



Sharing Our Faith

St. Luke's United Methodist Church

3080 Okatie Highway, between the back gates of Sun City on Hwy 170

"Praising and Serving God Thru the Ages"

Worship times: 8:30 & 10:15 AM (5th Sundays 9:15 AM)

Volume 19, Issue 7

JULY 2024



Ever since I was a little squirt, I have been in awe of my elders, especially my seasoned elders. There is something all inspiring about sitting at the feet or standing shoulder-to-shoulder with one who has been where you are wanting to go, seen what you want to see and they can, are willing, don't mind pointing you in the right direction or taking you by the hand and leading you, if it comes down to it. My appointment here at St. Luke's has definitely been a God send. Every day I wake up feeling that I am in the presence of greatness. That I am blessed that you have allowed me to be the shepherd of this flock, the head of this hospital.

So, if I may, I would like to give a praise report for the **WISDOM** keepers of St. Luke's. The majority of these persons can be found in attendance each and every Sunday morning. They may not say anything or very little, but they are present in every way when it comes to St. Luke's and how we should move forward for the good of the church and the community, according to the Vision and Goal that God has given us.

To ensure that I am still keeping with the giving of flowers and the sharing of the gifts for this bicentennial season, I had to do a little research and digging to make sure that these persons are recognized. I may not say anything about them, but you should know that just their presence alone is enough for me.

For our Nonagenarians; I would like to recognize the following, June Hamilton – 98 years young; J.W. Harper – 96 years young; Joe McCullough – 95 years young; John Hubbard – 93 years young; Jane Wick – 92 years young; Harold Prosser – 91 years young; Harry Skinker – 91 years young; & Richard LaFever - 90 years young; & Lois Finch – 90 years young.

For our Octogenarians; I would like to recognize the following, Joan Ruffino - 88 years young; Peggy Firton – 87 years young; Bill Trainer – 87 years young; Andy Makarick – 87 years young; Jerry Vagnier – 86 years young; Ruth Dolan - 86 years young; Bob Antoine - 85 years young; Bill Halstead - 85 years young; and there are 27 other members who are between 80 & 85.

If I have not recognized any one, please forgive me and charge it to my head and not my heart. If anyone is upset over me sharing the ages of our most seasoned members, again charge it to my head and not my heart.

I share this information because age is a gift and the Bible tells us in Proverbs 20:29 "The glory of youths is their strength, but the beauty of the aged is their grey hair." (NRSV). In Job 12:12 "So with old age is wisdom, and with length of days understanding." (ESV). And in Psalms 92:12-15 "The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. In old age they still produce fruit; they are always green and full of sap, showing that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." (ESV)

This month, I thought it only right that we celebrate the truly blessed and seasoned members of our congregation. Especially as we celebrated the 200th year of existence of our edifice.

Let us continue to look forward while looking back at some who helped to pave the way for us to be where we are and helping us to make strides towards the mark that we are heading to.

Rev. Christopher L. Thompson, D. Min

I LOVE THE Mountains



Although I was born and bred in southeastern Michigan, I love the mountains. I love the thought of them, I love their grandeur, and I love the way they majestically and seemingly endlessly march in procession as far as the eye can see. I lived in Anchorage Alaska for two years, surrounded by mountains.

Maybe there is something about mountains and their connection to God that has drawn people to them, just as people have been drawn to rainbows and their connection to God. The very dwelling place of God Himself is Heaven, and this dwelling place is described as being of the mountains.

The psalmist declared, “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole Earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Psalm 48:1-2).

Moses climbed the mountain to speak with God and receive His Commandments. Jesus often retreated to the mountains to spend time with His Father. “And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone,” we learn in Matthew 14:23.

Climbing the mountain of God is what our Christian Walk of faith is all about. It is a steep climb that can seem at times to be difficult and as dangerous as the storms. Our God will shelter us during these times of storm, just as His word promises. Psalm 61:3 tells us, “For Thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.” Just as the mountains of God offered protection to the city of Jerusalem, God is also described as offering protection to His people in this manner: “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever” (Psalm 125:2).

Yes, mountains are so awesome and breathtaking to behold, but they are not our salvation. Our salvation is from *the* Rock, Jesus Christ. Whatever you may be dealing with, you may just need to climb up to spend time with the Lord. God wants us to learn to climb to the top and focus every aspect of our life on His will. Let us take out some time this week to try it! “From the end of the Earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I” (Psalm 61:2).

Will Ross, Lay Leader

the big picture

Going back to the basics: **All that we have come from the Lord.** We are each Stewards of protecting and properly using all that the Lord has given us in our lives.

Let’s now look at the larger (worldwide?) view of what God has provided and what we are each stewards of. The food we eat, the air that we breath, the sunshine that sustains us, the family and friends that care for us: these are all part of God’s ongoing gift to each of us. Every day we have ongoing opportunities to help care for (be Stewards) the natural gifts that we take for granted. On trash day, did you separate the recyclables so that they may be reused in some manner? Do you try to use up your leftovers, rather than throw them in the trash? Do you consolidate trips so that you will use less gas in the car? Do you take unused items to God’s Goods so they can be delivered to those in need?

There are endless ways to remind yourself and others that “all we have come from the Lord” and that we have endless opportunities to be good stewards of our planet and everything in it.

Share your thoughts or questions on Stewardship with *Rob Clark: Stewardship Chair*





Finance Matters:

The Finance Committee will meet on July 17, 2024 to discuss the 2025 budget for St. Luke’s. The budgeting process begins early because we need to finalize a budget for presentation and adoption at St. Luke’s charge conference. The charge conference date is established by our district and normally is scheduled for early to mid-September. You may think it is maybe too early for this process to begin and I am not surprised if you are thinking that, but let me assure you, from the planning kick off to final approval of the budget, time will fly by quickly. Also, please keep in mind that September will be a very busy and hectic month as we celebrate our Bicentennial.

Committee Chair Persons: If you are a committee chair, I will reach out to you in the next week or two to inquire about your financial needs. Do not panic, I will provide pertinent historical financial data to help you assess your financial needs be for 2025.

Parishioners: Your help is integral to the budgeting process. Committee Chairs need to hear from you to identify financial needs that fall within areas of their ministry programs. If you know of a need or needs, please reach out to the respective chair persons soon. Names of the Committee Chairs are identified in the first page of our church directory.

Thank you in advance for your help with the budgeting process, but more importantly, thank you for supporting St. Luke’s ministry programs with your prayers, time, and financial resources.

Jim Manning
Finance Committee Chair
jwmanning518@gmail.com

Many may not know about the various Funds we have at St. Luke’s. Listed below are some which you may choose to donate to. (Checks should be made out to St. Luke’s UMC with the fund name listed on the “memo line”.)

Our **Property, Preservation & Improvement Fund** is being used at the present time to do the repairs needed on our sanctuary. (Also known as **PPI**.)



St. Luke’s has a **Flower Fund**. We have a florist who arranges the flowers. All you need to do is sign-up, donate \$53.50 and indicate whether they are in honor or memory of a special person. There is a sign up sheet on the bulletin board in the sanctuary.

Other funds are: a **“Mission Fund”**. This fund allows the Mission Committee to decide the best way to disperse these funds in order to fulfill their Mission Statement of: “The goals of the Mission Team are to help people discover the joy of knowing Jesus and serving. We will accomplish our goals by being a blessing to our community through our gifts and service.”



The **Music Ministry** which will allow us to enjoy special music provided by our Music/Choir Director, the choir, various musicians, etc.



Communications and Advertisements



A new committee has been formed. Communications and Advertisement. I have offered to chair this group. This is where I ask for help. We need people to help. We need hands and ideas. If you have any experience in getting messages out into the community, I need to hear from you. If you have any ideas, I want to hear from you.

So far we have planned mailings to newcomers to Sun City. How can we access other communities? We need people to address envelopes and stuff letters. We plan on posting placards of upcoming events in the windows of local storefronts. Do you know a printer? We welcome anyone who can help with these two activities.

We have had some wonderful events recently. Music in the Park, Pancake Breakfasts, Spaghetti Dinners, Chili Cook off contest, game nights, Karaoke and many more. Our response from the outside community has been less than desired. We need to make the public more aware of all we do.

Please help me spread the word.

Pat Schwartz-Ross



Mark your calendars for these Upcoming meetings!! (Subject to change)

MEETINGS — In the Fellowship Hall

July 2, Trustees at 9:00 AM

July 11, Women's Bible Study, 5:30-7:00 PM

July 25, Women's Bible Study, 5:30-7:00 PM

Please check for other event dates in the "History Happenings" article.

Many requests were received for this recipe—courtesy of Bonnie van Rensburg

South African Curry Pasta

- 1 Box Elbow noodles, cooked and rinsed under cold water
- 1-2 carrots – grated or finely chopped
- 1 red pepper – chopped
- ½ red onion – chopped
- ½ English cucumber – seeds removed and chopped
- 1 can kernel corn, drained
- 5-8 chopped dry apricots
- Handful of chopped golden raisins (or black or mixed)
- 1-2 mangoes – chopped
- 2 T chopped cilantro or chives

Dressing

- ½ cup Greek yogurt
- 1/3 cup mayo
- 2-3 T curry powder (to taste)
- 1 T apple cider vinegar
- 2-3 T Mrs. Ball's Chutney (Publix or World Market)

Whisk yogurt, mayo, vinegar, chutney and curry powder.

Pour over pasta and veggies. Mix well.

Garnish with cilantro or chives

(Bonnie doubles the dressing as she likes it moister. You can also halve the recipe.)





One of the many blessings that comes along with being Co-Chairs of St. Luke’s Missions Committee is seeing the needs of our neighbors firsthand and then seeing how our congregation comes together to help meet those needs. Whether it is nonperishable or fresh food, freshly prepared casseroles and desserts, water bottles or snacks, we need only make you aware of the need, and your generosity is overwhelming! You are making a difference in the lives of those in need in our community.

We will not be holding a Missions Committee meeting in July. But that doesn’t mean we will not be busy. Please read below to see how you can help this month. **Our next Missions Committee meeting will be on August 7 at 1:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall.** Anyone interested in helping plan and implement St. Luke’s missions programs are always welcome to join us!

Elizabeth Vance & Linda Fisher, Missions Co-Chairs

Bluffton Self Help – First Sunday Mission, July 7

Lois Willig will be collecting donations for Bluffton Self Help in the parking lot between our two worship services on Sunday, July 7. Last month, your donations not only filled the back of Lois’ van, but the back seat as well!

The food insecurity in our area is staggering. In March 2024, a record-breaking 536 households (the highest in the organization’s history) received food from Bluffton Self Help’s Market. This was the highest number served in a single month in their history. So, let’s continue to help our neighbors in need! Here is a list of the most requested and needed items:



- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Taco Kits | Black & Refried Beans |
| Rotel Tomatoes | Pancake Mix & Syrup |
| Cereal, Oatmeal & Grits | Rice-a-Roni, Knorr Mixes |
| Peanut Butter & Jelly | Flour, Sugar, Cooking Oil |
| Canned Meats & Tuna | Dried Pasta & Sauce |
| Hearty Soups & Canned Chili | Hamburger Helper |
| Shelf Stable Milk (Boxed) | Diapers (Sizes 4,5 & 6) & Pull Ups |
| Shelf Stable Cheese (like Velveeta) | Toiletries |

If you have items to donate later in the month, please place them in the basket labeled Bluffton Self Help in the Fellowship Hall. Unfortunately, they cannot accept open, expired, or damaged packages.

Pritchardville Elementary Water Bottle Drive – Continues through July

Last month we began a water bottle drive for the students in need at Pritchardville Elementary School. As we mentioned in last month’s newsletter, fifty-one percent of their student population qualifies for free or reduced lunch. St. Luke’s has been helping meet the needs of these children for several years through supplies, snacks, and Christmas gifts.

One of the ongoing needs has been small, refillable water bottles that the students keep on their desks. They do not need to be insulated. If you can help meet this need, please place your donations in the basket labeled Pritchardville Elementary in the Fellowship Hall. Thank you to everyone who has already donated!!

Helpful Shopping Hints: Missions Committee members report that the Dollar Tree store and Walmart are good places to find inexpensive water bottles. Also, Dollar Tree often has shelf-stable cartons of milk in stock for only \$1.25 each.

St. Luke's has offered to provide meals for the families in this transitional housing program on July 23 (Tuesday), July 25 (Thursday), and July 26 (Friday). We provide two complete dinners for all the families on Tuesday and Thursday, and Domino's pizza gift cards for Friday.

Beginning on Sunday, July 7, we will have two sign-up sheets posted on the bulletin board in the sanctuary. Please stop by the bulletin board to sign up for one or more of the items that will be needed for the meals on each day. Only the main entrees will need to be delivered to the Fellowship Hall by 9:00 AM on the date you sign up for. Other perishable food (fruit, fresh veggies, dips) can be placed in the refrigerator clearly marked for "Family Promise." Non-perishable food can be placed in the Family Promise bin in the Fellowship Hall.



We also need one or two people who can assist with assembling the meals at 9:00 AM in the Fellowship Hall on Tuesday and Thursday. This usually takes less than an hour. If you have any questions, please contact Linda Fisher at dlfisher4@hotmail.com.

The number of parents and children in the Family Promise program can vary from month to month. In June we fed three adults and seven children, ranging in age from 1 year to sixteen. THANK You to everyone who helped with the delicious dinners in June. They were really appreciated!

Prayer Blanket Ministry Returns in August

Mark your calendars now and plan to join us in the Fellowship Hall on August 26 at 10:00 AM to make no-sew blankets for people who are ill, shut in, or recovering from surgery. Everyone is welcome! Watch for additional information later this month and in our next newsletter.

Rosalyn Perdue received one of our blankets. She loved it and was very grateful!



Agape Family Life Center, 5855 Okatie Hwy, Hardeeville

On Wednesdays and Saturdays, every week, Agape Family Life Center distributes food to seniors and families in need from 10:00 -12:00 noon. Agape is six miles from St. Luke's UMC. You do not need to let them know you are coming – just show up and they will put you to work. No heavy lifting is required. When the Second Helpings trucks arrive with the donations from local grocery stores, you will help to sort and display the food, and then help the clients as they choose their groceries. On most days, you will find one or more people from our church helping. Agape welcomes and appreciates all volunteers. If you need further information, please contact Leslie Richards at lesliearichards@gmail.com,



If you are going through an illness or another crisis and could use some support, please let us know. Marie Baldauf leads this ministry that can help by providing a meal and caring phone calls. Please contact Marie at baldaufmarie@gmail.com or 843.705.2210, if you need support or would like to help in this ministry.



HISTORY HAPPENINGS

Our bicentennial year is half-way finished. When the History Committee began their planning, we were a bit overwhelmed with the responsibility of such an undertaking. We wanted this year to be memorable, creative, exciting, and fun. We wanted to honor the people who, for the past 200 years, have kept this little church going and who have been responsible historians by keeping 75% this church as it was in 1824. We think we have done a good job, certainly not a perfect one, of accomplishing our goals. What does the second half of this bicentennial year hold?

Before I discuss what's to come, I want to thank all of you. You have supported us in everything we have done. You stepped up, as always, and did whatever we asked you do. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Without your participation and support, none of this could have happened.

The next big event is the ice cream social on August 17, starting at 6:00 PM. Lois Willig has arranged for David Volt, the owner of Jack Frost Homemade Ice Cream to be with us. He has a passion for creating frozen desserts "from scratch". His commitment to using fresh, high-quality, ingredients can be tasted in every scoop of ice cream or sorbet he serves.

We will have some displays in the Fellowship Hall for you to enjoy as well as church memorabilia for sale. Church and graveyard tours will be available.

To add to the fun and fellowship, joining us will be two historical figures from St. Luke's. No doubt they will have interesting stories to tell. You won't want to miss their stories, great ice cream, and fellowship!

September is a month of celebration. **All Sundays in September, we will have one service at 9:15 AM** with a guest speaker. A reception will follow in the Fellowship Hall.

September 1: Guest speaker—Jim Smith

September 8: Guest speaker—Bishop Jonathon Holston

September 15 : Guest speaker—Rev. Richard Smith

September 22-Guest speaker—Rev. Terry Fleming, Walterboro D.S.

September 29-Rev. Dr. Chris Thompson—5th Sunday Potluck

September 28 is the Final Major Bicentennial Event – Annual Music on the Grounds –2:00-5:00 PM. This will be the final major event hosted by the History Committee. However, we will take part in all the scheduled events for the remainder of the year.

In the Fellowship Hall we will have displays, including a Chrismon Booklet and samples, history scrapbook, updated graveyard book, Newsletters (2011-2024), committee displays, pictures through the years photo book, old photo church directories, historical artifacts, etc.

In the Pavilion will be music (TBA), a variety of vendors (TBA), food choices, and at 5:00 PM we will end with a Bicentennial Birthday Party complete with cake, sparklers, party hats, balloons, etc.

Please come and help us celebrate St. Luke's final official bicentennial year event.

*Pam Hoel,
Church Historian*

A LOOK BACK AT JUNE



On June 2nd we had the Walterboro District Superintendent, Rev. Joey McDonald give our message at the 9:15 worship service followed by a Potluck in the Fellowship Hall, rededication of the Hall and burning of our debt papers! It was a pleasure to have Rev. Joey with us. As always, the food was great!



Dessert Table—Yum!!



So wonderful having Marge and Harry Skinker back with us!!!



Who wants a scone??

Methodists have a reputation for casseroles, but St. Luke's does PotLuck's Over the Top!! 2 PotLucks in one month!

MORE FROM JUNE...

June 9th we welcomed new members



Bonnie van Rensburg, Dave & Janet Baumeister, George & Constance Ulrich

Our Men received delicious cookies to celebrate Father's Day.



Wait, what class or meeting is this???
Oh, that's just an expanded coffee chat!!



Nonagenarians: J. W. Harper, John Hubbard, Harole Prosser and Lois Finch



Who decorated the Pastor's chair??? Clever way to welcome him back!



Lois Willig & Walker Hamilton ready to celebrate July 4th!

Besides fantastic dishes, you always step up to help from set-up to clean-up! Fun and Fashion.



Tedious work continues on our sanctuary windows!



We welcomed our new Music Director, Marsha Gerber



MORE FROM JUNE...

Let's travel with Pastor Chris & Cynthia as they visit countries in Europe to celebrate Chris' birthday and their upcoming 31st anniversary. (Photos from Cynthia's Facebook page.)



Leaving for Savannah airport...



Pastor Chris wearing his "uglier" Christmas ugly sweater ribbon.



Big Ben, London



Do these still work?



Father's Day in London.



Changing of the Guards.



Train to Belgium.



Brussels.



Paris—celebrating Pastor Chris' birthday with high tea!



Paris Disneyland.



Another day with uglier sash!



Catholics for the Common Good Presents Our 3rd Annual International Friendship Potluck Day

Bring Your Favorite Cultural Dish,
Dress in Your Cultural Attire, &
Bring Your Own Table Setting
(we will provide some cutlery, plates, drinks)



Saturday July 27th from 11:00 a.m.-2:00 pm
at St. Gregory the Great Parish Life Center
31 St. Gregory the Great Drive
Bluffton, SC 29909

Please RSVP by Wednesday, July 17th to

Sister Pamela Smith SS.C.M., Ph.D.
psmith@charlestdiocese.org ,

Or Ferine Johannes @ ferinesnc@gmail.com

Dear Rev. Thompson,

For the third consecutive year, Catholics for the Common Good (CCG) invite you and your congregation to join us for our **International Friendship Day Potluck**.

Our group is dedicated to ecumenical, interfaith, interracial, and environmental causes. The potluck is a way for us to gather in friendship with members of many faith communities in our area. Past observances have brought African Methodist Episcopal, Latter Day Saints, Methodists, Presbyterians, and people of other faiths. Last year we also had some visitors here in the U.S. on missionary and family visits. Africa, Latin America, Europe, and Asia were represented.

While the potluck is open from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM, we ask that those who wish to speak about their special ethnic recipes and family customs be ready to offer some words at Noon.

We will provide water, lemonade, iced tea (sweet and unsweet) and dishes and silverware for those who don't bring their own. All that we ask is that you let us know so that we can have enough tables and chairs set up for our guests,

We're close neighbors, so we hope you can join us!

Prayer Requests

You will notice that the list no longer includes the reason for prayer, due to HIPPA regulations. Please email Amy Erickson, amyhousererickson@gmail.com with any prayer requests you may have. If you have loved ones who have been blessed by recovery, peace or grace and may be removed from the list, please provide that information to Amy as well.

CONGREGANTS

Ruth Dolan Jack Reed Pam Hoel
Andy & Sharon Makarick Lynn Cutshall

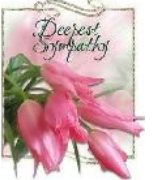
FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF CONGREGANTS

Karen Williamson, friend of Linda Fisher
Hannah Nystrom, friend of Marie Baldauf
Kathy Visconte, friend of Jane Tiffany
Becky Owen, friend of Jane Tiffany
Jack and Barbara, friends of Janet Jacoby
Bonnie Fogerty, friend of Will Ross
Beverly Byrd, friend of Cynthia Thompson
Lynette Hassinger, sister of Leslie Richards
Denise Landin, daughter-in-law of Judi Landin
Wilda Reed, mother of Jack Reed
David Cook, son of Tom and Beverly Cook
Art Doley, long-time friend of Harold Prosser
Dottie, friend of Linda Jackson
Luke, grandson of Leslie Richards
Leon, friend of Pastor's sister-in-law
Mike, son of Agnes Scarlett
Debbie Baldauf, daughter-in-law of Marie Baldauf
Rick and his daughter, Jennifer, caregivers of Pam Hoel
Tina Dere, friend of Elizabeth Vance
Gary, husband of Judi Landin
Tom Colty, friend of Will Ross
Grant, father of Eve Hennessy
Ron Hershberger, husband of Dawn Hall
Lynn Clearwater, neighbor of Beverly Cook
Miguel Monzon, our church's lawn care person
Ray Lentz, friend of Sherri Prosser
Lindsey Morgan, daughter of Leslie Richards
Jerome Green, nephew of Cynthia Thompson
Uncle of Sherri Prosser
David Elmer, friend of Lois Finch
Dave Nicholson, brother-in-law of Carla Carte
Sister of Ouida Dell
Quinn, grandson of Fran Iacovo
Robert Biles, friend of Norm Stark
Michele, sister of Nancy Sariscak
Steve, acquaintance, of Jane Tiffany
Jim McElyea, brother-in-law of Amy Erickson
Shannon, friend of Judi Landin
Adolf Schnetz, husband of friend of Letty and Bill Husson
Makayla
Bridget, relative of Kathy Smith
Sharon Malickey, acquaintance of Jane Tiffany
Monica Sorenson, daughter of friend of Sherri Prosser
Kevin Prosser
Duane Monstream
Febie Knight
Safe travels for Nancy and John Sariscak

THANKS AND PRAISES

Jean Shaffer became a US citizen.

*Our sincere condolences & sympathy
go out to Verna Crosby's family on
her passing, June 24, 2024.*



*Our deepest sympathy and prayers to
the family and friends of Pat Hunter,
cousin of Pat Simmons, who passed
away on June 27, 2024.*

Let us remember with cards, and prayers...

**CHURCH MEMBERS IN NURSING HOMES, ASSISTED
LIVING OR HOMEBOUND**

Ruth Dolan,
Summer Breeze
351 Wilmington Island Rd., Room 225
Savannah GA 31410

Elnora Ekholm, 173 May River Rd.,
Bluffton SC 29910

June Hamilton, 4 Concession Oak Dr.,
Bluffton SC 29909

Jane and Jerry Wick, 740 Middletrail Court,
Mt. Airy MD 21771



Happy Birthday!

JULY BIRTHDAYS

02—Debbie Burr
 06—Diana Hamilton
 11—Alan Jordan
 11—Mikki Rolain
 12—Elizabeth Vance
 12—Reese Woods
 13—Arlene Schaltegger
 19—Will Ross
 24—Tammy Carper
 26—Lois Finch
 26—Eric Woods
 27—MaKayla Carter
 28—Dell Harper

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

04—Archie Vance
 06—Harry Skinker
 10—Jeananne Cranston
 17—Hudson Pryor
 19—Francine Iacovo
 20—Sherry Lee
 21—Letty Husson
 23—Leslie Richards
 24—Pat Schwartz-Ross
 25—Joe Cservek
 27—Rick Slater
 28—Jeff Rolain
 30—Lee van Rensburg

JULY ANNIVERSARIES

01—Judy & Chuck Watts*
 06—Sheryll Ingram & Bill Halstead
 12—Barbara & Ron Marangio
 17—Cynthia & Rev. Dr. Chris Thompson
 20—Doris & Bob Heck
 25—Pam & Rick Hoel
 27—Denise & Randy Pryor
 27—Elizabeth & Archie Vance
 29—Ann & Allen Webster
 31—Lynn & Joe Cutshall

*Address for Chuck & Judy Watts
 309 Connelly Court
 Franklin TN 37064



AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

15—Norm & Shirley Stark
 17—Constance & George Ulrich
 27—Karen & Phil Mitchell
 27—Maureen & Rick Slater



OR WATCH "ON-LINE" AT

ST. LUKE'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj_gXL78wJ24jkL6HMBp02g

Donate through Vanco, go to our web page:

<https://stlukesumc-okatie.org/>

Click on the "Donate" button at the top of the page. This will link you to our Vanco donation tiles. Choose where your donation will be applied.



Please "like" our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100082060615677&mibextid=LQQJ4d>

LET ME TAKE YOUR PHOTO! If you are attending St. Luke's United Methodist Church, we would like to have you in our Photo Directory. We include visitors as well as members! Please see Pat Simmons to arrange a time to have your photo taken. It only takes a minute of your time!



IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A MEMBER

OF ST. LUKE'S – you may pickup an "Invitation to Membership" form (located behind the last pew) or on the bulletin board. You can also email patsimmonsperdue@gmail.com for a copy. Fill it out, bring it back and someone will get in touch with you.



If you cannot come to church, we Thank You for "mailing" your donations to:

**St. Luke's UMC
 PO Box 2779
 Bluffton SC 29910**



Below are a few photos from the South Carolina Annual Conference attended by Pastor Chris & Pat Simmons



It's always a pleasure to attend the SC UM Annual Conference. This was my first time at the convention center in Greenville. The center was quite large and the services and meetings were held in a very large ballroom. The exhibits were in another part of the center. Quite different from the convention center in Florence.

Since the center wasn't near any restaurants or hotels, I ordered Sunday dinner and lunch for Monday & Tuesday... It was noted on my name badge that I had signed up for these meals. But no one pointed that out to me when I registered – consequently, I missed my dinner on Sunday...and only found out on Monday where to go to get lunch. There was a “Café” set up in the exhibit center for meals. If I go to the conference in Greenville again, I'll know better how everything works.

During the time there, I saw and spoke with previous pastors who had served St. Luke's, and others from different churches. This is always a highlight for me.

The theme of the conference was “Seeking a More Excellent Way: On the Leading Edge of Ministry”.

The worship services were very good and inspiring. Sunday evening, Bishop Frank L. Beard (from the Illinois Great Rivers Conference) preached the service. After that 16 clergypersons were commissioned or ordained. 36 retirees were honored.

Bishop Holston, in his opening worship sermon on Monday morning, called on South Carolina United Methodists to embrace life's “turning points” to be the people God calls them to be. He shared about various turning points in his own life. There are also turning points in denominations, Holston said, noting that coming out of all the changes at the recent General Conference, we must remember: “Our tone of dialogue must always be of care, concern, compassion and a shared commitment to faith in Jesus Christ.”

After worship and communion, official business began for the 53rd session of Annual Conference as Holston called the Monday morning plenary session to order at 11:09 a.m.

One of the first major actions at this year's conference involved a number of changes to the Standing Rules that govern the way the conference handles business. All passed without debate.

There was a report from the Committee on Nominations. Then the body elected its slate of conference officers for the quadrennium. A quadrennium is a four-year period significant in the denomination's governance and planning, encompassing General Conferences and other strategic initiatives.

After lunch, Council on Finance and Administration Chair Mitch Houston offered the first reading of its proposed \$11.7 million 2025 budget for the South Carolina Conference. The adjusted budget is \$2.3 million less than 2024's \$13.2 million budget.

Next, Annual Conference passed legislation that forgives approximately \$3.3 million in debt in direct billing charges owed by churches experiencing hardship. This resolution was the only one that went before the body for a vote. Of the seven total, five were ruled out of order.

On Tuesday, after the morning prayer and praise, the business day started with a report from the Commission on Equitable Compensation that proposed a 3.2 percent cost of living increase in 2025 to the minimum salary for clergy across South Carolina. Annual Conference approved that report, which recommended this increase.

We heard reports from Pension & Health Benefits, Africa University, the body elected all of the people put before conference by the Committee on Nominations for conference and conference-related boards, commissions and councils, as well as 41 clergy and lay people for the jurisdictional pool.

Tuesday afternoon brought what many consider to be the most significant and dramatic action of this year's Annual Conference, as a slate of 112 churches went before the body for a vote on separation from The United Methodist Church. The names and number of churches were released just before lunch on Tuesday. The 112 that separated represents about 13.4 percent of the 836 total churches in the South Carolina Conference. Last year, 113 churches separated from the South Carolina Conference.

(Many of these churches separated from the United Methodist because of the change in our Book of Discipline which was approved at the General Conference last May. The changes that follow are copied from the Western North Carolina United Methodist Conference where the General Conference was held in May 2024:

- Removal of the language that the “practice of homosexuality ... is incompatible with Christian teaching.”
- Removal of the ban on the ordination and appointment of “self-avowed practicing homosexual” clergy.
- Removal of language that made the ordination of “self-avowed practicing homosexual” clergy and the performance of same-sex weddings chargeable offenses.
- Removal of mandatory minimum penalties for clergy holding same-sex weddings.
- Removal of a prohibition against using United Methodist funds to support groups, activities and causes that promote the acceptance of homosexuality.
- Removal of the requirement that the General Council on Finance and Administration, the denomination's finance agency, enforce the funding ban. Instead, the provision says the agency should ensure that church funds do not go to anything that rejects LGBTQ persons or limits the response to the HIV epidemic.

Allowance for all clergy in good standing to be appointed across annual conference lines when their bishop can't locate an appointment in their conference.

These changes bring the *Book of Discipline* back to a neutral place where one group is not singled out for discrimination. It holds space for differing opinions within The United Methodist Church by avoiding broad mandates.

What does this mean for my local church?

It is important to note that nothing passed by the General Conference would compel churches to receive an LGBTQ+ pastor. The legislation approved also explicitly protects the right of clergy and churches not to officiate at or host same-sex weddings. Pastors have the authority to decide when and for whom they will officiate a marriage. Congregations have the right to determine whether such ceremonies will be held on church property.

At the same time, this legislation means candidates for ministry who are LGBTQ+ will continue to be welcomed. Some of our churches, if they feel so led, may have same-gender weddings. There is no prohibition against either.

As Bishop Carter stated in his letter to the Conference, “United Methodist churches will have the freedom to respond to God’s call to ministry in ways that are best for their contextual and missional communities. We will do this anchored in the grace of Jesus Christ, in connection with each other, and in our desire to grow in love with God and our neighbor.)”

Altogether over the past two years, 225 churches have left of the 958 starting number of churches, which is a grand total of about 23.4 percent.

The day concluded with a Service of Thanksgiving and Memory, which remembered 62 clergy, clergy spouses and others who passed away over the last year.

Next, the body received a motion regarding equity in fund distribution coming from the separating churches. Churches that separate from the UMC through the Local Church Discernment Process are required to pay certain financial obligations. That amount received from the 2023 separating churches was about \$17.5 million; the 2024 number has not yet been released.

It was moved, to ensure equity from funds that come from separations, both previous and current, that a minimum of \$5 million be considered for Black, indigenous and other people of color congregations, with Black Methodists for Church Renewal and the Office of Congregational Development helping as advisors.

The motion passed. The body also approved a motion that all expenditures from the Hope Fund (direct ministry grants) and all funds received from separating churches be reported at the next annual conference so the conference is fully aware of what is happening with this money.

The body approved the consent calendar, then approved the closure of 10 churches and the changing of 31 charge lines. Unlike the churches closed Tuesday afternoon over a desire to separate from the denomination, these churches closed because of other reasons, largely financial.

The \$11.7 million budget for 2025 passed.

The 53rd session of Annual Conference concluded with a service of Sending Forth and Fixing of the Appointments led by Bishop Holston. A full list of appointments was handed out and approved, or “fixed,” at the end of the session.

In his closing sermon, Bishop Holston called upon the people of the South Carolina Conference of the UMC to remember what really matters as they leave this place. “Following God’s call is not always easy,” Holston said, lifting up Romans 12:9-21. But, he said, “Scripture tells us how to prepare for the road ahead.”

By the time business ended, the body had passed a \$11.7 million budget, approved the separation of 112 churches from The United Methodist Church, ordained or commissioned 16 clergy, licensed 17 new local pastors, elected new conference officers, passed two motions regarding funds from separating churches, and passed a “jubilee” resolution forgiving approximately \$3.3 million in direct billing debt owed by churches experiencing hardship.

Respectively submitted, Pat Simmons, alternate lay delegate

(Much of this report was copied from the SC UM Advocate newspaper. To read more about what went on at the Annual Conference, to go <https://advocatesc.org/>).

GENERAL CONFERENCE



Delegates to the postponed 2020 General Conference of The United Methodist Church, meeting April 23-May 3, 2024, adopted several changes to the denomination's Book of Discipline and its Social Principles regarding human sexuality. It is important that South Carolina United Methodists know what has changed and what hasn't.

What has changed

The General Conference removed restrictive language in The Book of Discipline pertaining to human sexuality.

What has not changed

The General Conference did not add any language requiring local churches or pastors to host or preside over same-sex weddings and did not add any language requiring annual conferences and boards of ordained ministry to commission or ordain openly gay candidates for ministry.

What this means for the local church

- ◆ Local churches can choose to open their sanctuary for a same-sex wedding, but they are not required to do so.
- ◆ Pastors can choose to officiate a same-sex wedding, but they are not required to do so.
- ◆ Bishops will continue to make appointments, in consultation with local church leaders, to ensure the best pastoral leadership for the church's ministry context.

May 2024

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please email your Lay Leader, Will Ross. His email is wilross2689@gmail.com. In the Subject line, please type "General Conference".



AIN'T

He was just a little boy,
On a week's first day.
Wandering home from Bible school,
And dawdling on the way.

He scuffed his shoes into the grass;
He even found a caterpillar.
He found a fluffy milkweed pod,
And blew out all the 'filler.'

A bird's nest in a tree overhead,
So wisely placed up so high.
Was just another wonder,
That caught his eager eye.

A neighbor watched his zig zag course,
And hailed him from the lawn;
Asked him where he'd been that day
And what was going on.

'I've been to Bible School ,'
He said and turned a piece of sod.
He picked up a wiggly worm replying,
'I've learned a lot about God.'

'M'm very fine way,' the neighbor said,
'for a boy to spend his time.'
'If you'll tell me where God is,
I'll give you a brand new dime.'

Quick as a flash the answer came!
Nor were his accents faint.
'I'll give you a dollar, Mister,
If you can tell me where God ain't.'

Have a great week!