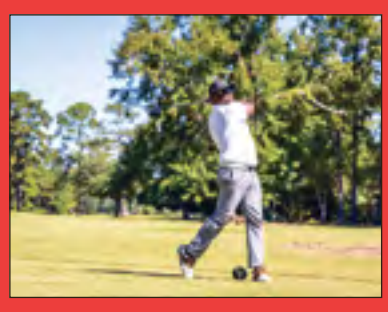
Advocate.
SERVING SOUTH CAROLINA UNITED METHODISTS SINCE 1837

Volume 190 • No. 11 November 2026

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St. Paul UMC in Greenville blesses beloved animals. Page 15.



UMVIM-South Carolina celebrates 50 years of mission. Page 8.

Visit our new website:

Advocate makes digital content free

Shift removes barrier to South Carolina UMC news

Beginning this month, all *Advocate* digital content will be completely free, from the website, e-newsletter and digital PDF to all the articles and features on its app.

Print subscriptions will remain available for a fee.

Leaders are calling it the *Advocate* for All Plan, and they say it arose in the spirit of generosity, faith and a genuine desire to be a full ministry operation.

"Our new plan reflects something I've wanted to do since I became editor of the *Advocate* 16 years ago, in essence eliminating any financial barrier to reading important, inspiring, helpful and encouraging church news and features," said Jessica Brodie, *Advocate* editor. "We've long believed that the articles produced by the

See "Advocate for All," Page 12



Helene Ellis stands with representatives from the Manning Police Department as they celebrate food and children's comfort bags collected by Manning UMC for local families.

Photo by the Rev. David McManus

Loving God by loving neighbors

Manning collects child comfort bags, food for families in need

By Jessica Brodie

MANNING—A South Carolina church is partnering with local police and fire departments to provide much-needed comfort to families in crisis.

Manning United Methodist Church's outreach includes a congregation-wide food drive on the first Sunday of every month, as well as comfort bags they assemble for children, both of which they provide to first responders to give out when needed. They also purchased and donated a small storage shed, installed next door to the police station, where the food and comfort bags can be housed.

Manning member Helene Ellis, who heads the project, said they learned local police and firefighters often encoun-

See "Comfort," Page 11

Judge to dismiss conference's cases against 68 departing churches; appeal planned

By Jessica Brodie

The South Carolina Conference suffered a setback in its legal fight over departing churches.

According to a press release from the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, the conference learned Oct. 12 that Circuit Court Judge Brian M. Gibbons intends to issue an order dismissing the cases brought by the conference against roughly 70 churches seeking to separate from the UMC but keep their property. (Read the full release at https://go.advocatesc.org/litigation-101426.)

See "Judge to Dismiss," Page 11

Shandon UMC funds repairs at Killingsworth

By Jessica Brodie

COLUMBIA—When Robert Lentz read an *Advocate* article last year about Killingsworth Home needing significant repairs to keep its ministry operational, his heart tugged.

Lentz, who chairs the board of trustees at Shandon United Methodist Church, knew his church had a missions fund with possibly enough money to cover the repairs, and he began to sense God urging him to take action. While Lentz had heard of Killingsworth and knew the home was something the women's circles at his church supported and cared about, he'd never been to the home.

See "Shandon helps Killingsworth," Page 24

Advocate.

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Back Issues
The *Advocate* maintains copies of back issues for sale for up to one year, as long as the supply lasts. Postage may apply. To research or review articles published more than one year ago, bound copies of the newspaper are available for review at the *Advocate* office, Wofford College in Spartanburg and the South Caroliniana Library in Columbia.

Deadlines
Deadlines are the 10th of each month for the following month's paper (except July paper due June 6).

Letters and Op-Eds Policy
We welcome letters to the editor and commentary from guest writers who are members of or connected to United Methodist churches in South Carolina. Letters should not exceed 450 words, and commentary should not exceed 800 words. All submissions are subject to editing as needed to meet standards of grammar and style. We will not publish anonymous letters, letters praising or criticizing businesses by name, endorsements of or letters from political candidates, fundraising language or personal attacks. All submissions will be verified; include your name, phone number and church name with city and hometown. Email oped@advocatesc.org.

Obituaries
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 South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Photographs
Photographs can be submitted to the newspaper for publication. High-resolution digital color images are preferred. Photographs should be in focus and should have proper exposure. People in photographs should be identified with names and ages, and a contact person with a phone number should be included. Email news@advocatesc.org.

Submissions
The *Advocate* encourages readers to submit 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. They appear in the newspaper on a space-available basis. Email news@advocatesc.org.

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Conference projects 73 percent apportionment collection for 2026

By Jessica Brodie

As the countdown begins for year-end apportionment payments, conference financial leaders again hope to bring in roughly three-quarters of their budgeted goal for the year.

Conference Treasurer Beth Westbury said that as of Oct. 19, South Carolina United Methodist churches have paid approximately $5.1 million of the $10.2 million budgeted goal for 2026, or 49.68 percent.

However, she noted this percentage includes the churches in litigation with the South Carolina Conference of the UMC, which lowers that figure.

"The churches that are not in litigation with the conference are doing a great job," Westbury said. "Their collection percentage is up from the same time last year—54.22 percent for 2026 and 51.27 percent for 2025. I am projecting that these churches will pay 80 percent of the apportionments asked of them for 2026."

She said that overall it looks like the conference will reach a 73 percent collection percentage for 2026; this is for all churches, including those in litigation.

Westbury said at this time last year, the overall percentage of apportionments paid was 54.62 percent. However, she noted last year was also heavily influenced by the final payment of apportionments from churches that separated in 2024; in 2025, the conference collected $878,609 from churches that separated in 2024.

Some good news is that 161 churches have already paid 100 percent of their apportionments.

"That is an increase from 157 in 2025," Westbury said.

But there is an increase in the number of churches that have paid zero percent—256 as of Oct. 19, versus 218 in 2025.

"Bishop Fairley has set a goal that no church be in the zero percent column. That is not a burdensome request, and I encourage our churches to do their utmost to make a payment so we do not disappoint our bishop," Westbury said.

So far, the Walterboro District is leading the others at 65.88 percent in percentage collected as of Oct. 19, followed by the Columbia District (58.73 percent) and Marion District (53.34 percent).

The last day to pay apportionments for 2026 is Thursday, Jan. 14, 2027. The payment must be in the treasurer's office by 4 p.m.

Westbury said the postmark is not the deciding factor and the treasurer's office is not responsible for delivery delays regardless of which carrier is used. The treasurer's office can accept wires if necessary. If paying by Vanco, the payment needs to be initiated by 3 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 13.

Generous gift helps Open Hearts connect with community

An anonymous donor gave Open Hearts United Methodist Church in Greenville $110,000 to support its nonprofit partners serving the community. Entrusted with deciding how to distribute the gift, the church saw an opportunity not only to provide financial support but also to build and strengthen community connections.

The donor chose to give anonymously through the church rather than contribute directly to nonprofit organizations, said the Rev. Karen Jones, Open Hearts' lead pastor. That approach allowed the church to nurture and support agencies already serving the homeless, helping the poor and changing lives.

Church leadership spent months praying and deliberating about how best to use the gift rather than making a hasty decision. Leaders then invited nonprofit organizations already working with the church to submit proposals for projects that would make a significant difference in the lives of the people they serve.

By the time leadership was ready to award the funds, interest had increased the gift to $112,000.

The church's S.H.A.R.E. Committee, which coordinates mission opportunities, recommended how to allocate the gift. Open Hearts UMC decided to distribute the funds as follows:

• $13,500 to Pendleton Place to furnish nine units at its Waypoint Shelter for teens or emerging adults experiencing homelessness. The congregation will partner with Pendleton Place to assemble furniture and prepare the rooms.

• $10,500 to Judson Community Partnership to expand mental health counseling services for children in its program. These children have observed poverty and trauma.

• $38,000 to Soteria to add a van to its fleet and help address transportation barriers to reentry. The agency considers a lack of reliable transportation to be one of the most significant barriers to successful reentry for formerly incarcerated individuals by reducing employment opportunities, creating challenges in meeting probation and parole requirements and limiting access to treatment and supportive services. Strategically, Soteria has decided to acquire two gently used vehicles rather than one new van.



Above, the Rev. Karen Jones (far left) leads a special Celebration of Community and Connection at Open Hearts United Methodist Church.



The Rev. Jerry Blassingame, Founder and CEO of Soteria, talks about the great work done by the agency that he leads.



Church members and community partners met for dinner before a special Celebration of Community and Connection.

• $50,000 to United Ministries for its Eden Village Cottage Community project that will provide dignified affordable housing and supportive services for people who have been chronically unhoused. The first phase of the project is anticipated to be completed by 2028.

Open Hearts didn't want this gift to the community to be about checks changing hands. More opportunities for church members to serve with these agencies will be created, and the bonds between the church and its community will only grow stronger.

To deepen those connections beyond service projects, the church decided to celebrate the gift in a special way. Open Hearts brought church members and its four nonprofit partners together for a "Celebration of Community and Connection" on a Tuesday night in early October. Dinner was followed by a worship service that recognized the partners and gave them an opportunity to speak about their work.

"Many agencies in our community are already doing the good work of Jesus Christ," Jones said at the worship service. "We didn't want to create something new. We wanted to work through the agencies already in the community."

The worship service ended with celebration through Communion.

Although Open Hearts United Methodist Church began on July 1, 2023, its story is rooted in a rich history connecting an existing church building with the Greenville community. Located at 2703 Augusta St. in Greenville, the church cultivates a welcoming community to live out Jesus Christ's teachings.

5 Things to Know.

About Joseph B. Bethea UMC, Myrtle Beach

The Advocate *has started a new feature that showcases a different United Methodist church in every district throughout South Carolina with their answers to five questions. This month, get to know Joseph B. Bethea UMC, Myrtle Beach, whose pastor is the Rev. Kim Strong.*



The church has seen a 70 percent membership gain in the last five years.

1. What makes your church unique compared to other churches in your district?

Joseph B. Bethea UMC was, from its very beginning, created to be a truly multiracial church. It was created within a time frame in the Conway/Myrtle beach area when racial tensions were very high over the suspension of a member of the football team, who was African American, who was replaced with the White son of an assistant football coach. The church building itself was originally part of a plantation in Georgetown County. The sanctuary was built by slave in the 1830s and moved from Murrells Inlet to its present spot in 1994.

2. What is one local or outreach effort your church is especially proud of, and what impact has had?

Our church is not only multiracial but is multicultural. We intentionally made it very public through the news that we were a church open to anyone of any race or sexual orientation after the vote for disaffiliation by our denomination.

We have expanded our reach by hosting a once-a-month community food distribution to any in need. We average feeding more than 300 people each month with free food paid for by our church's mission and outreach committees.

3. How does your church serve people who never set foot in your church?

We contributed to the local Socastee food bank until its closing and now we attempt to fill that void in our community. We provided free school supplies to local classrooms and also at our August food distribution. We provide space for a Hispanic faith group to worship and pray.

We allow a group of dentists to provide free dental car to the Hispanic neighbors who do not attend our church but are being blessed by it. This is our third year of doing so.

We provide meeting space for a group of parents who have lost a child to death for a time of healing and support. None of these folks attend our church, but they live among us in our communities.

After a grant from the District Congregational Development committee, we installed video screens and started recording our worship services and placing them on our Facebook page. An average of 120 people watch this service online at some time during the week, including out-of-state church members and those too ill to attend.

4. What is the biggest challenge facing your congregation right now and how are you addressing it?

Our church has enjoyed a membership gain in the last five years of close to 70 percent. Our challenges currently do not seem huge! We have incorporated our new members into the church and had our first Christmas play in decades last year and started a church choir for the first time in years this year.

We have an active youth program that meets two Sundays a month and provides a new life to our aging congregation. They are active in our food distribution program and helped provide needed school supplies to the teachers and classrooms in our schools.

Our biggest challenge is making better use of our lay speakers in our congregation and using their talents and gifts to improve our outreach.

5. What is one dream or goal your church has for the next five years?

We would like to have better outreach in the community around our church. In a large community across from our church, we only have one person who attends. We have plans to reach out to them better through our food distribution, youth and community programs.

The goal of our church is to do more, reach more and love more in the next five years and let everyone know they are truly welcomed.

—Submitted by the Rev. Kim Strong

Hospital Bethesda expands

The extension of Hospital Bethesda in Guatemala is in full swing. Founded by South Carolina elder Dr. Luke Rhyee and supported by the South Carolina Conference of the UMC, Hospital Bethesda is part of Healing Guatemala. Rhyee said crews have completed the excavation work and are now focusing on constructing the footings and assembling rebar column structures. Because of the scale of the project, they have had to dig deep for the foundations and build numerous rebar column structures. The total budget for the expansion is $2 million. For information on how to help their work, email rhyeemt@gmail.com; write Healing Guatemala, P.O. Box 1835, Duluth, GA 30096; or visit https://healingguatemala.org. To help with the effort, visit https://gofund.me/9d960d8aa.



Need-to-Know Roundup.

Six key takeaways from this month's Advocate

- Union UMC Shred Day feeds the hungry, reaches the hurting (Page 8)
- UMVIM celebrates 50 years of mission (Page 8)
- Weekend of events rallies support for Africa University (Page 9)
- Mount Sinai serves as film site for student-led movie (Page 14)
- Joseph B. Bethea starts food ministry in Carolina Forest (Page 15)
- Eight churches selected for Cohort 3 of Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer Initiative (Page 18)

National Messy Church Conference coming to Greenville in April

By Dr. Johannah Myers

In April, Messy Church leaders from across the country will gather in Greenville for the 2027 Messy Church USA National Conference.

For South Carolina United Methodists, this is an opportunity close to home; Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Greenville, will host the gathering April 15-17.

The conference theme, "Come Together in the Mess," speaks to a need many churches recognize. Families and communities are navigating busy schedules, isolation, uncertainty and change. We live in a world that is increasingly messy—and not in a good way. People long for places where they can belong, ask questions, build relationships and explore faith.

If you have never experienced Messy Church, picture people of different ages gathering around tables to create and explore a Bible story. They worship together, share a meal and get to know one another. Its five values—hospitality, creativity, celebration, all ages together and being Christ-centered—shape a way of being church in which everyone has something to offer.

Aldersgate has been home to a Messy Church for years; it's one of the longest running Messy Churches in the country. Hosting the national conference gives us the chance to welcome others into a ministry that has shaped us and to learn from the ways churches in different settings are living out those same values.

It also puts South Carolina on the map as a place where churches are asking thoughtful questions about how we form disciples and build community across generations.

The conference is for people already leading Messy Church who need fresh ideas and encouragement. It is also for churches considering whether Messy Church might serve their communities. And it is for anyone interested in intergenerational ministry, even if starting a Messy Church is not on their agenda. Participants will have opportunities to worship, learn through workshops and connect with people who understand the work's joys and the challenges.

I hope churches across our conference will consider sending a pastor, staff member or team of lay leaders. If attending is not possible, I invite you to join us in another way: Pray for Aldersgate as we prepare, for the volunteers and presenters, for the congregations making the trip and for the relationships and ideas coming.

It is a gift to host this national gathering here in South Carolina.

Learn more and register at https://messychurchusa.org/come-together-in-the-mess-registration.

Myers is executive director of Messy Church USA and director of discipleship at Aldersgate.

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Perspectives.



Editorial
by Jessica Brodie

Why the Advocate is going free

Many of us have grown used to free news online, and I'm no exception. When I was a child, my family had subscriptions to the newspaper and cable TV. But today I read most of my news online, I pay for an inexpensive streaming service instead of cable, and I read most of my books on my Kindle, made far more affordable thanks to an unlimited subscription plan. I'll pay for news when necessary, but I'm reluctant to do so when I can get most of my news without charge. Call me frugal, but I'm being honest here.

I imagine many of the *Advocate's* readers agree. I think people are reluctant to pay for news when, as a society, we have become accustomed to letting advertising finance the news we read. I'd rather encounter a small ad on a webpage or app than have to shell out money unnecessarily, especially with three kids in college.

When I first took the helm of the *Advocate* 16 years ago, I learned only a small percentage of all United Methodists knew about the *Advocate*, let alone read it. Yet those who do read the *Advocate* consider it "essential news." They want more people to know about it.

I began to cultivate what felt then like a distant dream—maybe one day the *Advocate* could figure out a way to make our news free so that everyone could have access to it.

This fall, that distant dream is becoming reality. Now everything the *Advocate* produces, except for our print edition and our books, is free. That means no paywalls and no barriers to receiving important information about the churches and ministries we care about within our connection.

I have long sensed that if we start really treating the *Advocate* like the nonprofit ministry it is, and let donations and advertising help fund our mission instead of making people pay for a subscription, people would be far more interested in what we have to offer.

This is a major leap of faith for us. You might not know that the *Advocate* receives only a small share of its funding from the annual conference—less than one-sixth of our operating budget. The rest comes from subscriptions, advertising, donations and book sales. We have a trust fund that, thanks to some good investing, had grown to a large sum, and we've been relying on that during these times of financial leanness, yet even that is dwindling.

And now, most of our subscription income is going away.

Instead of hunkering down and clutching what we have left, we've decided to open our hands to the Lord, to pray and see where he is leading us.

And he's led us to this bold and generous faith move. It's a stretch, and it's a little scary, but I believe it is a risk worth taking.

If you enjoy digital news, check out the wealth of articles, photos and videos available on our website, AdvocateSC.org. Download our free app, which is available on the App Store and Google Play. Sign up for our free e-newsletter so you get an email whenever our new edition is out and whenever we publish new stories or have other updates.

If you don't like digital content, don't worry—print is not going away. We're going to have to charge a little more for it because printing and postage costs are going up, but it will remain.

We hope you will help spread the word that all of our news content is now free online. Tell your church friends. Speak up during announcements at worship. Follow us on social media and share some of our content. Help people know about our ministry as we work so very hard to keep telling the stories that inspire, inform and connect us.

Informed United Methodists are stronger United Methodists.

Consider, too, some of the benefits of reading our content. Many people attest that they get ideas about new ministries by reading about other ministries going on in our state.

On Page 1 of this edition, we're running a story about a man who—after reading an *Advocate* article about significant repairs needed at Killingsworth Home—felt compelled to ask his church to fund the endeavor. Those repairs are now complete.

A couple of months ago, we ran a story about how a church member in Rock Hill read in the *Advocate* about pillowcase dresses that another church in the Midlands was giving away, and the two churches connected in mission, all thanks to the *Advocate* ministry of spreading awareness.

We plan to do this as long as the Lord allows.

We celebrate 190 years of ministry next year, and we pray we can continue for another 190 years.

Please pray for us, and tell others about us. And if the *Advocate* matters to you, please consider a gift at AdvocateSC.org/donate.

In Matthew 5:15, Jesus makes the point that people don't "light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house" (NIV).

Here's to putting the *Advocate's* lamp on its stand and making the news visible to everyone.



Bishop's Column
by Bishop Leonard Fairley

The heart of the matter

Have you ever wondered why the heart is most often said to be the center of emotions? Jesus reminds us that loving God and neighbor with our whole heart is central to the greatest commandment. He reminds not to let our hearts be troubled. There are countless Scriptures about the heart.

Why all this attention to the heart?

The heart is the place where beauty lives if we allow it. The heart is always reminding us who and whose we are.

Now, I am sure someone out there will remind me that the heart does not actually feel emotion; it is simply the organ that pumps blood throughout the body.

But I will never forget what I felt in my heart when I had to lean over Priscilla's bed while she lay dying and speak the hardest words I've ever had to say: "Honey, it's okay to let go." I was heartbroken to the point to where I felt intense physical pain in my heart.

I also remember what my heart felt when Dawn came into my life. It was a joy that I hadn't felt in a long time; my heart was rejoicing.

I love John O'Donohue's understanding of the heart in his book, "To Bless the Space Between Us." He reminds us, "The state of one's heart inevitably shapes one's life; it is ultimately the place where everything is decided."

O'Donohue goes on to describe the heart of the matter. His understanding had such a profound effect on me that I now quote it in full for your consideration:

A courageous heart will go forth and engage with life despite confusion and fear.

A fearful heart will be hesitant and will tend to hold back.

A heavy heart will make for a gloomy, unlived life.

A compassionate heart need never carry the burden of judgment.

A forgiving heart knows the art of liberation.

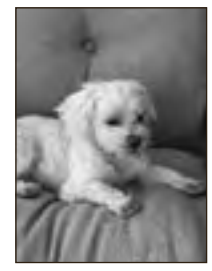
A loving heart awakens the spirit of possibility and engagement with others.

This my friends, is the heart of the matter. What if we treated our heart as it were God's sanctuary?

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."—Matthew 5:8

Precious Pet of the Month.

Jack Frost Gamble


Jack Frost Gamble

Hello everyone, my name is Jack Frost Gamble, a name so majestic that even I don't ask how my person came up with it. I simply accept it as further proof of my natural star power.

I am, of course, a certified cuddle professional and expert in the field of attention acquisition. My person is the Rev. Sharon Spann Gamble, who does her best to keep up with my demanding schedule. She's wonderful, even though she occasionally forgets that my mealtimes are a top priority and sacred event. I try to be patient, but I guess sermons don't write themselves.

The household—two-legged and four-legged—adore me, and who could blame them? My charm, fluff and ability to look into your soul until you give me treats is simply the natural response.

—Submitted by the Rev. Sharon Spann Gamble

Do you have a pet who is near and dear to your heart? Share a photo and brief story about your pet and what they mean to you in the Advocate*, and be sure to include your name and church name with city. Whether your animal friend is furry or has feathers or scales, we welcome your submission. Email news@advocatesc.org.*

Corrections.

In the article "44 Days in Kyiv" by the Rev. Daniel Flessas (October *Advocate*), the caption showing the little flags should have identified the scene as a memorial to fallen Ukrainian soldiers in Independence Square in Kyiv. Also, Flessas was in Kyiv Aug. 19-Oct. 1, which is 44 days. He arrived back in Charleston on Oct. 4.

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

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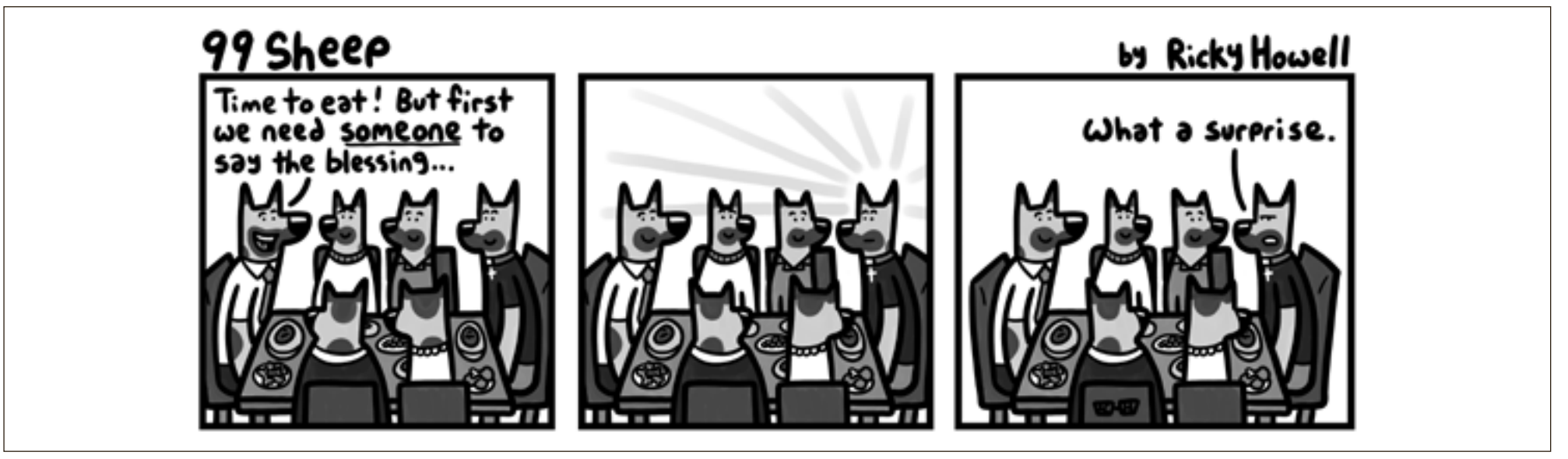
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Perspectives.





Commentary
by Dr. Anthony Hodge

Local pastors, you matter more than you know

As long as I can remember, local pastors have made a lasting impression on my life. From the local pastors who served my home church, to colleagues whom I served alongside as a student local pastor in North Georgia, to local pastors whom I have served with in our annual conference, to the ones I have encountered through local pastor's school, I continue to be impressed by the ministry local pastors provide local churches.

I've even experienced solid leadership from local pastors throughout my time as a district superintendent and as an instructor for Emory University's Course of Studies program over the years.

Unfortunately, for a number of reasons, colleagues serving faithfully throughout the annual conference as local pastors still feel underappreciated and less valued. Why do some local pastors feel underappreciated and less valued? Aren't local pastors touching lives just like full elders and full deacons? Don't local pastors provide solid pastoral care and counseling to the churches and parishioners they are appointed to serve?

Anyone with any knowledge of what local pastors do with their parishioners within the communities they are appointed to serve clearly realize that local pastors make valuable contributions in the lives of many individuals.

The Rev. Norman Ransom and the Rev. Buford Robertson, the last two pastoral leaders who served my home church (Fisher Chapel) prior to joining the military provided meaningful leadership to our church family and in the surrounding communities around the church. Additionally, the Rev. John Sellers, another local pastor, was a mentor of mine who left a positive mark throughout our annual conference as he served various local churches and communities.

So as clergy are being appreciated this month and beyond, I ask that anyone who is being served by a local pastor take some time to let him or her know that you see, acknowledge and appreciate all they have done, are doing and will do for God and others as they continue embracing their call to serve God and others as pastoral leaders.

Full elders and full deacons, whenever possible, let's reach out to our local pastor colleagues and let them know we value and appreciate their service to God and others.

Laypersons being served by local pastors, continue letting your pastoral leader know how much you cherish the work that they have done, are doing and will do for your church and community.

Bishop Leonard Fairley and members of the Appointive Cabinet all affirm that local pastors throughout our annual conference in each district matter to us in significant ways.

Local pastors, we thank God for each of you and want you to know that we see you, value you and are proud to call you colleagues.

Hodge is the Rock Hill District superintendent.

Letters to the Editor.

Loving children

My grandmother lost three children in the late 1800s to diseases because there was no medical treatment. Thankfully, medical science has progressed and saved many, many children lives.

Politics has no business in deciding vaccinations. The new White House policy will make children less safe. "Parents should listen to their child's pediatrician about vaccines rather than listening to an inaccurate executive order," said U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy, a physician. "This is so wrong."

"Nothing bad can happen from what we are doing," said President Trump.

But critics disagreed.

This administration seems to have no compassion for children. Funds have been cut hurting children in health, education and world food and medical needs. Thousands have died because of cutting USAID funds.

"None of it is based in science," said Peter J. Hotez, a vaccine pediatrician and scientist at Texas Medical Center.

Jesus loved the sick and well children. Taking a child in his arms, Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes one of these children in my name welcomes me" (Mark 9:37). He took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them (Mark 10:16).

Why can't we love children as Christ tells us to do? Vaccinations are gifts of grace.

Pray for healing.

Rev. John Culp, retired
West Columbia

A poem: About Heaven

Above the kindness of the sky
A perfect love is true
"All is calm and all is bright"
Here awaiting you.

Heaven promises release
From worldly sadness, too.
For God his children he receives
Into freedom's dew.

As our burdens we lay down
Our battle ends in grace
We'll see the love of Jesus' crown
The glory of his beautiful face.

And so that ends my words for you
Our battle ends in grace
We'll see the love in Jesus' crown
The glory of his beautiful face.

And so that ends my words for you
The rest will yet be known
Believe with every ounce of faith
The peace of Heaven's home.

Dr. Linda Hodgin, member
Ashland UMC, Columbia

Necessary questions

After reading the latest update in the ongoing litigation saga between the conference and the many "bolt-and-run" churches, I found myself prayerfully asking these questions:

Have we let our denominational authority and interests become more important than faithfully responding to Jesus' command to love and the Gospel we proclaim?

Are we guilty of waving a prideful banner of our faithfulness to serve God while neglecting the humility to ask, "Is our service producing the justice, mercy and faithfulness God desires of us?"

Have we allowed spiritual pridefulness to convince us that our opposition to another brother or sister is proof of our faithfulness to God?

Are we building up or tearing down the Kingdom of God by our actions?

Are we protecting the holiness of the church or protecting our own place within it?

These are not easy questions. But I believe they are necessary questions.

My prayer: Lord Jesus, keep revealing the places in my heart that still resist your love. Give me courage to acknowledge my failures without despair, humility to receive correction without defensiveness and grace to love others as you have loved me. Where my faith is weak, teach me to trust you. Where I have wounded others, lead me toward repentance and, wherever possible, reconciliation. Let me never forget that I stand here today, and will stand in eternity, by your grace alone. Amen.

Rev. Merritt Wentz II
Union Charge, Union



Commentary
by Bryce Williams

Checking on you

When was the last time you checked on you? Not your children, not your spouse, not your parents, not your job and not everybody else who depends on you. I'm talking about you.

We live in a world where everybody has somewhere to be, something to do and somebody depending on them. We're constantly moving, working, worrying and trying to make sure everything and everybody is taken care of.

But somewhere in the middle of all that, we forget about ourselves. We ask everybody else how they're doing, but how often do we stop and ask ourselves that same question?

The truth is, we have gotten so comfortable with being busy that we've started treating our own health like something that can wait. We put off doctor's appointments, ignore warning signs, push through exhaustion and convince ourselves we'll deal with it later.

But here's my question: What happens when later becomes too late?

Don't wait until something goes wrong

Taking care of our health should not begin when something goes wrong.

You don't have to feel sick to visit the doctor. You don't have to experience a health scare to start paying attention to your body. And you certainly don't have to wait until you're completely overwhelmed to acknowledge you need a break.

Regular checkups, recommended health screenings and conversations with health-care professionals can help identify certain health concerns early, sometimes before symptoms appear.

Whether it's checking your blood pressure, discussing diabetes screening, reviewing your family medical history or finding out which cancer screenings are recommended for your age and risk factors, these conversations matter.

Not every screening is necessary for everybody, but knowing which ones are right for you is a good place to start.

And please, don't ignore something unusual simply because you're afraid of what you might find out. Getting answers gives you an opportunity to understand what's happening and what steps may be needed.

Your health deserves attention before it becomes an emergency.

Your mind needs care, too

While we're talking about health, let's not forget about our mental and emotional well-being.

Some people are walking around carrying responsibilities, worries, grief and stress that nobody knows anything about. They're smiling in public, encouraging everybody else and making sure everything gets done while quietly feeling exhausted themselves.

And sometimes, the people who seem the strongest are the very ones who need somebody to check on them.

We have to stop treating rest like it's something we have to earn. Taking a break doesn't mean you're weak. Asking for help doesn't mean you've failed. And acknowledging that you're overwhelmed doesn't mean you lack faith.

Even Jesus understood the importance of stepping away from the crowd.

In Mark 6:31, Jesus told his disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while" (KJV).

Think about that. Even in the middle of doing important work, there was still a need for rest.

If rest mattered then, why do we act like it doesn't matter now?

Taking care of yourself is not selfish

I especially want to speak to the parents, grandparents, pastors, caregivers, teachers, community leaders and everybody who spends their days taking care of other people.

You matter, too.

Your responsibilities may be important, but so is your health. The people who depend on you need you, but that doesn't mean you should neglect yourself trying to meet everybody else's needs.

In 3 John 1:2, we read, "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

That Scripture reminds me our well-being matters. And while faith is important, we should never confuse having faith with refusing to seek medical attention or professional help when we need it.

Pray, absolutely. But also make the appointment. Speak with your doctor. Take your medication as prescribed. Talk to somebody when life becomes overwhelming. And when you need to rest, rest.

There is nothing wrong with taking your health seriously.

Don't wait until it's too late

We never know what tomorrow may bring. That's why it's so important to take advantage of the opportunities we have today to care for ourselves.

Maybe you've been putting off an appointment. Maybe you've been ignoring your stress. Maybe you've been so focused on taking care of everybody else that you haven't taken a moment to check on yourself.

Whatever it may be, I want to encourage you to do something about it.

Make the phone call. Schedule the checkup. Ask about the screenings you need. Take that day to rest. Have that conversation. And remember that your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being all deserve care.

Because here's something I want you to remember: You cannot keep pouring into everybody else while ignoring the very person doing the pouring. We spend so much time trying to fill everybody else's cup that we forget about the pitcher we're pouring from. And the truth is, pitchers run dry, too.

So before you go checking on everybody else, I want you to stop for a moment and ask yourself one simple question: When was the last time I checked on me?

Don't wait until it's too late.

Williams' home church is Camden First UMC, Camden. He currently attends the Williston Charge, where his mother serves as pastor.



Author shares about book with veterans

The Rev. William Evans, author of "Meaningful Moments" from the Advocate Press, spoke to a group of National Guard veterans he served with as a military chaplain. Evans served in the United States Air Force/Air National Guard as a chaplain from 1984 until retiring from the South Carolina Air National Guard as a brigadier general in 2010. Evans shared stories from his book and also signed copies of the book. For 20 years, Evans served as a pastor with The United Methodist Church in North Carolina and South Carolina. He also served as a hospital chaplain and a pastoral counselor. To get his book, go to https://store.advocatesc.org/product/meaningful-moments.

Humanity Behind Bars
by the Rev. Nichole Middleton

What are we stewarding?

I used to hate the offering.

Before I was appointed to serve beyond the local church, the offering was probably the part of worship I wrestled with most. I believed in giving. I understood it as a responsibility and an expression of faith. But I did not like asking people for money.

I still think about that sometimes.

Today, I serve in a ministry context where we do not pass collection plates. Yet stewardship is very much a part of our conversations.

Because stewardship has never been only about money.

It is about what we do with what God has placed in our hands.

Our time. Our gifts. Our relationships. Our resources. Our influence. Our opportunities. Even the season of life in which we find ourselves.

I have been teaching my parishioners that we should practice today who we want to be tomorrow.

That is stewardship. It is also discipleship.

Henri Nouwen, in "A Spirituality of Fundraising," helped me think differently about the relationship between fundraising and faith. He describes fundraising as an invitation—not simply an appeal for money, but an invitation to participate in something that matters.

I think the church has sometimes forgotten the invitation.

As clergy, we invite people into discipleship. We invite them to participate in the work God is doing in the world. And with that invitation comes a responsibility to steward what God has entrusted to us.

So perhaps the stewardship question is bigger than, "How much did we give?" Perhaps we should also ask: What did we do with what we were given? Did we steward our relationships well? Did we invest in people? Did we listen when our neighbors told us what they needed? Did our resources follow the things we said mattered? Did our ministries make room for people who were not already at the table? Did we have the courage to release something that no longer served the purpose for which it was created?

Those questions can be uncomfortable. They should be.

Because a church's stewardship is revealed not only in its budget but in its practices.

We can say that young people matter, but what does our investment tell them? We can say that people returning from incarceration matter, but what happens after the annual donation or outreach event? We can say that our community matters, but have we allowed the community to shape how we serve?

Our practices eventually tell the truth about what we value. Stewardship, then, is not simply about having enough. It is about being faithful with what we have.

Sometimes that means giving more. Sometimes it means listening more carefully. Sometimes it means redirecting resources. Sometimes it means partnering with someone who can do what we cannot. And sometimes it means having the courage to stop doing something simply because we have always done it.

The question is not only, "What can we afford?" It is also, "What are we called to steward?"

Because what we practice today is shaping who we will become tomorrow.

And perhaps faithful stewardship begins when we are willing to look honestly at what is in our hands—and ask God what we are supposed to do with it.

Middleton is an elder in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, endorsed by the United Methodist Endorsing Agency for prison ministry. She serves as a chaplain in the federal prison system.



Commentary
by Sandy Thrasher

Voting for all my neighbors

Frustration and fear. Gratitude and love. Lately, I find myself holding all four at the same time.

Everything is expensive. Gas, groceries, housing, utilities. I can complain about putting gas in my car—or right now, my rental car—but then I remember to be grateful that I can put gas in it. Not everyone can.

There are people working full time, showing up every day, doing everything they can. Yet they're still struggling to pay rent, buy groceries, keep the lights on, much less pay for a car and gas.

And I know some of those people. Being a member of South Main Chapel and Mercy Center in Anderson has changed the way I see my neighbors. Honestly, it surprised me at first. Being part of a church that so intentionally puts the teachings of Jesus into action has been one of life's greatest surprises and blessings.

On Sundays, we worship together and then we eat lunch together. Some of the folks sitting around those tables have homes. Some don't. Some are struggling with things I understand, and others are walking roads I have never traveled. But we sit together. We eat together. We laugh together. We love each other.

Somewhere along the way, words like "homeless" and "vulnerable population" started being replaced in my heart by names, faces, stories and friends. Jesus tells us to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. He doesn't give us a list of which neighbors qualify.

As I think about the upcoming midterm elections, I keep coming back to that. I don't believe my faith gives me a neat little checklist telling me how everyone else should vote. But I do believe my faith should affect how I approach my own vote. Am I thinking only about myself? Or am I remembering the person working full time who still can't afford rent? The person sleeping outside when temperatures drop? The child going to bed hungry or wondering where they'll sleep tonight?

These are not political talking points. They are our neighbors

So this election season, I'm challenging myself, and maybe you'll join me, to look beyond party labels, campaign slogans and political arguments and remember the people Jesus told us to love.

Before we vote, let's pray. Let's listen. Let's learn. Let's look around our communities and really see the people who are struggling. Let's ask ourselves not only, "What is best for me?" but also, "What is best for my neighbor?" Then let's carry that love with us to the voting booth.

Loving our neighbors is actionable; it can't be reduced to just words on Sunday mornings. It should shape the way we live, the way we serve, the way we speak to one another and, yes, the way we vote.

Vote thoughtfully. Vote prayerfully. Vote with grace.

And whatever choices we make, may we never forget who Jesus called us to love. Our neighbors. All of them.

Thrasher is the co-lay leader for the Anderson District.



Commentary
by Anna S. Bright

From pain to praise

What do you sing when the medicine costs more than you can pay, the refrigerator is nearly empty and another young life has been lost to despair? What do you sing when a paycheck disappears, gas and groceries devour what remains and the evening news brings a war many believe was unprovoked?

Many of us are weary. We watch national leaders push past the limits of their authority. We see neighbors walk away from church because they have seen too much judgment and too little help. How can praise rise from a country in pain?

First, we must tell God the truth. Pain does not become praise because we pretend everything is fine. Psalm 34:18 says, "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit" (ESV). Bring him the unpaid bill, the frightening diagnosis, the anger about injustice and the name of the child whose future feels fragile. God can receive a "trembling" prayer. He meets us in the place where our strength runs out. Hallelujah!

Second, the church must make its praise visible. Romans 12:15 calls us to "rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." That means sitting with the grieving, checking on a struggling teenager, helping a neighbor obtain food or medicine and standing up for fair and accountable leadership. A church that sings about God's provision while ignoring an empty cupboard has missed the melody. Our worship must leave the sanctuary with us. It must reach the family choosing between insulin and rent and the worker who no longer knows how to make ends meet.

Finally, we praise God before the circumstances change because our hope rests in his faithfulness, not in the headlines. Habakkuk saw fields fail and flocks disappear but declared, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:18). His praise did not deny hunger; it defied the claim that hunger had the final word. Paul and Silas prayed and sang in prison at midnight (Acts 16:25). Their chains were real, but so was the God who heard them.

From pain to praise is not a command to smile through suffering. It is a decision to lament honestly, love our neighbors courageously, seek justice faithfully and trust God wholeheartedly. We may not recover the ease we once knew; however, we can become a people whose praise carries medicine, meals, mercy and truth into wounded places. The Lord is still near; his people must be near, too.

So here is the hard question: If our neighbors can hear our songs but cannot see our love, who are we really praising?

Bright is a member of Isaiah United Methodist Church, Walterboro.

Abram releases his third book

The Rev. Joseph Abram Jr. has released his third book, "Makin' It Plain: God's Word For the Average Joe."

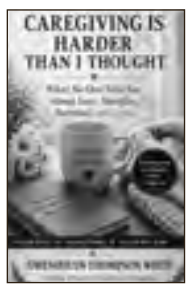
The book brings faith, wisdom, humor and honest reflection together in a powerful collection designed for everyday people. Abram takes biblical truth beyond the pulpit and places it in the middle of real-life struggles, relationship, choices and challenges. With plain-spoken insight and heartfelt conviction, he challenges readers to examine how they live, speak, love and walk with God.

From falling and getting back up to finding purpose, overcoming doubt and keeping the fire of faith alive, these pages offer encouragement for the journey. "Makin' It Plain" reminds readers that we may stumble, struggle and sometimes lose our way, but God never stops calling our name.

The book features a foreword by the Rev. A. Mel Arant Jr., secretary of the South Carolina Conference.

Books can be obtained through the author or from Amazon and other online retailers.

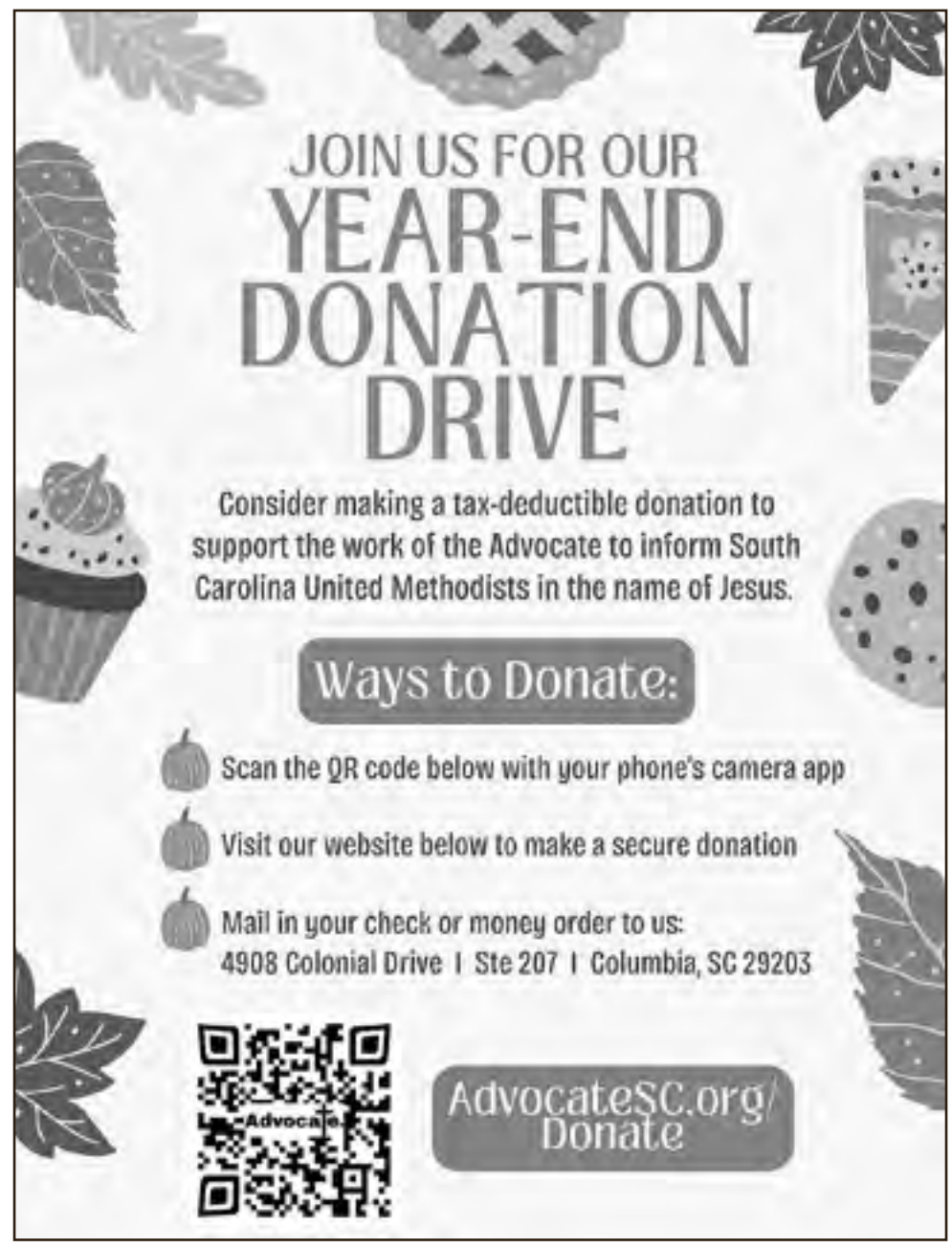
White releases book on caregiving



SUMTER—United Methodist pastor the Rev. Gwen White has released her latest book, "Caregiving Is Harder Than I Thought: What No One Tells You about Love, Sacrifice, Survival, and Grace," now available on Amazon.

White, also a caregiver advocate and founder of AOE Consulting, said the book grew out of journal entries she wrote during her own caregiving experience—late-night reflections, quiet prayers and lessons she didn't know she was learning until she looked back and saw them on the page. The book releases alongside a 90-day companion journal designed to help caregivers process their own journeys. With daily prompts and reflections, the journal gives caregivers space to name what they're carrying. She has also started a family caregiver support group.

White pastors Shepherd United Methodist Church in Sumter.



UMVIM–South Carolina marks 50 years of mission

By Jessica Brodie

COLUMBIA—A roomful supporters packed the fellowship hall at Grace United Methodist Church Oct. 6 to celebrate half a century of hands-on help through United Methodist Volunteers in Mission.

The anniversary celebration featured a meal and a program highlighting the many missions and ministries of UMVIM around the world—including words from one of UMVIM's co-founders, the Rev. George Strait.

Strait, 93, recalled how UMVIM started through the dedicated and visionary efforts of the late Bamberg physician Dr. Mike Watson along with a group of committed South Carolina United Methodists, including Strait. It eventually became a jurisdictional ministry, and today, UMVIM is a denomination-wide sending ministry that has deployed half a million volunteers on short-term mission trips around the world. It offers disaster relief, construction mission work and community care, including medical and dental clinics, teaching and youth programs through the efforts of laypeople and clergy locally, nationally and globally.

At the celebration, Strait shared how he and Watson met and became friends 70 years ago, and Watson's passion to help people through missions was contagious.

"He helped people connect and use their God-given talents to serve," Strait said, noting the ministry built slowly, one conversation at a time.

He said he and Watson agreed that when it comes to laity, "there's more we can do than just water the flowers at church."

"Now here we are at the 50th anniversary, and I thank God for how he's blessed us, provided for us and provided leadership for us," Strait said. "God is ready for us. All we have to do is say 'Here Am I, Lord.'"



Cal and Caroline Watson, son and daughter of the late UMVIM founder Dr. Mike Watson, share how happy their father would have been to see UMVIM turn 50. See more photos at https://go.advocatesc.org/umvim50.

Watson's son Cal Watson and daughter Caroline Watson shared about their late father and how his commitment to service impacted their family and community.

"I don't think there was ever a time when service wasn't part of our household," Cal Watson said, also lifting up the efforts of their mother, Mary Carolyn, who was equally as dedicated. "It was a part of who we were, a foundation of our whole childhood."

Caroline Watson said her father strongly believed a healthy church is one that actively involves its lay members in ministry, and she agrees.

"Think how pleased Daddy and Mama would be to see UMVIM at 50," she said.

Several stood to share how UMVIM helped bring about other thriving ministries, including Salkehatchie, the Disaster Response/Early Response Team and the Eye Clinic of Haiti.

The latter was founded by the late Dr. Hal Crosswell, who passed away this summer. His son, Holland Crosswell, spoke at the celebration about how much the eye clinic meant to his father and their whole family.

"He went to Haiti to help people see," Crosswell said. "What he didn't realize was how much Haiti would open his own eyes."

UMVIM-Southeastern Jurisdiction Executive Director the Rev. Matt Lacey offered greetings and deep appreciation by video, sharing that South Carolina's enthusiasm for mission is "unmatched."

Lacey said mission is a powerful tool with the opportunity to bring the church together as love in action.

"Thank you, South Carolina, for your hard work and dedication," Lacey added. "South Carolina is one of the strongest parts of the UMVIM family."

For more on UMVIM-South Carolina, visit https://www.umcsc.org/outreach-2/volunteers-in-mission.

UMVIM-SEJ to mark 50th anniversary with Giving Tuesday campaign

This year, UMVIM-Southeastern Jurisdiction is hoping to raise $40,000 in the 50 days leading up to Giving Tuesday, set for Dec. 1.

If they reach their goal, said UMVIM-SEJ Executive Director Matt Lacey, a group of anonymous donors has committed to adding on $10,000 to bring the total to $50,000.

Proceeds support UMVIM programming and ministry, not administrative costs.

As a part of the anniversary, donors who give $50 or more will receive a limited edition T-shirt with a "Heart Strangely Warmed" graphic.

Learn more at https://umvim.org/tuesday.

Lay-led Bible study blesses Mechanicsville UMC

Lay Servants at Mechanicsville UMC, Bishopville, offered faithful service and dedication in teaching United Women in Faith Bible study classes recently. They have been doing this since 2022. "Thank you for sharing your knowledge, strengthening our faith, and helping our church grow in God's Word," said Ruth McCants, the church's United Women in Faith Bible Study Founder. Pictured from left are Mechanicsville UMC Lay Servants, the Rev. Angela Nesbitt Hampton, Women in Faith Bible Study teacher and Lay Servant Edward McMillian.

Photos by Terrence McCants and Ruth McCants







Union UMC Shred Day feeds the hungry, reaches the hurting

IRMO—On Tuesday, Sept 15, the Chapel Sunday School Class of Union United Methodist Church hosted a paper shredding event for the community.

The event was advertised in the church bulletin as well as on social media sites for a few weeks prior. The class shared that shredding would be free in exchange for canned goods for the local food pantry, Sharing God's Love.

The event was scheduled to begin at 11 a.m.; however, cars were lined up beginning at 10:15. The shredding company, Shred360, brought trucks early, and the onsite shredding began at 10:45. Class members directed traffic, welcomed the contributors and collected food from donors.

Drivers were allowed to have three containers of paper shredded at no cost, and they did not even have to get out of their car.

At 1 p.m., traffic slowed and the event was over. Union collected 10,900 pounds of paper from 243 cars.

In addition, Union collected three pickup truck loads of food for Sharing God's Love as well as $500 in cash from people who donated money in addition to or instead of canned goods.

When the food was delivered, the employees at Sharing God's Love called the church "a God-send," as some of their shelves were bare. The Irmo community stepped up in so many ways that day.

The day wasn't just about shredding paper.



Cars were lined up beginning at 10:15 for the free event.

Volunteers said several things happened that made them feel the presence of God working through the class members and through the church.

First, a Hispanic lady who spoke no English drove through the line that was for shredding. Her young son translated and told class member, Kaye Gillian, that they thought this was a food distribution, not a food collection. Gillian told the boy they should call the church for help, or they could contact Sharing God's Love. But it bothered her that she couldn't do more, so she asked another class member, Church Administrator Susan Vinson, if there was anything more the church could do to help the family. Gillian directed the family around the corner of the building to the church Blessing Box, where they could get all the food that they needed. The family was very grateful for the help.

Second, a woman drove up, got out of her car and started crying. She said she needed help. She shared that her husband had committed suicide back in April and she had a bunch of papers and things to shred. All her friends had come to help her through the funeral, but now everyone was gone and she was all alone. She saw the ad for the shred event and looked up the address and saw it was a church. She continued to search the website and saw Union offered Griefshare, so she came not only to shred but to find help for her grief and suffering.

The church administrator took her into the church office, talked with her and shared information about Griefshare and also about the Stephen Ministry program, also offered through the church. The woman was not a member of Union; however, she was invited to Griefshare which happened to occur that very night. Pastor Faye Jones was summoned out of a meeting to come and talk with the lady, and she, too, invited her to Griefshare.

The lady returned that night and is hopefully getting some help she desperately needed.

All of this happened and so much more because of a shredding event offered to the community at no charge.



"It is a celebration," proclaims James Salley, president and CEO.



Bishop Leonard Fairley preaches on the power of connection



Hartsville DS Telley Gadson accepts the Drum Award on behalf of her late mother, missionary Linda Dingle Gadson.



Orangeburg DS Ken Nelson welcomes the crowd to the dinner.

Orangeburg weekend rallies support for Africa University

By Jessica Brodie

ORANGEBURG—Supporters of Africa University headed to Orangeburg for a weekend that featured an invitation-only dinner Friday, a board meeting Saturday and a Sunday worship service involving more than 15 churches, all culminating in a golf tournament Monday, Sept. 28.

All raised much-needed funds for the United Methodist-related institution and drew participation from at least four United Methodist bishops, including South Carolina Resident Bishop Leonard Fairley.

In 1992, the United Methodist Church opened Africa University, in Mutare, Zimbabwe, as its first pan-African, private, UMC-related institution of higher learning. South Carolina has been one of the university's key supporters from the beginning, and to further support AU, lay leaders in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church established the annual golf tournament 13 years ago.

James Salley, president and CEO of Africa University (Tennessee) Inc., is a South Carolina native whose home church is Edisto Fork UMC, Orangeburg, and Edisto Fork hosted most of the AU weekend's events.

"I'm amazed at how God continues to bless us," Salley said about the weekend. "It was wonderful."



Photos by Jessica and Matt Brodie

A golfer lines up a shot at Orangeburg Country Club.



A large crowd of supporters turned out for the Legacy Dinner.



The Rev. Regina Moore talks about SpiritShore, one of the AU event sponsors.

Legacy dinner honors supporters

Friday kicked off the weekend with the 23rd annual Richard E. "Dick" Reeves Legacy Society Recognition Dinner, held Sept. 25 at Edisto Fork UMC.

"It is a celebration," Salley proclaimed, noting attendees came from around the world—North America, Africa and Europe.

Dr. Peter Mageto, AU vice chancellor, brought greetings from what he called "God's project that is known as Africa University," an institution that he said is transforming lives.

Former South Carolina Bishop L. Jonathan Holston said those in attendance represent a powerful and shared commitment. He said Africa University was built for God's purpose and is "a divine instrument designed to bring forth hope."

Bishop Minerva Carcaño and Bishop Marcus Matthews also spoke.

The evening celebrated 2026 honorees inducted into the Dick Reeves Legacy Society: Pastor DeBorah F. Barnwell, Bishop Leonard E. Fairley and Dawn Sparks Fairley, Barbara Howkinson, Richard R. Johnson and the Rev. Karen L. Munson, Col. David W. Lile and Gladys N. Lile, Marjorie M. May, Dr. Whittaker Middleton and Lillie A. Middleton, Ann Rader Pfisterer, Dr. Charles and Ann Quilter, James and Polly Daniels Sheppard, and Dr. Dwaun J. and LaKisha Warmack.

As well, two people were honored with the Drum Award: Elaine Jenkins, former director of planned giving with AU Tennessee, who helped establish and grow AU's planned giving portfolio, and the late Missionary Linda Dingle Gadson, a longtime human services worker at Rural Mission Inc. and the first Black woman to graduate from the College of Charleston.

Gadson's daughter, Hartsville District Superintendent the Rev. Telley Gadson, accepted the Drum Award with gratitude on her mother's behalf.

Through tears, she said she considers herself "Linda Gadson Junior."

"The essence of who I am and all that I become is ... grounded in the people who birthed me in this world," she said, leading the room in singing "Anyway You Fix It Lord."

'A Pentecost moment'

After a meeting Saturday of AU's advisory and board development committees, Sunday turned to worship.

At both Edisto Fork UMC and 15 other churches, AU "saturation events" were held in conjunction with their worship service.

Bishop Fairley brought the message at Edisto Fork, calling on God's people to cultivate holy imagination. He reminded all that what started as a desire inspired on the continent of Africa is reminiscent of what happened during the birth of the church in Acts 2.

"Nothing short of a Pentecost moment birthed Africa University," Fairley said, noting God has a history of taking ordinary people and doing extraordinary things through them.

He said the disciples were "common, everyday working folk." One betrayed Jesus, another denied him and the rest fled, he said.

"But Jesus understood the power was coming," Fairley said.

He reminded the body that God has no hands but our hands, no lips but our lips, no heart but our heart.

The disciples trusted God would send the power, and that power became a movement that became an unstoppable force.

This happens today, as well, he said.

"Look at Africa University! Look at what God has done!"

He closed with a humorous story about trying to iron a shirt once when his children were little, and his daughter laughed at him because the iron wasn't plugged in.

"You've got to be plugged into the power source," he said.

Golf caps the weekend

Monday brought sunny, breezy weather for the more than 90 golfers who headed to Orangeburg Country Club for a day of golf, followed by a delicious meal and recognition for tournament winners.

Lead sponsors were Wespath and SpiritShore Retreat.

Proceeds from the weekend fund scholarships and campus programs that equip Africa University students to lead and serve across Africa.

Bishop Fairley will lead a 12-day pilgrimage next summer to Africa University, also visiting other parts of Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa. The trip runs Aug. 23 through Sept. 3, 2027.For information: https://bit.ly/4bTRk97.

For more about Africa University, visit https://support.africau.org.



‘Faith Under the Big Top’ brings generations together

By Angela Williams

St. Stephen United Methodist Church celebrated a memorable week of faith, fellowship and learning during vacation Bible school 2026: Faith Under the Big Top.

The event was an intergenerational experience that brought children, youth, adults and senior adults together to worship, learn, create and grow in Christ.

Under the leadership of Rev. Kenneth Middleton, with the support of First Lady Jenny Middleton through the Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer Cohort initiative, this year’s VBS intentionally united every generation. Using the Messy Church model and principles of Narrative 4, participants explored Scripture through worship,



This year's VBS united every generation.

storytelling, discussion, creative expression, games and collaborative activities, demonstrating that faith grows stronger when experienced together.

A featured lesson based on 2 Corinthians 2:14-15 challenged participants to reflect on being the “fragrance of Christ” by considering how we can either draw others closer to Christ or push them away.

Honest conversations across generations offered meaningful perspectives on living out the Christian faith. Participants also brought Bible stories to life through skits using their own everyday language, highlighting the timeless relevance of Scripture.

Throughout the week, teams worked together to solve puzzles, paint inspirational rocks, build a memorial rock garden celebrating God’s faithfulness and participate in hands-on activities that encouraged cooperation, communication and fellowship. Each experience reinforced the importance of serving and growing together as the body of Christ.

Reflecting on the week, VBS Chair Angela Williams said, “Watching generations encourage one another, exchange ideas and celebrate each person’s unique gifts was a beautiful reflection of the body of Christ.”

Participants also shared their enthusiasm for the experience.

Mrs. Janelle Mitchell, chairperson of the board of the church, said, “I loved seeing the different generations interact.”

Sydney Green, 7, said, “My favorite part was creating a puzzle with my grandmother. We had so much fun working together.”

Barbara Lebby said, “I really enjoyed the intergenerational Bible study. I had a wonderful time and was excited to come all three nights.”

Franklin UMC holds intergenerational, Messy Church VBS

By Glorine J. Brabham

DENMARK—Franklin United Methodist Church held vacation Bible school July 29-31 with the theme “All God’s Children: The Church Family Gathers for Living Water.”

We decided that instead of breaking up into age groups, we would all meet in the fellowship hall and be seated as families. As the director, I wanted family fellowship time in our intergenerational study. Each family sat together, but we also fellowshipped as a church family. There were five sessions.

For Session One, Jesus and the Samaritan Woman, we made a well from a drink cooler, added a bucket, did a skit with Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well and made posters for everyone with a slide display of John 4:14.

For Session Two, Well of Living Water, we built a beautiful well from the old-time drink cooler. We put paper around the cooler, drew blocks like bricks, attached two small pipes to the inside and attached one across the top, allowing it to move. We added some cord and attached a small bucket to the cord, allowing it to be lowered into the well. A small tub was



Instead of dividing into age groups, all met together for fellowship.

placed inside the cooler/well for water for everyone, especially the children, who were allowed to examine the well. We explained the difference between well water and the living water Jesus offers.

For Session Three, God’s Comfort from the Living Water, a large tomato bush was brought in, noting that the bush had deliberately not been watered for a few days, allowing the bush to become withered “to give everyone an opportunity to examine what it’s like if we stray away from God.” We need God just as a plant needs water; without God, our lives are incomplete and dry up, just like a plant without sunlight and water. Another example was that everyone was misted in the face with cold water from the healing springs in Blackville to feel the refreshing, rejuvenating physical water and to imagine the spiritual water being a thousand times more refreshing.

A video of a nature trail was also shown, and everyone was given a piece of paper and a pencil to write down everything they saw or heard along the trail. We had an open discussion in which they shared what they saw or heard, using the letters A-Z.

Session Four, Remembering God’s Promises, and Session Five, Gathering at the River of Life, were combined. A very detailed discussion was given, questions were asked and answered and there was full class participation in remembering God’s promises as real and demonstrated.

Vacation Bible school also featured spiritually and physically nutritious food, all sponsored by a grant we applied for and received.

Murray UMC marks 162 years with celebration, growth and busy summer

By Jamelah L. Youmans

SUMMERVILLE— With a 162nd anniversary celebration, a back-to-school send-off for more than 40 students and sanctuary upgrades under way, Murray United Methodist Church has had a summer full of reasons to give thanks.

Murray UMC celebrated its anniversary July 26 with the Rev. Jeffrey Salley as guest speaker.

The theme and his sermon title was “Celebrating Faithfulness,” and the keynote Scripture was from Psalm 126:3. Worship Chair Debra McClellan did a great job putting together the anniversary celebration.

The anniversary celebration topped off Murray’s Family and Friends services, which were July 22-23. On July 22, the Rev. James Grant, from Shady Grove UMC in St. George, was the guest speaker and delivered a dynamic sermon backed up by his inspirational choir.

Dr. Jeffrey A. Howard from Second Baptist Church in Aiken delivered a powerful sermon July 23. His message reminded Murray to “keep swimming.”

Family and Friends chairpersons Faye Jones and Jacqueline Haynes did a great job putting the programs together.

The church started the month of August by getting students excited to return to school. Murray hosted its annual Back to School Roll Call where kindergarten through high school students were highlighted. More than 40 students were in attendance and were each recognized with a school roll call during morning worship. After, free school supplies were available to them based on grade level. They also got ice cream sundaes and fresh popcorn.

Murray welcomed a new member to the flock, Vanessa Hamilton, Aug. 16. She is excited to help the church grow and join some ministries.

Murray is also currently in the process of getting new large TVs and cameras in the sanctuaries to enrich online worship service and help members in person follow along with the morning worship. Newly renovated bathrooms are also under way at the back of the sanctuary as they get much-needed updates. The bathrooms are being designed by Floyd J. Lemon Jr.



Members gather for a smile during the anniversary celebration.

Trustees Chair Ronald Tucker is diligently overseeing the entire process.

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District News.

Charleston District

New Francis Brown, Charleston, and the Charleston District UMM held its first men’s prayer breakfast Sept. 12 at the church. The Rev. David Washington, pastor of Old Bethel UMC was the guest speaker.

Columbia District

I. DeQuincey Newman UMC, Columbia, will hold its third annual Tailgating Sunday including a classic car show Nov. 8 beginning at 9 a.m. Everyone is asked to wear their favorite team colors and join the church for a day of food, fun and fellowship.

COMFORT

From Page 1

encounter people who need basic survival items, such as food or toiletries. They also often encounter children on the scene, whether from a car accident, fire or domestic incident that leaves the child frightened or displaced. In addition to meeting needs, they hope to establish positive rapport with residents, and church members decided they wanted to partner with police and fire and help their efforts.

"We are just trying to respond to God's love for us by showing love to our neighbor," Ellis said.

The project launched under former pastor the Rev. David McManus; it continues under new pastor the Rev. Bill McCown. Both, with the congregation, have a passion for helping neighbors feel the love of Christ, particularly when they are experiencing hardship.

"We were encouraged to think outside the box, to consider different ways to think of mission work beyond the status quo of what we'd been doing," Ellis explained, noting the public safety partnership seemed an ideal way to do just that.

On Communion Sunday—the first Sunday of each month—Manning members are asked to bring nonperishable food items and place them at the altar rail for a blessing as a love offering.

Manning also purchased a supply of "comfort bags," which they passed out to members and asked them to fill them with a small gender-neutral stuffed animal, a small soft blanket, personal items (like a toothbrush, toothpaste, soap and a washcloth) and a box of Pop-Tarts. When filled, the comfort bags are also placed at the altar rail for a blessing.

Officers and firefighters keep the food and comfort bags with them and give them to someone in need while responding to a scene.

"We wanted our congregation involved in a hands-on way," Ellis said. "Through various mission endeavors, we've found it's so much better not to ask the congregation to write a check but to bring something that involves the individual. Each one of us feels more involved when we go to the store and actually buy something for another person."

The storage shed came when church members realized police needed a place to store the items, so they purchased a brand-new 10x12-foot storage building and moved it next to the police station so officers could easily get items they need.

Director of Youth Ministries Kelly Gottheiner said the project has ignited much enthusiasm.

"Our church loves being able to do this project because it's a tangible way we can help our neighbors. Loving like Jesus involves action as well as faith," Gottheiner said.

McCown said he loves that his church is so devoted to this effort. After all, he said, God came into the world as a human being, so human beings could learn to be more like God.

"My hope is no child ever needs our gifts. When they do, I hope the child knows someone cares. In fact, lots of people care," McCown said.

JUDGE TO DISMISS

From Page 1

The release notes the final orders have not yet been written or entered, and attorneys representing the separating churches have been asked to prepare proposed orders for the judge's consideration and signature.

The conference urged United Methodists to remember our trust rests not in any single decision or proceeding, but in the Lord who leads the church.

"We intend to appeal these rulings to the South Carolina appellate courts. Our hope is to bring these matters before the appellate courts, potentially including the South Carolina Supreme Court, at the earliest appropriate opportunity," the release states, calling for prayer for all involved and for all to remain focused on the Christian mission.

South Carolina Conference Resident Bishop Leonard Fairley urged all to remember the good work ahead.

"People are hungry for the Gospel," Fairley said in the release. "Communities need healing and hope. Children and young people need places where they can discover the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Our neighbors need the church to be present with compassion, courage and grace. So, we will continue to seek justice faithfully, pursue the appropriate legal avenues available to us, and trust God with what lies ahead. And through it all, we will remain focused on our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

The consolidated case, The South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, et al v. Aldersgate Methodist Church of Greenwood, et al., involves 68 churches across the state. The case originated when defendant churches indicated in writing they planned to separate from the South Carolina Conference—mainly over theological differences about human sexuality—but keep their property.

The conference argues the denominational trust clause prohibits churches from being able to leave the denomination and keep their property.

Defendants argue the court should not hear the case because it involves internal church matters and religious doctrine, and because the UMC trust clause does not comply with South Carolina law. They also argue the plaintiffs lack legal standing to challenge defendants' actions.

The 68 churches are as follows:

- Aldersgate UMC, Greenwood County
- Andrews Chapel UMC, Clarendon County
- Bellingers Chapel UMC, Allendale County
- Bethel UMC of Bethune, Kershaw County
- Bethlehem UMC of Pamplico, Florence County
- Bethsaida UMC, Florence County
- Beulah UMC, Calhoun County
- Bogansville UMC, Union County
- Boiling Springs UMC, Lexington County
- Brunson UMC, Hampton County
- Calhoun Falls UMC, Abbeville County
- Camp Swamp UMC, Horry County
- Canaan UMC, Cherokee County
- Dickson Memorial UMC, Oconee County
- East Bethel UMC, Calhoun County
- Ebenezer UMC, Abbeville, Abbeville County
- Ebenezer UMC, Bennettsville, Marlboro County
- Emma Gray Memorial UMC, Spartanburg County
- Folly Beach UMC, Charleston County
- Fork Creek UMC, Chesterfield County
- Fort Lawn UMC, Chester County
- Good Shepherd UMC, Lancaster, Lancaster County
- Gordon Memorial UMC, Fairfield County
- Grace UMC, Union, Union County
- Greenbrier UMC, Fairfield County
- Hardeeville UMC, Jasper County
- Hopewell UMC, Lancaster, Lancaster County
- Jackson Grove UMC, Greenville County
- Jefferson UMC, Chesterfield County
- Livingston UMC, Orangeburg County
- Lupo Memorial UMC, Greenwood County
- Lynchburg UMC, Lee County
- McLeod UMC, Richland County
- Montgomery Memorial UMC, Spartanburg County
- Monticello UMC, Fairfield County
- Mount Zion UMC of Sandy Run, Calhoun County
- Nichols UMC, Marion County
- Panola UMC, Greenwood County
- Paxville UMC, Clarendon County
- Philadelphia UMC of York, York County
- Pinewood UMC, Sumter County
- Pleasant Hill UMC, Bamberg County
- Providence UMC of Holly Hill, Orangeburg County
- Quinby UMC, Florence County
- Rehoboth UMC of Greenwood, Greenwood County
- Republican UMC of McCormick, McCormick County
- Salem UMC of Pageland, Chesterfield County
- Sampit UMC, Georgetown County
- St. James UMC, Laurens, Laurens County
- St. John UMC of Columbia, Richland County
- St. John UMC of Graniteville, Aiken County
- St. Luke UMC, Elliott, Lee County
- St. Luke UMC, Lancaster, Lancaster County
- St. Paul UMC, Florence, Florence County
- Summerton UMC, Clarendon County
- Swallow Savannah UMC, Allendale County
- Tabor UMC, Pickens County
- Trinity UMC, Bamberg, Bamberg County
- Trinity UMC, Lancaster, Lancaster County
- Trinity UMC, Laurens, Laurens County
- Trinity UMC, Lynchburg, Sumter County
- Trinity UMC, Smoaks, Colleton County
- Union UMC of Cope, Orangeburg County
- Van Wyck UMC, Lancaster County
- Wesley Memorial UMC, Charleston, Charleston County
- West Bethel UMC, Calhoun County
- Zion UMC, Dorchester, Dorchester County
- Zion UMC, Lancaster, Lancaster County



ADVOCATE FOR ALL PLAN

From Page 1

Advocate make a difference in people's faith journey and help United Methodists stay fully connected across our state."

Brodie added, "It's a ministry faith leap, and we are excited to see how this will help our annual conference while also transforming the *Advocate* itself."

Brodie said she expects free access to significantly increase readership, which will be helpful to the *Advocate's* advertisers, who now will have a vastly increased pool of people who will view their ads, as well as appeal to donors, who she expects will appreciate the ministry's more inclusive shift.

The plan was approved Sept. 29 by the *Advocate's* Board of Trustees.

To enable the *Advocate* to handle this shift financially, all complimentary subscriptions—for clergy, retired clergy, their surviving spouses and a handful of others—will switch to digital-only beginning Jan. 1, 2027. A letter will be sent to all subscribers this month notifying them of the change and instructions on how to access digital content.

However, those complimentary subscribers who feel they need the print publication yet have financial constraints that prevent them from affording it may apply for a financial hardship grant enabling them to receive the print *Advocate* for free. Information on how to apply for the financial hardship grant will be shared through the letter; people can also email Brodie at jbrodie@advocatesc.org.

Those who remain as print subscribers will see an increased rate for the print *Advocate*, as postage and printing costs continue to escalate. The new price beginning Jan. 1 will be $40 a year instead of $30 a year.

"The *Advocate* has been an award-winning and highly respected publication for many years, and making our digital content free is a wonderful way to nurture the spiritual growth of United Methodists across South Carolina. It truly offers something for everybody," said the Rev. Michael Henderson, *Advocate* board chair.

"Most people today consume their news digitally through an app, website or email platform, so this should be extremely helpful to people who often don't want to pay for news. At the same time, it enables those who need or strongly desire to read their *Advocate* as a print publication to have a way to continue receiving their news that way."

"We think this is an inclusive and excellent way to pivot into our future," said the Rev. Rebecca Rowell, vice chair of the *Advocate* board. "We just want to make the helpful and inspiring content produced by the *Advocate* available to everybody without any obstacle, and we believe this is the best way to do this sustainably."

The *Advocate* was founded in 1836 at General Conference and published its first paper in 1837. Its mission is to foster discipleship within South Carolina United Methodism by providing relevant news in various formats to unite followers in Christ.

While part of the annual conference, the *Advocate* receives only about one-sixth of its operating budget from the conference. The rest comes from donations, advertising support, book sales and subscriptions.

To learn more about how to support the *Advocate*, visit https://advocatesc.org/donate.





Harvest moon
The harvest moon rises at the seawall at Belin Memorial United Methodist Church in Murrells Inlet recently. Belin member Dakota Bond, 16, took this photograph.

Photo by Dakota Bond





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David Kongthara directs the filming of "Dust."

Mount Sinai serves as film site for student-led movie

Mount Sinai United Methodist Church was the site of a Clemson University movie, "Dust," filmed at the church Sept. 17-18.

The Clemson senior who produced the film, David Kongthara, is majoring in media and business. Kongthara worked with professionals—who did the filming with movie cameras and drones—and fellow students in the production.

The scene shot at Mount Sinai was from Kongthara's movie titled "Dust." In the movie, the main character, Elijah, experienced an apocalyptic event and came across a church in the woods (Mount Sinai), where he sought refuge.

Mount Sinai's church administrator Elizabeth J. Shaw said that in the scene, "He sees a cross hung over the altar and a drop of blood hit the baptismal bowl and turns to wine—very dramatic!"

The film is the property of Clemson University and will be shown to the school, then others in the country. If successful, they will be able to show it publicly.

"They were extremely respectful of the church and its space, and when I walked in on Sunday morning, I never would have known they were there at all," Shaw said. "The church was immaculate."



Treasures galore
Manning UMC, Manning, held a church yard sale and bake sale recently. Here, a shopper makes a purchase.

Photo by Kelly Gottheiner

Looking to the birds: Messy Church goes intergenerational at Grace UMC

By the Rev. Meg Sweeney Cook

COLUMBIA—On Sunday, Sept. 13, Grace United Methodist Church celebrated Grandparents Sunday with an intergenerational Messy Church experience following worship.

Using the Look to the Birds lesson from Messy Church USA, based on Matthew 6:25-34, they explored Jesus' invitation to notice the birds and the flowers and trust God's care.

After a pizza lunch and a special dessert (bird-shaped sugar cookies and bird's nest cookies), Grace celebrated Messy Church. There were seven hands-on stations where participants could explore, create, wonder and learn together. Children and adults made bird suncatchers, experimented with paper airplanes while learning about flight and aerodynamics with a member who is a physicist, played a stacking game about worries, created prayer rocks, wrote prayers and added them to a prayer tree and garden.

A quiet reflection station offered coloring and activity sheets for a low-sensory option, while a discussion station provided deeper conversation for teens, adults and curious kids.

With 22 children and 68 people altogether, the gathering included everyone from babies to people in their 80s and everyone tried at least one station. Leaders were especially excited to see many repeat guests, along with people who stayed after enjoying lunch together to experience Messy Church for the first time.

Grace has traditionally offered Messy Church in the evening. While those gatherings have been well attended, Grace leaders realized that when services are offered matters. A midday Messy Church gave people who cannot comfortably attend evening events another opportunity to participate.

They ended the time together with worship led by Mr. Sam and his ukulele, including "10,000 Reasons," a song suggested by one of the teens. From babies to grandparents, everyone had a place—and everyone had something to contribute.

That's the beauty of Messy Church: it isn't a children's church with adults invited in. It is a church where all generations learn, create, worship and experience God together.





Mount Hebron UMC celebrates 225th anniversary

By Joyce Wingate, Betty Wise and Katy Renfroe

On Sunday, Aug. 23, Mount Hebron UMC celebrated its 225th Anniversary at a special "225 Celebration."

The church held one worship service in the sanctuary combining the traditional and contemporary services. It featured many of Mount Hebron's former ministers—the Rev. Ken Barwick, Dr. John Culp Sr., the Rev. Larry Hays Jr., the Rev. George Riser, the Rev. Emily Scales Sutton and the Rev. Cynthia Taylor—who participated in various parts of the service, and UMCSC Resident Bishop Leonard E. Fairley delivered an uplifting sermon propelling all forward for the next 225 years.

A brass ensemble performed with the Chancel Choir and the New Life Band and featured both groups throughout the service. Former ministers the Rev. Linda McDaniel, the Rev. Dave DeDonato and the Rev. Wayne Horne were also in attendance.

After the service, members were able to stroll through history vignettes featuring defining moments of the church's history and enjoy a delicious barbecue lunch from local favorite Shealy's BBQ, with sheet cakes depicting different church buildings over the years for dessert. State House Rep. Micah Caskey also presented a special resolution.

Youth Director Ben Treaster drew door prizes for attendees that featured gift certificates to the UMM barbecue and Christmas dinner, United Women in Faith Bake Sale, the barbecue Family Fun Night, the Rev. Ken Barwick's honey and some 225-branded travel mugs and ornaments. Attendees were also treated to a complimentary photo booth where they could take home a commemorative photo strip.



Jackson DeVore and Kaye Landrum clean one of the stairwells in the Fellowship Hall.

Photo by Judy Whitesell

The day prior, members, family and friends participated in 225 acts of service throughout the Midlands. The goal of 225 acts was surpassed with 206 people participating in 273 acts.

Acts of service consisted of the following: volunteering at local nonprofits Mission Lexington, Family Promise of the Midlands, Power in Changing; donating food and supplies to area churches' blessing boxes; donating blood at the American Red Cross; bringing donations to the church for various nonprofits; exterior landscaping and interior cleaning of the church campus; children and youth packed hygiene kits and 225 bags of dog food for Mission Lexington; choir members sang for the residents at National Health Center; members made cards and various pieces of yarn items for our cross in front of the prayer garden; members prayed; others visited with homebound congregants and served communion; and a group prepared another "We Love You" lunch for Asbury Arms, Family Promise, Killingsworth and many other groups.

Although the main celebration was in August, preparations started long before. A committee was formed consisting of church members, lay leaders, staff and church historians in summer 2025, and planning began in August 2025. Starting in January, the church celebrated every fourth Sunday with a "225 Moment" where different ministry areas were highlighted. Church members wore special commemorative T-shirts featuring the 225 logo and tagline of "History. Hope. Hebron." They also placed inserts in the bulletin featuring the history of that ministry, historical archives and photos along with a physical board showcasing these items during both services. "Did You Know? Facts" were printed in bulletins throughout those eight months, and the congregation was tested during a special trivia game at a Midweek Boost Wednesday night program.

Finally, they created a special 225 Legacy Gift to update their brick-and-mortar marquee sign to a modern, digital LED sign. The money for the sign was raised in a month and a half. The newly updated sign was installed Aug. 17 just in time for the celebration.





Photos by Dana Hampton and Charles Riley

Bluff Road UMC celebrates Homecoming

Bluff Road UMC, Columbia, celebrated Homecoming Weekend Sept. 26-27. On Saturday, Fun Day at the Road consisted of games for all ages, a bounce house, Bible trivia, a silent auction, food, fun and fellowship. On Sunday, a spirit-filled service featured guest speaker Dr. Constance Barnes McLeod, a daughter of the church. Former members were invited to reminisce and celebrate a time of fellowship.





Photos by Eugenia Vicars

Blessing the animals together

St. Paul UMC and St. Andrew's Episcopal, both located in the west end of Greenville, joined for a Blessing of the Animals Service Oct. 4. A short service of Scripture and song was held, followed by the Rev. Brian Humphries of St. Paul and the Rev. Gary Eichelberger, the rector of St. Andrew's, blessing the animals. Owners received a certificate of the blessing and a medallion of St. Francis for their pet.

Joseph B. Bethea starts food ministry in Carolina Forest

MYRTLE BEACH—Joseph B. Bethea United Methodist Church recently began a Food Distribution Ministry in the Carolina Forest area.

In conjunction with the Low Country Food Bank, the church serves the public with free food on the fourth Saturday of every month.

What began as an extension of their local food pantry has grown to a ministry that serves more than 300 people each month.

Dr. Kim Strong said that with the recent closure of the Socastee Food Bank, the church has gladly stepped into the void with a new ministry. They also provided food supplies and other materials to local families as they visit the distribution each month.

A blessing box was added to the property by one of the church's youth, Jackson Uphold, as part of his Eagle Scout project. The box is being refilled twice a week to ensure people in need can have access to food.

The blessing box is located near the local bus stop and is filled with quick breakfast items for children who did not receive a breakfast before going to school.

Joseph B. Bethea UMC is a multiracial church that began in the early 1990s as an intentional effort to have everyone worship together, regardless of race. Today they invite all to come and feel at home there.



The food ministry serves more than 300 people each month.



Jack's Eagle Scout Project was the church's blessing box and bench.



Native American Ministries.

Part Two: The Iconic Hudson Bay Trade Blanket

By Lee Anne Lamar

Editor's note: This is the second in a two-part article detailing the history of the Hudson Bay point blanket, from its origins as a fur-trade good through its adaptation into coats, its imitators and successors and its tragic misuse in spreading smallpox. Most important is its lasting role as a symbol of honor and gift-giving in Native American culture. Part One ran in the October Advocate.

Hudson Bay blankets sewn in the Mackinaw style resembled today's shorter, double-breasted coat with a traditional collar. The name Mackinaw comes from the Straits of Mackinac, the narrow waterways that connect the Great Lakes, particularly Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. Historically, the Odawa people are said to have called the area near the straits Michilmackinac. The local Ojibwe people thought the large island in the strait looked like a turtle, so they named it Mitchimakinak. The British shortened it to Mackinac, which later became Mackinaw.

The Mackinaw blanket coat was made from several types of Hudson Bay blankets, including three iconic styles: the cream blanket with colored Queen Anne stripes, the HBC green blanket with a large black stripe and the HBC scarlet blanket with a large black stripe. Later, the Mackinaw coat became associated with the lumberjack style when red-and-black plaid wool blankets were made into coats for workers who felled trees for lumber exported across the ocean to build ships, structures and fine furniture. This quality blanket had broad appeal to Natives, frontiersman and Europeans.

The highly valued iconic Hudson Bay blanket was often used in sacred ceremonies, which followed specific ancient tribal protocols. As these point blankets grew in value, another English Company located in Witney, Oxfordshire, England, began copying and producing the iconic version of the Queen Anne colors originally made by the Hudson Bay Company. The blankets woven in Oxfordshire became known as Witney (Whitney) Point Blankets.

As Europeans moved westward along the border, the eastern Hudson Bay Company came under French influence, while the British Hudson Bay Company expanded northwest. Eventually, the HBC reached the Pacific Coast, where other notable wool blankets were later produced. One of these was the Pendleton blanket, which emerged in the region that became Oregon. Among Northwestern Native tribes in both the United States and Canada, the Pendleton blanket became a highly valued gift, often given to mark important life events, honor individuals or seal agreements. Gift giving has long been an important part of Native American culture and even today giveaways remain prominent in ceremonies, celebrations and acts of appreciation.

Tragically, the popularity of Hudson Bay blankets was used against Native peoples in America and Canada for a brief period. In an effort to "rid themselves of savages," some people used blankets as an early form of biological warfare. From the beginning of European exploration of the "New World," diseases such as smallpox, tuberculosis, syphilis and others were introduced to Native communities that had no prior exposure or natural immunity. The devastation was immense, with disease sometimes destroying entire villages. This vulnerability was later exploited when blankets and handkerchiefs used by people with smallpox were given to Indigenous people.

Proof that this occurred comes from eyewitness accounts from journal entries—one from Fort Pitt in June 1763 and one from William Trent during Pontiac's Rebellion. Both indicate smallpox infected items were intentionally shared to cause Indians harm and death. Records show that disease-related deaths in some Native villages often reached 60 to 90 percent of the population.

Across the past 350 years and into the present, three blanket brands—Hudson Bay Company, Witney Point and Pendleton—have remained highly valued. These iconic cream-colored striped blankets appeared in early Indigenous photographs and were also depicted in paintings. Originally given as practical and desirable trade goods, these blankets became enduring symbols of honor, respect and remembrance. Often blankets are gifted for the purposes of honoring elders, chiefs, warriors and dignitaries. Special quilts or blankets might be shared to mark births, deaths, graduations, marriages or high achievements.

Giving gifts or having a giveaway is a special Native American tradition. The blanket gift is meant to last, to remain present in a person's life and to affirm that each life matters—yours, mine and ours—and that the Creator sees and cares about every journey.

Aho, may it be so!



There were 16 staff present including those involved with foster care assessment and placement, Homebuilders and Early Intervention.



Disciples hosts Epworth Upstate

GREENVILLE—Disciples United Methodist Church hosted Epworth Upstate for their Staff Appreciation Lunch. After a delicious lunch, Cathy Joens shared a meaningful devotion before introducing Beth Williams CEO and President of Epworth. Williams introduced the staff by name and explained what they did for Epworth and the umbrella of programs in which they are involved.

"I was surprised to learn how many people work together at Epworth for the good of children," Patty Hammond shared. "I would like to convey my appreciation for their loving support of each other and for the children. I am awed by their commitment to the health of these families that they work with."

There were 16 staff present including those involved with foster care assessment and placement, Homebuilders and Early Intervention.

Robin Aleksinas appreciated the clarity in which they spoke about how their programs work together.

"I am glad they used words and explained their jobs to us at our luncheon," Aleksinas said. "I learned about how the staff interacts with the families and kids in their homes, in follow-ups, in helpful, guiding ways and giving tools to foster parents. It opened my eyes and moved me so—they are dedicated and loving and doing Jesus' work on behalf of children and those who want to care for them. No child asked to be put in whatever situation they find themselves in. These angels on earth are so needed and appreciated."

Disciples provides Welcome Bags for those children who are placed in Epworth Upstate homes, as well as car seats, booster seats and bikes.

Disciples members said they were blessed by their sharing and it led to better understanding of all the many ways Epworth supports children and youth.

Helen Rowland, Epworth local church representative, said, "It's a great ministry! The staff is genuinely interested in their mission."

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A helping hand
The United Women in Faith of Trinity UMC, Orangeburg, recently made a donation of paper goods to the residents of Paths To Wholeness. From left are Mrs. Freddie O'Bryant, Pearl Brownlee, Annette Clowney, Dr. Minnie Anderson, Cynthia Middleton and Mae Tobin.

Gatorade Splash, more help St. Andrews Parish aid missions



Members dump Gatorade on the Rev. Brent Dehlbom.

CHARLESTON—St. Andrews Parish United Methodist Church raised more than $8,000 at its fall festival, with much of that money coming from a churchwide favorite—the Gatorade Splash.

Members raised $3,500 for the privilege of dumping Gatorade on their pastor, the Rev. Brent Dehlbom.

Those funds, along with others raised with help from from vendors and cooks, will support the Charleston Wesley Foundation campus ministries and to help send young people to Salkehatchie summer service camps.

The festival was held Oct. 10.

Dehlbom said that even though the Gatorade was wet and sticky, the experience showed him the big heart of his congregation.

"As that Gatorade came pouring down, I couldn't help but think about those coaches who have just won the Super Bowl," Dehlbom said. "Because when I look at this congregation, I know exactly what it feels like to be part of a winning team! Not because of a scoreboard, a trophy or even the amount of money raised, but because of the hearts of the people who make up this church."

Killingsworth Gala raises funds for UMC women's ministry

COLUMBIA—This month, South Carolina United Methodists head to Seawell's to raise funds for Killingsworth, a United Methodist-founded home for women emerging from crisis situations.

An annual event described by many as the official kickoff to the holiday season, the Killingsworth Gala will be held Thursday, Nov. 12, from 6-9 p.m.

Tickets are $85/person and $650 for a table of eight, and sponsorships are available starting at $700.

The event will feature a silent auction, a Belk Fashion Show, live music and a full course meal. This year, a comedian will round out the fun.

Note that Seawell's is now in a new location: The Moore Building on the South Carolina State Fair Grounds, 1200 Rosewood Drive, Columbia.

Proceeds support Killingsworth Home, a unique community residence for women who are emerging from crisis situations.

Within the eight-bedroom Columbia home, women recovering from addiction, incarceration, mental and emotional problems, violence and assault or family crisis situations can find shelter and support.

The residential program includes room, board, guidance and support for a nominal fee. Vocational assistance to the residents is also available.

To purchase tickets or become a sponsor, visit https://killingsworth.org/gala.

Alston Wilkes Society.

The people who make hope possible

Thanksgiving invites us to pause and recognize the blessings in our lives: a welcoming home, people who care about us and the comfort of knowing we have somewhere to turn.

At the Alston Wilkes Society, this season also reminds us why our work matters. For a veteran facing housing instability, a young person navigating difficult circumstance or someone rebuilding life after incarceration, those sources of comfort may feel uncertain. Having someone listen, offer guidance and help identify the next step can make a meaningful difference.

This November, we are grateful for the people who help make that support possible. We give thanks for our donors, whose generosity helps sustain services that meet people in moments of need. We appreciate our community partners and volunteers, who share their time, resources and compassion. We are thankful for our staff, who approach challenging work with dedication and a belief in each person's potential.

We also give thanks for the people we serve. Their determination deserves recognition. Asking for help, working toward stability and beginning again can take tremendous courage. Each step forward belongs to the person taking it, and we are grateful for the opportunity to walk alongside them.

Learn more about our mission: https://www.alstonwilkes.org.

St. Mark UMC offers many musical opportunities

Under the spiritual leadership of Dr. Carlton J. McClam Sr. and the musical direction of Antonio Edwards Jr., the music and ministries at St. Mark United Methodist Church, Taylors, offer something for all ages.

The church offers a unique blend of contemporary gospel, spirituals and inspiring hymns of the Christian tradition. Their vision is to provide a ministry that is spirit-filled, sincere, humble and obedient to the move of God.

Music ministry teams are as follows:

• A Children's Choir allows the church's youngest members to develop and explore musical interest and to develop a willingness to actively serve in worship.

• A Youth Choir features middle and high school students in training to develop vocal talent reinforced by spiritual grounding.

• The Brenda Benson Memorial group features young adults aged 40 and younger who have served together for more than 25 years. Some members of the group have relocated and serve in other faith communities, but they often return to St. Mark to sing and praise God together.

• The Vessels of Praise group is an ensemble dedicated to moving beyond performance and into proclamation, ushering all to God through praise and worship.

• The Chancel Choir is a time-tested traditional ministry team that stands united as living testimonies of the goodness and grace of God in their lives and the lives of the founding father and mothers of St. Mark.

• The Male Chorus and Women's Choir offer the sisters and brothers of the church the opportunity to serve as worship leaders on fifth Sundays, Men's Day and Women's Day.

• The St. Mark Inspirational Choir is a multi-generational team of ministers during Sunday worship experiences. Throughout the years they have been invited to share their gifts during annual meetings of the South Carolina Annual Conference of the UMC, most recently in 2025. SMIC is one of upstate South Carolina's most dynamic church gospel choirs, sharing in ministry with other churches, congregations and public gatherings throughout the Southeastern United States. In 2026, SMIC was featured in "By Faith Magazine" a publication serving Black United Methodists for Church Renewal and its network of local and jurisdictional chapters.

• The St. Mark Band reflects Psalm 150, a command for everything that has breath to praise the Lord. Each Sunday The Band's musical intuition and style serves as the foundation of a transformative worship experience.

The church appreciates its many music ministry offerings.

'Teachers deserve the best'

Members of Branchville UMC, Branchville, donated snacks recently for the weekly teacher snack cart for Lockett Elementary School. Pictured delivering the teacher goodies are Pastor Katie McCracken and son Malcom and church member and organist Gayle McAlhany. Accepting the items are Assistant Principal Corey McAlhany and principal Chasity Fralix. As Branchville volunteers said, "Teachers deserve the best."

Courtesy of Gayle McAlhany





Young Methodists.

Eight churches selected for Cohort 3 of Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer Initiative

Eight United Methodist congregations in South Carolina have been chosen for Cohort 3 of Connecting Children in Worship and Prayer, an initiative funded by Lilly Endowment Inc.

The new cohort begins in January.

The initiative helps churches make children and youth full, active participants in the life of the congregation as worshipers, people of prayer and leaders rather than observers. Each church takes part with a team that serves alongside its pastor. The churches learn together as a cohort and receive training, resources and support for a full year. At its heart, the initiative is an organic approach to discipleship: faith is formed naturally as children, youth and adults share in worship, prayer and everyday church life, instead of in separate age-level programs.

The Cohort 3 churches are:

- St. Mark UMC, North—Dr. Marvin A. Moss
- Triune UMC, Orangeburg—Rev. Lawrence Cantey
- St. John's UMC, Lugoff—Rev. John Jordan
- Foundations UMC, Duncan—Rev. Mike Jeter
- Disciples UMC, Greenville—Rev. Narcie Jeter
- Central UMC, Spartanburg—Rev. Bryan Pigford
- Silver Hill Memorial UMC, Spartanburg—Rev. Morris Waymer Jr.
- Cornerstone UMC, Rock Hill—Rev. Cindy Rumsey

A central goal is to help congregations move from multi-generational to intergenerational ministry. In multigenerational ministry, people of all ages are present in the church. In intergenerational ministry, they intentionally worship, pray, serve and grow together every Sunday. Children and youth bring gifts to the church today, not only in the future, and the initiative helps churches make room for those gifts.

"We are excited to welcome these congregations into Cohort 3," said Toni Norris, grant facilitator for CCWP. "Each church has shown a real commitment to making children and youth part of the heart of worship and prayer. We look forward to learning alongside them and seeing how God works through their ministries as all generations, especially children, feel they belong and have a voice. We believe the future of the church is intergenerational."

Cohort 3 joins the congregations from the first two cohorts in a growing network of South Carolina churches that are changing how children and youth take part in worship and prayer. Norris asks all to please join the South Carolina Conference in congratulating these churches and praying for their pastors, their teams and the children and youth they serve.

For more information, contact Toni Norris at ttaylor@umcsc.org or visit https://www.umcsc.org/children.



Photo by Vern Middleton

Brother to brother

Bluff Road's Brother to Brother Male Mentoring Program hosted its first Bible Spelling Bee on Saturday, Sept. 19, from 10 a.m. to noon at Bluff Road UMC, Columbia. There were three groups of competition: elementary (four students), middle (three students) and high school (two students). Cash awards were given to the top winners in each group. All students were awarded prizes. The program plans to hold this event next year on a much larger scale.

Camps & Retreat.

Asbury Hills opens registration

As autumn colors fade and winter approaches, it is officially time to look ahead to sunshine, mountain trails and life-changing summer experiences. And now, registration for the 2027 Summer Camp Season at Asbury Hills is officially open.

For generations, summer camp has been far more than just a week away from home; it is a sacred milestone where faith takes root, confidence blossoms and lifelong friendships are forged. As parents, pastors and church leaders know, giving children and youth the space to step away from daily routines can transform the trajectory of their lives.

In today's screen-saturated world, the unique environment of outdoor camp ministry offers invaluable gifts. Trading phone screens for mountain streams gives the nervous system a much-needed reset. Free from the constant noise of social media, campers re-learn how to be fully present in God's creation.

Also, living in a cabin with peers fosters deep, face-to-face relationships. Campers learn teamwork, empathy, and what it truly means to belong to a supportive Christian community. Beyond that, guided by dedicated summer counselors, campers explore their faith.

Asbury Hills provides camp for all ages. From elementary schoolers trying camp for the first time to high schoolers seeking deeper leadership and spiritual growth, there is a tailored session for every step of the journey.

For registration and session information, visit https://www.asburyhills.org.





Wesley Foundations
by the Rev. Laurel Fraser

Cultivating intentional relationships

Campus ministries are able to thrive because of the work that local churches do to support them. The Wesley Foundation at Winthrop University is blessed by the work that the churches of the Rock Hill District do to support us, from bringing dinners for students every Monday, to regular work days around the property, to generous financial support from churches and their members.

Many churches are now taking that support even deeper as they learn and work to foster intentional interpersonal relationships with college students.

One such church that is partnering with Winthrop Wesley is Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Rock Hill.

"Over the fall season, Aldersgate United Women in Faith and Evangelism and Outreach partnered with Winthrop Wesley Foundation desiring to build relationships with the attending students," said Betty Evans of Aldersgate UMC. "Activities included sharing meals together, listening to God's word during worship and fellowship and having fun playing games, picking apples and eating pizza."

Some of the events incorporated small group time, and students and church members received prompts—the kind you might see on a list of icebreakers or conversation starters. They were instructed to use the prompts to tell a story. This simple change from "breaking the ice" to "telling a story" led to over an hour of rich conversations among each group. This level of connection meant that, when Aldersgate folks joined Winthrop Wesley for worship the following Sunday, students and church members knew one another's names and shared with genuine joy, "It's good to see you again!"



Many churches are now fostering intentional interpersonal relationships with college students.

When church members come to our Wesley Foundations—leaving their assumptions outside and simply embracing the holy, awkward space of connecting with college students—everyone is equalized. Stories can be shared and lives can be changed.

"My aspiration is to meet these students where they are and hopefully be a safe place for them to open up," Susan Floyd of Aldersgate UMC reflected. "With Jesus alive in me, they will know where my heart is."

To connect with the Wesley Foundation in your area, go to http://www.umcsc.org/campus-ministries.

We need you!

Leave A Legacy To Change Lives

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P. O. Box 5087, Columbia, SC 29250-5087
scumf@bellsouth.net

Across the UMC.

Dallas to host United Methodist youth event

NASHVILLE, Tenn.–A national gathering for United Methodist youth will be held July 11-14 in Dallas. YOUTH 2027 is intended to be a space for youth and their chaperones to experience community and connectionalism. The event is open to youth entering sixth grade through those graduating high school in 2027.

'This Moment Matters' granting tops $38 million

ATLANTA–More than $38 million in grants to support agriculture and food security, education, health, migrants and peace have been awarded through the "This Moment Matters" initiative of the United Methodist boards of Global Ministries and Higher Education and Ministry. Across 681 grants, the support "demonstrates the United Methodist connection at work and the capacity of our agencies to deploy resources in response to urgent global needs," said Roland Fernandes, top executive of both boards.

A faithful response to school shooting

BEND, Ore.–The Rev. Jen Stuart of Bend United Methodist Church and other faith leaders are coming together to support their community in the wake of a shooting Oct. 15 at Silver Rail Elementary School that left three young children and one teacher dead, along with the 16-year-old shooter. Stuart was among clergy invited to offer pastoral support to Silver Rail families. "It was absolutely sacred to be there with people mourning their loss of safety and their children," she said.

Court revives suit to block ICE from churches

WASHINGTON–A U.S. federal appeals court ruled that an interfaith coalition, including United Methodists, has grounds to sue to curb immigration enforcement activities at houses of worship. United Methodist churches already have experienced ICE agents targeting their ministries.

Gathering begins to imagine church yet to be

CALGARY, Alberta–More than 280 United Methodist lay and clergy leaders from four continents gathered in a 114-year-old sanctuary and online to begin the work of praying, listening and striving for The United Methodist Church of the future.

Where to worship online

NASHVILLE, Tenn.–Online worship services have become a common ministry in United Methodist churches across the connection. Many stream and/or post their full, regular worship services weekly. United Methodist Communications has compiled a list of places to worship online. If your church offers online services and is not on the list, write to AskTheUMC@umc.org with your church name, city and state, times of online services, verification of your streaming licensing, and links to where you post your services.

Conference adds second count to Highland Park suit

DALLAS–The Horizon Texas Conference has amended its civil suit against Highland Park United Methodist Church, adding a second count accusing the church of breach of contract and arguing that the church council's 2022 changes to Highland Park's articles and bylaws are void. The conference is asking the court for a permanent injunction prohibiting Highland Park from breaching the articles and bylaws further and from amending them without a district superintendent's approval. The Oct. 15 filing comes as Highland Park's church council announced that it unanimously adopted a resolution calling for a church-wide disaffiliation vote on Oct. 25 and 26. In the letter, the council recommends severing all ties with The United Methodist Church.

Church opened doors to people with nowhere else

SCHENECTADY, N.Y.–When unhoused neighbors had nowhere else to turn, First United Methodist Church of Schenectady opened its doors. The congregation is loving boldly by offering warmth, safety and compassion to those in need.

Methodist-Catholic dialogue moves forward

ROME–The Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission has completed the 12th phase of its dialogue. Commission members have approved the final draft of the report from this phase: "One in Faith and Ministry to the World: Reflecting on Unity and Diversity for the Mission of the Church."

Three honored for shaping UM history

MADISON, N.J.–The United Methodist Commission on Archives and History recognized three recipients during its annual board meeting for their contributions to archival service, Methodist scholarship and advocacy within The United Methodist Church. Mark Shenise, archivist at Archives and History, and the Rev. Laceye Warner, executive vice dean of Duke Divinity School, were presented with the Distinguished Service Award. The Queer Delegate Caucus, whose organizing helped shape the historic actions of the 2024 General Conference, received the Contemporary History Trailblazer Award.

Courtesy of UMNews



Proposal moves forward for new connectional ministries agency

NASHVILLE, Tenn.–The proposal to unify four general agencies of The United Methodist Church–Discipleship Ministries, Global Ministries, Higher Education and Ministry and United Methodist Communications–to create a new connectional ministries agency has passed its next significant milestone.

During the 2026 fall board meetings of these agencies, board members voted to approve the recommended new agency name and the drafted unification legislation. The legislation will now advance to a review by the Standing Committee on Regional Conference Matters.

The boards adopted United Methodist Mission & Ministry Agency as the proposed unified agency's name. Before the board voted, a survey to vet possible names was sent to board members of the four proposed unifying agencies, as well as regional and annual conference communicators and agency communicators, to gather input from across the United Methodist connection. The recommended name, United Methodist Mission and Ministry Agency, received the broadest support for its clarity and timelessness in representing the unified agency's ongoing, global and diverse ministry work.

The legislation creates a single incorporated agency, governed by one 40-member board that reflects a balance of clergy, laywomen and laymen, with broad geographic, racial, age and cultural diversity. The draft combines the four agencies' current work with the amendments each agency has already submitted.

The proposed single agency will be made up of four ministry units that resource and support the worldwide ministries of the UMC. Each will hold distinct areas of responsibility:

- Mission, Humanitarian Relief and Health: Connecting the church in mission and alleviating human suffering.
- Higher Education and Ministry: Connecting the church and the academy and developing transformational leaders for the church and world.
- Discipleship and Spiritual Formation: Assisting the church in making disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Communication: Leading the denomination's communication, public relations and marketing as the global communications body of The United Methodist Church.

Two subsidiaries–the United Methodist Committee on Relief and The Upper Room–will remain in place under the unified agency, with their boards elected by the agency's board.

The UnifyingForImpact.org website remains the go-to resource for details and updates on this proposal.

Pending approval of legislation at the 2028 General Conference, the new United Methodist Mission & Ministry Agency will become the legal successor to all four predecessor agencies effective at the event's close.

A new board will be formed for 2029–2032, and a transition plan will be developed to help facilitate a smooth unification process.



Fun (and some T-shirts!)

Faith UMC, Kingstree, presented "Boots On The Ground" Sept 19. Everyone created their own color-dye T-shirt, plus there were games, line dances and food. Chairperson was Kaye Cooper with staff. Music was supplied by Faith's new pastor, the Rev. Edwin Cooper, and his wife, Deborah. On Sept. 27, the congregation gathered for a picture displaying the T-shirts they made for Dress-Down Sunday.







Historical Society
by the Rev. Victoria Richardson and the Rev. Meredith Dark

A history of Enoch Chapel

In 1865, Enoch and Clara Williams, who had previously held church service in a spare room of their home along with many other God-fearing members of the community, founded Enoch Chapel Church in Lambs.

These people expressed a need and a desire to serve God and worship with each other. The class mother was Clara Williams. There were two class leaders, Enoch Williams and John Moultrie, and they were also local preachers. Willie Brown served as the treasurer of the church. Prayer meeting was held on Tuesday nights, a Love Feast was held on Thursday nights and a worship service was every Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

In 1904, church members David McKeever and Frank Watson, who both worked at the Charleston Mine Company, spoke with William Hutchinson, superintendent of the Charleston Mine Company, about giving a portion of the land to the members of this group to build a church. The Charleston Mine Company agreed to give the land, and Enoch Chapel Methodist Church was built.

The members at that time included Elijah Smith, John Moultrie, Enoch Williams, Clara Williams, Frank Watson, David McKeever, Samuel Ward, Anna Sinclair, Robert McKeever, Maggie Smalls, John Hagood, Clara Bell Evans, Missy Heyward, Maggie Hagood, Adriean Hagood, James Hagood Sr. and Mose Montgomery. William Montgomery Sr., the Rev. James Hagood Sr. and the Rev. James Hagood served as class leaders. Mose Montgomery served as Sunday school superintendent. The Rev. J. Cunningham was the pastor and the Rev. James Rivers and the Rev. James Hagood Sr. acted as his assistants.

In 1948, the Airport of Charleston bought the property previously owned by the Charleston Mine Company, and therefore Enoch Chapel Church was relocated and reestablished at Liberty Park in North Charleston. The pastoral leadership was in the careful hands of the Rev. S. B. Hamilton, the Rev. Joe Rogers and Assistant Pastor the Rev. James Hagood Sr., and the Rev. L. A. Gelzer was the district superintendent.

In 1962, because of the construction of Interstate 26, the church was rebuilt at the current location, 2355 James Bell Drive (formerly Chime Street), North Charleston. The Rev. C. J. Johnson was the pastor. His assistants were the Rev. Benjamin Mood, the Rev. James Hagood Sr. and Evangelist Virginia Tucker. There have been several pastors since Johnson such as the Rev. Jacobs Bennekin, the Rev. Issac Smalls, the Rev. L. J. Graham, the Rev. Joseph Stretch, the Rev. Omega F. Newman, the Rev. Sam Lucas Jr. and Pastor Benjamin T. Rivers Sr.

Enoch Chapel's first theme was: "Here by God's Grace," which certainly identifies the tenacity, resilience and fortitude of the membership of the small but proud church.

In 2005, Enoch Chapel was blessed with Pastor Victoria Richardson of Huger. A new theme was adopted by Richardson: "The Small Church with the Big Heart," meaning the church may be small in numbers, but Enoch Chapel has a big heart.

Enoch Chapel shows its love in the community with an annual fish fry and a clothes drive for the last 21 years. Richardson has helped the church start many programs such as the A.S.S.I.S.T. after school program, weekly youth vacation Bible school and children's ministry.

Today Enoch Chapel is 75 percent seniors and 25 percent young adults. "The Small Church with the Big Heart" is continuing to grow in God's word under the leadership of Richardson.

In 2026, Enoch Chapel is anticipating another relocation as the Department of Transportation has come and given an estimate for the property value.

Through the history of the church, the church members and ministers can attest to God's love and care. Be in prayer for Enoch Chapel, Richardson and the next step of their journey together as a church family.

Mount Sinai honored with historical marker

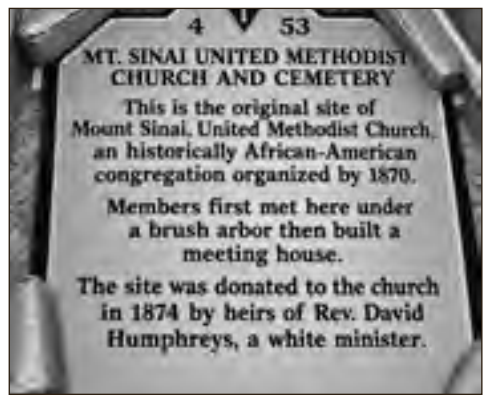
Mount Sinai United Methodist Church, Anderson, has received its long-awaited historical marker from the South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

The marker has been in the making for more than nine months and was shipped from Ohio.

After filing and documenting the historical value of the church and the adjoining cemetery, the marker was approved.

Historian Liz Shaw was instrumental in this obtaining this achievement for the church.

On April 15, 2025, Shaw filed an application for a historical marker for the church and its historical cemetery. After much research and documentation, this application was finally approved Jan. 15 by Dr. Edwin Breeden, coordinator of the South Carolina Historical Marker Program. Exactly eight months later, it was shipped to the church.



The marker has been in the making for more than nine months and was shipped from Ohio.

A dedication ceremony will be held in Spring 2027 to honor this designation.



From the Archives
by Dr. Phillip Stone

Notes from a century ago

In the 1920s, fall was Annual Conference season in South Carolina. As the weather presumably turned cooler in November 1926, South Carolina Methodists were thinking and writing about the connection.

As churches found themselves in transition, so did the *Advocate*, as the Rev. E. O. Watson took over the editorship following the close of the Upper South Carolina Conference.

The Upper South Carolina Conference had convened in Rock Hill in late October at the new sanctuary of St. John's Church. Members commented on the thoughtful preaching they heard from Bishop Edwin Mouzon, who was a South Carolina native. The *Advocate* also carried the journal of proceedings and reports for the conference for readers who had not attended. They did the same for the South Carolina Conference a few weeks later.

The Nov. 4 issue also contained a lengthy account of the memorial service for the Rev. Edward S. Jones, who had been the Columbia district superintendent and who had died in an automobile accident in mid-October outside of Spartanburg. Clergy knew better than many of the poor condition of the state's growing road network as the state was moving out of the horse and buggy era. The decision to publish the entire eulogy, given at Washington Street Church, no doubt reflected the conference's shock at losing one of its leading voices.


SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE

Image courtesy of Dr. Phillip Stone

From the archives
This October 1926 Advocate front page shows St. John's Methodist Church in Rock Hill.

Later issues in November previewed the South Carolina Conference, which was meeting in Bennettsville. They also carried numerous news notes about farewell sermons for ministers as well as messages about welcome sermons in new pulpits.

Professor D. D. Wallace's columns mentioned issues that would ring familiar today. He explained a Supreme Court decision that affirmed the president's removal power, and he recapped the 1926 midterm elections, which might be something we'll be thinking about in November ourselves. And Prohibition was also in the news, with supporters claiming a strong national mandate on continuing the ban on alcohol.

The *Advocate* also commented on a notorious lynching that took place in October in Aiken. Calling it a "horrible, fiendish crime," the paper noted that the murder of three Black residents of Aiken came after they were acquitted of the charges for which the lynch mob murdered them. The crime came to be known as the Lowman lynching, which took place on Oct. 8, 1926, and no one was ever charged in the crime.

Finally, one article featured calls for relief and assistance for homes and churches damaged or destroyed in South Florida. The article noted more than 50 churches had been damaged and 16 had been destroyed, along with eight parsonages. Thousands had lost their homes and all their belongings, and it made special note of how many pastors had seen their personal libraries blown away. While the Red Cross could help individuals, they could not help churches rebuild, nor could they help pay salaries of ministers who could no longer be paid by their congregations. The *Advocate* called on South Carolinians to help with rebuilding or repairing damaged churches.

As we remember our own losses from hurricanes in this state, it's good to know that the work that organizations like United Methodist Committee on Relief do today have their roots in the care Methodists have shown for others throughout our history.

Stone is archivist for the South Carolina Conference and Wofford College.



Photo by Kendrick Huggins and Toni Strawther

Celebrating 159 years of ministry
Mount Zion UMC, Kingstree, recently celebrated 159 years of ministry. The theme of the celebration was "Firm Foundation." Ministry activities included a one-day revival with guest preacher the Rev. Barry McFadden, pastor of St. Michael UMC, Kingstree. There was a Friday community Fish Fry, and Sunday service featured guest speaker Orangeburg District Superintendent the Rev. Kenneth Nelson sharing a powerful message, "Jesus Christ is a Firm Foundation." Nelson left Mount Zion members with this thought: What is God calling us to do?

Obituaries.

Edgar Lee Brown Jr.

WILLIAMSBURG, Va.—Edgar Lee Brown Jr., father of the Rev. Steven Brown, died Oct. 6, 2026. Rev. Brown is the superintendent of the Marion District, South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

A graveside service was held Oct. 24 at Williamsburg Memorial Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to St. Stephen Lutheran Church, 612 Jamestown Road, Williamsburg, VA 23185.

Mr. Brown is survived by his wife, Ingrid Seigert Brown, three daughters, two stepdaughters and son.

Elaine Knighton Carter

SPARTANBURG—Elaine Knighton Carter, wife of the Rev. James B. Carter, died Oct. 9, 2026. Rev. Carter is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

A graveside service was held Oct. 16 at Oak Grove Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to Hope Remains Youth Ranch, 1771 John Dodd Road, Wellford, SC 29385; or to Spartanburg Regional Foundation Hospice, 1692 Skylyn Drive, Spartanburg, SC 29307.

Mrs. Carter is survived by her husband.

Sarah Darlene Snow DeYoung

WOODRUFF—Sarah Darlene Snow DeYoung, sister of the Rev. Murray Snow, died Oct. 7, 2026. Rev. Snow is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Oct. 12 at Sharon Methodist Church with burial in Sharon Methodist Cemetery.

Mrs. DeYoung is survived by her two daughters.

Rev. Jason Charlie Duncan Sr.



Duncan Sr.

GREER—The Rev. Jason Charlie "J.C." Duncan Sr., a retired local pastor of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Oct. 2, 2026.

Prior to his retirement in 1998, Rev. Duncan served the Greer-Liberty, Liberty-Campobello and Greer-Liberty charges.

Funeral services were held Oct. 6 at The Wood Mortuary Chapel.

Memorials may be made to Shriners Hospitals for Children, 950 W. Faris Road, Greenville, SC 29605.

Rev. Duncan is survived by his son.

William Pinckney Edwards Sr.

GREENVILLE—William Pinckney Edwards Sr., father of the Rev. Keyla Edwards, died Oct. 15, 2026. Rev. Edwards is a member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church currently on leave.

Funeral services were held Oct. 19 at St. Mark UMC, Taylors, with burial on Oct. 26 in M.J. Dolly Veterans Cemetery, Anderson.

Mr. Edwards is survived by his wife, Orrie B. Edwards, two sons and daughter.

Bettye Clyde Henderson Holston

ATHENS—Bettye Clyde Henderson Holston, mother of Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, died Oct. 12, 2026. Bishop Holston is the former bishop of the South Carolina Conference and current bishop of the North Alabama and Alabama-West Florida conferences of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Oct. 19 at Athens First UMC with burial in Evergreen Memorial Park.

Memorials may be made to the Bettye Henderson Holston Elementary School, 205 Alps Road, Athens, GA 30606.

Mrs. Holston is survived by her two sons.

Sam Lucas Jr.



Lucas Jr.

GOOSE CREEK—Sam Lucas Jr. died Sept. 29, 2026. Mr. Lucas was a former local pastor of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Oct. 5 at Mount Nebo UMC, Pineville, with burial in the church cemetery.

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

Henrietta Rosson Morton

GREENWOOD—Henrietta Rosson Morton, widow of the Rev. Theodore Morton Jr., died Sept. 26, 2026.

A memorial service will be announced at a later date with a private burial in Elmwood Cemetery, Columbia.

Memorials may be made to the Henrietta R. Morton Scholarship, The South Carolina United Methodist Foundation, P.O. Box 5087, Columbia, SC 29250-5087.

Mrs. Morton is survived by her two sons and daughter.

Rev. Barbee Olis Parsons



Parsons

LUGOFF—The Rev. Barbee Olis Parsons, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Sept. 28, 2026.

Prior to his retirement in 2000, Rev. Parsons served the East Chesterfield, Ashland-Hebron, McBee, Graniteville-St. John, Walhalla-St. Luke-Zion, Cannons, Pamplico-Prospect, Fountain Inn-Trinity, Lugoff-St. John's, Trinity-Bamberg and Bethany charges. Following his retirement, he served the St. Matthew Circuit and Wesley Chapel charges.

Funeral services were held Oct. 3 at Power's Funeral Home.

Memorials may be made to Epworth Children's Home, P.O. Box 50466, Columbia, SC 29250.

Rev. Parsons is survived by his wife, Barbara Parson, three sons and daughter.

Shirley Faye Salser Tipton

RACINE, Ohio—Shirley Faye Salser Tipton, mother of the Rev. Vaughn CroweTipton, died Sept. 1, 2026. Rev. CroweTipton is the pastor of Liberty United Methodist Church, Liberty. His wife, Beverly, is the pastor of Zion UMC, Anderson.

Funeral services were held Sept. 12 at the Anderson McDaniel Funeral Home, Pomeroy, Ohio, with burial in Letart Falls Cemetery.

Mrs. Tipton is survived by her son.



Resource Center.

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.

Advent Can Still Change the World

(DVD3044CA=) Author: Scott, Josh. 4 sessions, 9-10 min/bk/2026.

This four-week Advent study invites you into the historical and cultural world of the nativity narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Explore how the birth of Jesus fulfills Old Testament hopes, revealing God entering human history as the Word made flesh. Age: YAS. CC.

God's Surprises for the Christmas Season

(DVD3045CA=) Author: Robb, Susan. 4 sessions, 10-12 min/bk/2026.

See the Christmas story through the lens of disruption and delight. From Mary's unexpected calling and Joseph's change of plans, to shepherds startled by angels and magi redirected by a dream, the people of the Nativity all discovered that God's interruptions brought life, joy and hope. In this Advent study, pastor and teacher Susan Robb explores how our own broken plans may open the way for God's presence and how every holy surprise carries a blessing. Age: YAS. CC.

The Strength to Carry

(DVD3046CA=) Author: Toney, Lisa. 4 sessions with introduction, 10-19 min//participant's wbk/2026.

The Strength to Carry DVD brings author Lisa Toney directly to your group, guiding women through this heartfelt journey into Mary's story and its profound lessons for the life we didn't choose. With warmth and insight, Toney illuminates the faith, courage and quiet trust that carried Mary through unexpected circumstances, making the richness of this Advent Bible study accessible to all women. Age: YAS. CC.

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





Adult Lessons
by the Rev. Sharon Spann Gamble

About the Author
Gamble is an ordained elder in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, serving faithfully for 15 years. She currently attends services at the Rock Hill Charge in the Rock Hill District.

When God Calls Us Back

Nov. 1
Lesson 9: "Mourning Clothes"
Focal: Jonah 1:1 -2; 3:1–10
Background Text: Jonah 1:1–4:11
Key Verse: Jonah 3:6-7

When a national leader dies, a country enters public mourning. Flags drop to half-staff, communities pause and people collectively acknowledge that something weighty has occurred. These gestures are not empty symbolism; they communicate that life has been disrupted and that the nation must stop, reflect and respond. Public mourning is grief made visible.

Scripture treats mourning with this same embodied seriousness. In the Hebrew world, mourning was never quiet or internal. It involved tearing garments, wearing sackcloth, sitting in ashes, fasting and lamenting aloud. Mourning declared that life had been shaken and that the community needed God's intervention.

This is the scene in Jonah 3:6-7. When Jonah's warning reached the palace, "the word came to the king of Nineveh," striking him with urgency. His response was immediate and humble. He rose from his throne, symbolically stepping down from power. He removed his royal robe, laying aside privilege. He covered himself with sackcloth, the garment of grief and repentance. Then he sat in ashes, the posture of one who knows judgment is deserved.

But the king did not stop with personal mourning. He issued a national decree, commanding every person—and even the animals—to join in the lament. This was not political theater. It was a radical, kingdomwide act of repentance. The king understood that mourning is not merely sorrow; it is a turning point. It acknowledges that the nation's way of life has been broken and must change. Nineveh's mourning became Nineveh's repentance. Their grief became their transformation.

Just as a nation lowers its flags to mark the death of a leader, Nineveh lowered its pride to mark the death of its sinful ways. Both acts declare the same truth: we must pause, acknowledge what has happened and respond differently. Jonah teaches that repentance begins with honest mourning. When a people bow low, God lifts them with grace.

Reflection Question: Where is God inviting you to "put on mourning clothes"—to move beyond spoken repentance and adopt a posture of humility that makes room for real transformation?

Nov. 8
Lesson 10: "Showers of Forgiveness"
Focal Passage: 6:1-3
Background Text: Hosea 4:1-5:15
Key Verse: Hosea 6:3

Imagine the world of "Les Misérables." Jean Valjean stands trembling before the bishop, caught in his theft and expecting judgment. Instead, he receives mercy—mercy so extravagant it breaks him open. That moment becomes the turning point of his life. Valjean does not simply receive grace; he learns to know it. And knowing, in the biblical sense, means allowing mercy to reshape one's character, choices and future.

This is the heart of Hosea 6:3. The Hebrew word "yada"—"to know"—is not intellectual awareness but covenantal intimacy. It is relational knowledge that transforms a person the way grace transformed Valjean. Hosea invites Israel into that deep, lifealtering knowing.

But Israel, in Hosea 4:1–5:15, does not know God in this way. They have abandoned the Ten Commandments, living as though God's covenant were optional. Their problem is not lack of information but lack of faithfulness. God cries, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"—not because knowledge was hidden, but because they refused it. Even the priests, entrusted to guard and teach the covenant, have become corrupt, leading the nation deeper into sin.

So when Israel proclaims, "Let us know the Lord; let us press on to know him," their lips speak devotion, but their lives reveal betrayal. Their confession is thin as morning mist; their repentance evaporates with the rising sun. Hosea exposes the gap between confession and character. True knowing requires returning, repenting and realigning life with God's heart.

Then comes the promise: God's response is as certain as the dawn and as refreshing as rain. His coming is faithful, cleansing and renewing. The "showers of forgiveness" fall not on those who merely speak repentance but on those who embody it. Hosea invites us into that same journey—not to speak repentance, but to live it.

Reflection Question: Where in your life is God inviting you to press on to know him more deeply—so that his "showers of forgiveness" can soften what has grown dry, distant or resistant within you?

Nov. 15
Lesson 11 "The Holy One in our Midst"
Focal Passage: Hosea 11:1–12
Background Text: Hosea 11:1–12
Key Verse: Hosea 11:8–9

Hosea 11 opens with one of Scripture's most tender portraits of God: a parent teaching a toddler to walk, bending down to feed, lifting Israel to his cheek. This is not fragile affection. The Hebrew "rachamim"—rooted in the womb—describes love that is visceral, protective and unwilling to abandon its child. God's compassion is covenantal commitment, love that acts, restores, accompanies and heals.

Yet Israel resists this love. The chapter moves through five painful stages: covenantal care, punishment, God's anguish, repentance and truth. God remembers shaping Israel with cords of kindness, but Israel pulls away. Their refusal leads to consequences—not as divine revenge, but as the painful boundary of covenant life. Then comes the most startling moment: God's heart breaks. "My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender." Divine love wrestles with divine justice.

This is the heart of Hosea 11:8-9. God names Israel's betrayal with brutal honesty—"How can I give you up, Ephraim?"—yet refuses to let judgment have the final word. God's anguish reveals a love so fierce it restrains wrath. "I will not execute my fierce anger ... for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst." Israel's ingratitude does not cancel God's presence. Holiness, in Hosea, is not cold distance but burning mercy.

Modern readers glimpse this in "The Shack," where Mack meets a God whose compassion confronts pain and rebuilds trust. Compassion does more than feel sorry; it restores and transforms.

Today, the church causes God pain when it chooses judgment over mercy, protects institutions more than people or ignores suffering. Yet many of us have known moments when God bent low—offering strength, comfort, forgiveness or hope. Hosea assures us that the Holy One is still in our midst, refusing to give up on us.

Reflection Question: How will we respond to such persistent compassion?

Nov. 22
Lesson 12: Flourish and Blossom
Focal Text: Hosea 14:1–9
Background Text: Hosea 12–13
Key Verse: Hosea 14:7

Hosea 14 stands as the final, hopeful movement of a book filled with warning, heartbreak and divine longing. After the painful indictments of Hosea 12-13—chapters that expose Israel's long drift from covenant faithfulness—God offers a stunning invitation: "Return to the Lord." Israel's idolatry, political games and false security had created an illusion of flourishing. Their prosperity masked spiritual decay. God expected more and still expects more from his people today.

Hosea 12 recalls Jacob's story, reminding Israel that their identity began with struggle, dependence and mercy. Hosea 13 intensifies the warning: idols will fail, selfmade strength will collapse and ingratitude will lead to ruin. Israel cannot wander from God and later expect to resume life unchanged. True returning requires responsibility—naming the choices that led them astray and acknowledging the distance they created.

Into this moment, Hosea 14:7 offers a vision of restoration: "They shall return and dwell beneath My shadow; they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine." The imagery is agricultural, but the promise is spiritual. To dwell under God's shadow is to live in his protection and presence. Flourishing like grain evokes stability and nourishment. Blossoming like the vine suggests beauty, fruitfulness and joy. Repentance is not merely turning from sin; it is turning toward life.

A modern parallel comes from the life of Steve Jobs. Early success fed his pride, and he mistreated colleagues, believing himself untouchable. When Apple fired him, the fall forced him to confront his behavior and return to what mattered. His greatest flourishing came only after humility, honesty and renewed purpose. Like Israel, he discovered that true growth begins with returning.

Hosea invites us to take words with us—confession, renunciation of idols and a plea for mercy. And God responds with healing, love and the promise that we will flourish and blossom again.

Reflection Question: Where is God inviting you to return so that your life may once again flourish and blossom under his shadow?

Nov. 29
Lesson 13: Test or Trust
Focal Text: Isaiah 7:10–25
Background Text: Isaiah 7, II Kings 16
Key Verse: Isaiah 7:11-12

King Ahaz stands in a moment of national crisis. Syria and Israel threaten Judah, and fear pushes him toward political alliances rather than spiritual dependence. Instead of seeking God, he seeks Assyria, choosing human strategy over divine security. Into this anxious moment, God sends Isaiah—and instructs him to bring his son, ShearJashub, whose name means "A remnant shall return." The child becomes a living sermon, a reminder that God will preserve his people, yet judgment awaits those who refuse to trust him.

Then God does something astonishing. He invites Ahaz to put him to the test: "Ask for a sign ... as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven." This is not arrogance; it is grace. God offers proof of his faithfulness; a divine assurance tailored to Ahaz's fear.

But Ahaz refuses. Cloaking his unbelief in religious language, he says, "I will not test the Lord." His refusal is not humility but resistance. He prefers the security he can control over the promise God freely offers. In the Wesleyan and United Methodist tradition, this moment reflects God's prevenient grace: God reaches toward Ahaz before Ahaz ever reaches toward God. The sign is not a test of God's ego but a gift meant to strengthen faith.

This tension mirrors our own lives. We profess faith yet grasp for control. We declare "God is with us" but act as though we stand alone. Isaiah 7 invites us to choose trust over fear, surrender over self-reliance.

Advent echoes this call. It is a season of discernment, a time to examine what—and whom—we trust. "God with us" means God is present in our fears, compromises, wars and politics. His plan is not the backup plan; it is the main plan.

United Methodist theology reminds us that God's grace is active, invitational and trustworthy—even in seasons of fear. We actively wait for Christ's second coming because his first coming—Immanuel—already changed everything.

Reflection Question: Where are you choosing control over trust—and what sign might God already be placing before you?

Happenings.

Event Calendar.

October

Oct. 29-31—Summit on the Black Church, Doubletree, Columbia. Register: https://www.umcsc.org/october2026summitregistration/

Oct. 31—Halloween

Oct. 31—Doggie Tricks for Treats and Blessings pop-up event hosted by Columbia UMC, Bark Park Earlewood Park, Columbia, 2-4 p.m.

November

Native American Heritage Month

Nov. 1—All Saints Day

Nov. 1—Daylight Saving Time Ends

Nov. 2—All Souls' Day

Nov. 3—Election Day

Nov. 4-6—The Wonder Summit: Reimagining Congregational Worship & Prayer with Children, Lake Junaluska, NC. https://thewondersummit.org

Nov. 7—Fall ERT Basic Training, Dacusville UMC, Easley, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. $30. https://www.umcsc.org/ertregistration/

Nov. 7—Fall Bazaar & Garage Sale, Shiloh UMC, Gilbert, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Nov. 8—Organ and Tissue Donor Sunday

Nov. 8—Veterans' Day Service, Joseph B. Bethea UMC, Myrtle Beach, 11 a.m. https://www.josephbbetheaumc.org

Nov. 8—Third Annual Tailgating Sunday, I. DeQuincey Newman UMC, Columbia, 9 a.m.

Nov. 9—Orangeburg District Connectional Ministries meeting, St. Mark UMC, North, 6:30-8 p.m.

Nov. 9—Clergy Connexion Monthly meeting, Trenholm Road UMC, Columbia, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. For information, email Matt Alexander, mlalexander@umcsc.org, or Jad Taylor, jdtayloriii@umcsc.org

Nov. 11—Veterans Day

Nov. 11—Veterans Day Concert, Carteret Street UMC, Beaufort, 6:15 p.m.

Nov. 12—Killingsworth Annual Gala, The Moore Building, State Fairgrounds, Columbia, 6-9 p.m.

Nov. 13—LSM School (Columbia District), Trinity UMC, Blythewood, 5-8:30 p.m. $40. https://go.advocatesc.org/columbia-lsm-nov2026

Nov. 14—LSM School (Columbia District), Trinity UMC, Blythewood, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. $40. https://go.advocatesc.org/columbia-lsm-nov2026

Nov. 18—Clergy Orders featuring Dr. Michael Beck, Lexington UMC, Lexington, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Nov. 20-22—Immerse, Asbury Hills Camp and Retreat Center, Cleveland. https://scmyp.org/mountain-immerse-registration/

Nov. 22—Christ the King/Reign of Christ Sunday

Nov. 26—Thanksgiving

Nov. 26—27th Annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner, Hudson's Seafood, Hilton Head Island, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Nov. 26—Annual Thanksgiving Buffet, Lakeside Terrace Hotel, Lake Junaluska. https://bit.ly/LJThanksgiving2026

Nov. 26-27—United Methodist Center closed

December

Dec. 14—Clergy Connexion Monthly meeting, Trenholm Road UMC, Columbia, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. For information, email Matt Alexander, mlalexander@umcsc.org, or Jad Taylor, jdtayloriii@umcsc.org

Dec. 20—Longest Night Service, South Main Chapel and Mercy Center, Anderson, 6 p.m. https://southmainmercy.org

Dec. 24—Christmas Eve

Dec. 24-28—United Methodist Center closed

Dec. 25—Christmas Day

Dec. 26-Jan. 1—Kwanzaa

Dec. 31—New Year's Eve/Watch Night

January

Jan. 1—United Methodist Center closed

Jan. 3—Epiphany Sunday

Jan. 6—Epiphany of the Lord

Jan. 10—Baptism of the Lord

Jan. 11— Clergy Connexion Monthly meeting, Trenholm Road UMC, Columbia, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. For information, email Matt Alexander, mlalexander@umcsc.org, or Jad Taylor, jdtayloriii@umcsc.org

Jan. 11—Orangeburg District Connectional Ministries meeting, St. Mark UMC, North, 6:30-8 p.m.

Jan. 17—Human Relations Day

Jan. 18—Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Jan. 18—United Methodist Center closed

Jan. 24—Ecumenical Sunday



Children's Sermon
by the Rev. Meg Cook

Don't bury your gifts!

Children's Sermon:
Date: Sunday, Nov. 15
Scripture: Matthew 25:14–30
Time frame: 3 minutes (aiming for 3–5 minutes max)
Supplies: A cardboard box, a shovel, and a bag of Hershey's Kisses (check the label for allergens)

Do: Welcome the children.

Say: I have a box and this bag of Hershey's Kisses. Look! It's brand new and unopened! I love chocolate so much. I think I'm going to bury it to save it forever or maybe until next year. It'll still be good next year, right? (Pause for responses.)

Ask: Is burying this candy a good idea? (Pause.)

No, you're right. The chocolate might get yucky, and bugs might get into it and ruin it. A cardboard box won't keep it safe underground. What would be a better choice for all this chocolate? (Pause for ideas.)

Hmm, those are some good ideas, but I think maybe the best idea is to share it. Don't you think? I'll give you one in just a little bit, right after I tell you today's Bible story.

Trying to figure out what to do with this chocolate reminds me of our story today from Matthew 25:14–30.

Jesus told a parable, a story to teach us, about a master and three servants. Before the master went away, he gave each servant some money. One received five talents, another received two and the last received one. Talent was a kind of money back then.

The first servant used the five talents and earned five more. The servant with two talents earned two more. Wow! The master was pleased with them. But the servant who received one talent was afraid. So what did that servant do? Buried it! Just like I was going to bury this chocolate.

When the master returned, he was pleased with the servants who had put what they were given to use. But he was unhappy with the servant who buried the money instead of doing anything with it.

Ask: I wonder what Jesus was trying to teach us. What do you think? (Pause for responses.)

Maybe Jesus was teaching us to be brave and use what we have been given. In the story, the talents were money. But we can also think about the gifts God gives us: Things we're good at, ways we can help and ways we can show love. We don't have to be the best at something, and we don't have to be unafraid. Sometimes we feel scared to try something new. That's okay! We can be brave even when we feel afraid. Jesus invites us to use our gifts to help others, share God's love and grow God's kingdom. It's better to try than to bury our gifts because we're afraid of making a mistake.

Do: Hold up the bag of chocolate.

Say: And speaking of sharing our gifts, I think this chocolate will do a lot more good if I share it than if I bury it!

Do: Hand out the candy.

Say: Will you pray with me?

Prayer: Dear God (echo), we love you (echo). Help us use our gifts (echo). Help us share with others (echo). Help us be brave and bold (echo) and share your love (echo) with everyone we meet (echo). Amen (echo).

Cook pastors Grace United Methodist Church, Columbia, and is the author of the Herbert the Hippo series from the Advocate Press, which is available at https://www.advocatepress.org.

Classifieds.

Jobs

Coordinator of Discipleship

For Ashland UMC, Columbia. Full-time, $50,000–$64,500. Lead discipleship ministries for all ages; recruit and train volunteers; coordinate outreach, newcomer engagement, and new member classes; plan VBS, retreats, and events; more. Sundays/some evenings required. Requires bachelor's in education, ministry, or related, ministry experience, and United Methodist familiarity. Send cover letter, resume, and three references to pastor@ashland-umc.org. Applications reviewed until filled.

Music Director Wanted

St. Luke's UMC, Bluffton, SC, is seeking a Music Director to lead and grow the church's music ministry. Includes conducting chancel choir and administering music program. To apply, contact St. Luke's UMC at 843-705-3022.

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SHANDON HELPS KILLINGSWORTH

From Page 1

Still, the Lord nudged him—and kept nudging him.

"When I read the story, I said, 'You know, this is something we can do, and if not us, then who?'" Lentz said.

A year later, those repairs are now complete, and the women of Killingsworth once more have a safe, clean and functional place to live where they can begin the hard work of transforming their lives after crisis.

And it's all thanks to the United Methodist connection.

Cautious but thorough assessment

Susan Sirmons, Killingsworth executive director, said the house was built in 1902 and had major issues affecting its staff and residents, most significant of which were plumbing and heating and air problems. A leak in a shower had caused damage, putting one bathroom out of commission. For some time they had only two working bathrooms for as many as 18 women living in the home.

In existence for almost 80 years, Killingsworth was initially a boarding house for Christian women seeking higher education, but today it houses women who are emerging from difficult life situations, whether addiction, incarceration, abuse or trauma, helping them learn needed skills in a safe, Christian environment before fully entering the community.

But with such major repairs looming, Sirmons and the Killingsworth board were worried. It costs from $20,000 to $30,000 to run the home each month between insurance costs, upkeep and staff, and they barely have enough funds to stay operational, let alone finance the repairs needed.

When Sirmons got the call from Lentz, she began to feel hopeful.

"Initially we thought they were just coming in to take a look at the issues and offer us advice, looking at what we needed to get done and getting estimates on how much it all would cost," Sirmons said.

After all, Lentz wasn't certain whether the home could be fixed.

"We didn't want to go into an old, old building, spend a lot of money and have it not be long-term," Lentz explained. "That was the challenge we faced, so we cautiously moved down the road."

'Just blessed'

But with help from Pat Kirk of Kirk Commercial Construction, as well as help from others on the trustees, missions and property committees, they did a full assessment of the property and realized the repairs were not only doable, but affordable. Shandon trustees voted to fund up to $90,000 in repairs.

The repairs were completed in September. Shandon also provided Killingsworth with a complete floor plan with the exact square footage of the historic home, something they didn't have prior to this. The final cost ended up being a bit less than what they had estimated, so they plan to use the remainder to help fund painting the affected spaces so the home is not only functional but a beautiful space where the residents can grow and flourish.

Sirmons and the residents are overjoyed at Shandon's generosity.

"I was over the moon. The biggest word is just blessed," she said. "This has been a struggle for quite a while. People don't really understand how Killingsworth works. When they see big fundraisers like the gala, they assume we have a lot of money, but we are a nonprofit; it takes so much to run it."

'Someone cared'

The Rev. Smoke Kanipe, Shandon's senior pastor, said he's grateful Shandon was able to help Killingsworth.

"A number of generous donors have blessed Shandon UMC with a missions endowment fund, which we are able to use for major projects. When we read in the *Advocate* of Killingsworth's needs, it was a perfect opportunity to support this wonderful ministry that has been changing the lives of women in crisis for so many years," Kanipe said.

Lentz said he knows God was at the helm in making this happen.

"I personally think the good Lord called me to read that article and to realize we can utilize our gift from the foundation for this special cause," he said. "We saw something we were unsure of, saw something we did not know if we could make an impact, and at the tail end, now we see something that is certain, that can continue the over 78 years they have been doing this."

Lentz, Kanipe and other Shandon members gathered Oct. 11 with Killingsworth residents, staff and board members to celebrate the completed work and hold a rededication service.



Photo by Jamie Collins

Susan Sirmons, Robert Lentz and Killingsworth staff member Katina Watson share a smile at the home's rededication.

Seeing the smiles on everyone's faces was heartening, they said.

"One of the ladies said, 'One of the things that really touched me was that someone cared enough for us to do this,'" Lentz recalled, noting that comment hit home.

Kanipe said he experienced much the same talking with a Killingsworth staff member.

"She said, 'As important as the actual renovation is, what is truly life-changing is for these women to realize that there are people in the community who care about them. That has not always been their experience,'" Kanipe said.

For more on Killingsworth, visit their website at https://www.killingsworth.org. To see more photos from the dedication, visit https://go.advocatesc.org/shandon-killingsworth.



