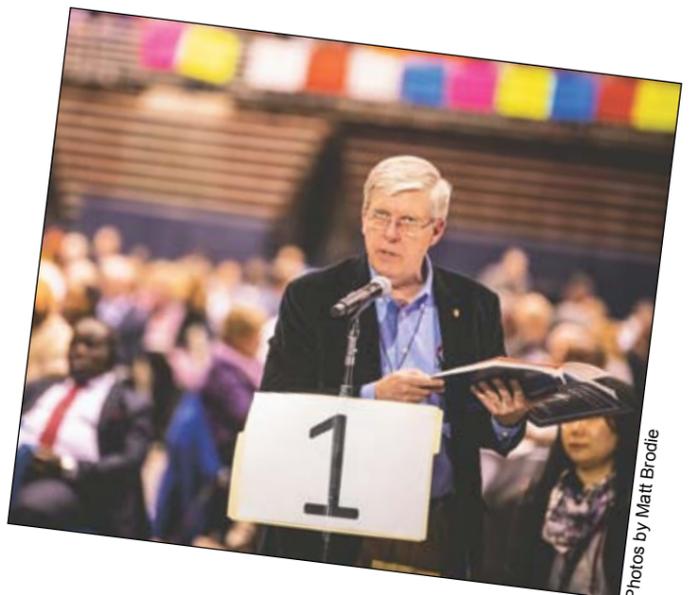




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March 2019

GC2019 passes Traditional Plan, maintains 'incompatible' language



Photos by Matt Brodie



By Jessica Brodie

ST. LOUIS—Culminating a day of tears, frustration, peaceful protests and impassioned debate, General Conference delegates have passed an amended Traditional Plan for the denomination.

The Traditional Plan affirms current language in The United Methodist Church's *Book of Discipline* that "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching" (Para. 304.3).

The very close vote came at the tail end of Day 4, Feb. 26, passing 438-384—a 53.28 percent majority.

After the vote, delegates flooded the center of the room, chanting and singing in reaction—some in protest, some in solidarity. In the risers circling the floor, visitors and others led speeches and rally cries citing Scriptural prophecy from Isaiah and other

books and demanding the church turn from oppression to love. Then the conference shifted into a time of holy song, cranking up the volume on the praise band, which sang "Spirit of the Living God."

Behind the music, and later as business progressed, others in the crowd chanted "No more harm!" sometimes so loudly it made proceedings difficult to hear. Reports of arrests and other police action spread throughout the room.

The rest of the afternoon saw debates on the two disaffiliation plans—which the UMC Judicial Council had ruled unconstitutional earlier that day in Decision 1377. One disaffiliation plan, adopted as the minority plan, passed by a close margin, but it was referred to the Judicial Council.

See "General Conference," Page 6

Top left, delegates react after Upper New York delegate Jeffrey "J.J." Warren makes an impassioned speech on inclusion. Top right, S.C. delegate the Rev. Tim Rogers makes a motion that the UMC Judicial Council rule on the petitions. Bottom right, S.C. delegate Barbara Ware talks on the floor with the Rev. Tim McClendon.

Women with a purpose: 150 years of United Methodist Women

By Jessica Brodie

From its nascent beginnings from eight women gathered in a cozy church room to what it is today—a mission organization comprising 800,000 members around the world—United Methodist Women are celebrating 150 years

strong this month.

On a rainy day in Boston a century and a half ago, the founders of what is today's United Methodist Women gathered at Tremont Street Church in Boston to form the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the then-Methodist

Episcopal Church (what is today The United Methodist Church). But though they were small, they were determined. The next week, they more than tripled their number, and 70 years later, they had sent out more than 1,500 mis-

See "UMW 150," Page 17

Church sows seeds of love producing food for those in need

By Laura Camby McCaskill

SPARTANBURG—One pastor has taken up the call to feed the hungry through missions.

The Rev. Darrell McNeill, of Spartanburg Urban Mission, has been involved with feeding programs since 2015. Starting with a program called the Market Garden, McNeill and interns worked with those in need by developing a savings account for the working poor. In exchange

for working in the garden, clients attended a one-hour class meeting per week, owned what they planted and received help selling their produce. For example, one person sold \$5,000 at the farmer's market during the summer, while another started a catering business. Additionally, clients received help exploring God's call on their lives while also learning to access resources in the city, or "career ladders."

In 2018, the mission received a significant grant from the South Carolina Association for Community and Economic Development, which led to a partnership with an existing program in Columbia called Foodshare, established in 2015.

Another partnership with the University of

See "Foodshare," Page 10

Men embrace faith, not fear in huge one-day spiritual retreat

By Jessica Brodie

LEXINGTON—It might have been scaled down, but for the hundreds of men who gathered last month for the men's ministry spiritual retreat, the movement of the Holy Spirit was strong.

More than 600 men gathered at Mount Horeb United Methodist Church Feb. 16 for the annual United Methodist Men's retreat. Normally a weekend held in Myrtle Beach, a late change in venue prompted a switch to the Midlands, which ended up not only shifting the three-day spread

to a one-day focused session but also brought a gob of first-timers and younger men.

The men had the chance to hear from Stuart Hall, director of Leadership and Leadership Networking for Orange (ReThink Group) who also leads INFLUNSR, an organization whose mission is to fuel the next generation of leaders worth following. They also got to hear godly wisdom couched in humor from comedian Akintunde, plus learn through many

See "Men's Retreat," Page 10



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Women heard from speakers all day about education, health and other issues impacting children. At left, the Rev. Brenda Kneece of the South Carolina Christian Action Council speaks. At center, women pray during the morning session. At right, Sen. Gerald Malloy, who was the event's morning speaker, lifted up the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Do you love me?

UMW Legislative Day lifts up importance of helping children, people know their worth

By Jessica Brodie

COLUMBIA—Forget "simply trying to survive." It's time to help children know their worth—that they are loved by God, loved by us and important enough to raise our voices loud enough to help.

That was the message brought by the Rev. John Holler, president of Epworth Children's Home, who brought a keynote message for hundreds of South Carolina women gathered Feb. 12 for the annual United Methodist Women Legislative Advocacy Day.

Drawing from Matthew 19:13-15, on Jesus validating the importance of children, Holler underscored the importance of helping children know this.

"All of us at different times and in different ways ask the question: 'Do you love me?' And the younger we are, the more desperate we are to know we are worth something," Holler said. "If we are disposable and disposed of then we die. Emotionally, we fail to thrive if we do not matter to those important to us."

Citing what he called disturbing statistics, Holler noted that child abuse and neglect in this nation cost more than \$100 billion a year—\$33 billion in direct costs alone. Every 10 years, he said, that's a trillion dollars.

"Our child welfare and child protective systems are failing us. They are a mess, and it appears they are going downhill rapidly," Holler said.

It's easy to blame departments, politicians and leaders, he said.

"But we need to look at ourselves because we have not objected strongly enough or loudly enough to change a system that's been in existence longer than any of us have been on earth," Holler said.

In the meantime, South Carolina remains in the bottom tier of child wellbeing. In effect, he said, we are saying we don't love our children enough to lift our voices.

Together, he said, United Methodist Women—and all people of faith—can stand together and stand up for these children.

'Every Child is a Miracle'

Holler was one of a number of speakers at the legislative day at Epworth, each lifting up this year's theme, "Every Child is a Miracle."

Sen. Gerald Malloy, who was the event's morning speaker, lifted up the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

"You have a voice, and my encouragement to you today is to raise your voice," Malloy said to applause.

Malloy spoke about important issues currently facing the state legislature, such as "Raise the Age" legislation and other incarceration issues, as well as education legislation.

"If we like the status quo then we just sit there," Malloy said, "Anything in motion stays in motion. Something not in motion does not move unless you move it."

"It's time to get to work."

Malloy said politics by definition is how you allocate resources, how you prioritize what you put first, second and third.

"What are we doing for our children?" he



The Rev. John Holler, president of Epworth Children's Home, brought a keynote message drawing from Matthew 19:13-15.



Workshops for the day addressed quality care, advocacy, health and more.

asked, noting we can ruin generations and generations with how we treat one child.

Malloy urged the women to remember Paul's letter to the Galatians: "Don't get tired of doing good."

A future with hope

Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, the resident bishop of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, also spoke to the crowd, emphasizing the importance of a future with hope.

"The themes for this day include education, health and more, and these are important issues because these impact our children in South Carolina," Holston said. "As Winston Churchill said, 'We have the responsibility for looking out for others.' And the cost of leadership is responsibility."

Holston called on United Methodist Women to continue to be our brothers' and sisters' keepers.

"Your presence makes a difference," Holston said.

Cathy Ford, president of South Carolina Conference United Methodist Women, thanked those present for caring and being passionate about these important issues.



Cathy Ford, president of S.C. Conference United Methodist Women, welcomes the crowd.

"It takes courage and boldness, and that is who we are," Ford said.

The Rev. Brenda Kneece of the South Carolina Christian Action Council, called on attendees to learn what the issues are and what buttons to push.

"We have to be willing together to raise our voices, even in misery," Kneece said. "You may be pushed down, you may be kept from rising, but nobody can keep you from raising your heart to heaven. It is in the middle of misery that such becomes clear."

"No matter where I go, I defend Allendale," said Valaree Smith, who represents Allendale and four other counties on the State Board of Education. "We've got to love where we live, and don't let anybody talk about our house. When you have that passion for your community, and start valuing education again, and start teaching your children to value education—that's when change takes place."

The Fellowship of South Carolina Bishops is a special ecumenical relationship among churches led by bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal-Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Episcopal, Lutheran, Roman Catho-

From closure to new life

Camp at former UMC brings excitement to children in Kerhsaw

By Laura Camby McCaskill

KERSHAW—A closed United Methodist church is now thriving in its new life: as an outreach enrichment camp for local children.

After dwindling to about a dozen members, First UMC, Kershaw, closed its doors in April 2014. But a decade before it closed, the church had begun a ministry there to serve about 40 area children, Mount Calvary Outreach Enrichment Camp.

The Rev. Hope Avins, former pastor there, remembers the difficult closing process. "It was a very emotional time for the 12-14 remaining active members, knowing their beloved church was dying a slow and painful death. The only thing that gave them hope in the end was knowing their God-sized dream—of Mount Calvary Outreach being able to receive the church building and the land it sits on from the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church—was being honored," Avins said.

"Where there is a death, a resurrection awaits."

Mount Calvary Outreach started in 1994 by the Rev. Eugene Lewis, who drove from Charlotte to start the ministry, which began with 40 children. When Lewis died in 2002, the Rev. Reo King took the reins of the camp, reading Bible stories, plays and singing. King is a pastor in the African Methodist Episcopal Church who lives in Camden.

When the church closed its doors, the camp was given permission by Rock Hill District Superintendent the Rev. Joe Long to continue using the building. Conference Trustees gave them the property at the close of 2018.

Team Church also shares space at the church.

"I have a deep appreciation and gratitude in my heart for the leadership of Rev. Reo King, not only for her ministering to the kids in the Kershaw Community, but also for taking my son, Michael, under her wing. His life has been impacted by the ministry of Mount Calvary," Avins said. "It gives me goose bumps to think of how many young lives have been transformed over the years due to this ministry."

Under King's guidance, the ministry grew, expanding to 120 children in 2018. The four-week summer program runs from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Transportation is provided, and the children are bused to the school for a free meal each day. Divided into five groups, the children are involved in activities such as swimming, bowling, baseball and one large field trip. Past field trips have been to places such as the University of South Carolina-Lancaster, golf clinics, the aquarium and more.

"It has been highly successful," Mount Calvary board member Beverly Timmons said. "We have seen it make a



The children range from 3-15 years of age. The camp cared for 25 3-year-olds last summer. When children reach the age of 15, they're given the option of working at the camp, giving them experience as helpers.



difference in the lives of the children. I think it's a wonderful work of God. The children are learning the Scriptures and the significance of the Bible, they're learning how to worship God, they're learning manners and respect for elders, and growing academically."

The children range from 3-15 years of age. The camp cared for 25 3-year-olds last summer.

"We thought that if we bring them in at three, they'd have some experiences before they attend public school," King said. "It's working out just fine."

When children reach the age of 15, they're given the option of working at the camp, giving them experience as helpers.

At the end of the camp, children are involved in a combination program, where they show what they've learned during their time there, whether it be through a praise dance, educational piece, reading or play.

"I think it's a ministry that stands in the gap for our children, teaching them the word of God," King said. "And I believe it does develop a vision for the future for them."

Mount Calvary has expanded even more by opening its doors every day to the community for different events. On the third Sunday, Girls On The Run For Jesus meet. Some Saturdays host mother-daughter luncheons, and on Wednesday night, senior citizens gather for Bible study, lunch and bingo. Mount Calvary even has its own baseball group, Lamp, which ministers to roughly 25-30 young men.

Frustration, anger—but also hope for Allendale schools

By Dan O'Mara

Nearly 100 people gathered in Allendale to share hopes and concerns about the future of Allendale County schools—and what that means for the future of their children, grandchildren and the community as a whole.

At the "Listening Post" event, hosted Feb. 11 by the Fellowship of South Carolina Bishops' Public Education Initiative, parents, educators and local residents told bishops and other church leaders about their frustration, anger and disappointment at the state of their school system, which the state Department of Education took control of in June.

Almost person-for-person, however, they also delivered a message of hope, confidence in the future and support for local schools, teachers, administrators and the children themselves.

"No matter where I go, I defend Allendale," said Valaree Smith, who represents Allendale and four other counties on the State Board of Education. "We've got to love where we live, and don't let anybody talk about our house. When you have that passion for your community, and start valuing education again, and start teaching your children to value education—that's when change takes place."

The Fellowship of South Carolina Bishops is a special ecumenical relationship among churches led by bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal-Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Episcopal, Lutheran, Roman Catho-

lic and United Methodist churches.

The bishops collectively have been advocating for public education since April 2014, when they issued a joint pastoral letter pledging "our commitment to support the full flourishing of public education in South Carolina." They expressed concern after the state Supreme Court in November 2017 dismissed a landmark school equity lawsuit, filed in 1993 to force the General Assembly to improve educational opportunities in the state's poorest public schools.

"It's going to take all of us working together—legislators, teachers, administrators, parents and students—to make the education experience what it should be," said Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, resident bishop of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. "Students can't speak for themselves, so we have to advocate for them. "Educating all of our children is our priority. This is not about you and me, this is about the children and how we will begin to better their lives."

The Fellowship has scheduled two "Public Education Advocacy Days." One was Feb. 19 and the next is March 21, during which training will be offered for those who want to advocate on behalf of children and their education, and attendees—including bishops, other church leaders and volunteers—will go to the State House and lobby their own elected representatives on the issues.

"We have a unique opportunity to talk to those who write legislation," said Dr. Doris

Hicks, pastor of Cleaves Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in Columbia. "These laws are made, and we have to live by

them. As we go to Advocacy Day next week, help us help them make laws we can live with."

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Viewpoints



Editorial

by Jessica Brodie

No one wins

Shortly after General Conference ended, a friend who is gay reached out. “I have no words,” he said. Pain, hurt, betrayal—none of them were strong enough, fitting enough.

On Twitter, my news feed contained photos of sobbing Christians, some escorted by police. “The church has told us they don’t want us here,” one message flicked across my screen.

My heart broke for my brothers and sisters—gay and straight and anywhere in between—in anguish now because The United Methodist Church, through its delegates to a special called session of General Conference, voted by a narrow margin to uphold its stance that homosexuality is “incompatible with Christian teaching.” (See article, Page 1.)

I must clarify: the UMC did not vote to exclude lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning/queer and intersex people from the church. It did vote that being a “self-avowed practicing homosexual” is not acceptable behavior for Christians and that the church cannot perform gay marriages or have “practicing” gay clergy.

Still, the message many are gleaming from what happened is one of rejection: The church doesn’t want us; who I am is not welcome here.

As Adam Hamilton, pastor of the largest UMC in the denomination, said in a meeting to UMC communicators the day after GC2019, “The message conveyed is that the Methodist Church in 2019 said once more ‘no’ to gay and lesbian people, and it feels like it’s rejected them.”

Friends, despite how many are hearing rejection, let’s work all work to send a different message and narrative—one of God’s love and unity. I pray to cling to these truths:

One is that the UMC fervently believes “all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God.”

Second, people are hurting. Regardless of where you stand on this, acknowledge that pain. Reach out to people and show you care for them and value them. Work to foster relationships with people of a different perspective. Love each other. Tear down fences.

Third, understand the UMC is implored to welcome *all* people with radical hospitality.

Fourth, we have a mission in our denomination to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world. That comes first.

As our South Carolina Bishop Jonathan Holston has said, “It’s not a day to talk wins or losses. This is the church of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. We have to find a way to be God’s Kingdom.”

Amen, amen.

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.



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Bishop’s Corner

by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston

Faithful dialogue

“Know that the Lord is God—he made us; we belong to him. We are his people, the sheep of his own pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving; enter his courtyards with praise! Thank him! Bless his name! Because the Lord is good, his loyal love lasts forever; his faithfulness lasts generation after generation.”—Psalm 100:3-5

Many United Methodists in South Carolina have prayed about and followed along with the proceedings of the 2019 special called session of General Conference. Some see the decisions made as hurtful, yet others celebrate the outcome.

In all of this, I want to remind the people called Methodist in South Carolina to have hope. We are still one church, we are all God’s people and each of us plays an important role as we work together to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

This Lenten season can be a time for United Methodists across South Carolina to communicate with those who share our opinions and also with those whom we disagree by engaging in thoughtful and respectful discussion around the significant issues in our communities. While the pace of change in our society has perhaps never been more rapid than it is today, we are

called to be faithful in our witness to Jesus Christ even when it feels risky and frightening to do so.

The only decision we can make is what will be the next step. It is difficult because sometimes we are comfortable where we are. And sometimes we are scared of going into the unknown. But that is not what God wants for us. That is not who God has called us to be.

You don’t have to know where you want to go, but when you take that one step beyond caution into God’s future for you, miraculous things will happen.

Our world is in need of people who can help us see and be part of the community. The world needs people who will respect each other regardless of who you are. How do we create the community God means for us to experience?

We were made to thrive, not simply to survive.

God wants us to be people that will lead and guide others in ways we may not even know about yet.

As followers of Christ in this Lenten season, let us be committed in our reflection, study and prayer to the hard work of peacemaking and reconciliation in our communities and beyond.

That’s the way it should be with those born of the spirit.

Correction

In the Greenwood section of “District News” (February *Advocate*), the list of churches in the Newberry Area Council on Ministries mistakenly left out Trinity UMC and New Chapel UMC, Newberry. The council collected \$5,250 for relief workers’ food and transportation needs when going to the coastal and Pee Dee counties for relief work in the wake of Hurricanes Matthew and Florence. We apologize for this error and, as always, strive to set the record straight.

Appointment Change

Bishop Jonathan Holston has announced the following changes of appointment:

Effective March 1, 2019—Charleston District: Bethel, Charleston, Associate Pastor of Congregational Care: John Hipp (RE) (1/2)

Letters to the Editor

It’s a game nobody wins

This is being written before the historic “special” conference to settle the issue: “Is an LGBTQ person acceptable in our churches?” Wow! Does anybody really think this vote will end in peace? Not me!

No matter what the conference decides, the war of words will continue.

Conservatives will proclaim that “homosexuality is an abomination.” Others will proclaim “all are children of God and people of worth.”

From my writing in the past, most of you know where I stand on the issue, and I still stand firmly with my transgender daughter. That is not my point in this letter.

Sadly, I believe the war of words will never end.

Did the church’s recognition that slavery was wrong end the emotions on race that still echo in our churches and streets? Did

the church’s recognition of the place of women in the church end that debate? This current game “is a game no one wins!” Not conservatives, not middle grounders, not progressives.

I applaud our bishop and other bishops in calling for a time of prayer before this huge gathering.

I will say that I am not optimistic. Few hearts on either side appear to be open to hearing God’s voice. They are like the pastor who was asked to bring the invocation at his alma mater’s home football game: “Lord,” he prayed, “keep these young men safe from harm, let them compete in a spirit of sportsmanship and bless both teams ... but bless ours just a bit more.”

Both groups want to stand on the moun-



How I Got My Call to Ministry

by the Rev. Marvin Ira Lare

A childhood decision

When I was 11 years old, I struggled night after night with the problem of existence. How can we know who we are, what we are, where we came from and where we are going? How can we know what life and existence is all about?

Despite a devoted family and all the love and support of Sunday school and church, I was sure nothing could really ever be proved about the nature and purpose of life and being.

Each night I pushed the questions out of my head with fear and trembling. Finally one night I could ignore the questions no longer. I decided I had to face the unknown, search and think through some solution to the unanswerable. I agonized and finally concluded that the only solution for me was to choose—to choose—to trust and believe there was a God in spite of that fact that it could never be proved. I simply had to choose to believe and trust in God! I was overwhelmed with relief and thankfulness. As unprovable as it all was, to commit to belief and trust in God was the only solution for me. Peace and joy flooded my being.

But soon I was posed with the question, “So what should I do with my life?” There was no ready answer. I figured I should try to live a good life like church people seek to do, but somehow that didn’t seem to be a sufficient response to

the peace and joy I felt.

Again I puzzled and puzzled for an answer without any solution. Then suddenly it came to me: I should become a minister!

It is hard for me to believe now, some 70-plus years later, that that childhood decision has guided me and shepherded me all these years.

But perhaps as amazing to me as that is that a few days ago, I received another call! At 1:15 a.m. on Epiphany Sunday, Jan. 6, 2019—yes, this year—I was convicted of a decision that I can only compare to my original call! Briefly put, I feel called to champion the cause of LGBTQ rights in the church! I have long had strong sympathies and felt clear support for the cause, but somehow this is something different.

Now, across my ministry I have often felt “led by the Spirit.” Probably one of the most ironic of these was that in 1961 I had to choose whether to remain in the North Texas Conference or move to California to finish my seminary education that had been interrupted.

For days, perhaps weeks, I agonized over the decision. Even at Annual Conference in Dallas, when I had to make the choice, I spent hours in the chapel praying for divine guidance. No answer came.

LETTERS: Readers share thoughts on friendship, General Conference

From Page 4

taintop when this is over and proclaim: “This is God’s will. We win!” I am not convinced God wants any part of this game. Neither side wins: God loses.

My heart breaks for God’s church, which I was privileged to serve.

Rev. Warren Ashmore, retired
Liberty

Smiles about past experiences

The Williamsburg County Judge Cynthia Williams was the chairperson of the Florence District Council. I had just met her in that position. I marveled at the way that she conducted the meetings. She wasn’t good—she was great. I could easily have developed envy.

I invited her to go on the Walk to Emmaus, and she accepted. Part of the program is to pick them up and carry them to supper. Harriet and I went from Pamplico to Kingstree and beyond. She enjoyed Emmaus and shared with us some of the joys as we carried her home Sunday night. Her husband later went, and he was a truck driver.

She was thankful and expressed it several times. I could tell that she might try to return the favor. She did and caught me off guard. We stopped at Subway and saw her in line

ahead of us. When I got to the register to pay, the clerk said, “It’s already been paid.” I knew immediately that she had paid and was gone on purpose. She enjoyed the moment. I could not even find her to thank her.

I did see her sometime later and could not get to her fast enough to say, “You got me!” We hugged and I saw the glee on her face for what she had pulled on my wife and me. Such are the good experiences of life. I have seen her several times and I think about it. I can tell what she is thinking when I see the smile on her face. Now we just see each other, smile and think about past experiences.

Rev. Farrell Cox, retired
Pamplico

Thank you, delegates

I am writing to express my sincere appreciation to the South Carolina Delegation to the 2019 Special General Conference.

Thank you for offering yourselves in our service to represent us in this important conference.

The hours were long, the work was hard, and it was not always a fun job. But you were willing to put yourselves on the point of the spear.

The decisions that had to be made were

difficult. And no matter what decision was made, there would be those who would be happy and those who would be hurt.

But you did your job and made a decision. Some will applaud you, some will assail you. But know that you have been upheld in prayer, and we pray for you even now.

May you now find rest from your labors and the peace of God. Thank you.

Rev. Robert Cox, retired
Columbia

Praise God from whom all blessings flow

This is a time for great rejoicing—God’s word has prevailed! Praise God for giving our delegates the courage to stand on and for His unchanging and lifesaving word when they adopted the Traditional Plan. God’s will was done. Amen!

This is a wake-up call to all of us Christians. Make no mistake about it—God’s word and Christianity are under attack. Spiritual warfare is real. Satan is the great deceiver and the father of lies. All who are deceived and led astray are being used as his instruments to carry out his evil will that would lead to death and destruction of all things—including our United Methodist Church. Satan will no doubt arise protest and label us Chris-

Billy Robinson, member
North UMC, North

‘Evening of Elegance’ gala to benefit students at Africa University

SUMTER—The South Carolina Conference Ethnic Local Church Concerns committee and the African-American Task Force will host “An Evening of Elegance Scholarship Gala” at the Williams Brice Center of Trinity United Methodist Church March 9.

Set for 7 p.m., the formal event will raise money for scholarships for the students of Africa University in Zimbabwe. Tickets and sponsorships are available. The gala will feature dinner, musical entertainment and a silent auction.

The Hon. James E. Clyburn, U.S. Congressman and majority whip, will be the speaker.

Gold sponsors will be invited to an exclusive reception with Clyburn from 6 to 7 p.m. A professional photographer will be available to memorialize this occasion.

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.

Finally it was clear to me. God was telling me, “Well, Marvin, it’s up to you. Do what you want to.”

Many other times I have had a sense of “being led.” Before going on the Voting Rights March from Selma to Montgomery, it became clear to me that I should go. In the late 1960s, after founding the Dallas Inner City Parish, I had to choose whether to return to the pastoral ministry or hold out for a special appointment somewhere in the country. I ended up coming to Columbia, South Carolina.

There are probably a dozen other times in my ministry that I felt divinely led. One was as I retired in 2003. I was inspired to begin interviewing civil rights leaders, which led to publication of “Champions of Civil and Human Rights in South Carolina.”

I have been blessed to follow “the road less traveled” in much of my ministry. Is this current calling to campaign for LGBTQ causes substantially different? I may not be able to prove it, but it sure feels different to me. I guess I will just have to give myself to the cause and see where God leads me.

tians as bigots and anti-everything that the bias media will take and run with. Let the deceivers, false prophets and all set on fatally destroying our UMC leave as we follow Jesus’ examples while not succumbing to their protest and false accusations.

We are Christians who love and accept all people into our churches and family. We love the people but hate the sin. We believe in God’s graceful forgiveness of all who turn from their evil ways and follow Jesus. We will not compromise the life-giving word of God now or ever. We will all stand before God and be accountable for our actions and inactions. Now more than ever we need Christian leaders from our bishops and pastors to our laity and missionaries to “be bold, be brave, be fearless!” (Joshua 1:9). God needs warriors who are strong, courageous and steadfast in His word.

Now let us joyfully and with great excitement and jubilee get back full throttle to carrying out God’s Great Commission of carrying His Gospel to the ends of the earth. Let us also earnestly fulfill His greatest commandments to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind plus to truly love our neighbors as ourselves!

For tickets, sponsorships or more information: cabenson@umcsc.org, 843-374-5554 or 864-903-3222.



Hon. James E. Clyburn

GENERAL CONFERENCE: What happened in St. Louis

From Page 1

Day 4 closed with an abbreviated worship service.

"It's been a tough day," South Carolina Resident Bishop L. Jonathan Holston said. "Regardless of how we feel on certain issues, we are still one church. There is so much that divides us, and we must look to things to unite around."

"It's not a day to talk wins or losses. This is the church of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. We have to find a way to be God's Kingdom."

Why did we have a GC2019?

The special session of General Conference 2019, held Feb. 23-26, was held to help the global denomination move beyond its debilitating disagreement over human sexuality. Per the official call, GC2019 was "limited to receiving and acting upon a report from the Commission on a Way Forward based upon the recommendations of the Council of Bishops." The Way Forward Commission was created at the will of the last General Conference, in 2016, and charged to examine paragraphs in the UMC *Discipline* concerning human sexuality and help the UMC move beyond its impasse around ministry and human sexuality.

The Way Forward Commission developed three plans for the church: the One Church Plan (recommended by the Council of Bishops and found to be constitutional by the Judicial Council), the Traditional Plan (ruled partially unconstitutional) and the Connectional Conference Plan (which would have required a full constitutional rewrite).

The idea was that if the decisions are addressed in 2019, then the next main General Conference, set for May 2020 in Minneapolis, will be able to focus on the full mission of the church and not one issue.

Sixteen delegates from South Carolina (eight lay and eight clergy) joined a total of 864 clergy and lay delegates from around the world for General Conference.

"When you come here, you vote your conscience," said South Carolina delegate Herman Lightsey. "I don't know if we made any great strides, but we made a decision, a step in the right direction. No matter what plan we picked, we'd be going through this. And no matter what we do, God's got a church for us. God's got a plan for us."

What happened at GC2019?

GC2019 began Saturday, Feb. 23, with a full Day of Prayer to anchor the global church in God's Word. There was a twofold prayer focus, both for the conference itself and for increased effectiveness in the mission of the church. The day featured a plenary prayer service, an experiential prayer guided by bishops from four different regions of the world and a service of Holy Communion.

Day 2 was jam-packed, tackling far more work than many expected. Delegates set their legislative priorities, voting to address the Wespeth Recommendations first (pension liabilities and the Clergy Retirement Security Program amendment), followed by the Traditional Plan, then two disaffiliation legislation sets (first Taylor, then Boyette), then the One Church Plan, then the other disaffiliation legislation (Ottjes), then the rest.

Joe Harris, Oklahoma Conference, was elected chair of the Legislative Committee. Betty Kazadi Musau, North Katanga Conference, was elected vice chair, and Carlene Fogle-Miller, a young adult from the Florida Conference, was elected secretary.

Before the session adjourned for the day, delegates began addressing the Wespeth Recommendations, ultimately approving them.

On Day 3, delegates continued their tough work in legislative committee. They narrowly voted (53.04 percent) not to pass an amended One Church Plan. They did approve an amended version of the Traditional Plan, as well as two sets of legislation allowing



S.C. delegates (from left) the Rev. Tiffany Knowlin, Herman Lightsey and Dr. Robin Dease ponder proceedings on Day 3.



S.C. delegates (from left) the Rev. Susan Leonard, Martha Thompson and the Rev. Mel Arant consider a vote.

churches to disaffiliate with the UMC (with some limitations).

Then, in the aftermath of the One Church Plan rejection, they voted in an overwhelming majority (91.98 percent) to reject en masse all remaining petitions except A Simple Plan. Later that day, after lengthy debate, the body voted to reject A Simple Plan (60.47 percent majority), as well.

Also on Day 3, South Carolina delegate the Rev. Tim Rogers made a motion before the body that the Judicial Council review the constitutionality of all amended petitions approved by the committee. Rogers' motion for the declaratory decision was approved.

The final debate

Finally on Tuesday, Feb. 26, the last day of General Conference 2019, the body reconvened in plenary session.

Per Rogers' motion the day prior, General Conference Secretary Gary Graves announced Judicial Council Decision 1377, noting the UMC's top court ruled the majority of the key aspects of the Traditional Plan were constitutional. These include aspects of qualifications for ministry (Paras. 304.3 and 304.5), episcopal responsibilities (Para. 415.6), minimum penalty (Para. 2711.3), complaint process (Para. 362.1e), just resolution (Para. 2701.5) and church appeal (Para. 2715.10).

Nine petitions were ruled unconstitutional. The court ruled six other aspects of the Traditional Plan unconstitutional: three on episcopal accountability violate Paras. 20 and 58, and three (on composition of Board of Ordained Ministry and full examination) violate the principle of legality.

It also ruled the second sentence in another petition, 90045 (Traditional Plan #4 Episcopal Accountability, Para. 422), was unconstitutional.

It ruled both disaffiliation plans (Boyette and Taylor) unconstitutional; the Boyette plan violates Paras. 33 and 41 and the Taylor plan violates Para. 33.

"It was a long day and a very difficult day," South Carolina delegate the Rev. Mel Arant said, calling it a frustrating but necessary process.

"We've been divided since 1972, and it's obvious that continues," Arant said. "We did exactly what General Conference 2016 wanted us to do. We did not do what everybody wanted. Some were pleased, and some were disappointed and even hurt. All



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of us are here because we care deeply about The United Methodist Church, and when our family's divided, it hurts. But one issue we can all agree on is that God is God and Jesus is Lord, and it's time to celebrate what we hold in common and move forward in mission."

South Carolina delegate Barbara Ware said she also found Day 4 to be a very difficult time in the life of the UMC.

"I would equate it with a family having a disagreement and trying to find a way to solve it," Ware said. "And there is pain and sadness sometimes when we disagree with family members. My prayer for the UMC is that we can continue to be a source of strength for a hurting world."

'We shall press on'

Delegates entered a time of prayer just before noon CST, then had the chance to vote on whether to substitute the One Church Plan for the Traditional Plan. They voted (majority 54.56 percent) not to substitute.

The afternoon was spent amending and debating aspects of the Traditional Plan.

Finally, just before 5 p.m. CST, the vote on an amended Traditional Plan was called—and it passed.

South Carolina Delegation Chair the Rev. Tim McClendon said he believes the Traditional Plan will pass muster in the Judicial Council, but he believes the minority report on disaffiliation will be unconstitutional.

"It's a sobering reality-check about how divided we are," McClendon said. "There are a lot of hurt people, and it's not a win-lose."

South Carolina Delegate the Rev. Narcie Jeter said after the close of Day 4 that she is feeling a "jumble of emotions."

"It was a very emotionally, spiritually and theologically exhausting day," Jeter said—a day with much passion and tears. "We shall



Bishop Jonathan Holston and other bishops from across the global UMC listen onstage.



S.C. delegate Jim Salley reacts after a speech.



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press on resting in the grace of God who calls us for this purpose to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world.

"Both the Traditional and the One Church plans would have caused harm. We move on by grace, compassion and love for one another. Making relationships with others of opposing views is very much needed right now."

It's not easy or comfortable, she said. "But no one ever said it would be easy."

South Carolina reaction

In South Carolina, emotions are mixed. Stanton Adams, a young adult in the Charleston District, shared with the *Advocate* that he is deeply saddened about the outcome.

"It is heartbreaking to me that the majority of the body determined to that doubling down on the *Book of Discipline's* exclusionary language was the best way forward for our denomination," Adams said. "The fight for justice for LGBTQ+ people in the life of The United Methodist Church is far from over—we aren't going to go gently into the night. We will continue to hear God's call on our lives, we will continue to seek justice and love for all people and we will continue to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world—whether The United Methodist Church chooses to fully acknowledge us or not."

The *Advocate* welcomes your views about the decision regardless of your perspective. Letters to the editor are welcome and must be 400 words or less and contain your name, church name and church city, plus contact information so we can verify for any clarification. If you are interested in writing a longer opinion piece, contact us for details. Email jbrodie@umcsc.org.

It is fair to say none of us are free from the bias of our own culture. Those pointing to a changing culture as a reason for change in the church should understand those bringing forth new research to change the church's attitude toward LGBTQ+ are biased by today's culture, just as they claim scriptural writers were biased by their culture. It is a weak argument. Let's not be conformed to the world but transformed.

Next, to debate what is loving is always subjective. I have a family member that I love deeply but disagree with on this issue. The words of Jesus to the woman caught in adultery keep coming to my mind, "Your sins are forgiven, go and sin no more." This statement connects forgiveness with repentance. Those who are concerned about the spiritual well-being of our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters truly "hate the sin and love the sinner." Jesus said, "Those whom I love, I rebuke."

Of course, I recognize they do not see the homosexuality lifestyle as sin. I am not their judge and they are not my judge. So, let's peel away the issue of who is truly loving. As Christians, do we believe God intended a monogamous lifetime sexual relationship? I think so, but the virginal dream in the Garden of Eden and reality part. Many surveys in the United States report an average of six to seven partners during a lifetime with only 14 percent reporting that they have had one partner in their entire life. Studies show a correlation between a successful marriage and low number of partners, yet celibacy outside of marriage is downplayed even by liberal Christians.

There are liberal and conservative interpretations for the New Testament words for sexual sin in the Greek language. In simple terms, porneia, translated as fornication, is where we get the word pornography with the connotation of using someone or something instrumentally for one's own sexual gratification. Moicheia, translated as adultery and akatharsia, translated as unclean, have similar connotations of introducing a foreign entity into a relationship or system that nullifies its purity. The broad term of porneia covers a multitude of sexual sins. Moicheia is but one of the sexual sins under its umbrella. All these words include a sexual relationship outside of marriage.

In Jesus's encounter with the Pharisees testing Him about Moses's laws on divorce, He used the word porneia for the act of marital unfaithfulness rather than moi-



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Michael Brown

It comes down to one issue

In The United Methodist Church's vote on sexuality, we need to peel away many of the issues to help our focus. No one lives in a culture vacuum.

One could argue that culture has progressed our society in many positive directions, such as the abolishment of slavery, women's rights, etc. At the same time, one could argue that it has done tremendous harm. Drugs, violence and promiscuous sex in our media have desensitized us to many problems in our society.

It is fair to say none of us are free from the bias of our own culture. Those pointing to a changing culture as a reason for change in the church should understand those bringing forth new research to change the church's attitude toward LGBTQ+ are biased by today's culture, just as they claim scriptural writers were biased by their culture. It is a weak argument. Let's not be conformed to the world but transformed.

Next, to debate what is loving is always subjective. I have a family member that I love deeply but disagree with on this issue. The words of Jesus to the woman caught in adultery keep coming to my mind, "Your sins are forgiven, go and sin no more." This statement connects forgiveness with repentance. Those who are concerned about the spiritual well-being of our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters truly "hate the sin and love the sinner." Jesus said, "Those whom I love, I rebuke."

Of course, I recognize they do not see the homosexuality lifestyle as sin. I am not their judge and they are not my judge. So, let's peel away the issue of who is truly loving.

As Christians, do we believe God intended a monogamous lifetime sexual relationship? I think so, but the virginal dream in the Garden of Eden and reality part. Many surveys in the United States report an average of six to seven partners during a lifetime with only 14 percent reporting that they have had one partner in their entire life. Studies show a correlation between a successful marriage and low number of partners, yet celibacy outside of marriage is downplayed even by liberal Christians.

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In Jesus's encounter with the Pharisees testing Him about Moses's laws on divorce, He used the word porneia for the act of marital unfaithfulness rather than moi-

cheia. Perhaps it was because Jesus wanted to convey divorce was justified for a wider range of sexual sins. But the most important things Jesus does in this story is to remind the listeners that the variations on the law they were discussing were not a part of God's original plan. In Matthew 19:4, He uses the phrase "at the beginning," and in Matthew 19:8, He says, "But it was not this way from the beginning."

He did not go through all the nuances of their question. He simply looked at their rebellious heart and stated that Moses made an allowance for you, but this was not God's original plan.

In Genesis 2, we see the surgical metaphor as God separates the masculine self from the feminine self so the two could be rejoined to become one. We see the Hebrew language shift from ha'adam (translated Adam), meaning human, to ish (translated man) and ishshah (translated woman). God ordains this the most sacred union in life. It is even more important than that of a parent to a child, for that union would be dissolved to establish the union of ish and ishshah.

In Matthew 19, Jesus affirms what God created as marriage in Genesis. But Jesus adds a warning. "What God has joined together, let not man separate" (NIV). Jesus was giving a stern warning to not mess with marriage! Don't do away with it. Don't redefine it, for this was God incarnate speaking about the spiritual, physical and mystical union of what He had put together.

Looking back at Genesis, it didn't take long for original sin to blow the virginal dream plan out of the water. Soon the God-designed marriage was destroyed as we began to question if God truly knew what was best for us, if God truly meant what He said, if we could plan our lives just as well. Shortly thereafter, there were many wives and concubines to go around. Well, if statistics are true, most have fallen short of what God originally wanted for us on the marriage front. Fortunately, Jesus came to redeem.

By the time you read this, the vote will be over and the direction of The United Methodist Church will be clearer. The issue is marriage. Does the Supreme Court of the United States have the authority to redefine what the Supreme being has said constitutes a marriage? Do we not recognize the influence of original sin, discounting that it could be rebellion in our hearts that questions what God really means? How much Scripture will have to be reinterpreted to make the change work?

Who decides what is a marriage? I believe LGBTQ+ people have the right to equal treatment under the law and civil unions. After all, Jesus said, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's." However, I do not believe they have the right to serve as spiritual leaders or define monogamous fornication as marriage.

Brown is a retired elder of the Kentucky Conference, a retired Air Force chaplain and a member of Bethany UMC in Summerville.

Statewide RMSC to hold post-GC gathering

Reconciling Ministries of South Carolina will host a statewide gathering for post-conference worship, prayer and fellowship and to debrief and discuss what happened at the February 2019 General Conference.

The gathering will be held at Washington Street UMC, 1401 Washington St., Columbia, on Saturday, March 16, from 1-3 p.m.

Connect @advocatesc



Guest Commentary

by Jackie Jenkins, GC2019 delegate

An attitude of hope

Charles Swindoll writes: "The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than success, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company ... a church ... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past ... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you, we are in charge of our attitudes."

As I finish my second General Conference of The United Methodist Church, I find special relevance for Swindoll's understanding of the impact of attitude on all that we do—especially in our search for righteousness in the church of Jesus Christ. While there was never the real hope of a resolution to the issues of LGBTQ+ inclusiveness that would totally satisfy the desires of every United Methodist, there was a fragile hope that there would not be defined "winners and losers."

This is where "attitude" applies. I intentionally write this before final plan decisions are made. You would have known the outcome of GC2019 long before reading this. More importantly, looking back at GC2019 and arguing its merits, regardless of its outcome, is of lesser importance than "discerning a way forward" for every congregation.

At this General Conference, I learned all participants—regardless of their preference of plans for a way forward—came

with passions and beliefs that the plans they supported are pleasing to God and reflect the teachings of Christ Jesus. And, while many perceived the emergence of specific winners and losers, I maintain that the only true victory still lies in Jesus.

It is the attitudes with which we look forward that will determine the future of every United Methodist, regardless of which plan is adopted—or if no plan is adopted. Speeches from the floor of GC2019 often implied that the life or death of their congregations hinged on the adoption or failure of a particular plan.

Nevertheless, on the first Sunday of March, churches will open, worshippers will sing hymns and pray, an offering will be taken to continue the administration and ministries of the church, a sermon will motivate us to service, and church activities and missions will be announced. On the following days, weeks and months, people in our mission fields still will be hungry, homeless, hurting, disenfranchised, abused, lost and seeking. Our post-GC2019 attitudes affect our response to our mission fields even more than what is decided.

I leave my second General Conference with an attitude of hope—a hope that is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. Regardless of the outcome of GC2019, hundreds of delegates will report the "bad news" to their congregations. I prefer to return to my church and Annual Conference with the Good News that our mission remains the same—to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world—and that Christ has promised to be with us always, even to the end of the age.

So how will your church discern its way forward?

EXPERIENCED & KNOWLEDGEABLE FACULTY

Experienced and knowledgeable faculty at Lenoir-Rhyne's Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (LTSS) play an integral role in preparing John Kronz for ordained ministry in the United Methodist Church.



"There is a great deal of pastoral experience among the professors here at the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. They provide insight in contemporary issues and in current theological academia. LTSS is truly a place to be 'transformed by the renewal of your mind (Romans 12:2).'"

JOHN KRONZ
Master of Sacred Theology student



Youth Revolution: 10 years strong

South Carolina Ministries with Young People of the UMCSC celebrated 10 years of its annual youth spiritual retreat, Revolution, Jan. 25-27 at the historic Township Auditorium in Columbia. This year's milestone birthday celebration featured wisdom from the Rev. Sarah Heath, lead pastor at First UMC in Costa Mesa, California, plus worship music from Bonray. Here are scenes from the weekend.



Photos by Matt Brodie



2019 Annual Conference Lay Leadership Activities

The Lay Leadership Executive Team is excited to announce the events planned for Annual Conference. Mark your calendars now!

June 2

First Timers Orientation
102 A-B
4:00pm-4:45pm
5:00pm-5:45pm

Laity Conversations: Missions and Ministries in the Local Churches
102C
4:00pm-4:45pm
5:00pm-5:45pm

June 3

Mission Expo
Hall 1, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.
This year's mission expo will feature a variety of hands-on missions that you will see in action and learn to do! Some may include Plarn, B.E.D.S. (Better Education Deserves Sleep), reusable hygiene kits, dresses for girls, wheelchair ramps, and the Conference Early Response Team/ Disaster Relief.

For more information, please email laityevents@umcsc.org. We look forward to seeing you at Annual Conference!

Church's Christmas Eve offering funds Backpack Buddies ministry through end of school year

HAMPTON—More than \$10,000 in gifts to the Christmas Eve Miracle Offering at Hampton and Varnville United Methodist churches has allowed the church to fully fund its Backpack Buddies ministry through the end of the school year. "Backpack Buddies is a ministry we believe will become a gateway ministry for our county," said pastor the Rev. Tyler Strange. Strange said in 2017-2018, they received a \$25,000 grant for this ministry. In 2018-2019, Hampton and Varnville UMC committed to fully funding this ministry because the grant was for only one year. "We gather on a Sunday afternoon at the

beginning of the month and pack grocery bags with enough meal items to feed a child for an entire weekend for the whole month," Strange explained. Currently, they provide weekend meals for 175 elementary and primary school students in Hampton School District One. There are about 1,100 elementary and primary students in the district, Strange said, and this ministry makes sure 16 percent of these children have food on the weekend. "When Christians see people in need we don't just pray about it. We jump in and we do something about it," he said.

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The weekend connected students to build relationships and worship with others from different universities and Wesley Foundations across South Carolina.

Wesley Foundations hold conference-wide college retreat

By GraceAnne Dukes

During the first weekend of February, Wesley Foundations across the South Carolina Conference gathered for their annual Wesley Winter Weekend. One hundred thirty-seven college students representing more than eight universities travelled to Camp Bonclarken in Flat Rock, North Carolina, for three days to worship, grow and engage. The Rev. Susan Leonard, from Bethel United Methodist Church, Charleston, led students in large group sessions discussing "Living in God's Great Story," and Clemson Wesley's worship band led the group in song and praise the whole weekend. "The weekend was a wonderful time where I got to con-

nect with other students I haven't been able to talk with as much, and I'm so glad I had some time where I was able to grow in my faith and grow with my friends," Kendra Gordillo, sophomore, said. "Retreats are always a refreshing time for me, both spiritually and mentally, and I felt renewed when I returned to campus." The weekend connected students to build relationships and worship with others from different universities and Wesley Foundations across our state. Outside of worship and small groups, students spent their free time ziplining, exploring and engaging with one another. "A unique aspect of Wesley Winter Weekend is the coming together of the different Wesley Foundations from across the state," Christopher Nelon, graduate student,

said about the weekend. "While we all come from different backgrounds, we are able to come together and stand side by side as we worship as one body. This weekend year after year reminds us that we are not alone in our journey of faith as we worship as a body of Wesley Foundations from across the state." This retreat marked the fourth straight year of the statewide retreat hosted by the various Wesley Foundations around the conference. Plans are already under way for 2020. To learn more about what Wesley Foundations are doing across the conference or to let a campus minister know about a student headed to campus, go to <https://www.umcsc.org/campus-ministries>. Dukes is assistant director for Clemson Wesley.

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary names Shore as new rector and dean

COLUMBIA—Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore has been announced as the newly appointed rector and dean at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary of Lenoir-Rhyne University.



Shore

Shore began her duties in February. In her role as rector and dean, Shore serves as the lead academic and church administrator for LTSS and works to further develop the seminary to an exemplary status within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. "I look forward to deepening our relationships with congregations and other innovative ministries to which our students will be called," Shore said. "Our alumni are crucial partners in helping to strengthen connections within the ELCA and with our ecumenical partners. Together, we are stronger and more imaginative as we prepare leaders for mission." LTSS, which was founded in 1830 and merged with Lenoir-Rhyne in 2012, offers graduate degrees in Christian ministry,

divinity, sacred theology and theological studies. LTSS is one of seven ELCA seminaries in the United States, and the only ELCA seminary in the Southeast. Shore was pastor at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepard in Brevard, North Carolina, a position she served in since 2013. She also served 16 years at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, where she held positions as a professor with tenure and associate dean. Shore is a frequent speaker and author of the book, "Signs of Belonging: Luther's Marks of the Church and the Christian Life." She has also published articles in The Christian Century magazine, Word and World journal, Journal for Preachers, and the website Working Preacher. Shore completed her doctorate in religion at Duke University, a Master of Divinity degree from Luther Seminary, and a Bachelor of Arts in religion degree from Capital University in Columbus, Ohio.



Photo by Austin Bond

Youth speak out

During their free time at Revolution, Belin Memorial UMC's youth stopped by the South Carolina State House and joined a protest against human trafficking.

Registration now open for summer youth events at Lake Junaluska

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C.—Registration is open for Lake Junaluska's Summer Youth Events. Middle school and high school youth groups may sign up for one of six events to be held in June and July. Each three- or four-night event features morning and evening worship sessions as well as small groups, spiritual

workshops and evening vespers. During the afternoons, youth may participate in recreational activities at Lake Junaluska, off-site adventures such as rafting or ziplining, or mission projects through Asheville Youth Mission, a partner of Lake Junaluska. The Rev. Mitzi Johnson, director of programming at Lake

Junaluska, said she is particularly excited about the theme for the 2019 Summer Youth Events – "Kairos: Your Moment of Opportunity." Information about speakers, bands and entertainers is at www.lakejunaluska.com/summeryouth. To register: 800-222-4930 or www.lakejunaluska.com/summeryouth.

Southeast Church Network to hold 65th conference at Lake Junaluska

The Southeast Church Network: Facilitating God's Ministries will hold its 65th Annual Conference April 28 to May 1 at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. This year's church administration theme is "Safe and Sound: Church Security for the 21st Century." It will be a time of spiritual growth, job knowledge growth and fellowship. Presenter Dr. Robert Winstead is a United Methodist minister serving as assistant professor of practical theology at Candler School of Theology, Emory University. He is a national trainer for the United Methodist Church and a contributing author of "Contextualizing Theological Education." Worship leader Dr. Connie M. Shelton serves as superintendent, East Jackson District, Mississippi Annual Conference. Five learning sessions will address the theme. Deadline for registration is April 10. To register, visit www.secn.biz and select "SECN Conference."

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MEN'S RETREAT: 'God is seeking to align men in the church'

From Page 1

workshops on everything from mentoring to small groups to the need for discipline in parenting.

"The church needs men today," said Marvin Horton, president of South Carolina United Methodist Men, lifting up a nugget from the book "Disciplining Men" on how it takes a man to teach a man how to be a man.

Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, resident bishop of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, applauded the large number of men in attendance, noting that when we give in to God, something mighty happens.

"God is seeking to align men in church," Holston said. "God has something He will use us to do that we have never dreamed of."



Photos by Jessica Brodie

Prayer was a huge part of the one-day spiritual event.

"Most of us feel brave and scared at the same time. "There's no such thing as courage unless you decide to wrestle with the thing that wreaks havoc in your heart."

Prayer and learning

Men spent the late morning praying deeply for each other, laying hands on each other's shoulders as they lifted their cares, sins and concerns to the Lord.

After lunch, they heard from the comedian Akintunde, plus split into several workshops. Dr. David Olshine led "The Lost Art of Mentoring and Discipleship: Five Ways of Connecting, Learning and Investing in Others." The Rev. Nick Cunningham led "One: Fully Embracing Our Shared Life in Christ." The Rev. Trevor Miller led "Men's Ministry on Purpose: Creating and Sustaining Effective Ministry to Men."

Stephen Scheid led "Making Men and Giving Them a Place," and Charlie Lyons and Odell Horne Jr. led "Igniting YoungER Men's Ministry in Your Church, District and Beyond." Bishop Holston led "District Leadership: Stepping out in Faith." And Jonathan Bright led "Discipline: Not a Four-Lettered Word."

Herman Lightsey, past president of the South Carolina UMM, challenged men to bring one or two men with them next year so the event can grow even bigger. They plan to remain with a one-day event and incorporate a golf fellowship event the day prior.

For more on men's ministry in South Carolina: <http://menministrysc.org>.

More photos of men's retreat, Page 12



Stuart Hall brings a word on authentic courage.



Men lift their concerns—and their sins—to God.

FOODSHARE: Ministry sources 50% of food from local farmers

From Page 1

of South Carolina medical school and the Palmetto Health USC School of Medicine helped bring Foodshare to Spartanburg.

"We are in an urban neighborhood called the North Side, (which is) poverty stricken. It's a food desert," McNeill said. "We knew we had to adapt the mission here; we needed to reach more people. We had to show (that) after a year, (there was) a larger impact than the last three years and it has taken off. It's growing rapidly. There is a tremendous need."

More than half the customers served are SNAP/EBT customers who are being served in Columbia, Greenville and Spartanburg.

"We know that the city of Spartanburg in 2015 was rated 186 out of 190 through the United States," McNeill said. "Spartanburg was rated near the bottom for food insecurity. The issue of poverty and hunger is great here. That's what we're targeting."

When customers find out about the program, they contact Foodshare, which enrolls them and processes their EBT card (they are a SNAP retailer with the United States Department of Agriculture).

Customers preorder their box and pick it up every other Wednesday. They're educated on healthy eating, and the Foodshare program includes healthy recipes in their boxes. When they pick up their box, they preorder for the next time.

"We're trying to promote community health, cooking education and health education with healthy recipes and more," McNeill said.

The cost of a box is \$5, and customers are allowed four boxes per month. Low income customers who do not qualify for SNAP/EBT pay \$15 per box. Each box contains nearly a dozen different varieties of fruits and vegetables. During the growing season, Foodshare sources 50 percent of its food from local



Tonja Smith (left), executive director of the Spartanburg Urban Mission CDC, with "Ms. Wanda," a Foodshare customer. Below, each box contains nearly a dozen different varieties of fruits and vegetables.



farmers. In the off-season, Foodshare uses the state farmers market.

"It's high-quality food," McNeill said.

The Foodshare program costs \$7,500-\$9,000 a month to run at its current location, the Spartanburg hub of Foodshare, where all

food distribution occurs for customers and partner sites. Partner sites require training, and one volunteer can spend five hours a week processing orders at their location.

Since 2015, Foodshare has distributed 585,000 pounds of fresh, high-quality, nutrient-dense food; a total of 28,000 food boxes have been picked up. The program is in the process of expanding to other cities.

The program located in Spartanburg started with 12 families and has grown to approximately 48 families to date. They're projecting to supply 150 families by end of the year.

Over a span of three years, Greenville and Columbia programs have expanded to serve 450 households biweekly year-round. These numbers are expected to be shared by the Spartanburg location.

"Most of the people that we are serving are low-income single mothers or a grandmother that's taking care of grandchildren,"

McNeill said. "The majority of these people are un-churched. When they come here they know we are the extension of the church. They share with us the struggles of their lives both good and bad."

Often, he said, they want a prayer or a referral to a church or church program for further help and support.

"This is a vital ministry of the church: to reach people that are not connected to the church," McNeill said. "We see our work as evangelism, because we do have good news to share with these people. We really establish a long-term relationship. We get to know these people, their children. They bring their dogs. They share with us what they're doing throughout the week, how they're really surviving with limited resources. They minister to us when they share that good news, as well."

"It's beautiful when you see the survival instinct of these single mothers. It's quite amazing."

Volunteers help with sorting boxes on customer pickup days from 10 a.m. to noon. Partner sites like Spartanburg Regional Medical Center and Upstate Family Resources Center pickup boxes between 12-2 p.m., and customers come between 2-6 p.m.

Since 2015, The United Methodist Church has invested approximately \$150,000 for the establishment of this mission, McNeill said.

In the future, Foodshare hopes to enroll in a program with the hospital called the Community Kitchen. This program would offer educational classes and more.

"I think this is an example of ministry outside the walls of the church that is reaching the community at-large for improved community health, but also reaching the unchurched," McNeill said. "This is called a market place ministry."

To learn more about Foodshare: 864-586-2840 or www.foodshare.org.



Mount Zion UMC, Sandy Run, pulled together a multigenerational group to raise money for a local man who was in a severe car accident.



Small church raises huge funds for young man in brain rehab

By Linda Mack

On Oct. 1, a young man in our community was involved in a tragic accident, which took the life of the driver who was driving in the wrong direction on the interstate.

Jacob was only given a 1 percent chance of survival. He spent months in a Spartanburg Hospital and was finally stable enough to travel to a Charleston hospital for rehab. After being hospitalized there for a short time, he developed some complications and was moved to the Medical University of South Carolina. After much searching and securing approval, he was accepted and admitted to the No. 2 brain rehab center in the country, located in Houston, Texas. The cost was astronomical.

Our small church, Mount Zion United Methodist Church, on the St. Matthews Charge in the Orangeburg District, decided to do what most of us do when a need arises:

to do something. A Spaghetti Supper/Bake Sale Fundraiser was planned, with a date set for three weeks from the idea being planted. A goal of 400 tickets was set with 100 percent of proceeds being donated to Jacob's Fund. An amount of what we hoped to raise through ticket sales and donations was set in the minds of those planning with no one verbally stating a hopeful amount.

The group met and prayed. Businesses donated food items, and surrounding churches baked cakes, pies and cookies by the carloads. Businesses and individuals gave monetary donations, and many hands helped with setting up and cooking. The fundraiser was not only about helping with the financial need but also opening our doors in love to our neighbors, inviting them to be a part of what God calls us to in sharing and caring. Our prayers were constant. We invited those attending to write a message on a

brightly colored card to Jacob, which will be delivered to him so he can see and hear the messages from so many and know of their love, their faith and their support for him and for his family.

As for our "imagined" amount hoping to be raised? Well, God gives us so much more than we ever imagine. Ticket sales surpassed the 400 mark, and food continued to exceed what had been planned and prepared with a portion left over.

God only gives what's good. And ultimately, He gives gifts that are infinitely better than what we ask for. The monetary goal surpassed anyone's imagination and still continues to grow.

Jacob's journey is long and he continues to improve daily through God's Grace. To Him, the One who loves us beyond measure, we give the glory for all He has done.

UMCSC credit union lifts up strong financial status

By Jessica Brodie

COLUMBIA—Leaders of the conference's United Methodist credit union gathered for their annual meeting Jan. 28 to lift up positive growth and its largest income gain since the financial crisis of 2008.

"This is the third consecutive year of positive net margin," said James Bradley Jr., chair of the board for the South Carolina Methodist Conference Credit Union, noting they finished 2018 with a net income of \$14,000.

The Rev. Reginald Wilson Jr., credit union president, reported assets of \$5.26 million and lifted up what he called "the ministry of the credit union" in offering loans to low-income people. Wilson re-



James Bradley Jr. reported their loans are way up and their rate of loan delinquencies is "great" at just 0.33 percent. During their meeting, the Rev. Roger



The Rev. Reginald Wilson Jr. Gramling provided entertainment in the form of humorous experiences he has had throughout his ministry—including times as an associate pastor on hospital visits when



The Rev. Roger Gramling he was mistaken for doctors and even asked once to look at a woman's incision. For more on the credit union and its ministry, visit <https://www.scmccu.org/>.

Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry holds 2019 annual meeting

COLUMBIA—Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry, the United Methodist agency that helps families prepare for the future of loved ones with developmental disabilities, held its annual meeting Feb. 14 at the United Methodist Center.

Board Chair Sam Waldrep called the meeting to order and introduced Conference Secretary the Rev. Ken Nelson to provide the invocation. Bishop L. Jonathan Holston thanked the ministry for caring for God's children and for recognizing everyone matters.

Outgoing board of trustees' member Sally Garner received a certificate of appreciation for her valuable service to the organization and for her dedication to improving the lives of adults with disabilities and their caregivers.

Executive Director Elaine Mathis gave a summary of the 2018 organizational accomplishments including the implementation of holiday time off for full-time employees, providing salary increases for direct care staff, updating the bylaws, restructuring committees and receiving positive state regulatory reviews. Mathis also reported on upcoming goals including finalizing a strategic plan and participating in Midlands Gives.

Mathis facilitated a panel discussion on what ASNMM means to the residents. Resident panelists included Margaret Brabham, Bryant Shelley and Damon Campbell. Panelists said they enjoy living at Aldersgate because it helps them be independent, it is a Christian home and they've made new friends.

Nominating Committee Chair Sally Garner presented the 2019 slate of officers: Sam Waldrep, chair; Susan Kovas, vice chair; W.C. Hammett, treasurer; and Yvette Hering, secretary. She also presented the slate of new board members including William Childs and G. Lee Cole Jr. All of the nominations were approved by a unanimous vote. Waldrep closed the meeting by thanking everyone for



Resident panelists Margaret Brabham, Bryant Shelley, and Damon Campbell share what ASNMM means to them. attending.

ASNMM is the result of several families and interested persons, some of whom were parents of special needs children, taking their desire to develop a place for the care of adult children with developmental disabilities to the Conference Council on Ministries. Delegates to the 2003 Annual Conference approved the Council on Ministries' plan to create Aldersgate.

Today, Aldersgate maintains three homes for adults with special needs, giving them the opportunity to live in a Christian environment with a professional staff dedicated to providing a loving home: Aldersgate at The Oaks, adjacent to The Methodist Oaks Retirement Community in Orangeburg, is a home for six men; Aldersgate Columbia, near Epworth Children's Home, is a home for six women; and Aldersgate Florence (also known as Rick's House), near The Methodist Manor of the Pee Dee, is a home for four men. For more information: 843-754-8936 or asnmm-sc@att.net.



Board Chair Sam Waldrep presents Trustee Sally Garner a certificate of appreciation for her service on the board.

MEN'S RETREAT: More scenes from the one-day event

From Page 1

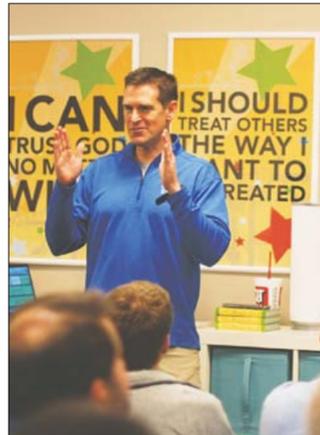


Former UMM President Herman Lightsey (left) gives L.W. Smith an exceptional achievement award. The retreat was held at Mount Horeb UMC, Lexington.



Photos by Jessica Brodie

Men said the day was filled with learning, plus was a chance to make (and deepen) friendships with other Christian men.



Workshops addressed outreach to younger men, discipline, prayer and more.



Above, Bishop Jonathan Holston welcomes the men and boys to the retreat.



Marvin Horton, new UMM president, shares about his recovery after a bad car wreck.



The Rev. Nick Cunningham shares about small group accountability.



The Rev. Trevor Miller leads a workshop at the spiritual retreat.

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Adult Spiritual Life Retreat: Embracing our spiritual life

More than 120 people headed to The Landmark Resort in Myrtle Beach Jan. 29-31 for the Adult Spiritual Life Retreat. The Rev. Angela Ford Nelson was retreat leader, and the Rev. Paul Frey was music leader. Workshops included a painting class and more.



Attendees learned new ways to embrace their spiritual life at the three-day retreat.



The Rev. Angela Ford Nelson was the retreat leader, and the Rev. Paul Frey was music leader.



Retreat attendees painted a beach scene as a way to refresh their souls.



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S.C. directors attend LSM National Convocation

By Rev. Kris Bergmann

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—How can South Carolina Lay Servant Ministry complete their mission; to train and equip laity and to support their local church in the mission of the United Methodist Church, to make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world?

Part of the answer is by attending The Association of Conference and District Lay Servant Ministry Directors Annual National Convocation.

In January, Conference Director Jackie G. Jenkins, Charleston District Director Constance Wilborn and Walterboro District Director Thelma Hudson met with directors from around the nation to discuss problems and share solutions.

The 2019 convocation theme was, "Therefore, Go! With HOPE through Purpose!"

Thursday evening they were introduced to Edgehill United Methodist Church Ministries in Nashville. Edgehill UMC began in 1965 with hope of being a racially integrated church. There they worked to transform hearts one at a time. Today their mission continues with enrichment groups for children and youth and a "free store" for the local community. These ministries embody an ongoing mission to transform the com-



S.C. lay servant ministry directors attended the annual national convocation in January.

munity around them.

The experience continued with praying, worshipping, studying and learning. Directors were trained in a new course, "Leading Public Prayer." This course will soon be offered by South Carolina Lay Servant Ministry.

Directors were given the opportunity to discuss other new courses, as well as the need for Spanish and Korean transla-



The 2019 convocation theme was, "Therefore, Go! With HOPE through Purpose!"

tions with David C. Teel, the director of laity and spiritual leadership at Discipleship Ministries in Nashville.

Dr. Phillip R. Meadows, from Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, spoke on missionary discipleship and fellowship bands. These ministries help all regain their Wesleyan DNA and zeal. His book, "Remembering Our Baptism," may be the beginning of a future LSM class.

Lay Servant Ministries schools are gearing up this spring in districts across S.C.

Lay Servant Ministries schools are gearing up this spring in districts across S.C. The current listing is as follows:

Anderson District LSM School

March 3-5, Porters Chapel United Methodist Church, Pickens. Course Offering: To be announced

Contact: Gwendolyn Brown, Director, gbrown1974@andersonuniversity.edu or 678-480-5176

All classes are \$45; \$50 after registration deadline

Charleston District LSM School

March 15-17, Cokesbury UMC, North Charleston. Course Offering: Lay Servant Basic, Justice in Everyday Life, Conflict Resolution, Lead Bible Study, Communications, Preach, Opening Ourselves to Grace Cost: \$35

Contact: Constance Wilborn (843-797-3736 or clw_51@bellsouth.net) or Rev. Kris Bergmann (843-709-2094 or krisbergmann1954@comcast.net)

Columbia District LSM School

March 8-9, Mount Hebron UMC, West Columbia. Course Offering: Lay Servant Ministry Basic Course, Leading a Special Needs Ministry, Devotional Life in Wesleyan Tradition, From Pew to Pulpit, Transforming Evangelism

Contact: Debbie Watford (803-673-4930 or debbiawatford1@gmail.com)

All classes are \$30. Online registration: <https://fs22.formsite.com/umcsc/coditlmspringtraining/index.html>

Florence District LSM School

March 10 and 17, Wesley Chapel UMC, Lake City. Course Offering: Basic, Called to Preach, Worship, Transforming Evangelism, Lay Pastoral Care Giving, Opening Ourselves to Grace

Contact: Dr. Evelyn Fulmore (843-664-8854, 843-618-3599 or efulmorex2@aol.com) or James Haynes (843-687-6231 or jimhaynes@ftc-i.net)

Registration fee: \$40

Greenville District LSM School

Fall Session: Oct. 20-21, Simpsonville UMC, Simpsonville. Course Offering: Basic, Come to the Table, Heritage, Polity, Justice in Everyday Life

Contact: Ken Moore (864-288-8311 or kmoore8311@charter.net)

Greenwood District LSM School

March 24 and 31, St. Mark UMC, Greenwood. Course Offering: Basic, Polity, From Your Heart to Theirs, Lay Servant/Lay Leader

Contact: Cathy Treivino (864-992-2228 or cathyt24@yahoo.com)

Hartsville District LSM School

March 16-17, Bethlehem UMC, Bishopville. Course Offering: Adult Basic, Youth Basic, Preach, Pastoral Care, Worship, Discovering Spiritual Gifts, Prayer, Heritage

Contact: Rev. Edward Herlong (843-332-1631 or hadist@umcsc.org)

Registration fee: \$35

Marion District LSM School

March 10-17, Trinity UMC, Bennettsville. Course Offering: Introductory to Lay Servant Ministry: Basic Course, Called to Preach, Leading in Prayer, Lead in Stewardship, Transforming Evangelism, Opening Ourselves to Grace, Living Our United Methodist Beliefs

And March 31 and April 7, St. Paul UMC, Litchfield. Course Offering: Introductory to Lay Servant Ministry: Basic Course, Called to Preach, Leading in Worship, Lead in Stewardship, Opening Ourselves to Grace, Lay Servants Lead in Conflict Resolution

Contact: Bill Barber, billbarber29576@gmail.com

Orangeburg District LSM School

March 30-31, St. Mark UMC, North Course Offering: Basic Course, United Methodist Heritage, Grief Rites, Leading Worship, Spiritual Gifts

Contact: Kevin Liles (803-439-2600) or

Rosa Kennerly-Dance (803-308-0666)

Registration fee: \$35

Rock Hill District LSM School

March 16-17, First UMC, Clover. Course Offering: LSM Basic Course, Leading Prayer, UM Heritage, Called to Preach, Grief Rites, 5 Practices of a Fruitful Congregation

Contact: Pam Brenwald (803-493-0980 or pambrenwald@gmail.com)

Registration fee: \$35

Spartanburg District LSM School

March 10, 17, 24, St. Luke UMC, Spartanburg. Course Offering: LSM Basic, Grief Rites, UM Heritage, Polity, Lay Servants as Christian Transformational Leaders

Contact: Annie Crocker (864-381-3098 or sprcrocker7@aol.com)

Registration fee: \$40

Walterboro District LSM School

March 2-3, Bethel UMC, Walterboro Course Offering: Basic, Youth Basic, Heritage, Planning Worship, Afire With God, Book of Discipline, Grief Rites, Polity, Transforming Evangelism, From the Pew to the Pulpit

Contact: Jackie Williams (843-538-3807 or nmjfordwill@gmail.com)

Registration fee: \$45

Register at tinyurl.com/wdls2019

Epworth Children's Home

Early Intervention 'Makes Cents': Research on disconnected youth

One in seven older youth falls into a category of "disconnected youth" ages 16-24, with South Carolina having 82,000 young adults ages 18 to 24 who were not enrolled in school, were not working, had no permanent living situation, and had no degree beyond high school in 2016. This is according to SC Kids Count Report 2016.

There is also a direct economic impact on the community. National statistics indicate that the average taxpayer carries an indirect burden of \$13,900 annually for government services per individual disconnected youth in their communities, with a social burden of over \$37,000 annually per disconnected youth that their communities must bear. Over the lifetime of a disconnected youth the cost soars to \$235,680, according to Opportunity Youth Network, 2018.

But the costs to society don't end there. If you include other costs borne by citizens — such as lost gross earnings, lost productivity spillovers across the workforce and criminal justice victim costs — the true cost is \$51,340 per year and \$939,700 over the course of a lifetime (Opportunity Youth Network, 2018).

A high proportion of disconnected black boys and young men—nearly a fifth—is institutionalized in some type of correction facility, compared to 0.3 percent of the overall population ages 16 to 24. (Measure of America Report of the Social Science Research Council, 2018)

A recent Pew Charitable Trust Report indicates a component of the disconnected youth problem that is especially relevant for South Carolina. Since this state is classified by the United States Department of Agriculture demographic statistics and the United States Census Bureau as "very rural," (the highest rural classification on their scale), the majority of South Carolina's disconnected youth live in rural counties. The Pew Report clearly indicates that the share of "disconnected youth" in rural areas has soared over the past five years, overtaking the rate in urban areas and forcing state and local officials to look for new ways to help young people stay in school and get jobs.

Of the 4.9 million disconnected youth in the nation in all kinds of communities, about 20 percent of young people in extremely rural areas were jobless and not in school, on

average, over a five-year period, from 2010 to 2014. That's much higher than the rate for counties in urban areas (about 14 percent) or for suburban counties (12 percent).

The Pew Report quotes a Measure of America Report in saying, "These vulnerable young people in rural areas are cut off from the people, institutions, and experiences that would otherwise help them develop the knowledge, skills, maturity, and sense of purpose required to live rewarding lives as adults, and the negative effects of youth disconnection ricochet across the economy, the social sector, the criminal justice system, and the political landscape, affecting us all."

The Pew Report concludes that: "We're living now with some of the consequences of a bifurcated country. It's not good for America to have so many people disconnected. However, when youth reconnect with work and school, not only does spending on social services decrease, but also tax revenue and economic participation increase, which is good for the state's bottom line. This is especially true in rural areas."

—Statistics compiled by Sherry Beasley for Dr. John Holler

The Message of the Hush Harbor

History and Theology of African Descent Traditions

By the Rev. Angela Ford Nelson

On March 27, 1871, just eight years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation wherein African-American slaves were given their freedom, the Rev. Samuel Watson and eight of his members purchased two acres of land in Sumter County to be used for building a church that they would later call Good Hope Methodist Church.

Although March 1871 is the date the church was officially established on the property, its congregation is thought to have worshipped there for many years before in a secluded space called a hush harbor.

It was on this land that James M. and Mary Louisa Davis, Alexander and Elias Dessassuare, Junis and Sara Davis, John Dessassuare and Lloyd Dessassuare and others gathered under the cloak of night to worship God in song, dance and prayer.

In 2002, Good Hope Methodist Church merged with Wesley Chapel Methodist Church, another church with plantation roots, to form Good Hope Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church, per a history by Jewell R. Stanley. This unified church maps its beginnings to a time when slaves were not allowed to worship unsupervised by their masters. Yet, in spite of restrictions and life-staking repercussions, they stole away to hush harbors where their faith was continued from Africa and strengthened in the New World.

Today, I serve as the second female pastor of Good Hope Wesley Chapel UMC in its 147-year history, a history that began in the secrecy of a hush harbor and continues amid changing times.

But what was the hush harbor? Who were some of those who risked it all to worship the God of their ancestors and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? What was worship like in these sacred spaces?

And what is the message of the hush harbor for us today?

What was the Hush Harbor?

The hush harbor, also known as a brush harbor or a bush arbor, was "a secluded informal structure, often built with tree branches, set in places away from masters so that slaves could meet to worship in private," according to Paul Harvey's "Through the Storm, Through the Night: A History of African American Christianity." During the Antebellum period, and subsequent to the Great Awakenings, Christianity grew rapidly in America. This growth included a number of African Americans who assumed the Christianity of their masters and shaped it into what author Albert J. Raboteau and others call the "Invisible Institution." This institution, which was characterized in large part by the hush harbor, enabled slaves to worship in spirit and in truth in thickly forested areas which were hidden from their masters, wrote Raboteau. In parallel to the invisible institution of worship, there was a visible one.

To this end, Harvey explains there were actually three ways in which African-American worship took shape during this period: Firstly, in segregated biracial churches where white ministers preached. Secondly, in African-American churches such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church founded in 1816. And thirdly, in hidden hush harbors where slaves were free to combine both African and Christian worship practices.

It was in the hush harbor, buried deep within the untended woods on the plantation that slaves remembered the forests of their homeland. As Noel Leo Erskine wrote in "Plantation Church: How African American Religion Was Born in Caribbean Slavery," it was there that they escaped the confining worship of segregated chapels and were able to practice African rituals and to rest in knowing that the spirits of their ancestors followed them—even into slavery:

"It was primarily through religious rituals and the carving out of black sacred spaces that enslaved persons were able to affirm self and create a world over against the world proffered by the master for their families."

The hush harbor would eventually serve as not only a place for worship, but also as a place where unrelated slaves would become a sustaining family of faith.

Hush Harbor worshippers

Leaders within the slave community announced hush harbor gatherings or "meet-ins" with the use of coded language or songs, which traveled from one slave to another until the appointed time of the gathering.

Singer and preacher Melody Bennett Gayle explains that on the day of the meeting, slaves would work all day in the hot sun, gather at night in the hush harbor to worship until the sun came back up, and then return to the fields in the morning renewed to begin work again. These worshippers risked being severely beaten, sold off from their families and even killed if they were caught; however, the risk was worth it because of the liberating power of the unfettered Gospel that was preached in the woods.

To this end, former slave Lucretia Alexander explained that in the white church, the preacher would tell slaves to obey their masters and they had to sing softly. Further, per Raboteau's "African American Religion," escaped slave Henry Atkins lamented that "white clergymen don't preach the whole Gospel there." It was in the hush harbor that slaves could hear stories of the children of Israel and their exodus from the slavery of Egypt and envision their own freedom in this world and the world to come.

It was also in the hush harbor where plans for freedom were hatched in the hearts and minds of those like Nat Turner.

On August 22, 1831, history records that the largest slave revolt in America was waged by slave preacher and organizer Turner. On this fateful day in Southampton County, Virginia, Turner led a group of some 20 other slaves to kill the family of his owner, John Travis, and 60 other whites. Turner's plans were born as a result of visions received, prayers rendered and plans made in the seclusion of the hush harbor.

PBS.org records the following about the signs that Turner received from the Lord: "In May 1828, he experienced a vision of a serpent. In February 1831, he witnessed an eclipse of the sun. Then on Aug. 13, 1831, the final signal was revealed to him: a second 'black spot' on the sun. He told his followers, 'As the black spot passed over the sun, so shall the blacks pass over the earth.'"

After the insurrection it became even more difficult for slaves, especially those in the South, to escape the grip of their masters—yet they could not be deterred for long. Erskine affirms that "where ever Black people were they had an irrepressible need, a desire to worship in their own way."

Worship in the Hush Harbor

In their beautifully written and illustrated children's book, Freddi Evans and Erin Banks reveal the intricacies of hush harbor worship. Once the coded call had been made to "Steal Away to Jesus" or "There's A Meetin' Tonight" worshippers would leave their slave cabins under the veil of night and make their way through the woods to a designated spot.

Upon arrival, a person would be designated to watch out for the "paterollers" (patrollers) who were always lurking in the woods looking for runaway slaves. Wet Quilts and rags would be used to form a tabernacle and wash pots would be turned over to catch the sounds of the worshippers singing, weeping, dancing, praying and preaching. When the Holy Spirit fell upon the worshippers they were free to dance and shout because there



Although March 1871 is the date the church was officially established on the property, its congregation is thought to have worshipped there for many years before in a secluded space called a hush harbor.

wasn't anybody there to put them out! Songs such as "Kum bah yah," "Go Down Moses" and "Have You Got Good Religion?" were sung. On occasion, Evans wrote in "Hush Harbor: Praying in Secret," the elderly were prepared in prayer offered by the gathered community to meet the ancestors.

It was also there in the hush harbor that the African ring shout, or circle dance, continued from Mother Africa.

The ring shout is a dance that continues today in some black churches, especially in the Sea Islands and the surrounding areas. In the dance worshippers gather in a circle and dance in a counter-clockwise manner, and a song leader leads the song as the circle moves and the dancers echo a rhythmic chorus. Without consideration for time, the worshippers are united with God, with their ancestors and with one another, per Flora Wilson Bridges' "Resurrection Song: African American Spirituality."

The message of the Hush Harbor

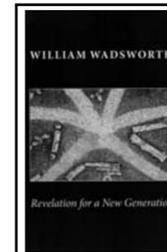
On June 26, 2015, a grieving nation leaned in to hear words of hope offered by President Barack Obama following the horrific murders of the Hon. Rev. Clementa Pinckney and eight of his fellow disciples while attending Bible Study one evening at Mother Emanuel Church.

In his eulogy, the president invited the nation to remember "when black churches served as 'hush harbors' where slaves could worship in safety; praise houses where their free descendants could gather and shout hal-lelujah—(applause)—rest stops for the weary along the Underground Railroad; bunkers for the foot soldiers of the Civil Rights Movement. They have been, and continue to be, community centers where we organize for jobs and justice; places of scholarship and network; places where children are loved and fed and kept out of harm's way, and told that they are beautiful and smart—and taught

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.



Columbia District
 Congratulations to the Rev. Jeff and Lynn Kersey on the birth of their grandchild. Denver Reese Kersey was born to Whitney and Aaron Kersey. Rev. Kersey is the pastor of Mount Horeb UMC, Lexington.
 Congratulations to the Rev. Tiffany Knowlin and Kareem Boykin, who were married Jan. 26 at College Place UMC, Columbia. Knowlin is the pastor of Wesley UMC, Columbia.

Greenwood District
 Congratulations to the Rev. Daniel and Summer Eplee on the birth of their second daughter. Emily Elizabeth Eplee was born Jan. 24. Eplee is the pastor of First UMC, Laurens.

Congratulations to the Rev. Steve and Laura Keck on the birth of their granddaughter. Abigail Grace Keck was born Jan. 28 to Paul and Allison Keck. Rev. Keck is the pastor of Broad Street UMC, Clinton.

Orangeburg District
Mount Nebo UMC, Orangeburg, and its UMW will celebrate Women's History Month March 10 at 8:45 a.m. Rachel



The offerings received at these services were equally divided between elder care and homeless missions.

Canaan participates with 37th Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

RIDGEVILLE—The Canaan-Sand Hill Charge participated with the 37th Week of Prayer for Christian Unity hosted by Canaan. The theme for the service was "Justice and Only Justice You Shall Pursue."

Members of the congregation received a surprise visit from John Wesley portrayed by the Rev. John Scott, assistant rector, St. Paul's Anglican Church, Summerville. Scott reminded the congregation of its historical connections and assured them of God's pleasure at seeing all draw together in unity.

The offerings received at these services were equally divided between The Ark (services to the elderly) and Dorchester County Community Outreach (homeless shelters for men and women).

Sistrunk will be the speaker. The Orangeburg District UMW will hold a 150th Anniversary Celebration March 23 at Canaan UMC, Cope, from 10 a.m. to noon.

The Orangeburg District held its annual leaders training Jan. 19 at St. Mark UMC in North. The Rev. Jeff Campbell, associate general secretary, strategic planning, led the workshop titled "Intentional Discipleship." Approximately 130 laity and clergy attended.

Walterboro District
Carteret Street UMC, Beaufort, will hold its 10th annual Great Day of Service March 23. Volunteers of all ages will be sent into the community to serve nonprofit agencies and individuals in need. Service projects will include painting, repairing, sorting food, sorting clothing, cooking, cleaning and yardwork.
 Presbyterian, United Methodist and AME churches in the greater Bluffton-Okeeta area will gather at noon each Wednesday March 6 to April 10 for worship and fellowship.

Forward Focus program a success in Manning

By Nancy Hunt
 MANNING—Bethlehem United Methodist Church completed its Forward Focus Program with some hard work by participants.

Led by the conference's Lou Jordan and the Rev. Katherine Haselden, the team consisted of a prayer partner (Peggy Davis) and team leader (Nancy Hunt) with team members Bobby Boykin, Jim Boykin, Kim Boykin, Gayle Brunson, Dee Osteen and Ann Windham.

The team completed all worksheets required, did their own interviews, performed research for growth opportunities and with the pastor's guidance was able to successfully complete the following programs to encourage member growth and visibility in the community:

- Resumed Family Night Suppers monthly, from September through June inviting members, friends and newcomers and neighbors to home cooked buffet food and fellowship

and invitations to church.

- Organized and provided visitor packets by the Ladies Aid group and distributed during worship events. Packets included information about the church, its contacts information and printed sermons, printed Sunday bulletins and newsletter copies. It also included small items of interest.

- Volunteerism/Serving Project: A formal presentation of volunteer opportunities was presented to the congregation during morning worship service Nov. 19, 2017. Invited guests spoke to the congregation: Stacy Mosier (McLeod/Clarendon Hospital Volunteer Services), Kathy Brice (United Ministries of Clarendon County), Pat Terry (Manning Primary School) and Jennifer Powell (Council on Aging). Tri-fold posters, created by team members, illustrated the various volunteer opportunities for these groups. A thermometer poster represented a goal of 1,300 volunteer hours was set for the year 2019, and volunteers surpassed it with

a grand total of 1,311 hours performed, with more than 40 different agencies and groups aided with volunteer hands.

- Pack-The-Pew-Sunday (held March 18, 2018, with 73 persons attending and prizes awarded for the person with the most people attending, the youngest in attendance, the oldest in attendance and the one who traveled the most distance. After a joyful worship service together, all attendees and guests enjoyed a meal in the church fellowship hall. Team and volunteers prepared ahead of time, helped park vehicles, greeted guests, served and did cleanup.

Through Bethlehem UMC's participation in Forward Focus, team members learned about church history, how many churches are within a 10-mile radius, how to reach out to others and give back to the community, and most of all, how to serve God in wonderful ways.

Hunt is with the Committee on Communications.

Dickson Memorial to host 'The Making of a Disciple Maker: A Four-Stage Process'

TOWNVILLE—This month, Dickson Memorial United Methodist Church will host a four-step discipleship program that International Missionaries for Christ used in Uganda, Kenya, the Congo and other places

with success.

The program is set for Saturday, March 16, at the church. After gathering at 9:30 a.m., the Rev. Steve Duvall from International Missionaries for Christ will speak until 12

p.m. Lunch and discussions will follow.

"I was in Uganda last summer to observe this amazing process that is in the manner of John Wesley," said the Rev. Judy Hames, Dickson Memorial pastor. "International Missionaries for Christ established over 11,000 house churches last year, and the outreach of this ministry is astounding."

Hames said for 18 months, Duvall and his ministry partners were unable to go into

Kenya because of an unstable political situation. When they went back last Easter, four witnesses, who had produced "disciples who make disciples," had 17,000 people ready to be baptized throughout Kenya. That number has risen since then to 70,000 and counting. "I believe there are ways to use this process in the U.S.," Hames said.

For information or to reserve your seat: RevJudy7@aol.com or 803-793-3595.

Swansea hosts Paint and Praise nights

SWANSEA—Swansea United Methodist Church hosted its third Paint and Praise night Feb. 3. The event had a Valentine's Day theme, and as with all Paint and Praise nights the church hosts, the foundational message was Christian love and grace.

Paint and Praise is led by Alex Booth, a University of South Carolina honor graduate and middle-level teacher at Sandhills Middle School, who holds a minor in studio art. Participants are given everything they need for the event: canvas (or board), paint, a variety of brushes and instruction. Booth leads in preparing the canvas and mixing paints, then guides them through the art of painting the selected image. She has many samples of her own on display to provide ideas for others.

The first Paint and Praise night this past summer featured an abstract painting of a cross on canvas. The second was a painted board for Thanksgiving.

The event has brought many churches together in fellowship. There are no denominational lines, and everyone paints together and praises together.

"Through this activity, people can express their love of Christ in a visual form," Booth said. "And then they can take their painting home with them and hang it on the wall as a reminder of that love."



There are no denominational lines at Swansea UMC's Paint and Praise, and everyone paints together and praises together.

UMW 150: 'Standing on the shoulders of our brave foremothers'

From Page 1

sionaries to work on four continents and in 17 nations.

When The Methodist Church founded in 1939, the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society merged with several other organizations. In 1973, now called the United Methodist Women, the group became the women's mission organization of the UMC.

"This is a very special time, a memorable time to be a member of United Methodist Women," said Cathy Ford, president of the South Carolina Conference of United Methodist Women. "For 150 years women have organized for mission work. We are standing on the shoulders of our brave foremothers, the tireless pioneers of our beloved organization. We celebrate each of them and choose to carry on their good deeds."

Across the nation—and the state—various United Methodist Women circles and districts will host birthday parties, fundraisers and other events to celebrate the group's 15-year milestone.

Here are activities happening across South Carolina:

- On March 23, the Orangeburg District United Methodist Women will have a 150th Anniversary Celebration from 10 a.m. to noon. The celebration will be held at Canaan UMC, Cope. All ages are welcome, and attire for this event is from 1869 to present.

- On March 23 in the Spartanburg District, Trinity UMC will host a birthday party inviting all the ladies of the church along with several guests to celebrate. The speaker will be the Rev. Angela Ford Nelson, who will speak on the anointed woman.

- On March 24, immediately follow-



View from the Pews

by Bill Barnier

Good job, pastor

As the year drew to a close, Pastor Al passed out answer sheets to the Wednesday night Bible study class for one question: What would you like to study on Wednesday nights?

One of the answer selections was "other religions of the world," which won a unanimous decision. We have a dedicated group of about 15 who make it to potluck and class just about every week. The studies of the Bible are always useful, but after a couple years there needed to be topics that inform and refresh, maybe even draw more church members to study with us.

Our first world religion to study was Islam. Pastor provided well prepared outlines and spoke with knowledge of the tenets of that faith, as well as the origin and parallels to our beloved Christian faith. A few in the class had firsthand experiences living or working with Muslims and filled in with some of their real-world observations. In the end, Pastor gave a 40-question test of the material he presented, just to see if we were paying attention. Since most of us are memory-challenged, the results were mixed, but encouraging. The discussion that followed was a bonus as we agreed there were more similarities than differences between our faiths.

This understanding of how the other outfits worship is either an opportunity to learn and understand, or be judgmental and reinforce the divisions between us. I'm hoping we will embrace the chance to find some point of commonality from which we can become one stitch to close the gap between us. Since it's easier to judge and separate than to understand and share, we should learn from 1 Corinthians 12 that we are all part of a whole.

In the coming months, we will be learning

ing the 11:15 a.m. service at Chapin UMC, Chapin, the Chapin United Methodist Women will gather in Room 206 for a fun-filled birthday celebration. All women are invited, and there will be finger food, a birthday cake, ice cream and balloons.

On March 23, Carteret Street United Methodist Women, Beaufort, are all taking part in their Great Day of Service. This is a day where they fan across the community and help with painting, meals, repair work and whatever else is needed in the community. On Sunday, the women are leading the entire church service and celebrating after with a big birthday party with cake and ice cream for the United Methodist Women members as well as the church.

On March 23, the Columbia District will hold a Legacy Day Celebration from 10 a.m. to noon at Platt Springs UMC, West Columbia. A fun time is planned for all to enjoy, including a skit, "A Legacy Carol," the history of Columbia District, plus recognizing the oldest unit in the district and the oldest United Methodist Woman present.

There will be praise dancing and line dancing and ladies sharing their most special moments as United Methodist Women (and, of course, cake and ice cream).

On March 23, the Anderson District will host a Rock-A Thon to raise money for the Legacy Fund. Seneca City Museums will begin by filling up the porch of the historic Lunney Museum with rocking chairs. They will proceed to the patio of the Bertha Lee Strickland Cultural Museum with overflow filling the lawn between these two museums. Rockers will have sponsors who support the minutes rocked. The goal is to raise more than \$2,019 representing looking beyond



Above, United Methodist Women from South Carolina have some fun during Leadership Development Days in Tempe, Arizona, earlier this winter. Below, S.C. women learn new ways to advocate for children during last month's Legislative Advocacy Day.

2019 to the future as the women continue the work of the organization.

"I am humbled by the 150-year history we inherit," Ford said. "Truly the Lord has been with us providing strength and courage when circumstances were daunting. Thanks be to God for the many acts of kindness which have nurtured countless women, children and youth for 150 years. I am honored and excited to begin the next 150 years. With God as our leader we know it will be great! We invite you to make history with us. We start now!"

Some information courtesy of United MethodistWomen.org.



JUNK AND TREASURES

Your unwanted "junk" could be their treasure!

Junk and Treasures, a ministry started by First UMC, Hemingway, 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: americasblessedchildren@gmail.com | 843-483-4026 P.O. Box 628, Hemingway, SC 29554

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United Methodist Women

by Caron Cooper

UMW to hold Spiritual Growth Retreat

Are you seeking a spiritual uplifting time away from your everyday life and a time to enjoy the beauty of God's creation? Do you long to see old friends and make new friends? Then join us in the mountains of North Carolina for the Annual Spiritual Growth Retreat.

Lake Junaluska will once again come alive with the sounds of the South Carolina Conference United Methodist Women members worshipping together on April 26-28. For two nights and three days we will sing, pray, listen and enjoy fellowship with one another. We have new activities planned: a guided walking tour of the grounds, a trolley tour of the many onsite gardens and activity rooms in both hotels. You will have free time to participate in activities or you may want to find a rocking chair, a seat in the chapel or at the cross to refresh, renew and relax while reflecting on your faith journey.

We are excited to hear the inspiring messages from our speaker, Dr. Robin Dease, district superintendent of the Hartsville

District. She will be speaking on the theme "Preserved by the Power Divine: Keeping Faith in Changing Times." Her scriptural theme is Ephesians 3:17-18 (NIV), "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ."

We know you will delight in our music by our first-time leaders, musician Jessica Volz Hall and song leader Dee Johnson.

If you have not yet reserved your room, please call Lake Junaluska. Also make sure to send in your registration to registrar Susan Smith by April 12. The form can be found in the Mission Echo or at <https://www.umcsc.org/ministries/discipleship/united-methodist-women/>.

Perhaps your unit or circle would like to sponsor someone who has never had the "Junaluska experience." We look forward to seeing you this spring at the lake!

Cooper is SCCUMW spiritual growth coordinator.



Photo by Cynthia Williams

Church members learn grant-writing skills

Kay Hightower from the Governor's Office on Aging held a grant-writing workshop at St. Paul UMC, Kingstree, Feb. 8.



Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Michael Jarrell

Will there be coffee in the resurrection?

Do you believe in the resurrection?" Tom Caldwell did not start our conversation with this. It started over whether I was a Pittsburgh native because I was wearing a Steelers jersey. I was standing in the lobby of the Litchfield Inn on Pawley's Island carrying on a conversation with Tom, whom I had known for a grand total of about 20 minutes. I had gone downstairs to look over the continental breakfast with my children and while I was rummaging about, Tom asked about the jersey and things just went from there.

Usually the conversation ends when the inevitable question of what I do for a living comes up. In Tom's case, it was just the opposite.

Tom is a retired lawyer from the Charlotte area who happens to have a few ministers in his family. He also happens to be practicing agnostic and a curious intellect, which apparently made a conversation with a minister an added treat for his vacation. Rather than find an excuse to wash his hair or walk the dog or anything to avoid being potentially proselytized by the preacher, Tom waded in with one question after another about the state of the church, the inerrancy of the Bible, church abuse scandals and the aforementioned gem of a question I started this article with.

And he wanted serious answers. Not dusty, rote, recited preacher-speak, but real, direct, serious answers.

I don't know if you have ever been in the position to have to defend your life's work and personal beliefs at the same time, but for ministers, it ends up being part of the territory. Some people bring their questions, criticisms, past negative experiences and pain to you as a minister in one form or another and expect answers to explain it all. Usually though, it's just a question or two that needles at them on the subconscious level.

For Tom, this was somewhere between a cross examination of the Christian faith and a mad dash through various ideas, philosophies and schools of thought. In which case, we got on quite well. When Tom turned to me after a 10-minute barrage of questions and answers, and said, "Do you believe in the resurrection?" I had a good idea what he was after. For Tom, this was an issue of proving the physically, logically, unscientifically impossible as a foundation for religious belief.

The early church was built on the resurrection of Jesus, the idea that their Messiah, the anointed one of God, had come and taught and healed and been murdered but, by the power of God, raised from the dead to new life. With all our other discussion and this idea in mind, I turned to Tom and told him that of course I believe in resurrection. I see it every day.

The lawyer in Tom took over. "Explain," he said.

I went on to tell him that I see resurrection everyday in lives that have been broken by horrible pasts or simply poor choices of direction reborn/resurrected to being new lives lived with joy and purpose. I told him of my own experiences of being changed and growing to the place I am now, far from where I am going but certainly far from where I was. The conversation went on for a while longer there, and then again as we were both getting our families ready to leave a while later.

This encounter stuck with me for several reasons. First, it was a reminder of how much we as a church need to learn what we believe well enough to explain it. I don't mean spout out "Christianese" at people with our plethora of buzzwords like missional, doing life together, being saved, child of God and others. I mean using simple, basic, everyday terms to describe the difference that following the life and teachings of a first century rabbi makes in our daily lives.

Second, it was a reminder that relationship is at the core of everything we do. I could have tried to convert Tom (to use some Christianese), but I thought it better to get to know him as a person and find some connection to build on. Some people may argue that I missed a chance to "save a soul" (more Christianese), but I saw it as disciple-making. I'm interested in seeing people become lifelong followers of Jesus, not just momentary members on the church rolls. To me, I have the chance to walk with Tom on his journey and let him walk with me (especially since Charlotte is close by).

What we believe is immensely important. But our ability to find a way to share it with others in a lasting, fruitful, relational way is of equal importance. Buzz words and church speak comes and goes, but real lasting relationships, with God and with others, are the building blocks for the Kingdom eternal.

Jarrell pastors Zion United Methodist Church, Lancaster.

Entries sought for UMCSC 2019 evangelism awards

The Evangelism Committee of the South Carolina Conference is seeking worthy recipients for awards at Annual Conference 2019.

The theme for Annual Conference 2019 is "A Future with Hope."

Nominations of churches, pastors and laity are sought. The Evangelism Committee of the Conference Connectional Ministries hopes to have all three Denman awards presented this year.

In 2018 they were able to present this award to Charena Myers as a youth recipient and L.W. Smith III as a laity recipient, but there was no clergy recipient.

For 2019, the committee is hoping every church within the conference will evaluate the gifts within their pastor, laity and youth to affirm their worthiness for this award.

Applications are available at www.umcsc.org.

Bishop's Five-Star Award

This provides an incentive for churches to embrace new ministries each year geared toward growth and outreach. The award 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 apportionments paid in full for 2016, or a 25 percent increase in apportionment payments compared to two years prior.

Data for the awards are based on 2016 statistics. Recognition will be given to the pastor and one layperson at a breakfast during Annual Conference. The award is sponsored by the Board of Evangelism.

Denman Evangelism Award

Established in 1980 by The Foundation for Evangelism, this award honors pastors and laypersons for responsible evangelism in the local church. In 1981, the national award was introduced to annual conferences to choose a clergy person, a layperson and a youth each year.

The award recognizes people who are effective in making disciples of Jesus Christ, whether through speaking, personal witnessing, inspiring the church to be involved in evangelism, etc.

This person may or may not have the best statistical record and may be from any size church. Nominees' lifestyles bring honor to Christ, the church and works in ways that are in keeping with the United Methodist history and traditions.

The award is sponsored by The Foundation for Evangelism.

Obituaries

Ethel Lee Burney

CROSS—Ethel Lee Burney, mother of Rose Middleton, died Jan. 26, 2019. Mrs. Middleton is the wife of the Rev. Albert Middleton, a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Funeral services were held Jan. 29 at Zion UMC.

Mrs. Burney is survived by her two daughters.

Trenholm Road Ministerial Counseling.

Funeral services were held Feb. 17 at Trenholm Road UMC, Columbia.

Memorials may be made to Salkehatchie Summer Service, 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203.

Dr. Carlson is survived by his two daughters and son.

Myrtle Franklin Cook

ANDERSON—Myrtle Franklin Cook, sister of the Rev. Herb Franklin Sr., died Jan. 27, 2019. Rev. Franklin is a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church currently serving as minister of congregational care, St. John's UMC, Anderson.

Funeral services were held Feb. 2 at the McDougald Funeral Home Chapel with entombment in Forest Lawn Memorial Park Mausoleum. Mrs. Cook is survived by her son and daughter.

Rev. Wayne B. Geissinger

KENTON, Ohio—The Rev. Wayne B. Geissinger, brother to the Audrey Ritter and a retired member of the Western Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Jan. 23, 2019. Mrs. Ritter is the wife of

Obituary Policy

The Advocate prints death notices of clergy and their immediate families and laypersons who have served on conference boards and agencies or who work for the S.C. Conference of The United Methodist Church.



Hendricks

Hendricks served the Sampit, Folly Beach, Red Bank, Harris, Newberry-Trinity, Ware Shoals-Hodges and Ninety Six-St. Paul charges. Following his retirement he served the Lake View-Union Charge as a retired supply.

A memorial service was held Feb. 9 at Kipling UMC, Kipling, N.C., with a private burial in Olive Branch Cemetery, Kipling.

Memorials may be made to the John Hendricks Memorial Scholarship Fund for Laurens District 55 High School Students at Palmetto Bank, 101 W. Main St., Laurens, SC 29360.

Rev. Hendricks is survived by his wife, Margaret, four daughters and son.

the Rev. Carl Ritter II, a retired member of the South Carolina Conference currently serving the Zion-Zoar Charge, Pageland.

Funeral services were held Feb. 2 at John Stewart UMC, Upper Sandusky, Ohio. Memorials may be made to Otterbein UMC, 19914 County Road 190, Mount Victory, Ohio 43340.

Rev. Geissinger is survived by his wife, Connie Watkins Geissinger, and four sons.

Rev. John Kirkwood Hendricks Sr.

ANGIERS, N.C.—The Rev. John Kirkwood Hendricks Sr., a retired member of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, died Feb. 6, 2019.

Prior to his retirement in 1994, Rev.

Nettye Ann Williams

ORMOND BEACH, Fla.—Nettete Ann Williams, widow of the Rev. Bill Williams, died Dec. 4, 2018.

Mrs. Williams is survived by her three sons and daughter.

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, Turberville
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, Warrenville
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

ORANGEBURG DISTRICT

Bethel Park UMC, Denmark
Bethel Peachtree Rock UMC, Lexington
Bethlehem UMC, Orangeburg
Clinton UMC, Salley
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, Smaocks
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

Leave A Legacy To Change Lives

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

Guest Commentary

by the Rev. Mickey Fisher, retired

Home: A refuge for the weary

Have you noticed that here at the beginning of a new year a number of newspaper, magazine and television stories focus on the subject of "home." They often feature homeless children and senior adults in the process of adapting to new situations. The underlying tragedies vary. Some families are left without a home because of accidents and illness. Others are left homeless due to the death of a spouse or parent. Acts of nature play a big role. A fire or storm may destroy entire neighborhoods. Of course, some homes are lost though the house remains intact. That is frequently the case for senior adults.

The problem

This writer is 86 years old. I am widowed and live alone in the family home. In 46 years as a United Methodist pastor I visited senior living facilities throughout the state. Now retired, I frequently visit with friends at White Oak, an "assisted living" facility in the Upstate. I am writing out of concern that the very best of such facilities face serious difficulties in providing a home, a place of refuge, for those who live there.

The problem in evidenced in several ways. First, it is seen in the difficulty of agreeing upon a name for these places. Is it a home, a facility, a unit, a building? Even personnel working in organizations serving seniors use a variety of names for their employers. Do they work for a company, an agency, an institution, a boss? Are the seniors who live there residents, clients, patients or customers?

A second problem with these homes is the number of residents who, though breathing and walking about, appear to have given up on living. They seem to be waiting to die. Much of this is due to the onset of dementia.

Much is due to physical disability, to feelings of isolation and abandonment; to simple boredom, lack of energy and loss of interest in living! An often unspoken, and sometimes spoken prayer, asks, "Lord, why are you leaving me here?"

Other issues

Sadly there are other issues. Some of us seniors cave in to the normal inconveniences of aging. We have lived for years with debilitating habits and values. Thus, we never developed the coping mechanisms that we need to claim even a modicum of inner peace and tranquility in the face of the normal physical and mental decline associated with aging.

Is it realistic to expect the management of senior living facilities to deal with such life-shaping issues? What kind of staff would be required? Are there workers available who have the caring spirit, patience, sense of humor, training and spiritual toughness that is necessary to tolerate us sometimes contrary seniors? Consider the cost! Who beside the wealthy could afford such care?

Clearly, it is a serious challenge to provide housing and quality care for our generation of seniors. Success in that effort requires a team approach that includes some seniors as part of the team. Most of us older adults reached our status in life by learning to solve problems. We do not want to be catered to or looked after as incompetents. We want to be respected as persons: persons who have gifts and abilities to share; persons who continue to have ideas and are capable of solving problems; persons who are mindful of and responsive to the needs of others!

Seniors' limitations

In our prime we were engaged in reward-

ing work and enjoying life with our family. Still we were mindful of our limitations. That is especially true here in the twilight of life. We are not as sharp as we once were. We do not hear well. Our patience and communication skills have diminished. We know that! A country music song reminds us that "We ain't what we once were." We know that all too well!

Once we were quick on our feet. We could feel a mosquito landing on our arm; hear the buzzing of a bee; see a sparrow perched high in a tree; distinguish between sweet and sour; stand on one foot without falling. Once we could do those things. Today we can only admire our grandchildren as they do them!

It is easy for us seniors to get down on ourselves. Thus we do not need others putting us down! For sure we do not need the fundraising industry targeting us as easy marks. Yet, most every day we are bombarded with appeals to support various causes. These appeals come through our trips to the mailbox, through unsolicited telephone calls and by people ringing our doorbell. There is an endless list of dramatic appeals seeking to make claims on our pocketbook.

We in the church bear at least a part of the blame for this situation. Our emphasis on stewardship sets some up to be exploited. I remember once standing in line at the post office behind an obviously non-affluent older lady who cashed out her social security check to make a gift to a group which I knew to be fraudulent. The employee behind the counter asked, "Why are you doing this?"

The lady answered, "Because they asked for it and my church teaches that we are to be cheerful givers."

Finally

Occasionally I am in touch with a friend in the northwest corner of the country. In a recent telephone conversation I asked, "When are you going to come back home to South Carolina?" "Oh," he said, "I can't do that. I left such a trail of pain behind me that I can never come home again."

Unfortunately I have been unable to penetrate my friend's monstrous sense of guilt. He continues to live on the side of a mountain in Oregon, choosing to die as a stranger in a far country rather than come home to friends who know all about his prodigal life yet still love him.

Sadly, not every home is a refuge for the weary. Some homes become a source of weariness for those who live there. Such was the South Carolina home for my friend in Oregon. The trail of pain he left behind here in South Carolina grew out of the pain he received in his home of origin. Not one of the four people in that family escaped permanent injury and hurt!

Let us resolve that our homes shall be a refuge for the weary. And let us understand that only the practice of forgiveness and the grace of Christ can turn that resolve into reality.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen and amen!

A Pittsburgh conference

Years ago I attended a conference in Pittsburgh, Pa. At one time Pittsburgh was the home of the U.S. Steel Company. Today it may be most well-known as the home of the Pittsburgh Steelers of the National Football League. It was also the home of the ultra rich Carnegie family and Public Television's Fred Rogers.

You may remember "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" on television. In a magazine that come to my house, I learned that Fred Rogers was born into one of Pittsburgh's many wealthy families, that he attended a Presbyterian seminary and that he viewed his television program as a ministry.

Did you ever wonder what happened to Fred Rogers? Well, let me tell you. Sixteen years ago, in December 2002, he fell ill and was diagnosed with stomach cancer. Within three months he was dead.

Mr. Rogers was a serious student of the Bible and counted Henri Nouwen among his friends. Nouwen was a Catholic priest whose writings are among the most widely read devotional books available today.

Soon after the cancer diagnosis, Mr. Rog-

ers gave a speech at Dartmouth College in which he recited his song from the television program. You might remember that song: "It's You I Like." He explained it to the audience:

"What that song ultimately means is that you don't ever have to do anything sensational for people to love you. When I say, 'It's you I like,' I'm talking about that part of you that knows that life is more than anything you can ever see or hear or touch. (It is) that deep part of you that allows you to stand for those things, without which humankind cannot survive."

I recently learned that they are making a movie about Mr. Rogers with Tom Hanks in the starring role. Of course Mr. Hanks sings "It's You I Like." Media critics who are aware of the movie speak of it as "a drama of the ordinary!" That seems appropriate. Mr. Rogers did indeed champion the ordinary and challenged us to the same, that is, to find meaning and purpose in the ordinary events of everyday life!

Let me suggest that the place you call home might be the key to your ability to deal creatively with the ordinary. When home provides you with a sense of security, joy and peace, when it serves as a refuge for the weary, you can deal with most anything. There you can find healing for the injuries that come to each of us. Often our troubles begin when we stray from home, when we walk away from and turn our backs on the affections and values of parents and grandparents and friends and neighbors.



'He knew he was home'

- Olivia and James Renneker Testimonial

Olivia Renneker and her husband, James, have lived here in Florence since 1978. James was a political science professor at Francis Marion University, and Olivia worked at DSS until their children were born. Olivia's husband, James, lives in Magnolia Terrace Memory Care at The Manor. Olivia graciously agreed to share her experience of what it's like having a spouse with memory impairment and how Magnolia Terrace Memory Care has been of help to her. Take a read.

The man could make Houdini look like an amateur.

Describe what



daily life was like before James came to The Manor.

When James was still living at home, I realized I could no longer keep him safe. The man could make Houdini look like an amateur. He got out of that house just like that, despite my changing the locks and fencing the yard. He wasn't getting the care that he was supposed to have; that he needed.

Prior to coming to The Manor, caring for James was challenging. It seemed to me that the people caring for him may not have been properly trained. He was not bathed, his teeth were not brushed, he managed to stash away two handfuls of his medication that he didn't swallow. One day, he tried to show our daughter how to climb out the window so they could take a walk. That's when we knew we had to make a change.

How did you first hear about The Manor?

It's hard to remember how I first came to know about The Manor ... because the community talked about it! Some good friends of ours came to tour The Manor and told us how much they liked what they saw. I think that's what helped us know that The Manor was a place we needed to see.

Tell me about how you felt the day James moved to The Manor.

The Manor saved us. The very first day, I knew The Manor was the right place to be. The staff called us with updates about his apartment before we showed up with the first piece of furniture. He didn't even live there yet, and already, The Manor staff was looking out for him and taking care of him. That's when I knew we were at the right place, and I could exhale a sigh of relief. The nursing staff is phenomenal. They genuinely love their residents. They truly take their time ... I couldn't be that patient with Jim when he was at home!

Has the move to The Manor helped your interactions with Jim be more pleasant?

Yes, very much so. Because he had reached the stage at home, where, he hadn't gotten aggressive, but he was just very assertive because he didn't want to shower, or brush his teeth, or put on a certain shirt. Now, we just sit and visit with each other and spend time together or watch a movie together. Now, we no longer have the battles over when to shower or what to wear, and I can just be present without having to worry about being his caregiver. It's eased a lot of tension.

What has James' experience been like at The Manor?

It didn't seem to be difficult for him to get acclimated, he has always been a social person. He made a friend right away and the staff made sure to do activities with the two of them together. They took special care to get Jim up first because he liked to help get set up for breakfast and they allowed him the opportunity to help with that.

What has your experience been like from a spousal standpoint?

Relief. I felt relieved of the caregiver responsibility, but I've been involved and informed every step of the way. The staff calls me often to let me know what's going on; even if something small happened. They can even tell the days when I arrive and I need a hug.

If someone in the community had a loved one who needed Memory Care, but they were on the fence about coming, what would you say to them?

Magnolia Terrace is just ... it's just perfect! As close to perfect as life can be given the situation. Nothing compares. I'd definitely recommend people explore this option. I would tell them not to feel guilty, because you need to make this decision. It's not an easy decision, but you have to make it. At that point, you're back to the child-parent situation, and you have to choose what's best for them. And when it's a place that's as great as Magnolia Terrace, guilt is no longer a feeling, because you can feel good about them being there.

Do you share comradery with other family members?

One of the other wives called me out of the blue because she just needed to talk, and I was happy to do it. We talked for over an hour! And I got to meet her for the first time at the Christmas Dinner this past year. That was so nice, and our daughters were there too, and they got to meet. It genuinely feels like family here.

Any additional thoughts?

I want to share a story that happened not long ago. One of the last times we took him out to see his doctor, before we switched to the doctor on campus at The Manor, we came back in a different door than we normally used. And he was getting upset; saying, "this is not my place this is not my place," but I assured him when we got through the doors at the end of the hall, he would know where he was. When we walked through the doors, his face lit up; he knew he was home. That's comforting for me. It's nice to know that he does feel at home here.



Like I said, The Manor saved us. I didn't know what I was going to do, and The Manor saved us.

Call or visit us online today to schedule your personal tour.

The Manor is a full Continuing Care Retirement Community that offers Independent Living options as well as Assisted Living and Dementia/Alzheimer's care.



2100 Twin Church Road Florence, SC 843.664.0700 | www.themanorseniorliving.com



100 years of life and love

Reba Mae Brisbon celebrated her 100th birthday with family and friends Jan. 26. She is a member of Springhill UMC, Rembert, where the Rev. Blondell S. Miller is pastor. A part of the United Methodist Women and the Senior Choir, she is the mother of two sons and one daughter and has a host of grandchildren, great-grandchildren and friends.

ALSTON WILKES SOCIETY

Your help is needed as a volunteer or member. Contact us today. www.alstonwilkesociety.org (803) 799-2490 3519 Medical Drive, Columbia, SC 29203

Rebuilding Lives for a Safer Community

I came to the 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 the 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

Methodist Children's Home

Breaking the Cycle. Transforming Lives.

Remember the children of Epworth in your will or estate planning. 803-256-7394 * 2900 Millwood Ave., Columbia, SC 29205 * www.epworthchildrenshome.org

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 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 Junaluska, N.C. www.fcconfirm.net

March 9—An Evening of Elegance Scholarship Gala and Silent Auction to benefit Africa University, Trinity UMC, Sumter, 7 p.m. Rev. J. Elbert Williams, elbert1@tc-i.net

March 10—Girl Scout Sunday (alternative Scouting Ministries Sunday)

March 10—United Methodist Camps and Retreats Sunday

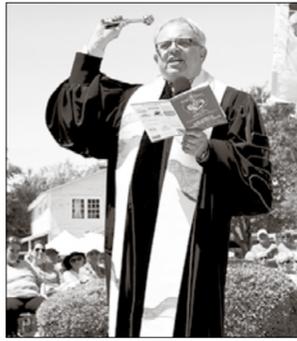
March 10—Daylight Saving Time begins

March 10—UMW Women's History Month Celebration, Mount Nebo UMC, Orangeburg, 8:45 a.m.

March 10-12—Marriage Enrichment Retreat, Lake Junaluska, N.C., <http://www.lakejunaluska.com/marriage-or-800-222-4930>

March 15-17—IGC Confirmation Retreat #2, Harrell Center Auditorium, Lake Junaluska, N.C. <http://intentionalgrowthcenter.org/confirmation-retreat-weekends/>

March 15-17—FCF Confirm 2019, Lake Junaluska, N.C. www.fcconfirm.net



Blessing of the Inlet 23rd anniversary is May 4

On May 4, the Blessing of the Inlet at Belin Memorial UMC, Murrells Inlet, will celebrate its 23rd anniversary. The free festival is held annually the first Saturday in May from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Blessing has grown to attract thousands of participants who enjoy more than 100 arts and crafts vendors, food, a children's play area with inflatable rides and fun events. The entertainment schedule is packed with Gospel choirs, various dance groups, contemporary Christian musicians and more. For 2019, there will again be games for tweens, teens and adults. The festival is highlighted by the Blessing of the Inlet ceremony, which starts at 11:30 a.m. Dr. Mike Alexander and the Rev. Walter Cantwell will administer the blessing. For more information: www.blessingoftheinlet.com

March 16—"The Making of a Disciple Maker: A Four-Stage Process" workshop, Dickson UMC, Townville, 9:30 a.m. Reservations needed; Rev.Judy7@aol.com or 803-793-3595.

March 16—Statewide Reconciling Ministries of South Carolina Post-General Conference Gathering, Washington Street UMC, Columbia, 1-3 p.m.

March 18-20—Guided Personal Retreat, Lake Junaluska, N.C. https://www.lakejunaluska.com/events/spiritual_enrichment/personal_retreats/

March 21-23—A Weekend with Diana Butler Bass, Lake Junaluska, N.C. \$225 <http://www.firstlightproductions.org/registration>

March 22-24—IGC Confirmation Retreat #3, Lambuth Inn, Lake Junaluska, N.C. <http://intentionalgrowthcenter.org/confirmation-retreat-weekends/>

March 22-24—FCF Confirm 2019, Lake Junaluska, N.C. www.fcconfirm.net

March 23—UMW Legacy Fund Day of Giving

March 23—UMW 150th Anniversary Celebration, Orangeburg District, Canaan UMC, Cope, 10 a.m.-Noon. Sonya Benjamin, 843-832-7098.

March 23—Great Day of Service, Carteret Street UMC, Beaufort.

March 24, 31—Greenwood District Spring Lay Servant Ministry School, St. Mark UMC, Greenwood, 2-7:30 p.m. Deadline March 19, <http://greenwood.umcsc.org/home/?p=1321>

March 29-31—IGC Confirmation Retreat #4, Harrell Center Auditorium, Lake Junaluska, N.C. <http://intentionalgrowthcenter.org/confirmation-retreat-weekends/>

March 29-31—FCF Confirm 2019, Lake Junaluska, N.C. www.fcconfirm.net

March 30—There Is No Health without Mental Health Conference, Bethesda UMC, Easley, 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. \$7, <http://anderson.umcsc.org>

March 31—UMCOR Sunday (offering)

March 31—Report of the Annual Audit due

April

April 1-4—UMW Spiritual Growth Mission Trip to northern Kentucky. Register: <http://www.umcsc.org/umw>. Ann Alexander, 803-222-4958 or mhaall5@bellsouth.net

April 4-7—Life's a Bear: Quilt Retreat, Lake Junaluska, N.C. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/209172742437624/>

April 5-7—IGC Confirmation Retreat #5, Lambuth Inn, Lake Junaluska, N.C. <http://intentionalgrowthcenter.org/>

confirmation-retreat-weekends/

April 5-7—FCF Confirm 2019, Lake Junaluska, N.C. www.fcconfirm.net

April 6—11th Annual Cook-Out for Kids, Epworth Children's Home, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

April 12-14—IGC Confirmation Retreat #6, Harrell Center Auditorium, Lake Junaluska, N.C. <http://intentionalgrowthcenter.org/confirmation-retreat-weekends/>

April 14—Passion/Palm Sunday

April 14-20—Holy Week

April 18—Holy Thursday

April 19—Good Friday (UMCtr. closed)

April 20—Easter Eve

April 20-21—Lake Junaluska Easter Celebration, Lake Junaluska, N.C. <http://lakejunaluska.com/easter>

April 21—Easter Sunday

April 21—Festival of God's Creation

April 21-26—Road Scholar Program: The Great Smoky Mountains Through the Photographer's Lens, Program #22927, Lake Junaluska, N.C. Amy Ney, aney@intentionalgrowthcenter.org or 800-482-1442, ext. 384.

April 21-26—Road Scholar Program: The Women of Appalachia: Traditions, Stories & Songs, Program #22829, Lake Junaluska, N.C. Amy Ney, aney@intentionalgrowthcenter.org or 800-482-1442, ext. 384.

April 25—World Malaria Day

April 26-27—South Carolina UMW Spiritual Growth Retreat, Lake Junaluska, N.C. www.umcsc.org/umw

April 26-28—FCF Confirm 2019, Lake Junaluska, N.C. www.fcconfirm.net

April 28-May 1—Southeast Church Network, Lake Junaluska, N.C. www.secn.biz

April 29-May 4—School of Pastoral Ministry (Licensing School)

May

May 2-5—North Carolina Quilt Symposium, Lake Junaluska, N.C. <http://ncqsi.org/>

May 3-5—FCF Confirm 2019, Lake Junaluska, N.C. www.fcconfirm.net

May 5-10—Road Scholar Program: A Wildflower Quest in the Mountains of Western North Carolina, Program #23036, Lake Junaluska, N.C. Amy Ney, aney@intentionalgrowthcenter.org



by the Rev. Jerry Louis Gadsden

March 3 Serve

Devotional Reading: Luke 14:15-24

Background Scripture: Luke 14:7-14

Key Verse: Luke 14:11, "All those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Luke 14:11

During Jesus' time, the closer you sat to the host, the higher you were on the social ladder, and the more you would be involved in the conversation at the table. Jesus was commenting on a common scene in those days at dinnertime. When the dinner bell rang, the guests ran to the table like they hadn't eaten in weeks, dove for the best seats and then clung to their spot. Jesus taught them that self-promotion doesn't lead to fulfillment. Self-promotion is temporary and incomplete. And yet we see this behavior played out in our society much. In verse 11, Jesus explains that with God, the way up is down. The way of honor and exaltation is achieved by self-giving service to others.

Then Jesus shares some advice to the host. Jesus challenges the host to not associate with people only on the basis of what they can do for us. We are called to follow Jesus. Our focus must not be on self but on others. We are called to serve all of God's children.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said it this way, "Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

Can you think of ways in which you can do a better job at humbling yourself? In what ways can your church practice hospitality toward those who are different?

March 10 Sacrifice

Devotional Reading: Philippians 3:7-16

Background Scripture: Mark 1:16-20; Luke 14:25-33

Key Verse: "Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:27

Fishing can be a very fun and relaxing pastime. But there are a lot of people who carry this pastime to a higher level. Some people spend a lot of money on rods and reels. They compete in competitions that have prizes that are worth millions of dollars.

And they don't even keep the fish! They would catch them and then release them. Back in the days of Simon and Andrew, these guys weren't sports fishermen. They

didn't "catch and release." They caught fish for a living. This wasn't a pastime for them. This was their livelihood. They sacrificed everything to follow Jesus. They would never be the same from this day forward.

The text from the Gospel of Luke tells us that there is a cost in following Jesus. We are to carefully measure the cost of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus is calling us to die to the life we live.

Die to our ambitions. Die to our hopes and dreams. Die to our desires. Then we begin to move from self-centered living to Christ-centered living.

Are you willing to come to Jesus on His terms? What have you sacrificed for becoming a follower of Jesus Christ? How do you know when you have given up everything to follow Christ?

March 17 Return

Devotional Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-16

Background Scripture: Luke 15

Key Verse: "The father said to his servant, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet'... For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. So, they began to celebrate." Luke 15:22,24

Luke 15 is one of the most beloved chapters of the Bible. It is made up of parables spoken in response to the accusation, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." The parables were spoken to the Pharisees and scribes, but in the hearing of the multitude of tax collectors and sinners who drew near to Him to hear Him.

What we see in this chapter is that these people that were called "sinners" are valuable to God. They're valuable to him like one coin to a poor old woman who can't afford to spend a single cent unwisely. They're valuable to him like one sheep to a poor shepherd who only has a small flock with which to make his living.

They're valuable to him like a foolish son who rejects his loving father, breaking his heart. Yet that father still sees that one burning ember of hope that his son will one day return to him.

Jesus' reason for telling these stories was to explain to the religious leaders that God loves and searches for the lost. God is always persistent. God is always consistent. God is always ready to take us back and welcome us home.

How does the church help people from becoming spiritual prodigals? What are some warning signs that people are rejecting Christianity?

Called to...

March 24 Repent

Devotional Reading: 1 Chronicles 16:8-13, 23-27

Background Scripture: Luke 19:1-10

Key Verse: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Luke 19:10

The story of Zacchaeus is a powerful story of change. It is one that I would call redemptive change. It is found only in Luke's Gospel. I tend to believe that this story could be a mini reproductive story of the life of Jesus. Jesus was received by the outcast and condemned by the authorities, and that murmuring followed him all the way to Jerusalem and to the Cross.

The story begins with a small man in a tree. It ends with one of the fullest hearts Jesus ever encountered in all of Israel. When Jesus comes to town, he has an agenda to seek and save the lost and to change the world one person at a time.

I invite you to spiritually climb a tree and see what Jesus is about to do in your life. He may just stop beneath your tree. No matter how comfortable or complacent or secure you may think you are, He may look up at you and invite you to come down from your tree. He may ask you to come down and fellowship with him. An encounter like this with Jesus may just transform your entire life.

It took courage for Zacchaeus to come down from that tree. But with the gift of new vision, a new life in Christ, it was worth it all for him. In the end, Jesus declares that salvation has come to the house of Zacchaeus. You see, Zacchaeus was lost. He was confused about his purpose and whom he was to serve.

It is the same way for many of us. Jesus comes looking for each of us and invites us to a changed life—a life that is continually transformed into the image of Christ.

What changes will you make in your life to be better prepared to pursue the calling to seek and save the lost? How can we not block the view of others when they are searching for Jesus? Did your encounter

with Jesus make a difference in your life?

March 31 Follow

Devotional Reading: Psalm 91

Background Scripture: Matthew 4:12-22

Key Verse: "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." Matthew 4:19

When Jesus walked the earth, he was looking for disciples. Jesus still wants people to choose to be his disciples today. We can see from the text, that James and John immediately left their posts and followed Jesus. This is what disciples do. They dropped their own priorities and followed Jesus.

We may not literally hear Jesus call us today, but if we are receptive to His voice, we can receive the prompting of the Holy Spirit to do something in His name. And we can always read and receive the Word of God for how we are to live.

But the problem with too many Christians is that we hear the Word of God, but do not respond to it. We know what Jesus wants us to do, but we think that obeying would be "too uncomfortable" or "too extreme." We are called to make extreme choices for him.

When you really think about it, God calls people who are busy doing something. Jesus called these disciples as they were fishing or mending their nets. James and John were in a lawful occupation when they were called.

Why would Jesus call on those who were already busy? When you need work done, you need to find someone who knows how to work. You need to find someone who has shown they can be responsible.

God is looking for "responsible" workers. That's why Jesus said: "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much" (Luke 16:10). Have you made a decision to serve Him? Are you available? And, what are you available to do?

Gadsden pastors Silver Hill Memorial UMC, Spartanburg.

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From the Archives

by Dr. Phillip Stone

Wightman and the Woman's Missionary Society

Mrs. Maria Davies Wightman lived in several states, but she became one of the most prominent women in South Carolina Methodism as the founding president of the Woman's Missionary Society of the South Carolina Conference.

Given how the organizations have evolved, she stands first in the line of women to have led the conference's women's organization.

Born in 1833 in the home of her great-grandfather, a Revolutionary War veteran of the Siege of Yorktown, Maria Davies moved as a small child first to Montgomery, Alabama, then to Macon, Mississippi. She graduated first in her class in 1849 from Centenary Institute in Summerfield, Alabama.

During the Civil War, her family moved to Greensboro, Alabama, where Southern University was located. A South Carolina clergyman named William Wightman was serving as the university's chancellor, having left Wofford College in 1859 to help start the new university. (This college eventually became Birmingham-Southern.) In 1862, Maria Davies met Wightman, who was a widower with five children. Despite a 25-year age difference, they married in November 1863.

In 1866, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, elected William Wightman a bishop, and the Wightmans moved to Charleston, Bishop Wightman's home, to establish his episcopal residence. Bishop Wightman traveled throughout the country to preside over Annual Conferences, and Mrs. Wightman found herself busy supporting the bishop and raising their two children.

And here began Mrs. Wightman's involvement with missionary society work. Women in Methodism had wanted to organize some type of women's work in the church for years but had been discouraged by the church hierarchy. In 1878, the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was approved by General Conference and a constitution prepared by the College of Bishops. On May 23, 1878, the society was

organized, and plans soon made to establish societies in each Annual Conference.

The bishops appointed the initial officers of the church-wide society, and the eight bishops' wives became vice presidents. Mrs. Wightman helped organize the society and she suggested that each Annual Conference should also have a society.

When the South Carolina Conference met in November 1878 in Newberry, the conference missionary secretary invited any interested women to meet to form a society. Mrs. Wightman was asked to preside. The nominating committee recommended her for the presidency of the conference Woman's Missionary Society, and she was elected.

Some sources have suggested that she was the first woman to preside over a public meeting in the history of South Carolina.

Mrs. Wightman remained as president of the conference Woman's Missionary Society after Bishop Wightman died in 1882, and for 30 more years until her own death in 1912. Many of the articles in her papers testify to the strength and resolve she brought to her position, for she was intent on supporting women who wanted to serve the church. When the conference society held its first annual meeting at Trinity Church, Charleston, in April 1880, she addressed the members as to why they were not holding their state meeting during Annual Conference.

"At this time, we have, all to ourselves, two days for consultation, for reports, suggestions, for united, specific, continuous prayer, and an opportunity to see our duty and our privilege, that our lives may take a deeper meaning and purpose." Had they met during conference, they would have felt like a sideshow.

She concluded her address, "We need faithful, willing hearts and hands for service... I say to each of you, my sisters, your hand is wanted. The Lord has need of you."

And so, Mrs. Maria Wightman spent the next 30 years organizing the missions work of South Carolina's Methodist women.

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

Faith, Activity, Nutrition

More FAN trainings set for May

FAN—Faith, Activity and Nutrition—has announced it will host more training sessions in May.

FAN is a faith-based program that works to create a healthier church environment. FAN encourages churches to increase physical activity and healthy eating in church members.

More than 100 United Methodist Churches across the state that have been trained in FAN, making changes to improve the health of their members and communities. The University of South Carolina has spotlighted 18 of these churches (read more at <http://prevention.sph.sc.edu/projects/fanumc.htm>).

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.

If your church is interested in participating in a FAN training, complete an online interest form at <http://prevention.sph.sc.edu/projects/fanumc.htm>. FAN will then contact you with additional information about how to register for a training. Interest forms must be submitted by March 15.

For more information, contact Jessica Stucker at 803-576-5992.



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