

THE CONNECTION

January 22, 2023

Where have we been...and where we are going

The history of The United Methodist Church is the product of more than a few splits, separations, and reconciliations. The formation of The Methodist Episcopal Church—a predecessor denomination of The United Methodist Church—was itself a split from the Church of England. In 1784, John Wesley went against his own tradition's ordination standards and ordained Thomas Coke, Richard Whatcoat, and Thomas Vasey to go to the United States, where they would ordain Francis Asbury. Coke and Asbury would become the main leaders of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States.

One of the first groups to leave the Methodist Episcopal Church because of its racist policies were Black Methodists in Philadelphia, led by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones. They left St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, in 1787 and formed the Free African Society, which would grow and become the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

With a current body of over 12 million members globally, United Methodists are not of one mind and for decades we have been in disagreement with one another about how to be in ministry with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people.

Currently, the Church officially affirms that all people are of sacred worth and are equally valuable in the sight of God. It is committed to being in ministry with all people. The Church "implores families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends."

Underlying this is the constitutional principle of inclusiveness of the church. Everyone is welcome to worship and actively participate in the life of our churches. Laypersons may become members and live out their faith through their local church without respect for sexual orientation or practice.

The Church deplores acts of hate and violence against people based on sexual orientation or gender identity and believes human rights and civil liberties are due to all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Homosexuality was first openly debated at General Conference in 1972, four years after the formation of The United Methodist Church, resulting in the addition of the first statement on homosexuality. While affirming the belief that persons of homosexual orientation are persons of sacred

worth who need the ministry and guidance of the church, the statement added that the church "does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching."

Since then, the church has officially maintained that "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching." This draws a distinction between orientation and practice, or behavior. Sexual relations are affirmed only

within the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.

The May 1984 General Conference in Baltimore amended the *Book of Discipline* to state that "no self-avowed, practicing homosexual shall be ordained or appointed in the United Methodist Church." Based on these positions about homosexual practice and marriage, the Church has also maintained that Pastors may not conduct ceremonies that celebrate same-sex weddings or unions. Such ceremonies also may not be held on church property.

While the church has official statements regarding homosexuality, all members can disagree with the church's positions and can advocate for change in policy. That process happens through General Conference*, the only body that speaks officially for the church.

"The Church deplores acts of hate and violence against people based on sexual orientation or gender identity and believes human rights and civil liberties are due to all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity."

Thus, immediately following the vote on the ordination ban, a small group gathered outside the Civic Center in Baltimore and passed out brochures to General Conference delegates and visitors inviting their congregations to become Reconciling Congregations (RCs), in essence to dissent from the policies approved by The UMC.

In 2019, the members of Washington Street UMC went through a discernment process and became a Reconciling Congregation. This means, our congregation is committed to engaging in the ministry of Reconciliation in two ways:

- Outreach, affirmation, and intersectional ministry with and for LGBTQIA+ persons in the local setting.
- Creating opportunities to engage in dialogue, build relationships, and advocate for changes to Church policies related to ordination equality, marriage equality, and the availability of funds that help make LGBTQIA+ justice a reality.

When the next General Conference convenes (April 23 - May 3, 2024) it will address multiple legislative proposals to alter existing church policies (in both more exclusive and more inclusive directions) and proposals to divide or restructure the denomination as a result of differences related to the church's official position about homosexual practice and marriage and other issues. There is no way to predict at this time how that General Conference may respond to proposals related to restructure or separation.

This uncertainty about the denomination's future has led to calls by some for congregations to separate from the denomination. Most recently, more than 2,000 churches in the USA chose to disaffiliate from The UMC under a provision in the current *Book of Discipline***, Paragraph 2553. The ability to disaffiliate under that paragraph expired at the end of 2022.

On December 19, 2022, our Bishop, Jonathan Holston, issued a press release to ensure United Methodist congregations in SC are equipped to make decisions that enable them to best live into their disciple-making mission. In the press release he stated:

"There are a growing number of churches in our conference inquiring about a way to leave the denomination, especially since disaffiliation under Paragraph 2553 is not available to them. While this is a source of real sadness, I have concluded that providing churches the space for conversation and discernment is a faithful step forward within the provisions of *The Book of Discipline*."

Thus, in conjunction with the Trustees of the Annual

Conference and the Extended Cabinet, our Bishop has developed a Local Church Discernment Process. While similar to the disaffiliation process found in Paragraph 2553, the Local Church Discernment Process is grounded in Paragraph 2549 of the *Discipline*, which is typically employed when a local church is closed because it no longer serves the purpose for which it was organized. Details related to this multi-step process can be found at www.umcsc.org/discern.

It is important to note that action is not required by every church to make a decision to separate from or to remain with The United Methodist Church. Only churches seeking to discern separation need to engage in this process.

Because there continues to be a lot of confusion and misinformation disseminated about what all this means for local congregations like Washington Street UMC, I have invited our District Superintendent, The Rev. Fran Elrod, to meet with us on **Sunday evening, January 22nd, at 6:00 pm in our Sanctuary.**

We will livestream the session for those who are not able to attend in person. Please contact Jane Peterson (jane@wsmethodist.org) for the livestream link.

Rev. Elrod's time with us is designed to provide space for us to ask questions and allow her to clarify any misunderstandings while providing us with up-to-date and accurate information. It will be helpful to our time together if you are able to submit your questions to me in writing before Sunday. You may email them to rjshirley@umcsc.org.

Thank you for taking the time to read this message and for your continued prayers for God's guidance and grace.

Prayerfully, Becky

*To learn more about the General conference, visit <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/what-is-the-general-conference>

**The Book of Discipline is the current statement of how United Methodists agree to live together. It includes our church Constitution, our history, our doctrinal standards, and our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ, as well as practical processes through which our congregations are organized and clergy are ordained.

TO RECEIVE A LINK TO WATCH SUNDAY'S Q&A WITH REV. ELROD, PLEASE EMAIL jane@wsmethodist.org, OR GO TO THE REALM CALENDAR FOR JAN. 22, CLICK ON THE EVENT, AND THEN CLICK THE LINK IN THE DESCRIPTION TO GO TO YOUTUBE.

THE LINK IS PRIVATE AND WILL NOT BE ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC.

Getting to Know...

Wendy Clark

By Fran Zupan

Wendy Clark and her husband Joe left Columbia in 1989 for a new job for him in Florence. Three years later they moved back to Columbia in part because they missed their church family at Washington Street, especially the Aldersgate Sunday school class.

"We missed the camaraderie of that class," Wendy said.

Once they decided to come back to Columbia, they had a month to make the transition. Joe had decided to go to law school. They had to sell their house in Florence and buy another one in Columbia. They had to find daycare for their 1-year-old daughter, Bradley. And, Wendy had to find a job.

"It all happened, and we just knew it was meant to be," Wendy said.

Wendy grew up in Walterboro, a small town 47 miles from Edisto Beach. She was an only child, but she was close friends with three sisters – the Berrys -- who lived down the street. Her father was an entrepreneur, and her mother had a hairdressing business in their house.

Wendy's parents were Baptists, but she helped them become Methodists. When she was an infant and her mother took her to the Baptist church nursery, she cried the whole time she was in there. After several tearful Sundays, her mother took her across the street to the Methodist church – the Berrys' church – and she didn't cry at all.

Wendy grew up going to Edisto Beach. The family rented a house there for two weeks in the summer, and she and her mother would often go on Saturday or on Sunday afternoons. Her love for the place was to be lifelong.

Wendy graduated from high school Friday night and started at Columbia College the following Monday. She majored in business and graduated in 1981, after three-and-a-half years.

One of her professors asked her if she would come work at the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Columbia. She accepted that job.

Wendy and Joe met in December 1983 at a bar where they gathered with mutual friends. They discovered they not only lived in the same apartment complex but that their apartments were adjacent. Joe asked Wendy for her phone number and asked her out.

Joe was 20 minutes late for their first date. While she fumed, she thought, "I will never go out with him again."

She remembers how he was dressed when she opened the door: tweed blazer, bow tie, khaki pants and dirty bucks.

"And he had the cutest dimples and smile on his face," she said.

"I'm sorry I'm late," he said, "but the traffic getting here was just awful."

Wendy changed her mind about not going out with Joe

again. They married on April 19, 1986, at her home church, Bethel UMC in Walterboro. April 19 was her mother's birthday and her parent's wedding anniversary.

Joe also grew up in the Methodist church, in Marion. In early 1987, Wendy and Joe started attending Washington Street. Joe's parents were friends of the Rev. C.J. Lupo and his wife Vera. Lupo was senior pastor at Washington Street from 1979 until 1985, and he also officiated at Joe and Wendy's wedding.

Wendy became active at Washington Street. Over time, she chaired the Worship Committee and the Membership and Evangelism Committee. She also chaired the committee that planned and executed the church's bicentennial celebration in 2003.

"That one was fun," Wendy said, explaining that the year included a play, a devotional book, a cookbook and a float in the Christmas parade, among other activities.

In addition, Wendy also served on the Church Council, the Foundation Board of Trustees, the Child Development Center board, and the Nominations Committee.

But one thing Wendy likes to do best is to help Mary Lide in the kitchen during Lenten lunches and at other times.

In 1995, Wendy was expecting her second child in October, but he was born six weeks early and diagnosed after birth with trisomy 13, a chromosomal disorder characterized by three copies of chromosome 13 in every cell of the body instead of the usual two.

Their son, whom they named Marion Hiott Clark, lived only five days.

"It was awful, but this church wrapped their arms around us," she said. "They fed us. They visited and called us. They gave us so much time and attention and love."

Money donated to the church in memory of Marion was used to order a stained-glass window installed just outside the children's library on the second floor.

In 1997, Wendy gave birth to their second daughter Lucas — "the blessing that came out of all that." That year, Lucas was baby Jesus in the nativity tableau. Wendy was Mary and Joe was Joseph. Bradley, who was 6, was an angel.

Wendy said her church family has also been there for her in other crises. In 2004, she was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 43. In 2005, her mother was diagnosed with Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease, a rare degenerative brain disease.



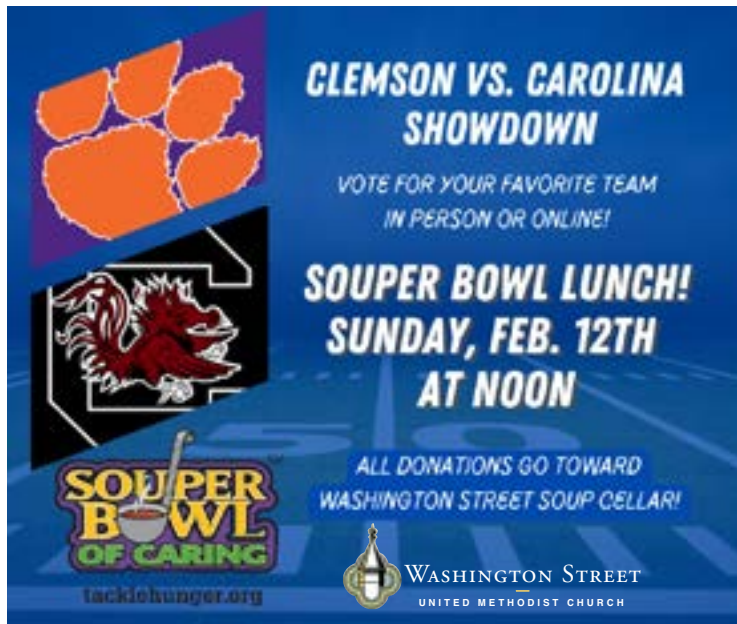
She died six weeks later.

Today, Bradley, 31, lives at Edisto Beach and manages a restaurant and bar owned by a local family. Lucas, 25, is taking a couple of years off and traveling out West. She has a truck, a Scamp camper, and a pit bull named George.

Wendy and Joe have a house at Edisto, and she lives there from May to September. Joe, a corporate attorney at Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd in Columbia, goes down on weekends. Other than the cold months of December, January and February, they spend their weekends at Edisto.

"As much as I love this church, I would now call us 'seasonal members,'" Wendy said of Washington Street.

She and Joe will join a church at Edisto once they move there permanently when Joe slows down or retires completely, Wendy said.



The Youth of Washington Street will host a "Clemson vs. Carolina Showdown" soup lunch for Souper Bowl of Caring on Sunday, February 12, following the 11:00 am worship service in Threatt Hall. Tackle Hunger's signature Souper Bowl of Caring effort is a youth-inspired movement working across the nation to tackle hunger in their local communities. Mobilizing grassroots resources including churches, schools, civic groups, and caring individuals, Tackle Hunger and the Souper Bowl of Caring movement has created over \$175 million worth of support that stays completely local to make sure no one goes without soup in their bowl. The youth will be collecting cash donations before worship Sunday, Feb. 5, and Feb. 12, that will benefit the Washington Street Soup Cellar! You can also donate online by marking your donation "Souper Bowl of Caring" in the memo line. Donate toward which team you think is the best—Clemson or Carolina for this "Souper Bowl Showdown." Your donation will cover the cost of your soup. For more information, contact Sarah-Kate at sarahkate@wsmethodist.org.

Sunday School Updates

• **The Aldersgate Class:** The class is studying a series based on a message from Max Lucado, *Because of Bethlehem: Love is Born, Hope is Here*. We welcome anyone who would like to join us for a short video and lively discussion. Our class meets in the Aldersgate classroom on the 2nd floor at 10:00 am with coffee and a pastry. If you have any questions, please call David A. Anderson at 803-318-8821 or email him at DAAnderson@richardsonplowden.com.

• **The Dawsey Class:** This Sunday, January 22, we will continue studying *The First Christmas: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Birth* by Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan. Hunter Rentz will lead a discussion of Chapter 7, "Light Against the Darkness." Next Sunday, January 29, Tom Summers will teach Chapter 8, "Jesus as the Fulfillment of Prophecy." The class meets in the Dawsey Classroom on the 2nd floor. Class members who desire to join from home use FreeConferenceCall. Class members should call in between 9:50 and 10:00 am. The call-in number is (701) 802-5115. The access code is 7252934. For more information about the class, contact the class president, Mary Slade, at marydslade4@gmail.com.

• **The Grace Class:** On January 22, we will start the book, *Do I Stay Christian?* by Brian McClaren. Lynn Shirley will lead the class on Jan. 22 and Jan. 29. Join in-person or contact Jim Lane at jlane@columbiasc.edu for the Zoom link to gather Sunday mornings at 9:45 am for fellowship and at 10:00 am for spiritual reflection.

• **The Joy Class:** The lessons are being led by various members and focused on how we can use this season to further our faith journey. Everyone is welcome to join us as we learn together. If you are interested, please contact Lee Haynes at lelandhaynesjr@gmail.com or Sylvia Stevens at sylviasaundersstevens@gmail.com for more information.

• **The Open Door Class:** The class is doing a study based on the video "The Bible Project." The subject is the character of God. Visitors are always welcome! The class meets both in-person and via Zoom each week. For Zoom link information, contact Ann Jessup at jessup.ann@gmail.com.

• **The Paul Harmon Class:** On January 15, Lois Lovelace Duke will lead our discussion of Chapter 7. All are welcome. For more information contact Suzanne Joye at sjoye@sc.rr.com.

• **The John Harper Class:** The John Harper class discusses lessons from Adult Bible Studies published by Cokesbury. The January focus is Power and Belonging. Lessons include "Grace and Awareness for All" from Luke, "In the World, Not of It" from John and Ephesians, "Controlled by Peace" from Colossians and, "A Seat at the Table" from Matthew. For more information, contact Tracy Powers at tipowers65@gmail.com or meet with us in the classroom on the first floor by the elevator.

• **The WSUMC Youth Class:** Sarah-Kate is working on building a volunteer schedule for youth Sunday School and Sunday night Youth Group. If you are interested in helping out, please reach out to her. Right now the youth Sunday school class is in flux as we do not currently have enough volunteers to teach. Please keep watching for updated information!

• **NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS:** A new class has started and is meeting in the Traxler Classroom. The class is led by Christine Taylor. The class is doing a slow-read through the Gospel of Luke. Anyone who is interested is welcome to join! For more information, contact Christine at christine@wsmethodist.org.

**YOUTH GROUP MEETS SUNDAY NIGHTS FROM 4:00 TO 6:00 PM
IN THE YOUTH ROOM!**



WASHINGTON
STREET

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

F.U.E.L.

FELLOWSHIP. UNITE. EAT. LOVE.

Fill up your tank at Sunday Night Fuel!



**BEGINS FEBRUARY 5TH
5:00 PM**

**JOIN US ONCE A MONTH
FOR THIS FELLOWSHIP
OPPORTUNITY!**

**SPAGHETTI DINNER
BINGO WITH GIFT CARD PRIZES**



**Make plans
today!
Ecuador 2023
June 12-21,
2023**

**Save the date for our
first meeting:
Jan. 29 | 9:00 am
Wesley Room
Email Mackin Wall
for more information!
mackinwall4@gmail.com**

Gifts



IN MEMORY OF DON FOWLER
to WSUMC

Given by Laura K. Behre

IN HONOR OF DEE GULLEDGE
to the Soup Cellar

Given by Michael Hiers

**IN HONOR OF
REV. TONI WHITE**

to the Soup Cellar

Given by Ann White

**IN HONOR OF
AVA & LEILA JACKSON**

to the Youth Ministry

**Given by Benjamin
Whetstone**

**IN MEMORY OF
NELLE PETERSON**

to Active Faith

**Given by Rick &
Deborah Rowe**

**IN MEMORY OF
SARAH THREATT**

to the Soup Cellar

**Given by Rick &
Deborah Rowe**

**IN MEMORY OF
SARAH THREATT**

to WSUMC

Given by Ms. Barrie Kirk

Prayer List

Betsy Alexander

Martha Boynton

David Byrum

Mickey Epting

Pat Griffin

Rev. Paul Harmon

Karen Horne

Lisa Johnson

Debby Joyner

Martha Helen King

Paul McClanahan

David Middleton

Shawn Powers

Genie & Ron Quinn

Rick Rowe

Paula Walters

Nancy Williams

Our homebound

In Sympathy

Rev. Becky Shirley joins the entire staff and Washington Street Church family in expressing our deepest sympathy and Christian love to the following families on the death of their loved one.

Nelle Peterson, January 6, 2023
(Charlie & Jane Peterson)

Joanne Outlaw, January 7, 2023,
(Patti & John Beerman)

Sarah Threatt, January 12, 2023

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. — Matthew 5:4

February Birthdays

February 1 Jan Baker Bruce Adams	February 7 Cindy Waund	February 14 Joe Epting	February 19 Ana Sofia Hait	February 26 Maddy Foley
February 2 Phyllis Eledge	February 8 Melaine Johnson	February 15 V. Diane Farr	February 20 Janelle Beamer	February 27 William Brown Scott Middleton Aida Rogers
February 3 J. Marshall Colcord	February 10 Don Britt Samuel Schatz	February 16 Beth Robinson Gloria Apple Dawn Haynes	February 22 Leland Haynes Joy Foley Travis Luthren Amy Geddes	February 28 Geoff Bonham
February 4 Alisa Liggett	February 11 Jean Kanes	February 17 Ned Self	February 24 Jennifer Jackson Greg Middleton	February 29 Kevin Duggan
February 5 Rose Dangerfield	February 12 Lathan Robinson	February 18 Emily Franklin Daniel Hanlin	February 25 John Halloran	
February 6 Stewart Hall	February 13 Lois Duke			

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

*Subject to change. *Denotes non-member event; blue type indicates WSUMC events with an open invitation to attend.*

Monday, January 23

11:30 am-12:30 pm | Soup Cellar Serving | Soup Cellar
1:30-2:30 pm | NA Meeting | Soup Cellar*
2:30-3:30 pm | CDC Special Dance Class | Threatt Hall
5:45-8:45 pm | Columbia Choral Society | Choir Room*

Tuesday, January 24

11:30 am-12:30 pm | Soup Cellar Serving | Soup Cellar
6:00-8:00 pm | Palmetto Mastersingers | Choir Room*
6:30-8:00 pm | Private Meeting | Room varies*

Wednesday, January 25

10:00-11:00 am | Staff Meeting | Wesley Room
11:30 am-12:30 pm | Soup Cellar Serving | Soup Cellar
1:30-2:30 pm | NA Meeting | Soup Cellar*

Thursday, January 26

11:30 am-12:30 pm | Soup Cellar Serving | Soup Cellar
7:00-9:00 pm | Palmetto Chamber Orchestra | Choir Room

Friday, January 27

11:30 am-12:30 pm | Soup Cellar Serving | Soup Cellar
1:30-2:30 pm | NA Meeting | Soup Cellar*
4:00 pm | REVOLUTION | Township (Youth event)

Saturday, January 28

All day | REVOLUTION | Township (Youth event)

Sunday, January 29

All day | REVOLUTION | Township (Youth event)
9:00-9:30 am | Ecuador Meeting | Wesley Room
11:00 am-12:00 pm | **Worship Services | Sanctuary & Livestream**

Monday, January 30

11:30 am-12:30 pm | Soup Cellar Serving | Soup Cellar
1:30-2:30 pm | NA Meeting | Soup Cellar*

Tuesday, January 31

11:30 am-12:30 pm | Soup Cellar Serving | Soup Cellar
6:00-8:00 pm | Palmetto Mastersingers | Choir Room*

Wednesday, February 1

11:30 am-12:30 pm | Soup Cellar Serving | Soup Cellar
1:30-2:30 pm | NA Meeting | Soup Cellar*
5:30-6:30 pm | CDC Board Meeting | John Harper Classroom

Thursday, February 2

11:30 am-12:30 pm | Soup Cellar Serving | Soup Cellar
1:30-2:30 pm | NA Meeting | Soup Cellar*

Friday, February 3

11:30 am-12:30 pm | Soup Cellar Serving | Soup Cellar
1:30-2:30 pm | NA Meeting | Soup Cellar*
4:00-8:00 pm | Wedding Rehearsal | Sanctuary*

Saturday, February 4

1:00-4:00 pm | Mom's Demand Action | Threatt Hall*
1:30-2:30 pm | History & Archives Meeting | Archives
2:00-6:00 pm | Wedding | Sanctuary*

Sunday, February 5

9:30 am-12:30 pm | **Mary's Maidens Chocolate & Valentines Sale | Hallways**
11:00 am-12:00 pm | **Worship Services | Sanctuary & Livestream**
5:00-7:00 pm | **F.U.E.L. | Threatt Hall**

ATTENDANCE (as of 1-19-22):

Jan. 8: 135 (in-person); 90 (online) = 225
Jan. 15: 170 (in-person); 175 (online) = 345
Jan. 1: 108 (in-person); 105 (online) = 213
Dec. 25: 46 (in-person); 100 (online) =146

GIVING YEAR-TO-DATE (as of 1-19-22):

Church Budget \$ TBD

Church Actual	\$60,405
Soup Cellar	\$1,415
Foundation	0



REVOLUTION

Revolution is coming up at the end of January! Each year at REVOLUTION, more than 2,000 youth experience a powerful weekend of worship and music and messages focused on sharing God's love in a relevant way. This youth event will be held at the Township Auditorium on January 27, 28, and 29. The theme for this year is "GLOW" based on John 1:5 with speaker Nathalie Nelson Parker and the band Stars Go Dim! Washington Street Youth will meet together at Washington Street on Friday, Jan. 27, at 4:00 pm and head over to the event after dinner. The Saturday session lasts all day and begins at 9:30 am. REVOLUTION requires a lot of planning, so *be sure you have signed up to attend this weekend!* Sarah-Kate will be in touch with parents of youth who have signed up to attend throughout the weekend to send updates about pick up and drop off times.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED TO TEACH YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL & TO HELP WITH CHILDREN & YOUTH ACTIVITIES! IF INTERESTED, PLEASE CONTACT SARAH-KATE AT SARAHKATE@WSMETHODIST.ORG