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February 2019

Special session of General Conference: Almost there

By Jessica Brodie

Delegates and other church leaders are in the final stretch as they prepare this month to head to the special called session of General Conference to help the denomination move beyond its impasse on human sexuality.

The special session is slated for Feb. 23-26 at The Dome

in St. Louis. There, 16 delegates from South Carolina (eight clergy and eight laity, plus their alternates) will join the 864 total men and women who are delegates from each conference in The United Methodist Church.

The *Advocate* will be at the special session covering the event for South Carolina readers, and South Carolina Resi-

dent Bishop L. Jonathan Holston is calling on clergy and laity in this state to join him in daily, focused prayer that the church continue doing God's work in the world no matter what happens at GC2019.

See "General Conference," Page 9

Killingsworth casts new 'vision net'



Killingsworth residents chat with staff in the living room of the historic Columbia home, where they have come seeking transformation and a way out of crisis.

Photo by Matt Brodie

Crisis residence seeks new director, new perspective on current issues facing women as it approaches 75th anniversary

By Jessica Brodie

COLUMBIA—Three years from its 75th anniversary, a United Methodist home for women in crisis is casting what it calls a "new vision net" as it prepares to seek a new executive director and a new

perspective on current issues facing its female clientele.

"Just as our board of directors did in 1972, when we went from a boarding house for young Christian women to our current existence as a home for women

in various crisis situations, we're looking at a new vision for 2019," said Jeri Mckie, chair of the Killingsworth Board of Directors.

See "Killingsworth," Page 11

Tea Time program helps teens gain self worth

By Laura Camby McCaskill

BENNETTSVILLE—One program in rural South Carolina is broadening teens' sense of self-purpose and helping to reduce teen pregnancy.

In 2009, lifelong United Methodist Marian David spearheaded a mission of creating Tea Time with Teens, a program in the Bennettsville-Cheraw area that not only helps establish a solid foundation for teens, but also teaches them about their self-worth.

"South Carolina is one of the highest in the nation for teen pregnancy," said David. "The community is rural farmland. There's nothing to do here—no skating rinks, bowling alleys, free dance classes, movies (or) recreational activities of any kind."

To lower the pregnancy rate, Tea Time with Teens was created to celebrate these girls and provide fun opportunities. It provides a space for them to grow, explore and discover themselves.

"I grew up in a rural South Carolina United Methodist church," David said, so she can relate to what these girls are feeling. "The difference was I had these wonderful ladies who would have tea with us on Sundays. They would talk to us about our dreams. They'd constantly remind us we could do anything. They didn't talk down to us—

See "Tea Time," Page 24

UMCSC achieves 90.9 percent in apportionment giving

By Jessica Brodie

Numbers are in, and for the fourth year running, South Carolina United Methodists have paid more than 90 percent in apportionments.

The South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church closed 2018 with 90.9 percent in apportionment giving of the church's \$17.7 million total budget for the year. That percentage translates to \$16.1

million for church ministries, missions, programming and more across the 12 districts in South Carolina.

While the conference did not reach its 94 percent goal for the year, financial lead-

ers applaud the generosity and enthusiasm displayed by the 953 UMCs in the state that paid some or all of their apportionments,

See "Apportionments," Page 11

Churches to visit prisoners with their prayers this Lent

By Jessica Brodie

SENECA—One Upstate church is hoping to heed Jesus's call to visit people in prison through weekly, intentional and specific prayer during the season of Lent.

Through a project called "Visit Prison with Your Prayers," St. Mark United Methodist Church, Seneca, plans to pray each week for a number of prisoners living in South Carolina correctional facilities.

Many of these same prisoners spent the month of December in prayer for United Methodist churches and pastors across South Carolina, and inspired and humbled by their spirit of Christian love, St. Mark members hope to reciprocate with prayers of their own.

"Jesus said to visit those who are in prison, and this is a way we can help do that," said the Rev. Todd Davis, St. Mark pastor. "Lent can sometimes be a dark place depending on how

you focus on it, and I feel that the Lord walked a lonely journey knowing his destination was the cross. For us to consider as part of our Lenten journey people who are probably lonely every day and need hope in their lives, it's a way to be selfless like our Lord."

The prison prayers—Advent and Lent—are an extension ministry of Myrtle Beach Wesleyan College and Pilgrim Theological Seminary.

See "Pray for Prisoners," Page 10

Trauma relief clinic helps clients navigate pain through massage

By Laura Camby McCaskill

COLUMBIA—What started as a way to help women who had been sexually assaulted find relief and solace within a church setting has now become something more.

By offering the use of their facility, St. Mark United Methodist Church has been helping the community by housing a Trauma Relief Clinic, run for the past two years by Pamila Lorentz. The clinic started as a six-

week course as a partnership with Sexual Trauma Services of the Midlands, but it has evolved into a monthly meeting for people experiencing all kinds of trauma. Open to the public, men and women who self-identify with trauma caused by sexual assault, as well as other issues such as chronic illness and cancer, meet at St. Mark once a month for massage therapy offered by a handful of trained volunteers.

See "Trauma Relief," Page 12



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

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

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



One hundred backpacks were donated to the homeless, filled with toiletries, shirts, scarves, towels, gloves, socks, caps, first aid items and more.

Silver Hill seniors donate Backpacks for the Homeless

SPARTANBURG—Older adults at Silver Hill Memorial United Methodist Church donated Backpacks for the Homeless during Advent as a way to show love to the needy during the holidays.

The outreach project was organized by Mary Taylor, coordinator for Silver Hill's older adult ministry.

Each backpack featured a screen-printed message stating, "God loves you and we do too! Silver Hill Memorial United Methodist Church."

The backpacks were filled with toiletries, shirts, scarves, towels, gloves, socks, caps, first aid items and more, all donated by members of the older adult ministry. An invitation to attend Silver Hill Memorial UMC was also included in each backpack with information about the church and its ministries.

Members of the older adult ministry, along with college students of the church, packed 100 backpacks with these items during eight workshops. SPIHN, Spartanburg Soup Kitchen, Divinity Care and Miracle Hill Rescue Mission

received the backpacks for distribution to the homeless they serve.

"Members are energized and excited when there are opportunities to bless others by sharing their skills and talents with people in need," Taylor said.

Older adult ministries at Silver Hill advocates for older adults via programs that address their spiritual and physical needs, safety, health and socialization.

For more on Silver Hill and its ministries: <http://silverhillumc.com>.



UMC to host daylong mental health conference in Easley

EASLEY—When it comes to mental illness and mental health, the church can play a big role in helping people.

With that in mind, Bethesda United Methodist Church will host a daylong mental health conference Saturday, March 30.

"There Is No Health Without Mental Health: The Role of the Church in Addressing Mental Illness" begins with registration at 8:30 a.m. and runs from 9 a.m. until 2:30 p.m.

The mental health conference aims to accomplish three major objectives: To raise awareness of the role of the church in addressing various forms of mental illness and mental health; to decrease the stigma of mental illness; and to identify community resources for churches, those dealing with mental illness and their caregivers.

Bethesda UMC is at 516 Piedmont Road, Easley SC 29642. Cost is \$7 and includes lunch. To register: <http://anderson.umcsc.org>.

Whitten is UMCSA Hurricane Florence disaster recovery director

By Dan O'Mara

Tim Whitten's fondest memories in ministry come from having served and advocated for others, both personally and professionally.

Whitten—who started Jan. 14 as disaster recovery director to handle Hurricane Florence-related efforts in the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church—has had plenty of chances to do both since becoming a United Methodist in 2004.

Most of those opportunities have come in ministry at two South Carolina churches and one in Alabama, during his seminary studies at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, and while helping lead youth teams in Salkehatchie Summer Service and Alabama Rural Ministry, a United Methodist-related ministry similar to Salkehatchie.

"I enjoy the challenge of finding how to match the needs of a community with the resources available," said Whitten, 39, a native of California who grew up in Alabama. "Each new ministry opportunity presents a unique set of challenges and rewards, and I have learned a great deal from leading congregations and ministry teams over the last several years.

"I will be relying a lot on those experiences in this new position."

Whitten will report to the Rev. Kathy James, director of Connectional Ministries. The full-time position is funded by a grant from the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

"Tim brings experience in training and developing teams and starting programs that continue after he leaves," James said. "His compassion for persons in need and his leadership gifts will serve the conference well. I am looking forward to working with him."

Whitten will work from an office in Marion in the Marion District, which is centrally located within the area most affected by Hurricane Florence and its aftermath.

The September 2018 storm and subsequent flooding killed at least 55 people after making landfall in North Carolina, then striking northeastern South Carolina. It caused more than \$1 billion in property damage in South Carolina, and at least \$17 billion in damage in North Carolina.



Whitten

Ready to volunteer?

UMCSA Disaster Recovery needs volunteers to roof houses, repair siding, install Sheetrock, repair floors and other tasks to return South Carolina families to safe situations. Whether you can help for a couple of days or a week, whether you have an experienced team or you want to come alone and work alongside new friends, whether you are young or old, experienced or not, local or out-of-state, your time and talents are needed. To volunteer, contact UMCSA Disaster Recovery at s1recovery@umcsc.org or 803-726-3105.

"I'm really excited that Tim will be joining us in this important ministry," said the Rev. Tim Rogers, superintendent of the Marion District. "We are blessed to have someone with the kinds of gifts and abilities he possesses in what looks to be another multiyear recovery effort.

"But Tim can't do it alone. I encourage everyone to continue to volunteer whenever possible, and to pray daily for the people of South Carolina whose lives were devastated by this storm."

In his role as disaster recovery director, Whitten will lead the development and implementation of a long-term Hurricane Florence recovery strategy, and recruit, train and super-

vised a recovery staff.

Disaster recovery efforts related to the 2015 floods and 2016's Hurricane Matthew are expected to wrap up in the next few months, under the direction of Ward Smith.

Whitten will work closely with UMCOR, United Methodist Volunteers in Mission of South Carolina, UMVIM of the Southeastern Jurisdiction, local long-term recovery groups, the South Carolina Disaster Recovery Office, South Carolina Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster and National VOAD.

He draws much of his inspiration for service from Luke 10:25-37.

"The parable of the Good Samaritan speaks plainly about the responsibility we have to help our neighbor," Whitten said. "Disaster recovery work within the UMC lives that message out.

"Jesus concluded that parable with the instruction to 'go and do likewise.' Disaster recovery is the UMC's living out that commandment."

Whitten didn't grow up attending church, but he found a home at Loxley UMC in Loxley, Alabama, a small town across the bay from Mobile. Loxley UMC is where his wife, Julie Whitten, grew up and where they were married.

"Since the beginning of my faith journey, I have connected most with Jesus the Teacher and with the lessons taught in the Book of James," he said. "Walking alongside other people in all phases of their lives has allowed me to witness God's work in some very powerful ways.

"Seeing the many ways that people lean on God continues to inspire me along my journey."

Whitten is ready to hit the ground running in his new ministry.

"Toward the top of my list is to connect with those who have been a part of the response since the hurricane hit," he said. "We have so many wonderful people in the South Carolina Conference and beyond who have given so much of themselves to help.

"Listening to and understanding their collective story will be among my top priorities."

Nominees sought for 2019 Annual Conference awards

The time has come to nominate outstanding clergy and laity in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church for five awards to be presented at the 2019 Annual Conference in June, as well as an annual award for scouting units at UMC churches.

Nominations for the five Annual Conference awards must be submitted electronically by April 5.

Nominations for the scouting award must be mailed by March 31.

For more details about any of these awards, and to download nomination forms, go to www.umcsc.org and click on "Resources," then "Award Information."

Awards to be presented are as follows:

Bishop's Five-Star Award (Board of Evangelism): This award provides an incentive for churches to embrace new ministries each year geared toward growth and outreach. It enables small and large churches to receive recognition. Criteria include an increase in Sunday school attendance and/or enhancement of Christian education ministry; a "new work" that impacts growth; members received by profession of faith or rededication, one for every 100 members; emphasis on youth ministries that demonstrate growth; and all appointments paid in full for 2018, or a 25 percent increase in apportionment payments compared to 2017.

Harry Denman Evangelism Award (The Foundation for Evangelism): This award honors a pastor, a lay adult and a youth from any size church for responsible evangelism in the local church. It recognizes people who are effective in making disciples of Jesus Christ. This can involve speaking, personal witnessing or inspiring the church to be involved in evangelism.

Nominees' lifestyles bring honor to Christ, the church and works in ways that are in keeping with the United Methodist history and traditions.

Barbara Boultinghouse Bridge Builder Award (Commission on Religion and Race): Named after a UMC deaconess, this award is given to a person or organization in the South Carolina Conference who has built bridges of understanding by promoting equity and inclusiveness without regard to race, gender, age, handicap or economic condition.

Michael C. Watson Volunteer in Mission Award (Conference Board of Global Ministries): Named in honor of the founder of the South Carolina United Methodist Volunteers in Mission, this award is given to one clergy and one layperson who exemplify extraordinary volunteer mission service



Nominations for the five Annual Conference awards must be submitted electronically by April 5. Nominations for the scouting award must be mailed by March 31.

within the conference, beyond the local church.

Joseph Benjamin Bethea Distinguished Service Award (Commission on Religion and Race): This award is presented to a person who has performed outstanding service in working for racial justice. Laity or clergy of the conference who have shown a strong commitment to Christian social justice for at least five years (fewer, if the individual is a youth) are eligible. Criteria include efforts toward elimination of racism; efforts toward building inclusiveness; efforts toward empowerment of persons considered a minority (racially or ethnically); Christian character; and servanthood.

Bishop's Award of Excellence (Conference Scouting Ministry): This award recognizes United Methodist congregations that extend their ministry to children and youth by creating a faith-based environment for children, youth, their families and their leaders who participate in Girl Scouts of the USA and Scouts BSA. All of the following criteria must be met:

- 20 percent or more of registered youth members of the unit working toward or having completed appropriate religious emblem program;
- 20 percent of the registered adult leaders must be members of the United Methodist Church;
- Unit must participate in annual Scouting Ministries Sunday observance in the local church;
- Unit must plan and complete one service project in each of the following categories: local church (e.g. grounds workday), the community (e.g., litter pick-up),

Scouting ministry to honor award recipients at banquet May 4

Winners of the Bishop's Award of Excellence for scouting in the United Methodist Church will be honored at a special awards banquet Saturday, May 4, at 6 p.m. at Shandon United Methodist Church, Columbia.

The Bishop's Award of Excellence is authorized for the purpose of recognizing outstanding United Methodist Church units that have met the established criteria (see more in larger article, this page). The award is for Cub Scout Packs, Boy Scout Troops, Venture Crews, Sea Scout Ships, Girl Scout Units and Campfire. The award is an annual award and can be earned each year.

Access form at <http://www.umcsc.org/home/wp-content/uploads/2019-Bishops-Award-of-Excellence-nomination-form-Scouting.pdf>.

Questions may be directed to the Rev. Robert L. Cox (scouting@umcsc.org or 864-554-2008).

conference, national or work programs of the United Methodist Church (e.g., hunger relief, work service or UMCOR);

- Unit leader and scouting coordinator must review unit sponsor agreement program plans with pastor annually;
 - Unit must observe regular worship services when away from the church on Sundays for camping experiences or trips; and
 - Unit must have a person assigned to encourage active participation in religion, respecting the faiths of all, and Boy Scout troops must have a registered unit chaplain (adult) and chaplain aide (youth).
- Recipients of the five Annual Conference awards will be recognized at the Awards Breakfast at 7:30 a.m. June 4, during the 2019 Annual Conference.
- Recipients of scouting awards will be recognized at an Awards Banquet at 6 p.m. May 4 at Shandon UMC, Columbia.

Get Out of the Boat: Faith Over Fear

Annual men's spiritual retreat is Feb. 16 at Mount Horeb

LEXINGTON—With the arrival of 2019 come new and fresh opportunities. For the United Methodist Men of South Carolina, the annual men's spiritual retreat has a new look, as well.

This year's event will take place at Mount Horeb United Methodist Church, Lexington, Feb. 16.

The daylong event will be jam-packed with preaching, testimonies, a comedian, workshops, fellowship opportunities and music.

"Our prayer is that every church across

South Carolina would gather a group of men who want to see renewal and a fresh move of God's spirit in their communities and join us for this annual event," event leaders said.

The theme this year is Get Out of the Boat: Faith Over Fear. They pose questions such as how would your family, community, work place and church be different if you no longer lived out of fear, but instead out of faith?

This event is for men and boys of all ages. The lead speaker is Stuart Hall, director

of Leadership and Leadership Networking for Orange (ReThink Group) and also leads INFLUNSR, an organization whose mission is to fuel the next generation of leaders worth following. Hall will help men learn how to lead with faith rather than fear.

Workshops are led by other men who are on the front lines of developing men ready to lead. Comedian Akintunde will challenge and encourage with his humor. The

Mount Horeb Worship Team will lead worship.

The cost is \$70 (lunch included). Registration is from 8-9:15 a.m. and the event runs from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

It will be held in the Mount Horeb UMC Auditorium, 1205 Old Cherokee Road, Lexington, SC 29072.

Register at menministriysc.org.

Epworth awarded Charity Navigator's four-star rating for sixth year in a row

Epworth Children's Home has been awarded Charity Navigator's four-star rating for the sixth year in a row.

"Epworth thanks the United Methodists of South Carolina for keeping this mission strong," said the Rev. John Holler Jr., president and CEO of Epworth.

Michael Thatcher, president and CEO of Charity Navigator, wrote a letter congratulating Epworth on this honor, demonstrating strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency.

"The nonprofit sector is advancing and expanding," Thatcher wrote. "As our organizations evolve, so do the desires and interests of our supporters. Astute donors are yearning for greater accountability, transparency and for concrete results from us. With more than 1.5 million American charities, Charity Navigator aims to accentuate the work of efficient and transparent organizations. The intent of our work is to provide donors with essential

information to give them greater confidence in both the charitable decisions that they make and the nonprofit sector.

Thatcher said the four-star rating is the highest possible rating and indicates that an organization adheres to sector best practices and executes its mission in a financially efficient way.

"Attaining a four-star rating verifies that Epworth Children's Home exceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in your area of work," Thatcher wrote. "Only 7 percent of the charities we evaluate have received at least six consecutive four-star evaluations, indicating that Epworth Children's Home outperforms most other charities in America. This exceptional designation from Charity Navigator sets Epworth Children's Home apart from its peers and demonstrates to the public its trustworthiness."

To see Charity Navigator's favorable review of Epworth: www.charitynavigator.org.

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Viewpoints



by Jessica Brodie

Editorial

Dead to self, alive in Christ

When the weight of my unworthiness settles in my bones, I play a little trick. I pretend to be slipping through life unseen. My actions don't matter; my words don't matter. Neither my past nor my future matters.

All I am is my soul, flitting here and there like I'm wearing fairy wings, untouchable and untouched, dancing in the light.

If you've seen the movie Harry Potter (or read the books), you might be familiar with the Cloak of Invisibility that Harry the young wizard donned when creeping about Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. All he had to do was slip it on and no one could see him. He could go wherever he wanted undetected.

His cloak reminds me of my "untouchable soul" trick. Now, Harry wore the invisibility cloak when he was investigating certain mysteries, or when he wanted to go someplace he'd been forbidden (he was a teenager, after all). My little trick, however, is something I play when the pressure of Self becomes too much and I want to hide away from it all. After, I feel "like me" again, ready to take on the world.

But reading the Apostle Paul's letter to the early church in Corinth, I came across a passage that makes me realize my little trick is pointless.

Paul wrote, "The love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: one died for the sake of all; therefore, all died. He died for the sake of all so that those who are alive should live not for themselves but for the one who died for them and was raised" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15 CEB).

Paul said something similar in Romans 6:11, that we should consider ourselves "dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus."

This is a comfort to me, not only because I know my sins were washed away when I was saved by Christ, but also that in Christ, I have the freedom to let all the unworthy aspects of myself go—fully and completely.

See, I don't need to disappear through little tricks or invisibility cloaks to become one with Christ. I simply have to accept that I am a new creation in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17). I no longer live for self but for the kingdom of God.

Christ died for me. Every day as I walk through life, I strive to "die" to worldly ways and desires. I strive to live for Him.

As we prepare for the special called session of General Conference this month, I've decided I'm bringing that attitude with me. It matters not what I want to change with our denomination or what I think is the best way forward. It only matters that God's will be done on earth—and with The United Methodist Church—as it is in heaven.

May we all be alive in Christ regardless of what that looks like.



by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

Bishop's Corner

Taking a step beyond caution

"Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. 'It's a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.' 'Lord, if it's you,' Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water.' 'Come,' he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. 'You of little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?' And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down."—Matthew 14:25-32 (NIV)

Several years ago, the United Methodist Men in South Carolina embarked upon a new direction in ministry. I want to invite you to consider the proactive leadership collaboration of clergy and laity that we have for our men in ministry emphasis in South Carolina. Indeed, God has blessed this ministry to men and their families in tremendous ways.

Truthfully, our prayers for God's direction and plan for growing our church through the efforts of men in South Carolina is continuing to come into focus!

Attendance at our Men's Spiritual Week-end has grown over the last several years from 150 to more than 1,100 men and women. In fact, this is a God-sized vision of the South Carolina Conference United Methodist Men.

What the South Carolina United Methodist Men movement is doing to attract

men in ministry is simple. We meet men where they are, connecting strong faith and discipleship with family, community and vocational responsibilities. I feel that it is not only about the opportunity we have to disciple men and their families in their faith journey, but it is also about empowering men and women to return to their communities ready to continue the witness of faith locally and beyond. While men in other areas are staying away from the church, we are seeking a more excellent way by making disciples of Jesus Christ that will transform the world.

Later this month, we will gather for a one-day spiritual retreat experience that will empower men and their families to "Get Out of the Boat," facing the inevitable waves of life with faith rather than fear. You are invited to join me and many other men of all ages on Saturday, Feb. 16, for this day of dynamic preaching, personal testimonies, stand-up comedy, practical workshops, fellowship, music and food.

To find out more information or to register, visit www.menministrysc.org. This new one-day format for the spiritual retreat provides the opportunity for even more men to participate.

We recognize the need for men to serve in their local church, district and on the conference level and seek to be a witness for men's ministry in every way. I am grateful for the United Methodist Men of South Carolina and their ministry to men in South Carolina.

Thank you for your consideration of what we call a "mighty move of God" in our midst.

Appointment Changes

Bishop Jonathan Holston has announced the following changes of appointment:

Effective Nov. 1, 2018
Anderson District: Starr Hebron: Chuck Blowers (SY)

Effective Jan. 1, 2019
Anderson District: Calhoun Falls: Robert Eubanks (RE)

Effective Jan. 6, 2019
Hartsville District: Lamar Circuit: Charles Teal (SY)

Effective Feb. 1, 2019
Charleston District: Smyrna, Moncks Corner: David Smith (RE), 1/4 time
Columbia District: Trinity, Blythewood: Cheryl Rhodes (RE), associate, 1/2 time
Marion District: Brookgreen Charge: Stephen McNeal (PE)

March Advocate a little late to include news about GC2019

The March edition of the *Advocate* will be a little later than normal in order to accommodate the news about what happened at special called session of General Conference, Feb. 23-26. That edition will go to press Feb. 27 and be posted online later that week at www.advocatesc.org. The edition will arrive in mailboxes a few days later.

Letters Policy

We welcome letters to the editor. We urge brevity, as succinct writing often produces clarity. Letters should be no more than 400 words. All letters are subject to editing as needed to meet standards of grammar, space and interest. We will not publish anonymous letters, letters praising or criticizing businesses by name, endorsements of or letters from political candidates, fundraising appeals, or letters containing inappropriate language or personal attacks. All letters will be verified, so you must include a name, daytime phone number, church membership and hometown. Letters should be sent to The Advocate, 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203, faxed to 803-735-8168 or e-mailed to advocate@umcsc.org. Deadlines are the 10th of each month.



How I Got My Call to Ministry

by the Rev. Alice L. Deal

Epiphany

My great-grandfather was a Methodist minister—a circuit rider. My grandfather, who baptized me when I was a baby, was also a Methodist minister and a missionary. So maybe it was in my DNA all along. I don't know. God knows.

I was raised in the faith, in the (not yet United) Methodist Church.

Before telling the rest of the story, I share some lyrics from a favorite hymn (in *The Faith We Sing*), "I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry." In the hymn, God speaks in the first person singular: "I was there when you were but a child, with a faith to suit you well; in a blaze of light you wandered off to find where demons dwell."

And not long after being confirmed, that's just what I did. I wandered away and stayed away through most of my teens and 20s. During that time, I went to college, married, became a mom and went to work in a bank.

Then one Sunday morning, I woke up and said to myself, "I think I'll go to church today." I thought it was my own idea. But it wasn't. The Holy Spirit nudged and tugged at me until at last I returned from the metaphorical "far country" where I had been living.

The busy years started flying by. Bob and I were raising our kids, and the only "circuit" I was on consisted of home, the office and the grocery store. But now, it included the church.

That's where becoming part of a believing community and getting involved in Disciple Bible Study deepened my faith and helped me remember what I had for so long forgotten: whose I am. I learned the identity of the One to whom my life belonged. Happily, I became more and more engaged in the life of the church.

And one day I said to myself, "Self, you could go into the ministry. Except that you're not a public speaker." Again, I thought it was my own idea. But it wasn't. I was hearing a call then. I just didn't know it.

Concern over McClendon commentary

The Rev. Dr. Tim McClendon's commentary in the January *Advocate* titled "The 'Done' Church Plan" concerns me.

First, the tone of the article suggests that his belief in the Traditionalist model (from the Commission on the Way Forward) and the sacredness of the one-man, one-woman marriage commitment are inviolable. He emphasizes that Methodist teaching for 250 years and Judeo-Christian teaching for 4,000 years are sacrosanct. This slope is slippery. He admits to social change with slavery, women's rights and diversity but cherry picks with the marriage covenant.

The tone employs scolding phrases such as "who in the world do we think we are" and "wake up, people!" These phrases represent a vitriolic, narrow attitude.

Secondly, for years McClendon has served Annual Conference as our parliamentarian. He understands well our *Book of Discipline*. He knows the *Discipline's* mean-spirited language in the exclusion of the gay and lesbian community: "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching" (Para. 161).

The Traditionalist model advocates this judgmental language and supports additional accountability and punitive measures for ministers who perform same-sex marriages and favor the ordination of gay and lesbian clergy. Our LGBTQ community deserves change. It's time to renounce a Traditionalist status quo which blocks much-needed reform.

Finally, nowhere in McClendon's strongly worded warning against the One Church model does he allow for scriptural challenge to the Traditionalist stance. Scripture can often be used to argue from both sides. If scriptural passages are being used to declare that same-sex marriage violates sexual ethics, then opponents have the right to highlight one of the treasures of Christ's teaching: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ... And ... thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:37-39).

The One Church model represents this teaching better than the Traditionalist model on its best day.

McClendon ignores an excellent rebuttal of his plan: "Open hearts, open minds, open doors." Methodists believe in this creed. Our supposed demise under the One Church plan opposes a workable "way forward" during this time of conflict.

Michael Broome, member Washington Street UMC, Columbia

Your call story wanted!
Call stories (how we heard or felt God calling us to ministry) can be powerful testimonies, as well as inspiring. Sometimes they are uplifting, sometimes they are painful, but they are all real ways the Lord speaks to us today. The *Advocate* invites you to share your "call story." We are also exploring using these stories in an upcoming book. Email your story (500-1,000 words in length) to jbrodie@umcsc.org. If you do not have access to email, mail to Advocate, Attn: Call Story, 4908 Colonial Dr., Columbia, SC 29203. Include name, whether you are clergy, your church and a photograph.

life, that point in my faith journey, to call in an unmistakable way? I don't know; maybe God had more work to do on me than on the "average" candidate for ministry. But this I do know: God's wisdom is infinite, and God's timing is perfect.

Before that night, whenever I had considered another career option, the door had closed; God seemed to be saying "Wait." But when God called, God said "Now!" And then, doors began to open.

Amazingly, one of those doors admitted me to the Divinity School, Duke University.

The call was truly an epiphany: This God of grace knows everything about me—a sinner—and has chosen to use me anyway! God knows where I've been. But Scripture tells us that God has always used ordinary people—people with failings and flaws, like me—in mighty ways to accomplish God's good purposes.

I am deeply thankful for the years in ministry and grateful to the South Carolina Annual Conference for the high adventure, the holy privilege and the great blessing of serving as pastor of people called Methodists in Christ's church.

God has worked and is working in my life. God has used every past experience to set me on the path of becoming the servant God intends me to be. I am a work in progress. This God of surprises continues to call; Jesus continues to invite, "Follow me." And I'm listening.

God has worked and is working in your life, too. God who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it (Philippians 1:6). And once that call and that claim are placed on your life, you will no longer be the same.

To what could God be calling you today?
Deal is a retired elder

Letters to the Editor

Thank you for balanced perspectives

Thank you for the intentional and balanced coverage of The Way Forward and the Special Session of the General Conference. The copy space the *Advocate* has committed to representing each of the three proposed plans and the actions and reactions across the conference is to be commended.

We recognize it is the delegates who carry the vote for our church as well as other churches across the world of United Methodists.

Accordingly, we have communicated our recommendation of the Traditionalist Plan to the 16 delegates representing the South Carolina Conference to the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference.

Rather than be silent on a decision of this magnitude, we are committed to communicate our response through additional and appropriate channels. Enclosed is a copy of the letter communicating our recommendation of The Traditionalist Plan and challenge to The One Church Plan. (See it on Page 9.)

Our position and recommendation may be of value to the *Advocate* in representing the range of positions in future articles addressing The Way Forward. Thank you again for the *Advocate* and your commitment to inform and represent The United Methodists of the South Carolina Conference.

Max Crawford, administrative board chair Bells UMC, Abbeville

I am a Christian

I am a Christian. That means that I believe in Christ, I support His teachings and I believe that He is "the way, the truth and the life." Christ, sent by God into this world to save us from our sins. Christ offers us the peace that no other entity in this world can offer. Your money won't save you. Your fancy house or car won't save you. Your high esteem for yourself won't save you. Whatever this world tries to offer you won't save you! Only the love of God in Christ Jesus will bring you to that place where you can have true peace.

All other "worldly treasures" will fade away. You may be happy for an instant, but deep down in your soul you will have unrest. Jesus says, "Come to me all that are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

You say, "Well, how do you know?" I say, "I know because I've been to the mountain top and I've been in the valley. No one but Jesus can satisfy your soul!" Time and time again I've broken God's law, and yet He forgives me and brings me back into His throne room.

But here's the greatest gift of all: He forgives and forgets (see Isaiah 43:25). He says, "Believe in me and you will have life everlasting." Do you hear me? Are you listening? All anyone has to do is believe!

Don't wait. Serve Him now while you have life and breath. Don't wait until you're 50 or 60—serve now!

We all know our days are numbered. Wouldn't it be great to know today that you're doing your part for His kingdom here on earth?

It's a good feeling, my friends a good feeling. Like the song says, "Only Jesus can satisfy your soul!"

Margaret Faulkenberry, member Mount Holly UMC, Rock Hill

Turning Scripture against itself

In Mark 7, Jesus confronted the practice of turning the Scriptures against itself in order to promote a "greater good." In the case at hand, Jesus was referring to "corban." That was the practice of dedicating to God money and resources that would otherwise be used by grown children to care for their elderly parents. Jesus saw caring for elderly parents as part of the Fifth Commandment responsibilities. He condemned the practice of corban and how Scripture was used against itself.

What does it take to so turn Scripture? Take a broad biblical theme, add to it some spiritual doctrines of men and you have it! Temple worship, as instructed by God in the Scriptures, was the only "means of grace" available. What greater good for all the people of God was there than the perpetuation of Temple sacrifices God commanded? And "the bills had to be paid" for sacrifices to continue for the spiritual good of all, including elderly parents. Appeal to the broad truth of perpetual, temple sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins of the entire nation, and you can rid yourself of a narrow, individual moral expectancy of the Fifth Commandment. And Jesus said to them, "Many such things you do."

But do we? Take, for example, the biblical truth that God is love. Add to it unbiblical but generally accepted "truth" such as a loving God would never send anyone to hell, and you can ignore the call to repent, the necessity of Jesus, and all other exclusive doctrines.

I believe this practice is raising its head again in the emerging concept of contextualization. If I understand correctly, contextualization promotes the idea that what is sinful



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Our Mission

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

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S.C. bishops to hear education concerns in Allendale

ALLENDALE—The Fellowship of South Carolina Bishops, which includes South Carolina's United Methodist Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, will hold a listening post in Allendale based on the bishops' Public Education Initiative.

The post is set for Feb. 11 at 7 p.m. in the James Brandt Building Auditorium. The Fellowship of South Carolina Bishops supports flourishing public education for all children in South Carolina. The bishops want to know the concerns and hopes

for education as voiced by the people of Allendale. Their goal is to encourage people of faith to take part in building the best education system possible for Allendale. The Fellowship of South Carolina Bishops is made up of bishops from the A.M.E.,

A.M.E. Zion, C.M.E. Episcopal, Lutheran, Roman Catholic and United Methodist churches in South Carolina. For more information on the listening post: sheath@educ.org or 803-771-7800, ext. 108.

Faith, Activity and Nutrition trainings to be offered this spring

The South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church and the University of South Carolina Prevention Research Center partnered to offer the Faith, Activity and Nutrition Program to churches in the conference. Currently, there are more than 100 United Methodist churches across the state that have been trained in FAN. These churches have made meaningful changes to improve the health of their members and communities.

In response to interest in the program from additional churches, FAN will offer more trainings this spring. FAN trainings will be held in May of 2019. To participating in a FAN training, complete an online interest form by March 15 at <http://prevention.sph.sc.edu/projects/fanumc.htm>. FAN is an evidence-based program that aims to create healthier church environments by promoting church-level opportunities, guidelines/policies, messages and pastor support for physical activity and healthy eating within a

spiritual and biblical context. During the interactive FAN training, committees receive resources and materials to share with their congregations and begin developing a FAN program plan to guide their activities over the next year. Training and materials are provided at no charge. Lunch is \$10 per person. To learn more or have questions, contact Jessica Stucker at 803-576-5992.

Marriage Enrichment Retreats slated for this year at Lake Junaluska

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C.—We are created for a lifetime of love and intimacy, but relationships can be hard, even for the happiest couples. Distance, frustration and disconnection can enter through any number of life's events. With that in mind, Lake Junaluska is hosting a Christian-based marriage retreat to help partners better understand each other and learn to cultivate a warmer, more joyful and loving relationship. Dates for this year are March 10-12, Aug. 18-20 and Sept. 29-Oct. 1. Attendees will learn how to strengthen essential psychological and spiritual foundations for healthy, happy relationships; how to stop rigid negative patterns in communication that

lead to frustration and disconnection; how to be more accessible, responsive and engaged in your relationship; how to better understand your partner and help them to understand you; and how to share your deepest needs for support, love and affection and respond to those same needs in your partner. Pastoral participants earn 1.5 CEUs for participation in this program. This retreat is perfect for pastors who regularly do marriage counseling, or anyone who wants to strengthen the bond in their marriage. For cost and other information: www.lakejunaluska.com/marriage or 800-222-4930.

LETTERS: Readers sound off on way forward, sexuality

From Page 5

in Africa may be acceptable in North America because God is love and acknowledges the differences between cultural contexts. It really sounds like 1970s "I'm OK, You're OK" philosophy applied to cultures instead of individuals. Thereby, biblical instructions are received or dismissed from one culture to another, both with the blessings of God. I don't think Jesus will fall for this application either. And many such things we do.

First, I believe we are called to follow a resurrected Christ that is alive, living and working in our present world, not one who is dead and frozen in the positions of ecclesiastical dictums from past eras. I believe that God is continuing to speak in our time, and to our church, as in ages gone by.

Further, I am surprised and distressed that his position seems so characteristic of the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day. They were so locked into the legalisms of their day that they could not imagine or accept the love and grace that Jesus brought to the conditions of that day. Also, the Apostle Paul again and again overthrew the old traditions, dietary laws and ritual traditions that excluded Gentiles from the faith. He proclaimed "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male or female, slave or free for all are one in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I am sure that the structural and organizational issues in "The Way Forward" decisions are formidable, but our heritage gives us many resources to call upon. First, we are Protestant. Therefore, with Martin Luther, we believe in "the priesthood of all believers." On the same-sex relations issues we each stand before God. No bishop, priest or pastor stands between us and God.

Ultimately, we are each, individually, accountable before God for our soul's salvation. In the end "it's me, it's me, it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer." On that great "getting up morning" it's going to be me standing before God, not my minister or my bishop. And as I struggle with all the encounters my life brings me, my prayerful choice of

mate is one between me and God. In his blog, McClendon advocates not changing "4,000-year-old" traditions regarding religion and human sexuality. Whatever happened to 4,000 years of tradition that denied women their rightful place in the clergy? Does the gender sensitive membership of the church have to reach 50-60 percent of the membership before we learn to grow beyond our roots?

Certainly this is a distressing time, and the organizational issues we face here and around the world are legion, but our connective system of shared ministry surely can solve the problem of same-sex couples requesting a clergy who in good conscience will perform their wedding. I close with this: Much has been made of biblical authority that harkens back to Leviticus for its justification. Despite the "cherry picking" of Scriptures to justify one's biases, a scholarly translation and reading of those passages reveal a society and social structure that is nothing like we have today. It is a living faith that I ask McClendon to consider.

Rev. Marvin Ira Lare, retired
Columbia

A response to McClendon
In the January *Advocate*, Bishop Jonathan Holston called on United Methodists to participate in "focused prayer" in advance of General Conference 2019. That is much needed.

Apparently, Rev. Tim McClendon has grown weary of serious, prayerful consider-

ation of the issues surrounding the current LGBTQ deliberations and frames what United Methodists are now about in terms of "winning the fight" (Guest Commentary, January *Advocate*). He wrote, "This is a fight we have won over and over again, and if we want to transform the world for Jesus, we'd better win again." He continues, "The Traditional Plan has won the battle not just since 1972, but for 4,000 years."

Arrogance aside, this is not Christian transformation but faithless bullying. It is, as Bishop Ken Carter notes, the "dark side of orthodoxy." McClendon, in his attempt to sway and conquer to transform the world, has, in fact, conformed himself to the world and its language of declaring winners and losers. I expect this kind of discourse from politicians. Words matter, and this bears no resemblance to transformative, Christian discourse.

McClendon has neglected our most important resource as Christians struggling to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit: Holy Scripture. He charges those who disagree as "wanting to reshape ageless biblical ethics into the time-limited circumstances of our fallen world, not the other way around." The sentence reveals an astonishing degree of ignorance about how serious disagreements in Scripture get resolved. How did the earliest Christians negotiate the thorny and serious issue of circumcision with their new Jewish converts? Read the Book of Acts and you will find a spirit-filled conversation and resolution, not a fight where there are winners and losers.

You see a church trying to keep up with a God who has already moved past our limits and biases and beckons us to a risky, faithful future. Sadly, in McClendon's secular view of winners and losers, any biblical or Wesleyan understanding of grace is strikingly absent from his commentary. Lacking the Spirit-led imagination to keep up with what new thing God may be doing, he resorts to desperate fearmongering.

We deserve from our leaders at this pivotal moment grace-filled Christian discourse, informed by Holy Scripture, that seeks the unity of God's people through the Spirit, not winners and losers.

We should all pray for that.
Rev. Thomas C. Pietila, retired
Florence

Seminary student scholarships available

A number of scholarships are available for seminary and theological school students from South Carolina. Applicants should be certified candidates for ordained ministry and enrolled as full-time students in approved seminaries or theological schools.

Scholarships include The South Carolina Conference Seminary Students Scholarship, The Bessie Bellamy Parker Memorial Scholarship and The T. Dennie Smith Scholarship. A number of additional scholarships are offered by the South Carolina United Methodist Foundation. These include The Cook

Scholarship, The Fred E. and Janet Smith Plyler Scholarship, The Gene Roger and Mildred Wimberly Kizer Scholarship, The J. Lawrence and Margaret F. McCleskey Scholarship, The Melvin Kelly and Mayme DuBose Medlock Ministerial Scholarship, The William Fletcher and Agnes Dawsey Rogers Scholarship and

The Clarence D. and Belva M. Williams Scholarship. Application information, guidelines and deadlines are available at www.umcsc.org (under Resources, then Grants/Scholarships). Address inquiries to scumf@bellsouth.net or jsalley3@umcsc.org.

SMC opens the Moore Family Fitness Center with student celebration

Spartanburg Methodist College opened its new 4,000 square foot student fitness center Jan. 8. The addition of the center to SMC's campus includes cardio and exercise machines, free weights and an aerobics room. Exercise classes include yoga, Zumba, barre and Pilates classes, as well as Fitness on Demand. Equipment was furnished by Ready Fitness of Atlanta. The building was designed by McMillan Pazdan Smith and was built by Mavin Construction of Spartanburg. "Our new fitness center is the space our students deserve," said Teresa Ferguson, SMC dean of students. "Being able to work out after a long day of studying is a great stress reliever. This space will improve student health, which will

in turn help them succeed in academics and life." In celebration of the opening, SMC gave away T-shirts, bottled water and fruit to students. President Scott Cochran and Student Body President Jacob Killian spoke at the opening. Students were able to begin working out in the fitness center immediately, and Ready Fitness staffers were at the opening to demonstrate how to use the machines. "It is so encouraging and convenient to have a place to work out on campus that is free and accessible," said Kimberly Wynn, SMC sophomore. "I am very grateful to the donors who made the fitness center possible and plan on taking full of advance of it this semester."



From left, Emily McGuirt, Noah Boykin, Matthew Wallace and Hannah Shadburn celebrate the opening of the Moore Family Fitness Center Jan. 8 at SMC.

Advocate to offer \$1K scholarship for student at UMCSC college

Deadline to apply is April 1

The *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate* invites applications for a \$1,000 scholarship for South Carolina United Methodist students who are planning to enroll or are already enrolled at one of the four United Methodist colleges in South Carolina: Claffin University, Columbia College, Spartanburg Methodist College or Wofford College.

The scholarship is available to students with an interest in communications, journalism or business. Applications for the scholarship are due April 1 and should be submitted to Jessica Brodie, editor of the *Advocate*, via email or postal mail. The application will include the following:
• A letter to address the applicant's background, how the scholarship would help him or her in pursuing a college degree, and his or her view of the role of journalism in ministry. If there is a specific financial need, it should be specified in the letter of application.
• A college transcript (or a high school transcript if the applicant is a rising freshman)
• A letter from the pastor of the applicant's local church or a college chaplain confirming that the applicant is a United Methodist and describing the applicant's participation and contributions to the church or to campus ministry.
Send these three items by April 1 to jbrodie@umcsc.org or to *Advocate*, Attn: Scholarship, 4908 Colonial Dr., Columbia, SC 29203.



Photo courtesy of the Rev. Troy Cato

Safe churches

In an effort to create an environment that is safe for children, youth and vulnerable adults, St. James United Methodist Church, Sumter, along with Mount Zion UMC, Bishopville, hosted the Rev. Cathy Joens Dec. 15. Joens traveled from Greenville to Sumter to lead a Safe Sanctuary training at the church.

JUNK AND TREASURES

Your unwanted "junk" could be their treasure!

Junk and Treasures, a ministry started by Fitz UMC, Hemmingway, member Denise Santoro, is collecting unwanted and unneeded items and delivering them directly to people who can use them in the local community.

Reach out today to donate your unwanted items: americablessedchildren@gmail.com | 843-483-4026
P.O. Box 628, Hemmingway, SC 29554

Applications accepted for UMW scholarship

This year, 2019, marks the third year of offering the Presidential Scholarship, funded by the South Carolina Conference of United Methodist Women. The SCCUMW Presidential Scholarship is designed to financially assist young women with their higher educational needs. United Methodist Women are a supportive community who desire partnering with these future leaders through a \$1,000 scholarship. Scholarship application packets require a March 1 postmark. A total of eight \$1,000 awards have been made in two years. Six were awarded in 2018. Students Emma Cohen, Jada Crawford, Alleah Glover, Hannah Porter, Lauren Rhodes and Brittany Williams were chosen.

Two were awarded in 2017. Students Alleah Glover and Allison Hannah Simpson were the first recipients. UMW prayers and financial scholarships go with them as they continue their college and university studies. Two changes mark the 2019 application process. The UMW now requires a postmark date of March 1 for the total application packet to be considered for the award. Postmark is a more equitable deadline recognizing mail delivery varies by distance. The second change is they are now limiting the number of times one individual may be awarded the Presidential Scholarship. The limit is two times. The UMW celebrates Alleah Glover as the first recipient to reach this quantity. Apply at www.umcsc.org/umw.

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June 30 - July 3: Rev. Jeremy Steele with Zachariah Suggs
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Rebuilding Lives for a Safer Community

I came to Alston Wilkes as a resident of their adult re-entry program. It was there that case managers worked intently with me to become self-sufficient and obtain independent living. Through their efforts and from many programs they offered, I was able to obtain a great job and an awesome home. I am grateful for the second chance Alston Wilkes has given me in rebuilding my life.—Anthony Bryant

Blues Bash is March 3 in Charleston, SC, at Bowens Island Restaurant



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Brandon Fulmer

A better way

As we approach the called General Conference this month, I find myself reflecting on the differences between traditionalists like myself and the progressives who wish to alter our current standards.

I freely admit right up front that I am, in the words of Tom Berlin et al, a traditional non-compatible. I stand on our *Discipline* the way it is currently written. The standards regarding sexuality were the same when I was certified, licensed, commissioned and finally ordained. At each point along the way I agreed to uphold those standards, and I freely admit now that those are the standards I will continue to live by regardless of what happens at the 2019 General Conference.

But according to many of my progressive friends, there is no problem here. Under the One Church Plan, I can continue to live by those standards, and they can choose to live by a separate set of standards. So it seemed wise to me to try and articulate for my progressive friends some of the differences we have as I see it, and perhaps to help them see why I can't agree to live by a separate set of standards regarding human sexuality and still say we exist under the same umbrella of authority.

Let me begin by saying I think many progressives are right in thinking a lot of traditionalists just don't want anything to do with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning/queer community. I have always thought this. I fear many traditionalists write off the possibility of transformation in the life of homosexuals to the same degree the progressives do. And in this I will admit the progressives have us beat. They do care about the homosexual. I wonder if they are really helping this community, but I do think they care. And for that they must all be commended.

But I also think there are still a lot of traditionalists who believe there is a better way to engage this community than simply saying, "It is OK. You were made this way." We believe God has a better way. We believe God's call regarding sexuality is straightforward and clear in Scripture. We believe people struggle with all manner of issues regarding sexuality and identity, and the issues faced by the LGBTQ+ community are not to be treated as some kind of especially heinous or gross sin.

We believe homosexuals and those dealing with questions of gender identity need a loving supportive community of faith where they can be loved and belong and not inappropriately judged. We believe their questions and struggles will not automatically or instantaneously go away by submitting to Scripture's prescribed means of sexual expression.

We believe they will fall into temptation and will need the community of believers to help them trust in God's forgiveness and move forward with a new resolution,

strength and will to live victoriously in Christ.

We believe having faith in Jesus brings justification; that they are fully accepted and justified before God by simply believing in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. We believe they will spend a lifetime being sanctified and growing in their understanding of grace. We believe these are people who have something valuable to share and teach us about the grace of God.

We believe that the grace of Jesus Christ, found in the loving community of the church ought to bring about transformation in the life of the person who currently identifies as LGBTQ+, in the same way we believe it for every person who turns to Christ for salvation. These are some of the things we believe. But perhaps it might also be helpful to share some things we traditionalists don't believe about life as a LGBTQ+ person.

We don't believe LGBTQ+ persons are just willingly living sinful lives. In other words, we do believe orientation, as a way to describe what one feels inside, is a real thing. But we don't believe orientation is the defining factor in anyone's life. We don't believe this struggle is solved by simply "committing to a lifelong monogamous relationship." I know some will think me crass for bringing it up, but I think progressives need to understand this. To many traditionalists, the idea of a committed monogamous relationship for the LGBTQ+ person sounds like arguing for polygamy for those who have committed adultery and will not be faithful to their spouse. To us it really just sounds like using the grace of God as a license to do what you want as long as you can rationalize it in a way that seems acceptable in your own eyes.

We don't believe the LGBTQ+ community ought to be kicked out of the church. And we don't believe that being born that way means that it is God's best for anyone. Because we do see issues surrounding the LGBTQ+ community in this way, we do find it hard to understand why we would be encouraged to ignore our conscience regarding the practices of those who will lead our churches and ministries, and hence we wonder if The United Methodist Church cares about our concerns anymore.

We wonder if you want us around to talk about these things, or if you just want us to give up the ghost so to speak and accept and believe what you've come to believe. We wonder if after all the years we've spent listening and debating these things and seeing the value of your care and concern if you can even begin to see the value in our concerns?

What we hear you telling us is that God doesn't have a better way, and we just can't accept or tolerate that.

Fulmer pastors the Jackson Charge in the Orangeburg District.

Prayer vigil for GC2019

On Sunday, Feb. 24, at 6 p.m., Reconciling Ministries will be holding a prayer vigil focused on hope, love and reconciliation as they lift up The United Methodist Church and the 2019 delegates to General Conference in prayer. The vigil will be held at Brookland UMC, 541 Meeting St., West Columbia. All are invited for worship and prayer.

ADVERTISE HERE!

Toni Strawther | advocatesales@umcsc.org | 843-408-7879



Guest Commentary

by Roland G. Fitch II

What's the real problem with sexual orientation?

As The United Methodist Church, along with other denominations, wrestles with the issues of human sexuality, I have developed a theory on why this is such a hot button item.

It has nothing to do with Scripture but with human nature and our ability to deal with things that we find different. I have found a pop culture example to help explain it.

Science fiction makes a great vehicle for looking at social issues, and perhaps Star Trek is most well known for that. In Star Trek, the human race finally has our act together, and we have solved most of our problems. But we find those problems in different cultures, with slight variations. Those cultures are technologically and intellectually advanced, but in an earth-centric view, humans know better, so we help them solve their social ills. Recently, I watched an episode of Star Trek: Enterprise and saw a comparison to the way we, especially the church, deal with gender equality.

Enterprise is the installment of Star Trek that is set well before the original series, about 100 years before, around 2146. The Enterprise in this series also has a Vulcan crew person, T'Pol, who is the science advisor.

In Enterprise, the Vulcans are not the completely peace-loving scientist-diplomats that we know. They are arrogant, condescending and even known to be dishonest. Although they claim to have purged emotions and aggression and have logic as a sort of religion, they still seem to be driven by ambition, suspicion and the desire to control people's lives. They also have a habit of suppressing the writings of logic founder Surak that they find inconvenient.

In the episode "Stigma," we learn T'Pol has contracted a disease that over time affects the victim's mental discipline. The ship's doctor contacts some Vulcan doctors and asks for information on the disease. The doctor is told there is little research going on concerning that disease because only a small segment of the Vulcan population contracts it by "engaging in an abhorrent intimate behavior" that is contrary to Vulcan belief. This abhorrent intimate behavior turns out to be the mind-meld, which is believed to be detrimental to society and must be discouraged, hence there has been no effort to cure the disease.

The Vulcan doctors surmise that T'Pol is the person with the disease. They report her to the Vulcan government, and there is an effort to recall her. But T'Pol is not a melder. She contracted the disease as the result of a non-consensual meld.

The phrase "abhorrent intimate behavior" struck me as something many Christians do, especially because in this series the Vulcans go against all manner of Surak's teachings that they find inconvenient, but they find this practice really repulsive (it turns out Surak was a melder).

Many Christians get wrapped about the theological axle of homosexuality by claiming it violates their faith. They love to cite Leviticus (out of context, of course) as the basis for that belief. At the same time, they will violate all of the other laws because we are "saved by faith not the law."

We have believers who say we can't allow same-sex marriage because of Leviticus 18:22, but they will violate Leviticus 20:33 by wanting to turn away people at the border. It is perfectly OK for Christians to eat bacon, pork barbecue or shrimp in violation of Leviticus 11:7-12, but we can't ordain a gay or lesbian clergy person. Finally, there is my "favorite"—we can violate the second commandment by having other gods, such as money or power (Exodus 20:3), but we exclude LGBTQ persons from the full love and grace of Jesus.

I have wondered about how as Christians we can say "love your neighbor as yourself" at the same time we say "homosexuality is

incompatible with Christian teaching" and marginalize a segment of believers. Perhaps it is because they are a segment of the population that engages in "an abhorrent intimate behavior," much like the mind meld in Vulcan society and people who are repulsed by it.

It is easy for us to eat bacon; that is definitely not repulsive. However, when people's minds go to the idea of two people of the same sex engaging such an intimate act (something that is none of our business), we are repulsed.

The 19th-century French physician, anatomist and anthropologist Dr. Paul Broca discovered different functions were assigned to different sections of the human brain. Among the things he postulated is that the brain contained prejudices instilled by "cultural norms." The innate fear of snakes may stem from biblical story of the Garden of Eden. The result is that humans have a range of fear of all reptiles from a healthy respect to being unable to look at a picture of snakes. The prejudice against LGBTQ folks appears to be a result of culturally derived memories.

In the 1980s we had the AIDS crisis, initially confined to the LGB community. It was tailor-made to give fear-mongering believers the idea that LGBTQ folks were somehow unclean and sinners being punished. Nobody really wanted to address it because it only occurred in people engaging in "abhorrent intimate behavior." It wasn't until heterosexuals started contracting AIDS that people began to take notice, but still, it was assumed these folks had engaged in "abhorrent intimate behavior."

Today, societal prejudice against homosexuality is slowly breaking down. But the church, an institution that is supposed to be the most welcoming place in humanity, excludes a group of people by using a law (which we ignore large portions of!) to do it. Why? Because we can't get our heads wrapped around a simple biological act that we think is "yucky" because it is not "normal?"

Humankind has a tendency to dehumanize or marginalize people they don't want to understand. It makes it easier to not like them and lets us treat them with less than human dignity. But as disciples we are called upon to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are to respect and accept just as we desire respect and acceptance.

In Romans 8:38-39, Paul writes, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God, that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." To me that means nothing is "incompatible with Christian teaching."

General Conference will be holding a called meeting in February for the purpose of deciding the future of the UMC on the acceptance of LGBTQ people. There are essentially four choices. Two of them take a step in the direction of inclusion and of continuing to make disciples, and two of them say that we really are not interested if you become a disciple if you are engaging in an "abhorrent intimate behavior."

I am hoping we take that step in the direction of inclusion, but if we don't, perhaps we need to start enforcing all those other laws in Leviticus to be consistently "compatible with Christian teaching."

Fitch is a member of Stallsville UMC, Summerville. He serves as the coordinator of specialized ministries, evangelism chair, scouting ministries coordinator and recording secretary. He is also a lay speaker and secretary of the Charleston District Lay Servant Ministries Board. He notes that the opinions in the submission are his own and do not reflect any official position of the Charleston District, the Charleston District LSM, or the clergy, lay leadership or congregation of Stallsville UMC.

GENERAL CONFERENCE:

From Page 1

"Together each day, let us join one another in prayer, believing that God hears every word," Holston said. "There is not magic that erases our trials or suffering, but in the midst of it all, a life of prayer shifts our perspective from a spirit of despair toward a spirit of hope.

"We truly trust in God's promises."

What will happen at GC2019?

The purpose of GC2019 is "limited to receiving and acting upon a report from the Commission on a Way Forward based on the recommendations of the Council of Bishops."

The way forward commission was created at GC2016 in Portland, Oregon, and charged to examine paragraphs in the *Book of Discipline* on human sexuality and help the church explore ways to move beyond its differences over sexuality. The way forward commission developed three plans for the church: the One Church Plan, the Traditional Plan and the Connectional Conference Plan.

Other plans are also expected to be considered at GC2019, such as the Simple Plan and the Modified Traditional Plan.

The UMC Judicial Council has ruled on two of the three way forward plans.

It ruled the One Church Plan is largely constitutional, noting that while there are constitutional issues with three of the 17 petitions to the One Church Plan, the plan mainly passes muster.

It also ruled the Traditional Plan had constitutional issues with nine of the 17 petitions that must be fixed before it can pass muster.

It said it does not have jurisdiction to rule on the Connectional Conference Plan, because that plan contains proposed constitutional changes.

According to a release from the General Conference Committee on Reference, 78 petitions submitted for consideration by GC2019 are in harmony with the purpose of the special session. The Commission on the General Conference tasked the Committee on Reference with the responsibility for deciding whether petitions meet that standard. The reference committee met Jan. 11-12 in Irving, Texas, to review all the legislation in advance of the special session.

All those petitions must receive a vote in legislative committee, according to a 2016 provision in the *Discipline*, and all those approved by legislative committee must receive a plenary vote.

There will be a single legislative committee.

Want to learn more?

Learn more about GC2019 at www.umc.org/topics/general-conference-2019-special-session.

You can also browse past detailed Advocate coverage of GC2019 by going to www.advocatesc.org/gc2019coverage.

March Advocate a little late to include news about GC2019

The March edition of the *Advocate* will be a little later than normal in order to accommodate the news about what happened at special called session of General Conference, Feb. 23-26.

Bishop Holston's daily focused prayers for GC

Sunday: Gracious and loving God, we give thanks for your presence in our lives and the promise that you have plans for us to prosper and not be harmed. Continue your good work in our families and our lives. Help us to understand how we can make a difference—in our church, in our community, and in our world—as your instrument of hope. Amen.

Monday: Merciful God, help us to see the many opportunities before us to serve you by serving our neighbors. Open our hearts and our hands to both receive your grace and to offer it to everyone we meet. Amen.

Tuesday: Almighty God, we confess to you that we have not loved you with our whole hearts. We have often failed to be an obedient church when we have not heard the cry of the needy. Free us for joyful obedience that, where there are corridors of shame, despair and want, we might create corridors of faith, hope and love that glorify you. Amen.

Wednesday: Gracious God, I know that you are the potter and I am the clay. Mold me and make me into a disciple of Jesus Christ. Show me how to offer your grace and mercy in ways that transform the world. Amen.

Thursday: Lord, we know that when we make space in our hearts for you, Jesus redeems the broken pieces of our lives. We ask, O God, that you will be at work in us and through us to make a difference in the lives of the hurting and the hungry in our midst. Amen.

Friday: God, we thank you for the gift of faith that carries us through those times when we cannot yet see what you are doing in our midst. Help us to walk in your light and to be a light for others. Amen.

Saturday: God of Heaven and Earth, as your humble servants, we know that the needs around the world and around the corner are great. Open our eyes so that we can see how to use the gifts you have given us to serve our neighbors and be in mission in the community and beyond. And give us the strength and perseverance to get started in this holy work. Amen.

That edition will go to press Feb. 27 and be posted online later that week at www.advocatesc.org.

The edition will arrive in mailboxes a few days later.

An open letter from one church to S.C. delegates of 2019 Special Session of the General Conference

I am writing on behalf of the members of Bells United Methodist Church in reference to the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference. We have reviewed the three plans as proposed. We recognize each plan has merit and there are proponents of each plan.

However, with deliberation and prayer, we petition you to vote for The Traditionalist Plan. We believe The Traditionalist Plan best represents the Bible and its teachings on marriage and sexuality.

The Traditionalist Plan aligns with the founding principles of our denomination and best represents the heart of Methodism going forward.

Historically we have stood in unity on common truths. The Council of Bishops' majority vote to recommend The One Church Plan places the founding principles of our denomination at risk. A plan that allows each church to make decisions on matters of sexuality, marriage and clergy ordination undermines the value of being unified as a denomination.

To be unified comes easily when we set aside truths allowing for competing interpretations.

While the latitude for diversity is clearly presented in the plan, we believe the plan counters the biblical teachings on sexuality, marriage and clergy ordination. We, too, believe all are welcome and God's mercy is for all people regardless of one's welfare, ethnicity or sexual orientation. However, allowance for a divided view on sexuality, marriage and clergy ordination will compromise the witness of the redeeming love of Jesus.

Believing our witness to the world as United Methodists is unified in truth and love, The One Church Plan will foster division and ultimately a schism. In good conscience, we believe the plan is a compromise of the Gospel and the saving grace that redeems each of us.

The reference in the presenting docu-

ments from the Commission on a Way Forward likening these issues to Gamaliel and the debate regarding the Sanhedrin and the leaders of the early church were disheartening. To parallel the issue at hand with the Spirit of God working through Peter, John and the disciples is very troubling.

We agree that the injustices referenced are concerning and deserving of action coupled with compassion. We also believe just as God transformed lives in the days following Jesus' resurrection as evidenced in Acts, so does He today, and this transformation is a change of heart rather than relegating the truths of Scripture.

As the Administrative Board, we conducted a survey to be certain our convictions were consistent with the church. The results affirmed the 2016 *Book of Discipline* and the language on marriage, sexuality and clergy ordination with a unanimous response and no votes in approval of the proposed changes to the *Book of Discipline* as recommended in The One Church Plan.

We covet your prayers as we continue to grapple with the gravity of the pending decisions. To be clear of our conviction, we anticipate that if The One Church Plan is affirmed, we will initiate and expedite the proceedings to gracefully exit The United Methodist Church.

Be assured of our continued prayers for you and all 864 delegates. We have been diligent to pray for you, the bishops and the Commission on a Way Forward. We recognize this is a pivotal time for our denomination and our witness. We claim the promise that in the midst of strife and uncertainty, God's spirit guides us with wisdom, conviction and courage.

Even now we pray our search for God in discerning guidance at this critical crossroads will illuminate our hearts bringing revival to our church and denomination.

Max Crawford, chair of the Administrative Board, Bells UMC, Abbeville



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PRAYER FOR PRISONERS: 'You can bet we'll be praying'

From Page 1

The college/seminary has a mission to help people seeking a college education in Christian perspective, particularly those incarcerated in federal and state correctional facilities throughout the United States.

During Advent, South Carolina prison chaplains helped prisoners pray for pastors and churches through "Give the Gift of Prayer this Christmas," a Christmas-themed prayer vigil. With the vigil, Christian prisoners prayed daily from the beginning of Advent through Epiphany. The Rev. Traci Bennett, clinical chaplain supervisor at Tyger River Correctional Institution, and the Rev. Edward McKnight, senior chaplain at Lee Correctional Institution, were two of several prison ministry advocates across South Carolina who participated.

The Rev. Keith Smith, dean of the chapel at Myrtle Beach Wesleyan College and Pilgrim Theological Seminary and a former prisoner himself, said he hopes St. Mark's enthusiasm for the Lenten Visit Prison with Your Prayers project will inspire many of UMCs to follow suit.

"The model of believers in prison and believers outside of prison is one from the earliest days in Christianity," Smith said. "You have all these biblical stories of folks who were in prison—St. Paul, Peter and so many others. Why do all these people keep showing up in the Scriptures? Perhaps to remind us that even though human beings are capable of doing some terrible things, there is a compassionate God who still loves us and offers grace and forgiveness to all who will believe in Christ.

"Remember that Jesus was himself judged to be a criminal and became the victim of capital punishment. These models are in front of us to remind us of the redemptive possibilities of every person, regardless of the gravity of our sin."

Prisons are not places to simply house people, Smith said. They are communities, and the church is already present there.

"Despite what many might believe, there are dedicated Christians living inside prison communities. Supporting incarcerated believers with our prayers and praying for the believers-yet-to-be is something that every United Methodist congregation can do," Smith said.

Davis said he and his congregation were touched by the love these Christian prisoners showed to them. Before they



Above are several men from St. Mark UMC, Seneca, and elsewhere who participated in a prison ministry weekend. St. Mark is hoping other UMCs across South Carolina will participate in the Lenten "Visit Prison with Your Prayers" project with them.

heard about the program, their church was already active in Kairos Prison Ministry, and with the Visit Prison with Your Prayers project, Davis hopes to steer the congregation to a next step in their love for the prisoners: "adopting" a correctional facility.

"These people are in prison, some of them for life, and I can't imagine being in their shoes and perhaps the lack of hope they have. They're never going to be on the outside again," Davis said. "For them to be selfless and willing to pray for pastors in our conference I think is incredible. They're stepping outside their self when they have all day

long to think about self. The guy who prayed for me sent me a postcard that said 'I'll be praying for you every day,' and he said, 'I hope you'll be praying for me, too.'

"I wrote him back and said, 'You can bet we'll be praying for you.'"

Davis hopes their zeal for prisoner prayer will encourage his fellow pastors and churches across South Carolina to do the same.

Churches interested in participating in Visit Prison with Your Prayers can email Pilgrim Seminary at prayers@pilgrimseminary.org.

Prayers sought for GC2019 delegates

Prayer is needed for South Carolina's delegates to the 2019 Special Session of General Conference, set for February 23-26 in St. Louis.

These are the same delegates elected to serve South Carolina at General Conference 2016 in Portland, Oregon.

Laity

Barbara Ware
James Salley
Dr. Joseph Heyward
Herman Lightsey
Jackie Jenkins
Michael Cheatham

Martha Thompson
Dr. David Braddon
Alternates: Lollie Haselden and Emily Rogers Evans

Clergy

Dr. Tim McClendon
Rev. Ken Nelson
Rev. Tim Rogers
Dr. Robin Dease
Rev. Tiffany Knowlin
Rev. Narcie Jeter
Rev. Mel Arant Jr.
Rev. Susan Leonard
Alternates: Rev. Telley Gadsdon and Rev. Michael Turner



Photo courtesy of Becky McCorkendale

Merry Christmas in Bluffton

On Dec. 9, Bluffton UMC held its Children's Christmas Program during both services. Using a narrator, the children portrayed the Christmas Story at both the 8:30 and 11 a.m. services. Between the services, the youth group made and served everyone a pancake breakfast. It was a busy Sunday morning with all the church's children and teens contributing their time and energy to make it amazing.

APPORTIONMENTS: 90.9%

From Page 1

said Beth Westbury, treasurer and director of administrative services.

Of the 977 total churches, 781 paid 100 percent of their apportionments and only 24 did not pay their apportionments, though Westbury said some of the 24 are churches that closed after Annual Conference 2017, so they still had a 2018 apportionment request.

"I want to thank our churches for their amazing generosity," Westbury said. "They recognize that we can do more together than we can do alone. And I feel certain we will continue to work together and grow in our stewardship of God's blessings."

Westbury said the conference surpassed 90 percent collection rates for each of the past four years, "And that is better than we have done since 2002 when we last achieved 90 percent."

South Carolina UMCs gave 92.3 percent in 2017, 92.0 percent in 2016 and 91.1 percent in 2015.

Collection has already begun for 2019 apportionments, and Westbury noted the 2019 goal remains at 94 percent.

Walterboro paid the highest percentage of apportionments at 97.51 percent, fol-

lowed by Columbia at 94.51 percent, Spartanburg at 94.31 percent and Orangeburg at 94.02 percent.

Westbury said 104 churches had an increase in percentage paid for 2018 compared to 2017 and 117 churches had a decrease in the percentage paid for 2018 compared to 2017.

The fund for Camps and Retreats was the highest earner at 93.29 percent, and General Conference Administration was the lowest earner at 88.91 percent.

"While we did not achieve 100 percent for Africa University through apportionments, the Africa University golf tournament was able to make up the \$5,158 shortage so that we will once again achieve 100 percent," Westbury noted, thanking efforts of the Rev. John Culp and Ronald Friday to make the tournament successful.

She also lifted up the strong model exhibited by Two Rivers Cainho, a new church start in the Charleston District that contributed toward apportionments even though new church starts are not asked to pay apportionments.

For more on conference financials, visit www.umcsc.org/home/administrative-services.

Apportionment Giving Through the Years

2018	90.9%
2017	92.3%
2016	92.0%
2015	91.1%
2014	89.5%
2013	89.7%
2012	87.0%
2011	84.2%
2010	83.2%
2009	84.0%
2008	86.1%
2007	86.8%
2006	86.0%
2005	78.7%
2004	78.9%
2003	87.8%
2002	90.9%

2018 Apportionment Payments by District

Walterboro	97.51%
Columbia	94.51%
Spartanburg	94.31%
Orangeburg	94.02%
Rock Hill	93.7%
Greenwood	90.18%
Charleston	90.07%
Anderson	88.8%
Greenville	88.03%
Florence	87.4%
Marion	87.36%
Hartsville	85.91%

—South Carolina Conference Treasurer's Office



Photo courtesy of Rev. Carol Holladay

Afterschool care

Brunson UMC and Bellingier Chapel UMC of the Fairfax Charge are partnering with an afterschool program in Brunson. The churches have provided meals, ice cream party rewards and more than 900 snacks with Bible story puzzles attached.



Photo by Matt Brodeur

Today, United Methodist Women still owns and insures the historic Killingsworth building in Columbia, and Killingsworth's staff and board handle operations.

KILLINGSWORTH: Cont'd

From Page 1

As Killingsworth's executive director, Donna Lollis, steps down, the board is treating the years leading up to its diamond anniversary as an ideal time to reassess their mission and bring on staff with the administrative gifts they need.

"It's a good time for this," Mckie said. Board member Flo Johnson agreed. "We're in a place of hope."

An evolving ministry

Killingsworth, a United Methodist Women national mission institution, opened in 1947 in a historic home in downtown Columbia purchased and renovated through contributions from Methodist churches across the area. Then, it was a place for unmarried women to board while they attended business or nursing school. Within a decade, they had outgrown the house and, with the help of the national office of United Methodist Women, bought a larger home a few doors down. Today, United Methodist Women still owns and insures the building, and Killingsworth's staff and board handle operations.

By 1972, the culture had changed, and there was little need for a women's boarding house. Killingsworth shifted gears and began its second chapter—as a unique community residence for women emerging from varying forms of crisis. Some are recovering addicts, others have escaped an abusive marriage or just been released from prison, and others are

battling mental health or gambling problems.

In 2019, Mckie said, the needs continue to evolve. While addiction, prison and abuse are some of the issues many of its residents face, Killingsworth is increasingly aware of South Carolina's newest status as one of the largest human trafficking hubs in the nation. They also believe there are needs they do not yet know about, and they are hoping to use this time for intentional research, dialogue and visioning to understand those needs and hone strategies to address them.

"We're casting the net for a new 2019 vision that includes all the issues facing women today," Mckie said.

Johnson agreed. "We'll still be helping women just released from prison and fighting addiction, but we'll also be focusing on other problems women might be facing today and adjusting the way we help our residents."

Next steps

In addition to seeking a new executive director, the ministry is also launching a new campaign for the various program operations it hopes to tackle this year.

Killingsworth leaders are also inviting people to contact them with ideas about ways the ministry can continue to serve South Carolina women.

To contact Killingsworth with your thoughts, call Arlene Roberson at 910-916-9721 or arlene.roberson44@yahoo.com.

You can also learn more about Killingsworth at www.killingsworth.org.



Help Killingsworth Help women in crisis

In 2022, Killingsworth Home for Women will celebrate 75 years of enabling women in crisis to transform their lives and embrace hope in a Christian environment.

You can help! Give \$75 toward almost 75 years of Killingsworth, or any amount you feel is best.

Give to Killingsworth and help change the life of a real-life South Carolina woman in need. Donate online at Killingsworth.org, or send your check to Killingsworth, 1831 Pendleton St., Columbia, SC 29201.



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TRAUMA RELIEF: 'Everyone is welcome and cared for'

From Page 1

When someone attends a group session, they're welcomed by one of the staff and offered coffee, tea or water. There are two sessions, one at 3:30 p.m. and one at 5 p.m., and a light, hot vegetarian meal is provided between the sessions.

Once everyone has settled, they're intro-

duced to each other and then given options of which massage they'd like to try: stress relief or compression, both designed to aid in relaxation.

"It's individual one-on-one massage," said Lorentz, a bodywork therapist and peace minister who graduated from The Beloved Community Seminary in Portland, Oregon.

They also offer energy-healing such as

Reiki, acupuncture, Qigong, yoga, aromatherapy and more. There is also a portable canvas labyrinth for walking meditation. Participating in the classes is not mandatory.

"If you choose to be alone, you have the opportunity to do that and be in the same space. And if you just want to just sit and have coffee with someone, you can do that to," Lorentz said. "You don't have to participate."

Groups include no more than 15 people at a time. The clinic is all-volunteer—some cook, some do hands-on services, some do other things.

"When you come in you can't tell the difference between the workers and the clients. ... It's very informal and very open," Lorentz said. "We were surprised to find out that that was the element that made the biggest difference for everyone. It's not like group therapy—you don't have to participate."

Sometimes getting involved in the massages isn't easy.

"(There were) women who came in who were terrified at the door because all they knew was this was some kind of massage. They didn't know how they would respond to being touched. It took coaxing to get them in the door," Lorentz said. "They would (come in) and then observe, then they decided they'd try that. We explain what we're going to do, and you tell us when to stop."

Services are free, and a donation jar helps pay for food and to support their host church, St. Mark UMC, which lets them use the space and some storage for free.

When asked why she chose this field, Lorentz explained, "I am someone who experienced sexual trauma as a child. I had an opportunity as an adult to engage with multiple kinds of therapy, body work therapy, beyond traditional therapy most people think of."

She said the response from attendees has been extraordinarily positive.

"It's very humbling to me to see just what simple compassion can offer to help

someone. When we started the project, what we found was that of all the services that we offered, the number one item that everyone mentioned was, in their words, a 'nonjudgmental attitude.'"

One of the rules about the trauma relief clinic is that it's not typical psychological therapy, Lorentz said, which has been ideal for many of the attendees.

"They didn't have to come in and tell their story again. They didn't want to have to be the victim or to be judged for any part of where they felt guilt remorse or shame. They recognized we were just there to give them service," she said.

That, along with the hot meal, a community of support and companionship, has been a huge draw, Lorentz said.

Beth Barry, missions and outreach chair at St. Mark, said they appreciate having the trauma relief clinic at their church to help people in need, some of who may feel marginalized.

"Everyone is welcomed and everyone is cared for," Barry said.

Lorentz said she and her team are incredibly grateful to St. Mark UMC for opening their doors to their ministry.

"The minister there, who is new, didn't hesitate to say yes. Just knowing that we're strangers to them, they said yes," Lorentz tearfully said. "It means a lot. We respect that. It's never a question to them—we're in there once a month, and they just let us do that. They couldn't be more accommodating. I think that's extraordinary."

The church also offers prayer support, which Lorentz said is extremely important.

Lorentz hopes one day to be able to offer this therapy through a mobile clinic so they can offer their classes and treatment anywhere.

She also hopes to help with the migrant population and people recently released from prison.

Volunteers are always welcome, as are class attendees. To volunteer or attend a class, contact Lorentz at 803-749-1576 or chimassage@bellsouth.net.



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Photo courtesy of Pamela Goodwine-Glover

Parsonage paid in full

In July 2008, the Canaan-Sand Hill Charge was issued a new challenge of securing a parsonage to provide adequate housing for the pastor. In September 2008, the Rev. Mack C. McClam compiled a parsonage search team, and the search began. On Feb. 20, 2009, they purchased a 2,766-square foot home for \$333,000 with brick veneer, four bedrooms, two and a half baths and a two-car garage. Trusting in His word, the charge remained steadfast and thought of ways to eradicate the mortgage. In November 2017 it was decided, with God and Senior Pastor Rev. Jeffrey Salley, to pay an additional principal of \$2,500 monthly. On Dec. 14, 2018, the final payments were made and documents delivered stating "paid in full."

Branch Hill reaches neighbors through Breakfast with Santa

By Gerald Clinkscales

SALUDA—Branch Hill United Methodist Church and Crossroads Outreach Ministry held their second-ever Breakfast with Santa at the former Gasaway United Methodist Church.

The breakfast was held Dec. 16 and served approximately 75 community members. Children selected gifts of their choice from an array of toys bought and donated by members of the congregation and others.

This year, 10 children were selected to receive bicycles courtesy of various local organizations, churches and individuals. The event's highlight was, of course, a visit from "Santa" (Dennis Buford, a member of Panola UMC). Organizers extend a special thank you to St. Paul UMC, Saluda, and Memoirs Catering of Greenville, along with Branch Hill members, for their assistance in providing and preparing the breakfast.

Crossroads Outreach Ministry has other events planned for the 2019 church year, which include a blood drive with the Blood Connection of Greenwood, as well as quarterly

free wellness checks in conjunction with Self Memorial Hospital, the first scheduled for January.

Additional outreach projects planned for Saluda residents include ministries for those experiencing brokenness because of addiction, life circumstances or loss.

They will continue their weekly Bible study and are currently planning their summer enrichment program for children.



The breakfast was held Dec. 16 and served approximately 75 community members.



Trinity UMC holds First Sunday Praise and Worship Service



Trinity Musical Director James Lagroon invited community church choir members to combine with the Trinity choir

GREENWOOD—Trinity United Methodist Church held a First Sunday Praise and Worship Service Jan. 6 at 3 p.m. Trinity Musical Director James Lagroon invited community church choir members to combine with the Trinity choir for what he called an "awesome praise and worship experience."

The combined choir practiced together several weeks prior to the service. Local UMC pastors also came together. The Rev. Mike Evans from Matthews, Panola and Ebenezer UMCs paired with Trinity's the Rev. Thessa G. Smith to deliver God's message to His people. The Rev. Tim Jones from Republican and St. Paul UMCs in McCormick County gave the closing prayer.

The congregation was filled with diverse community members and leaders. "This was truly a wonderful worship experience filled with praise and love for God," Lagroon said. "This service highlighted how powerful we are in Christ when we stand together as one praising and worshipping His name. To God be the Glory!"

Church of the Palms to perform at Carnegie Hall

OKATIE—Music Director Norma Brown and the Church of the Palms United Methodist Church Choir have been invited to participate in a performance of Pepper Choplin's "Heaven's Child" Dec. 2, 2019, at the Isaac Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

"The Church of the Palms in Okatie received this invitation because of the quality and high level of musicianship demonstrated by the singers as well as the quality of their audition recording. It is quite an honor just to be invited to perform in New York," said Dr. Jonathan Griffith, artistic director and principal conductor for Distinguished Concerts International New York City. "These wonderful musicians not only represent a high quality of music and education, but they also become ambassadors for the entire community. This is an event of extreme pride for everybody and deserving of the community's recognition and support."

The musicians of Church of the Palms will join with other choristers to form the Dis-

tinguished Concerts Singers International, a choir of distinction. Composer Pepper Choplin will serve as conductor of the performance and clinician for the residency. The singers will spend five days and four nights in New York to prepare for their concert, with approximately nine or 10 hours in rehearsals over the five-day period.

"At Church of the Palms, we have performed eight of Pepper Choplin's cantatas over the years, and they have always been popular and entertaining for our community," Brown said. "We feel highly honored and excited to now be invited to perform 'Heaven's Child' with Choplin and other distinguished choirs at Carnegie Hall. We appreciate the opportunity to represent the Lowcountry of South Carolina in this concert, and we are grateful for the support of our congregation and community in helping us get there."

Church pastor the Rev. Pete Berntson said, "This is a great testimony to the dedication and passion of the members of the choir."



A Christmas celebration

St. George UMC, St. George, celebrated the joy of Christmas with a cantata orchestrated by Jeff Cockcroft, director of music. A reception followed courtesy of Brian and Tammy Hutto. Here, Cockcroft (right) shares a smile at the cantata with Jackie G. Jenkins, director of the South Carolina Conference Lay Servant Ministries, and her husband, Kenneth.

Disciples UMC to celebrate 40th birthday this May

First appointed minister, the Rev. Bob Stillwell, to preach

GREENVILLE—May will mark the anniversary of the first charge conference of Disciples United Methodist Church—and the welcoming of their first appointed minister, the Rev. Bob Stillwell.

That first conference was in the evening at St. Peter's Episcopal Church May 21, 1979. This year, to celebrate Disciples' 40th birthday, a planning committee is preparing for a big celebration Sunday, May 19.

Stillwell will be the main speaker that day, and the church is hoping the Rev. Harlan Wilson will be able to join also. He was the church's founding minister who began working with a small group in 1978.

All of Disciples' past ministers and past members, many of whom went into the ministry as well, are encouraged to attend. If anyone has special pictures or memorabilia they could share, bring it that day.

"We plan on large displays and a possible slide show to run during gathering and during lunch and fellowship," said Diane Wilson, planning committee chair.

Tentative plans include a two-hour service and sharing of memories from 10 a.m. to noon followed by lunch in the fellowship hall for a nominal fee.

If planning to attend, or if you have questions, contact the church at 864-297-0382 or my-disciplesumc@att.net, or Wilson at 864-270-1592 or dianewilson@charter.net.

Charleston District

The United Methodist Men of Old Bethel UMC, Charleston, and Wesley UMC, Charleston, will hold a Unifying Men in the Community Luncheon March 2 at 11 a.m. Dr. Nelson B. Rivers III, pastor of Charity Missionary Baptist Church, North Charleston, will be the guest speaker. Tickets are \$5 and black attire is requested. For more information, contact Old Bethel church office at 843-722-3470.

Columbia District

Congratulations to the Rev. Meg and John Cook on the birth of their son. James Tiberius Cook was born Jan. 13. Rev. Cook is the pastor of First UMC, Winnsboro.

The South Carolina Chapter of Fellowship of United Methodists in Worship Arts will hold its 2019 Church Music Workshop Feb. 22-23 at Shandon UMC, Columbia. Presenters will include John Behnke, Brent Velde and Keith Watson. For more information, contact Jason Barrs, 803-787-3058. Register at www.southcarolinafellowship.org.

Columbia College, Columbia, awarded 126 degrees Dec. 15 during commencement ceremonies. Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin and Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott were the speakers for the two ceremonies.

The Best College Reviews put **Columbia College, Columbia**, in the top 50 for Best Small Colleges in 2019.

Dominion Energy is giving the youth and families served by **Epworth Children's Home, Columbia**, new resources to live independently with an \$8,500 grant to establish a Resource and Assistance Closet program. It will provide clothing, home



Photo by Enola Mills

The armor of God

The Rev. Andrew Sizemore, pastor of Immanuel UMC, Wellford, recently led a sermon series titled "Suit Up" where each Sunday he presented a different piece of the "full armor of God" from Ephesians during worship. He wore that specific piece throughout the sermon, adding another piece to his armor each Sunday. Members said they loved the visual lesson and learned a lot.

goods and other resources to the home's foster parents and children living in private residences, youth aging out of foster care as young adults and mother with young children who are served by Epworth's Family Care Center.

Francis Burns UMC, Columbia, held a Martin Luther King Jr. Community Service Jan. 20. Dr. Harry Singleton, professor of religion and theology, Benedict College, was the keynote speaker, and Rep. James E. Clyburn was a special guest. The Clafin University Choir offered its musical talents.

Rehoboth UMC, Columbia, will hold its 36th Annual Fish Fry Feb. 25 from 6-8:30 p.m.. The event is part of the Columbia District Men's Fellowship Night. The Rev. Robert Cox will be the speaker. The church asks that if a large group is attending to please call the church before Feb. 18. A minimum meal donation of \$10 is requested.

Charleston District

Congratulations to the Revs. Sandra Stevens Poirel and Jim Hyatt on the birth of their grandson. Christopher West Poirel

Lyttleton Street presents Music for Mission Concert with American Spirit Ensemble

CAMDEN—The American Spiritual Ensemble will be performing in Camden for the first time Feb. 13 at Lyttleton Street United Methodist Church during their winter tour.

"Our goal at Lyttleton Street is to present concerts that are unique and something you couldn't just go see anywhere else," said Jason Brown, director of music at Lyttleton Street.

Providing excellent music while also making it free and accessible to the public is also a priority, he said.

The American Spiritual Ensemble is an internationally acclaimed group of performers who have sung in theaters and opera houses around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Houston Grand Opera and abroad in Italy, Germany, Britain, Scotland, Spain and Japan.

Their repertoire ranges from opera to Negro spirituals to Broadway.

"While they do sing some gospel music, this is not a gospel choir," Brown said. "They are trained opera performers, and it's not unusual for them to end a performance with

Circle of Life from "The Lion King."

Tickets to this event are free but must be reserved in advance. Ticket holders will be seated at 6 p.m., and doors open to the general public at 6:30. To reserve a ticket, call the church office at 803-432-3191.

A freewill offering will be received, and all proceeds from this event will directly benefit the Community Medical Clinic of Kershaw County.

Brown, who has toured and performed with the American Spiritual Ensemble, said the experience changed his life.

"If it can change my life by singing with them, it can change yours by listening," Brown said.

Members of the American Spiritual Ensemble are soloists in their own right, and the vocalists have thrilled audiences around the world with their dynamic renditions of classic spirituals, jazz and Broadway numbers highlighting the black experience. The mission of the American Spiritual Ensemble is to keep the American Negro spiritual alive.

The American Spiritual Ensemble has presented diverse concerts throughout the

United States, Europe and South America and has toured Spain seven times presenting more than 80 international concerts.

"It truly is an honor to have them come

to perform here in Camden," Brown said. "While the tickets are free, we're selling out quickly. If you're interested in coming out, I wouldn't wait to call and reserve a ticket."

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Resource Center

by Betty Stalnaker

Church musicians, it's time to plan your Easter music. Listed below are new titles available in the conference Resource Center. Check our website for many other titles for children, youth and adults, or come by the Resource Center to see, listen and select your musical (appointments only).

Amazing Love How Can It Be

(SBK435=) *Composer/Arranger: Mauldin, Russell/Smith, Sue.* Russell Mauldin and Sue C. Smith team up to deliver the Simple Series Easter musical, "Amazing Love." Within the heart of every believer is a story of Christ redeeming brokenness with transforming grace. This Easter, reflect on the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus paid on the cross and celebrate the freedom offered through His amazing love. In Christ we find new life, strength and hope in the midst of any circumstance. With these songs, your church will lift up the name of Jesus and remember that, no matter what life brings, Jesus remains victorious. Adult/25 min/Easy/Unison, 2 part. (Brentwood-Benson) Listening CD available.

Closer to the Cross

(SBK437=) *Composer/Arranger: Robertson, Nick/Clark, Dave.*



From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

Bishop James S. Thomas

Bishop James S. Thomas was one of South Carolina's most significant contributors to The United Methodist Church. His pioneering work helped lead to the end of racial segregation in the church's hierarchy.

Bishop Thomas was born 100 years ago this spring, on April 9, 1919, in Orangeburg. His father, the Rev. James S. Thomas Sr., was a clergyman serving there. Bishop Thomas enrolled at Claflin University, graduating in 1939 with a degree in sociology. He first became an educator, spending a year as a school principal in Florence County. However, he could not ignore his call to the ministry and was ordained deacon and elder in subsequent years. He attended Gammon Theological Seminary and served the Orangeburg Circuit and later earned a master's degree at Drew University.

Back in South Carolina, he served two years on the York Circuit and was also a chaplain at South Carolina State College. From the local church, Bishop Thomas found a calling in higher education, going on to become a professor at Gammon Seminary. While there, he earned his Ph.D. in sociology and anthropology at Cornell University. During part of his time at Gammon, he served as acting president of the seminary.

In 1953, he took a position as associate general secretary of the Methodist General Board of Education, with responsibilities for assisting and supporting the denomination's historically black colleges. He served at the General Board for a dozen years, retaining his clergy membership in the South Carolina 1866 Conference.

During the 1950s, many Methodists began to question the bargain that had been struck during the reunification of the northern and southern branches of Methodism, the bargain that relegated African-American Methodists into the segregated Central Jurisdiction. As early as 1952, Methodists were arguing that "there is no place for racial discrimination or segregation in the Methodist

Church." In a painfully slow manner, Thomas was at the forefront of helping to dismantle segregation in the church.

Though the Central Jurisdiction still existed in 1964, Thomas was elected to the episcopacy by the North Central Jurisdiction. He became the youngest Methodist bishop at the time of his election. He was assigned to the Iowa Area, one of the largest annual conferences in the denomination, where he served until 1976. During those 12 years, the merger with the Evangelical United Brethren Church created The United Methodist Church, the Central Jurisdiction was abolished and former African-American conferences throughout the country merged into integrated conferences. During those 12 years, Thomas became president of the Council of Bishops, served as chair of the social principles study commission and delivered the principal episcopal address in 1976. In 1972, in fact, three native South Carolinians played leading roles in General Conference, one of them being Thomas.

Claflin remained dear to his heart, and he helped the university raise funds on numerous occasions. A longtime trustee, he chaired the board and was inducted into the Claflin hall of fame.

He also received honors from colleges across the Midwest, including Ohio Wesleyan, Iowa Wesleyan and DePauw, and in South Carolina, both Claflin and Wofford conferred honorary doctorates on him.

He was the first African-American to receive an honorary degree from Wofford in 1972.

In 1976, he was appointed to the East Ohio Conference, where he served until retirement in 1988. He continued his ministry as a bishop in residence at Emory and at Clark Atlanta, and continued his work of mentoring and teaching until his death in 2010 at age 91.

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

Easter music ideas

"Closer to the Cross" combines powerful top worship songs with exciting new songs to take a fresh look at the Easter story. The arrangements in this mini-musical are accessible enough for your small-to-medium-sized choir to learn with just a few rehearsals. Fully orchestrated tracks provide spectacular split-track accompaniment. This Easter, invite your faith community to remember the price of their redemption and have them on their feet singing, O we're free, free, forever we're free! Listening CD available.

Hallelujah! What A Savior: The Crucified and Risen Christ

(SBK438=) *Composer/Arranger: Various.* Bring the Passion story and its impact to life through moving music and Pamela Stewart's compelling narrative: from euphoria surrounding Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem to the desolation in the lonely Garden as He fully embraced God's plan, to his ultimate death on the cross. Combining the compositional talents of Lloyd Larson, Faye Lopez, R. Kevin Boesinger, Larry Shackley, Molly Ijames, Mark Hayes, and Pepper Choplin, this inspiring cantata provides an unforgettable worship experience. It can be used in segments or performed in its entirety. This is a powerful resource for choirs

large and small. Adult/40 min/Moderate/SATB. (Lorenz) Listening CD available.

One Day

(SBK436=) *Composer/Arranger: Mauldin, Russell.* Every year at Easter, we celebrate the risen Savior. God's promise to save us from our sins was fully realized in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God. But God made another promise. One day, all who believe the Easter story will be reunited with Jesus in heaven! In "One Day," the new Ready To Sing Easter collection by Russell Mauldin, your choir can sing of these promises with joy and celebration. With a multi-narration format and iconic Ready To Sing arrangements, "One Day" will invite your congregation to worship as they celebrate the risen Christ and His promised return. Adult/35 min/Moderate/SATB. (Brentwood-Benson) Listening CD available.

The South Carolina Conference Resource Center is your connection to VHS tapes, DVDs and seasonal musicals. We are here to serve your church family. To reserve resources, call 888-678-6272 or 803-786-9486, or visit www.umcsc.org/resourcecenter.



Methodism Revisited

Rev. Bob Huggins

On to Charleston

After several days in the City of Georgetown and a visit with Mr. Wayne (a cousin of Gen. Anthony Wayne of the Revolutionary War fame), Asbury and his company were given ferry passage and shown the way to Charleston.

Mr. Wayne had given courtesy letters of introduction to Mr. Henry Willis, who had gone on before, which secured for Asbury a cordial reception in the City of Charleston.

Asbury wrote in his Journal, "Thursday, February 24. We traveled on through a barren country, in all respects, to Charleston. (From Elmer T. Clark's editorial notes of Asbury's Journal, "The party doubtless crossed Santee River at Myzack's Ferry near Honey Hill and over the Cooper to Charleston.") We came that evening to Scott's, where the people seemed to be merry; they soon became mute. We talked and prayed with them.

"In the morning, when we took our leave of them, they would receive nothing. We met Brother Willis. He had gone along before us, and had made an acquaintance with Mr. Wells, a respectable merchant of the city, to whom he had carried letters of introduction from Mr. Wayne, of Georgetown. I jogged on, dejected in spirit, and came to Mr. Wells's. We obtained the use of an old meeting-house belonging to the General Baptists, in which they had ceased to preach. (From Dr. Clark's editorial notes in Early Methodism in the Carolinas, "Chreitzberg says this was the Old Seaman's Bethel in which Joseph Pilmoor twelve years earlier preached the first Methodist sermon in Charleston, but this is refuted by old Baptist records.")

"The Calvinistic or Particular Baptists organized first. Then the Arminian or General Baptists came in. Both used the same house until the former tried to oust the latter. The colonial courts gave equal rights to each group, and the Particular body bought the Seamen's Mission where Pilmoor preached. After the Revolution the General Baptists dwindled and congregation later reclaimed the property, and Asbury and his party used the original house which they abandoned.

The Particular congregation later reclaimed the property, which was on the site of the present First Baptist Church. Asbury, Lee and Willis used it during this visit to Charleston.

"The Methodist were later ejected, the seats were thrown into the streets, and the doors and windows barred. Mrs. Stoll, grandmother of Bishop William W. Wightman, then opened her home for Methodist worship until the services were moved to an unfinished house on Wentworth Street" (Betts: History of South Carolina Methodism).

Brother Willis preached at noon—brother Jesse Lee morning and evening. I first went to the Episcopal Church (St. Phillip's Church) and then to the Independent meeting-house (Circular Congregational Church, called the "White Meeting House," Shipp: History of Methodism of South Carolina) at this last I heard a good discourse (sermon)."

Afterwards, Asbury was given the opportunity to preach in the meeting house. Asbury noted again in his Journal, "Monday, 28. The Calvinists, who are the only people in Charleston who appear to have any sense of religion, seemed to be alarmed. Yesterday morning (Sunday), and again at noon, the congregations were small; at night we were crowded. There is a great dearth of religion here; some say, never more so than at this time. The people were a little moved while brother Lee preached to them on Sabbath evening.

"My first sermon was on Wednesday, the second of March, on 2 Corinthians 20. I had but a little enlargement. I preached again the next day on Eccles. xi. 9; the people were solemn and attentive. I find there are here who oppose us—I leave the Lord to look to his own cause. I told my hearers that I expected to stay in the city but seven days; that I should preach every night, if they would favour me with their company, and that I should speak on subjects of primary importance to their souls, and explain the essential doctrines taught and held by Methodists."

Huggins is president of the S.C. United Methodist Historical Society and is pastor at Mount Pleasant UMC, Pomaria.

Global Briefs

Wesley verse and hymn project completed

DURHAM, N.C.—The Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition at United Methodist Duke Divinity School has completed a multiyear project to make accessible accurate transcriptions of all the known surviving verse of Charles Wesley, as well as collections of hymns published by John Wesley.

Book offers practical guide to God's grace

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—In his new book "Simply Grace: Everyday Glimpses of God," released by the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Bruce L. Blumer delves into the sometimes perplexing power of God's grace and the role it plays in our everyday lives. All profits from the book will benefit scholarships and the construction of an addition to a school in LaGonave, Haiti.

38 United Methodists serve in 116th Congress

WASHINGTON—United Methodists comprise the fourth-largest religious group in the new U.S. Congress, which has fewer Christians and slightly more religious diversity.

Raising indigenous voices through D.C. march

WASHINGTON—Members of the United Methodist Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference were among those chanting and drumming as they walked down Constitution Avenue with pots of burning sage and cedar, part of the first-ever Indigenous Peoples March.

Judith Craig, pioneering woman bishop, dead at 81

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Bishop Judith Craig, who was the third woman elected as a United Methodist bishop in 1984, died Jan. 18. She was 81. She is being remembered for her robust sense of humor and her eloquent and inspiring preaching style.

Zimbabwe faces violence, record fuel prices

HARARE, Zimbabwe—United Methodists in Zimbabwe are calling for prayers after protests, sparked by soaring fuel prices, led to a government crackdown. The unrest has left shuttered businesses, canceled flights and a blocked internet.

Simple Plan supporters talk strategy

MADISON, N.J.—Supporters of the Simple Plan acknowledge the legislation faces long odds at the special General Conference next month. Backers recently held a strategy session on promoting a plan that strikes out all church restrictions related to homosexuality.

Scholarships available for ecumenical training

ST. LOUIS—The Council of Bishops is offering up to six partial scholarships for young adults and seminary students participating in the 2019 United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Training in the U.S. The training will be held April 1-4, in conjunction with the National Workshop on Christian Unity. To obtain a scholarship application, contact the Rev. Jean Hawhurst at jhawhurst@umc-cob.org.

Bishops find resonance in Kennedy's telegram

MADISON, N.J.—In 1968, the merger of the Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist churches into The United Methodist Church was big news. The United Methodist Commission on Archives and History recently discovered a congratulatory telegram Sen. Robert F. Kennedy sent to church leaders. In the brief message, Kennedy speaks of the need for church cooperation in a broken world.

Wespath launches institutional investments arm

GLENVIEW, Ill.—Wespath Benefits and Investments, the United Methodist pension agency, has launched Wespath Institutional Investments. The nonprofit investment management organization is dedicated to serving a broader range of institutional investors related to The United Methodist Church.

Kansas church fund assists during shutdown

MANHATTAN, Kan.—First United Methodist Church has set up a \$15,000 fund for those affected by the partial federal government shutdown. "Most of us live paycheck to paycheck," said the Rev. Troy Bowers. "With that paycheck not coming in and the uncertainty of when it will come in, we figured we needed to help the community."

Academic exchange set between U.S., Japan

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz.—Students and faculty at United Methodist colleges and universities in the United States and Japan will soon have new opportunities for shared research and cultural exchange. Those opportunities are thanks to a formal agreement between the National Association of Schools and Colleges of The United Methodist Church and Aoyama Gakuin University, a Methodist-related institution in Tokyo.

Churches respond during government shutdown

WASHINGTON—As the partial U.S. government shutdown continues, the impact is being felt in people's pocketbooks. Churches throughout the Baltimore-Washington Conference are responding to federal employees and other people hurting because of the shutdown.

Partnerships enable hurricane response

ATLANTA—When disaster occurs, the United Methodist Committee on Relief helps people recover, partnering with annual conferences to train volunteers from local congregations as disaster responders and providing grants for direct support, goods or services to survivors. The relief agency approved 53 grants totaling more than \$53 million for 2017-18.

Hospital reaches out to Sierra Leone's poorest

BO, Sierra Leone—United Methodist Mercy Hospital's outreach program is transforming the lives of the poorest of the poor in Sierra Leone. The program targets pregnant women, nursing mothers and children younger than age 5 in remote communities where availability and the power to pay for health care is a challenge.

Church helps fight ageism in Zimbabwe

HARARE, Zimbabwe—Elderly patients in Zimbabwe are often excluded from receiving the same health care as young people, said the Rev. Farirayi Nyabote. The UMC is helping fight ageism through new health initiatives that make senior citizens a priority.

—Courtesy of United Methodist News Service



The Plank: A satire

by Phil Reynolds

The sermon he never could preach

Dear Charlie Churched, I enjoyed the trip with you and Mrs. Charlotte last Sunday down to Happy Bucks Church for homecoming. I especially enjoy the stories you tell about your grandfather and grandmother who are buried there. I'm pretty amazed how tombstones made out of granite age and wear from rain over the years.

I thought it odd that Happy Bucks invited their previous pastor BobbyBo back to preach. They did not like him when he was there, but maybe he's all they could find to preach for homecoming. I think some churches always have a Gospel singing for homecoming because they can't find anyone who will preach to suit them. It almost seemed like BobbyBo came back for homecoming to preach the sermon they wouldn't let him preach when he was their pastor.

New preachers meet with the committee in secret before the new preacher officially arrives. Pastor BobbyBo said the committee told him not to preach about alcohol because the owner of the beer distributor was their biggest giver. BobbyBo said the committee told him not to preach on gambling because the sanctuary was refurbished with money won in the lottery, and on and on and on. They told BobbyBo not to preach about money. BobbyBo said people don't want to hear about their greatest sin, but BobbyBo felt in good company because the crowds didn't want to hear about sin from the prophets, Jesus, Paul, Billy Graham or Billy Sunday, either. Pastor BobbyBo said the reason he asked the district superintendent to be moved after a year was he didn't have anything to preach about.

I know you noticed half a dozen church ladies got up to check on the macaroni and cheese when Pastor BobbyBo started talking about giving and tithing and stewardship and all that. Then he said some church people want to spend but never give. Some church people give but never want to spend anything. He said some church people don't like controls on how money is spent so they open their own little church accounts and no one cares because "no one would ever steal from a church." A few years back, three church people Upstate stole over \$1 million from three different churches. Then he said the worst sinners with money were folks who give a church big bucks and think they should control where it's spent—or get their way in other matters because of the ever-present threat of pulling their contributions.

I know you thought it was a great sermon, and I thought the same as well.

Maybe the best part of the whole day was listening to your cousin Viola at the table while we were eating. She said BobbyBo got all that stuff about money and sin from other churches he has served because Happy Bucks didn't have any of those money struggles. I just thought that was the craziest thing I'd heard all day and was surprised she would tell you that. You two have been in a church about every Sunday for 90 years and you know that can't be true, even if the name of the church is Happy Bucks.

We really have a great time when both of you wear your hearing aids, have fresh batteries in the hearing aids and turn the hearing aids on. I'll see you Sunday.

Reynolds is a local pastor not currently appointed. Email him: reflector.ihg@att.net.

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Registration open for United Methodist Women's Spiritual Growth Mission Trip

Registration is now open for a Spiritual Growth Mission Trip with the United Methodist Women of South Carolina, scheduled for April 1-4.

The group will travel by bus to northern Kentucky to visit Ark Encounter and The Creation Museum and tour the Wesley Education Center in Cincinnati.

Registration with full payment is due Feb. 28. Registration forms are available at umcsc.org/umw.



Guest Commentary

by Rev. Tony Rowell

Steppin' Out

Angel sat across from me in the old open-air passenger jeep as we tore through the streets of Cali, Colombia. The jeep had a brand new coat of candy apple red paint adorning its sides, but try as he might the driver couldn't hide the battle scars and near misses that traced their way down the fenders and side panels of the old rattletap.

The windshield bore a striking resemblance to a spider web shimmering in the early morning sun, and to say the tires lacked tread would be rather generous; but, gracious, how that thing could move. As my granny would say, it ran like a scalded dog through the streets, and you had best be prepared for the ride if you knew what was good for you. It was a "hold on to your hat, hang on for dear life" type of ride, and I loved every minute of it.

The fact that the driver was named Christian and his navigator, Angel, seemed strangely comforting to me, but did not appear to have an equal effect on the team's newbies, if the startled screams and hasty prayers were any indication. The thing was standard transportation for mission work, though, so I quietly prayed that the new folks would embrace the adventure and increase their faith to the point of enjoyment.

During a brief lull in the excitement, I asked Angel who had manufactured the vehicle. He reply was intriguing: "What part?" Then he proceeded give me a brief genealogical history of the vehicle. The engine was an International, the frame was from a Chevy, the body from a Jeep, the transmission was from some Korean company and the tires were Michelins, of course. He proclaimed that last little tidbit with a sarcastic smile.

Upon reflection the hodgepodge we were riding in seemed strangely fitting for mission work to me; but after he had finished, I realized he had missed something, so I asked him who manufactured the back bumper. He said he had no idea. Then I asked him who installed it, and with a smile he thumped his chest and I understood why. As it turns out, Angel spent a great portion of his time standing on that bumper hanging on for dear life as he directed the driver in the way he should go. I reasoned that if I spent my time standing on the back bumper of a jeep as it threatened to go supersonic, I would want to be sure the bumper was secure myself, as well.

Personally I was glad to hear of the quality installation. You see, one of my chief pleasures in life while working in Cali was to stand on that same bumper and hang on for dear life as we careened up and down the mountain.

Years ago Christian, that year's driver,

held Angel's position; and he and I struck up a friendship in the same way that Angel and I had. One morning, a few years back, as we left the city behind and began the dirt road climb up the mountain; Christian tapped me on the shoulder and invited me to share the bumper with him. It was a moment of acceptance and a bit of a test, I believe. So I gladly stepped out into the morning sunshine, and I have refused to relinquish my position from that time to this.

A peaceful freedom overtook me when I stepped out onto that bumper that was truly wonderful. The shackles of fear seemed to fall away, and my spirit relaxed within me as my muscles tightened their grip. When I felt the wind on my face, I begin to see the world anew. There is no use in me trying to explain it, it must be experienced. It is an awakening of sorts.

This past year the bumper didn't beckon; the rear seat of a rickety and ramshackle motorbike did as we left Brisil Del Mar and headed for the coast. The motorbike was of the same manufacturer as the jeep, the driver projected the same mixture of peaceful insanity as did Angel and Christian and the ride was a bit more challenging than the mountain, if that is possible. As I tumbled down the hillside with the bike more airborne than earthbound, that same odd sense of freedom and peace overtook me again, so I decided to examine it. Where does it come from? Why is it there? It occurred to me that perhaps this particular brand of freedom, this particular brand of spiritual peace, can only be obtained when we step out of bounds a little.

Most of us spend our Christian life in a carefully ordered spiritual vacuum of sorts. We are often afraid to color outside of the lines. We live out our Christianity as if we are painting by numbers in fear that should the yellow bleed over into the red, disaster will follow.

Well I contend that if God can make Eden out of chaos, joy out of sorrow and eternal life out of death; then He can make a blessing out of anything done in His name.

It seems to me that true blessings seldom occur in a carefully planned sterile environment. God seems to love to work in haphazard and surprising ways. So let the colors run a bit in your life. Relax and bask in the freedom that Christ gives you. Find blessings in all things.

Step out onto the bumper of life, careen down a hill or two, cast off your fear of the unknown and know that God is always before you, always behind you and always with you, yearning to bless you.

Rowell pastors Beulah United Methodist Church, Gilbert.

Leave A Legacy To Change Lives

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

United Methodist Women

by Linda Eichenbaum

Legislative Advocacy Day set for Feb. 12

The South Carolina Conference United Methodist Women Legislative Advocacy Day is set for Feb. 12 at Epworth Children's Home, 2900 Millwood Ave., Columbia.

Our Social Action Committee has planned a great day of learning in workshops and hearing guest speakers. The snow makeup date is March 5.

Our morning speaker will be South Carolina Sen. Gerald Malloy, former chair of the Sentencing Reform Oversight Committee, which produced remarkable and groundbreaking guidelines for South Carolina Reform. He is a graduate of the University of South Carolina, is an active attorney and Darlington County resident, and currently serves on the Education and Judiciary committees. He will speak primarily about criminal justice issues, especially as they pertain to youth, and about effective advocacy for several landmark criminal justice bills he is currently sponsoring: hate crimes, juvenile justice, drug courts, gun sales, racial profiling, the death penalty and vehicle pay day loans.

The Rev. John Holler Jr. will be the afternoon speaker on the topic, "Do You Love Me? How Can I Tell?" Holler graduated from Wofford College and earned an Ed.S. in educational psychology from the University of South Carolina and a Master of Divinity from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. He is an ordained minister, a licensed professional counselor and a licensed

marriage and family therapist. He currently serves as chief executive officer and president of Epworth Children's Home.

Morning workshops will include "Stars in the Making: Becoming Educational Champions for Highly Stressed and/or Traumatized Children," "Is There a Villain in the House? Promoting Quality Care in Children's Homes," "Becoming an Effective Advocate: Steps to Being Heard" and "Unsung Heroes—Campaigning for Grandparents and Other Non-Traditional Kin-Rearing Children." Our SCCUMW Social Action Coordinators have chosen mass incarceration/criminal justice, income inequality, climate change, quality public education, maternal health and school/church/home safety as primary focus areas for 2019.

United Methodist Women are bold and 8,000-plus strong in South Carolina. We can make a legislative difference for our most vulnerable citizens. We all have personal perspectives and experiences that lead us to approach social issues in a variety of ways. But, as God's children who are charged to love one another, we are singular in seeking justice. To do so, we must educate ourselves, listen and learn, then take action. Faith without works is dead (James 2:14-17), and we are alive in Christ.

The Legislative Advocacy Day registration form is found on the www.umcsc.org/umw. Early registration ends Feb. 1.

Eichenbaum is the 2019 Social Action Mission Coordinator for SCCUMW.



View from the Pews

by Bill Barnier

Elusive happiness

My wife handed me a copy of an Internet post by Darius Foroux with a handwritten note in one corner. She noted part of the title proclaiming the purpose of life is not happiness. What?

How often in our lives do we quietly contemplate the reason we exist? In times of trouble we all have moments of doubt or fatigue in which we simply ask, "Why am I doing this?" We work hard, save and sacrifice, endure pain and hardship in the quest for some level of happiness.

Foroux writes, "We buy things we don't need, sleep with people we don't love and work hard to get approval from people we don't like."

For a multitude of reasons, many live lives filled with unhappiness, failed expectations, unfulfilled dreams, loneliness and fear. The true reward we seek remains elusive while we spend entire lifetimes chasing happiness.

The author then brings the focus directly into view—the "duh" moment, if you will: "The purpose of life is to be useful, honorable and compassionate. To make some difference that you have lived well."

Useful. Could it really be that simple? Can one achieve happiness by being useful, helpful? When all of the detritus of seeking happiness is stripped away, it might be the acts of being useful to someone are the most rewarding of anything we can do. The concordance of the Bible has 35 references under the categories of helpful. Perhaps the most pointed and useful of those is Ephesians 4:28, which says the thief must do something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

Before my dad was called home two years ago, he lamented the frailty of his 94 years.

He was sorrowful that he no longer had any purpose, anything to contribute to life. He considered himself to be a burden and welcomed the prospect of moving on to be with our Lord. I should have pointed out that his needs were giving usefulness to those caring for him. He also instilled in his children the trait of self-sacrifice and charity toward others. We have all lead useful lives because of his example.

Being useful in life takes effort. Every one of us on this earth has a special talent or ability that could be a benefit to others. We've all seen people who retire from a lifetime of labor, only to die quickly, often from unhappiness, despair or boredom. They felt useful in their jobs and careers, but once released from working, they lost their feeling of value. They don't realize, what made them valuable in their working lives doesn't disappear just because they don't get a regular paycheck.

God invests a lot of time and energy in us during our lives. He prepares us with training and guidance about how we should live so when we earn our retirement we can fill those extra years with usefulness. He doesn't ask us to do things we are no longer capable of doing, but He does require us to do something to show others His love by being useful to them in some way.

Finding ways to be useful only requires a little imagination. Needs are all around us. Throughout our lives we should think less of happiness from things or people and more toward usefulness. We may not be able to hold the results in our hands, but they most certainly will be felt in our hearts. Oh, God will notice, too, and His gratitude will be so much more rewarding than anything on earth.

Now, go be useful.

Columbia LSM school set for March

Columbia District Lay Servant Ministries will hold its Spring Training School March 8-9.

The school will be held from 6-9 p.m. March 8 and 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. March 9 at Mount Hebron United Methodist Church, West Columbia.

The registration deadline is Feb. 20. Course offerings include Lay Servant Ministries (The Basic Course); From Pew To Pulpit (a beginner's guide to preaching); Leading a Special Needs Ministry: A Practical Guide to Including Children and Loving Families; Transforming Evangelism (The Wesleyan Way of Sharing Faith); and Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition (Grow Spiritually through Daily Discipline).

All classes are \$30. Each participant is to purchase his/her own books ahead of time. For online registration, visit <https://fs22.forms.site.com/umcsc/codistlsm/springtraining/index.html>.

For more information, contact Debbie Watford, director, at 803-673-4930 or debbiewatford1@gmail.com.

Virgil Greer Bell Jr.

HOLLY HILL—Virgil Greer Bell Jr., brother of the Rev. Melvin Bell, died Jan. 21, 2019. Rev. Bell is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Jan. 24 at Avinger's Funeral Home with burial in Gerizim UMC Cemetery, Vance.

Memorials may be made to The Alzheimer's Foundation of America, 322 Eighth Ave., 7th Floor, New York, NY 10001.

Mr. Bell is survived by his daughter.

Oliver Baxter Ervin

CHARLOTTE—Oliver Baxter Ervin, brother of the Rev. David Ervin, died Dec. 30, 2018. Rev. Ervin is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Jan. 2 at McEwen Funeral Home, Pineville Chapel, with burial in Sharon Memorial Park Cemetery.

Mr. Ervin is survived by his wife, Frances, two daughters and two stepdaughters.

Mary B. Finklea

PELION—Mary B. Finklea, widow of the Rev. Enoch S. Finklea, died Dec. 20, 2018.

Funeral services were held Dec. 23 at Wayside Baptist Tabernacle with burial in the church cemetery.

Mrs. Finklea is survived by her three sons.

Charlotte Cole Flessas

CHARLESTON—Charlotte Cole Flessas, mother of the Rev. Daniel Flessas, died Jan. 5, 2019. Rev. Flessas is a member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church currently on leave of absence.

Funeral services were held Jan. 9 at Shandon UMC, Columbia, with burial in Greenlawn Memorial Park.

Memorials may be made to Hibben UMC Sanctuary Restoration Fund, 690 Coleman Blvd., Mount Pleasant, SC 29464.

Mrs. Flessas is survived by her two sons.

John Johnson

ATLANTA—John Johnson, brother of the Rev. Pamela Richardson, died Dec. 25, 2018. Rev. Richardson is the pastor of Epworth Memorial United Methodist Church, Columbia.

Funeral arrangements were unavailable at the time of publishing.



Helping hands

Shiloh UMC, Lugoff, members volunteered at Food for the Soul Shelter in Camden Jan. 11. Church volunteers offer their services monthly to prepare, serve meals, help with laundry or other activities as needed. Above left, front row from left, are Vera Murphy, Joyce Seabrook and Mary Davis. In back from left are Anthony Nelson, Craig Davis and Henry Belton. Above right, Nelson staffs the serving line. Bottom right, everyone pitched in to help.



Photos courtesy of Henry Belton

Obituaries

Mr. Malphrus is survived by his wife, son and daughter.

Gertrude Jones McClam

FLORENCE—Gertrude Jones McClam, grandmother of Chasie Cattenhead, died Jan. 9, 2019. Mrs. Cattenhead is the wife of the Rev. Derrick Cattenhead, associate pastor at Central United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Jan. 15 at Wesley Chapel UMC, Lake City.

Michael Leroy Moore

SPARTANBURG—Michael Leroy Moore, brother of the Rev. James Moore, died Dec. 13, 2018. Rev. Moore is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of the UMC.

Funeral services were held Dec. 17 at Majority Baptist Church with burial in Lincoln Memorial Gardens.

Mr. Moore is survived by his two brothers and sister.

Lillie Brown Perry

GREENSBORO, N.C.—Lillie Brown Perry, mother of Donna Vandiver, died Dec. 29, 2018. Mrs. Vandiver is the wife of the Rev. Michael Vandiver, a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Dec. 31 at Christ Methodist Church with burial Jan. 2 in Mount Lawn Cemetery, Boone, North Carolina.

Memorials may be made to the Henry B. and Lillie Perry Jr. Endowment Fund of Curamericas Global, 318 Millbrook #105, Raleigh, NC 27609; or to the Music Ministry of Christ Church, 410 N. Holden Road, Greensboro, NC 27410.

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

Clarence T. 'Redd' Reynolds

LEXINGTON—Clarence T. "Redd" Reynolds, father of Phil Reynolds, died Jan. 13, 2019. Mr. Phil Reynolds is a local pastor not currently under appointment.

Funeral services were held Jan. 16 at St. John's Lutheran Church.

Memorials may be made to St. John's Lutheran Church, 213 St. John's Church Road, Lexington, SC 29072; or to the Redd and Doris Family ROTC Grant-in-Aid at Clemson University, c/o Deborah Towery, Clemson University Foundation, P.O. Box 1889, Clemson, SC 29663.

Mr. Reynolds is survived by his wife, Doris, three sons and daughter.

Katherine Taylor

IRVINGTON, N.J.—Katherine Taylor, sister of the Rev. Marvin Taylor, died Dec. 8, 2018. Rev. Taylor is a member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church currently on leave; his wife, the Rev. Mae Taylor, is the pastor of Joshua UMC, Moncks Corner.

Funeral services were held Dec. 11 at Fellowship Baptist Church with burial in Evergreen Cemetery, Hillside, New Jersey.

Ms. Taylor is survived by her five sisters and three brothers.

Rev. Bobby Gene Waddell

GREER—The Rev. Bobby Gene Waddell, a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Dec. 13, 2018.

Prior to his retirement in 2000, Rev. Waddell served the Olar, Few's Chapel, Midland Park, Central Charge, Hartsville-Wesley, Greenville-Trinity, Manning, Grace and Buford Street charges.

Funeral services were held Dec. 17 at the Wood Mortuary Chapel with burial in Wood Memorial Park.

Memorials may be made to Hospice & Palliative Care of the Piedmont, 408 W. Alexander Ave., Greenwood, SC 29646; to the South Carolina United Methodist Foundation, 2900 Millwood Ave., Columbia, SC 29205; to Lions International, Dept. 4544, Carol Stream, IL 60122; or to Parkinson's Research, Emory School of Medicine, Emory University 1400, 762 Clifton Road, Atlanta, GA 30322.

Mr. Waddell is survived by his wife, Ramona, three daughters and son.

Adell Dean Wilson Watson

ORANGEBURG—Adell Dean Wilson Watson, wife of Dr. George C. Watson Sr., died Jan. 5, 2019. Dr. Watson is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Jan. 11 at Trinity UMC with burial in Belleview Memorial Gardens.

Memorials may be made to Trinity UMC Restoration Fund, 185 Boulevard St., Orangeburg, SC 29115.

Mrs. Watson is survived by her husband, son and daughter.



Waddell



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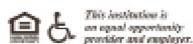
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Photo by Michaele Duke, reprinted with permission of the Kingstree News
Good Hope UMC, Hemingway, honored the 105th birthday of one of its members, Bernice M. Carter.

Church honors member who turns 105

HEMINGWAY—Good Hope United Methodist Church honored the 105th birthday of one of its members, Bernice M. Carter, Oct. 1.

Carter was honored at the church and by family at her home. A large number of friends and family enjoyed the afternoon party.

Carter is the widow of the Rev. Clifford L. Carter, a member of the South Carolina Conference for nearly 50 years. She is a re-

tired elementary school teacher who taught in many areas of South Carolina. The Carters were married almost 70 years and had two children, Novyce and Travis. They also had five grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

Carter has many friends and is said to be loved by all who know her. She still plays the piano and loves to play bingo. She also has a prayer group that meets at her home each month.



Santa's helpers included Shirley Miller and Bill Crowe.



Church pastor the Rev. Jamie McDowell as "Santa Claus."

Tiny church delivers Christmas blessings to seniors at assisted living home

WALHALLA—Zion United Methodist Church is nestled in the foothills of Upstate South Carolina. The congregation is a small but faithful group. The average attendance includes five members and two regular visitors.

One of the members, Shirley Miller, has a special place in her heart for Lakeview Assisted Living. Lakeview is operated under Senior Solutions, a nonprofit organization in Walhalla. It is a 19-bed facility with 14 employees.

In November, the idea to fill the Christmas wish list for all of the residents was brought before the church. The church voted unanimously to do as much as it could to make this happen.

Lakeview's director, Dawn Merritt, was contacted, and she happily provided a wish list for each of the residents. With some help from the Seneca Wal-Mart, the church was able to fulfill the entire list for all residents. The church was also able to provide a small token of appreciation to each employee.

On the afternoon of Dec. 20 the pastor, members and friends of Zion loaded cars with all the gifts and drove out to Lakeview. With church pastor the Rev. Jamie McDowell dressed as jolly old Saint Nick, the gifts were distributed in the social room to the residents and employees.

Lakeview is located at 320 Camp Road, Walhalla. The staff there is always friendly and encourages visitors.

Haiti awareness tables

Members of Disciples UMC, Greenville, sort toys, school supplies, personal hygiene and lots of candy to send to boys and girls in Haiti as part of the church's Haiti awareness event recently. Church members made 41 gallon plastic bags labeled both for younger than 12-year-old girls and boys and older than 12-year-old girls and boys. The project started after the church hosted the Haitian Orphan's Choir in October and they became more aware of the needs and how they could help.



New book on Revelation!

It's time to acknowledge that the Bible's Book of Revelation repeatedly highlights the visible return of Jesus. Read *Revelation for a New Generation* by William Wadsworth to understand the timing of the great tribulation, the wrath of God and the visible return.

Available online at Amazon and wherever books are sold.

Thank you, Advocate Church Partners

Advocate Church Partners believe that a strong and flourishing *Advocate* newspaper ministry helps strengthen the conference, districts and its churches. To that end, they put funds in their budget, raise funds or otherwise help the church enroll in an *Advocate* church plan (print or online). Advocate Church Partners also on occasion lift up the *Advocate* either from the pulpit and church bulletin so people know the importance of the 181-year-old ministry—the oldest newspaper in Methodism.

ANDERSON DISTRICT

Clemson UMC, Clemson
Dickson Memorial UMC, Townville
Lawrence Chapel UMC, Clemson
Main Street UMC, Abbeville
Mount Sinai UMC, Anderson
Shiloh UMC, Piedmont
Trinity UMC, Honea Path

CHARLESTON DISTRICT

Asbury-St. James UMC, Charleston
Bethany UMC, Summerville
Grace UMC, Charleston
New Light UMC, St. Stephen
Pinopolis UMC, Pinopolis

COLUMBIA DISTRICT

Ashland UMC, Columbia
First UMC, Winnsboro
Francis Burns UMC, Columbia
Gilbert UMC, Gilbert
Mount Horeb, Lexington
Pond Branch UMC, Gilbert
Rehoboth UMC, Leesville
Shandon UMC, Columbia
Shiloh UMC, Gilbert
Union UMC, Irmo
Virginia Wingard Memorial UMC, Columbia
Zion UMC, Blythewood

FLORENCE DISTRICT

Bethel UMC, Kingstree
Bethlehem UMC, Pamplico
Central UMC, Florence
Cumberland UMC, Florence
Friendship UMC, Florence
Hebron UMC, Cades
Highland Park UMC, Florence
Jeremiah UMC, Kingstree
Manning UMC, Manning
Mount Beulah UMC, Lake City
Nazareth UMC, Olanta
Old Johnsonville UMC, Hemingway
Shiloh UMC, Turbeville
St. Paul UMC, Florence
Summerton UMC, Summerton
Trinity UMC, Alcolu
Wesley Chapel UMC, Lake City

GREENVILLE DISTRICT

Allen View UMC, Greenville
Few's Chapel UMC, Greer
Grace UMC, Greer
Green Pond UMC, Gray Court
John Wesley UMC, Greenville
Mountain View UMC, Greer
Piedmont Park UMC, Greenville
Piedmont UMC, Piedmont
Sharon UMC, Greer
Simpsonville UMC, Simpsonville

St. Mark UMC, Taylors
St. Paul UMC, Greenville
Wesley Chapel UMC, Greenville

GREENWOOD DISTRICT

Central UMC, Laurens
Ebenezer UMC, Greenwood
Ebenezer UMC, Newberry
Harmony UMC, Johnston
Main Street UMC, Greenwood
McCormick UMC, McCormick
Mount Pleasant UMC, Pomaria
Panola UMC, Greenwood
Pentecost UMC, Warrentonville
Ridge Spring UMC, Ridge Spring
St. John's UMC, Batesburg
St. Paul UMC, Ninety Six
St. Paul UMC, Saluda
Ware Shoals UMC, Ware Shoals
Waterloo UMC, Waterloo
Wightman UMC, Prosperity

HARTSVILLE DISTRICT

Epworth UMC, Darlington
McLeod Chapel UMC, Rembert
Mount Olivet UMC, Cheraw
Mount Zion UMC, Sumter
Salem UMC, Pageland
St. Paul UMC, Camden
Trinity UMC, Darlington

Wesley UMC, Hartsville
Zion UMC, Pageland

MARION DISTRICT

Brown Chapel UMC, Murrells Inlet
Central UMC, Marion
Loris First UMC, Loris
Pine Grove UMC, McColl
Rehoboth UMC, Aynor
Salem UMC, Conway
Bethel Park UMC, Denmark
Bethel Peachtree Rock UMC, Lexington
Bethlehem UMC, Orangeburg
Clinton UMC, Sallee
Jericho UMC, Cameron
New Beginning UMC, Norway
New Light UMC, Orangeburg
North Orangeburg UMC, Orangeburg
St. Andrews UMC, Orangeburg
St. Paul's UMC, Orangeburg
Shady Grove UMC, Cameron
Springfield UMC, Springfield
Swansea UMC, Swansea
Union UMC, Cope
Wagener UMC, Wagener
Wesley Foundation, Orangeburg

ROCK HILL DISTRICT

Camp Creek UMC, Lancaster
First UMC, Clover
India Hook UMC, Rock Hill
Sharon UMC, Sharon
St. James UMC, York
St. John's UMC, Fort Mill
Woodland UMC, Rock Hill

SPARTANBURG DISTRICT

Buffalo UMC, Buffalo
Foster's Chapel UMC, Jonesville
Silver Hill Memorial UMC, Spartanburg

WALTERBORO DISTRICT

Bethel UMC, Ruffin
Brunson UMC, Hampton
Buckhead UMC, Ruffin
Canaan UMC, Ridgeville
Carteret Street UMC, Beaufort
Green Pond UMC, Smoaks
Mount Carmel UMC, Hampton
Shady Grove UMC, St. George
St. Andrew By-the-Sea UMC, Hilton Head
St. Mark UMC, St. George
St. Paul UMC, Ridgeland
Wesley UMC, Beaufort

Don't see your church here? It's easy and inexpensive. Contact the *Advocate* to learn how your church can become an Advocate Church Partner: advocate@umcsc.org, 803-786-9486 or AdvocateSC.org/support

January
Jan. 29-31—Adult Spiritual Life Retreat, Landmark Resort, Myrtle Beach.

Jan. 31—Academy of Faith and Leadership and Interfaith Partners of South Carolina's "A Taste of Interfaith," Reinartz Hall, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-taste-of-interfaith-tickets-53959598612>

Jan. 31-Feb. 2—Granville Hicks Lecture Series, Claflin University, Orangeburg.

February
Black History Month
Feb. 1-3—UMW Leadership Development Days, Tempe, Ariz.

Feb. 2—Native American Representative Training, Windsor UMC, Columbia, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Feb. 3—Souper Bowl Sunday

Feb. 5—Fifth Annual Four Chaplains' Day, Inman Baptist Church, Inman, 6 p.m.

Feb. 5-8—TIIMS Phase I, Foundation for Evangelism, Lake Junaluska, N.C. <http://intentionalgrowthcenter.org/tiims/>

Feb. 7—Academy of Faith and Leadership Mini-Retreat, Alumni Hall, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., \$30, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mini-retreat-tickets-5360034917>

Feb. 8-10—2019 Winter Youth Retreats, Lake Junaluska, N.C., <http://lakejunaluska.com/winteryouth>

Feb. 9—"We've Come This Far By Faith" Black History Month program, Mount Nebo UMC, Orangeburg, 2:30 p.m.

Feb. 9—Greenwood District Packing Party (flood buckets), Lowe's of Greenwood,

Feb. 10—Boy Scout Sunday (Scouting Ministries Sunday)

Feb. 10—Greenwood District Safe Sanctuary/Sexual Ethics Training, Broad Street UMC, Clinton, 3-5 p.m.

Feb. 11—South Carolina Bishops' Public Education Initiative Listening Post, James Brandt Building Auditorium,



Photo by the Rev. Judy Hames

Crafting in the name of Christ

Dickson Memorial UMC, Townville, has a new permanent craft room with sewing machines. It is being used for craft sessions and classes.

Allendale, 7 p.m. Rev. Susan Heath, sheath@edusc.org or 803-771-7800 ext. 108.

Feb. 12—UMW Legislative Advocacy Day, Epworth Children's Home, Columbia, 9 a.m.

Feb. 13—Lytleton Street UMC, Camden, will host a free concert featuring the American Spiritual Ensemble. Tickets to this event are free but must be reserved in advance. Ticket holders will be seated at 6 p.m., and doors will open to the general public at 6:30. To reserve a ticket: 803-432-3191.

Feb. 15-18—2019 Winter Youth Retreats, Lake Junaluska, N.C., <http://lakejunaluska.com/winteryouth>

Feb. 16—Men N Ministry Spiritual Retreat, Mount Horeb UMC, Lexington.

Feb. 16—Connectional Ministries Meeting, Trenholm Road UMC, Columbia, 10 a.m.

Feb. 17—Greenwood District Prayer Service for General Conference, St. Paul UMC, Saluda, 4 p.m.

Feb. 18—Presidents Day

Feb. 19-21—Transitional/Intentional Interim Ministry: Phase III, Lake Junaluska, N.C., <http://lakejunaluska.com/interim.aspx>

Feb. 20—Lutheran and Reformed Theology in Conversation with Dr. Robert Kolb, Stavros Auditorium, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, 1 p.m. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lutheran-and-reformed-theology-in-conversation-tickets-54600218724>

Feb. 22-23—2019 Church Music Workshop, Shandon UMC, Columbia. Register: www.southcarolinafellowship.org. Jason Barrs, 803-787-3058.

Feb. 22-24—Boy Scout Ski Retreat, Lake Junaluska, N.C., https://www.lakejunaluska.com/specials_packages/group_packages/boy_scout_retreats/

Feb. 23—Faith-Sharing Workshop, St. Paul UMC, Saluda, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Feb. 23-26—Special Session of the General Conference, St. Louis.

Feb. 22-24—Hands and Feet Service Weekend, Asbury Hills, Cleveland. 864-836-3711 or retreat@asburyhills.org.

Feb. 24—Prayer Vigil with Communion and Candle lighting sponsored by Reconciling Ministries of South Carolina, 6 p.m., Brookland UMC, West Columbia.

Feb. 25—36th Annual Rehoboth Fish Fry (Columbia District Men's Fellowship Night), Rehoboth UMC, Columbia, 6-8:30 p.m. min. \$10 donation. 803-788-2220 or L.W. Smith, 803-730-6769 or tigerraglw@yahoo.com

Feb. 28—Statistical Reports due

March
Women's History Month
March 1—Deadline for UMW Presidential Scholarship applications. www.umcsc.org/umw

March 1-3—FCF Confirm 2019, Lake Junaluska, N.C. www.fcconfirm.net.

March 1-3—SCUMC Spouses' Retreat, Lake Junaluska, N.C. Contact Sara Rose, 803-347-2617, sajayrose2@gmail.com; or Lynne Chandler, 864-426-3501, mrs.lynnchandler@gmail.com

March 2—Unifying Men in the Community sponsored by UMM of Old Bethel UMC and Wesley UMC, Old Bethel UMC, Charleston, 11 a.m. \$5. Black attire. 843.722.3470

March 3—Transfiguration Sunday

March 5—Snow Date: UMW Legislative Advocacy Day, Epworth Children's Home, Columbia, 9 a.m.

March 6—Ash Wednesday

March 8-9—Columbia District Lay Servant Ministries Spring Training School, Mount Hebron UMC, West Columbia. \$30 per class. <https://fs22.formsite.com/umcsc/codistmspringtraining/index.html>

March 8-10—IGC Confirmation Retreat #1, Lambuth Inn, Lake Junaluska, N.C. <http://intentionalgrowthcenter.org/confirmation-retreat-weekends/>

March 8-10—FCF Confirm 2019, Lake Ju-



by the Rev. Steve King

Feb. 3
Press on in Christ
Lesson Scripture: Philippians 3:7-14
Background Scripture: Philippians 3:1-16
Key Verse: Philippians 3:13, 14, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Paul's image of the Christian life as a race reminds us that we can never rest on our laurels. But this particular race is not a competition in which only one person can succeed. The end is assured, not because of what we are able to do (though we must do our best!), but by virtue of the fact that it rests ultimately on the hold Christ has on us: He has made us his own, and we belong to him (v. 13).

The tension between what Christians already are and what they are called to be is neatly expressed in Paul's use of two words with the same root, first, to declare that he is not yet "perfect" (v. 12), and second, to appeal to those who, like himself, are "mature" (v. 15). John Wesley was only one person among many who have believed that Christian perfection is not only a proper aim but a real possibility – but Wesley was nevertheless skeptical about those who actually claimed to be perfect! It has been well said that the mark of true maturity is to know that one is not yet perfect. In this life, the goal always remains beyond us, demanding our continual endeavor, beckoning us forward.

Paul describes the goal of the Christian as "knowing Christ" (vv. 8, 10). The pattern of the Gospel must be stamped upon all who call Christ "Lord." When Paul declares that "Christ Jesus has made me his own," he describes a task that is both a privilege and a responsibility. Teresa of Avila expressed this task well when she said: "Christ has no body on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion is to look out to the world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless us now."

Feb. 10
Our Loving God
Lesson Scripture: Psalm 48:1-3, 9-14
Background Scripture: Psalm 48:1-3, 9-14
Key Verse: Psalm 48:14, "This God is our God for ever and ever."

To contemporary readers, the claims made about Jerusalem are likely to seem highly exaggerated or perhaps even extremely parochial and dangerously wrong. To assert that Jerusalem is the indisput-

able and indestructible capital of the world was probably as inflammatory in ancient times as it would be today. We certainly know that Jerusalem was not indestructible and that hostile kings and their forces were not put to flight by the very sight of Jerusalem.

But before dismissing the psalmist as a naïve optimist or a misguided patriot or a clever politician, we must remember that the details of Psalm 48 are as much metaphorical as geopolitical. What Psalm 48 embodies, in the words of Robert Alter, "poetic form used to reshape the world in the light of belief?" In effect, the psalmist has created in poetic form an alternative worldview, a new reality that for the faithful becomes the deepest and most profound reality of all: God rules the world, now and forever!

If this sounds strange to Christian readers of Psalms, they need only consider how the same paradox, the same scandal of particularity, lies at the heart of Christianity. For Christians, a particular event in time (the crucifixion of Jesus) at a particular place (Golgotha) becomes the central event of history. What appeared to be an ordinary execution of a common criminal is for Christians the focal point of all space and time. In a way just as particularist and strange and scandalous as the Zion theology of Psalm 48, Christians profess the incarnation of God in Jesus, a first-century Jew from an out-of-the-way place called Nazareth. What Psalm 48 says about Jerusalem is what Christians profess about Jesus: No one can see him and go away unchanged. In the midst of a world that is fragile and troubled, we join the psalmist in proclaiming a new reality: God rules the world!

Feb. 17
Our Mighty God
Lesson Scripture: Psalm 66:1-9, 16-20
Background Scripture: Psalm 66
Key Verse: Psalm 66:1, "Shout for joy to God, all the earth!"

Rowland Prothero has written the following about John Bunyan's use of Psalm 66: "In his Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, which bears the motto, 'Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul' (Psalm 66:16), he has recorded, with a pen of iron and in letters of fire, his own passage from death to life." Psalm 66 is about this "passage from death to life" (see especially Verse 9), so much so that the Pentateuch and the Vulgate even provide this psalm with the title "Psalm of the resurrection," and it is still associated liturgically with the season of Easter. In the exodus (Verses 5-7), in recurring exoduses in new circumstances (Verses 8-12), and in individ-

Love songs that glorify God

ual experiences of deliverance (verses 13-20), God is at work bringing life out of death. For Christians, of course, the ultimate paradigm of God's life-giving activity is found in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Just as Christians affirm participation in the paradigmatic death and resurrection of Jesus (see Romans 6:1-11), so also the psalmist affirms participation in the paradigmatic event of exodus. Finally, what God has done for all God's people (Verse 5) is inseparable from what God has done for the individual (Verse 16), and vice versa. Such is the lesson of Psalm 66 when it is read as a whole. As Walter Brueggemann puts it, "This psalm shows the move from communal affirmation to individual appreciation, which is what we always do in biblical faith."

How has God's activity in your faith community directly led to your own individual appreciation and praise of God in your life?

Feb. 24
Our Rescuing God
Lesson Scripture: Psalm 91:1-8, 11-16
Background Scripture: Psalm 91:1-16
Key Verse: Psalm 91:15, "He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him."

The sheer eloquence and comprehensiveness of the psalmist's affirmation of faith make Psalm 91 powerful indeed. These same attributes, however, can also be a source of misunderstanding. For instance, many Jews and Christians have copied passages of the psalm and worn them in amulets to magically ward off danger; indeed, Verses 11-13 have

been used to support the notion that guardian angels protect us from harm. Illustrating such misuses of the psalm, in Luke 4:9-12 the devil quotes Psalm 91:11-12 to tempt Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the Temple, but Jesus refuses to claim God's promise of protection for his own benefit. For Jesus says to do so would be to test rather than to trust God.

We should not use Psalm 91 as a magical guarantee against danger, threat or difficulty. Rather, this psalm is a reminder to us that nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God" (Romans 8:39). Neither Jesus nor the apostle Paul sought to avoid danger or difficulty at the expense of being faithful, and Jesus warned his followers not to abuse the promised power of God. In Luke 10:19-20 Jesus says, "Look, I have given you authority to crush snakes and scorpions underfoot. I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you. Nevertheless, don't rejoice because the spirits submit to you. Rejoice instead that your names are written in heaven."

In fact, Jesus' and Paul's faithfulness to God and to God's purposes impelled them into dangerous situations (see 1 Corinthians 6:4-10); when Jesus did claim the assurance of the Psalms, it was from the cross (see Luke 23:46 where Jesus quotes Psalm 31:5). Jesus' life, death and resurrection demonstrate the self-denial and humble trust that lead to being exalted by God.

King pastors New Hope United Methodist Church, Anderson. He serves as treasurer of the Advocate board and the secretary of Conference Connectional Ministries.

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Moncks Corner UMC is looking for a new Director of Youth. This is a full-time, salaried position (with benefits help) commensurate with experience. The DY must be able to organize and lead programs, direct the spiritual life of the youth, work with the Youth Council, attend worship services, and follow the direction of the appropriate church committees. Applicants should send resume and cover letter to Jeremy Howell, jlhowell@umcsc.org

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR POSITION

Killingsworth, a United Methodist home for women in crisis located in Columbia, is seeking an executive director to head its 72-year-old ministry. The ideal candidate must be skilled in administrative leadership and fundraising. Interested applicants should contact Arlene Roberson at arlene.roberson44@yahoo.com with cover letter, resume and references.

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TEA TIME: Safe space to discuss body image, cyberbullying

From Page 1

they lifted us up.”

But apart from Tea Time, she said, “These girls don’t have anybody to talk to about girl things or anything.”

Meeting once a month for tea, the girls discuss topics ranging from self-worth, positive body image, cyberbullying, career goals

and more. Groups are kept small with three adults to 10 teens. The average meeting time is two hours. Girls start at age 13 and commit to a group, which they attend until they graduate from high school.

Currently there are nine churches involved with Tea Time for Teens, and organizers hope that number will continue to grow.

“It provides something positive for the

girls’ development,” advisor Shirley Jones said.

The curriculum is leadership-based with subjects such as “My Internal Self” and “We Are More than Just Skin and Bones, We Have a Soul.” Hot tea is served to encourage discussion and learning. The girls also have the opportunity to participate in a number of community service and social activities such as Relay for Life, the Martin Luther King Parade and Veteran’s Day festivities. They also take trips to tour colleges, museums and other locations around the area.

“We can’t just say, ‘Let’s stop the pregnancy.’ We have to put something in ahead of that,” David said.

Role-playing scenarios help the girls consider different perspectives, such as their parents’. For example: Your daughter is 16, and she wants to go out on a date with a guy you never met—and he is older. As a parent, what would you answer be?

Parents are shocked to learn their teens answer “No, definitely not.”

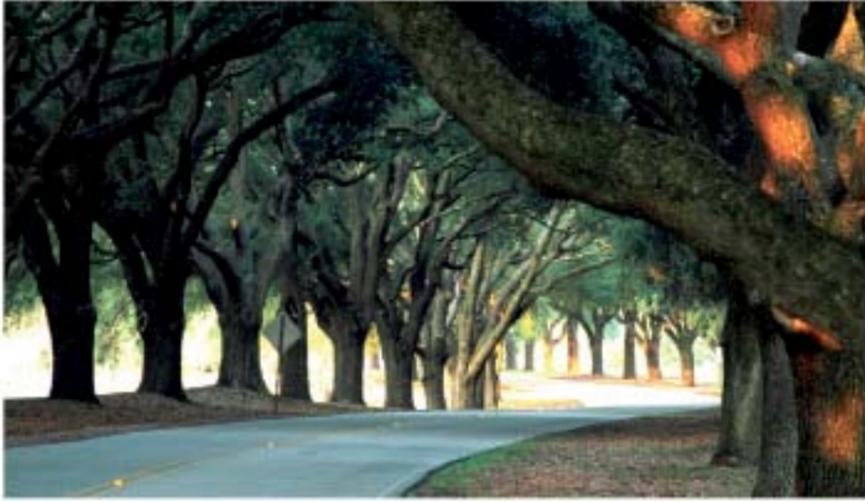
Since the start of Tea Time with Teens, David said, teen pregnancy and high school dropout rates have reduced. The program partners with the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, the Coalition of Family Enrichment and the Children’s Defense Fund. It is also listed as a model pregnancy prevention program by the University of North Dakota Rural Health Network Hub.

“I believe it is sending a positive message,” said the Rev. Judith Knox, pastor of Trinity UMC, Bennettsville. “Girls know that we care.”

In five years, David hopes the program will develop a stronger curriculum that can be used in broad spectrum. But most importantly, she hopes teens understand they are truly loved.

“Always know people care. You are not by yourself,” she said. “It’s worth the effort. We can turn these negative statics around if we work together.”

To learn more about this ministry, email uarepeace@aol.com.



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