truly matters behind. Remember: A hollow victory is no victory at all.

As a pastor and friend, please: Slow down long enough to experience the life God has given you. Don’t let your life be a blur on the side of the road. Enjoy it.

Take the time to love those God has given you to love. Take the time to be loved.

Life is so much more than getting to a destination. Life is the destination. So slow down a bit and enjoy the ride.

Rowell pastors Beulah United Methodist Church, Gilbert. He is also the author of “What Would Granny Say,” an essay collection from the Advocate Press available at <https://www.advocatesc.org/books>.

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by Bob Fowler

Guest Commentary

Three general rules

I believe we have reached a place in our life where, as a people of faith, we are ready to give serious consideration to another way, a more faithful way of living as disciples of Jesus Christ.

It must be accessible and inviting to young and old, rich and poor, powerful and weak. Most of us never imagined we would be living in such a divided world. But alas, the world of peace and plenty for all has not happened. John Wesley anticipated times like these, and he knew everyone needed a way of living, helping all to live a holy and good life in a world like ours.

John Wesley led all the Methodists from then until now and the future with Three General Rules: Do no harm, do good and stay in love with God. As the church in the world, we are to “lead by example” (Colossians 3:12-17).

“Do no harm” is first. Without this, most of the people Jesus healed or helped or loved would have been lost while his disciples would be saying, “How much we love God!” People wanted “Do no harm” at the end of the rules. “Start with loving God,” many would say. But Wesley and Jesus knew that the hardest was to first change our behavior—to change our witness to the world even before doing good. “Doing no harm” would be the hardest because it would demand the most from us and require a fundamental change from “my will” to “thy will.” It would make us dependent on God’s help with this one. And following God was the hardest thing to do; the whole Bible is about that struggle.

“Do no harm” is foundational to our faith. Yes, we’re the church together. The church is not a building; the church is not a steeple; the church is not a resting place; the church is a people.

I’m pretty sure John Wesley didn’t want us to keep on making up more and more detailed lists about what not to do. Just reading them all would take so long we wouldn’t

be able to actually go do anything. He was trying to give us a way to focus our thoughts, words and actions and think about how they affect others. We need to stop occasionally and ask ourselves: Did any of my words or actions this week cause someone harm? During the coming weeks, when passions and emotions are running high because of all the obstacles that come my way, can I make sure my attitudes, words and actions don’t cause anyone harm?

By intentionally deciding to not harm others every day, maybe I can hold my tongue when someone does or says something hurtful to me. Remember what Romans 12:17 says: “Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought of what is noble in the sight of all.” If all of us can keep that thought in our minds, we might be better at tempering our desires to get even or strike back.

John Wesley realized that avoiding doing harm wasn’t good enough, so he included “do good” in the rules. Here are John Wesley’s exact words: “It is therefore expected of all who continue in Methodist societies and classes that they should continue to evidence their desire for salvation by doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, as far as possible, to all. 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, if ever you can.”

Here are some examples of doing good: Do good to all, “to their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, clothes to the naked, by visiting and helping them that are sick or in prison.” First, do good by caring for people’s physical and bodily needs. It is in our Methodist DNA that religion is as much about the physical as it is the spiritual.

Finally, Wesley wants us to stay in love with God. What exactly does that mean? First off, you must consider that love

is more than an emotion or feeling; it’s also an action. To understand how to stay in love with God, spell it T.I.M.E.—time. I think this is what Wesley is trying to say when he tells us to stay in love with God. Do this by spending time with God. We can do that by doing the simple acts that allow us to spend time with God. This includes things like prayer, reading and reflecting on God’s word, praise and worship. Prayer is just conversation with God. It is talking to God and then being quiet so we can listen to God. We all know that any good relationship—whether it is a marriage or the relationship with our children or friends—needs conversation. We need to be able to talk with one another and share our hopes, dreams and needs with others. When we do this, our relationships grow. No healthy relationship can survive without conversation, no marriage can survive without good communication, no family can remain strong without sharing and listening to one another and every friendship needs times where we can speak and where we sit together in silence.

The same is true in our relationship with God. There is no way we can stay in love with God without good communication with God. We need times to share our hopes, dreams, fears and doubts with God. If we are willing to listen, God will do the same with us.

God has hopes and dreams for us, God has fears and concerns for us and God wants to share those with us if we would stop and listen. One, do no harm. Decide not to harm others, and guard our thoughts, words and actions. Two, do good. Do all the good we can in all the ways we can; we’re only limited by our creativity. Three, stay in love with God; do this by spending time with God each day.

Keep these rules in mind and see the difference.

Fowler is a member of Shandon United Methodist Church, Columbia.



Musings

by the Rev. Michael Jarrell

Authenticity

This morning I had a great conversation with a friend of mine reminiscing about our old Sunday school class. We talked about how much we enjoyed discussing the variety of subjects we engaged with as a class. We talked about how exciting and at times uncomfortable our discussions were, but also how much we stretched our spiritual legs in the process. It was a class I thoroughly enjoyed teaching but also just being a part of. The discussions were always open, honest and tended to create or expose a lot of growing edges for those of us in the class.

For me, it was more than just a great class. It was a place I could truly be myself. I could explore the bounds of theological thought without worrying about it devolving into arguments. We didn’t always agree, but we did always approach the time together as an exploration. I felt free to express some of the theological ideas I had been studying and refining, things that would be challenging to the status quo—which by the way, I think needs some serious challenging considering the state of the church. It was a place where I wasn’t afraid of repercussions or retaliation. I was just traveling with my fellow explorers. It was my theological/church safe place.

After our conversation this morning, I realized why it was my safe space: I could be my authentic self. I could say, ask and think the things out loud normally reserved for my headspace alone.

So much of our conversation is guarded for the sake of propriety. It can be easy to lose track of the person you are for spending so much time “protecting” the people around you or avoiding disagreement. Not that anyone should go out of their way to be offensive or antagonistic. We should, how-

ever, find a balance and be the people we are inside and out.

The word for this is authenticity.

Authenticity is an interesting word because, like so many other words, it has been defined, redefined and post-defined. I found half a dozen definitions or ideas about the word from half a dozen different philosophers in one academic word search.

For me, authenticity is being the same person with other people that you are in your head. Authenticity is the true self on display. This reminds me a scene from the show “Friends” where they are playing a game and one of them asks what another’s favorite movie is but follows it up by asking what their real favorite movie is.

Authenticity is answering with the second answer first.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to be authentic. First Timothy 1:5 reads, “The goal of instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.” These three things make a good description for an authentic person.

You cannot be the same person inside and out and not exhibit these characteristics. And when we are authentic, people will know it, as they will know when we are not. I think our survival instincts may help us in this way but more than that, I think the Holy Spirit within us is a sort of authenticity filter. We recognize the difference in people being real (authentic) and people being fake.

The question to ask ourselves is how authentic am I? Am I the same inside and out? Or do I need to some work to reconcile myself to myself?

Jarrell pastors Adnah United Methodist Church, Rock Hill.

Virginia Wingard helps local school

WEST COLUMBIA—Virginia Wingard Memorial United Methodist Church began a new ministry journey in June when it discovered food was needed for approximately 50-60 vulnerable students each week during the school year.

Their “Snack Backpack” program at H.B. Rhame Elementary School in Columbia ensures children have food on the weekends.

To help this ministry, a special event, “Sweet Bites with Betty,” was hosted by United Women in Faith. The group invited their friends for a gathering of 70 women for desserts and an original play, “The Bettys” (based on the story of Betty Crocker), by Debi Young, the church’s intergenerational ministries director. Everyone who attended donated non-perishable food (individual packs of oatmeal, grits, macaroni and cheese, applesauce, juice boxes, goldfish crackers, etc.) to give to the school.

Then in July a hot dog supper and school supply drive was planned at Virginia Wingard Memorial UMC. School supply lists for each grade level of H.B. Rhame were distributed at church. The drive collected 20 boxes of supplies for pre-kindergarten through fifth grades. The list also included specific requests from teachers. Dr. Monica Carter, the principal of H.B. Rhame, was a guest and spoke to those gathered.

Knowing the church would need help continuing to supply the needs of H.B. Rhame Elementary, the four Broad River Road area churches—Virginia Wingard, St. Andrews Lutheran, St. Andrews Baptist and Westminster Presbyterian—entered a ministry partnership with the school. This elementary school has some 500 students and is located in the Richland One school district. It is also a Title 1 school.

In cooperation with the principal and guidance counselor, Young invited representatives from each church to come to Virginia Wingard Memorial UMC to meet and discuss the needs of the upcoming 2023-2024 school year. In August, St. Andrews Baptist Church hosted a teacher and staff luncheon



Also in September the churches participated in a joint effort to provide socks for the 500 students with a “Sock It To Me” sock drive. A representative from each church delivered the socks to the school.

where 60 teachers and staff received gifts of appreciation for their dedication and commitment to education. They were also asked to indicate other ways the four churches could help.

Dr. Carter asked that the churches collect children’s books to be available at H.B. Rhame’s Open House on Sept. 7 for parents and children to take home and read together. The remainder of the books collected will be used as an alternative to having a book fair during the year.

Also in September the four churches participated in a joint effort to provide socks for the 500 students with a “Sock It To Me” sock drive. A representative from each church delivered the socks to the counselor’s office at the school.

Virginia Wingard Memorial members said they are thankful to be in ministry with brothers and sisters in Christ of the area churches to help meet needs at this school.

As they continue this partnership, members from each church are being vetted to serve as volunteer mentors, reading partners with students, volunteers at special events and in the Lunch Buddy Program in which a person eats lunch with a student on a regular basis.



Mason Snype and Moryah Snype were honored with a gift acknowledging their accomplishments on Sunday, July 23, by Pastor Curnell Graham and the members of the church.

Snype family achieves family goal with higher education

LADSON—Wesley United Methodist Church celebrated the Snype family recently after their third and fourth children received their higher education degrees.

The oldest of Myron and Kathy Snype's children already have college degrees, and now their youngest have, also. Mason Snype and Moryah Snype were honored with a gift acknowledging their accomplishments on Sunday, July 23, by Pastor Curnell Graham and the members of the church.

Mason Randall Snype graduated from the University of South Carolina-Beaufort with a Bachelor of Arts in business administration in December. After high school, he started his higher education journey after working at Bosch. He got a paid internship with Sunland Logistics in North Charleston his junior year and was hired to work in their Savannah plant his senior year. He currently works for Sprinturf on Daniel Island as an assistant project manager.

Moryah Alexandria Snype graduated from Gardner-Webb University in May with a Bachelor of Arts in in political science and international affairs, minoring in French. During her four years at Gardner-Webb University, she played Division 1 soccer with the university's varsity women's soccer team. She was the first to enroll in Gardner-Webb's Webb on Washington program, giving her the opportunity to study at the American University while interning with a nonprofit organization. She is a member of Pi Sigma Alpha, which is a National Honor Society for scholars of political science and government affairs. She is also a member of Pi Delta Phi, the National Honor Society for French students. Before graduation, she received the International Affairs award for her studies in her major. She will be pursuing her Master of Arts in international affairs at George Washington University this fall. She hopes to become a human rights advocacy officer for the United Nations.



View from the Pews

by Bill Barnier

Unhappy or ... ?

The other day my wife made a direct observation about me that really got me thinking. I had been dealing with a huge shift in medical benefits, which soured a rather painless shift to retirement.

"You're not happy," she said. "Since you retired you've been dragging around the house, not smiling, not your usual self. I thought you were tired of working those shifts. Now you don't seem to have any desire to do anything."

Sometimes we need a loving slap to jog us into deep analysis of life events and their effect on us. It took me another week and a lengthy talk with Holy Spirit to diagnose the real malady: I'm in mourning!

I ended 56 years of labor, 19 of which were spent in service of a great company, and watched the final scissors of separation descend on my identification card as it was destroyed. My working life died.

I asked a couple of my retired friends about it, and they told me it was the same for them. One took a year to get realigned, while the other jumped headfirst into a new business, which thankfully turned into a huge success. God pointed out that, while I worked with the goal of comfortable retirement, it was he who blessed me with people, places and rewards to achieve my goal.

"It's OK to be sad; you've had quite a journey," he said. "Every day you tell me how grateful you are. But I spared your life a few years ago, and I have a plan already in motion that will give you great pleasure sharing your experience and wisdom to help others achieve their goals. I helped you. Now you help them."

That same feeling of loss may be felt by thousands of Methodists who have or will experience the loss of community when they

are removed from The United Methodist Church rolls at a very dear price. The disappointment of being forced to choose, of feeling that separation is the only way to retain a spiritual standard, simmers deep within the hearts of so many.

No doubt we all grieve our loss.

Once the grief and disappointment are soothed by God's grace, the light of opportunity shines brightly from a new future. Those left behind in the UMC will have what they wanted. Those who are now pioneers into self-direction are free to learn of the wonders of Spirit without broken rules, constraints and financial piracy. As long as God is first, there are no limits to what is possible. Make no mistake; there are no easy paths into the possible. For many, the escape to freedom was paid for by incredible generosity of a few blessed travelers. Others have made promises that will be difficult to keep, and faith will be the ink of signatures. No doubt, others who have been blissfully ignorant or denied knowledge of events will wish to follow the path of the pioneers and seek their wisdom to also open the door to truth.

God asked us to trust him, to have true faith in his love and mercy. We are awakening into a time of great change. We will learn to remember the lessons of our past, the lessons Jesus tried so desperately to teach us.

Holy Spirit will walk beside us on our new journey of worship and service, so we must allow courage to replace fear, grace to soothe unintended actions. We are at the edge of a spiritual frontier where grief and disappointment are not allowed.

I'm better now. I softened my sorrow and opened God's gift of a way to share my future. God is good all the time!

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



Guest Commentary

by Deborah Len

God with us always (Part 6 of 7)

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

Dear Boys,
My heart breaks for all of you as you might begin to realize there is something special and different about each of you. I started writing this letter back when Ken was hurt jumping off the chicken coop. Why you three had to climb up and jump off things God only knows. I thought, "No, not now. You are all too young yet to know the truth." Then the disastrous day happened when Ken's kidney failed. No one in the family was a match. I held my breath and waited for someone to ask me why. No one did!

That moment I decided to write down the truth of what I did at the age of 16.

In 1907, my dad was killed in a mining accident, and my mom had to move to eastern Pennsylvania. My mom took in sewing and laundry to help feed and clothe me. I was born in 1908. We stayed with her sister for many years. My mom became a good costume designer for the local opera house. I never knew my dad. This was my life. When I met my husband, I was only 14, and it helped Momma out if I got married and moved out of the house. I can just imagine how this makes no sense to each of you. Let me continue with this hard-to-share secret. Only two years into my marriage, my husband died in a riot. I did not even know what the word meant, and there I was 16 years old and a widow.

After my husband died, I cried for days and days. One day when I was returning from the market, there was a church that was so peaceful and inviting that I just walked up to it as if a combination of being propelled and compelled happened at once. I said a prayer. I said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." Then a sense of peace washed over me and in me as if I was being hugged and my burdens were taken away.

Right then I heard a loud bang and a bunch of clattering, and it startled me. I looked up and the minister for the church was coming down the aisle behind three unruly toddler children. They were laughing and screaming and babbling all at once, and they were dirty and had on torn clothes, and I knew they needed a loving home. New tears came out of my swollen red eyes. These tears were of love and joy and peace, because I knew God was sending me the most precious gift of all.

It took several months to get everything for those two boys and a sweet girl to come to live with me. The church helped me find enough work to keep the home I was left when my husband died. I made them birthday cakes, and they got apples and oranges in their Christmas stockings, and God blessed me with income to get them all bicycles. I made sure I taught them to be resilient and to be resourceful. I wanted them to spread their wings and go out into the world knowing God created them to be who he needed them to be to further his kingdom.

Now for the good part, as George would

be asking about now: They all got married and had you Three Musketeers all in the same year, 1953. Yes, these are your parents. Let that settle in your minds. God has always been in our family story.

Your parents are not related to each other at all! Yes, I took them in, as their parents had either died or abandoned them during the Depression. I raised those three children as if I had given birth to them. So many young children were left to fend for themselves, and I could not let that happen. Ken and Daniel and George, your parents do not even know they are not related. Since the area was mostly Scottish and German, they looked alike enough to pass for siblings and to be mine. I chuckled to myself a lot on how no one ever questioned me about having no children and then, in less than nine months, I had three children.

So now you know the secret I kept for years and years. That is why none of you could help Ken out with his kidney.

If your parents are still alive, it will be up to you to decide how or if you want to share my secret. The choice will be yours. Why I am putting this in a letter before I die is to help you understand that you can do anything that you put your minds to doing. You must beyond anything remember to only trust him, the Lord God and his precious Son Jesus, with all your thoughts and actions.

So, you three boys, please—when you read this letter, look at each other and hug each other and know that God put us together as a family. He needed your parents to be who they were to become so you could become who you are. All those Sundays I made pie and read the Bible verses to you I did because I loved you. I pass onto Kenneth this house. Daniel has a home and a ministry. George, you are just too fancy for this house. You need chrome and metal and those skyscrapers.

What I hope and pray before I pass is you will make this home into a homestead—the homestead of the Three Musketeers whom I loved as much as I loved their parents.

What I want all three of you to understand is God was 100 percent in the story of my life, even though my life was difficult at times. My mother was strengthened by her faith in the one true God, and she taught me and I taught your parents and you three wonderful young men. Never, ever did I want to give up or have the struggles that I went through to be gone. I wanted to have strength and the ability to endure and persevere so I could be a stronger witness for God.

I walked to that market a lot of times and never really noticed that church. That day I was at low point, and that is when God lifts us up.

God, please continue to bless these three young men in a very special way as they read this letter from my heart.

With love and hugs and peace,
Your Grandma Dot
(To be concluded next month.)

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



Did You Know?

The Advocate offers a free one-year subscription to anyone who joins a United Methodist Church in South Carolina. Send us your new members' names and addresses and the name of your church and we'll get them started on becoming more informed about our conference and our church.

Four UMCs worship together in Laurens



Scott



Love



Stallworth



Taylor

Pastors at four United Methodist churches in Laurens got together and created a Unity in Christ Sunday worship service to demonstrate that all are part of the body of Christ.

On Sunday, Aug. 20, the four churches worshipped together at First United Methodist Church. Also participating in the service were Central UMC, Trinity UMC and St. James UMC (all of Laurens).

Dr. Stephen Love, superintendent of the Greenwood District, preached the message, titled, "Do the Right Thing." A collection was taken during the service, and approximately \$900 was donated to the district's Early Re-

sponse Team, which helps in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

After the service, there was a covered dish luncheon so all could enjoy fellowship. During the luncheon, there was a lot of excitement about the congregations coming together during the traditional worship time on a Sunday morning. People were asking if the churches would come together again next year.

Pastors who participated included the Revs. Clyde Scott (St. James), Myra Taylor (Trinity/Central), Gray Stallworth (First) and Love.



Dinner ... and an airplane?

The youth of Manning UMC, Manning, had a progressive dinner June 4. They visited five different houses, having a different course at each house. At one home, they got extra special treatment when one of Manning's member gave them their own flight show.



New members at St. Mark were celebrated with a welcome reception.



St. Mark's Inspirational Choir celebrates 42 years of song and praise.



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Chris Allen

Ice cream and safe sanctuaries

White Stone UMC, White Stone, hosted an ice cream social Aug. 27 to beat the summer heat. While people enjoyed their treats, they participated in a sing-along led by Robert Wood. After fellowship and ice cream, four other churches' leadership teams—St. Luke, Beaumont, Allen Chapel and Florence Chapel—gathered for a Safe Sanctuary training event led by District Lay Leader Rick Hammett and Certified Lay Minister Annie Crocker.

Congregational Development: Our connection in action

By the Rev. Jonathan Harris

What would your church do to reach new people if cost was not a deterrent? Develop a ministry for feeding and meeting the church's neighbors? Upgrade technology to better support a growing children's ministry? Support the development of new, low-income housing for families in need, and welcome them to the church?

These kinds of dreams are already possible through congregational development grants, which are funded through the generous apportioned giving of United Methodists throughout South Carolina. In the Anderson District, which is where I serve, a recent grant helped St. Luke United Methodist Church in Walhalla create a Community Share Box. Each day of the week, church members and community members stop by the box to leave food items and other necessities like blankets, clothing and toilet paper, while other community members come to pick up items they need from the box. Aside from meeting a need and creating opportunities for the church to cross paths with members of the surrounding community, this ministry has helped the church develop a reputation as "a church that cares."

Another congregational development grant has supported a similar ministry at Lawrence Chapel UMC in Central. Three years ago, Lawrence Chapel began its "Goodness Grocery" to address food insecurity in the surrounding area. By the end of 2023, the church expects to give out 6,700 more food items than in 2022 because of a continued growing need. Congregational development's grant has helped the church rise to the challenge as it feeds, and meets, its neighbors.

There are, of course, other ways to meet

and serve neighbors. Several years ago, Chicopee UMC in Walhalla donated six acres of land to Habitat for Humanity, allowing for the construction of five houses for people in need. In appreciation of the church's generosity, and in order to support the church in reaching these new neighbors, congregational development awarded a grant toward new signage, along with complementary coaching to help the church develop intentional plans for ministering to these neighbors. As the church's pastor, the Rev. Jeff Hogan, wrote in a message to the Anderson District Board of Congregational Development, "Your grant is not just a financial contribution but a symbol of hope, compassion, and faith. We are humbled and thankful for your trust in our mission and commitment to making a positive change in this community and the world."

Finally, a grant to Zion UMC in Pendleton last year made possible the purchase of TVs for each of the children's Sunday school rooms. This investment in technology has supported the ongoing development of a growing children's ministry as dedicated church volunteers teach the youngest generation about the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

Do you have a vision for how your church might reach new people? If you think a congregational development grant would help you move toward that vision, you can learn more at <https://www.umcsc.org/congregational>

And remember—it is your church's faithful, generous apportioned giving that allows those visions to be funded.

Harris chairs the Anderson district board of Congregational Development.

St. Mark thriving with outreach

TAYLORS—Under the leadership of Dr. Carlton J. McClam Sr., St. Mark United Methodist Church, "the 9-1-1," recognized the rich history of their legacy with an annual homecoming celebrating 154 years.

Their theme, "The Legacy Continues," focused on Psalm 78:4 and highlighted the contributions of members who have passed, new members who recently joined their church, community heroes using their life to serve, a gospel concert and a charge to the next generation to keep the torch passed down to them lit and on fire for the Lord.

A monthlong celebration in August honored their legacy in the community and within The United Methodist Church universal. On Aug. 6, the church held a memorial service with a candle lighting and balloon

release in memory of loved ones. On Aug. 13, the church held a special meet and greet reception to celebrate their new members. On Aug. 20, the church honored its community heroes with a special message from guest preacher the Rev. Mack McClam, followed by an inspirational choir concert at 4 p.m. And on Aug. 27, the church held a service commemorating the continuation of its legacy, with a passing of the torch from the older members to the younger ones.

Over the next several months, St. Mark will host community events to empower persons who are single through interactive workshops and networking; a men's weekend in November; and a 100 Voices of Christmas celebration with Lee Road UMC in Taylors.

All are encouraged to attend.

Around the Districts

Columbia District

Congratulations to the Revs. Clay and Beth Faulk on the birth of their first granddaughters. Twins Magnolia Grace and Olivia Rose were born Aug. 23 to Daniel and Alanah Faulk. Rev. Clay Faulk is the pastor of Red Bank UMC, Red Bank; Rev. Beth Faulk is the pastor of Virginia Wingard Memorial UMC, Columbia.

Hartsville District

New Market UMC, Hartsville, will hold its Fall Festival Oct. 7 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. The festival will feature a bake sale, vendors, games and a hot dog lunch.

Marion District

The Marion District Men N Ministry will host a "Growing in the Spirit" event Sept. 30 at Surfside UMC from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. The Rev. Steven Brown, new Marion District superintendent, will be the keynote speaker. Register at <https://www.surfsideumc.org> and click on SMC UMM Register; or by calling 843-246-8398.

Greenville District

Disciples UMC, Greenville, will hold its annual Pumpkin Patch, Oct. 1-31. Sales benefit United Methodist missions and the Navajo Indians of New Mexico who grow the pumpkins. Pumpkins and gourds of all shapes and sizes will be available. Patch hours are 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday through Saturday and Noon-7 p.m. on Sunday. For more information, call the church at 864-297-0382.

Spartanburg District

Cross Anchor Yarrowborough UMC, Cross Anchor, will celebrate its centennial Oct. 15. The celebration will begin at 10 a.m. with the gospel group The Riverside Boys. The worship service will begin at 11 a.m. with guest speaker Sandy Hobbs. Sandy is the daughter of the Rev. Walt Forrester, who was the pastor for 16 years. A covered dish luncheon will follow in the Social Hall.

GUATEMALA HOSPITAL LICENSE: Taking ministry farther



Photo courtesy of Dr. Luke Rhyee

The hospital license will enable them to help far more people in the region.

From Page 1

Also, the license will help Hospital Bethesda be self-sustainable, as it will be able to rent facilities, such as a surgery suite and patient rooms, to local doctors.

Quetzaltenango, which is about a five-hour drive from Guatemala City, serves a million people who live nearby, mainly in the mountains. The majority are Mayan indigenous people who speak one of 23 languages and not the country's official language, Spanish. Because of that, they have little power and access to assistance.

Healing Guatemala, through Hospital Bethesda and other ministry efforts in the area, tries to make a difference in Guatemala for the sake of Christ.

Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, along with the Rev. Ken Nelson, headed to Quetzaltenango in July 2018 to dedicate the clinic on behalf of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Rhyee hopes to host an inauguration service for Bethesda soon to celebrate the hospital license and the work God is doing among the people there. Until then, Rhyee and others are working hard to secure needed medical equipment to help the hospital serve the region as best as possible. They are seeking hospital beds and furniture, as well as equipment for their OB-GYN and ophthalmology surgery room (especially an autoclave with a large capacity), their clinical lab and their emergency room. So far, Rhyee said, a CT scanner, an ultrasound machine, and two hemodialysis machines were donated by ChonNam National University Hwasun Hospital in South Korea, as well as ultrasound machines, clinical lab equipment and dental equipment from the United States. Rhyee has been working to coordinate shipping.

For questions about donations or how to help Healing Guatemala, email Rhyee at rhyeemt@gmail.com, or write Healing Guatemala, P.O. Box 1835, Duluth, GA 30096.

FOSTER IN HOPE: 'They don't feel like an island by themselves anymore'

From Page 1

For example, Brown said, a parent might get a call for an emergency pickup of a foster child that night, but the child arrives with few clothes or difficult-to-find medication needs, which quickly becomes a hurdle. Or they need help with transportation and childcare, but they don't know how to quickly find what they need. When burnout sets in, one more foster family could well be lost.

"I started digging around, doing research, and the more I researched the more I realized this is something we need to respond to," Brown said.

Led by Brown, Hopewell started dialoguing with Epworth Children's Home, social workers and others who work with foster families to uncover ways they could help support them. Soon they discovered their niche: to come alongside, equip and support foster families so they can be as successful as possible with these kids. Whether its providing clothing, a home-cooked meal or transportation to and from school or doctor appointments, Hopewell members strive to serve the families so their obstacles aren't insurmountable.

"We found that foster parents often feel ill-equipped and isolated," Brown said. "They don't need us to come save them or their children. They just need people to be there in life together with them, helping to meet their needs."

Beginning late last year, Hopewell created a Foster in Hope Committee with a goal to meet the needs of families whatever that looks like. They started a foster closet, where people can come shop entirely for free for items they need, from diapers to bedding to clothing. They provide transportation and food, and their men's group is helping to rebuild a ramp on one family's home. Quarterly events, such as a spring carnival complete with baby animals, help families gather with others in their situation and share problems while dreaming up solutions.

"They realize they're not isolated and on their own, and they don't feel like an island by themselves anymore," Brown said.

Stacy Black is the children's ministry director at Hopewell, and she is one of a sizable group that has taken on much of the work of Foster in Hope. For her, it all stemmed from her involvement with Epworth Children's Home, both locally and in Columbia. Soon, she got to know a family in the church who was getting licensed to be a foster family and needed some help with meals. Black helped put together a food train,



The new standalone foster closet, a 12- by 20-foot building, was delivered to the church Sept. 11.

which was, for her, the launching point.

"We realized there was a huge need for a support system for these families that were helping support the kids in our community," Black said. "There are so many kids out there who don't have the loving home we could provide, and I have a massive amount of respect for these families who welcome these kids into their home."

"If there is anything I can do to make it easier on them, I want to help. I want them to know they're seen, and we understand the difficulties."

Hopewell member Steve Jackson and his wife were foster parents in the past, and they know how difficult it can be. While they have since adopted the children they fostered and are no longer foster parents, he remembers well how much it helped to have instant support when they got the call that a child was available and in need of a home.

"People sign up and want to be a foster parent, but they have no idea what is involved," Jackson said. "They go through training and get a phone call, 'We've got a child for you—meet us at McDonalds on such and such road.' And the kids get handed over with nothing, just a little backpack someone has put together. They don't have a teddy bear be-



Photos courtesy of Stacy Black

Events like the spring carnival help foster families come together and realize they're not alone.

cause they were taken out of their home so suddenly."

He said most foster families don't wear a sign advertising they need help, and they don't ask for handouts.

"But they really need help," Jackson said.

The need is great, Brown said, and things are moving fast. They've outgrown their first foster closet. Recently, with a \$2,000 gift from Mount Hebron UMC, West Columbia, they purchased a \$12,000 12- by 20-foot building delivered Sept. 11 that will enable them to expand what they do.

They are seeking a sizable grant from the Belin Trust now as they seek to create a model that can be duplicated in other UMCs across the state, enabling churches to be vital and relevant in their community as ambassadors for Jesus. Brown said the children being fostered need to know someone is in their corner, and the parents need to know somebody is right there with them, supporting them. And there are things a church can do no matter their budget.

Brown said it's heartening. "When the people of God who are United Methodist are presented with evidence of a need, they will meet that need," Brown said. "Imagine, if all the United Methodist churches in South Carolina would do a little something, the impact it would make."

Celebrate, rejoice, envision

Sand Hill UMC to mark 140th anniversary with two-week celebration

RIDGEVILLE—Sand Hill United Methodist Church will celebrate its 140th anniversary Oct. 1-15.

The theme is "Celebrating the Past, Rejoicing in the Present and Envisioning the Future."

Oct. 1 will feature a pre-anniversary celebration with Bishop L. Jonathan Holston preaching at 11 a.m.

On Oct. 8, the Rev. Jerry Harrison will preach a 9 a.m. worship and church picnic.

Three weekday events will be held. On

Tuesday, Oct. 10, at 7 p.m., the speaker will be retired pastor the Rev. James C. Lane. On Wednesday, Oct. 11, at 7 p.m. the speaker will be retired pastor Dr. Timothy J. Bowman. And on Thursday, Oct. 12, at 7 p.m. the speaker will be retired pastor the Rev. Mack McClam.

The anniversary festivities conclude Oct. 15 with an anniversary service, with the Rev. Jeffrey Salley preaching 11 a.m.

More information can be found at <http://www.sandhillumc-sc.com>.

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ERT AFTER IDALIA: Two teams helped Valdosta in September

From Page 1

Immediately, South Carolina's United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Early Response Team got to work mobilizing people to help. Billy Robinson, South Carolina ERT coordinator, and the Rev. Mike Evans assembled a crew of 18 men and women spread from Charleston to Honea Path, calling them Team Alpha. They traveled to Valdosta Sept. 4-9 and spent long days helping people in need in the name of Jesus, doing chainsaw and tarp work as well as muck-outs.

Robinson shared that one of the most meaningful moments of the trip was when

they had the opportunity to assist Darlene Ray. Ray, a disabled woman who lives alone near Valdosta, saw one of the South Carolina ERT disaster trailers and was desperate for help. She tracked down the phone number for the South Carolina Conference of the UMC, which put her in touch with the team on-site. They were able to come to her aid, removing a tree blocking access to her home and other downed trees in her yard.

"She needed a lot of help, and by God's grace and mercy we were able to come to her aid—including standing back up one smaller tree that meant so much to her, since her mother planted it years ago," Robinson said.

As of press time, a second team, Team Bravo, led by Chuck Marshall and Stephen Turner, was heading back to Valdosta the week of Sept. 10-14 with 10 volunteers.

While South Carolina's damage from Idalia was relatively minor, ERT members also pitched in to help in Holly Hill, where a huge oak tree crashed to the ground in front of Holly Hill United Methodist Church, blocking some access to the church and the roadway. Robinson, the Rev. John Elmore and a few other ERT members cut the tree away and got word out that help was available if anyone needed it.

Hurricane season is always in need of ERT members who can help be the hands and feet of Christ after a storm. Anyone interested in serving as part of the ERT is encouraged to do a training. Three trainings are scheduled: Sept. 30 at Cornerstone UMC, Rock Hill; Oct. 21 at Edgefield UMC, Edgefield; and Nov. 18 at Faith UMC, Lexington. Register at <https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration>, or contact Robinson at brpraisejesus@aol.com



Photo by Billy Robinson

Steve Bishop of Charleston cuts out chunks of debris from a big oak tree that crashed into a home near Valdosta.

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APPORTIONMENTS: No decision yet about 10 percent tithe

From Page 1

Beyond the apportionments, separating churches were also required to pay the conference a tithe equal to 10 percent of the appraised value of all church property and liquid assets.

However, this 10 percent and the apportionments were “two different pots,” said the Rev. Mike Wood, chair of the conference Board of Trustees.

The Rev. Mitch Houston, chair of the Conference Council on Finance and Ad-

ministration, said he met in August with the trustees on behalf of CF&A and requested \$2.4 million from the exit fund.

As of press time, Wood said, the trustees have not yet decided what to do with the 10 percent.

About the Local Church Discernment Process

The discernment process was open to churches who believe the UMC has not upheld its stated doctrine on issues of human sexuality. The process was developed by

the Trustees of the Annual Conference and the Extended Cabinet, which noted it was needed because there was no other pathway to exit the denomination for churches that agree with the existing human sexuality language in the UMC *Book of Discipline*.

Currently, the *Discipline* states that, while persons of homosexual orientation are persons of sacred worth who need the ministry and guidance of the church, the UMC “does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching” though the church

“implores families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends.”

While the 2019 General Conference added Para. 2553 as a pathway for exit to the *Discipline*, South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston said that provision only applies to those churches that disagree with the *Discipline’s* current language on human sexuality.

You can read about the conference’s full discernment process at <https://www.umccsn.org/discern>.

Communications Learning Week returns to reenergize church outreach

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—United Methodist Communications will hold a weeklong ecumenical training opportunity this fall for anyone in ministry seeking to enhance their communications skills.

Communications Learning Week: Communications that Transform will be held Oct. 16-20 and is designed with busy schedules in mind. All of the learning week content will be recorded and stored in a learning portal that participants will have access to for six months following the event. Registration is open now through Oct. 12 with an early bird discount for people signing up by Sept. 30.

During the learning week, church leaders and communicators will get access to a vast library of on-demand resources including recorded videos, tutorials and podcast episodes

and self-guided eLearning modules curated by the UMC training team. Workshops led by experts on a variety of topics will be presented followed by Q&A sessions with each facilitator. Opportunities for discussion and networking round out the activities.

Sessions will include Tik Tok for Churches, Personal Branding, Things I Wish I’d Known About Communications as a Senior Pastor, Disaster Communications, Content for Digital Congregations, Next Level Canva Tools and Combatting Disinformation.

“Communications is an essential part of ministry, but getting started or continuing to navigate an ever-changing landscape can feel overwhelming. After strong interest in last year’s inaugural learning week, it was clear that it was a needed and appreciated

resource,” said Jeremy Brown of UMCCom. Complete details are available

at <https://www.umctraining.org/product?catalog=Transform>



Photo courtesy of Midas Touch Photography (Terrence McCants)

Food for all

Mechanicsville UMC, Bishopville, has created a food pantry for their members and will serve the community as well with individuals and families who need assistance. Pictured inside the pantry are missions committee members, from left, Frankie Crawford, Ruth McCants and Betty Wilson, with pastor the Rev. Kenneth B. Middleton.

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USC Methodist Student Network reflects on meaning of campus ministry in their lives

By the Rev. Tom Wall

While it is true that an increasing number of young adults are no longer affiliating with organized Christian religion, there are still many young people who are captivated by Jesus Christ and the “good news” offered through the church.

This is particularly true on campus just as it was in John and Charles Wesley’s time at Oxford University. While The United Methodist Church is presently embroiled in conflict and a subsequent slashing of budgets, we should be prioritizing and recommitting ourselves to young adult and campus ministries. Our church’s future (and present) is on campus.

The following are some voices of students who are being impacted by United Methodist campus ministry at the University of South Carolina through the Wesley Foundation (Methodist Student Network). These stories could be repeated at any of our campus ministries through the SCUMC.

This is definitely the time to be in ministry and mission in higher education.

Savannah Bowers said, “From serving in optometry clinics in Ecuador to the humanitarian respite center on the Texas-Mexico border to the soup cellar on Washington Street, MSN has helped me see the image of God reflected in every person. It also has inspired me to advocate for society’s most vulnerable populations in all aspects of my life. During times when I felt lost and lonely in college, MSN helped me feel comfort and God’s presence when I could not feel it elsewhere. I will



Students at MSN, United Methodist campus ministry at the University of South Carolina through the Wesley Foundation, volunteer to help.

be forever grateful for the blessings that MSN has brought to my life.”

Katie Sheridan, “I spent my last year of college with MSN and wish I had found them sooner because of the impact it has had on my life. MSN was a place where I truly felt like I belonged. Everyone at MSN was so welcoming and nonjudgmental, which can be very difficult to find in churches today. I loved the service opportunities that MSN gave me, specifically our Saturday morning breakfasts for the unhoused and

food insecure in our community. I also loved the opportunity to be a part of a women’s group where I was able to grow in my faith while forming strong friendships with other young women. Being at MSN encouraged me to learn more about various aspects of Christianity and dive deeper into the Bible and my faith in a way I never had before.”

Casey Barnhill said, “I came to MSN as a junior seeking an inclusive and welcoming faith community on campus, and that is exactly what I found. My time at MSN allowed me to grow in my faith and serve others in the Columbia community in various ways. MSN has been a very significant part of my college years, and I am immensely grateful for all of the experiences I had as part of this fantastic community.”

Jane Polk said, “I knew that I wanted to join a faith community on campus freshman year. I tried a few different groups before COVID hit and students were sent home. Sophomore year I was at a crossroads. I didn’t really feel at home at any of the churches I attended, so my friend recommended that I attend MSN with her. I wasn’t sure what to expect, but I felt welcome from the moment I stepped foot in the building. MSN seemed like a true family. The past three years, I have enjoyed growing in my faith through fellowship and service. It has truly been a great experience and I will always be thankful for MSN.”

Wall is MSN director.



Opening eyes about vaping dangers

Hartsville District United Women in Faith President Dr. Tonya F. Mack hosted the district group at her home church, St. James UMC, Sumter, providing a program about the harmful effects of vaping on our children and youth. As research and more evidence are discovered, medical professionals are seeing alarming uses of vaping and witnessing the harm it is causing in the health of our children. Local unit president Nancy Wilson and vice president Valarie Jones were on hand to support the campaign, along with other members. At the end of the service, the children and youth took to the streets to march against vaping. The signs were created by Miss Jaleesa Perry.



Generous givers

Bluffton UMC, Bluffton, recently held their annual uniform collection for Hardeeville Elementary. Thanks to the generosity of their members, they delivered 303 uniform shirts and 224 pairs of shorts, pants and skorts, plus many packages of socks and underwear. Because of the loving hearts of their congregation, many children will have a brighter school year.

Spartanburg Methodist names new members to board of trustees

SPARTANBURG—Three new members joined the board of trustees for Spartanburg Methodist College following approval at the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Joining the board are L. Grant Close III, Betty Montgomery and Ashley Williams.

“We look forward to welcoming our new trustees. We’re excited to add their experience and viewpoints to our work on behalf of the college,” said John Moore, chair of the SMC board of trustees.

The new trustees will each serve a three-year term beginning on July 1. They will join

the board for the next meeting in October.

Close is an employment and labor attorney and shareholder with Maynard Nexsen in Spartanburg and Greenville. Montgomery is a local philanthropist and education

supporter with long family ties to SMC.

Williams lives in Spartanburg. She has been employed with Spartanburg County since 2006. She currently serves as the register of deeds.

Columbia College appoints 2023-2024 trustees

COLUMBIA—Columbia College announced the appointment of five new members to its Board of Trustees and Robin Waites as vice chair/secretary. Waites is the executive director of Historic Columbia Foundation, and she serves under Board Chair Ben Rex, CEO of Cyberwoven, a Columbia-based web, brand and marketing firm.

These strategic additions to the board come at an exciting time for the college, as it recently appointed a new president and is poised to embrace a new vision that serves as a foundation for its growth and leadership in our state and region.

“Having recently joined Columbia College, I cannot express enough how excited I am to welcome and work with our new board members,” President John Dozier said. “They add extraordinary value to what is already a dynamic board through the leadership,

deep knowledge (in their respective fields), commitment to the mission of Columbia College and diversity that they individually and collectively share with us. This is most important at a time when we are creating and executing a vision for the college that will enhance our ability to provide a liberal arts education that prepares our graduates to be leaders in their communities while also being highly competitive and sought after in our global marketplace.”

The newly appointed Board of Trustee members are Vivia Lawton Fowler (class of 1976), Scott Graves, Anthony Jackson, Sara Snell Whitaker (class of 1999) and Jada Willis. In addition to the new board members, the college welcomes new Alumni Association President Nan Cannon LaFitte (class of 1987), literacy coach for Forest Lake Elementary in Richland School District 2.

Graham Bennett is our pastor at Langley UMC. Pastor Graham is a tall drink of water with a heart that spews the word of God. He tries to keep our church



afloat, growing and moving to further the kingdom of Christ. He is a true shepherd who leads us in the way of the Lord. Bennett is a man with a heart for Jesus, a towering figure in our community, both physically and figuratively, and a man of great faith and conviction. We know him as a blessing to our church and community. Our example of a man who truly is committed to making the world a better place, a true southern gentleman and a joy to be around is how we would like to honor and remember Graham Bennett. We are grateful for his leadership and proud to call him our pastor and our friend.

The congregants of St. Luke’s UMC/Okatie wish to let our Pastor,

Rev. Dr. Christopher L. Thompson,

know how much we appreciate him for his ministry and dedication to our church.

He is a true blessing for us!

St. Luke VBS showcases 'Twists and Turns'

LANCASTER—St. Luke United Methodist Church kicked off its 2023 Vacation Bible School July 23.

Many weeks of preparation were put in by church members, who decorated the church with many props, some of them homemade and quite unique. Church members worked daily to get the church completely decorated for the 2023 VBS. The decorations were extravagant, and they were enjoyed and appreciated by the children, youth and adults alike.

Students and adults enjoyed a delicious meal each night before VBS. The original planning was to prepare for 50 persons for the meal, but this quickly escalated to 100 persons.

The theme verse was Psalm 25:4, and the theme was "Twists and Turns," on how following Jesus takes us through many twists and turns in our journey as Christians. VBS organizers also enjoyed "twists and turns" during the week as new volunteers came to help with the higher numbers for meals and classes.

A new curriculum involved a new schedule for the elementary rotations. Twist and turns were involved as organizers made adjustments in the crews to be able to accommodate the larger group sizes during the rotations.



The theme verse was Psalm 25:4.

There was even an adult class this year, and the adults studied much the same material that the children and youth studied. This developed a greater sense of community and camaraderie during the VBS.

The curriculum was Christ-centered. The first night focused on how Jesus is holy, and this changes everything. The second night dealt with how Jesus is trustworthy even when we doubt. The third night dealt with how Jesus is forgiving even when we sin. The fourth night focused on how Jesus is worth following even when it gets tough. The fifth night dealt with how Jesus is for everyone, including each one of us.



More than 50 children and youth attended.

The lessons were intriguing, and all were reminded that following Jesus does involve many twists and turns but is a joyous and wonderful journey.

Organizers said all were greatly blessed at St. Luke UMC's 2023 VBS. All learned much about following Jesus. Attendance included 54 children and youth and around 50 volunteers, teachers, security and others who made the experience happen.

They concluded the week with worship service on Sunday morning conducted by the youth and children, followed by a church cookout complete with a bouncy house and water games.



Photo courtesy of Lavone Breland

A wild time

Hickory Hill UMC's the Rev. Adrienne Stokes, along with youth minister Bridgett Brown, took a safari trip to Eudora Wildlife & Safari Park, Salley. The safari allows the public to view and feed the 300 exotic animals from around the world from the comfort of their own vehicles. The group consisted of three other adults and four children in attendance, and all said they had a blast. The drive-through concluded with pony rides, ice cream and cool drinks.



Photos courtesy of Eugenia Vicars

Hero Hotline VBS a hit

St. Paul UMC, Greenville, located in the West End, held its Hero Hotline VBS July 23-27. Children learned how heroes are called to help others, work together, listen to God, follow Jesus and show grace. Families gathered each night for dinner together and a special treat from Pink Mama's Ice Cream Truck. Their mission project for the week was collecting school supplies for their Pack the Backpack Event. More than \$300 was collected each night and used to purchase headphones for the backpack event. At the end of the week, the children led the worship service the following Sunday. They sang and told about the stories they studied each night. They also shared the "Hero Hotline tips" and the Scripture verse using the sign language they learned during the week.

Hartsville District Cooperative Parish hosts 'We Got This!' VBS

Vacation Bible school for the Hartsville District Cooperative Parish this year was faith-filled with great food, excited participants and loads of fun.

This is the second year that the parish has hosted a unified VBS with the three churches under its umbrella (St. John, New Providence and Wesley Chapel United Methodist churches). As a parish that is becoming more progressive and striving to meet the needs of the community, attendance was very high, with 100 plus on their last day, and averaging more than 80 for the other sessions.

Adults, children and youth filled classrooms and the gymnasium with games, arts and crafts, music and Bible study. The three-day event culminated with presentations from each group that told through music, dance and song what they learned about faith, God's love and the fulfillment of this year's theme, "We Got This!"

Storytellers created the culture and atmosphere by illuminating the day's overall theme and inviting the participants to become more interactive and involved.

All classes and activities were led or

taught collectively by members from each church forming a united effort to support, uplift and encourage each other. The fellowship and enthusiasm left everyone with the desire and promise to continue on this path of service.

"The Parish VBS is a prime example of the power of the parish model of sharing resources," said Dr. Reginald Lee, who taught

the adult Bible school classes. "Each year we are impacting more lives and growing together by sharing resources."

Working together through God's love keeps this parish motivated to reach out beyond themselves to embrace and enrich and to incorporate events that will bring more children and adults to the threshold of discipleship.



All classes and activities were led or taught collectively by members from each church.

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'The Time is Now'

Mechanicsville UMC's United Women In Faith hosted an afternoon luncheon worship service Aug. 19 in the Fellowship Hall. Their guest speaker was the Rev. Debbie Bowens-Davis speaking on the theme, "The Time is Now to Keep Faith, Hope and Love Alive." Pictured, the United Women In Faith sing the opening hymn, "Sweet, Sweet, Spirit." Mae Ruth Cooke is UWF president; Rev. Kenneth Middleton is pastor.



Camden First sponsors food distribution

Camden First UMC, Camden, is partnering with the Midlands Food Bank on Clemson Road in Columbia to provide free food giveaways bimonthly at the church, located at 704 W. Dekalb St. The ministry provides food items to individuals in Camden and the surrounding community. Sister Sarah Robinson is the coordinator and the Rev. Gwendolyn T. White is the pastor. The ministry reflects what Jesus said in Matthew 14:16: "They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat."



Native American Ministries

by LaShella Kirkland

The heartbeat of a people

One of the most recognizable features of Native American music is the drum. It is also one of the most sacred instruments and is treated with great respect.

According to many cultural anthropologists and archaeologists, the indigenous history of drumming on this continent goes back thousands of years and was used by nearly every tribe in some form or fashion for ceremonies. Within each ceremony, our stories and traditions are shared as a way of passing "heartbeats" to the next generations. Even though powwows are the most recognizable ceremonies and dances today, there are others: the Ghost Dance, the Pipe Ceremony, the Purification Ceremony, the Vision Quest, the Sundance Ceremony, the Making of Relations Ceremony, Earth Day Ceremony, the Giving of Possessions Ceremony, the Green Corn Ceremony and many others. The drum beat itself represents the heartbeat of the animals used in its making along with the heartbeat of Mother Earth and our connection with the universe and with the Creator.

The drums are usually made from animal skins such as deer, elk, moose and buffalo, as well as water drums, hand drums and frame drums. However, the indigenous groups located on the Pacific Coast use a square drum where men use their hands and feet to drum. But the most common use of the drum is the hand drum and the frame drum, played by at least four people.

Traditionally, drumming was only performed by the men, while the women would stand behind them, singing or using rattles.

This tradition remains today for the most part. However, you will now see some female drum groups. Again, this is dependent upon the tribe, region and their particular tradition. Proper etiquette requires that someone invite you to sit and/or sing with the drum group. One must not take it upon themselves to just sit down at a drum and willfully assume participation, especially as a spectator.

Before worship can begin, a smudging ceremony, which is a purification and cleansing rite using sacred herbs such as tobacco, must be performed before playing can begin. Each member of the circle will take a small amount of tobacco, offer a prayer to God and then place the tobacco on the drum. Once the ceremony has ended, the drum is then covered.

Because indigenous cultures have such a rich and strong oral tradition through storytelling, drums are used to enhance and narrate the experience. Often, by listening and feeling the heartbeat rhythm from the drum, emotions will emanate from the listener while also keeping the rhythm going for the dancers.

Drumming has also been used for healing and therapeutic purposes. It promotes relaxation and stress reduction and is a form of meditation to balance the mind and body, something today's physicians are only now beginning to take notice of.

Kirkland is Native American Representative coordinator for the Native American Committee of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. She is also a member of Lyttleton Street UMC, Camden.



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Killingsworth Gala returns in-person at Seawell's

COLUMBIA—This year, the Killingsworth Gala will return once again, this time in person after a virtual hiatus because of the pandemic.

On Thursday, Nov. 9, Killingsworth will hold "A Night to Remember."

Held at Seawell's Restaurant from 6 to 9 p.m., the event is offering individual ticket sales and sponsorship opportunities. Proceeds benefit Killingsworth, a United Methodist home in Columbia that helps women in crisis. Individual tickets are \$65. Tables start at \$500.

Learn more at <https://www.killingsworth.org>.



Deacon's Corner

Rev. Andy Jones

Getting to know Vivia

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

This month, take a moment to learn about the ministry of the Rev. Vivia Lawton Fowler, one of our ordained deacons.

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

Fowler: As a teenager growing up at Central United Methodist Church in Florence, I was surrounded by many who encouraged me to take leadership roles: pastors, youth directors, choir directors, teachers and other church leaders. I was welcomed and nurtured to lead in various ways, including worship and teaching. Attending a United Methodist college, where I studied religion and was a leader in the college's campus ministry, provided further encouragement, preparation and confirmation of my call to ministry. Methodist saints who shaped my growth include Bill Mills, Olene Civils, Sherrill Prevatte Senseney, Harris Parker, Chuck Pfeiffer and Pat Chandler.

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

Fowler: My call is to the teaching ministry of the church. I have served in two churches as a Christian educator (10 years) and 36 years in two United Methodist women's colleges as a professor and administrator. Currently, I serve as pastor of a congregation where I use my gifts of teaching and administration. I never would have imagined that a lifetime of ministry would evolve for me in many different ways! My current duties are much like those of an elder or licensed local pastor, although I describe myself as a "teaching preacher." That's just who I am! I love using my background as a religion professor in sermon preparation and Bible study, and the pastoral care that is so important is a

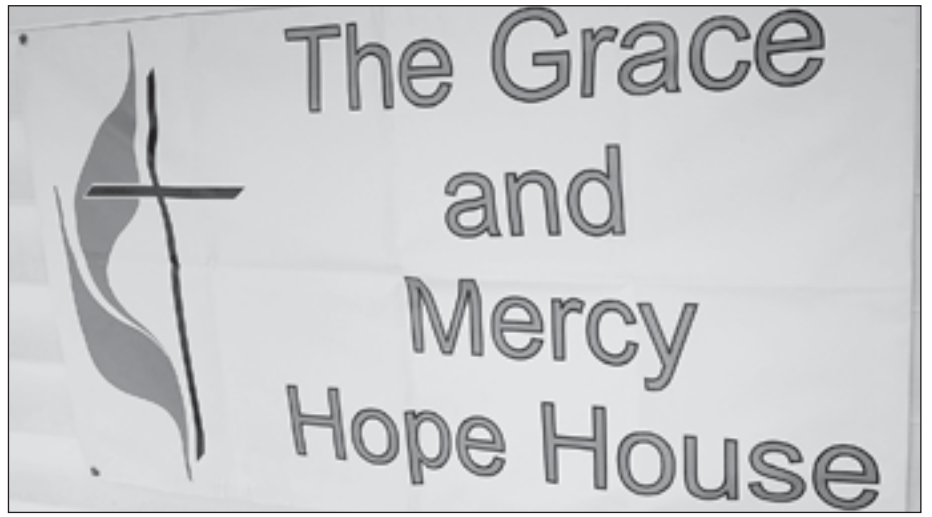
perfect expression of compassion and justice, to which I have been called.

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

Fowler: There are many ways to be in ministry besides traditional pastoral ministry. Being a deacon offers opportunities to be engaged in ministry in and beyond the local church in creative and ever-evolving ways. As a clergy member, I have found it rewarding to teach and mentor those discerning their call to ministry and work alongside elders and local pastors in denominational leadership, especially on the Board of Ordained Ministry.

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

- Q. Fill in the blank. Vulnerability is:
 - A. Knowing that I do not have all the answers, others around me often do.
- Q. You're called to do something brave, but your fear is real and stuck in your throat. What's the first thing you do?
 - A. Think it through.
- Q. What is something that people often get wrong about you?
 - A. Despite my very serious demeanor, I do know how to have fun!
- Q. What's the last show that you binged and loved?
 - A. "The Lincoln Lawyer"
- Q. What is a film that you really love?
 - A. "The Sound of Music"
- Q. What is a concert you will never forget?
 - A. Chicago c. 1975
- Q. What's your favorite meal?
 - A. Anything with salmon.
- Q. What's on your nightstand right now?
 - A. "Last Call at the Hotel Imperial"
- Q. Give us a snapshot of an ordinary moment in your life that brings you great joy.
 - A. Playing or singing songs with my grandsons.
- Q. What is the one thing you are deeply grateful for right now?
 - A. Epworth UMC at James Island.



Grace and Mercy Hope House Ministry

Beaumont UMC, Spartanburg, opened its Grace and Mercy Hope House Ministry Aug. 26. Located at 494 Fairview St., it is intended to be a clothing ministry for the Beaumont and surrounding communities of Spartanburg, providing clothing for men, women, boys and girls who are in need of clothing at no cost. The church is hoping to partner with other churches, businesses and people as they go forth in this effort. "Please pray with and for us, for the need is great," said Annie R. Crocker, pastor. "We have heard the call, seen God's mighty hand in the midst of it and want to be about God's business of feeding the hungry and clothing those in need." Grace and Mercy Hope House was open on the third Thursday of each month from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in September, and beginning in October, they will open two days a month.

White named Asbury Hills summer camp director

Ann Marie White has joined the full-time staff of South Carolina Camps and Retreat Ministries as summer camp director of Asbury Hills.



White

White is responsible for planning and implementing the residential summer camp program. This includes program design, staff recruitment/hiring, staff training and partnering with families to make sure their campers have an amazing experience.

White has been serving as assistant summer camp director since April 2023. She is a

long-time member of the Asbury Hills family. She served on summer staff for four summers. After graduating from Clemson University with a degree in animal sciences, she felt a calling to serve through outdoor ministry. Following her graduation, she thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail, which is more than 2,100 miles long and takes five to seven

months to complete. Prior to arriving back at Asbury Hills, she served as program intern at a sister-United Methodist summer camp in North Carolina.



United Women in Faith

by Samoria J. Session

A call to serve

As leaders, teachers, missionaries and organizers, women have shaped the history of Methodism. Women continue to serve and lead many ministries within marginalized communities as well as initiate social and political reforms.

Growing up, I was always surrounded by positive Christian women who helped shape and mold me to becoming an active member of United Women in Faith. I saw the connections firsthand having a mother that has served as a district president, a cluster leader, a local unit vice president, a member of the nominations committee and currently as the local unit president for our church and trip coordinator for the South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith. However, now I have even more understanding about these connections.


Looking up to women who are so eager to apply faith, hope, love and action has caused me to want the same for myself. Being a part of an organization that willingly and freely loves God while also impacting

and saving lives for a greater cause is the best part. Who would not want to be a part of an organization that does such?

Currently, I am serving and representing the South Carolina Conference United Women in Faith as a member of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the National Program Advisory Group. The Program Advisory Group studies issues and prepares recommendations to the national board regarding mission priorities, mission education work and program guidance through United Women in Faith. Being a part of the PAG has opened my eyes even more to what United Women in Faith really is.

I have truly enjoyed serving in this role with this amazing organization to lead, strengthen and grow United Women in Faith and to pass on the vital and thriving United Women in Faith to those who will follow us. Blessings to all.


Session is a member of the United Women in Faith Southeastern Jurisdiction National Program Advisory Group.



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October 22, 2023 ★ 1-4 p.m.

Rev. Irvin Plowden, Jr.

Thank you for your leadership and service to our church. We appreciate all the ways you teach, share God's word and support our ministries! You're a blessing to us all!

Cornerstone UMC, Rock Hill



Above from left, Elizabeth Hayes, Rev. Sandra Stubbs, Diane Hayes, Julia Meekins and Dorothy Lloyd assist with packing and loading the supplies. Below, a member and volunteers assist with loading the water for delivery.



Clio sends supplies and water to Amory, Mississippi

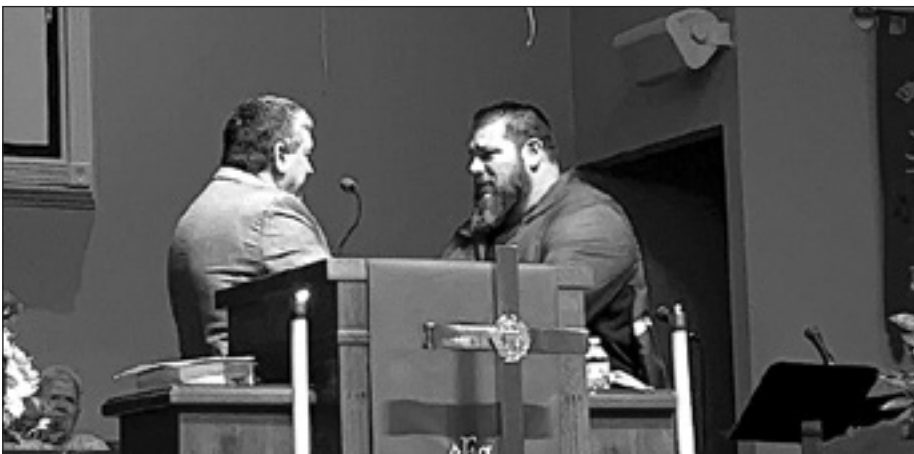
Listening to the news about the path of destruction that the tornados left behind in Amory, Mississippi, brought sadness to many people—including those in the town of Clio.

Diane Hayes, of Old Clio United Methodist Church, Clio, decided to speak to the church family about assisting the victims.

The church decided it would do all it could to assist by sending supplies, water and other items to those in need. The supplies were sent to St. James UMC in Amory, Mississippi.

The process for collecting the items began in April. Items collected were food, household goods, water, cleaning products, clothing, shoes and other items that could benefit the families. Upon hearing the news of the church's mission to help, other community members, friends and churches also assisted. Many said it was a great time of rejoicing, seeing everyone working together doing what God has called all to do by loving and caring for neighbors. This was a significant ministry for the Old Clio UMC family, and they said helping others truly blessed them in many ways.

The pastor is the Rev. Sandra Stubbs.



Christianity and America's first people

Chris Galvin (right), a member of Red Bank UMC, receives a Native American friendship bracelet from Zan Tracy Pender Aug. 21. Pender, South Carolina UMC's NAC chair, delivered the sermon to all three services at the church that Sunday as he helped dispel myths about Native Americans and offer a number of important truths. Galvin organized the Native American Sunday and introduced Pender to the congregation. To schedule a speaker for your church's Native American Sunday, one of the official Special Sundays in the UMC, email tracypender@hotmail.com.

The congregation of Green Pond United Methodist Church, Smoaks, SC, appreciates the service and leadership of our pastor,

Jeffrey P. Cila and his wife, Deb.

For the past year, Pastor Cila has shepherded our congregation with dedication, encouragement and caring. May God continue to bless him and his family.



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Luke Rhyee

Sight for the blind

Vision Care West held a successful Ophthalmology Camp at Healing Guatemala's Bethesda location in early July. Vision Care West attended to more than 500 patients and performed about 80 cataract surgeries and 30 pterygium removal surgeries. Healing Guatemala was started by Dr. Luke Rhyee, a South Carolina UMC elder who now lives and works at Healing Guatemala. "It is always a blessing to witness the moment when the blind regain their sight," Rhyee said, sharing that one very special case this summer was that of Dona Argentina, pictured here, who regained her sight after 35 years of blindness. Another is Diego, a boy who can now see again after three years of darkness. He got pediatric cataracts in both of his eyes three years ago. "We pray that the Lord continues to pour his blessings on them just like he does at the camp," Rhyee added. "Thanks to Vision Care West for bringing the blessings of the Lord to the people of Guatemala."

St. Andrew By-The-Sea to co-host 24th annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner

HILTON HEAD ISLAND—The 24th annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner will be held Thursday, Nov. 23, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Hudson's Seafood House on the Docks on Squire Pope Road in Hilton Head.

The event is co-sponsored by St. Andrew By-The-Sea United Methodist Church and Hudson's Seafood House.

"We are so proud to be a part of this highly anticipated event," said Gloria LaCoe, who leads the volunteer team and organizes the event with her husband, Allan, each year. "This free Thanksgiving Dinner is open to everyone, from individuals who don't have family in the area to entire families."

The family-style meal is served to more than 1,500 Lowcountry residents and visitors annually.

The concept for the Community Thanksgiving Dinner began with a 1998 article in the *Island Packet* that described lonely locals who had no place to go on Thanksgiving Day.

Early the following year, Brian Carmines, then-owner of Hudson's, Allan LaCoe and Betsy Doughtie, the former executive director of the Deep Well Project, met to discuss

opportunities to organize a community-wide event.

St. Andrew By-The-Sea United Methodist Church soon signed on to spearhead the volunteer organization, and Hudson's offered to host the first dinner.

Five hundred meals were served that Thanksgiving Day in 1999.

More than 300 volunteers now contribute their time by assisting with parking, welcoming guests, serving the meals and a variety of other tasks.

Many volunteers have participated in the event for years, and the volunteer roster is full by mid-October. The day will be filled with delicious food, Southern hospitality, fellowship and entertainment.

"Attendees can expect a traditional Thanksgiving Day meal with a Southern twist," said Andrew Carmines, owner of Hudson's Seafood House.

"This is an opportunity for the local community and visitors to come together and celebrate this great American holiday, and to connect with old friends and new."

Complete information about the event and how to help is available at <https://communitythanksgiving.com>.



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From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

South Carolinians in a postwar world

South Carolina Methodists were moving into a new world of possibilities in October 1948. The Upper South Carolina Conference, which had been formed in 1915, was merging back into the South Carolina Conference, and so new relationships around the state were being formed. And the pages of the *Advocate* were beginning to show an awareness of the beginning of the Cold War.

The Sept. 30 issue featured news of the Wofford-Columbia Million Dollar campaign, including groundbreaking for a new science building at Columbia College. The *Advocate* also celebrated the success of the campaign to support the two colleges in many local churches. And with changes in the wind already, two writers proposed changes to the date of Annual Conference, which was still meeting in late October. Those who wanted to move away from October conferences noted that parsonage families had to move after school started, and that a new minister would arrive just before Christmas and any planning had to wait until January. One suggested meeting in late May or early June, right after school ended. Others suggested a late August conference, though critics pointed out that vacation time was not a good time to be finishing up a church year. In another proposed change with the conference merger, one writer suggested changing the name of the *Advocate* from the *Southern Christian Advocate* to the *South Carolina Methodist Advocate*, which actually did happen.

News of foreign lands continued to fill the *Advocate's* pages. One series related to one minister's travels following the World Council of Churches meeting in Amsterdam. Through the assistance of Bishop Paul Garber, then the Methodist bishop resident in Europe, two ministers, Dr. Embree Blackard and South Carolina's J. O. Smith, were able to travel behind the Iron Curtain in Poland, Czechoslovakia and eastern Germany.

Blackard wrote of the devastation still so evident in Warsaw, where he stayed in the restored Methodist building. He noted the work of the church behind the Iron Curtain, that the growing Methodist movement there

received telegrams from Bishop Garber as the ancients had read missives from St. Paul. The article explained that the Polish people didn't care for the Soviets any more than they had the Germans, and particularly pointed out that barely 100,000 Jews remained in the entire country out of a pre-war population of several million.

The report continued with the ministers' travel to Czechoslovakia, featuring the account of the destruction of an entire Czech town in retaliation for the assassination of a German leader. A survivor wondered why the Americans would come to the aid of such a people. The report continued with Dr. Blackard's trip to Berlin. He had visited Germany's capital before the war and found the destruction of many of the landmarks shocking. He wrote that he could not help but feel sorry for the German people, given the amount of loss they had suffered.

He also provided a firsthand account of the Berlin Airlift, noting the efficiency by which American forces were supplying the western sectors of Berlin in response to the Soviet blockade. The Methodist district superintendent in Berlin also showed his American guests the black markets that were rampant in postwar Berlin.

These reports looked at the past and the future at once. World War II and its human and economic toll were still fresh in the minds of Europeans and Americans in 1948. That same issue of the *Advocate* carried the notice of a funeral for an American serviceman who had died in France in 1944. At the same time, the new reality of the Cold War was dawning on much of the world.

The work of the Methodist Church in helping the people of Central Europe recover from war is probably not much remembered today. The stories in the *Advocate* 75 years ago this fall reflect a mix of optimism for the future, but they also recognized that among many, a sense of hopelessness prevailed and that the church would have to work to give a reason for hope in that part of the world.

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

Leave A Legacy To Change Lives

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

With great appreciation, the Cross Charge recognizes our pastor,

Rev. Davie D. Sanders, Jr.

His prayers, dedication, sacrifices, and hard work make him a wonderful leader. He has guided us through the vision God gave him for us and we are blessed abundantly because of his vision. We appreciate the gospel word and inspirational messages he shares so passionately each Sunday. He reaches out to his members to provide support and guidance. He continuously challenges us to reach higher goals. During the pandemic, he established means for members to join Worship Service and Bible Study virtually, which is still continued today. Through his ministry, we are accomplishing great things.

Thank you, **Rev. Davie D. Sanders, Jr.**, for being our Spiritual Leader and guiding us higher into the path of God. We appreciate you, not just during this month of October, but each month of the year.

With Heartfelt Love,
The Cross Charge
Jerusalem and Zion United Methodist Churches



Conference Historical Society

by the Rev. Joseph D. Kovas

A catholic spirit in United Methodism

Those who are called Methodist or Wesleyan may be familiar with John Wesley's sermon "Catholic Spirit" from 1750. This was one of Wesley's well-known sermons, which was republished in 1755 and 1770.

Wesley strongly supported his own theological conviction and upheld that he believed that the most scriptural and apostolic form of church government was the episcopal model found in the Church of England. However, as one who strongly supported his convictions as a priest, he promoted in his preaching and life unity among Christians. Wesley used the term "catholic spirit" to preach on universal love in Christ Jesus. Wesley urged the early Methodists to not let differences of opinion on the practice of the sacraments, order of worship and church government divide them from other Christians in their parishes. According to Wesley, he asked in his sermon, "Though we can't think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion?"

Wesley's sermon focused on calling for all his listeners in the congregation to model the story of Jehonadab and Jehu from 2 Kings 10:15. Both were from different backgrounds and upbringings. However, Jehu asked Jehonadab, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? and Jehonadab answered, it is if it be, give me thine hand." For Wesley, he viewed this biblical passage as a beautiful example of what happens when two people put aside their differences and acknowledge the love of God that unites them in their hearts.

Richard Heitzenrater and Albert Outler observe in "John Wesley's Sermon: An Anthology," that this sermon serves as "Wesley's most important contribution to the cause of Christian unity and to the requisite spirit in which that cause may be served."

The "catholic spirit," or universal love, has been seen in the relationships formed throughout the history of South Carolina Methodism.

In 1845, Bishop William Capers and a delegation from South Carolina attended the Louisville Convention that created the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The creation of a new denomination was the result of the events at the 1844 General Conference. James O. Andrew, a former member of the South Carolina Conference, was asked to resign as a bishop for owning a slave. The General Conference voted 110 to 68 to call for Andrew to resign as bishop. Following the end of the General Conference, a plan was proposed for the development of a new Southern denomination.

The Southern and Northern Church reunited in 1939 along with the merger of the Methodist Protestant Church. Although both church bodies were reunited, it was at the expense of African-American Methodists, who were placed in the segregated Central Conference. Twenty-nine years after the reunion of the churches, The United Methodist Church was formed, which dismantled the Central Conference in the denomination and in the South Carolina Conference in 1972.

As I reflect on the current state of the UMC, our conference and on the 113 churches that have left our connection, I cannot help but think about the events that have taken place in our past in former divisions and unifications. In the events leading to the reunification of the Northern and Southern church, there was a pastor and layperson

somewhere that formed a relationship with pastors and laity from the other denomination. Although they had a difference of theological and moral opinions in their day and age, the relationships formed between the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church were used by God's love to create Christian unity.

However, there was much debate in South Carolina on the topic of unity and in the Central Conference. According to "A History of South Carolina United Methodism (1985)," the plan for merger in 1939 passed in both the 1866 Conference and the 1785 Conference with "the hope that such an arrangement was but a step on the way to a genuinely inclusive church in the future."

Twenty-nine years later, the hope for a genuinely inclusive church for Black and White Methodist was fulfilled with the dismantling of the Central Conference and uniting the South Carolina 1866 and 1785 Conference in 1972. There were South Carolina pastors and laity somewhere in the state who formed a relationship with Methodist across different racial context, who had different forms of worship, who had different preaching styles and who thought differently about the world as they did. However, God worked through their formed relationships. Both A. McKay Brabham and Warren M. Jenkins worked to publish histories that educated the churches on Black Methodism's history in the state. In the time leading up to the 1972 merger, both conference bodies "began to hold joint pastor's schools and leadership training enterprises."

The catholic spirit, or universal love, that Wesley preached was being embodied in the relationships formed between the 1866 and 1785 conferences. In the relationships, pastors and laity from the Black and White churches saw in one another that they may not have thought alike, but they desired to love the Lord Jesus Christ and God's people equally. Each gave each other's hand and together we have strived to love God and God's people as United Methodist in South Carolina for more than 50 years.

As I consider our current state of the church, I ask myself the question: What does it look like to embody a catholic spirit between United Methodist churches that choose to stay with the conference and congregations who have discerned to go a different path?

If your congregation is in the same community with a congregation that has left the connection, what does it look like to continue to form and foster relationships with these churches? Regardless of a congregation's denominational affiliation, we all live in the same community and strive to love the Lord Jesus Christ and God's people. Regardless of whether you are United Methodist, Global Methodist, Independent, African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregationalist or Catholic, we all experience the same issues in our community—food insecurity, transportation needs, economic depression, etc.

As our history shows us, forming relationships with other Christians out of genuine love has been a place where God has chosen to enact wonders and miracles in our midst that we could never dream or imagine.

Kovas is pastor of St. Paul UMC, New Ellenton.

Connect @advocatesc



Arlene Rose Raus Compton
 PATRICK—Arlene Rose Raus Compton, wife of the Rev. Charles Gary Compton, died Aug. 29, 2023. Rev. Compton is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church currently serving the McBee Charge, McBee.

A memorial service was held Sept. 1 at the chapel of Norton Funeral Home, Hartsville. Inurnment will take place at a later date at Fort Jackson Cemetery Mausoleum.

Mrs. Compton is survived by her husband, daughter and two sons.

Lottie Goodman Frierson
 SUMTER—Lottie Goodman Frierson, mother of the Rev. Ernest Frierson, died Aug. 29, 2023. Rev. Frierson is the pastor of Friendship United Methodist Church, Nesmith.

Funeral services were held Sept. 4 at Salem Chapel and Heritage Center with burial at a later date.

Edward DeFoix Huskey
 ROEBUCK—Edward DeFoix Huskey, brother of Lavonia Hill, died Aug. 30, 2023. Mrs. Hill is the wife of the Rev. Tommy Hill, a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Sept. 5 in Floyd's Greenlawn Chapel, Spartanburg,

with burial in Greenlawn Memorial Gardens.

Memorials may be made to Spartanburg Regional Hospice Home, 686 Jeff Davis Drive, Spartanburg, SC 29303.

Mr. Huskey is survived by his son and two daughters.

Rev. Thomas Charles Copeland Jones Jr.

WEST COLUMBIA—The Rev. Thomas Charles Copeland "Thom" Jones Jr., a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Sept. 2, 2023.



Jones Jr.

Prior to his retirement in 2001, Dr. Jones served Cherokee Place Associate, Catawba-Van Wyck, Aiken-Charles Wesley, Mill Creek, Main Street Associate, Platt Springs and Ashland charges. He also served as director of Creative Arts for the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church.

A memorial service was held Sept. 10 at Ashland UMC, Columbia. A private burial will be held at a later date in Bush River Memorial Gardens.

Memorials may be sent to Ashland

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.

UMC, 2600 Ashland Road, Columbia, SC 29210.

Dr. Jones is survived by his wife, Sue Moormann Jones, and two daughters.

Rev. Gene Austin Norris

CONWAY—The Rev. Gene Austin Norris, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Aug. 20, 2023.



Norris

Prior to his retirement in 1996, Rev. Norris served the Waterloo, India Hook, India Hook-Pleasant Grove, Whaley Street, Spartanburg-El Bethel, Highland Park, Spartanburg-Central, Newberry-Central, Wayne-Oak Grove and Loris-First charges.

Funeral services were held Aug. 24 at Trinity UMC with burial in Hillcrest Cem-

etry.

Memorials may be made to Epworth Children's Home, 2900 Millwood Ave., Columbia, SC 29205; or to Trinity UMC Building Fund, 198 Long Ave., Conway, SC 29526.

Rev. Norris is survived by his wife, Carolyn Norris, son and two daughters.

Carolyn Grace Seay O'Dell

SPARTANBURG—Carolyn Grace Seay O'Dell, widow of the Rev. Donald R. O'Dell, died Aug. 16, 2023.

A graveside service was held Aug. 19 at Greenlawn Memorial Gardens.

Memorials may be made to Spartanburg Regional Hospice, Spartanburg Regional Foundation, 101 E. Wood St., Spartanburg, SC 29303.

Mrs. O'Dell is survived by her three sons.

Cleveland Smith

HUGER—Cleveland Smith, father of the Rev. Cindy Shaw, died Sept. 1, 2023. Rev. Shaw is the pastor of Bethel United Methodist Church, St. Stephen. Her husband, the Rev. Timothy Shaw, serves Asbury-St. James UMC, Charleston.

Funeral services were held Sept. 6 at Stewart Chapel UMC with burial in Lavance Cemetery.

Mr. Smith is survived by his two daughters and seven sons.

AWS annual meeting to feature Andy Broughton and The Messengers

COLUMBIA—The Alston Wilkes Society will host its 61st annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony, honoring top professionals from the fields of law enforcement, corrections, social services, youth services, and veterans' services.

This year, the annual meeting's keynote address will be delivered by Andy Broughton and The Messengers Motivational Speaking Group.

Originally formed at South Carolina's Youth Correctional Facility, this group traveled the state of South Carolina and spoke to countless youth and adults about making better choices, choosing positive friends and the power of communication.

Now, after being released and building their new lives after incarceration, the former members of this speaking team have banded together again to bring their stories of change, hope and inspiration. The team, which comprises speakers all over the U.S., meets together regularly to strategize, encourage and motivate each other in their mission of restoration. By telling their stories, their goal is to encourage others to see change is always possible through positive communication and caring relationships.

All are welcome to join AWS for this event from 12 to 2 p.m. on Nov. 16 at Seawell's Catering in Columbia. For tickets, visit <https://www.alstonwilkessociety.org/events>

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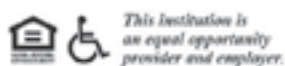
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Resource Center

by Betty Stalnaker

New Advent/Christmas Bible studies

The following are new Advent/Christmas Bible studies available from the Resource Center. Also, church musicians, we still have musicals available for your Christmas programs. Please check the website for all titles with descriptions.

An Unlikely Advent: Extraordinary People of the Christmas Story

(DVD2847CA=) Author: Billups, Rachel. 4 sessions, 9-10 min/leader's guide/bk/2023.

Expect the unexpected this Christmas. This four-week Advent study focuses on the experiences of four sets of often-overlooked characters in the Nativity story.

Billups guides readers through the themes of hope, love, joy and peace by sharing the stories of Elizabeth and Zechariah, Herod, the Magi and the shepherds. Each set of unexpected characters has something to teach about living faithfully on the journey to Christmas. CC. Age: YAS.

Experiencing Christmas: Christ in the Sights and Sounds of Advent

(DVD2848CA=) Author: Rawle, Matt. 4 sessions, 10-12 min/leader's guide/bk/2023.

Discover how everything changed when God was born. Everything seems different at the end of the year. We put lights on our houses to dispel the growing darkness, Christmas music floods local radio stations, apple cider and cranberry sauce are again on the menu, and wrapping paper and tape are always ready.

Things just look, smell and taste differently during the Advent and Christmas season, and these differences are a sign to us that God is about to do something radical and different.

Christmas is when God surrounded the divine with senses of his own. That first Noel was when God had eyes to see suffering, ears to hear our cries and hands to hold those in need, and all of these senses were bundled in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. "This will be a sign to you," the angel told the shepherds, and they traveled to Bethlehem and found a child.

What signs do you see during the Advent and Christmas season that point you to the divine?

These four video sessions feature Matt guiding participants through the content. CC. Age: YAS.

Heaven and Earth: Advent and the Incarnation

(DVD2849CA=) Author: Willimon, William. 4 sessions, 11 min. each/leader's guide/bk/2023.

Watch out. God is on the way. It's not within our own power to make a fresh start. If we're to have a future different from the past, it must come as a gift—something not of our devising. What we need is a God who refuses to be trapped in eternity, a God who not only cares about us but is willing to show up among us and do something with us, here, now.

In "Heaven and Earth: Advent and the Incarnation," Will Willimon introduces you to the God who does just that, bringing heaven to earth and changing everything. In Advent we celebrate and anticipate the earth-shaking, life-transforming good news that God is coming to us. Watch out. Get ready. God is on the way. CC. Age: YAS.

Waiting Here for You: An Advent Journey of Hope

(DVD2850CA=) Author: Giglio, Louie.

Christmas. It comes the same time every year. We have plenty of time to anticipate it—or, in some cases, dread it. And before we know it, it's gone as quickly as it came, leaving us wondering: What's it all for? Is there really hope for today in the story of a baby born so long ago?

The story of Christmas is one of waiting. It is a story of how the people of Israel waited years and years for the promised Messiah to arrive. But the story of Christmas is also one that reveals how God works during seasons of waiting—times in which he is developing us to carry out his plans in our lives.

In this study, bestselling author and pastor Louie Giglio will lead you through the season of Advent and show how your waiting is never wasted when you are waiting on God. Age: YAS.

The South Carolina Conference Resource Center is your connection to DVDs and seasonal musicals. We are here to serve your church family. To reserve resources, call 888-678-6272 or 803-735-8798. <https://www.umcsc.org/resourcecenter>



Mount Zion United Methodist Church-Central, SC, is extremely blessed to have such a talented and caring leadership team.



Thank you
Pastor Jonathan, Marissa,
Barbara and John for all
that you do for Mount Zion
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Global Briefs

Asian American group commits to denomination

ATLANTA—Member caucuses of the New Federation of Asian American United Methodists recently gathered at the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries headquarters. The federation, comprising traditionalist, progressive and centrist churchgoers, committed to the mission and unity of The United Methodist Church. "We believe we are better together as we move forward into God's preferred future for The United Methodist Church," the group said.

Students reflect on 'life-changing' Youth 2023

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla.—More than 2,500 young people came to Discipleship Ministries' Youth 2023 this summer for faith building and fellowship. Participants attended workshops, worship, concerts and communion on the beach, among other activities, all tied together with the theme of "BOLD—Being Ourselves, Living Different." Several youths from around the connection reflect on their experiences at the gathering.

Yambasu grant helps mission farms flourish

HARARE, Zimbabwe—Four United Methodist mission farms got a major boost from the Board of Global Ministries' Yambasu Agriculture Initiative, with some seeing a bumper harvest for the first time in a decade. The money provided seeds and fertilizer, along with equipment and technical support.

Study: Climate change threatens kids' health

GENEVA—A new study published in the journals "The Lancet" and "Child Abuse and Neglect," co-authored by the World Council of Churches, highlights the impact of climate change on the health and well-being of children. The ecological degradation caused by climate change increases the risk of armed conflict, forced displacement and poverty. The study looked at how the climate crisis heightened risk of violence against children.

United Methodists begin Idalia recovery

LAKELAND, Fla.—A day after Hurricane Idalia rampaged across the U.S. Southeast, United Methodists in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina were assessing the damage and responding to immediate needs. The United Methodist Committee on Relief also was coordinating with United Methodists across multiple states to provide early response.

N.C. disaffiliation lawsuit resolved

HUNTERSVILLE, N.C.—The 36 churches that sued the Western North Carolina Conference over disaffiliation policies have resolved all litigation pending between them by mutual agreement. The conference's board of trustees announced that the churches will disaffiliate under the *Book of Discipline's* Paragraph 2553 and that the conference will work through the disaffiliation process. Earlier this year, a judge in North Carolina dismissed the churches' lawsuit, but the churches had the option to appeal.

Update on church-trial preparations

GLENVIEW, Ill.—Plans for the church trial of Bishop Minerva Carcaño continue to unfold as the Sept. 19 start date nears. With the trial being an open session, new guidance also has been made available for people wishing to attend and follow the proceedings. Plans are for the church trial to be livestreamed. The online address for the livestream will be announced later.

Short docket brings church-exit questions

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The United Methodist Church's top court has set its shortest fall docket in years. However, the Judicial Council continues to face questions related to church exits and the COVID-delayed General Conference.

Study helps white Christians understand racism's impacts

WASHINGTON—The United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race is offering a seven-part curriculum aimed at White Christians in how racism affects society and the church. "You Are Here" defines racism and discusses how it impacts and impedes the integrity and effectiveness of God's people gathered as the church.

Candler professor tapped to lead Harvard Divinity

ATLANTA—Marla Frederick, Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Religion and Culture at Candler School of Theology, has been chosen the next dean of Harvard Divinity School. She will begin in January and will teach at Candler this fall. Candler is one of the 13 United Methodist seminaries in the U.S.

Church offers shelter to wildfire evacuees

MERRYVILLE, La.—First United Methodist Church of DeRidder is hosting close to 60 families who had to evacuate one of the largest wildfires to impact Louisiana in several years. "I listened to sirens running all night long and people working together in incredible ways to help take care of those who have had to leave their homes, lost their homes or didn't know if they're still standing," said the Rev. Laraine Waughtal.

Staff members deliver on diaper challenge

ATLANTA—Bishop Robin Dease has invited the congregations of the North Georgia Conference to consider hosting a diaper drive this summer or fall. But first, she challenged conference staff to join her in collecting diapers throughout July as a staff service project. The staff delivered.

—Courtesy of the United Methodist News Service



Rev. Allen Nesmith
St. James United Methodist Church
Sumter, SC
Happy Pastor Appreciation Month!

September

September 15-October 15: Hispanic Heritage Month; UWF Special Emphasis Month: Killingworth

- Sept. 20—Brian McLaren's Four Stages of Faith: Stage Two: Complexity, led by Cam Treece. Central UMC, Spartanburg, 6:30 p.m.
- Sept. 24—LSM School (Spartanburg District) III, Beaumont UMC, Spartanburg, 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>
- Sept. 24—LSM School (Greenwood District) II, Main Street UMC, Greenwood, 2 p.m.-7:30 p.m. \$35. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Greenwood-District-Registration-Form-for-Fall-2023-classes.pdf>
- Sept. 25-Oct. 31—Pumpkin Patch, Carteret Street UMC, Beaufort, 12-6 p.m. M-F; 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday; 12-6 p.m. Sunday.
- Sept. 27—Brian McLaren's Four Stages of Faith: Stage Three: Perplexity, led by Arthur Holt. Central UMC, Spartanburg, 6:30 p.m.
- Sept. 29-Oct. 1—LSM School (Walterboro District), Sand Hill UMC. Friday, 6:30-8:30 p.m. online; Saturday, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. in person; Sunday, 1:30-6 p.m. in person. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Walterboro-District-Lay-School-Fall-2023-rev-1.pdf>
- 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.
- Sept. 30—ERT Training, Cornerstone UMC, Rock Hill, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Register: <https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration/>
- Sept. 30—LSM School (Charleston District), Eccles UMC, Huger, 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Charleston-District-One-Day-Lay-Servant-School-September.pdf>
- Sept. 30-Oct. 1—LSM School (Orangeburg District), New Covenant UMC, Bowman, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.; 3-7 p.m. \$35. <https://www.umcsc.org/ordistlsmregistration/>

October

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

- Oct 1-31—Pumpkin Patch, Disciples UMC, Greenville. M-Sat. 9 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sun.



A reunion to remember

On the first Sunday in July, nearly 40 young adults returned to St. James UMC, Sumter, for an old-fashioned choir anniversary reunion. Members of the children and youth choir from the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s returned to sing songs inspired by choir leaders Mildred Cato and Cynthia Harvin (deceased). Harvin and Cato worked closely with the children and youth, and before Harvin passed, the idea of bringing these young people back together was in the works. Cato, along with her assistant, Jennifer Adams, made sure it came to fruition. Church family and friends, former pastors and current pastor the Rev. Allen Nesmith gathered to celebrate with these young people as they sang with uplifted voices many of the songs from their time as children and youth. A tribute to Harvin was given by her daughter, Quenisha Brunson. All said it was a reunion to remember.

- Noon-7 p.m. <https://mydisciplesumc.org/2023-pumpkin-patch>
- Oct. 1—Pre-140th anniversary celebration, Sand Hill UMC, Ridgeville, 11 a.m. Bishop Jonathan Holston, preacher. <http://www.sandhillumc-sc.com>
- Oct. 4—Brian McLaren's Four Stages of Faith: Stage Four: Harmony, led by Joan McPherson. Central UMC, Spartanburg, 6:30 p.m.
- Oct. 6-7—Annual Ruben L. Speaks Endowed Memorial Lecture Series via Zoom, Hood Theological Seminary. For further information: <https://www.hoodseminary.edu/news/attend-the-2023-virtual-speaks-lecture-series>
- Oct. 7—Indoor Yard Sale, Washington Street UMC, Columbia, 7:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
- Oct. 7—"Our Single Legacy" Singles Symposium, St. Mark UMC, Taylors, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. \$20. Register: <https://wallet.subsplash.com/ui/embed/5BVWTJ/>
- Oct. 7—LSM School (Rock Hill District) I, Aldersgate UMC, Rock Hill, 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. \$30. Register: <https://www.umcsc.org/rockhillonlineregistration/>
- Oct. 7—Fall Festival, New Market UMC, Hartsville, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Oct. 8—178th Anniversary Celebration, Smyrna UMC, Bennettsville, 10 a.m.
- Oct. 8—Worship and church picnic, part of 140th anniversary, Sand Hill UMC, Ridgeville, 9 a.m. Rev. Jerry Harrison, preacher. <http://www.sandhillumc-sc.com>
- Oct. 9—Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Oct. 10—Service, part of 140th anniversary, Sand Hill UMC, Ridgeville, 7 p.m. Rev. James C. Lane, preacher. <http://www.sandhillumc-sc.com>
- Oct. 11—Brian McLaren's Four Stages of Faith: Conclusion: So What?, led by Andy Crosland. Central UMC, Spartanburg, 6:30 p.m.
- Oct. 11—Service, part of 140th anniversary, Sand Hill UMC, Ridgeville, 7 p.m. Dr. Timothy J. Bowman, preacher. <http://www.sandhillumc-sc.com>
- Oct. 12—Service, part of 140th anniversary, Sand Hill UMC, Ridgeville, 7 p.m. Rev. Mack McClam, preacher. <http://www.sandhillumc-sc.com>
- Oct. 14—Asbury Hills Fall Festival, Asbury Hills, Cleveland, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. <https://asburyhills.org/fall-festival/>
- Oct. 14—LSM School (Marion District), First UMC, Marion, Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, 3-7 p.m. \$25. Register: bit.ly/MarionLSM
- Oct. 15—140th Anniversary Celebration, Sand Hill UMC, Ridgeville, 11 a.m.

- Rev. Jeffrey Salley, preacher. <http://www.sandhillumc-sc.com>
- Oct. 15—Centennial Celebration, Cross Anchor Yarbrough UMC, Cross Anchor, 10 a.m. Sandy Hobbs, speaker.
- Oct. 20-21—SCCUWF 51st Annual Meeting, St. John's UMC, Aiken. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/June-2023-Mission-Echo.pdf>
- Oct. 21—ERT Training, Edgefield UMC, Edgefield, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Register: <https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration/>
- Oct. 21—LSM School (Hartsville District) I, Trinity UMC, Darlington, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. \$20. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Hartsville-District-LSM-Fall-School-2023.pdf>
- Oct. 21—LSM School (Rock Hill District) II, Aldersgate UMC, Rock Hill, 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. \$30. Register: <https://www.umcsc.org/rockhillonlineregistration/>
- Oct. 21-22—LSM School (Rock Hill District), Mount Olive UMC, Rock Hill, Saturday, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Sunday, 2-5:30 p.m. \$30. Register: <https://www.umcsc.org/rockhillonlineregistration/>

- Oct. 22—Alston Wilkes Society Oyster Roast, Bowens Island Restaurant, Charleston, 1-4 p.m. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/aws-annual-oyster-roast-at-bowens-island-restaurant-2023-tickets-640598245597>
- Oct. 28—LSM School (Hartsville District) II, Trinity UMC, Darlington, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. \$20. <https://www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Hartsville-District-LSM-Fall-School-2023.pdf>

- Oct. 31—Halloween
- November**
Native American Heritage Month
- Nov. 1—All Saints Day
- Nov. 2—All Souls Day
- Nov. 3-5—Immerse 2023, Asbury Hills Camp and Retreat Center, Cleveland. <http://scmvp.org/immerse/>
- Nov. 4-5—LSM School (Rock Hill District), St. John's UMC, Rock Hill, Saturday, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Sunday, 2-5:30 p.m. \$30. Register: <https://www.umcsc.org/rockhillonlineregistration/>
- Nov. 5—Daylight Savings Time ends
- Nov. 7—Election Day
- Nov. 9—2023 Killingworth Gala, Seawell's Restaurant, Columbia, 6-9 p.m. Register: <https://www.killingworth.org/gala>
- Nov. 11—Veterans Day



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by the Rev. Tim Reeves

The wonderment of worship

Oct. 1 Can God Open Your Eyes?

Lesson Scripture: Genesis 21:9-21
Background Scripture: Genesis 16
Key Verse: Genesis 16:13, (Hagar) said “You are the God who sees me. Have I truly seen the One who sees me?”

God established a deeply personal relationship with Abraham and Sarah. In Chapter 15, God’s covenant promise made them parents of a great legacy of descendants. “Look up into the sky and count the stars, if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have,” the Lord said. That was astounding news for an aged, childless couple like 80-plus-year-old Abraham and 85-year-old Sarah. They believed when God gave them a humanly impossible promise. As the years sped by and still no child, they impatiently questioned that promise.

Consequently, Sarah took matters in her own hands and offered her servant, Hagar, to Abraham as a slave-wife. Sarah was within her culturally and legally accepted rights as an aged, barren wife. Any child produced from this would be recognized as Sarah’s child and a legal heir. She believed she was acting in good faith to fulfill God’s promise.

But like so much in life, what is humanly legal and culturally acceptable is not always acceptable in God’s eyes.

Hagar bore a son, Ishmael, to then 86-year-old Abraham, and Ishmael became legal heir. But when God announced Sarah would finally conceive, Abraham knew Ishmael could not be the legal heir. However, Abraham showed compassion and prayed for God to bless Ishmael. God showed compassion and made Ishmael the father of another great nation on his own.

While Isaac would father the Jewish nation, Ishmael remained part of the family of Abraham and Sarah. He would assist in Abraham’s burial, give his daughter to Esau in marriage and have 12 sons who would establish their own tribes.

This story shows we are to put our total faith in God rather than in human cultural customs and legalities. These individuals demonstrate how our faith must be firmly grounded in following God’s will, obeying God’s laws and trusting God’s promises.

Even though Sarah, Abraham and Hagar tried to circumvent God’s promise, God compassionately did not condemn them nor abandon God’s promise. Likewise, Abraham showed compassion for his son Ishmael.

Oct. 8 How Many Miracles Are Needed?

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 17: 1-7
Background Scripture: Exodus 6: 6-9; 25: 8, 29, 43-46; Numbers 20: 1-13

Key Verse: Exodus 17: 2-3, “So once more the people complained against Moses. ‘Give us water to drink!’ they demanded. ‘Quit complaining,’ Moses told them, ‘Why are you complaining against me? And why are you testing the Lord?’”

How many times do we need to see God’s presence before we fully trust God’s promises? What do we need to have unwavering/unswerving full trust in God?

The Israelites’ “mini-rebellion” against Moses and God is a lesson in how quickly trust/faith can evaporate like water on pavement on a hot South Carolina summer day. Their “evaporation” emanated from a lack of water and marked the second of three wilderness “water miracles” they experienced.

When the Israelites found themselves short of water near Rephidim, they complained to Moses (once again!) and Moses told them to “quit complaining and testing the Lord!”

We easily criticize the “complaining” Israelites for their apparent hypocrisy of praising God in good times but complaining when times get tough. And it’s easy to ask why they didn’t trust God more after all the miraculous demonstrations of God’s personal love and compassion they had already received!

Yet, truly, are we really much different? We each experience numerous displays of God’s divine wonder every single day, yet how often do we fail to see these as examples of God’s love, mercy and grace? In hundreds of ways, God reaches us daily with blessings and miracles of mercy and grace. Yet because of the “thirst” in our own souls, we instead choose to be critical because God has not given us some blessing/miracle/act of grace yet we feel we should have received. Is it because we simply do not have enough faith and trust in God as our creator, provider and redeemer?

The Shema says “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul” yet it could just as easily read “Trust the Lord your God with all your heart and soul” as well. If we truly do love God, then we’ll also trust God, because it is love and trust that make our relationship with God work.

Oct. 15 Whom Do You Crave?

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 42
Background Scripture: Psalm 43
Key Verse: Psalm 42: 1-2, “As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for You, O God. I thirst for God, the Living God.”

Like the Israelites who needed physical water to survive the wilderness desert, our soul needs “spiritual” water to both survive and thrive. Wilderness guides refer to the “rule of three” for wilderness survival: three minutes without oxygen/air, three days without water and three weeks without food.

Israel’s water sources are few and far between, so water is truly a matter of life or death. The Psalm writer once saw a near-death deer struggling across the dry, barren land desperately seeking some life-sustaining source of water. That image reminded the writer of the “spiritual” thirst for God which occurs amidst the “dryness” of our life.

Ask, when was the most recent time you felt completely fulfilled in your personal, intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ? Have you never felt that kind of fresh, clean “spiritual” water flowing into your dry, thirsty soul? Are you even now struggling in a “dry and thirsty” spiritual time? Likewise, can you recall a time when, like the writer, you felt like dancing and singing for joy as you traveled on the way to worship the Lord?

Two things stand out here. First, the euphoric anticipation which comes with worshipping the Lord with other believers; and second, the openness to embrace such celebration in actual worship itself.

Ask, has my worship become so predictable and unoriginal that I find little to no tingle of anticipation with just the thought of being in worship with other believers? Do I find myself drudgishly plodding along or maybe even making excuses not to attend worship of God with others?

Second, has my worship with others become so staid and un-satisfying that I find myself leaving church after worship still

thirsting (like that Israelite deer!) for some deeper connection with God? Do I find myself just going through the motions of worship, only to find my soul even more thirsty than I was before I attended worship?

These questions strike at the heart of our worship and relationship with God, because like the thirsty Israelites who so quickly forgot to keep faith in God (last week’s study), we can just as quickly lose our grasp of the wonderment of worship of, and with, God.

Oct. 22 The Best Water Source in the World!

Lesson Scripture: John 7: 37-44
Background Scripture: John 4:4-26; 7: 32-44
Key Verse: John 7: 37-38, “Anyone who is thirsty may come to Me! Anyone who believes in Me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from His heart.’”

Today, we miss the significance of Jesus’ proclamation shared on the Temple steps. Since we don’t worry about ever having fresh, readily available water, we can’t grasp the full impact of Jesus’ “living water” description.

This wasn’t the first time Jesus proclaimed this. Most notably, he made this proclamation to the Samaritan woman at the well, who was first visibly perplexed by the claim yet came to readily understand and embrace Jesus as “living” spiritual water.

Secondly, the Festival of Shelters occurred during the driest time of the year in a naturally dry land. The festival’s last day was climaxed by prayers for God to send the autumn rains. The public prayer ceremony was repeated seven times that day. Each time, priests would repeat the same ceremony by praying and pouring fresh, clean, “living” water all over the altar.

Jewish culture clearly delineated between “dead” and “living” water. Dead water was standing, stale, sour and tasted horrible. It could be deadly to drink. Living water was fresh, clean, physically healthy water found in streams, wells and rainfall. Living water was precious; dead water was disastrous.

Thus Jesus’ proclamation was both outrageous and extravagant. Anyone seeking “living” water that never runs dry and would sustain life eternally only need look to Jesus as the source. Jesus promised an ever-flowing, never-ending, inexhaustible supply of water that would sustain a soul forever.

While St. Augustine, Florida, may tout its mythical “fountain of youth,” courtesy of Ponce de Leon, on these temple steps Jesus proclaimed a “fountain of life” and made a dramatic statement of who he was and what he offered everyone who chose to believe in him. And once again, he quotes the ancient Scriptures to make his case and combine his ministry and life with the traditional and long-held beliefs of his people.

Oct. 29 The Link Between Faith and Works

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 25: 31-46
Background Scripture: Matthew 5: 20; 7: 21-27; 9:13; 11:28-30; 12:7; 23: 1-12, 23

Key Verse: Matthew 25: 40, “and the King will say: ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me.’”

This parable of Jesus clearly demonstrates the complex, yet simple, link between faith and works.

What we do for, and to, the least, the last, the lost, the lowest and the loneliest neighbors around us must be a direct reflection of our faith in, our love of, and our personal commitment to Jesus Christ first, foremost and forever. No one in history; no one in current times; and no one in the future will ever achieve salvation and reach Heaven, nor experience the Kingdom of God, by good works alone.

Jesus once again reminds his disciples that good works that are not driven and motivated by one’s inner faith, are insufficient for salvation or for building a personal relationship with Jesus. It just isn’t going to happen.

The first step in building this faith/good works foundation is repentance and a conversion of the heart, soul and mind. That step must include a concerted effort to turn away from our sinfulness.

Jesus Christ never taught that salvation from our sinfulness can ever be achieved by good works alone. Rather, he taught just the opposite: that any good works must first be preceded by repentance and conversion. Thus, we must constantly be aware of our ongoing critical need of repentance from “our” way of living to “his” way of living.

The good works to/for the least, last, lost, lowest and loneliest among us will be a natural consequence of having that personal relationship with Jesus. It will never come the other way around, because faith that does not produce good works is just as much a dead endeavor as good works that are not first prompted by faith in Christ are also dead endeavors.

A works-less faith won’t produce the righteousness that will invite us into the kingdom of God. Only faith-driven, faith-forged and grounded good works will produce that kind of righteousness.

It’s interesting here that both the sheep and the goats are surprised by the judgment of the King. The key point is understanding and embracing the heart and soul of the “King” who is represented in this parable by Jesus himself.

“Know” Jesus and you’ll know the truth of the link between good works and faith. “No” Jesus and you’ll never know that truth.

Reeves is a retired elder.

We are excited to welcome our new pastor, J. Keith Sellers, to Good Samaritan UMC at Lake Wylie. We look forward to what God will do through his ministry.

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Dr. Laura Barbas Rhoden and Dr. Christine Dinkins have been mentoring student researchers at Wofford for more than two decades. Sam, Nate and Samantha are a few of the students who have benefited from learning research methods and conducting publicly engaged research.

“Working with students is rewarding because we learn from their perspectives,” says Dinkins. “It’s also likely that students will use what they learn to build up the community or in their careers, and that’s exciting.”



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